

**An account of the morpho-phonology of English personal initialed nicknames:
orthography enters the constraint hierarchy**

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1.0 Introduction¹

Restaurant patrons often wonder whether the staff gossip about them behind their backs. Imagine the increase in paranoia if they were to learn that, on top of the establishment-particular lingo for the food and equipment, there are secret languages employed by the staff for just such a purpose. English *back-slang* is one such code “sometimes employed by barrow-boys and hawkers, and indigenous to certain trades such as the greengrocer’s and the butcher’s, where it is spoken to ensure that the customer shall not understand what is being said (‘Evig reh emos delo garcs dene’ – Give her some old scrag end)” (Opie and Opie 1959:320). The code, which is to say each word in reverse, is pretty simple, complicated only by instances of non-phonotactically symmetric sequences in the words, where an epenthetic vowel smoothes things over. What is really interesting about sentences like the above example and “‘*Loy nac ees reh sreekin ginwosh*’ (You can see her knickers showing)” (Opie and Opie 1959:320) are the instances where the *spelling* of the disguised word plays a part in its own cover-up. The *Es* of *Evig* and *emos*, the *U* of *Loy* indicate more change than a mere reversal of phonetically realized segments. “Secret” and “play languages” such as English Back-slang and Pig Latin, French Verlan, Kuna *sorsik summakke* or *arepecummakke* (“talking backwards”) and Latin American Spanish Maracaibo (Sherzer 1982) are employed by adults and children the world over. Phonology taking orthography into account is not so common, however, as phonology generally is a self-contained area of linguistic phenomena.

Compared to language, writing is a relatively recent human innovation, arising at various times a mere few thousand years ago in Sumeria, China, and Meso-America (Diamond 1997). Of the estimated 6,809 languages spoken in the world today (Grimes 2002), only a minority have been committed to writing (Crystal 1997). Thus, the relative paucity of phonology-orthography interactions is not particularly surprising, and those phonological/orthographic interfaces that we do find are all the more interesting.

Pedagogy in literate cultures involves naming the letters used to represent the sounds of a language. Table 1 gives these data for American English:

¹ I would like to express my deep thanks to my two faculty readers, Kari Swingle and K. David Harrison, without whose patient tutelage, kind encouragement, tactful redirection, and valuable reference suggestions this thesis would never have been finished. Both have been extremely generous with their time and expertise, and many of the ideas presented in this thesis were only the vaguest notions before Kari and David helped lend them definition. Toni Borowsky made this thesis possible through her stellar instruction of an imperfect student in Phonetics/Phonology and Optimality Theory. The people who contributed most directly to this thesis were the many friends, family, hallmates, and acquaintances who gave me data on my initial survey or who participated in my later experiment. Thank you all.

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Table 1
Pronunciation of English letters

A	[eɪ]	N	[en]
B	[bi:]	O	[ou:]
C	[si:]	P	[pi:]
D	[di:]	Q	[kʰu:]
E	[i:]	R	[ar]
F	[ef]	S	[es]
G	[dʒi:]	T	[ti:]
H	[eɪ̯]	U	[ju:]
I	[aɪ]	V	[vi:]
J	[dʒeɪ]	(W)	[ˈdʌ(σσ)] ² /[ˈdʌb(σσ)]
K	[keɪ]	X	[eks]
L	[el]	Y	[wɑɪ:]
M	[em]	Z	[zi:]

This thesis will investigate the patterns of initialed-nicknaming in English. I shall claim that this process is another example of phonology depending on orthography. Nicknames have a very wide range of forms and derivations. Even dismissing those nicknames which are not formed from the subject's original name, we observe great diversity: Jonathans throughout the English-speaking world commonly go by *Jack*, *John*, *Johnny*, *Jacko*, *Jackie*, *John-John*, *J*, or *JJ*. Initialed nicknames like *J* or *JJ* and their derivation and distribution will be the focus of this thesis, followed by a brief outlining of work to be done on these forms' treatment in Optimality Theory.

Consider the following nicknames composed of initials:

(1) Darren	[ˈde.rən]	D	[di:]
Jonathan	[ˈdʒɑ.nə.ˈθn]	J	[dʒeɪ]
Daniel Joshua	[ˈdæ.n.jɪ ˈdʒɑ.ʃu.wə]	DJ	[ˈdi:dʒeɪ]
Michael Jordan	[ˈmaɪ.kəl ˈdʒɔɪ.dən]	MJ	[ˈem.dʒeɪ]
Austin Parker	[ˈɔs.tɪn ˈpɑɪ.kə]	AP	[ˈeɪˈpi:]

The process seems simple: take the full name and extract the first letters of as many names as you wish to include in the nickname. But consider these additional examples:

² *W* is somewhat problematic, as its polysyllabicity probably affects its behavior uniquely among the letters of the alphabet in situations like initialed nicknaming. However, it cannot simply be discarded, so the salient (initial) syllable realizations are rendered in IPA alongside the mono-syllabic initials.

(2) Amanda	[ə.'mæn.də]	*A	[eɪ]
Susannah	[su.'zæ:ne]	*S	[es]
Jennifer Lopez	[ˈdʒɛ:ne.ɹɪˈlou.pez]	*J.L.	[ˌdʒɛɪ.'el]
but			
Jennifer Lopez	[ˈdʒɛ:ne.ɹɪˈlou.pez]	J. Lo	[ˈdʒɛɪ.ɹɪˈlou]

It appears that not all initials can become initialed nicknames. This thesis will analyze speakers' preferences regarding the content of initialed nicknames: what syllable shapes and segments are favorable? Which are unfavorable? Do these patterns show the emergence of any unmarked linguistic structures? This thesis will also attempt to frame the questions about Optimality Theory posed by these data.

2.0 Previous related work

Previous phonological work on nicknames has focused on truncation, clipping, and other methods of shortening. These are relevant to the work at hand because they show how nicknames are constrained by other phonological structures in the language, although this analysis has not been hitherto extended to initialed nicknames. A brief summary of selected works of this type follows.

2.1 Kenstowicz 1994 – deriving English name clipping/suffixation combinations

Kenstowicz gives the following names and their CVCi-form nicknames for analysis (p. 9):

(3a)	Abigail	Abbie	
	Jennifer	Jennie	
	Madeline	Maddie	
	Penelope	Pennie	
	Rebecca	Beckie	
	Margaret	Margie	
	Amanda	Mandie	
(3b)	Patricia	Pattie	*Pattie
	Jacqueline	Jackie	*Jacquie

The data in (3a) show a simple pattern for English nickname formation: select a prominent nucleus (initial or stressed), extract its full syllable plus the following onset, then add the diminutive suffix [-i]:

Penelope [pe.'ne.lə.ɹɪ] → Pen → +-i → Pennie [ˈpe.ni]

The data in (3b) complicate the picture slightly, as the onsets of syllables following the prominent one do not show up in the output (e.g., the *r* in *Patricia*). Kenstowicz explains that when the following onset is selected for inclusion in the nickname, as many consonants as are allowed by sonority constraints on syllable shape and can fit into the

monosyllable being produced before suffixation will be so selected. After suffixation, some of the Cs in the truncation's coda may re-syllabify into the second syllable as onsets. **Patrie* and **Jacquin* do not result because *[patɹ] and *[dʒæk^v] are not possible monosyllables in English due to phonotactic constraints on coda content. The process of clipping before suffixation ensures the presence of an onset in the final syllable of the nickname.

