Why being called “Davy” is a bad idea: 
Sound Symbolism and the Perception of Social Dominance

David Cottrell, Solvageh Broadhurst & Anna Brooks

Thank you! I got it for my birthday.

I really like your name!

Norma Jean Mortenson
Marilyn Monroe
Reginald Kenneth Dwight

Names and employment prospects

Olivia Wilde
Olivia Cockburn

Germans with Noble-Sounding Surnames More Often Work as Managers

König
Bäcker

Correlational data

| Christian Name starts with “D” | Poorer Academic Performance |
| Negative Initials (PIG, DIE, FAT) | Live 4.5 years Less |
| Common Name | Higher Grades |
| Familiar Name | More popular, Trustworthy |
| Ease of Pronunciation | Job promotions |

Sound Symbolism

BOUBA
KIKI

Ramachandran & Hubbard (2001)
Köhler (1929)
Sound Symbolism

High Frequencies - Indicator of Size

Diminutive Suffix

Does the sound of a name change our perception of a person?

Facial Dominance

Female Faces

Male Faces
Phase 1: Passive Learning

Phase 2: Active Learning

Phase 3: Test

Which of these faces is more dominant?

Hypothesis

Results: Female Faces

Results: Male Faces

Discussion

Dramatic effect of diminutively suffixed name on the perception of female faces.

Effect on male faces is less clear cut.

Dominant facial features override the name effect.
Most popular Girls Names (2015)
1. Olivia
2. Charlotte
3. Mia
4. Ava
5. Amelia
6. Emily
7. Sofia/Sophia
8. Sophie
9. Chloe
10. Ruby

Who would pick a Diminutive name?

Most popular Boys Names (2015)
1. Oliver
2. William
3. Jack
4. Noah
5. Jackson/Jaxon/Jaxson
6. Thomas
7. Lucas
8. James
9. Alex/Alexander
10. Ethan