TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN’S TEMPERAMENT
BASED ON THEIR FIRST NAMES

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TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN’S TEMPERAMENT
BASED ON THEIR FIRST NAMES

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Abstract

of

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Although uncommon names are becoming increasingly popular, they may convey subtle impressions of the individuals they refer to, and have also been found to be frequently misperceived by individuals such as teachers. Twenty-six preschool teachers were surveyed about their perceptions of characteristics associated with literal and non-literal children’s names. Results indicated that preschool teachers more frequently associated names with literal connotations with a difficult temperament, and names without literal connotations were more frequently associated with being successful and ethical-caring. With respect to name gender, preschool teachers more frequently associated female names with ethical-caring characteristics and male names with success, masculinity, and difficult temperaments. Implications for the study suggest that children with first names that preschool teachers consider desirable have higher quality interactions with their teacher, and as a result, a better self-concept and achievement
scores. In contrast, students with names considered to be undesirable by preschool teachers, such as those with literal connotations, are more likely to have lower quality interactions with their teacher, and lower self-concept and achievement. The importance of preschool teachers self-reflection on the perceptions of student names is also discussed.

__________________________, Committee Chair
Dr. Juliana Raskauskas

______________
Date
DEDICATION

To all my little “Bambinis” at CSUS Children’s Center. Your names sparked my interest and inspired my research. Thank you!
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dedication</th>
<th>vi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter**

1. **INTRODUCTION** ................................................................. 1
   - Purpose of the Study ................................................. 3
   - Significance of the Study ........................................ 3
   - Methods ................................................................. 4
   - Definition of Terms ............................................. 5
   - Organization of the Study .................................... 6

2. **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE** ........................................... 8
   - Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Theory .......................... 8
   - Naming Practices ................................................. 11
   - Perceptions of First Names ..................................... 12
   - Teachers’ Perceptions of Children’s Names .................. 16
   - Individual Differences in Temperament .................... 18
   - Teachers’ Perceptions of Temperament as it Relates to Naming Practices ...... 20
   - The Present Study ................................................ 21

3. **METHODS** ........................................................................ 23
   - Participants and Setting ............................................ 23
   - Procedures .............................................................. 26
   - Data Analysis ........................................................ 28

4. **RESULTS** .......................................................................... 30
   - Differences Between Literal and Non-Literal Names .......... 30
Differences Between Names by Gender .............................................................31
Differences Between Name Characteristics ..................................................33
5. DISCUSSION ........................................................................................................37
   Hypothesis Testing ..............................................................................................38
   Differences in Name Characteristics ...............................................................40
   Limitations & Future Research .........................................................................40
   Implications for Teachers ..................................................................................41
Appendix A. Invitations to Preschool Directors to Participate in Study ............45
Appendix B. Participant Consent Form to Participate in Research ....................47
Appendix C. Instructions to Participant Questionnaire .......................................49
Appendix D. Participant Questionnaire ...............................................................52
References .............................................................................................................55
**LIST OF TABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Teachers’ Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Table 2 Paired Sample T-test Comparing Teachers’ Perceptions of Names</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Table 3 Paired Sample T-test Comparing Teachers’ Perceptions of Names Based on Name Gender</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Table 4 Means and MANOVA for Literal vs. Non-Literal Names</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Children are born with their own natural style of interacting with or reacting to people, places, and things (Rothbart, Ahadi & Evans, 2000). This personal way of interacting and reacting is known as temperament. Temperament appears early in life and is reflective of biologically based emotional and behavioral consistencies (Else-Quest, Hyde, Goldsmith & Van Hulle, 2006). According to Thomas and Chess (1977) there are three distinct temperament types: difficult, slow to warm, and easy. Perceptions of a child’s temperament by others may be influenced by several factors. One of these factors may be a child’s name.

Previous research has confirmed that characteristics may be attributed to individuals based on their first names (Anderson-Clarke, Green, & Henley, 2008, Cotton, O’Neill, & Griffin, 2007; Mehrabian & Piercy, 1992). With a shift in the naming practices of children in the U.S. taking place over the last few years, uncommon names are becoming increasingly popular, including names with literal connotations. Uncommon or literal names have been found to connote more negative emotional reactions towards the individual than do common names (Mehrabian, 2001). In addition, uncommon names are likely to be judged as less desirable and ultimately result in different expectations and treatment of the individual by others (Busse & Seraydarian, 1978; Erwin, 2006; Mehrabian, 1992).

Names are also important since the way in which an individual views another person may be greatly influenced by previous experiences with similarly named
individuals (Cotton, O’Neill, & Griffin, 2007). These individual characteristics inferred by a person’s name also elicit reactions in social interactions and have a consistent influence on how an individual’s temperament is perceived (Mehrabian, 1992). These inferences may be especially critical in classroom situations where teachers’ perceptions about children’s temperament and character can play an important role in children’s interactions within the classroom.

Temperament has been identified as one mediator between children’s behavior and their relationships with teachers (de Schipper, Tavecchio, Van Ijzendoorn, & Van Zeijl, 2004; Griggs, Gagnon, Huelsman, Kiddler-Ashley & Ballard, 2009; Harari & McDavid, 1973). Perceptions of children’s temperament can influence teacher behavior and expectations within the classroom environment. Previous research has found that relationship quality between teachers and their students plays an important role in the development of children’s social competencies (Griggs et al., 2009; Howes, 2000; Howes & Hamilton, 1993; Howes, Matheson, & Hamilton, 1994; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009).

Conflict in student-teacher relationships has been found to increase the risk of negative behavioral outcomes in preschoolers with a more difficult temperament (Griggs et al., 2009). Preschool children who have a more secure relationship with their teacher have been found to engage in more complex play, display higher levels of resiliency, and exhibit lower levels of aggression later on in elementary school (Griggs et al., 2009; Howes et al., 1994). These findings suggest that preschool teachers have the opportunity to develop positive relationships and to help facilitate growth within their students so that
they may become more socially competent. However, if teachers have negative expectations of children based on their first name this can ultimately impair their ability to form a positive relationship with their students. Thus, the current study is an examination of the relationship between preschool teachers’ perceptions of children’s first names as it relates to children’s temperament and how this may impair children’s’ growth within the classroom setting.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between temperament and first names by specifically identifying preschool teachers’ perceptions of children’s first names in relation to their perceptions of the child’s temperament. It was hypothesized that preschool teachers would more frequently associate names containing literal connotations with the difficult temperament type than names without literal connotations. In addition it was hypothesized that male names with literal connotations would be more frequently associated with the difficult temperament type than female names. It was also of interest to examine teacher perceptions of other personal characteristics to determine if ethical, caring, popular, fun, successful, and masculine/feminine characteristics are connoted by names, and whether these perceptions differed by literal or non-literal name classification.

### Significance of the Study

Teachers’ perceptions of children’s behaviors, characteristics, and academic achievements have been found to be associated with name stereotypes. For example,
Anderson-Clark, Green, and Henley (2008), investigated elementary school teachers’ judgments of the behavior and characteristics of students based on the students’ first names. Students with African American-sounding names received lower achievement scores than students with Caucasian-sounding names. Despite the extensive amount of research on temperament, names and teaching practices, little research exists today on the relationship between temperament and first names, specifically in relation to preschool teachers’ perceptions of their students’ temperament based on their first names. Furthermore, no research to date has examined perceptions of literal versus non-literal names. The present study provides much needed information in this area.