2.2 Bethin 2003, to appear – Czech nicknaming

Bethin shows that unmarked values in Czech for syllable structure, metrical structure, and intra-foot quantity distribution not evident elsewhere in the language emerge in hypocoristics. Codas contribute to syllable weight in hypocoristics only. While quantity is freely distributed in the rest of Czech, quantity adjustment in hypocoristics maximizes the contrast between the two syllables of nicknames' disyllabic metrical feet, which are formed by a clipping/suffixation combination process similar to that in English described by Kenstowicz.

2.3 Bosch & de Klerk 1997 – Sound patterns in English nicknaming

Bosch and de Klerk (hereafter *B&K*) argue that segment, stress, and syllable structure preferences in English nicknames are influenced by nickname subject's gender and the intent of the nickname user. *B&K* attribute these correspondences to sound symbolism. Their study found a "markedly strong preference for bisyllabic [nick]names carrying stress on the first syllable," the same pattern they found for English first names, and which contrasts with the polysyllabic tendency of phon aesthet ic words observed by Crystal (1995) (*B&K* 1997:296-7). [b, p, k, m, n, t, s, dʒ], in descending order of frequency, accounted for a combined 71.3% of the consonants in the nicknames collected by *B&K*'s survey. Nasals, voiceless stops, and liquids occurred with higher frequency in female nicknames, voiced stops showing up more in male nicknames.

2.4 Summary of survey of previous related work

The three sample works treated above show the effects of markedness in nickname formation. Kenstowicz' and Bethin's studies show unmarked syllable structures emerging. Bosch and de Klerk's shows that segments and foot structures marked for euphony can also emerge.

3.0 Initial empirical survey of initialed nicknames

I collected from 27 people a wide variety of nicknames and the full names from which they were derived (where possible). I then sifted the 68 initialed nicknames and 2 non-initialed but initials-inspired nicknames (see Appendix I, Miscellaneous), containing 106 initials, out of the pile of mostly semantic-content nicknames.

3.1 Initial survey results

The weak tendencies revealed in the morpho-phonology of the initialed nicknames reported are shown here through selected data (see Appendix I for full list):

3.1.1 Simple cases

Initialed nicknames are formed by a kind of abbreviation, reducing a personal name to the name of the first letter in the spelling of the full name:

(4) Damien	[ˈdeɪ.mi.jən]	D	[di:]	*[deɪ]
Zoe	[ˈzou.wi]	Z	[zi:]	*[zou]

The pronunciation of the letters in the context of the whole name is irrelevant, as it is the orthographic representation which is the source for the initialed nickname:

(5) Geeti	[ˈgiː.ti]	G	[dʒi:]
Quiana	[kiː.ja.nə]	Q	[kʰu:]

In some instances it is difficult to tell whether certain nicknames are initialed ones or simple abbreviations, as these are homophones:

(6) Army	[ˈeɪ.mi]³	A	[eɪ]
Jason	[ˈdʒeɪ.sən]	J/Jay	[dʒeɪ]
Irene	[aɪ.ˈriːn]	*I	[aɪ]

Although English seems generally to favor clipping (e.g. *Mike* for *Michael*, *Dave* for *David*) when shortening names over the truncation process illustrated above (if it is not, in fact, initialed nicknaming in these instances), the shortening process is unambiguously attested in *Susan* [ˈsu.zən] → *Sue* [suː]. Written examples are not much help, either, as *Jay*, for example, could be interpreted as an orthographic representation of the first syllable of *Jason* or of the letter *J*. It is tempting to draw a parallel between *Jay* and *Kay* [keɪ] for *Katherine* [ˈkæθ.ɪn], where the spelling of the nickname is obviously a spelling of the name of the letter *K*, but *Jay* and *Kay* (as well as independent names) are such firmly established nicknames for *Jason* and *Katherine* that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to prove that they were not simply culturally-agreed-upon nicknames, such as *Jack* for *John*. I shall examine how the initialed-nicknaming system might work if the cases in (6) above were indeed initialed nicknames without claiming that that is their nature.

³ Given the marginal nature of the glottal stop as a phoneme in English, and the fact that its presence in these forms is peripherally perceptible to speakers at best, and the fact that it is not underlying in these forms, its rendering in these broad-IPA representations is not deemed necessary.

Initialed nicknames may contain two initials, which may be extracted from the first and middle names (7a), the first and last names (7b), from two sounds prominent within the same name (7c), or from only one name, whose initial is then reduplicated (7d):

- (7a) Caroline Justine [ˈke.jə.ˈlɑːn] CJ [ˈsiː.dʒeɪ]
 Donna Jo [ˈdɑ.nə.ˈdʒoʊ] DJ [ˈdiː.dʒeɪ]
- (7b) Martin Joseph [ˈmɑr.ɪŋ ˈdʒoʊ.səf] MJ [ˈem.ˈdʒeɪ]
 Jason Dickson [ˈdʒeɪ.sŋ ˈdɪk.sŋ] JD [dʒeɪ.ˈdiː]
- (7c) Karanjit [ˈkɑ.rən.ˈdʒɪt] KJ [ˈkeɪ.dʒeɪ]
 Katie [ˈkeɪ.ti] KT [keɪ.ˈtiː]
- (7d) Deirdre [ˈdiː.dreɪ] Deedee/DD [ˈdiː.di]

Nicknames may consist of one initial of one component of a name, and the full rendering of another component of the name (8a) or an unrelated second part (8b):

- (8a) Patricia Funk [pə.ˈtʃɪr.jə ˈfʌŋk] P.Funk [ˈpi.fʌŋk]
 Delma Curtis Allen [ˈdeɪ.lmə ˈkɜːrəs ˈæ.lɪn] DC Allen [ˈdiː.sɪː ˈæ.lɪn]
 Polly Jean Harvey [ˈpɑ.li dʒɪn ˈhɑː.vi] PJ Harvey [ˈpi.dʒeɪ ˈhɑː.vi]
- (8b) Garrett [ˈge.rət] G-Man [ˈdʒɪː.mæn]
 Geeti [ˈgiː.ti] G-Love [ˈdʒɪː.lʌv]

3.1.2 Gaps

A mono-initialed nickname is less likely to be formed from a name whose initial has a V or VC realization:

- (9a) Heather [ˈhe.ðɪ] ?H [etʃ]
 Amanda [ə.ˈmæn.də] *A [eɪ]
 Susannah [su.ˈzæ.nə] *S [es]⁴
 Fred [ˈfred] *F [ef]
 Nancy [ˈnænt.si] *N [en]

Not all initials occur in doubles (see (7d)): only *JJ*, *DD*, *KK*, and *PP* were returned.

⁴ There was one instance of a *Susan* being known by one person as *S*, but this was the result of a unique set of circumstances: the speaker with command of the *S* form, named *Cay* [keɪ], was jokingly referred to by the *Susan* in question as “The Letter,” referencing the homophony of *Cay*’s name with the name of the letter *K*. Thus, *S* for *Susan* became permissible as a parallel to this overtly facetious nickname.

