4 Names and Naming: Why We Need Fields and Frames

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INTRODUCTION

An important question that arises with respect to the organization of the lexicon is what the best theoretical framework is for showing (a) how lexical items are related to one another and (b) how concepts are lexicalized, that is, expressed in words. In particular, is there an empirical difference between the claims of semantic field theory and semantic frames? If there is a difference, is one approach superior, or does each have advantages in handling information that the other does not? This chapter addresses these issues by examining proper names in English.

A common basic distinction in noun subclasses is between proper and common nouns. Often little more is said about the difference, as in contemporary generative grammar, where the difference is characterized by the feature +/- Proper. However, if we look at a wide range of names and at the processes for naming, we discover that the difference between common and proper nouns is anything but clear-cut; and moreover, the vocabulary is not neatly divided. Instead we see that names are productively drawn from the common word classes and that not only nouns are used. Finally, words that are traditionally classified as proper nouns, such as John, are often used as nonreferring expressions.

Philosophical accounts of proper names, though interesting and important, have focused too narrowly on personal and place names, which in turn have led to a limited perspective on names. Moreover, philosophers have been interested primarily in names as referring expressions (insofar as they refer). The principal
philosophical conflict has been between the causal theory and the descriptive theory, each of which is best suited to a different range of cases.\footnote{The causal theory, which is most closely associated with Mill (1936) and Kripke (1980), sees proper names as referring to individuals, and thereby as having no meaning. This account works very well for people we know or know of and can identify, and for whom we can imagine a different life history (e.g., Richard Nixon, President of the United States from 1968 to 1974). The descriptive theory of names, associated with Russell (1905) and Searle (1969), which associates proper names with descriptions (but in Searle’s version, with no unique description), is best suited to cases like Jack the Ripper, the referent of which has not been identified, and where the name is associated with particular actions and properties. Names of historical figures, such as Moses or Homer, whose existence has been questioned, are in between.}

But personal and place names are a small part of the phenomenon of naming. John Carroll (1985) has called our attention to the fact that people name all kinds of other things—buildings, streets, companies, computer files, events, and pets. Carroll does not distinguish between proper and common names, but the English language does not either. So we say equally naturally:

1. Phoenix is the name of the capital city in Arizona;
2. red is the name of a bright color.

The common grammatical distinction between common and proper nouns, which is partially correlated with capital and small letters in contemporary English orthography, fails to correspond to any important philosophical distinction, such as the difference between referring to an individual or a class. General Motors refers to an individual company, whereas Buick refers to a class of cars, with numerous time-indexed models. Therefore, we can talk about a Buick or Buicks, using the normal patterns for articles and plurals with count nouns. Christmas and Passover denote cyclical holidays, whereas Monday and January denote cyclical time periods, and thus each denotes a class rather than a unique event.

Algeo (1973), who provides an extensive discussion of the various kinds and uses of proper names, demonstrates that there is no single definition of proper name that will serve all purposes. The syntactic division between proper and common nouns, the distinction between count and mass nouns, the semantic and pragmatic aspects of names, and referential functions of names are all distinct (though overlapping) aspects of names, and it is not possible to reduce everything to a single distinction or definition.

For the purposes of this chapter I follow Huddleston (1988), who draws a distinction between proper nouns and proper names. A proper noun is a grammatical noun subclass. A proper name is “the institutionalized name of some specific person, place, organization, etc.—institutionalized by some formal act of naming and/or registration” (p. 96). A proper name may have the form of a
proper noun, such as London or Jack, but it need not. "Thus The Open University is a proper name but not a proper noun: what distinguishes it from, say, the older university is precisely that it is the official name of a particular institution."

It is important to distinguish between names as referring expressions and name inventories. The female name inventory in English contains Mary, Joan, Susan, and Ann among others. In the case of inventories there is no reference to any particular individual in a decontextualized sentence. That explains why these names can so easily be treated like common count nouns, as in sentences like I know three Marys or the tall Mary you met in France. These names are available for reference, and, in normal context-based utterances, the speaker usually employs the name to refer. Names such as John F. Kennedy, used for the former president of the United States, refers to a particular unique individual.²

Linguists normally draw a distinction between closed and open classes. The class of name inventories is extremely open, much more so than classes of common nouns and verbs, because new items are frequently added. Moreover, among some groups of speakers, parents frequently make up new names for children. However, at least the commonest items in name inventories will be recognized as names, and new ones will be identified as names on syntactic grounds. In the case of traditional names, we can often identify the referent on the basis of the name. Consider the following:

3. John is hungry;
4. Fido is hungry.

Although John could refer to a dog or cat or specific car, it probably "refers" to a human male. whereas (4) "refers" to a dog.³ Personal surnames are even more open than first names.

