

## THE EFFECTS OF OPPOSING SCALED PREFERENCES FOR NAMES AND FACES

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Several experiments have been conducted on the psychological significance of first names. Eagleson (1) found that of 334 students in a southern college, 77 were dissatisfied with their names, and 14 of these said that they thought their name affected them in some way. As Eagleson himself remarks, "That names are of much significance can be easily appreciated when one thinks of the fact that many people are known only by their names" (2). In a study of Harvard undergraduate students, Savage and Wells (3) found that "singular names show special excess among flunkouts and psychoneuroses". The very fact that some names are consistently preferred over others suggests the possibility that the personal name plays some role in one's personal evaluation by others, since many evaluations are made solely on the basis of appearance and personal name.

The present experiment sought to investigate the relative importance of names and faces in determining judgments of personal preference in order to help clarify the social and psychological role of personal names.

### METHODS

#### Subjects

120 male college students served as subjects in procedure-1. Due to inavailability of some of the subjects for retesting, 100 of the original subjects were used again in procedure-2.

#### Apparatus

The apparatus in procedure-1 consisted of eight feminine names chosen from Thorndike's Word Book (4), and typewritten on 2.5 by 3.5 in. cards and reproductions of eight different women. Each photograph measured 2.0 by 3.0 in. and was mounted on 4.0 by 6.0 in. cards. In procedure-2, the same face cards were used and a name was printed under each photograph in size 240 type.

#### Procedure 1

Each subject was shown the set of eight name cards and was asked to rank each name in the order of his preference. Then he was given the set of eight face cards and asked to rank them in the same manner. Rank orders for these names and faces were then determined by allowing eight points for a first choice, seven for a second, etc. A summation of the individual ranks established the order of preference for the total group.

#### Procedure 2

The subjects were then divided randomly into two groups of 50 each called groups A and B.

Group A was retested for preference with the name and the face combined on the same card in the following manner. The highest ranking name was combined with the highest ranking face, the second highest name combined with second ranking face, etc. Thus a set of 8 cards with a name and a face mounted on each card was presented to each of the 50 subjects with instructions to rank them in the order of preference taking into account both the name and the face. The resulting preference scale was termed the **reinforced preference scale**.

Group B members were each given a set of cards on which the highest ranking name was combined with the lowest ranking face, the second ranking name with the seventh ranking face, etc., with the same instructions that were given to group A. The resulting judgments formed the opposed preference scale.

### RESULTS

A Chi-square test showed no significant difference between the preferences of the original 120 subjects used only in procedure-1, and the 100 subjects used in both procedure-1 and -2.

TABLE I

Table I. Percentile Rankings of Selected Female Names by Male College Students

Name	Percentile
1. Jean	78
2. Mary	70
3. Charlotte	64
4. Ruth	62
5. Eleanor	54
6. Minna	28
7. Euri	25
8. Gertrude	19

TABLE II

Table II. Percentile Rankings of Selected Photographs of Female Faces by Male College Students

Face	Percentile
1. B	62
2. E	60
3. A	59
4. C	59
5. G	52
6. D	46
7. F	44
8. H	18

Table I presents the names employed in procedure-1 and the corresponding percentile rank choice. The name preference scale ranged from the 19th to the 78th percentile. Table II presents the percentile ranks of the responses made to the faces alone in procedure-1. These ranged from the 18th percentile to the 62nd percentile.