V- and VC-realized initials, normally dispreferred, are permitted to occur in conjunction with following CV-realized initial:

- (9b) Martin Joseph [ˈmɑːr.tɪn ˈdʒɔː.səf] MJ [ˈem.ɹ̩dʒeɪ]
 Austin Parker [ˈɔː.tɪn ˈpɑː.kɪ] AP [ˈeɪˈpiː]

But:

- (9c) Kari Swingle [ˈke.ri ˈswɪŋ.gəl] *KS [ˈkeɪˈles]

The same segment may be permissible as a clipping, but not as an initialed nickname:

- (10) Emily [ˈe.məˌli] Em [em]
 Mark [mɑːk] *M [m]

These data indicate that the preferences for certain syllable shapes constrain initialed nicknames specifically. It is not the case that these restrictions on syllable shape apply everywhere in the language, or even throughout the domain of nicknames. It is only in initialed nicknames that these unmarked structures emerge.

3.1.3 Individual preferences

Some forms dispreferred by most speakers are still acceptable to some others:

- (11) Heather [ˈhe.ðɪ] ?H [et̩]
 Eric [ˈe.rɪk] ?E [ɪː]
 Angela Rachel [ˈæŋ.dʒəˌle ˈreɪ.tʃ] ?AR [eɪˈjɑː]
 Mary Hamblin [ˈme.ri ˈhæm.blɪn] MH [eːˈmeɪt̩]
 <unknown> SI [eːˈsaɪ]

Resyllabification of a first-initial coda as a (previously absent) second-initial onset makes *MH* and *SI* available to some speakers; however, most speakers do not favor this repair strategy. On more than one occasion during the writing of this thesis, people learning about it volunteered *MH* specifically as an example of a nickname that they could not make, and were astounded to learn that I knew an *MH*.

The case of *SI* was particularly striking. This form was elicited from four students who all had a class with a person known to them only as *SI*. This individual reportedly would not reveal what the initials stood for. Most notably, the four informants reported that when *SI* had introduced himself to the class at the beginning of the semester, no one in the class would believe him that that really was his name. Apparently, some students even said things like “That’s not a name!” Also, none of the four informants felt comfortable addressing him by his name, *SI*. I hypothesize that the lack of underlying onsets, forcing a marked re-syllabification, is responsible for these speakers’ dispreference for this name, as well as for *MH*.

3.2 Complex cases - initial-clipping combinations

Initials may be combined with abbreviations or clippings to form nicknames of a hybrid type:

(12a) Jennifer Lopez	[ˈdʒɛ.nə.ˈfɪ ˈloʊ.pɛz]	J. Lo	[ˈdʒɛɹ.ˈloʊ]
Alex Rodriguez	[ˈæ.ləks rə.ˈdri.ɡɛz]	A. Rod	[ˈeɪ.ˈrɑd]
Aaron Rabinowitz	[ˈe.rɪn rə.ˈbɪ.nə.ˈrɪ.wɪts]	A. Rab	[ˈeɪ.ræb]
Laurie Morrison	[ˈlo.ri ˈmo.ri.ˈsɪn]	L. Mo	[ˈɛl.mou]
Craig Wexler	[kɹæg ˈwek.sɪɹ]	C-Wex	[ˈsi.wɛks]
Diana Postemsky	[daɪ.ˈjæ.nə pɒs.ˈtɛm.ski]	D. Po	[ˈdi.ˈpou]

With the exceptions of *C-Wex* for *Craig Wexler* and *D.Po* for *Diana Postemsky*, these hybrids seem to emerge as repair strategies in instances of unsatisfactory initialed nicknames:

(12b) Jennifer Lopez	[ˈdʒɛ.nə.ˈfɪ ˈloʊ.pɛz]	*JL	[ˈdʒɛɹ.ˈɛl]
Alex Rodriguez	[ˈæ.ləks rə.ˈdri.ɡɛz]	*AR	[ˈeɪ.ˈɑɹ]
Aaron Rabinowitz	[ˈe.rɪn rə.ˈbɪ.nə.ˈrɪ.wɪts]	*AR	[ˈeɪ.ˈɑɹ]
Laurie Morrison	[ˈlo.ri ˈmo.ri.ˈsɪn]	*LM	[ɛl.ˈɛm]

Unfortunately, initialed nicknames of this type are rather rare, and I have been able to find no more examples, though I am sure they must be out there. Six types is hardly a large enough sample from which to draw any conclusions.

3.3 Summary of initial survey results

Preferences in syllable shape, voicing, and segments emerged from these data.

3.3.1 Syllable shape preferences

CV-realized initials are preferred when forming initialed nicknames. A well-formed (CV) second syllable can stabilize an initialed nickname otherwise in trouble from an ill-formed (V or VC) first syllable.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the names of the letters of the alphabet with respect to syllable shape. CV-realized initials are shown to comprise slightly more than half of the set, while Appendix 1 shows that they are present in disproportionate numbers in observed initialed nicknames (87 of 106 initials, or 82%, were CV).

Table 2
Pronunciation of English initials

(a)	V	A	[erɪ]	(c)	CV	B	[bi:]
	E	[i:]			C	[si:]	
	I	[aɪ]			D	[di:]	
	O	[oʊ]			G	[dʒi:]	
					J	[dʒerɪ]	
					K	[kerɪ]	
(b)	VC	F	[eɪ]		P	[pi:]	
	H	[eɪ]	[eɪ]		Q	[kwi:]	
	L	[eɪ]			T	[ti:]	
	M	[em]			U	[ju:]	
	N	[en]			V	[vi:]	
	R	[aɪ]			Y	[wɑɪ]	
	S	[es]			Z	[zi:]	
	X	[eks]			(W)	[ˈdʌ(σσ)]/[ˈdʌb(σ)]	

3.3.2 Voicing and segment preferences

The data (see Appendix I for full list) show a preference for voiced obstruents, especially [dʒ], which accounts for 27% of the initials reported. A large number of English names begin with J, and that could be the explanation for this preponderance. However, J is not the only well-represented letters among initials – S, for instance – without displaying a corresponding frequency in initialed nicknames. Constraints on syllable structure prohibiting the VC realization of S in an initialed nickname offer another explanation.

4.0 Experiment

In order to assess the validity of the tendencies observed during the empirical survey of initialed nicknames (see 3.3), I undertook the following experiment. Note, however, that this experiment has a small sample size and does not purport to be statistically significant.

4.1 Informants

Seven native speakers of American English participated in this experiment. All were Bryn Mawr College undergraduate dorm residents, women aged 18-20. Most had done some study of a foreign language, but none were bilingual. This restriction on bilingualism was imposed to limit interference from syllable shape preferences or requirements in other languages. Subjects were aware that the experiment was a

linguistic one relating to nicknames, but the emphasis on initialed nicknames was not revealed until after completion of Part I of the experiment.

4.2 Process

It seems likely that use of initials as nicknames may be less restricted in writing than in speech, since the author and reader of written initialed nicknames can be associating either the name of the letter or the full name for which the letter is an abbreviation with the letter written. Therefore, I conducted experiment entirely orally, so as to avoid any interference that reading may introduce into initialed nickname perception and creation behaviors. See Appendix II for full brief to informants.