Just as a competent speaker of a natural language is expected to know the basic vocabulary, so he is expected to know the common names. As Algeo (1973) pointed out, someone who did not recognize John and Mary as personal names or London and New York as place names could hardly be considered completely competent in English.

In this chapter I am concerned with a variety of names—some of them for individuals (persons and things) and some trade names, especially with names for things and events which are drawn from the common vocabulary (e.g., names that correspond to descriptions, such as the Grand Canyon and World War Two).

²Of course, we can always imagine situations with several individuals named John F. Kennedy, and in this case the name does not guarantee unique reference.

³"Refers" is in quotes because in these examples no reference to any particular individual is intended. But in linguistics examples, the use of such names carries with it information, for example, sex. Therefore, if a reflexive is used, as in John hurt himself, in contrast to the starred *John hurt herself, it is unnecessary (and would be pedantic) to add that John is male.
I confine this study to proper names, not common nouns. The reason for including proper names and trade names together is that they both result from some "baptismal" process, that is, they are deliberately selected and applied.

Unlike philosophers, whose main interests involve reference, along with associated metaphysical and ontological issues, my focus is on the appropriateness in selecting names for a variety of entities: concrete things (house pets, race horses, streets, university buildings, beauty shops), semiabstract entities (rock bands, opera companies), and events (festivals and wars). Since names often involve naive metaphysics and folk beliefs, these notions are invoked where necessary. But when I discuss names like Mary, my concern is not with any particular referent of that name but rather of the kinds of entities that can appropriately be called Mary.

There are two ways of attacking the problem: (1) We can look at kinds of things to be named and ask what names are given, and (2) we can look at inventories of names and ask what kinds of things the names can be attached to. I use both approaches in this chapter.

The main thesis of this chapter is that speakers of any language make judgments about the appropriateness of names for things that are analogous to judgments about grammaticality, semantic well formedness, and pragmatic acceptability. Corporations and business establishments have long known this fact, but it has been ignored by linguists and philosophers, perhaps because it is either too obvious to bother about, or perhaps because naming seems somewhat unpredictable. However, I try to show that there is a great deal of systematicity in names.

A central question in the philosophical controversy on names is whether names have meaning. The question is theory laden, because it depends on what is meant by "meaning." If any kind of cultural, historical, or pragmatic information is included, then names have meaning. On the other hand, if meaning is restricted to words that can be defined by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions (or a comparable prototypical definition), then names do not have meaning. Lyons (1977) holds the view that names have no sense, although he discusses aspects of naming, such as conditions of appropriateness, culture practices, uses of names as predicates, and other phenomena to which "name meaning" has been attached.

My position on this point is somewhat of a hybrid. With respect to name inventories, such as Paul, Evelyn, George, they have no meaning, although their application to individuals (persons, animals, and things) is strongly constrained by cultural norms. In the case of referring expressions, my position is sympathetic to that of Mill (1936), who argued that names directly denote—they have no sense. Mill’s criterion was that a name based on a description can be detached from that description without any loss of meaning—because it has no connotation in Mill’s terminology—or without leading to any contradiction. Consider Mill’s example of Dartmouth, which was so named because it was located at the mouth of the Dart River: “If sand should choke up the mouth of the
rule-schemes are relatively flexible; they narrow down the space of possibilities instead of making a single prediction. . . . And rule-schemes can be violated with impunity; if someone really wanted to name a new type of cookie Ronald Reagan, they could. Nevertheless, rule-schemes have structure. People don’t mechanically grind out new names, but surely they don’t start completely from scratch each time either. (p. 16)

Rule-schemes consist of a morphosyntactic part and a semantic part, although Carroll does not stress this difference, and for the domains he has examined, he tends to lump them together. The morphosyntactic part would deal with whether the name was simple (consisting of one word, for example), a compound, a noun phrase with a prenominal modifier or a postnominal prepositional phrase (which could be further specified by a specific preposition), or a morphologically complex expression, or some constructed word, such as a blend or acronym. Although these categories are rather simple, they do in fact correlate loosely with categories of names for things. A by-NP following a head noun is more likely to appear as the name for a beauty salon than for a restaurant. For example, Coiffures by Jacques is a better name than Cuisine by Jacques for their respective categories. Even a difference in the number of words in a name can differentiate schemes. House pets typically have one-word names, whereas race horses are more likely to have names with two or three words. However, the semantic considerations are more interesting and more to the point of this chapter, and I concentrate on these.

**Personal Names**

Personal names not only name persons but can also serve as a source of many other kinds of names. There’s a wealth of data on naming practices among different groups of people at different times, the popularity of certain names, etc. but this will not be dealt with here.