Methods

This study used a quantitative design to examine the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of children’s temperament based on the first names of students. The present study included 26 preschool teachers from preschools located in Redding (65.40%) and Sacramento (34.60%), California. Preschool teachers were specifically targeted because they work with the youngest age group of children, who often have names that reflect the recent change in naming practices. In addition, preschool teachers were also targeted because they often assess children’s temperament in order to provide developmentally appropriate care.

Consent forms and questionnaires were distributed to randomly selected preschools after they were first contacted to obtain permission from the director. The questionnaire for this study (Appendix D) was adapted with permission from Mehrabian’s (1997) Revised Name Connotation Profile (NCP), and included two sections: demographic
information about the participant and the individual ratings of 32 children’s names based on five categories, ethical-caring, popular-fun, successful, masculine-feminine, and temperament.

Data from the questionnaires were analyzed for differences in ratings as a function of name characteristics. First, t-tests were used to examine differences between names containing literal connotations and names without literal connotations. Next, a MANOVA was computed to explore the possible contributions of name characteristics (gender-typing of name and literal versus non-literal) on the five name connotation scores corresponding to ratings of five factors: ethical caring, popular fun, successful, masculine-feminine, and temperament.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of clarity, this thesis used the following terms as defined below:

**Literal and Non-Literal Names**

For this study, literal names refer to first names that contain literal connotations or literally connote something other than the name itself. For example, literal names that are male include name such as River, Cannon, and Blaze. Female literal names are those such as Willow, Daisy, and Princess. Non-literal names refer to first names that do not contain literal connotations and do not connote something other than the name itself. Examples for male and female non-literal names include William, Ethan, Daniel, Olivia, Emily, and Hannah.

**Temperament**

In this study, temperament is defined as the biologically based individual
differences in emotion, motor, reactivity and self-regulation that demonstrate consistency
across situations and over time (Else-Quest, Hyde, Goldsmith & Van Hulle, 2006).

According to Thomas and Chess (1977), temperament consists of to nine different
dimensions, including: activity level, rhythmicity, approach or withdrawal, adaptability,
threshold of responsiveness, intensity of reaction, quality of mood, distractibility,
attention span and persistence. From their research, Thomas and Chess determined that
while all children show the same behaviors at some time, some children are more likely
to show certain behaviors. They found that about 60% of children fall into one of three
groups; easy, difficult, and slow to warm.

Organization of the Study

This chapter served as an introduction to the topic providing an overview of the
thesis. The next chapter, Chapter 2, presents a review of the literature and examines
Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Theory, naming practices, perceptions of first names,
teachers’ perceptions on children’s first names, individual differences in temperament,
teachers’ perceptions of temperament as it relates to naming practices, as well as the
present study.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in this study. It examines the two
specific research questions that guided the present investigation. These research questions
were: (a) is there a relationship between preschool teachers’ perceptions of children’s first
names and their temperament?; (b) Is there a relationship between teachers’ perceptions
of children’s first names and their gender? The study used as variety of statistical
methods to investigate these questions.
Chapter 4 is the results section. The results are summarized in this section and the data is laid out for a better understanding of the results. Chapter 5 includes the limitations of the study as well as a summary of the major findings of the research in terms of existing and future research.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to better understand how teachers’ perceptions about children’s names and temperament, it is necessary to examine several areas of research. These areas include: Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Theory, naming practices, perceptions of first names, teachers’ perceptions on children’s first names, individual differences in temperament, and teachers’ perceptions of temperament as it relates to naming practices.

Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Theory

The effects of the changes in naming practices currently taking place within the United States can be examined within the framework of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). According to this model, all living things are linked to each other and to their environment. Within Bronfenbrenner’s model there are five interlinking social systems or relationships that surround the individual: the chronosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem. These systems can help explain how the attitudes of U.S. culture shape children’s everyday experiences, including the way parents think about naming practices.

The largest system in Bronfenbrenner’s model includes the chronosystem and the macrosystem. The chronosystem encompasses societal level factors such as the current US view of the role of preschool in early child development. The macrosystem includes cultural attitudes and characteristics, such as the shift in
attitudes about names that has taken place in United States culture, where distinct or unusual names are more desirable for children than common names (Satran, 2007; Twenge, Abebe & Campbell, 2010).

The exosystem, or the processes that takes place between two or more settings, indirectly influence the setting in which the person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Events that occur between or across two or more settings in the exosystem may indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which a person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). With respect to naming practices, changes in cultural attitudes may influence parents in their choices of names for their children. The mass media, popular culture (celebrities, for example) and family, friends, and neighbors' choices of children’s names may all influence parents' choices in the naming of their own children unusual or uncommon names (Satran, 2007).

The frequency of the interactions that take place between the child and their immediate environment, what are known as proximal processes, also play and important role in a child’s development. Examples of proximal processes include those between parent and child as well as with other individuals, in addition to group play or solitary play, when learning new skills and completing complex tasks. In relation to children’s names, a child that has a uncommon name may have more frequent negative interactions with their teacher than a child with a more common name due to the negative perceptions the teacher has of the child based on their name.
In addition to the frequency of interactions between the individual and others, the mesosystem helps describe the relationships between people and institutions that may directly affect the development of the child (Thomas, 2005). Relationships that take place within the mesosystem include for example, the home and school environments as well as the relationships among peer groups. If an individual is given a name that is unique or unusual, their interactions with others in the mesosystem may be positive or negative based on the others’ perceptions related to their names. For example, will a child stand out in the classroom as a result of a unique name, becoming popular among her peers, or will she become labeled as odd simply because her name is too unique or unusual?

The innermost system is the microsystem, which includes relationships between the child and others in their closest social contexts: family, peers, the school and the neighborhood. These environments may invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained and more complex interactions with, as well as activity in, the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). These important relationships may all be affected either positively or negatively by the uniqueness of a child’s name.

Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Model provides a perspective, which illustrates how factors in societal policies, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as interactions within and across systems, play an important role in the day to day development of an individual child. This model can also help to illuminate how
shifts in societal attitudes as well as parental practices in children’s names are embedded within a larger cultural context. Perceptions about a child’s name and, by extension, about a child herself in the classroom setting, may impact interactions and relationships across these systems.

Naming Practices

A shift in the naming practices of children in the U.S. has taken place over the last few years with uncommon names becoming increasingly popular (Twenge, Abebe & Campbell, 2010). Although this shift may appear to be recent, parents in fact began to change the way they named their children following World War II, and most dramatically during the 1990s. According to Twenge et al. (2009), in 1955, 32% of boys and 22% of girls had one of the year’s ten most popular names. By 2007, only 9% of boys and 98% of girls had names on that list. A recent study by the National Academy of Sciences (Twenge, et al., 2010) also tracked the shift toward unique names. Between 1900 and 2004, 8,000 different U.S. names were identified in comparison to 2,570 different names identified during the same period in France. These findings point out that Americans have developed a rich variety of names from which they can select for their children’s names.