4.2.1 Part I: Nicknames rating

Six first names and possible nicknames for each and eight full names (seven pairs of first and last names, one full name consisting of first, middle, and last names) and potential nicknames for each were read to each informant. The potential nicknames had a random order, lest the participants perceive some pattern in the sequences that could reveal the focus on initialed nicknames. Informants were asked to give a rating of 1, 2, or 3 (with 1 being “good” and 3 being “bad”) to each potential nickname as it was read out. Informants were instructed to base their ratings on how likely they would be to use each nickname for the given name. Table 3 shows the names and possible nicknames presented to informants for rating.

Table 3

Names and possible nicknames

Name/ Nickname	Pronunciation	Name/ Nickname	Pronunciation
Richard	[ˈrɪːfɹɪd]	Marge	[mɑːdʒɪ]
Rich	[rɪtʃ]	Margie	[ˈmɑːdʒi]
Dick	[dɪk]	Maggie	[ˈmæːgi]
Rickie	[ˈrɪki]	M.	[ɛm]
Rickard	[ˈrɪkɹɪd]	Mags	[mægz]
Richie	[ˈrɪtʃi]	Maggie-o	[ˈmægi.jov]
R.	[ɑː]	Meg	[meg]
Rick	[rɪk]	Margo	[ˈmɑːgov]
Ricardo	[rɪˈkɑːdov]	John	[dʒɑːn]
Rickster	[ˈrɪk.stɹɪ]	Jack	[dʒæk]
Dickie	[ˈdɪki]	Jackie	[ˈdʒæki]
Margaret	[ˈmɑːgrɪt]	Johnny	[ˈdʒɑːni]
		John-o	[ˈdʒɑːnov]

J.	[dʒeɪ]	E. S.	[iːˈes]
Peter	[ˈpiːtɪ]	E. Smith	[ˈiː smɪθ]
Pete	[piːt]	Rickie	[ˈrɪ.ki]
Petey	[ˈpiː.ci]	Michael Turner	[ˈmɑːkɪ ˈtɹ.nɹ]
P.	[piː]	Mike	[mɑːk]
Pete-ster	[ˈpiː.stɹ]	Mike T.	[mɑːk ˈtiː]
Emily	[ˈe.mə.ɪli]	M.T.	[em.ˈtiː]
Em	[em]	Mickey	[ˈmɑːki]
Emmie	[ˈe.mi]	Mick	[mɪk]
Emmo	[ˈe.mou]	Mickey T.	[mɪki ˈtiː]
E.	[em]	Patricia Levinsohn	
Emilia	[e.ˈmi.li.jə]	[pə.ˈtʃɪr.jə ˈle.vɪn.sɪn]	
Emster	[ˈem.stɹ]	Pat	[pæt]
Emma	[ˈe.me]	Pattie L.	[pæ.ci ˈel]
Katherine	[ˈkæθ.ɹni]	P.L.	[ˌpiː ˈel]
K.	[keɪ]	Pattie	[ˈpæ.ri]
Kate	[ket]	P. Lev	[ˈpiːlev]
Kathy	[ˈkæ.θi]	Eva Prince	[ˈi.və pɹɪnts]
Kath	[kæθ]	E.P.	[iː ˈpiː]
Katie/Katy	[ˈkeɪ.ri]	Evie	[ˈiː.vi]
Katerina	[kæ.ɹə.ˈri.neɪ]	E. Prince	[iː.pɹɪnts]
Kat	[kæt]	Eva P.	[i.və ˈpiː]
Theodore Jones		Caroline Anderson	
[ˈθi.jə.ɹdʒɔːnz]		[ˈke.ɹə.ɹlɑːn ˈæn.dɹ.ɹn]	
Ted	[ted]	Carol	[ˈke.ɹl]
T.J.	[ˈtiː.dʒeɪ]	C.A.	[sɪr.ˈjeɪ]
Teddy J.	[te.ci ˈdʒeɪ]	Carolina	[ke.ɹə.ˈliːnə/ke.ɹə.ˈlɑːnə]
T. Jones	[ˈtiː dʒeɪ]	Carrie A.	[ke.ri ˈeɪ]
Theo	[ˈθi.jov]	Irving Abbott	[ˈɪ.vɪŋ ˈæ.bət]
Erica Smith	[ˈe.ɹɪ.kə smɪθ]	I.A.	[aɪ.ˈeɪ]

Irvin	[ɪv]	M.A.	[e.'meɪ]
Irvin	[ɪ.vɪn]	Mair	[meɪ]
Irvin A.	[ɪ.vɪn 'eɪ]	M.S.	[em.'es]
Mary Alice Sawyer		Mary S.	[,me:ɪ 'esi]
[ɪme:ɪ 'æ:ls 'sɔ:ɪ]			

4.2.2 Part II: Creation of initialed nicknames

Informants were told that the second part of the experiment would focus on initialed nicknames like the ones occurring throughout Part I. Each informant was asked to flip through the White Pages, or residential section, of the Philadelphia 2002 phone book (Verizon 2002) and select any five names and then make initialed nicknames from them. To establish that any of the possible forms of initialed nicknames were admissible, the following list of examples was read to each informant:

Table 4
Example initialed nicknames

Nickname	pronunciation	Source name	pronunciation
E	[i:]	Eric	[e.ɪk]
D	[di:]	Deirdre	[ˈdi:drə]
F	[ɛf]	Fred	[fred]
CJ	[ˈsi: dʒeɪ]	Caroline Justine ⁵	[ˈke:ɹə.'lɑ:n]
AP	[,eɪ.'pi:]	Austin Parker	[ˈɔs.tɪn 'pɑ:kɪ]
MJ	[ˈem. dʒeɪ]	Michael Jordan	[ˈmɑ:k] 'dʒɔ:ɹ.dʒ]
KS	[,keɪ.'es]	Kate Smith	[ket smθ]
JLo	[ˈdʒeɪ.'ləʊ]	Jennifer Lopez	[ˈdʒe:ne.'fɪ 'ləʊ.pez]
A.Rod	[,eɪ.'rɑ:d]	Alex Rodriguez	[ˈæ:lɛks rə.'dri:gez]

Note that the example list included both initialed nicknames of the hypothetically favored varieties, CV and CV.CV (*D* for *Deirdre*, *CJ* for *Caroline Justine*), as well as some more questionable ones of the VC and CV.VC varieties (*F* for *Fred*, *KS* for *Kate Smith*), so as not to bias the informants.

⁵ The two possibilities displayed here for di-initialed nicknames (first and middle initials, first and last initials), were pointed out at this time.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Part I - Nicknames rating

Table 5 shows the average ratings assigned to each of the 27 initialed nicknames by the participants in the experiment.