First of all, names that refer to specific individuals, such as Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King, Jr., can serve as the basis for names for many kinds of things: streets, towns, buildings, parks, schools, and objects whose names are selected to commemorate one of these individuals. Such names can also be given names for other individuals or used as a part of a name, as in George Washington Carver. In these commemorative cases, it is the surname which is important and which will be selected if only a part of the name is used. Chains can occur, so that a street might be named Lincoln Street, and at a later time a bridge that is connected to Lincoln Street might be called Lincoln (Street) Bridge, not directly to commemorate Lincoln but because of the location of the bridge vis-a-vis the street.

Personal names can be the source of most business establishments, and in such cases the genitive form of either the first or last name can be used. So Ellen
Jefferson can name her restaurant or boutique Ellen’s or Jefferson’s. And of course personal names can combine with common nouns to produce very ordinary-looking noun phrases, like Ellen’s Diner or Jefferson’s Beauty Salon.

Pet Names

Although pet names must vary from culture to culture, just as attitudes toward pets do, there are three principle schemes for naming house pets (cats and dogs) in contemporary American culture. First of all, names can be selected from the personal first name inventory, and I have met cats and dogs named Jack, Tex, and George. Sometimes a name with ethnic associations will be selected for a particular breed. For example, a German Shepherd is more likely to be called Ludwig and a Russian Wolfhound Vladmir than vice versa. Also an Arabian horse may receive an Arabic name, whereas an Americanquarterhouse will not (see Taggart, 1962). Secondly, house pets can be named after famous individuals, with names like Cleopatra, Rembrandt, or Maximillian. Thirdly, they can be given descriptive names, such as Stripes, Fluffy, Smoky, or Pepper. Although there are generic dog names like Rover and Fido, and cat names like Felix, these names are more likely to be used for comic strip animals than for real house pets.

Automobiles

Aronoff (1981) has described the relationship of lines and models of American automobiles with respect to their place in the system. He points out that the common practice was to introduce a new line and model at the top of the hierarchy, thereby devaluing the others and eliminating the lowest rank.

But another aspect of automobile naming involves looking at the names selected for makes, models, and lines, because these are taken from a rather limited number of domains, and some names fit into several categories. The lists that follow show that most of these names can be classified into the following domains:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impala</td>
<td>Jaguar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stingray</td>
<td>Falcon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firebird</td>
<td>Ram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lark</td>
<td>Skylark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taurus</td>
<td>Sable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunderbird</td>
<td>Cuda &lt;Barracuda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the animals are associated with speed, strength, agility, cunning, or some combination. The list also includes the mythological Firebird and Thunderbird, and as we see later, mythological references are common in this name
domain. Although the VW Bug/Beetle is listed and these creatures do not fit into the characteristics of speed, grace, and power, it should be noted that these are, as far as I am aware, unofficial names, not those originally conferred by the company.

A second popular domain for cars is taken from place names:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malibu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biarritz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollywood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsica</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We could add a few more items, like *Victoria*, which could be classified as a place or personal name, and also items like *New Yorker* and *Continental*, which add suffixes to places. Many of these places are famous as resorts and vacation spots where the rich and famous hang out (or did so in the past) or as places where the rich and famous live or work.

Another common domain for car names is drawn from astronomical objects. (Compounds with one astronomical morpheme are included.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Astronomical Objects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vega</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another small class of natural objects is taken from meteorology, giving us the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meteorological Objects (Winds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tempest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal names do not usually serve as a basis for car names (except for companies, such as Ford). The main exceptions are *Edsel* and *Brougham*. *Victoria, Lafayette,* and *Lincoln* could be treated as personal names, but they could also be treated as the places named after those individuals. *Tudor,* a family name, is a counterexample but is probably used because of its association with royalty. *Victoria* may also enter the domain because its most salient referent is *Queen Victoria*. However, nouns denoting roles and types are common as a source for names. In some cases an adjectival derivative is used, or some metonymic object associated with royalty.
Royalty and Nobility

Monarch  Regency  Crown  Imperial  LeBaron  Marquis
Coronet  Cavalier  (Tudor)  Windsor  (Victoria)
White Prince

Roles associated with masculinity and power are popular for four-wheel drive vehicles and trucks:

Macho Types

Matador  Samurai  Ranger  Scout  Champ  Challenger
Corsair  Chieftain

Other roles include high status items such as Ambassador and Judge. A few others are Blazer, Nomad, and Maverick, with connotations of adventure, daring, and risk.

There are a number of other nouns and adjectives, but they can be classified into emotions and feelings (Fury, Caprice, Esprit), words associated with power and victory (Triumph, Conquest, Elite, Valiant, Citation), and items associated with adventure (Safari, Horizon, Ventura, Blazer).

