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Name of the Year Report 2023

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Summary

On January 4, 2024, the American Name Society continued its long-standing tradition and conducted the Name of the Year selection (NoY). The 2023 online vote was chaired by ANS President, Laurel Sutton, and ANS Information Officer, Brandon Simonson. This report gives a summary of this year's NoY deliberations and offers readers background information about some of the onomastic nominations and decision-making.

Introduction

Each year, the American Name Society holds a special election for the Name of the Year (NoY). In the past, this deliberation has taken place during the General Business Meeting of the ANS annual conference. However, this year, the deliberations were conducted in a special online session held on Thursday, January 4, 2024. The session was led by ANS President, Laurel Sutton; and ANS Information Officer, Dr. Brandon Simonson, tallied the votes. During this special session, attendees from around the world were given the chance to carefully review all of the advance nominations that had been submitted either via the ANS' online portal or by emailed ballots. The rules for making a nomination were simple. Although no limitations were made on who was allowed to make a nomination or how many names they could submit, participants were asked to restrict their suggestions to names that reflected important US trends. In addition, to receive full consideration, all nominations must have been accompanied with a short description to explain why this name should be selected as Name of the Year. Furthermore, participants were reminded that all nominations received would not be evaluated on the basis of what they label. Rather, nominations are judged on the basis of their linguistic innovation, potential to influence language use, and ability to capture national attention.

Once the deadline for advanced nominations had passed, the ANS President and *NAMES* Editor-in-Chief reviewed the submissions to ensure that the above rules had been followed and that each of the submissions were properly placed into one of the following onomastic categories: Personal Names, Place Names, Trade Names, Artistic/Literary Names, E-Names, and Miscellaneous. The final set of onomastic candidates were then presented to the meeting attendees by onomastic category. To determine the winner of each category, the following rules were followed.

- (1) If one name receives 51% or more of the vote, it is declared the category winner.
- (2) If a name receives 50% of the vote, it is named the category winner, UNLESS another name also received 50% of the vote. If such a tie takes place, a run-off is held between the two names to determine a winner. A maximum of two run-offs will be held in the case of a tie. Should neither of the nominations obtain 51% or more of the vote, a tie will be declared and both names will be the category winner.
- (3) If no name received 50% or more of the vote, a run-off will be held between the two nominations that received the first and second highest number of votes. If a third nomination is within 5 points of the second nomination, it will also be allowed in the run-off. The winner of the category will then be determined by the rules stipulated above.
- (4) Once all of the category winners have been determined, they will all be considered for overall Name of the Year.
- (5) Nominations from the floor may be taken for any of the individual name categories as well as for the overall Name of the Year.

The following report presents background information about many of the top candidates from the each of the name categories. It also provides a general overview of the deliberations. The report also provides the numerical election results for each of the NoY sub-categories and the overall NoY for 2023.