Today, being unique is now more popular than ever in U.S. culture. According to Pamela Redmond Satran (2007), author of The Baby Name Bible, instead of trying to blend into the melting pot, parents now want to embrace their diversity and often give their children names that reflect their heritage. The shift
in baby naming from common to more unique names can also be linked to an increase in individualism in our society (Twenge, et al., 2010). It is now not only acceptable to have a unique name, but also common for parents to think that giving their child a unique name will help make their child more visible to others.

The popularity of unique or unusual names has also been accelerated by celebrities’ baby name choices, including their creative spellings of popular names (Satran, 2007). Celebrity naming practices along with media exposure and the Internet has increased the visibility of celebrity parents who are naming their children unique names. Today’s parents are now doing the same and seem to be more interested in their children standing out rather than fitting in (Satran, 2007). What effect, however, will this new trend in naming have on the children who are thus named, particularly as they move into preschool and elementary settings?

Perceptions of First Names

A person’s name can trigger a variety of perceptions, or misperceptions, in others. For example, first names have been found to not only convey subtle impressions of the individuals they refer to, but also have been found to be frequently misperceived (Mehrabian & Piercy, 1992). Mehrabian and Piercy investigated the differences in impressions conveyed by unconventionally spelled versus conventionally spelled names. A sample of 159 male and female names, including 66 conventionally spelled and 93 corresponding unconventionally spelled names, were used. Subjects included 50 men and 50 women who were given a list of 28 to 35 names and asked to rate each name based on six different
connotations: successful, moral, popular, warm, cheerful and masculine-feminine. Results indicated that less desirable characteristics such as having a difficult temperament were attributed to conventionally spelled names.

Stereotypes associated with first names have been found to create different evaluative consequences and expectations for the individual (Erwin, 2006). For example, Erwin examined primary school children’s evaluative stereotypes of masculine, feminine, and androgynous first names, and found that evaluations were significantly influenced by the gender of the names and the sex of the rater.

In addition, first names have also been found to be judged based on their attractiveness in relation to individual raters perceptions of names. Unusual names have been found to be more frequently judged as less attractive (Busse & Seraydarian, 1978; Joubert, 1985; Mehrabian, 1992). For example, Mehrabian’s (1992) study investigated university students’ perceptions of the desirability or attractiveness of common versus unique names. Results indicated that names that were characterized as unusual, uncommon or unique connoted unpleasant and submissive characteristics. Uncommon names were also perceived as detrimental to a positive or desirable self-image and as creating handicapping effects in social relationships. Names that connoted pleasant or dominant temperaments were perceived as more desirable than those connoting unpleasant or submissive temperaments.

Along with attractiveness, first names can be judged in relation to the rater’s previous experiences with that name. A rater’s perceptions about an
individual may be inferred based on their prior perceptions about individuals with similar or dissimilar first names. This means that when an individual hears or sees a name, she or he may compare that name to other names she has had experience with. This is especially true for preschool teachers as they work with many children year after year, and often have both positive and negative memories of their students and the first names associated with them.

Ethnic features of names may also influence how individuals are perceived by others. Cotton, O’Neill and Griffin (2007) examined how characteristics of common, Russian, African-American, and unusual first names influenced an individual’s potential for hire. In the first part of the study, 505 individuals enrolled in a university business program evaluated 48 common, Russian, African-American, and unusual names in terms of uniqueness and likeability. In the second part of the study, 166 business graduate students assessed the uniqueness and likeability of the same names, and whether they would hire someone with that name. Results indicated that common or familiar first names were frequently perceived as similar to the individuals while unusual first names appeared dissimilar to individuals. Some names, such as Vladimir and Jamal evoked perceptions in respondents about the individual’s cultural background or economic status. Common names were seen as being more likeable or better than unusual names. Also, respondents reported they were more likely to hire someone with a common name and less likely to hire someone with an unusual name. This may be especially true for preschool teachers as the children’s names preschool
teachers are more familiar with may be more widely accepted or liked, and the children’s names preschool teachers are less familiar with may be less liked.

Other studies have confirmed that names are specifically linked to perceptions about social class and ethnicity (Cotton, O’Neill, & Griffin, 2007; Joubert, 1994). In a study by Cotton et al., 48 names were evaluated by graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in business programs at universities located in the Midwest. Names were evaluated in terms of uniqueness, likeability and overall likeliness of being hired. Results indicated that the raters identified perceived uncommon names, such as those identified as belonging to African-American individuals, as indicating a lower social class than more common names. African American names may therefore be more likely to be judged by preschool teachers as belonging to a lower social class.

Perceptions of names can also be influenced by the way in which they are spelled. Creative naming approaches including the purposeful misspelling of names are very prevalent throughout the United States today. Mehrabian and Piercy (1992), found that individuals with unconventionally spelled names were perceived by American students as having less desirable characteristics than those with conventionally spelled names. Unconventionally spelled names connoted lower levels of success, morality, popularity, warmth, and cheerfulness and may be congruent with preschool teachers perceptions of uncommon or unconventionally spelled names.
The length of first names is another characteristic that has been found to create both positive and negative perceptions of an individual’s personality attributes. In a study by Mehrabian and Piercy (1993), university undergraduates rated names based on six factors including successfulness, morality, popularity, warmth, cheerfulness, and masculine/feminine qualities, using a 9-point scale. Results indicated that longer male names were judged to connote higher levels of success and morality, and lower levels of popularity and cheerfulness. Shorter male names were found to connote higher levels of masculinity, popularity, and cheerfulness. Shorter female names were found to connote greater warmth.

Perceptions of names also differ with respect to gender. West and Shults (1976) found that common male names were rated more positively than common female names, while uncommon female names were more positively rated than uncommon male names. Mehrabian and Valdez (1990) had groups of university students rate male and female names ranging from common to more unique based on six factors: successful, moral, healthy, warm, cheerful, and masculine-feminine, using a scale ranging from 0 to 8. Results indicated that male names connoted greater success and masculinity while female names connoted greater morality, warmth, and cheerfulness. Additionally, the stereotypes associated with both male and female names were more prominent when the raters were of the opposite sex. This may be especially true for male and female preschool teachers.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Children’s Names

Because teachers play a critical role in children’s learning and development, it is important to understand how their perceptions of names may
influence their perceptions about the children themselves. A variety of studies have examined how teachers’ perceptions of children’s behaviors, characteristics, and academic achievements are influenced by characteristics of their names stereotype (Garwood, 1976; Anderson-Clark, Green, & Henley, 2008).

In a research study by Garwood (1976), elementary school teachers rated male sixth grade students’ first names on self-concept and school achievement using both an objective and projective self-concept measure and standardized achievement scores. A total of 79 public elementary school teachers drawn from a pool of teachers enrolled in graduate education courses at a southern university, rated 47 of 176 randomly selected children. Results indicated that students with more desirable names were rated higher on self-concept and school achievement that students with less desirable names.