Racetracks provide a source of automobile names, as in the following:

Racetracks

Grand Prix  LeMans  Sebring  Grand National
Gran Torino  Daytona  Bonneville  Baja

Another popular type of automobile name is to take one that sounds Italian (for a car that does not come from Italy), no doubt based on the high status of a few Italian cars:

Italian Sounding

Avanti  Camaro  Fiero  Quattro  Volare
Allante  Ventura  Beretta

A few names are based on weapons (Dart, Javelin, Cutlass, Laser, Corvette, and Cruiser). There is also a miscellany of names loosely associated with roads and travel: El Camino, Fleetliner, Speedster, Dasher, Roadster, Cruiser. Another category is one that sounds hi-tech, containing Turbo, Delta 80, and Laser. Finally, numbers and letters are frequently used in automobile names.

Although there are a few items not classified, we see that automobile names fall into distinct categories. Even some of the items not categorized can be

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6This category was suggested by Paul Saka.
lexically associated with some of the traditional classes. Geo, for example, can be analyzed as contrasting with Astro.

Generalizations among the semantic fields can be made, combining powerful things (some animals, weapons, and storms) and fast things (some animals and racetracks).

One of the striking things about automobile names, of course, is that the class is necessarily open, because new models and lines will get new names. And, of course, new categories may be called on for name sources. One new class is names of fashionable streets, such as Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue. If this turns out to be a trend, we can expect names like Champs Elysée and Wilshire Boulevard.

Rock Bands

Names for rock bands, especially heavy metal rock, are interesting, because one criterion for a name in this domain is that it be outrageous, even offensive. In this respect, the naming practices fall in place with other unconventional practices associated with rock musicians, such as dress and hair styles.

There are a variety of scheme classifications, but the one proposed here accounts for a large number of names. The largest single category I found was names involving death:

Death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grateful Dead</th>
<th>Dead Kennedys</th>
<th>Megadeth</th>
<th>Suicidal Tendencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creeping Death</td>
<td>The Stranglers</td>
<td>Overkill</td>
<td>Skull and Tophat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slayer</td>
<td>D.O.A.</td>
<td>Styx</td>
<td>Dead or Alive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killer Dwarfs</td>
<td>Dead Tongues</td>
<td>S.O.D.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other popular categories as a source of names are dangerous animals, drugs (and other unhealthy substances), and weapons:

Drugs and Unhealthy Substances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pot Leaf</th>
<th>Poison</th>
<th>Alcoholica</th>
<th>Venom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Dangerous Animals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King Cobra</th>
<th>Scorpions</th>
<th>Great White</th>
<th>White Snake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Lion</td>
<td>W.A.S.P.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weapons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guns N’ Roses</th>
<th>Iron Maiden</th>
<th>L. A. Guns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex Pistols</td>
<td>U 2</td>
<td>Bulletboys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kick Axe</td>
<td>B-52s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, there are a variety of other names with connotations of disease, abnormality, and social deviance: Anthrax, Misfits, Twisted Sister, Motley Crüe, 10,000 Maniacs, Atrophy, and Public Enemy.

Another fairly popular source category involves religious associations, usually without pious connotations:

**Religious Associations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom Come</th>
<th>Exodus</th>
<th>Black Sabbath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leviticus</td>
<td>Heathen</td>
<td>Genesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One aspect of the unconventionality of rock band names can be seen in ones with unusual syntactic combinations, or even outright syntactic violations: The Who, Faster Pussycat, and Frankie Goes to Hollywood. Names consisting of whole clauses are common in titles of literary works, but otherwise they are highly unusual.⁷

Some groups are named after their leader (Alice Cooper, Elvis Costello, Randy Rhoads, Ozzy Osbourne). Sex does not seem to be a major category source, though there are a few names: Sex Pistols, Kiss, The Slits (a female group), AC/DC, and possibly The Kinks.

Some of the names involve language play of certain kinds, such as puns (Kick Axe, Little Feat, Beatles), incongruent combinations (Guns N' Roses, Skull and Tophat) and oxymorons (Quiet Riot). The pun in Dead Tongues rests on the fact that the leader is a linguist.

**Beauty Salons**

Names for beauty salons have been described by Wilhelm (1988), based on listings in the Denver telephone directory (yellow pages). Similar results can be found in other American cities, and in fact many shops are national chains.

In addition to names based on the owner's first or last name and location (devices common to many kinds of business establishments), names for beauty salons make extensive use of alliteration (Crystals Cut and Curl), rhyme (Loxy Locks, Swirl and Curl), and consonance (Scissor Wizards). Puns are common in names, with the most frequent ones based on shear, mane, cut, and hair: Shear Genius, Mane Street Hair Stylists, A Head of Our Time, Hair It Is, and A Cut Above. Hairport is the name of a barber shop in the Minneapolis–St. Paul Airport. One of my favorites is Curl Up and Dye.⁸

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⁷I have been told that there is a hair product called *Gee Your Hair Smells Terrific*.