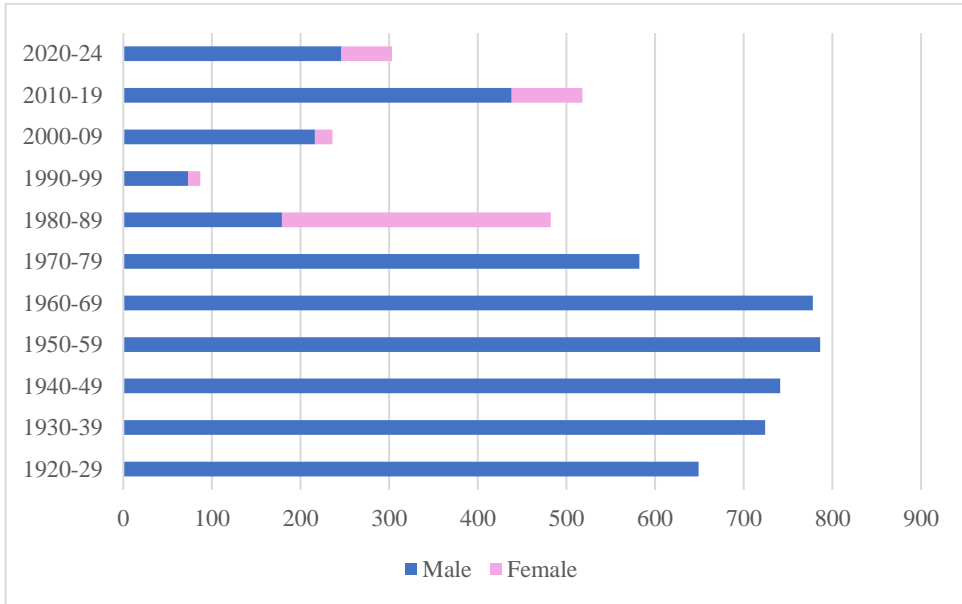
Category Winners

Personal Names

This year, there were twelve different nominations received for the category Personal Name of the Year. In alphabetical order, the nominees were *Barbie* (originally a short form for *Barbara*, the personal name became the moniker for Mattel's doll as well as the 2023 blockbuster film); *Chauncey* (the first name of Chauncey Billups, a popular former player and the current head coach of National Basketball Association team the Portland Trailblazers); *George Anthony Devolder Santos* (a former member of the US House of Representatives who was expelled for ethics violations); *Harry and Meghan* (the forenames of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex); *Lionel Messi* (the personal name of the Argentinian-born soccer legend); *MAGA* (the political acronym for the slogan "Make America Great Again"); *RINO* (popularized by MAGA supporters to disparage Republican Party members who do not follow their agenda, the dysphemistic acronym stands for "Republican in Name Only"); *Sheynnis Alondra Palacios Cornejo* (the 2023 Winner of the Miss Universe Beauty Pageant); *Swiftie* (the nickname for fans of musical artist Taylor Swift); *Taylor* (the first name of Taylor Swift); *Taylor Swift* (the award-winning US American female songwriter and performer); and *Vivek Ramaswamy* (a political contender for the Republican Party ticket, he taught voters how to pronounce his name through rap posts in social media). In 2023, the Republican candidate's name made the news when Democratic strategist and former chair of the Democratic National Committee Donna Brazile intentionally mispronounced his name during an interview with Bill Maher. Not letting the onomastic jibe go uncommented, Maher quickly responded: "I just feel like there's something wrong with everybody refusing to learn to say his name. I just feel there's a little racism there. [. . .]" (Hains 2023). The Asian American Foundation agreed and issued its own statement in reaction to the willful mispronunciation: "AAPI [Asian American and Pacific Islander] names are not punchlines and we expect public figures to use their platforms responsibly" (Venkatraman 2023, para 7).

As can be seen in this listing, the nominations came from many different cultural spheres. At the same time, the personalities of the real and imagined figures behind the names also ran the gamut from the celebrated to the disgraced, the exalted to the refiled. The range of reactions to these name-bearers underscores the necessity of one of the guiding regulations in the NoY proceedings: nominations are only evaluated on the basis of the linguistic characteristics of the name and not the relative popularity of the name-bearer. Thus, the fact that a personal name may have appeared consistently in the media throughout an election year is not enough to warrant its selection as category winner. Take for example, the name *Taylor*. Thanks in no small measure to the popularity of the singer and the phenomenal success of her "Eras Tour", in 2023 the name *Taylor* frequently appeared in the international press. Nevertheless, the prominence and popularity of this name-bearer seem to have had little effect on the attractiveness of this forename to expectant parents in the US. Evidence of this assertion can be found in the national data collected by the US Social Security Administration (SSA 2024). The bar graph below shows *Taylor's* ranking among the top 1,000 names given to male and female children born in the US over the past 11 decades.

Graph 1: The popularity ranking of *Taylor* for male and female children born in the US since 1920 based on US SSA data



As the bar graph above shows, *Taylor* has been one of the top 1,000 most common names given to male children born in the US for over a century. Using the SSA method, the shorter the bar, the higher the ranking. For example, in the 1920's, *Taylor* ranked 649th for male baby names. By the 1990's, it peaked in popularity and ranked 73rd among the top names given to US born male children. It was not until the 1980's, however, that the name emerged as a popular name for female US newborns. This was precisely the decade in which the songstress Taylor Alison Swift was born in West Reading, Pennsylvania. The current popularity of *Taylor* is, therefore, not caused of the singing sensation. Rather her naming was more probably the effect of an overarching trend affecting many US children born in that era. In this case, that US trend may well have been the increased popularity of unisex or adrogenous names (e.g., *Ashley, Blake, Cody, Cameron, Dakota, Drew, Erin, Hayden, Kirby, Jordan, Morgan, and Ryan*) (Williams 2016; Zhang 2023). Following this national pattern, *Taylor* also experienced a substantial increase in popularity as a girl's name, going from rank 303 in the 1980's to rank 14 in the 1990's.