Table 5
Initialed nicknames, their syllable structure, and their average ratings

Name	Nickname	Rating	Syllable structure
Theodore Jones	TJ	1.4	CV.CV
Michael Turner	Milke T.	2	X.CV
John	J	2.3	CV
Mary Alice Sawyer	Mary S.	2.3	X.VC
Caroline Anderson	Carrie A.	2.3	X.V
Katherine	K	2.4	CV
Theodore Jones	T. Jones	2.4	CV.CX
Michael Turner	MT	2.4	VC.CV
Peter	P	2.6	CV
Emily	E	2.6	V
Theodore Jones	Teddy J.	2.6	X.CV
Patricia Levinsohn	P. Lev	2.6	CV.CX
Caroline Anderson	CA	2.6	CV.V
Mary Alice Sawyer	MA	2.6	V.CV
Margaret	M	2.7	VC
Eva Prince	EP	2.7	V.CV
Eva Prince	E. Prince	2.7	V.CX
Eva Prince	Eva P.	2.7	X.CV
Richard	R ⁶	2.9	VC
Michael Turner	Mickey T.	2.9	X.CV
Patricia Levinsohn	Pattie L.	2.9	X.VC
Patricia Levinsohn	PL	2.9	CV.VC
Irving Abbott	Irvin A.	2.9	X.V
Mary Alice Sawyer	MS	2.9	VC.VC
Erica Smith	ES	3	V.VC
Erica Smith	E. Smith	3	V.CX
Irving Abbott	IA	3	V.V

⁶ Several informants balked at this nickname when it came up in the list, asking, "like, the letter R?"

4.2.2 Part II - Creation of initialed nicknames

I collected 5 names and corresponding nicknames from each of seven informants. Informant 3 had great difficulty producing any sort of initialed nicknames, although she had no trouble assigning ratings to my initialed nickname productions in Part I of the experiment, and, in fact, although her ratings were mostly 3s, there were 1s and 2s in there as well, so it is not the case that she simply dislikes initialed nicknames. Her first four nicknames were simple truncations or just the last names of the people she selected in the phone book, and so I have discarded those responses. See Appendix 3 for the names selected and nicknames derived from them by the experiment participants.

5.0 Analysis of results

5.1 Part I - Nicknames rating

Of the 27 initialed nicknames tested in this part of the experiment, 23 had initials as the last or only syllable, while 13 had initials as the first of two or more syllables. Of these 13, 5 had onsets, while the other 8 were onsetless. Of the 8 onsetless initials, 6 were V in shape, while the other 2 had a coda and were VC. Table 6 shows the average ratings by syllable shape.

Table 6

Average nickname ratings by syllable shape of name-initial initial

Syllable shape	Rating
CV	2.4
V	2.8
VC	2.7

Of the 23 nickname-final initials, 12 had onsets, while the other 11 were onsetless. Of the 11 onsetless initials, 5 were V in shape, while the other 6 had a coda and were VC. Table 6 shows the average ratings by syllable shape.

Table 7

Average nickname ratings by syllable shape of name-final initial

Syllable shape	Rating
CV	2.5
V	2.7
VC	2.8

Although the sample size is small and the differences between the average values are also small, syllables with onsets are clearly preferred as nickname-initial and nickname-final initials. A graduated dispreference for aberrations from the unmarked syllable shape

CV in nickname-final initials is also demonstrated. These findings confirm the initial intuition based on the informally collected survey data in Section 3 that speakers of American English disprefer onseless initialed nicknames.

5.2 Part II - Creation of initialed nicknames

Unsolicited comments from the experiment participants and statistics worked up from the experiment results show the informants' syllable shape and segment preferences in initialed nicknames creation.

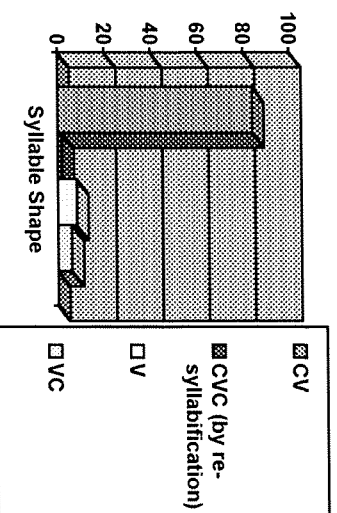
5.2.1 Some comments from the participants

Informant 1, while thumbing through the phonebook, mentioned that she knew which initials she was looking for, because “ones like CJ and JT are the best.” Informant 4 volunteered that she felt that “J sounds the best as a last name.”

5.2.2 Some statistics

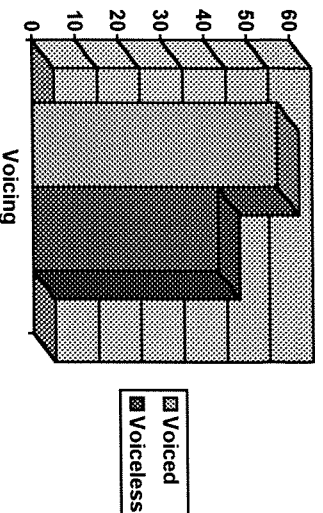
- A total of 31 names were selected by the seven informants. One of these is not included in the following analyses: *Chasmic* [tʃæz.mɪk] is very interesting in that it shows a perception of the Scots-Irish name prefix *Mc/Mac* as a single unit, which thereby makes it eligible for initialing status in some speakers' grammars. Despite these very interesting issues raised by the form, it is too much of an anomaly to be grouped with the other results. Therefore, I shall analyze only the remaining 30.
- Of the nicknames derived from them, none were of the single-initial type (e.g., D. for Damien).
- Nineteen nicknames were di-initialed ones (e.g., Informant 7's *DL* for *Connie De Leo*).
- Eleven nicknames consisted of a first or last name (the first name sometimes a nickname itself, of the clipping+suffix type described by Kenstowicz – See 2.1) and a single initial.
 - Of these eleven, three had the first initial preceding the last name, and seven had the first name preceding the last initial.
 - Nine initials were CV in syllable shape; two were VC.
 - The non-initialed halves were di-syllabic, resulting in a three-syllable nickname with the initial.
- The 30 nicknames contained a total of 49 initials.
 - 41/49 were CV.
 - 1/49 was CVC (by re-syllabification).
 - 4/49 were V.
 - 3/49 were VC.
 - Figure 1 displays these data graphically.

Figure 1
Frequency of syllable shapes of initials as percentages



- Of the 42 onsets, 24 were [+voice].
- Of the 42 onsets, 18 were [-voice].
- Figure 2 displays these data graphically.

Figure 2
Distribution of voicing quality in initialed nickname onsets as percentages



- Table 8 shows the frequency of selection by letter:

Table 8

Frequency of initials selection by letter

Syllable shape	Letter, pronunciation	Frequency: occurrences	Frequency: percentage
CV	J [dʒer:]	13	27%
	C [si:]	5	10%
	P [pi:]	5	10%
	B [bi:]	4	8%
	K [ker:]	4	8%
	T [ti:]	4	8%
	D [di:]	3	6%
	G [dʒi:]	2	4%

W	[dʌ(σσ)] / [ˈdʌb(σ)]	1	2%
Q	[kʰu:]	0	0%
U	[ju:]	0	0%
V	[vi:]	0	0%
Y	[war:]	0	0%
Z	[zi:]	0	0%
V			
A	[eɪ]	3	6%
E	[i:]	0	0%
I	[aɪ]	0	0%
O	[oʊ]	0	0%
VC			
H	[eɪf]	2	4%
M	[ɛm]	2	4%
L	[ɛl]	1	2%
F	[ɛf]	0	0%
N	[ɛn]	0	0%
R	[aɪ]	0	0%
S	[ɛs]	0	0%
X	[ɛks]	0	0%

- Syllable shape combinations:
 - 15/30 nicknames were CV.CV
 - 6/30 were X.CV
 - 3/30 were V.CV
 - 1/30 was V.CVC (by resyllabification)
 - 5/30 were CV.X
 - none lacked an onset in the nickname-final initial

These informants show a clear preference to form di-initialed initialed nicknames, with those initials having CV-realizations. Onsets are required in nickname-final initials. The displayed preference for voiced onsets loses impact in light of differentially voiced *J*, *C*, and *P* combining to account for 47% of the initials used.