⁸It has been pointed out to me that class differences are relevant. Cute names are principally found among the lower priced establishments. This might also explain why such naming practices are not found for the next category, theater and opera company names, because the clientele is upper and middle-upper class.
river, or an earthquake change its course, and remove it to a distance from the town, the name of the town would not necessarily be changed" (p. 20). Actually, Mill's example is not the best one, since the phonological reduction of /maωθ/ to /məθ/ has already obscured the etymology. A better example is one of a dance company that was named the Tenth Street Dance Works, because the group originally had a small studio on Tenth Street. When a more suitable performance space became available (and which was not on Tenth Street), the company did not change its name. The London Bridge, currently located in Lake Havasu, Arizona, retains the name appropriate to its origin. Notice that Mill does not rule out the possibility that a name might be changed, if the description on which it is based is no longer appropriate. (Below I present examples where changes were made because a change in circumstances make the names inappropriate.)

Proper names like the Tenth Street Dance Works or the Social Sciences Building appear to have meaning because the names (or at least parts of them) are drawn and/or constructed from the common vocabulary, and those words do have meaning. The line between a pure description and a proper name based on a description is subtle and difficult to draw, but I hope that a theory could draw that line.

Most names, whether based on descriptions or not, provide some information about the referent. In other words, if one knows the name for someone or something, one can usually make reasonable inferences about the referent. Even the proper nouns that are used as first names in English and many other cultures enable one to predict the sex of the bearer. Therefore, most speakers of English would feel that Sally is an unsuitable name for a boy and Samuel a poor choice for a girl. A few names are androgynous, but sometimes when a name is commonly given to girls, parents stop using it for boys. This happened with the name Shirley. Some names (both first and last) may enable one to make predictions about ethnicity, but such predictions are likely to be weaker than those for sex. My position is close to that of Allan (1986), who argues that although proper names do not have a sense, they must be listed in the lexicon of a language because they carry information with them.

The current study, motivated by Carroll's What's In A Name? (1985), calls attention to the large variety of names for things besides personal and place names. Carroll introduces the notion of rule-scheme, which is characterized as follows:

A rule-scheme differs from a linguistic rule in being less complete, less permanently a part of the language, and more discretionary from a speaker's point of view. . . . Violating linguistic rules makes speech ungrammatical. In contrast,

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4Exceptions come to mind, of course. There are a few androgynous names, like Lynn, and masculine noms de plume for female writers, like George Sands.

5Stan Lieberson (1984) uses first names as an index of ethnic integration into mainstream society.
The word play associated with names for beauty salons and rock groups can be contrasted with names for civic opera, dance, and theater companies, which tend to be serious and descriptive, although theater companies sometimes select names that give the acronym ACT.9

Streets

Names for streets are interesting, and quite a lot of variety is permitted.10 Streets are often named for famous people, geographical features, trees (in the United States), presidents, and places (cities, U.S. states, islands). In the United States important dates are not used, whereas they are common in some countries (e.g., Mexico). Another common source for street names is numbers and to a lesser extent letters. Whenever numbers are used (which are almost always positive integers11), the number names must follow the numerical sequences. Whereas there is no particular requirement to group Fir Street one street over from Spruce Street, it is completely inappropriate to shift around numbers by putting Fifth Street between Third Street and First Street. The same principle of sequence holds for letters, which must be alphabetical.12

Algeo (1978) compares the old and recent streets names in Athens, Georgia,

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9The local company was formerly named Arizona Civic Theater when it performed only in Tucson. However, when it became a statewide group, it changed its name to Arizona Theater Company.

10The naive ontology of what constitutes an individual street is interesting. In the United States, at least, streets should be continuous, preferably straight, although some curving is permitted to follow natural contours (e.g., when following a lake or cliff contour). Using the same name for 90° shifts is alright when it would be impossible to go straight or when the road must go around some barrier, but then it is expected that the “same” street will continue, following a roughly straight path. Discontinuous parts of the “same” street are acceptable if they can be connected by an imaginary straight line on a map (e.g., if there is a barrier or park that interrupts the flow of through traffic) or, in a new community, if the parts of the same street are not completely built, but it would be expected that at some future time they would be. In the case of cities that are laid out in strict grids, where a street corresponds to a hypothetical straight line, the same street name may be used. It seems inappropriate to change the name of a street when there is no deviation from a straight line or when two (or more) noncontinuous parts that cannot be connected by a hypothetical straight line are given the same name.

11Occasionally, a half may name a street, such as Seven and a Half, between Seventh Street and Eighth Street, but one does not find a street named Square Root of Minus One.