As personal name specialist, Cleve Evans (2007) once explained, the increasing popularity of a single name or even a name cluster is rarely the result of a singular cultural phenomenon such as the emergence of pop icon: instead, such changes are more often than not a manifestation of much larger, ongoing onomastic trends. In the case of what came first *Taylor* or *Taylor*, there are many factors other than those mentioned above that help answer the question. In 2006, for example, Taylor Swift released her first album which jettisoned the singer into the center of mainstream media. At the very same time, however, the name *Taylor*, began to backslide in popularity as a US baby name. Among the names given to baby boys, *Taylor* went from rank 216 to 438. Among the names given to girls, the decrease in popularity was even more dramatic with *Taylor* becoming four times less popular, sliding from rank 20 to rank 80. The fact that parents in the US moved away from rather than towards *Taylor* at the same time that Taylor Swift increased in popularity is not at all unexpected. As much onomastic research has shown, when searching for a name for their newborns, many contemporary parents prefer names that are considered unique, uncommon, or unusual (Powell & Karraker 2013; Twenge, Abebe, & Campbell 2010; Varnum & Kitayama 2010). Taken all together then, from a linguistic point of view, there was nothing particularly dramatic or unexpected about the name Taylor. This example shows the importance of separating the name-bearer(s) from the name in the NoY deliberations. To be considered strong title contenders, nominations must be, in and of themselves, novel or influential in their structure or usage.

The application of this rule helped to narrow down the field of contenders for this category. Of the original twelve nominations, nine were determined to be comparatively poor linguistic exemplars of the personal name category, despite their clear dominance in US American discourse throughout 2023.¹ This meant that the delegates cast their votes for one of three remaining contenders. (1) *Vivek Ramaswamy*, the personal name of the first US American of Indian ancestry who ran for political office using his Indian birth name; (2) *Harry and Meghan*, the onomastic couplet for the married couple who relinquished their official position in the British Monarchy to raise their family in the United States; and (3) *Swiftie*, the nickname for Taylor Swift fans. The first two of these nominations tied for second with both receiving 9% of the total vote. Coming in first place then was *Swiftie* which received a remarkable 82% of the votes. As reflected in the voting, there are many compelling reasons for selecting *Swiftie* as the winner of the Personal Name Category. Morphologically, the formation of the name is quite interesting. The term of endearment is formed through the affixation of the artist's last name *Swift* with the diminutive suffix *-ie*. This affixation pattern is extremely productive in English and is routinely used to create affectionate nicknames from full names (e.g., *Margaret*→*Maggie*; *Charles*→*Charlie*).

What makes *Swiftie* somewhat unusual is the fact that a surname has been used for this process. In addition, the name is an autonym which was developed by the artist's fan base. As the popularity of the singer-songwriter has exponentially increased, the autonym has been used by this group to distinguish themselves as long-term, particularly loyal, Taylor Swift fans as opposed to the growing numbers of newcomers who have only recently come to enjoy her music (Dictionary.com). The same kind of distinction has been made with other earlier fan-formations. For example, as opposed to occasional viewers who sometimes watched an episode, the term *Trekkie* was devised to describe generations of hardcore fans whose personal identities were intimately tied to the Star Trek series.

The ANS was not alone in its recognition of *Swiftie*. In its annual search for words of the year, the Oxford English Dictionary also ranked *Swiftie* as number 2 on its list of words for 2023 (OED). The name *Swiftie* has become productive in and of itself. It not only has a plural form, it has also generated many new coins. For example, among those politicians whose communities were lucky enough to be among the chosen few along Swift's concert tour route, a competition has broken out to devise the best place name to welcome the artist, her legions of followers, and all the profits that come with them.² For example, the city of Minneapolis temporarily changed its name to *Swiftieapolis* when the Eras Tour came to town. Not to be undone, Mayor Lisa Gillmor of Santa Clara, California, renamed the city *Swiftie Clara* from July 28 to 29, the two dates the Eras Tour came to town (CBS News 2023). There is even an academic society in Ireland which is dedicated to all things Taylor Swift: [Is é Swiftie Soc an chéad cumann dírithe ar Taylor Swift in Éirinn!] (University of Galway). Established in 2021 at University of Galway, the Gaelic language university society is called Swiftie Soc (University of Galway). In the United States, Texas A&M has the *TAMU Swiftie Society* which is dedicated to highlighting "the impact of Taylor Swift in pop culture and on an international scale (Texas A & M University). Just in time for the Super Bowl, an online petition began to change the name of the *Kansas City Chiefs*—the football team that Swift's boyfriend Travis Kelce just happens to play for and one of the few remaining teams in the US NFL that still retains a team name that many Native Americans find offensive. The petition calls for the team to finally shed its controversial name and adopt the moniker *Kansas City Swifties*. As Rhonda La Valdo, the head of the Native American advocacy group "Not in our honor" explains: "I know a ton of Naïve people are fans [of Taylor Swift]. She reaches out to so many diverse groups of people. She could be an ally and help get that message out." (Jones 2023, para 10)

