What's in a name? Studies link initials to success

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Do you like your name and iniÂ-tials? Most peoÂ-ple do. Past reÂ-search has found that someÂ-times we like these things enough to let them inÂ-fluÂ-ence maÂ-jor deÂ-ciÂ-sions. For inÂ-stance, Jack is more likely to move to JackÂ-sonÂ-ville and marÂ-ry JackÂ-ie than is Philipâ€"who is likeÂ-liÂ-er to move to PhilÂ-aÂ-delÂ-phia and marÂ-ry PhylÂ-lis. SciÂ-enÂ-tists call this the "name-letÂ-ter efÂ-fect.―

But if you like your name too much, you might be in trouÂ-ble. Leif NelÂ-son of the UnÂ-iversÂ-ity of CalÂ-iÂ-forÂ-nia, San DieÂ-go and colÂ-league JoÂ-seph SimÂ-mons of Yale UnÂ-iversÂ-ity found that likÂ-ing your own name sabÂ-oÂ-tages sucÂ-cess for peoÂ-ple whose iniÂ-tials are reÂ-latÂ-ed to negÂ-aÂ-tive outÂ-comes.In part of their reÂ-search, NelÂ-son and SimÂ-mons inÂ-vesÂ-tÂ-iÂ-gated the efÂ-fect of names in baseÂ-ball, where strikeÂ-outs, which are unÂ-deÂ-sirÂ-aÂ-ble, are recorded usÂ-ing the letÂ-ter K. AfÂ-ter anÂ-aÂ-lyzÂ-ing MaÂ-jor League records spanÂ-ning 93 years, the reÂ-searchÂ-ers found that batÂ-ters whose names beÂ-gan with K struck out slightly more ofÂ-ten than othÂ-ers. A monogram from an early-20th century Polish album.

"Even Karl â€~KoÂ-ley' Kolseth would find a strikeÂ-out averÂ-sive, but he might find it a litÂ-tle less averÂ-sive than playÂ-ers who do not share his iniÂ-tials, and thereÂ-fore he might avoid strikÂ-ing out less enÂ-thuÂ-siÂ-asÂ-ticÂ-alÂ-ly,― wrote the auÂ-thors in a paÂ-per deÂ-tailÂ-ing the findÂ-ings. The work is pubÂ-lished in the DeÂ-cemÂ-ber isÂ-sue of the reÂ-search jourÂ-nal PsyÂ-choÂ-logÂ-iÂ-cal SciÂ-ence.NelÂ-son and SimÂ-mons alÂ-so studÂ-ied the pheÂ-nomÂ-eÂ-non in acÂ-aÂ-demÂ-ia. LetÂ-ter grades are comÂ-monly used to measÂ-ure stuÂ-dent perÂ-forÂ-mance, with the letÂ-ters A through D deÂ-notÂ-ing proÂ-gresÂ-sively worse reÂ-sults. NelÂ-son and SimÂ-mons reÂ-viewed 15 years of grade point avÂ-erÂ-ages for MBA stuÂ-dents at a large priÂ-vate U.S. unÂ-iversÂ-ity. StuÂ-dents whose names beÂ-gan with C or D earned lowÂ-er avÂ-erÂ-ages than those whose names beÂ-gan with A or B, they found. The latÂ-ter group, though, didÂ-n't do betÂ-ter than stuÂ-dents whose iniÂ-tials were irÂ-relÂ-eÂ-vant to any grade. ThereÂ-fore, havÂ-ing iniÂ-tials that match hard-to-achieve posÂ-iÂ-tive outÂ-comes, like acÂ-ing a test, may not necÂ-esÂ-sarily cause an inÂ-crease in perÂ-forÂ-mance, the reÂ-searchÂ-ers sugÂ-gested. But afÂ-ter anÂ-aÂ-lyzÂ-ing law schools, they found that as the qualÂ-ity of schools deÂ-clined, so did the proÂ-porÂ-tion of lawyers with name iniÂ-tials A and B. The reÂ-sults overÂ-all ofÂ-fer "strikÂ-ing evÂ-iÂ-dence that unÂ-conÂ-scious wants can inÂ-sidÂ-iÂ-ously unÂ-derÂ-mine conÂ-scious purÂ-suits,― the reÂ-searchÂ-ers said in anÂ-nouncÂ-ing their reÂ-sults.