12There are some exceptions, such as the fact that what would be expected to be Sixth Avenue in Manhattan is Avenue of the Americas. Sometimes a named street will lie between two numbered streets. In other domains involving numbers and letters, exceptions occur. For example, hotels often omit calling a floor the 13th floor because 13 is considered an unlucky number. In some theaters in which the rows are letters, i is sometimes omitted because it could be confused with j. Also, as Keith Allan points out, highway numbers do not work in a regular way, although there is some loose correlation between geography and U.S. highway and interstate numbers, even though the numbering is not consecutive. Interstate numbers tend to be multiples of 5; the gaps were no doubt left so that new interstates could be built and that appropriate new numbers could be used.
and his results are mirrored in many American cities, especially those with recent rapid growth. Whereas most old street names were named after local people of prominence or after descriptive features adjacent to the street (e.g., Broad Street, College Avenue, or Factory Street), modern streets are laid out and named by developers of housing developments with dominant themes. Plantation Estates uses a pioneer theme, with names like: Plantation Drive, Homestead Drive, Frontier Court, and Doe Run. Moreover, street names contain words like spring, lake, and hill, even though there are no such geographical features in the area. But note that the names are drawn from limited semantic fields. Many new developments use the same first part for many street names, relying on the category for complete identification, such as Oahu Circle, Oahu Lane, and Oahu Place.

In addition to studies like that of Algeo, street names are often the subject of journalistic feature stories in the popular press, for example, one in The Arizona Republic August 20, 1989, which lists unusual street names in the Phoenix area, such as Cow Track Drive, Meander Way, Mosquito Range Drive, and Shootout Plaza.

More important for the purposes of this chapter, however, is the other part of the street names—the semantic category of street, avenue, boulevard, lane, court, freeway, highway, or alley. It is expected that there be some correlation between the use of these words in names and their decontextualized meanings. Moreover, in some cases, it is expected that parallel streets share the same category. This is especially true with numbered and lettered streets, where often numbered streets contrast with numbered avenues. For example, in Tucson numbered streets run east-west whereas numbered avenues run north-south. In Phoenix numbered streets run north-south to the east of Central Avenue whereas numbered avenues run north-south to the west of Central.¹³

To what extent do the descriptive parts of the name correspond to their meanings? Consider just a few possible terms: court, circle, boulevard, avenue, and drive. Although a complete study of denotation would require on-site inspections, I did not do this, but I did look at a Tucson map to get some idea of the way in which these terms were applied to streets. On the whole, court is used for cul-de-sacs only. But of course many cul-de-sacs are called other things (drive, lane). Most things called circle have some curving in the path of the street, but relatively few circles are complete loops. (Even fewer approximated circles at all!) Many things that do make complete loops were not called circles but have various names (e.g., drive, calle, Spanish for “street”). Boulevard and avenue tend to be reserved for relatively major thoroughfares, but many wide streets are called other things, such as way or road, and street and drive seem to be usable.

¹³Of course, if there is no contrast, and a speaker mistakenly uses Central Street for Central Avenue, reference may still succeed. This case is exactly like Donellan’s example of using the expression man with a martini to pick out a man with water in a martini glass.
for anything. In addition, Tucson uses a number of Spanish loans, such as calle, paseo, camino, and avenido, but there is no evidence that any attention is paid to the Spanish meanings.

The question for the semanticist and psycholinguist is whether the language learner is in any way influenced by the names for streets and the decontextualized meanings. Does our concept of lane come from experiences we have with streets having lane as part of the name or do we treat these categories as rather opaque? In the former case, we might expect semantic shifts to result from a casual (read careless) use of categories in street names. But in the latter case, we would not expect any change. In many cases (e.g., circle), the more salient meanings for the term would probably keep the senses together, in spite of anything street names might do. In other cases, such as lane or boulevard, our concepts might be formed through linguistic contexts (e.g., stories of children walking down lanes, or narratives that involve boulevards that are vividly described as being wide and tree lined).

University Buildings

The next category is names for university buildings. There are two popular naming schemes: The first is to name a building after some person who was important in the history of the institution, such as a past president or a generous benefactor. The other is to name the building after some discipline for which the building is used. Both types are used at the University of Arizona. The problem with the latter strategy is that when a department moves out of a building with the department name, the building name is no longer appropriate. At Arizona when a new psychology building was constructed, the old one was called Old Psych for awhile and then renamed after an person. The former Liberal Arts Building was renamed Social Sciences after most of the tenants were social science departments, and the Humanities Building was changed to Center for English as a Second Language when the function of the building changed. These changes required considerable expenditures, because the stone lettering on the outside of the building had to be redone, new maps constructed, etc. Moreover, when the Linguistics Department was located in the Mathematics Building (because there was space for it there), many people would look puzzled about its being located there and expected an academic justification.

Numbers as Names

The final topic briefly mentioned is numbers as names. Numbers (often in conjunction with other names and letters) can be used as names for many things: streets (as we have seen), aircraft types (Boeing 727, Lockheed 1011), appliance models, biological varietals, cars (Mazda RX-7), stone tool types, and stars.

