Baby name report card: Beneficial and Harmful baby names

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Rationale Underlying "Baby Name Report Card"
The traditional approach to selecting baby names is intuitive and emotional. Many parents select names for their babies using the name of someone they like or admire (a relative, a movie star, a politician, a character in a book, a childhood friend). Unfortunately, the personal associations one has to another's name rarely reflect consensus associations of the general public. In this way, many children are given names that have neutral or even negative connotations.

Impressions Generated by Names
Our research findings show a clear alternative to intuitive and emotional approaches to name selection. This alternative mind-set requires one to consider how the general population will react to the child's name and how that name (which becomes a lasting part of the child's identity) will influence the ways in which others react to the child himself.

Experimental findings show that people with desirable or attractive names are treated more favorably by others than are those with undesirable or unattractive names. Also, persons with undesirable or unattractive names tend to be handicapped in their personal, social, and work-related activities. Accordingly, it behooves parents to discover the impressions that will be generated by the names they select for their children.

Our large-scale surveys conducted for more than a decade identified desirable, attractive and beneficial names versus undesirable, unattractive, and harmful ones. Positive-negative impressions created by various types of names (e.g., given names vs. nicknames) are reported in the publications referenced below. In addition, "Baby Name Report Card" provides summary descriptions of impressions created by most commonly used names. In effect, the volume provides scientifically-based information for choosing baby names. It supplies guidelines for selecting names that will impart positive and beneficial, rather than negative and harmful, impressions to others; that is, names that will be assets rather than liabilities throughout a lifetime. It also includes useful information for adults who are dissatisfied with their first or last
names and would like to assume new names.

Dimensions Used to Describe the Impressions Generated by Names

The volume is written for the general reader and uses numerical scores to describe the impressions personal names create. The survey data for the book were gathered by asking respondents the following question: "Supposing you were to meet someone for the first time and you only knew their gender and first name. What kind of person do you think they would turn out to be?" Impressions of people based on their names were summarized on the following basic dimensions:

- Ethical-Caring (e.g., trustworthy, loyal, sincere, kind, generous, respectful, warm, patient, responsible)
- Popular-Fun (e.g., playful, humorous, cheerful, outgoing, good-looking, adventurous, athletic, healthy)
- Successful (e.g., ambitious, intelligent, independent, confident, assertive, creative)
- Masculine-Feminine
- Overall Attractiveness (a statistical combination of the first three dimensions)

Here is a link to the Name Connotation Profile that contains the specific instructions we provided respondents in our various surveys.

Average ratings from all respondents who rated a given name are summarized using scores that range from zero to 100, with 50 being an average score. For example, "John" received an average Success score of 98 (extremely high) whereas "Knut" received a Success score of 11 (extremely low). These two names differ substantially in terms of the impression of Success (which includes connotations of intelligence, creativity, ambition) they impart.

Changing Unsatisfactory Personal Names

You may be highly dissatisfied with your first or last name and require help with the selection of new name(s). Alternatively, you may be embarking on a new profession or business where your names can become a very important part of the image you project and the way you are received by others. Individuals who are beginning a professional career in acting exemplify the latter situation. "Baby Name Report Card" can help you select new name(s) that will connote desirable and appropriate connotations -- names that will be an asset to you in achieving your important and lasting social and career objectives.

References:
Mehrabian, A. (1994). The Name Connotation Profile. (Available from Albert Mehrabian, 1130 Alta Mesa Road, Monterey, CA, USA 93940)

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University of California professor Albert Mehrabian wrote a book called The Baby Name Report Card: Beneficial and Harmful Baby Names to explain his findings. According to his book, a name's success rate is based on how other people perceive it. For a lot of people, their idiosyncratic associations with names are based on their personal experiences with particular people. Mehrabian told UCLA News. Other things that influence their impressions are historical figures and the historical usage of names. Based on people's impressions, the professor then ranked names based on four categories: Yes, successful baby names are actually a thing. Albert Mehrabian, professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California-Los Angeles, wrote a book called the The Baby Name Report Card: Beneficial and Harmful Baby Names where he weighed up the best and worst names you could pick for your offspring. The book was apparently centred around research that he did where a baby name was judged good or bad depending on other people's perception of that name. Video of the Week. The research ranks baby names for how successful, masculine/feminine, ethical, caring, popular and fun they seemed.