Place Names

For the category Place Names, a total of five different nominations were received and reviewed. The first nomination names a humanitarian disaster that visited the US in the Summer of 2023: the deadly fires that engulfed Hawaii Islands, consuming nearly 20,000 acres of land in less than a week's time. The inferno began as a small set of fires of the coast of Maui. The Indigenous toponym *Maui* came to represent that place of origin and stands for the other landmasses and communities that fell victim to the wind-driven blaze. The next set of place name were also connected to a deadly crisis that dominated the news in 2023. As the various individual nominators explained, the toponyms *Gaza*, *Gaza Strip*, and *Palestine* have all become passepartout for the war being waged by Israel and the Hamas; and the desperate civilians who are caught in between.

The final nomination for this category, *Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, shares many features with the first two sub-groupings. Like *Gaza* and *Gaza Strip*, *Haudenosaunee Confederacy* is the name of a land-area with disputed geographical borders and at the center of international political controversy. Like *Maui*, the moniker *Haudenosaunee Confederacy* features Indigenous nomenclature. Explained briefly, *Haudenosaunee* is the autonym for the group of peoples collectively named by outsiders with the exonyms *Iroquois* and The League of Five Nations. Made up of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (HC) united the "People of the Long House" into one international conglomerate that is overseen

by the Great Council (Haudenosaunee Confederacy). The Confederacy made global news in 2023, when the International Olympic Council announced that the HC would be barred from sending a lacrosse team to compete in the 2028 Games. The IOC's official justification for their decision was that the fact that the HC is not on its official list of recognized countries with an Olympic committee (Schapitl 2023). The fact that what is currently called "Lacrosse" originated with the Haudenosaunee and remains one of their most revered spiritual traditions apparently did nothing to dissuade the IOC decision-makers (Haudenosaunee Nationals, n.d.). In reaction to the ruling, President Biden spoke out against the ruling and argued that the Haudenosaunee "ancestors invented the game. They perfected it for millennia. [. . .] And they should be granted an exception to field their own team at the Olympics". (Schapitl 2022, para. 2)

After much deliberation, the ballots were cast. Once again, the tally revealed that one nomination had managed to secure the overwhelming majority of the votes. While *Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, *Maui*, and *Palestine* each received 9% of the vote, *Gaza* garnered just over eight times that percentage (73%). Interestingly, the name *Gaza Strip* did not receive a single vote. The reasoning for this striking difference may be found in the communicative function of the two. The toponym *Gaza Strip* is almost exclusively used to name that geographical land space along the Mediterranean Sea, northeast of the Sinai Peninsula. By comparison, *Gaza* has extended its sphere of reference and may be used in a variety of linguistic constructions (e.g., *#Gaza*; *Free Gaza Movement* [FGM]; *Remember Gaza*). This semantic extension and marked increase in lexical productivity combined to set *Gaza* apart from the other contenders in this category.

Trade Names

This year, a total of eight different nominations were received for this category. In alphabetical order they were *Barbenheimer*; *Barbie*; *ChatGPT*; *Discord*; *Ozempic*; *OceanGate*; *Titan*; and *X*. This name set represents a broad diversity of commercial products and services. From the health sector, the drug name *Ozempic* made the headlines. Manufactured by the Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk, the drug was initially developed as a medical treatment to control Type II diabetes. However, once it became clear that one of the major side-effects of the drug was appetite suppression and weight loss, the drug became increasingly marketed as a weight loss remedy. As of the writing of this article, the profits from *Ozempic* have transformed Novo Nordisk into a 400 billion dollar company, making it the most valuable business in all of Europe (Rice 2023). For the year 2022, *Ozempic* alone accounted for more than 65% of all prescriptions (Rice 2023).