In a similar study by Tompkins and Boor (1980), student teachers were asked to rate six academic and five social attributes of fictitious seventh grade boys based on school records, which included photos of students that varied in attractiveness and first names varying in popularity. Results indicated that students who had a more attractive sounding name received higher evaluations than students labeled as having an unattractive name based on the five social attributes.

Teachers’ perceptions of students may also be influenced by cultural or ethnic characteristics of their names. Anderson-Clark, Green, and Henley (2008) had elementary school teachers judge the behavior and characteristics of a given
set of students based on their first names. Results indicated that students with African American-sounding names received lower achievement scores than Caucasian-sounding names. Teachers’ perceptions of their students’ names were associated with higher evaluations of student performance and as a result, negative perceptions held by teachers translated into less positive interactions with students. Short essays written by both male and female fifth grade students with common, popular, and attractive as well as rare, unpopular, and unattractive names, were evaluated by teachers and college sophomores. Results showed that the attributed quality of each essay was higher when essays were written by children with names associated with positive stereotypes. Teachers’ stereotypical expectations and bias regarding the performance of their students also was found to vary depending on the amount of training and experience as a teacher.

Individual Differences In Temperament

Just as a child’s name may influence the perceptions of others, temperament is another characteristic that affects how a child is perceived by teachers. In 1977, Thomas and Chess identified the existence of three different temperament types in children. The first type of temperament is referred to as the Difficult Child. This type of child reacts both firmly and negatively to new situations, adapts slowly, and is irregular in both sleeping and eating habits. The Difficult Child also has a low threshold of tolerance for discomfort and reacts intensely to distress. The second type of temperament, the Slow-To-Warm Child, approaches novel situations in a hesitant manner, but without the strong negative reactions of the Difficult Child. New experiences are adapted to by the Slow-To-
Warm Child in a positive way if not pressured. Thomas and Chess’ (1977) last type of temperament, the Easy Child, responds in a positive manner, adapts quickly to new experiences and has regular sleeping and eating habits.

Children’s temperament may affect the quality of student-teacher relationships as well as the quality of children’s peer interactions. In a study by Griggs, Gagnon, Huelsman, Kiddler-Ashley, and Ballard (2009), children with more difficult temperaments were more likely to be associated with an increase in disruptive peer play as a result of high conflict. Peer play was frequently disrupted in such cases due to the intervention of the teacher to resolve behavioral issues created by a child with a difficult temperament. In addition, children with more difficult temperaments have also been found to be more susceptible to negative caregiving influences. For example, previous research has found that children with a more difficult temperament can be more susceptible to environmental influences such as lower quality of care by caregivers (De Schipper, Tavecchio & Van Ijzendoorn, 2008). The same research study has also shown that boys are more vulnerable to negative caregiving in childcare settings as they often have less secure relationships with their caregivers than girls because their temperament is often more demanding. It therefore becomes vital for these children to have a secure relationship with their caregivers, by having caregivers that are sensitive and responsive to their needs regardless of their gender. This will then afford children the opportunity to not only cope within the classroom, but also to thrive while at school.
Teachers’ perceptions of children’s temperament have been found to be associated with their adjustment to day care. For example, de Schipper, Tavecchio, Van Ijzendoorn, and Van Zeijl (2004), evaluated the adjustment of 186 children between 6 and 30 months of age in the day care setting by checking the ‘goodness of fit’ between children’s temperament, program stability and caregiver ratios. Results indicated that caregivers perceived children with a more difficult temperament as being more vulnerable to lower quality care and less stability than children with an ‘easy’ temperament. Franyo and Hyson (1999) investigated the effect of temperament training of 292 child caregivers of children under 6 years of age, through temperament concepts and caregivers’ acceptance of children. Results indicated that when caregivers perceived children as ‘difficult,’ negative or ineffective interactions were more likely to occur. Although caregivers had a general knowledge of what temperament was in this study, little use was made of this information when interacting with children of different temperaments by preschool teachers within the classroom study.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Temperament as it Relates to Naming Practices

Very little research has examined the question of whether, or how, teachers’ perceptions of children’s names might influence their perceptions of children’s temperament. In a study by Harari and McDavid (1973), teachers’ perceptions of children’s temperament in the classroom differed based on name popularity.

Research by Harari and McDavid (1973), further suggests that children with first names that teachers consider desirable may have a better self-concept
and higher achievement scores than students whose names are considered undesirable by teachers. Children’s first names may also connote temperament attributes. In a three-part research study, Mehrabian (1992) investigated the interrelationship among name desirability, uniqueness, emotion connoted by names, and temperament were evaluated. Participants in the first group provided their names and data on their own temperament, followed by the second study’s rating of the previous group’s names on uniqueness and desirability. Lastly, subjects from the third study rated the temperament qualities connoted by the names given in Study 1. Results indicated that names that connoted pleasant or psychological health traits were associated with pleasant temperament attributes, while names that connoted unpleasant or maladjustment traits were associated with unpleasant temperament attributes. This may be especially true in the preschool classroom, where uncommon names may be perceived by preschool teachers to connote unpleasant temperament attributes such as a difficult temperament.

The Present Study

Despite the extensive amount of research on temperament, names and teaching practices, little research exists today on the relationship between teachers’ preconceived notions of their students’ temperament and how those perceptions may be linked to teachers’ perceptions of children’s first names. Using questionnaire methodology, the present study was designed to expand upon previous research by investigating teachers’ perceptions of children’s temperament based on children’s first names. It was
hypothesized that preschool teachers would more frequently associate uncommon names (literal) with the ‘difficult’ temperament type than more common names (non-literal). In addition, it was hypothesized that male names with literal connotations would be more frequently associated with the difficult temperament type than similarly literal female names.
Chapter 3  
METHODS  

This current study is an examination of the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of children’s first names and their perceptions about the child’s temperament as well as other characteristics such as name gender. This chapter presents a description of the methods used in the study.  

Participants and Setting  

Subjects included 26 teachers recruited from both public and private preschools located in two Northern California Cities: Sacramento (urban/suburban) and Redding (suburban/rural). Teachers of varying age, gender, and ethnicity were recruited through the use of a phone book. Two lists were compiled, the first containing of all of the names of the preschools listed in the phonebook to be located in Sacramento, and the second containing a list of all of the preschools listed in the phone book to be located in Redding. Twenty preschools from each city were randomly selected and letters and later each center director was contacted to invite their preschool teachers to participate in the study (see Appendix A).  

Of the 26 participants, 24 teachers identified their age, with a range from 21 to 62 years ($M = 39.29$ years, $SD = 11.84$ years). One hundred percent of the preschool teachers who chose to participate were female, and 65.4% of the teachers were from preschools located in Redding and 34.6% came from preschools located in Sacramento.
The majority of the teachers in the sample self-identified as Caucasian; the ethnic breakdown is reported in Table 1. The following were listed within the “other” category: Asian, African American, Hispanic, Ukrainian, Native American, and half Black/half White. Of those who chose to participate, 15.4% declined to state their ethnicity.

