



What's in a name? 10 cases where moniker maketh man

The New Scientist gave it the name nominative determinism - the idea that there is a link between people's names and their occupation.

In their book [Yes!](#), Goldstein, Martin and Cialdini cite the classic piece of research that supports the idea that nominative determinism really exists. A study of the rolls of the American Dental Association shows that more people called Dennis become dentists than you would expect if the choice of profession were purely random.

And now we have the exquisitely named [Bernard Madoff](#), making off with his client's cash.



Here are my top 10 examples of nominative determinism.

1. [Theodore Hee](#). Mr T. Hee was responsible for most of the early comic storylines for Walt Disney films.
2. [Cardinal Sin](#). The classic example, I think. Jamie Sin was an Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church of the Philippines. Wikipedia helpfully notes: "His name should not be confused with "cardinal sin", which is synonymous for the seven deadly sins".
3. [Judge Judge](#). In July of this year Sir Igor Judge was appointed Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales.
4. [Amy Freeze](#). Fox News Chicago's Chief Meteorologist could hardly have chosen a different profession. Save, perhaps, setting pay for Government employees.
5. [Patty Turner](#). The inevitable name of the wife of McDonald's CEO Frank Turner.
6. [Governor Blagojevich](#). The man responsible for introducing Americans to the British slang term "blag" which as the dictionary puts it means "To rob, steal [origin unknown]"
7. [Dr Fred Grabiner](#). This is what the internet is for. A forum on appropriate names yields this brilliant moniker for a gynaecologist.
8. [J. W. Splatt and D. Weedon](#). The *New Scientist* campaign was spurred on by the discovery of these two authors of an article on incontinence in the *British Journal of Urology* (vol 49, pp 173-176, 1977).
9. [Usain Bolt](#). Surely his surname influenced the career of the world's fastest man? The same cannot be said of Marina Stepanova. This is the ideal name for an elite hurdler. But she earned her first titles under her maiden name of [Marina Makeyeva](#), so her name can't have influenced her choice of career. Perhaps, though, it influenced her choice of husband.
10. [Paige Worthy](#). Nominative determinism has also fascinated the *Freakonomics* blog ever since they discovered this fact checker for *Good* magazine.

Posted by Daniel Finkelstein on December 16, 2008 at 01:18 PM in