5.3 Problems

Like any other experiment, this one had some flaws. Aside from getting more informants and therefore a larger sample (always nice), what could have been done differently?

5.3.1 Part I - Nicknames rating

More names and nicknames of every type might provide stronger evidence of tendencies observed.

5.3.2 Part II - Creation of initialed nicknames

I suspect that the lack of mono-initialed nicknames in these results is an artifact of the experiment's setup. People looking at full names consisting of first, last, and often middle names or initials may be less likely to think of choosing just one of those three for initialed nickname formation. Only one informant chose middle names and initials when forming initialed nicknames. The presence of the last names may have trumped the middle names in a manner not analogous to casual usage with one's familiars. Initialed nicknames are often formed by classmates, teammates, or co-workers who do not always know each other's last names, but do know anyone's middle name who goes by his first and middle names (e.g., *CJ* for *Caroline Justine*, *DJ* for *Donna Jo* or *Daniel Joshua*, *JJ* for *Jonathan Jeffrey*, *DC Allen* for *Delma Curtis Allen*, *PJ Harvey* for *Polly Jean Harvey*). Having informants select names from a list containing single (first, middle, or last) as well as full names would be the next thing to try. Unfortunately, such a list, containing also only authentic names, in actual proportions, is not as easily procured as a current phonebook.

5.3.3 Part 3 – Explicit initials rating

If I had thought of this in time, I would have included it in the experiment: a third section asking informants to rate each of the 26 letters explicitly as initialed nicknames.

6.0 Optimality Theory

We now turn to addressing the patterns displayed in these data in Optimality Theory (hereafter *OT*).

6.1 What is optimality theory?

The situation in modern phonology is not unlike that of naturalist biology in 1859⁷. Optimality theory is a recent (1991)⁸ re-examination of the theoretical framework for approaching phonology. Developed by Alan Prince and Paul Smolensky of Rutgers and Johns Hopkins universities, respectively, this new theory is more organic in its accounting for linguistic⁹ phenomena than the traditional rule-based approach. Rule-based phonology (hereafter *RBP*) can only describe sound changes as arbitrary processes occurring in language; it cannot explain the motivations behind these processes. *RBP* cannot address why one language may exhibit a kind of change, while others do not, even within a single language family; neither can it address why languages of very different genetic backgrounds should employ widely divergent repair strategies resulting in similar output structures, a problem known as homogeneity of target/heterogeneity of process (McCarthy 2002). *OT*, on the other hand, has the description of and motivations for phonological processes bound up together in one package. The mechanism *is* the explanation, the medium is the message.

⁷ Date of the formal publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection*.

⁸ Date of the course given by Prince and Smolensky at UC-Santa Cruz which first put forth the theory, which was largely circulated two years later (McCarthy 2002).

⁹ *OT* grew out of work on prosodic morphology and phonology, but it is now being applied to other branches of linguistics as well, especially syntax.

6.2 How does it work?

What are the components and processes of OT?

6.2.1 Markedness and faithfulness

Optimality Theory offers specific view on the nature of the relation between input and output forms (Archangeli 1997) dominated by a central dichotomy between markedness and faithfulness. Constraints make conflicting demands on the input-output relationship: markedness constraints disprefer output forms which contain marked segments or sequences and prefer output forms which eliminate any such problematic elements in the input, while faithfulness constraints disprefer output forms which differ from their corresponding inputs. OT also claims that these constraints are part of the Universal Grammar (hereafter *UG*), so why aren't all languages the same? The constraints are also ranked in a hierarchy of dominance which limits or obscures the influence of those constraints lower down in the hierarchy. Every language has a unique ranking: differential rankings of the same constraints allow different kinds of outputs to be found optimal in each language; thus, languages vary typologically based on their constraint rankings.

6.2.2 GEN, CON, and EVAL

The three basic components of the OT system are GEN, CON, and EVAL. GEN generates output candidates for a given input. CON is the set of violable constraints which act on the output candidates, assigning each a value for the number of violations it incurs to a given constraint. EVAL evaluates the candidates and selects the best one, based on each candidate's violations, and which constraints they correspond to. This last part is important because the constraints are ranked in importance. Consequently, if two candidates have equal numbers of violations, the one violating a higher-ranked constraint will lose.

6.2.3 The emergence of the unmarked

The setup of OT allows unmarked structures to emerge when, all other things being equal, some candidates are eliminated for markedness violations, while their unmarked correlates are not. CV emerges as the unmarked syllable shape in language after language, and this unmarked status of CV syllables is considered a language universal.

6.3 Inviolable constraints and CONTROL

Under the system described above, a null output theoretically will never win in any given tableau, because it will always incur more violations (Of the MAX¹⁰ type) than even very marked output candidates. Theoretically perpetual losers such as null output candidates are said to be *harmonically bound*, and will never emerge as the winner. But language

¹⁰ A category of faithfulness constraints, demanding that elements the input be MAXimized, or parsed, in the output.

does have cases of a gap in a paradigm, indicating that null output is preferable in these instances to whatever the otherwise optimal output would be. This situation is called *absolute ungrammaticality*. Prince and Smolensky proposed to solve the problem by positing “a special candidate called the *null parse*, which does not have any phonetic realization, as well as a special constraint *MPARSE* that the null parse alone violates” (Orgun and Sprouse 1999). But “[t]here are cases where violation of a constraint known to be violable in the language could have led to a grammatical output, but such violation is nonetheless avoided and no grammatical output is possible” (Orgun and Sprouse 1999). So, to solve this problem, Orgun and Sprouse propose a fourth major component to the OT system, *CONTROL*. *CONTROL* contains a set of inviolable constraints which assign their values to the winning candidate from *EVAL*. If the candidate violates any of the constraints in *CONTROL*, it is eliminated, and a null output is thus generated.