However, people I have talked with are resistant to accepting numbers as
names of individuals in the current world. Although they will admit that in a science fiction context numbers could well be names, they do not accept social security numbers as names, even though such numbers may well be superior to names as a means of identifying people. Numbers are too impersonal and are therefore used in situations in which people are deliberately depersonalized, such as prisons.

Discussion

Having looked at a variety of naming schemes in several domains, the main question is: How does this contribute to a theory of names and naming or to anything else in semantics?

One consequence is that although the concept of semantic fields is relevant, it is not sufficient. We must deal with names in terms of something larger, for example, frames or domains. At the same time, it is not particularly useful to talk about names and naming practices in general, since each frame (domain, class of entities) has different schemes. What counts as a good name for one kind of object is bad for other kinds. Even closely related categories like house pets and race horses utilize different kinds of name schemes. At the same time, semantic field analyses that deal only with lexemes are also not sufficient, because many names are larger than lexemes. Therefore, a theory of good naming must have access to compositional processes in semantics to evaluate a name properly. For example, Over the Edge is a good name for a race horse, but no current semantic field approach can deal with such phenomena. As Barsalou shows (this volume), relatively few complex concepts are lexicalized monolexemically.

A second reason for requiring frames in addition to fields (pointed out by Scott DeLancey, personal communication) is that not everything in semantic fields would make a good name. For example, not every animal name is appropriate for a car, only those that denote speed, strength, and other qualities desirable for automobiles. This would make a car name like Turtle or Slug highly unlikely.

Third, although the stock of names in any domain is quite open—far more so than even the open syntactic classes—it is not the case that “anything goes” any more so than in applying common names to things. Just as I can stipulate that my car is to be called “your table” and your table is to be called “my car,” to do so without a compelling reason is to violate maxims of conversational cooperation. I suggest that calling a baby girl “Someone is Listening” or “Mouse” (except perhaps as a nickname) is equally inappropriate, in this case violating cultural norms. This is not to say that people do not behave inappropriately at times. The Hogg family named their daughters Ima and Eura. But many people feel that this practice is weird, if not downright cruel.

Fourth, the names for many kinds of things are created from the common word class (that is, those words that have meaning). And the meaning of the
word is relevant to the name. In the more straightforward categories (where irony is seldom used), the common noun (adjective, verb, etc.) provides a constraint. Carroll (1985) wrote that "while it is not a contradiction to say that Dartmouth is not at the Dart's mouth, it is a contradiction to say that the Willis Avenue Bridge is not a bridge, or is not named after Willis Avenue" (p. 167). Although I am sympathetic to Carroll's position, I would prefer to say not that it would be a contradiction for the Willis Avenue Bridge to be something else but rather that this name might be inappropriate. I use the weak "might be" because bridge in a name could be extended to things that are marginally bridges (e.g., pedestrian overpasses). Calling a pedestrian overpass that spans the Marshall Freeway the Marshall Freeway Bridge might not be analytic. It depends on one's semantic theory and semantic analysis: whether an overpass counts as a bridge. However, the meanings of words in the common vocabulary severely constrain the use of such words in names. Shady Lane might be given to an avenue but not to a freeway.

Fifth, in many naming domains, such as car names (models, makes, and lines), new names are selected from a relatively small set of semantic fields (extending the term semantic field to include place names). Although not all car names can be fit into these categories, most can be. And I would predict that when new source domains are added, they will be productive. In other words, if an automobile company decides to name a line after famous movie stars or winning race horses, a whole set of names from these domains will be selected, not just one name from each new set.

Words in the common vocabulary enter into a variety of lexical relationships, such as synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy, etc. (see Chaffin, this volume). Are there lexical relationships among names? Although I have not investigated this topic yet, it seems that some names do exhibit something like synonymy, in that alternative expressions can denote the same entity. For example, World War II can also be referred to as The Second World War, although Second Street cannot be called Street II. There are also conventional nicknames for many personal names, such as Dick for Richard and Sandy for Sandra. Although not every Richard or Sandra uses the nickname, they are conventional enough so that in situations where first names are used, a speaker may well call someone Dick after that person is introduced as Richard.

Building on ideas of Paul Saka (1989), I propose that the "meanings" associated with proper names actually belong to the pragmatic component of the language, not the semantic component. Therefore, the information associated with certain proper names (e.g., personal and place names) is an important and often conventional part of its representation. Consider the car names that are based on places and recall that they are associated with glamorous places, such as resort areas where the "beautiful people" go (or went at the time that the name was selected). I predict it unlikely that an automobile manufacturer would select a name like Gary, Indiana, or Watts as a name.
As Kripke (1980) would no doubt stress, it is not necessary that Monte Carlo, a source for a fancy car name, be an attractive resort area and Gary, Indiana, not, and we can well imagine a future time where Monte Carlo becomes ugly due to increased crowding, pollution, urban decay, and where a complete renovation of Gary along with neighboring communities turns the south shore of Lake Michigan into one of the beauty spots in North America. If that were the case, and automobile manufacturers were still basing model names on attractive places, then perhaps Gary might be selected as a car name.