With that kind of success, it was only a matter of time before other manufacturers followed suit. Since its introduction, other pharmaceutical companies have brought out similar acting drugs. Within the lay community, however, the name *Ozempic* has emerged as a cover term for this line of products. As one market observer noted:

Ozempic is old news, and sooner than we thought, a bewildering array of medications for obesity is advancing through development. [. . .] Some drugs may be cheaper or more convenient [. . .]; some may be stronger. [. . .] That only makes it more disturbing that, even as the drug *Ozempic* is becoming obsolete, the name *Ozempic*, as the shorthand for a class of drugs, seems destined to live on. (Engber 2023, para 4)

The drug name is so resilient, in fact, that there is some speculation that *Ozempic* is becoming the generic name for a class of products in much the same way as the brand name *Hoover* became synonymous of all vacuum cleaner, *Tic Tac* for breath mints, *Kleenex* for facial tissue, and *Band-Aid* for adhesive bandages, *Scotch tape* for adhesive tape, and *Gummy Bears* for well, gummy bears. The resiliency of *Ozempic* is no accident. As Jenna Wise, one of the principle onomastic designers of *Ozempic* explains, their goal was to devise a name that communicated "achievement or victory" to potential consumers. One of the reasons why they landed on the name *Ozempic* was because of its phonological similarity to the term "Olympic". (Murphy 2023 para 7).

From the realm of entertainment, two of the names came from 2023 movie releases: (1) "Barbie", the name of Warner Bros. Pictures's blockbuster satirical film directed by Greta Gerwig and which details the feminist awakening of the Mattel doll; and (2) "Oppenheimer", the Universal Pictures's biographical drama in which director Christopher Nolan explores the disturbing psyche and work of physicist Julius Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb. The fact that the two films were released simultaneously on July 21, 2023, led the competing studios, and cinematic critics alike, to place their bets on which film would emerge the winner. As movie-goers slowly emerged from their pandemic lockdowns, and made their way back into the theaters, as anticipated, public discussions began both online and off.

However, contrary to many pre-release predictions, for many movie-lovers, the question was not so much which film to see but in which order. Was it better to see the film “Barbie” first and then “Oppenheimer” or the reverse? The competing sequences were affectionately labelled *Barbenheimer* = [**Barbie** → [[Barb] + [heimer]] ← **Oppenheimer**] and *Oppenbarbie* = [**Oppenheimer** → [Oppen] + **Barbie**]. These constructions are analogous to other Hollywood smash-ups which featured the clipped and affixed personal names of prominent couples (e.g., *Bennifer* = [**Benjamin Affleck** → [Ben] + [-ifer] ← **Jennifer Lopez**]; *Brangelina* = [**Brad Pitt** → [[Bran] + [gelina]] ← **Angelina Jolie**]).³ While the jury is still out over which sequence was better, the general consensus seems to be that the linguistic construction *Barbenheimer*⁴ was more popular than *Oppenbarbie*.

Alongside these nominations from the entertainment industry, the world of computer technology and the internet were also well-represented in the trade name category, making up 37.5% of the nominations received. In this subset there was *Discord*, the name of a gaming platform. Given the fact that the platform was designed to bring together a wide variety of communities, the name choice for this meeting place was rather ironic. An even more questionable tradename decision was made by Elon Musk who elected to dispose of the wildly popular corporate name *Twitter* and replace it with the single-letter name *X*. According to Musk, the name change reflects the fact that “Twitter was acquired by X Corp” (Feiner 2023, para 2). A look at Musk’s portfolio reveals the entrepreneur’s long-standing love for the letter. Several of the entrepreneur’s financial ventures, past and present, feature this letter in their names (e.g., *SpaceX*, *X.com*, *X Holdings*). The final name in this subset does not feature the letter *X* but may be equally enigmatic to many users: *ChatGPT*, the increasingly popular open AI system for text generation.