Participants were asked to describe the average socioeconomic status (SES) of the students their facility served (Table 1). Nearly one-third of the participants (30.8%) reported that they worked with middle SES students, but reports from teachers in the rest of the sample were mixed. The largest group (38.5%) declined to identify the SES of the students with whom they were working. Because of the high number of “no response” reports for this item, it was not used in subsequent analyses.

The participants were also asked to report the number of years of their teaching experience. This ranged from a minimum of 1 year to a maximum of 26 years \( (M = 12.16 \text{ years}, \ SD = 7.49 \text{ years}) \).
Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Teachers’ Demographic Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Reported</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>96.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Reported</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ SES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower/Middle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower/Middle/Upper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Reported</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedures

Recruitment Procedures and Participants

Recruitment of the participating teachers began with the creation of a list of possible preschool sites in the two selected cities. Using the Yellow Pages website, two lists were created that contained the names of all of the Sacramento (n=90) and all of the Redding (n=22) preschools. Next, twenty preschools from Sacramento and twenty preschools from Redding were randomly selected from two hats that each contained the names of all of the preschools on the lists. Of the preschools randomly selected in Redding, five were no longer in business and one preschool went by two names. The two remaining preschools that were not initially selected were then selected to represent Redding, which brought the total number of preschools for that city to 16. Of the preschools randomly selected in Sacramento, two were no longer in business and one school went by two names. Three additional preschools were then randomly selected from the list of remaining preschools, which brought the total number of preschools representing Sacramento to 20.

Once the preschools in Redding and Sacramento were selected, consent forms and questionnaires were mailed to the director of each preschool, with instructions for the director to disperse to each teacher at the school. This dispersal resulted in a pool of 189 public and private preschool teachers who were invited to participate in the study. Subjects who chose to participate in the study were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. Each subject’s return of the anonymous questionnaire served as passive consent to participate in the study (Appendix
A). Of the 189 teachers initially recruited, a final total of 26 teachers returned the questionnaire, which represents a 14% participation rate.

Data Collection and Questionnaire

Data for this study were collected by means of a questionnaire, which was adapted with permission from a previous research study by Mehrabian (1992). The new questionnaire included a temperament characteristic in addition to the other four original characteristics, as well as 16 literal and 16 non-literal names. The questionnaire completed by each of the participants comprised of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire provided instructions for the participants (see Appendix B). The second part included the demographic items, a list of 32 names and an 11-point rating scale that the teachers used to rate their perceptions of name characteristics and temperament on five different characteristics: Ethical/Caring, Popular/Fun, Success, and Masculine-Feminine (see Appendix C).

Demographics

At the top of the rating questionnaire, participants were asked to identify their gender, ethnicity, age, as well as the age of the students’ they were teaching, their students’ SES, the city in which the preschool they worked at was located, and the number of years they had been teaching.

Perceptions of Names

Differences in the teachers’ perceptions of children’s temperament based on names were assessed using Mehrabian’s (1997) Revised Name Connotation Profile (NCP). The Profile requires the respondents to rate a list of names on four characteristics:
Ethical Caring, Popular Fun, Success, and Masculine-Feminine. The instructions page provides an explanation of each of these characteristics as well as other guidelines for completing the ratings (See Appendix B).

On the questionnaire page, teachers were provided an 11-point Likert scale for rating each of the 32 names on each dimension. The first eight points of the scale ranged from zero, indicating none for that dimension; to eight, indicating an extremely high degree for that dimension. A higher score indicated a higher rating on each dimension for each name. Both literal (n=16) and non-literal names (n=16) were represented on the list. The names list was also balanced by gender with 8 female and 8 male names for both literal and non-literal lists.

In addition to Mehrabian’s (1997) four name characteristics, teachers were asked to rate each of the 32 names on a fifth characteristic of temperament, using the three temperament types - easy, slow to warm, and difficult. Descriptions of the three temperament characteristics were based on Thomas and Chess’ (1977) three distinct temperament types. The temperament ratings comprised the final three levels of the scale, which included easy (9), slow to warm (10), or difficult (11), with a higher score indicating a more difficult temperament.

Data Analysis

Teachers’ responses to the questionnaire items were analyzed using several analytical methods. Differences in ratings on the characteristics between the names containing literal connotations and names without literal connotations were examined using t-tests. A MANOVA was computed to explore the possible contributions of name
characteristics (gender and literal versus non-literal) on the five name connotation scores, which correspond to the five factors of ethical caring, popular fun, successful, masculine-feminine, and temperament. The following chapter reports the results of the analyses.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

In order to identify possible differences in teachers’ ratings of the names, two sets of t-test analyses were conducted. The first set of paired t-tests compared teachers’ ratings of literal versus non-literal names. The second set compared teachers’ ratings by name gender. Finally, a third set of analyses employed a MANOVA to examine relationships between the name factors of gender and literal/non-literal and the five characteristics.

Differences Between Literal and Non-Literal Names

Subjects rated each of the literal and non-literal names on the five name-connotation characteristics: ethical-caring, popular-fun, successful, masculine-feminine, and temperament. These five characteristics represented the five dependent variables for the first analysis, while the factors of literal versus non-literal represented the independent variable. Ratings for the five dependent measures were averaged across the 26 raters for each name (N = 32) to create a mean score. For the three temperament subscales, the average scores for each name were computed, and then the scores were then compared to determine which had the lowest numeric scores (difficult) and the highest scores (easy).

To examine group differences for literal vs. non-literal names, paired t-tests for dependent means were conducted for each of the five dependent variables (see Table 2). Results yielded significant findings for the characteristics of non-literal names for successful $t(25) = -4.56, p < 0.05$, literal names for temperament $t(24) = -3.23, p < 0.05$, 
and non-literal names for ethical-caring $t(25) = -6.73, p < 0.05$. There were no significant differences for the characteristics of popular-fun $t(25) = -1.21, p > 0.05$, or masculine-feminine $t(25) = -0.08, p > 0.05$.

Table 2. Paired Sample T-test Comparing Teachers’ Perceptions of Names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Type</th>
<th>Literal</th>
<th>Non-Literal</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular-Fun</td>
<td>4.71(1.58)</td>
<td>4.99(1.39)</td>
<td>-1.21</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>4.16(1.66)</td>
<td>5.57(1.34)</td>
<td>-4.56</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine-Feminine</td>
<td>4.80(1.29)</td>
<td>4.82(1.34)</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical-Caring</td>
<td>3.95(1.34)</td>
<td>5.56(1.37)</td>
<td>-6.73</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperament</td>
<td>9.84(0.37)</td>
<td>10.19(0.38)</td>
<td>-3.23</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results indicate that the preschool teachers were more likely to associate names with literal connotations with a more difficult temperament and names without literal connotations with an easy or slow to warm temperament. Preschool teachers were also more likely to associate names without literal connotations with being successful and ethical or caring.