6.4 OT applied to these experimental results

To account for the patterns shown in English initialed nicknaming would take up a whole second senior thesis, and so I shall limit my efforts here to the two aspects that I think are most important: OT being forced to take orthography into account, and the unmarked preference for onset-ful syllables emerging. I posit an *ONSET* constraint specific to final syllables of names, where it demands onsets, which I shall call *ONSET_{wd}*. I further posit a constraint which I shall call *MAX I-O (PH-ORTHO)*, which demands that the input – the phonetic realization of the first sound in a name, be maximized in the output as the name of the letter used in orthographic representations of that sound in that name:

$$\text{Max } \{ [{}_{\text{wd}}X]_{\text{name}} - X_{\text{orthography}} \}$$

ONSET_{wd} dominates *MAX I-O (PH-ORTHO)*:

Table 9

ONSET_{wd} >> *MAX I-O (PH-ORTHO)*
(Winner is bolded; graded ratings reported in Section 4.2.1 used to assess ranking)

	<i>ONSET_{wd}</i>	<i>MAX I-O (PH-ORTHO)</i>
PL	*	
Pattie L.	*	*
P. Lev		*

7.0 Conclusions and implications for OT

Markedness constraints on syllable shape do not usually show up in English outputs, as the language has corresponding faithfulness constraints ranked fairly highly. Three sentences chosen at random from works by native speakers of American English exhibit many violations of *ONSET* and *NOCODA*:

“I just kind of conjured them up out of my subconscious and put them in order of ascending peculiarity” (Wilkin 2001:ix)
 “Ellrod, like all Florida convenience store clerks, had the Serengeti alertness of the tastiest gazelle in the herd (Dorsey 1999:5)

“Imagine a mathematical genius born to a language where you went one fried ant, two fried ants, three fried ants, four fried ants, lots of fried ants, lots and lots of fried ants, lots and lots and lots of –The prospect was too frightful to contemplate” (DeWitt 2000)

Violations of Onset: [types/tokens] (7/10), (5), (5/15)

Violations of NoCoda [tokens] (21), (25), (66).

It initialed nicknames, however, the unmarked preference for an onset and a lack of coda emerge in English.

Initialed nicknames constitute a special lexical class and must be treated as such in OT. Several people appended to their data in the initial survey that they felt far more restricted as to what initials could make up personal initialed nicknames, as opposed to acronyms for objects, concepts, or other inanimate nouns. Indeed, a moment’s brainstorming of such acronyms generates *DNA* (deoxyribonucleic acid), *ASAP* (as soon as possible), *SNL* (Saturday Night Live), *FBI/SBI* (Federal/State Bureau of Investigation), *NSA* (National Security Agency), *NFLC* (National Foreign Languages Center), *TBA* (to be announced), *NFL* (National Football League), *AOI* (America Online), and *CO₂* (Carbon Dioxide). Millions of speakers use all of these on a daily basis without a second thought, despite their composition of V- and VC- as well as CV-realized initials, even in their final syllables. Closely examining the differences between the creation and distribution of personal initialed nicknames versus acronyms would be a thesis unto itself, though.

Initialed nicknames are a modern development dependent on writing and literacy. Constraints dependent on orthography cannot be innate or universal, as (a) not all languages are even written and (b) language is not dependent on writing. Literate speakers are appropriating constraints on syllable structure for new purposes. Where does this appropriation fit into the GEN/CON/EVAL setup (at what stage in the process does the appropriation take place)? Initialed nickname formation is a learned process, not an accessing and ranking of extant constraints. A writing of new constraints (in CON and perhaps in CONTROL) by adult (or at least non-child) speakers is taking place.

Appendix I – Initial survey data

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of tokens of a given name-nickname type.

Name, pronunciation	Nickname, pronunciation
Mono-initialed nicknames – V, VC	
Amy	[eɪ.mi] A [eɪ]
Heather	[ˈhe.ðɪ] H [eɪtʃ] (2)
Susan	[ˈsu.zən] S [es]

Mono-initialed nicknames – CV, voiced onset

Quiana	[kiː.ˈjɑ.ne]	Q	[kʷiː]
Buffy	[ˈbʌ.fi]	B	[biː]
Dannien	[ˈdeɪ.mi.jən]	D	[diː]
Darren	[ˈde.ɹən]	D	[diː]
Deirdre	[ˈdiɹ.dre]	D	[diː]
Diana	[di.ˈjɑ.ne]	D	[diː]
Wayne D. ¹¹	[weɪn ˈdiː]	D	[diː]
Geeti	[ˈgiː.ti]	G	[dʒiː]
Greta	[ˈgre.re]	G	[dʒiː]
Jamie	[ˈdʒeɪ.mi]	J	[dʒeɪ]
Jason	[ˈdʒeɪ.sən]	J	[dʒeɪ] (2)
John	[dʒən]	J	[dʒeɪ]
Jonathan	[ˈdʒɑ.ne.θən]	J	[dʒeɪ]
Vanessa	[və.ˈhe.se]	V	[viː]
Zara	[ˈze.ɹə]	Z	[ziː]
Zoe	[ˈzou.wi]	Z	[ziː]
Darren	[ˈde.ɹən]	D-Wood	[diː wʊd]
Garrett	[ˈge.ɹət]	G-Man	[ˈdʒiː.mæn]
Geeti	[ˈgiː.ti]	G-Love	[ˈdʒiː.lʌv]

Mono-initialed nicknames – CV, voiceless onset

Korporal Kousin Karl	[ˈkɔɪ.pɪ] ˈkɑ.zən ˈkɑ.ɹɪ]	Triple K	[tʃɹi.p] ˈkeɪ]
Patricia Funk	[pə.tʃɹi.fən] ˈfʌŋk]	P.Funk	[ˈpi.fʌŋk]

¹¹ Speaker reported that the *D* was a last initial, but could not recall the full last name.

Di-initialed nicknames – CV.CV, both onsets voiced

Big John	[bɪg 'dʒʌn]	BJ	['bi: dʒeɪ]
Caroline Justine	['ke.jə.,jʌm]	CJ	['si: dʒeɪ]
Daniel Joshua	['dæ.n.jɪ 'dʒʌ.jʊ.,wə]	DJ	['di: dʒeɪ]
Donna Jo	[da.nə.'dʒʊv]	DJ	['dʒeɪ.dʒeɪ]
Joel	[dʒʊv]	JJ	['dʒeɪ.dʒeɪ]
Jonathan Jeffrey	[ˈdʒʌ.nə.θŋ 'dʒef.jɪ]	JJ	['dʒeɪ.dʒeɪ]
James	[dʒeɪmz]	JJ	['dʒeɪ.dʒeɪ]
Richard, Jr.	[ˈrɪ.tʃɪd 'dʒʌn.jɪ]	RJ	['aɪ dʒeɪ]
James Daniel	[dʒeɪmz 'dæ.n.jɪ]	JD	[dʒeɪ.'di:]
Jason Dickson	['dʒeɪ.sŋ 'dɪk.sŋ]	JD	[dʒeɪ.'di:]
John David	['dʒʌn 'deɪ.vɪd]	JD	[dʒeɪ.'di:]
Deirdre	['dɪr.dɪə]	Deedee	['di: di]

Di-initialed nicknames – CV.CV, heterogeneous onset voicing

Jim Tobin	[dʒɪm 'tɒu.bɪn]	JT	[dʒeɪ.'ti]
John Titus	[dʒʌn 'tʌɪ.tʌs]	JT	[dʒeɪ.'ti]
Brian Charles	['brʌr.jɪn 'tʃɑ.rlɪz]	BC	[bi.'si]
Katherine Danielle	['kæθ.jɪm dæ.n.'jeɪ]	KID	[keɪ.'di:]
Timothy William	['tɪ.mə.θi 'wɪl.jəm]	TW	[ti.'dʌ.bɪ.ju]
Billy Clyde ¹²	['bɪ.li 'klaɪd]	BC	[bi:.'si:]
Delma Curtis Allen	['dɛl.mə 'kɪ.təs 'æ.lɪn]	DC Allen	[di:.'si: 'æ.lɪn]
Polly Jean Harvey	['pɑ.li dʒɪn 'hɑ.vi]	PJ Harvey	['pi: dʒeɪ 'hɑ.vi]
Karanjit	['kɑ.rən 'dʒɪtɪ]	KJ	['keɪ.dʒeɪ]

Di-initialed nicknames – CV.CV, both onsets voiceless

Philip Kenyon	['fɪlɪp 'ken.jɪn]	PK	[pi.'keɪ]
Pong Pong ¹³	['pɒŋ.pɒŋ]	PP	['pi.pi]
Kousin Karl	['kɑ.zɪn 'kɑ.rl]	KK	['keɪkeɪ] ¹⁴
Katie	['keɪ.ti]	KT	[keɪ.'ti:]

¹² This is itself a nickname, the *Billy* for *William* and the *Clyde* for nothing.