The fourth subset of nominations also comes from the corporate world. However, unlike the above-mentioned trade names from the digital world, this subset names label non-virtual enterprises. For example, *OceanGate* is the name the privately owned US American company that produced submersibles for scientific and recreational exploration. For many, the use of the term “Gate” for the company name was viewed critically. Since the 1970’s scandal, when President Nixon left office in disgrace after his participation in the burglary of the Democratic National Committee Headquarters in the Watergate complex, the term *Watergate* and has become synonymous with corruption. As the FBI explains, the infamy of Watergate “has become so ingrained in our country’s collective conscience that just adding ‘-gate’ to the end of a word instantly signifies a scandal. (FBI.gov, para 3).⁵ The derivative suffix *-gate* has been used routinely to name a number of infamous scandals.⁶

Against this history, the selection of the name *OceanGate* by company founder and CEO, Stockton Rush, was probably considered to be ill-fated. However, when Rush went on to name one of his deep-sea submersibles *Titan* after the sunken luxury liner *RMS Titanic*, some felt that the visionary was more than tempting fate. The inevitable comparisons between the two sea vessels went from curious to creepy in late June of 2023, when news broke that tragedy had struck again. During a dive to explore the *Titanic*, buried some 12,500 feet under the sea, the *Titan* evidently suffered a catastrophic implosion which killed all five passengers (Associated Press 2023). The connection between the *Titan* and the *Titanic* becomes even more eerie when one considers that the wife of *OceanGate* founder is Wendy Rush, who happens to be the great-great-granddaughter of Isidor and Ida Straus (Treisman 2023). For those readers who do not recognize the names, Mr. and Mrs. Straus died together on the *Titanic*, electing to give their places on the lifeboats to others (Patil 2023). Their heroism and devotion to one another was immortalized in James Cameron’s movie, “*Titanic*”.⁷

After discussing the linguistic merits of all of the candidates, the onomastic judges cast their ballots. As in the previous categories, in the first round of voting the winners were immediately apparent. Capturing 9% of the votes was the third placed winner, *Barbenheimer*. In second place with 18% was *X*. And, the nomination which captured 73% of the votes was *ChatGPT*. To a certain extent, this choice may be somewhat surprising to lay readers. Without doubt, there were other nominations in this category that had more compelling background stories (e.g., *Barbie*, *Discord*, *Ozempic*, and *Titan*) but the linguistic features of these names was by no means unusual. By the same token, while *Barbenheimer* and *X* certainly dominated the news, there is nothing particularly unusual about creating a new name through compounding, or destroying the market power of a brand name by selecting one with comparatively little cachet. What is novel is generating a new name by affixing a three-letter abbreviation [**Generative Pre-trained Transformer** → [GPT]] to a noun that was well on its way to becoming antiquated in US American English, “chat”. The high frequency of *ChatGPT* in general parlance is also remarkable when one considers the fact that few speakers know that the abbreviation stands for “generative pre-trained transformer”, let alone truly understand what that phrase actually means. Despite its unusual formation, within a relatively short period of time, *ChatGPT* has also become productive, giving rise to a number of other tech commercial names (e.g., *GPT-3*, *GPT-4*, *AppleGPT*, *GPTZero*, *GPT Reference*, etc.). Interestingly, in 2022, *ChatGPT* placed 4th for the miscellaneous NoY category (Nick 2023).

Literary/Artistic Names

In comparison to the other onomastic categories, the number of nominations for literary/artistic name of the year was rather low. Only the following four nominations were accepted as contenders: *Barbie*, *Barbenheimer*, *Renaissance* (the name of Beyoncé's 7th album, her concert film, and her 2023 concert tour which ranked in the top-ten grossing tours in music history [Frankenberg 2023])⁸, and *The Eras Tour* (the name of Taylor Swift's 2023–2024 concert tour which is the highest-ranking tour of all time [Frankenberg 2023])⁹. Once again, after carefully reviewing each of the nominations for their linguistic merits, the judges cast their votes. *The Eras Tour* and *Renaissance* both tied for 3rd place with each receiving 9% of the votes. In second and first place were *Barbie* and *Barbenheimer* with 36% and 45% of the votes, respectively. According to the election rules, given their close point margin, the two top contenders were pitted against one another in a second round of voting. *Barbenheimer* took first place again, however, by a much larger margin. While *Barbie* remained steady with 36% of the vote, the other 64% went to *Barbenheimer*.