Differences Between Names By Gender

In this analysis, teachers’ ratings of the names on the five name-connotation characteristics of ethical-caring, popular-fun, successful, masculine-feminine, and
temperament (dependent variables) were compared by the characteristic of name gender (independent variable). Ratings for the five dependent measures were averaged across the 26 raters for each name (N = 32) to create a mean score. To identify group differences for male and female gender of literal and non-literal names by rater, paired sample t tests were conducted. These analyses yielded significant results for the characteristics of masculine/feminine $t(24) = 5.81, p < 0.05$, and successful $t(24) = 2.24, p < 0.05$, such that male names were perceived as more successful. While non-significant, there was a trend toward significance for ethical-caring $t(25) = -1.87, p = .07$, and temperament $t(24) = -2.00, p = 0.06$. Differences in ratings for popular-fun also failed to reach significance $t(25) = -0.47, p < 0.05$ (see Table 3).

The results indicate that preschool teachers were more likely to associate male names as being masculine than female names, which is perhaps not surprising. They were also more likely to associate male names with success than female names. Preschool teachers were also more likely to associate male names with ethical-caring than female names and associate male names with a more difficult temperament than female names. Female names were more likely associated with popular-fun than male names.
**Table 3. Paired Sample T-test Comparing Teachers’ Perceptions of Names Based on Name Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular-Fun</td>
<td>4.88(1.39)</td>
<td>4.82(1.39)</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>4.62(1.30)</td>
<td>4.93(1.23)</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine-Feminine</td>
<td>3.18(2.00)</td>
<td>6.18(1.15)</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical-Caring</td>
<td>4.91(1.21)</td>
<td>4.63(1.37)</td>
<td>-1.87</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperament</td>
<td>10.01(0.39)</td>
<td>9.93(0.24)</td>
<td>-2.00</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences Between Name Characteristics

In order to further examine the five characteristics in relation to the names, a second data set was created. Unlike the prior data set, which was summed at the participant level (n = 26), in this new data set (n = 32) ratings assigned to each name by participants were summed for a total rating for each of the five characteristics. Using this summed name data, a MANOVA analysis was conducted, with the characteristics and temperament entered as dependent variables and gender and literal/non-literal classification as categorical independent factors. The results of this analysis are provided in Table 4.

When looking at the total model as a whole, the MANOVA showed significance differences in for ethical-caring, successful, masculine-feminine, and temperament. The
amount of variance explained was good and varied from 83% for Masculine-feminine to 19% for temperament. There was no significant main effect for popular-fun. Preschool teachers more frequently associated female names with ethical-caring, male names with success, male names with masculinity, and male names with a difficult temperament (See Table 4).

Main effects for literal and non-literal name types in the MANOVA were significant for ethical-caring $F(1, 32) = 3.42, p < .01$, and successful $F(1, 32) = 67.95, p = 0.01$. There was a trend toward significance for popular-fun $F(1, 32) = 3.72, p = 0.06$. There was no significant main effect for masculine-feminine $F(1, 32) = 3.26, p = 0.08$. Preschool teachers more frequently associated non-literal names with ethical-caring and successful than literal names (Means presented in Table 4).

Results of the MANOVA showed significance for ethical-caring, successful, masculine-feminine, and temperament. The amount of variance explained varied from 83% for masculine-feminine to 19% for temperament. There was no significant main effect for popular-fun. Preschool teachers more frequently associated female names with ethical-caring, male names with success, male names with masculinity, and male names with a difficult temperament (See Table 4).
### Table 4. Means and MANOVA for Literal vs Non-literal Names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>$F(3,28)$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Adj-$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical-Caring</td>
<td>Literal</td>
<td>88.63</td>
<td>106.88</td>
<td>97.75</td>
<td>21.24</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Literal</td>
<td>138.50</td>
<td>140.50</td>
<td>139.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular-Fun</td>
<td>Literal</td>
<td>114.50</td>
<td>119.38</td>
<td>116.94</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Literal</td>
<td>124.13</td>
<td>124.25</td>
<td>124.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Literal</td>
<td>102.63</td>
<td>98.75</td>
<td>100.69</td>
<td>24.29</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Literal</td>
<td>145.50</td>
<td>131.63</td>
<td>138.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine-Feminine</td>
<td>Literal</td>
<td>145.25</td>
<td>90.63</td>
<td>117.94</td>
<td>50.83</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Literal</td>
<td>167.13</td>
<td>67.50</td>
<td>117.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperament</td>
<td>Literal</td>
<td>227.25</td>
<td>237.25</td>
<td>232.25</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Literal</td>
<td>237.25</td>
<td>237.25</td>
<td>232.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main effects for gender of name showed significance for masculine-feminine $F (1, 28) = 140.52, p = 0.01$ and temperament $F (1, 28) = 5.79, p = 0.02$. There was a trend toward significance for ethical-caring $F (1, 28) = 3.42, p = 0.08$ and successful $F (1, 28) = 3.73, p = 0.06$. There was no significant main effect for popular-fun, $F (1, 28) = 0.44, p = 0.51$.

Preschool teachers appeared more likely to associate male names with masculinity and a more difficult temperament. There was a trend for female names to be rated higher on ethincal caring and male names to be rated higher on success but these failed to reach significance (Means presented in Table 4).

When looking at the interaction between literal/non-literal names and gender, the MANOVA showed significance only for masculine-feminine $F (1, 31) = 11.96, p = 0.00$. There was no main significant effect for ethical-caring $F (1, 31) = 2.20, p = 0.15$, popular-fun $F (1, 31) = 0.40, p = 0.53$, successful $F (1, 31) = 1.18, p = 0.29$, or temperament $F (1, 31) = 1.06, p = 0.31$. 

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Non-Literal} & 235.50 & 239.50 & 237.50 \\
\text{(6.16)} & (9.13) & (7.81)
\end{array}
\]
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Uncommon names, such as those with literal connotations, are becoming increasingly popular in naming practices in the U.S. Despite this recent trend of creative naming, (Mehrabian, 2001; Satran, 2007; Twenge, Abebe & Campbell, 2010), previous research has shown that uncommon or literal names may connote more negative emotional reactions towards the individual than do common or non-literal names. In addition, teachers’ perceptions of children’s behaviors, characteristics, and academic achievements have been found to be influenced by name stereotypes (Garwood, 1976; Anderson-Clark, Green, & Henley, 2008). As a result, these uncommon or literal names have the potential to shape the expectations and treatment of the individual by others, including teachers (Busse & Seraydarian, 1978; Erwin, 2006; Mehrabian, 1992).

Furthermore, individual characteristics that may be inferred based on a person’s name can influence interactions with and perceptions of the person by others (Mehrabian, 1992). These inferences are especially critical in classroom situations where teachers’ perceptions about children’s temperament and character can play an important role in children’s interactions within the classroom. The present study was designed to expand upon previous research by investigating teachers’ perceptions of children’s temperament and other characteristics based on their perceptions about literal versus non-literal first names.
Hypothesis Testing

It was expected that both public and private preschool teachers would more frequently associate names containing literal connotations with the difficult temperament type than names without literal connotations. It was also expected that male names with literal connotations would be more frequently associated with the difficult temperament type than female names. The first hypothesis was supported by the data, as preschool teachers were more likely to associate names containing literal connotations with a more difficult temperament. These findings are consistent with that of Mehrabian and Piercy (1992) as first names were found to be perceived differently depending on whether they were literal or non-literal.