¹³ This is itself a nickname for a given name *Bong* [bɒŋ].

¹⁴ Preceded *Triple K* in application to same person by same group.

Di-initialed nicknames – VC.CV, voiced onset

Martin Joseph	[ˈmɑː.tɪn ˈdʒou.səf]	MJ	[ˈem.ˌdʒeɪ]
Mary Jane	[ˈme.ji ˈdʒeɪn]	MJ	[ˈem.dʒeɪ]
Michael Jordan	[ˈmaɪkəl ˈdʒɔːr.dən]	MJ	[ˈem.dʒeɪ]

Di-initialed nicknames – VC.CV, voiced onset

Subhakanta Das	[ˌsu bʰɑ.ˈkɑn.ʃɑ dɑs]	SK	[ˈes.keɪ]
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Di-initialed nicknames – V.CV, voiced onset

Anton James	[ˈæn.tən dʒeɪmz]	AJ	[ˈer.dʒeɪ]
Emily Jane	[ˈe.me.ji dʒeɪn]	EJ	[ˈiː.dʒeɪ]

Di-initialed nicknames – V.CV, voiceless onset

Albert Charles	[ˈæɫ.bɪt ˈʃɑ.rlɪz]	AC	[ˈer.ˈsiː]
Austin Parker	[ˈɔs.tɪn ˈpɑː.kɪ]	AP	[ˈer.ˈpiː]

Di-initialed nicknames – V.CV(C) by virtue of re-syllabification

<unknown>		SI	[e.ˈsaɪ]
Mary Hamblin	[ˈme.ji ˈhæm.blɪn]	MH	[e.ˈmeɪtʃ]
Angela Rachel	[ˈæŋ.dʒe.ˌle ˈreɪ.tʃ]	AR	[ˈer.ˈjɑː]

Initial-clipping combinations – where a non-CV.CV initialed nickname would result

Jennifer Lopez	[ˈdʒe.nə.ˌfɪ ˈlou.pez]	J. Lo	[ˈdʒeɪ.ˌlou]
Alex Rodriguez	[ˈæ.ləks ˌrɑ.ˈdʒri.ɡez]	A. Rod	[ˈer.ˌrɑd]
Aaron Rabinowitz	[ˈe.ɹɑ ˌrɑ.ˈbi.nə.ˌrɪwɪz]	A. Rab	[ˈer.ˌræb]
Laurie Morrison	[ˈlo.ji ˈmo.ɹi.ˌsɹɪ]	L. Mo	[ˈel.mov]

Initial-clipping combinations – where a CV.CV initialed nickname would result

Craig Wexler	[kɹæg ˈwek.sɪɹ]	C-Wex	[ˈsiː.weks]
Diana Postemsky	[daɪ.ˈjæ.nə pas.ˈteɪn.ski]	D.Po	[ˈdiː.pov]

Miscellaneous¹⁵

¹⁵ These nicknames, while striking in that they are clearly inspired by unsatisfactory (with respect to syllable shape) potential initialed nicknames, are not themselves initialed nicknames, and are therefore not included in the analysis of the initial survey results in Section 3.3.

Marshall Mathers
Karl R. Smith

[ˈmɑː.ʃ] ˈmæ.ðɪz]
[ˈkɑːl ɑːr smɪθ]

Eminem
Kabar¹⁶

[ˈɛ.məˌnɛm]
[ˈkeɪ bɑː]

¹⁶ This nickname, synonymous with a USMC knife which was standard issue in the mid-twentieth century, was explicitly inspired by and chosen in lieu of the unfavorable *KR* [keɪˈɑːl] by the Corporal's fellow Marines.

Appendix II – Experiment elicitation

There are two parts to this experiment. For the first part, I'm going to read you a bunch of names – some first names, and some full names – and potential nicknames for each, and ask you to give each potential nickname a rating from one to three, with one being “good” and three being “bad.” When you're assigning these ratings, I want you to base your them on how likely you would be to say that nickname. Then, for the second part, we're going to do some stuff with the phone book.

At this point, the list given in Table 2 in section 4.2.1 was read out, with a pause after each potential nickname for the informant to assign her rating.

Okay, now for Part II. You may have noticed that there were a lot of initialed nicknames in what we just did, like *P* for *Peter*. That's because that's what my thesis is on. Now I want you to flip through the phone book and pick out five names and form initialed nicknames from them. You can pick any five names you want; there are absolutely no restrictions. Also, you can form any kind of initialed nickname you like: single initials like

E	[i:]	for	Eric	[e.rɪk]
D	[di:]	for	Deirdre	['dɪr.dɪrə]
F	[ef]	for	Fred	[frɛd]

or double initials, like

CJ	['si: dʒeɪ]	for	Caroline Justine	['ke.rə.'dʒaɪn]
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with a first and a middle name, or

AP	[eɪ.'pi:]	for	Austin Parker	['ɔs.tɪn 'pɑr.kɪ]
MJ	['mɑ.'dʒeɪ]	for	Michael Jordan	['mɑr.kɪ 'dʒɔr.dən]
KS	[keɪ.'es]	for	Kate Smith	[ket smɪθ]

with a first and a last name. Or you can do things like

J.LO	['dʒeɪ.'lou]	for	Jennifer Lopez	['dʒe.nə.'fɪ 'lou.pez]
A.Rod	['eɪ.'rɑd]	for	Alex Rodriguez	['æ.lɒks rə.'dri.gez].

Just do whatever sounds good to you.

Appendix III – Responses to part II of experiment

Informant 1

JJ Jeffrey Jones
 CJ Chris Jones
 PJ Paul Juray
 JT John Toner
 KT Katie Thompson

Informant 5

DJ David J. Horger
 BP Brian P. Hooks
 HH Hillsley Hood
 BJ Benjamin J. Hoover
 Lizzie P. Elizabeth P. Hope

Informant 2

Jaz Hasty

Informant 6

Chasmic Chas McNair
 M.Saw Michael Sawicky

Michael D. Michael De Vito

G. Sav Gaetano Sava
 AJ Anjani Jain

C. Horwood Craig Horwood
 Mary M. Mary Manuela

Informant 3

CJ Caridad Justino
 CW Clem Williams

B. Hatcher Booker Hatcher

Informant 7

Informant 4

AJ Andrea Jones
 TJ Timothy Johnson
 KP Khay Phi
 KG Kevin B. Gibson
 KC Kenyatta Cooper

DL Connie De Leo
 AJ Anna Jones
 Katie P. Katie Perrin
 Jackie T. Jacqueline Tot
 Tracy B. Tracy Banks

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