E-Names

The following seven names were taken under consideration for E-Name of the Year: (1) *AI* (the abbreviation for the phrase “artificial intelligence”); (2) *ChatGPT*; (3) *OpenAI* (“open access artificial intelligence”); (4) *#freepalestine*; (5) *The War Room* (the name of the phallogocentric internet network which reached international notoriety after charges of rape, human trafficking, and organized crime were brought against many of its members and the founder, Andrew Tate); (6) *Lu Do Magalu* (the name of a popular virtual influencer); and (7) *X*, the new name for the company former known as *Twitter*. After intense discussion by this year's NoY judges, only three nominations received votes; and of these, one entry received 80%. That hands-down winner was *X*. The two entries which tied for second place were *ChatGPT* and *Lu Do Magalu*, with each earning 10% of the judges' votes, respectively. While much has already been said in this article about *X* and *ChatGPT*, a few more words are in order for *Lu Do Magalu*. As explained above, *Lu Do Magalu* is the personal name of “a virtual influencer”. This phrase does not refer to a real-life human being who works online as an influencer. Instead, it refers to an ever-expanding set of AI generated personalities or “virtual humans”. Just like their flesh-and-blood predecessors, these influencers have names, places of birth, hobbies, likes and dislikes, and followers. However, unlike non-virtual humans, these 3-D AI life-style advisors are simultaneously available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in any programmable language, for an unlimited number of clients and followers. They never get sick, never grow old, never cause an unwanted scandal, and can be molded to fit any political, social, financial agenda desired. In short, they have all of the advantages that non-virtual influencers have, with none of the drawbacks of working with humans. Not surprisingly perhaps, virtual humans have become increasingly attractive for consumers and corporations alike. In the following table, information about some of the most popular virtual influencers are provided (Nguyen 2023).¹⁰

Table 1: Names and Followings of Some of the World's Top Virtual Influencers

	Personal Name	Origin	Followers		
			Instagram	Tiktok	Facebook
1	<i>Lu Do Magalu</i>	Brazil	6.4M	7.2M	12M
2	<i>Lil Miquela</i>	USA	2.7M	2.5M	1.1M
3	<i>Thalasya Pov</i>	Indonesia	463K		
4	<i>Imma</i>	Japan	398K	478K	544K
5	<i>Kyra</i>	India	251K		1.95K
6	<i>Bermuda</i>	USA	242K	46.3K	1.4K
7	<i>Shudu</i>	England	241K		2.7K
8	<i>Blawko</i>	USA	130K		394K

Note: K= Thousand and M= Million

Although *Lu Do Magalu* did not manage to capture first place this year, if the numbers above are anything to go by, this name type will no doubt grow in cultural prominence and linguistic importance in the very near future.¹¹

Overall Winner

As per ANS tradition, after the winners of each category have been determined, a final discussion is held to determine the overall NoY winner. Each entry which captured first place in their respective categories is automatically considered for this final competition. Thus, the following category winners were included in this final deliberation: *Barbie*, *Barbenheimer*, *ChatGPT*, *Gaza*, and *X*. In addition, nominations from the floor are accepted. These nominations may include names which did not place first in the other categories. In accordance with this rule, the previous nomination for personal name of the year, *Taylor Swift*, was accepted as a nomination from the floor. In addition, several entirely new nominations were also admitted as contenders for NoY. Taken as a group, these names all reflected seismic events that took place in 2023. For example, the date October 7th was submitted as a candidate. As the nominator explained, like other historic events such as *January 6th* and *9/11*, *October 7th* was no longer simply a date on the calendar. Since the moment when Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya or “*Hamas*” breached the Gaza-Israeli border, slaughtered 1,200 Israelis, and took some 230 Israelis hostage, a cycle of death and destruction was set in motion that has claimed the lives of more nearly 30,000 people. Thus, like other historic events such as *January 6th* and *9/11*, *October 7th* was no longer simply a date on the calendar but the name for so much more.

The other nominations from the floor also reflected historic developments that recently took place. For example, *Roe v. Wade*, the name of the 1973 US Supreme Court Ruling (410 U.S. 113) which made abortion legal which was then subsequently overturned in June of 2022 in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (No. 19-1392). The importance of that and other landmark rulings sparked the additional nominations *Dobbs* and *SCOTUS*, the acronym for “Supreme Court of the United States”.

This year, like many years in the past, more than one round of voting was required to determine the overall NoY winner. However, this year, unlike many years past, a subsequent round of discussion was unable to break the impasse. In Table 2 below, the results of the election are presented.