Preschool teachers perceptions of names were found to trigger unique perceptions relating to name characteristics such as ethical-caring, successful, popular-fun, masculine-feminine or temperament each name connotes. In addition, the present findings were also similar to those by Erwin (2006), as stereotypes associated with first names were found to have different evaluative expectations. Preschool teachers were found to have different expectations of names and the characteristics they connote such as temperament. Preschool teachers more frequently associated literal names with being less desirable, which ultimately resulted in negative expectations of temperament (Busse & Seraydarian, 1978).

The second hypothesis that male names with literal connotations would be more frequently associated with the difficult temperament type than female names
however, was not supported, as there were no significant findings for the interaction between literal names and gender. Preschool teachers were just as likely to associate male literal names with the difficult temperament, as they were to associate literal female names. These findings contradict previous research findings (Else-Quest, Hyde, Goldsmith, & Van Hulle, 2006; Fagan, 1990; Feingold, 1994; Guerin & Gottfried, 1994; Maccoby et al., 1984; Stern & Karraker, 1989).

There are several limitations to the present study, which may help explain why the second hypothesis was not supported in the current study. In comparison to previous research on gender differences in temperament, the overall size of the present study’s sample was relatively small. This sample size may not have been large enough to detect differences among name gender and temperament. The present study also included preschool teachers rather than college students as in previous research. The fact that the present sample included only female teachers may be important. A lack of male participants may have also had an impact on the present study’s findings. An increased number of male participant ratings could have possibly produced a lower rating for female names and thus female name may have been just as likely to be associated with the difficult temperament as male names.

On the other hand the pool of preschool teachers is primarily female so this may be an accurate representation of attitudes of those working with preschool children.
Differences in Name Characteristics

There results from this study indicated that names with literal connotations were perceived by preschool teachers as being more frequently associate with a difficult temperament. Due to the literal connotation associated with their names, names such as River, Daisy, Ace, and Cannon were perceived by preschool teachers to be associated with more a difficult temperament. In addition, names without literal connotations such as Joshua, William, Ava, and Olivia, were perceived by preschool teachers as being more successful and ethical-caring. These names that are without literal connotations were associated with positive characteristics perhaps because they themselves carry no connotation other than the name itself.

Limitations & Future Research

Research limitations in the present study need to be acknowledged. The fact that the present sample included only female teachers may be important. A lack of male participants may have also had an impact on the present study’s findings because according to previous research, the stereotypes associated with both male and female names have been found to be more prominent when the raters were of the opposite sex (Mehrabian and Valdez, 1990; West & Schults, 1976).

Along with the sample, the measurement tool used in this study may also have limitations. The survey forced teachers to make decisions about names that they may not have had strong opinions or experiences with. This may have forced decisions based on surface characteristics such as gender of name. The survey did
not ask about participants’ experience with the names listed.

Prior experience that the participants may have had with each name may have also influenced their scoring on the measure and the study’s overall results. In addition, the individual participants that responded may have been biased toward participating due to education, interest in the topic, or influence from other co-workers. Some of the potential participant may have failed to participate due to working conditions such as under staffing at their preschool or work related stress. Based on these limitations future research could identify teacher’s experience with names so that it could be determined as to whether name bias is more likely to happen among names that are newer to teachers or names that they have been more frequently exposed to. In addition, future research could also examine other potential characteristics that may be inferred in children’s names, such as parent’s education, religion affiliation, and socio-economic status.

Information such as this is important, as it would not only help educators to understand the hidden characteristics that are often associated with names, but also could be used to determine whether any additional assumptions are made about children and their families based on their first names. This research would be of value since it would indicate whether name stereotypes go beyond name characteristics such as temperament.

Implications for Teachers

These findings have several implications for the preschool classroom setting. Children have no control over the names they have been given as well as the quality of the interactions they will have with other people as a result of their name. Children with first names that preschool teachers consider desirable have
higher quality interactions with their teacher, and as a result, a better self-concept and achievement scores. In contrast, students with names considered to be undesirable by teachers, such as those with literal connotations, are more likely to have lower quality interactions with their teacher, and lower self-concept and achievement (de Schipper, Tavecchio, Van IJzendoorn, & Van Zeijl, 2004; Franyo & Hyson, 1999; Harari & McDavid, 1973).

This is especially worth noting since preschool teachers’ perceptions about children’s name characteristics, such as temperament, can be attached to a name and may play a role in how teachers interact with their students in the classroom. The present research findings have several implications for preschool teachers who are working with children in the classroom setting. It is important for preschool teachers to understand that unusual or unique names can be misperceived and even viewed as less attractive (Busse & Seraydarian, 1978; Joubert, 1985; Mehrabian, 1992). It is also important for teachers to recognize any bias they may initially have of children based on the uniqueness of their names and their perceived temperament, and to reflect upon any assumptions or stereotypes they may have regarding children based on their first names, as this may ultimately result in different consequences and expectations they may have for uniquely named children (Erwin, 2006).

Such a process can ultimately enhance preschool teachers’ ability to understand how their own misperceptions may affect how they treat individual children within the classroom setting (Mehrabian & Piercy, 1992). It is imperative
for preschool teachers to keep their own perceptions of names in check through either peer reflection or even by taking a name inventory of their own class so that they recognize any personal bias they may towards particular names. This will give each and every child the opportunity to be treated fairly while at school.

In the future, research could also examine preschool teachers’ perceptions of children’s families based on their names. For example, parenting types, parents’ education, religious affiliation, income, and social class could be investigated to determine if any additional assumptions are made about children and their families based on their first names. This research would be of value since it would indicate whether name stereotypes go beyond name characteristics such as temperament.

In addition, future research could examine whether preschool teacher’s perceptions of names actually translates into positive or negative behavior within the classroom setting. It could also be determined whether children’s temperament itself influences preschool teacher’s perceptions of names. Does a child’s temperament that is perceived to be difficult by a preschool teacher cause their first name to carry a negative connotation? Or do negative perceptions of a child’s first name, either literal or non-literal, influence the negative viewing of that child’s temperament? Further research on these questions could help to provide a more complete picture of the negative perceptions preschool teachers may have of children with literal names and their temperament.
The present findings add to the field of child development since they indicate that it is important for educators to understand that children’s names can be misperceived and that these misperceptions can lead to different expectations and consequences. It is also important for educators to reflect on their own perceptions of children’s names so that they in turn will treat children equally regardless of their name.
APPENDIX A

Invitation to Preschool Directors to Participate in Study
Dear Preschool Program Director,

   It was nice talking to you on the phone the other day. Per our telephone conversation, I would like to invite your preschool teachers to participate in the research for my Master’s thesis in Child Development at California State University, Sacramento. The purpose of the study is to explore perceptions about students’ personalities and names. This information is important because it may have implications for children’s experiences within the preschool setting.

   I would appreciate it if you could distribute the envelopes provided to any if all of your preschool teachers. These envelopes have the anonymous surveys that I am asking preschool teachers to complete. A return envelope is also provided so they can send it back to me. The survey is completely voluntary and teachers are under no obligation to participate.