There are naming domains where irony is considered appropriate, such as pet names, especially names for dogs and cats. One of my colleagues had a cat named Dog. A panel of subjects (see Appendix) considers Mouse to be a good name for a dog or cat. However, the notion of irony in naming depends on the semantics of the ironical terms chosen, and irony often involves selecting an “opposite” in some sense, where “opposite” is construed as a significant contrast. This makes Dog or Mouse an appropriate ironical name for a cat. Although I do not know if Screwdriver or Cantaloupe\(^{14}\) are good names for a cat, I do not think that they would be judged ironic. Bestowing pets with names like Aristotle, Cleopatra, and Napoleon also involves irony because a nonhuman creature is endowed with a name associated with a great person. Even in street naming, there is irony. Herb Caen reported in his column that the Bolton (England) Council lost a battle with a developer, but it had the right to choose the street names and has selected Chernobyl Crescent, Salman Rushdie Avenue, Auschwitz View, and Ayatollah Khomeini Road.\(^{15}\) (These last cases involve pragmatic principles rather than semantic ones.)

In any case, the point is that words in the common lexicon (that is common nouns, verbs, etc.) are available for use as proper names. It has also been often pointed out that proper nouns can serve as a source for creating new common nouns. So we see that there are interactions between the two sets.

Finally, as Saka pointed out (1989, p. 2) by associating content with names, we are able to show the similarity between utterances in which proper names refer to specific individuals and metaphorical predicates (cf. Jespersen, 1929);

5. He’s another Napoleon,

requires a similar kind of interpretation as

6. He’s a wolf (where he refers to a man).

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\(^{14}\)One could well imagine a situation in which Cantaloupe was selected as a pet name for an animal that loved to eat cantaloupe or who (which?) had an amusing experience (from the owner’s point of view) with a cantaloupe.

\(^{15}\)I wish to thank Paul Kay for pointing out this column.
In both cases for the hearers to figure out the interpretation, they must draw on their commonplace beliefs about Napoleon and wolves, respectively. Or consider:

7. Bill is a pansy.

There are at least two interpretations: The first is that Bill refers to a human male and the predicate must be reinterpreted metaphorically to mean that Bill is a weakling or is gay. In the second interpretation, the sentence is interpreted literally, but the flower referred to has a proper name, a somewhat unusual, but not unheard of situation.

To test the main hypothesis that speakers have strong intuitions on the appropriateness of names for various classes of objects, I submitted a questionnaire to students in beginning linguistics classes. One group was asked to consider a set of names and decide for which objects the names would be appropriate, and the other group was asked to consider a set of objects and decide which names would be good for them.

The null hypothesis would be that any name would be equally good or bad for any of the objects. However, I prefer to state a positive hypothesis: Speakers' judgments about the appropriateness of names is strong and rule governed. They will accept new names for things that are drawn from semantic fields or name inventories that pattern like existing names for such objects.

The most general hypothesis is confirmed: namely, that subjects have intuitions about appropriateness of names for various objects. However, in some cases, more specific predictions were not confirmed. For example, I predicted that Milano would be judged to be a good car name, because it refers to an Italian place. However, maybe Milan is not considered an attractive enough city, or maybe the subjects did not know where Milano is or even that it is a city in Italy. When we turn to personal given names, it can be seen that naming children is highly restricted. Although only appropriate names for baby girls were requested, it is mainly conventional names for girls that are acceptable. Appropriate names for rock bands are quite diverse, but there are still restrictions. In a pilot study the category for book titles was included, but apparently the name of a literary title can be anything at all. So there is at least one domain with unrestricted naming, though it is expected that most titles will have something to do with the literary work in question.

The normal situation is that naming, though creative, is highly constrained. Moreover, the preceding considerations suggest that semantic fields and semantic frames are not equivalent. In the case of names, semantic fields (or something like them) seem necessary to explain why whole sets of words from the common vocabulary can be drawn on for proper names and why they must retain at least some characteristics of their semantics. But because many names are constructed from phrases, and because they utilize pragmatic information such that not
everything in a field is appropriate, fields are not sufficient, and for this reason, semantic frames are necessary as well.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REFERENCES


# APPENDIX

## Questionnaire on Appropriateness

The figures to the left of the slash are in response to the question: Can the objects presented be appropriately given the names listed? \( N = 50 \). The figures to the right of the slash are in response to the question: Can the names presented be appropriately used for the objects listed? \( N = 45 \).

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