Table 2: The Results of the Two rounds of Voting for Overall Name of the Year

	Nomination	Round 1		Round 2	
		Percentage	Ranking	Percentage	Ranking
1	<i>Barbie</i>	30	1	50	1
2	<i>Barbenheimer</i>	10	4		
3	<i>ChatGPT</i>	10	4		
4	<i>Dobbs</i>	0	5		
5	<i>Gaza</i>	30	2	50	1
6	<i>Roe v. Wade</i>	20	3		
7	<i>SCOTUS</i>	10	4		
8	<i>Taylor Swift</i>	0	5		
9	<i>October 7th</i>	0	5		
10	<i>X</i>	0	5		

As can be seen above, three candidates received 80% of the vote (*Barbie*, *Gaza*, and *Roe v. Wade*). However, in accordance with the rules, as *Roe v. Wade* was more than 5 percentage points behind the top two contenders, a run off was held between *Barbie* and *Gaza*. In this second round, a perfectly even split emerged between the two names. After intense discussion, it was unanimously decided that the most appropriate resolution would be to declare both *Gaza* and *Barbie* the overall winners. As the judges concluded, the emotional polarization these two names perfectly and powerfully encapsulated the year 2023.

Endnotes

¹ According to *Washington Post* estimates, the Eras Tour has been responsible for increasing the US economy by an astounding 5.7 billion US dollars as each concert show rakes in ca. 93 million US dollars (Kaplan 2023).

² Interestingly, despite the phenomenal popularity of Taylor Swift, as yet, the US has not witnessed a rise in the number of children who are being given this name.

³ In the top-ten list of google searches performed in the US for 2023, the two films which ranked number one and number two were “*Barbie*” and “*Oppenheimer*”. Google reported the same ranking for movie searches made worldwide.

⁴ Inspired by the hype surrounding the two films, B-movie director Charles Band has announced plans to release a twisted comedy called “*Barbenheimer*”. According to an interview in the “*Hollywood Reporter*”,

Band's film will be a "bizarre coupling" which will bring together "Barbie's vibe" with the "darkness of Oppenheimer" (Ritman 2023, para 3.)

⁵ For an interesting discussion on the genesis and development of "-gate", see BBC 2020.

⁶ For example, in 2020, as the word was in the midst of the COVID pandemic, there was *Bleachgate*. The name refers to the now infamous incident in which former US President Trump suggested on national television that drinking bleach could cure COVID-19. An even more recent "-gate" scandal occurred during the 94th Academy Awards ceremony when actor Will Smith slapped comedian Chris Rock for reportedly insulting Smith's wife, the actress Jada Pinkett Smith. The scandal was later referred to as *Slapgate*.

⁷ For a moving account of the couple's sacrifice, see (Treisman 2023).

⁸ According to Billboard Magazine (Frankenberg 2023), the top ten grossing completed concerts are the following: (1) Coldplay's "A Head Full of Dreams" tour (2016–2017) which grossed 524 million US dollars; (2) The Rolling Stones's "No Filter Tour" (2017–2019, 2021) which earned 547 million; (3) The Rolling Stones's "A Bigger Bang" (2005–2007): 558 million.; (4) Beyoncé's "Renaissance World Tour" (2023): 580 million; (5) Guns N' Roses's "Not in This Lifetime. (2016–2019): 584 million; (6.) Harry Styles's "Love on Tour" (2021–2023): 617 million; (7) Coldplay's "Music of the Spheres World Tour" (2022–2023): 617 million; (8) U2's "360 Degrees" (2009–2011): 736 million; (9) Ed Sheeran's "The Divide", (2017–2019); 776 million; and (10) Elton John's "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" (2018–2020; 2022–2023): 939 million. As of the writing of this article, Taylor Swift's legendary "Eras Tour" has beaten Elton John's touring record. It has already grossed over 1 billion US dollars, and still has more than a year to go until it finishes.

⁹ Along with these candidates, the personal name *Jon Fosse* was also nominated. However, upon review, it was determined that the name of the Norwegian Nobel Prize winner for literature did not qualify as a artistic/literary name was consequently disqualified. Another nomination which was disqualified was *Brandon*, a personal name turned dysphemism when critics of President Joseph Biden chanted "Fuck Joe Biden!" during a televised interview with racecar driver Brandon Brown. With all of the background noise, the sports journalist misunderstood the chants as "Let's Go, Brandon!", giving birth to favorite epithet amongst MAGA Republicans. The term was then taken back by pro-Biden forces and used in "Dark Brandon" memes. For more, see (Tilman 2022; Long 2021).

¹⁰ Interested readers can view image of some of these non-human animated influencers via the following link: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/virtual-influencers/>

¹¹ The names of other animated influencers include *Guggimon* who/which has 1.5 million followers; *Knox Frost*, 1 million; and *Noonoori*, 404,000. Although these virtual humans are especially popular in Asia, their appeal is worldwide and growing. For more see (Molenaar 2023).

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