   If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either me by email at cquinn_ryan@yahoo.com or my research sponsor Dr. Raskauskas at (916) 278-7029 or by e-mail at jraskauskas@csus.edu.

Thank you for your assistance.

Caitlin Ryan
Master’s Student
APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form to Participate in Research
Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in research, which is being conducted by Caitlin Ryan, a Master’s Student in the Child Development Department at California State University, Sacramento. The purpose of the study is to explore perceptions about students’ personalities and names. This information is important because it may have implications for children’s experiences within the preschool setting.

A sample of 60 preschool teachers are being invited to participate in this research. If you elect to participate you will be asked to complete a short survey and return it in the envelope provided. The survey should take 5-10 minutes to complete and does not ask you for identifying information. Your participation in this study will be anonymous.

This procedure is not associated with any known risks. You have the right to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. You may not personally benefit from participating in this research but your responses will help us further understand children’s experiences in preschools.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either me by email at cquinn_ryan@yahoo.com or my research sponsor Dr. Raskauskas at (916) 278-7029 or by e-mail at jraskauskas@csus.edu.

You may decline to be a participant in this study without any consequences. Your return of this survey indicates that you have read this page and agree to participate in the research.

Thank you for your consideration.

Return of this Anonymous Survey to the Researcher Serves as Your Consent to Participate in this Research.
APPENDIX C

Instructions to Participant Questionnaire
The Name Connotation Profile

INSTRUCTIONS

What can you tell about a person from their name? You will find five separate groups of characteristics below. Each of these groups is defined for you with a list of highly interrelated adjectives.

For example, "POPULAR-FUN" (playful, humorous, popular, cheerful, outgoing, good-looking, adventurous, friendly, athletic, healthy, curious) includes adjectives that together define a general characteristic that is broader than any one of the component adjectives implies.

Take your time and think about each group of adjectives as a whole so you will know what is meant by the entire group as a unit.

ETHICAL-CARING: trustworthy, loyal, sincere, kind, generous, honest, respectful, caring, polite, patient, warm, moral, obedient, sensitive, responsible, religious, loving, congenial.

POPULAR-FUN: playful, humorous, popular, cheerful, outgoing, good-looking, adventurous, friendly, athletic, healthy, curious.

SUCCESSFUL: successful, ambitious, intelligent, independent, confident, assertive, creative.

MASCULINE: the opposite of feminine

TEMPERAMENT: 

Easy- responds in a positive mood, adapts quickly to new experiences and has regular sleeping and eating habits.

Slow to Warm- approaches novel situations in a hesitant manner, but without the strong negative reactions of the Difficult Child. New experiences are adapted by the Slow-To-Warm Child in a positive way if not pressured.

Difficult- The Difficult Child has a low threshold of tolerance for discomfort and reacts intensely to distress, acting both firmly and negatively to new situations.
You are given a Name List (consisting of names we want you to rate) and an Answer Sheet where you can record your ratings.

**PLEASE KEEP ALL OF THE FOLLOWING PRECAUTIONS IN MIND AS YOU RATE THE VARIOUS NAMES.**

1. Rate each name exactly as it is spelled -- do not alter the name in any way while thinking about it and rating it.

2. If you come across your own name, please don't rate it.

3. When you rate a name, **do not** think of a specific person you know who has that name. Instead, imagine that you are about to meet a person for the first time (someone introduced by a friend, maybe a blind date, or a new coworker or a new roommate). Imagine that you have not yet met the person and all you know about them is their name and their gender. Knowing only the name and gender of this individual, how do you picture the person and how would you describe this person on each of the four characteristics?

4. Be sure to keep the gender that goes along with a name in mind while you rate a name.

5. Periodically, please reread and review the five groups of characteristics. For example, remember that "ETHICAL-CARING" includes the qualities trustworthy, loyal, sincere, kind, generous, honest, respectful, caring, polite, patient, warm, moral, obedient, sensitive, responsible, religious, loving, and congenial. You need to keep all qualities within a group of characteristics in mind while rating a name on that group.

6. In rating the masculine-feminine quality implied by each name, use high numerical scores for masculine-sounding names and use low numerical scores for feminine-sounding names. For example, Tiffany would get a low score on masculinity, maybe a score of zero, one, or two. On the other hand, Butch would get a very high score, maybe a 6, 7, or 8.

7. When completing the TEMPERAMENT category, think about each name’s connotation individually and then rate them based on the three temperaments, easy, slow to warm, or difficult, marking a 9, 10, or 11.

8. Finally, please take your time, concentrate, and give us as carefully measured ratings as you possibly can. When you feel you are getting tired or losing concentration, please set the material aside and come back to it later. It is very important that we have your best efforts here, because others will be relying on your ratings. So, please be careful.
APPENDIX D

Participant Questionnaire
Please Circle:  Teacher Gender: M / F  
Preschool Location: Redding or Sacramento  
Ethnicity:  
Years Teaching:  
Teacher's Age:  Students' Ages  
Students' SES: lower / middle / upper

Please read the Instructions before you use this Answer Sheet. Use the scale below to indicate how much of each characteristic is implied by a given name by itself. Enter your five numerical ratings for each name in the six spaces provided on each line.

### RATING SCALE FOR NAMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 = none of the characteristic</td>
<td>1 = very slight degree of the characteristic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = slight degree of the characteristic</td>
<td>3 = slight to moderate degree of the characteristic</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 = moderate degree of the characteristic</td>
<td>5 = moderate to high degree of the characteristic</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 = high degree of the characteristic</td>
<td>7 = very high degree of the characteristic</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 = extremely high degree of the characteristic</td>
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### RATING SCALE FOR TEMPERAMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 = Has a low threshold of tolerance for discomfort, reacts intensely to distress, acting both firmly and negatively to new situations</td>
<td>10 = Approaches novel situations in a hesitant manner, but without the strong negative reactions. New experiences are adapted in a positive way if not pressured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 = Responds in a positive mood, adapts quickly to new experiences and has regular sleeping and eating habits</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethical-Caring</th>
<th>Popular-Fun</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Masculine-Feminine</th>
<th>Temperament</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
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<td>River</td>
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<td>Reagan</td>
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<td>Michael</td>
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<td>Emma</td>
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<td>Harley</td>
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<td>Daisy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethan</td>
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<td>Princess</td>
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53
Please read the Instructions and then the Name List before you use this Answer Sheet. Use the scale below to indicate how much of each characteristic is implied by a given name by itself. Enter your numerical ratings for each name in the five spaces provided on each line.

**RATING SCALE FOR NAMES**

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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Very slight degree of the characteristic</td>
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**RATING SCALE FOR TEMPERAMENT**

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<td>Has a low threshold of tolerance for discomfort, reacts intensely to distress, acting both firmly and negatively to new situations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Approaches novel situations in a hesitant manner, but without the strong negative reactions. New experiences are adapted in a positive way if not pressured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Responds in a positive mood, adapts quickly to new experiences and has regular sleeping and eating habits.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethical-Caring</th>
<th>Popular-Fun</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Masculine-Feminine</th>
<th>Temperament</th>
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