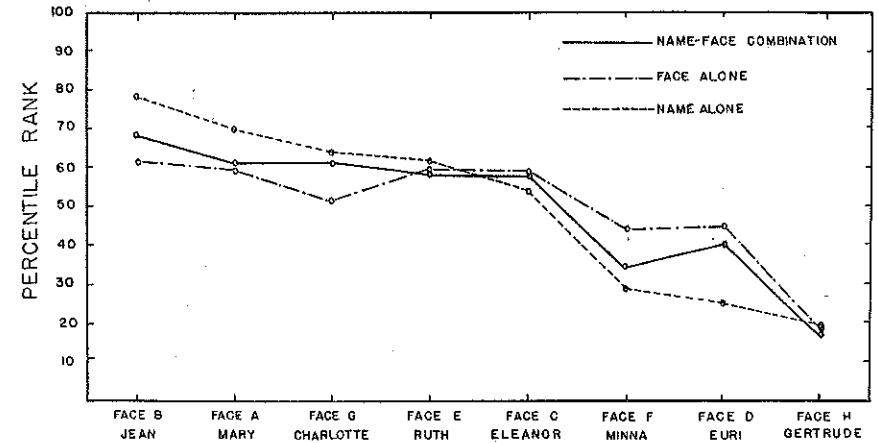


Figure 1. Reinforced Preference Scale for Choice of Names and Faces

Figures 1 and 2 present the results of procedure-2 for Groups A and B respectively. Figure 1 presents the **reinforced preference scale** generated by the ranking by the subjects in group A of names combined with faces of a similar rank value and compared to the percentile rank choice of names and of the faces alone. For example, the name Jean at the 78th percentile is paired with Face B, which is at the 62nd percentile.

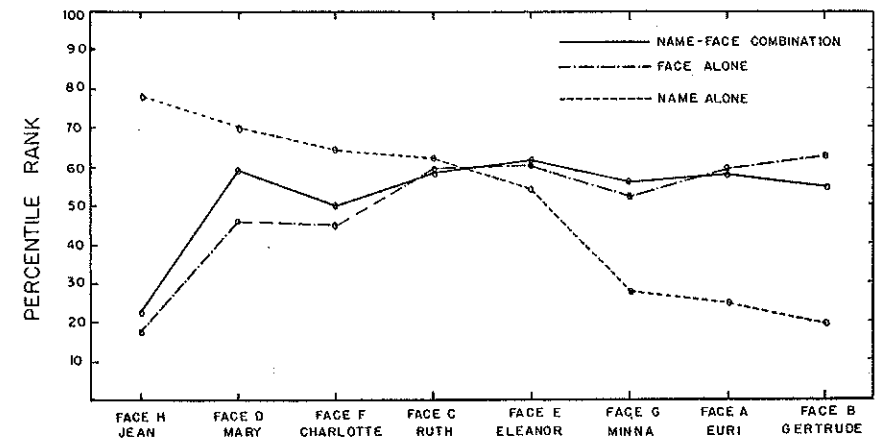


Figure 2. Opposed Preference Scale for Choice of Name and Face

The resulting scale value generated by the combination of the two lies in between at the 68th percentile. Similarly, throughout the whole graph, the reinforced preference scale function lies between the functions generated by the names alone and the faces alone.

Figure 2 presents the function generated by opposing scaled preferences compared to the percentile values of the name and the face alone. Thus the name Jean at the 78 percentile, combined with the Face H at the 18th percentile generated a name and face combination which was rated at the 22nd percentile. The opposing scaled preference function follows closely the function generated by the face alone, and seems to be but little affected by the name function. Thus the face appears to play the greater role in determining the preference value of the name and face combination.

### DISCUSSION

Table III compares the rank order preferences of 100 students at the University of South Dakota to the preferences derived from responses of 92 male students at the Central State Teachers College, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan (5), and to the rank order frequency of these names in the general population (4).

TABLE III

Comparison of Rank Order of Choice by Subjects in Study by Allen, et. al. (5) and Subjects in Present Investigation.

Rank Order of Choice	Order of Name Choice		Rank of Frequency Occurrence in United States Population
	Mt. Pleasant Michigan	University of South Dakota	
1	Jean	Jean	Mary
2	Eleanor	Mary	Ruth
3	Ruth	Charlotte	Jean
4	Mary	Ruth	Eleanor
5	Charlotte	Eleanor	Gertrude
6	Gertrude	Minna	Charlotte
7	Minna	Euri	Minna
8	Euri	Gertrude	Euri

The difference in preference may be either regional or due to the time element, since Allen, Brown, Dickenson, and Pratt's survey was published in 1941.

### SUMMARY

One hundred male college students were interviewed to determine their preferences for 8 feminine names and 8 feminine faces. Two groups of subjects were selected to rate names and faces together where the previous preferences reinforced or opposed each other in order to determine the relative importance of the name and the face in the combination.

1. The names with high percentile ranks tended to raise the percentile rank of the face with which it was paired.
2. The names with low percentile ranks tended to lower the percentile rank of the face with which it was paired.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are indebted to Dr. Roger T. Davis who provided guidance and assistance during the course of this experiment.

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