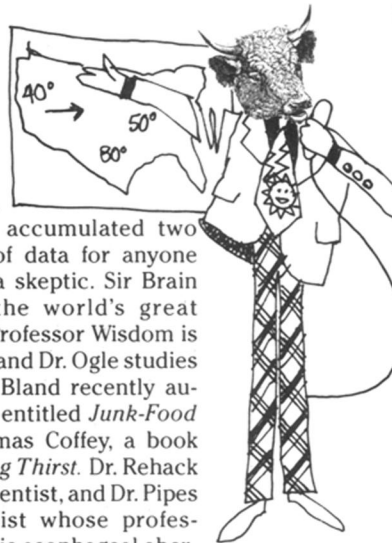


OFF THE BEAT NAMES THAT WORK



Most experienced scientists can testify to the temptation to identify a cause-and-effect relationship on the basis of insufficient evidence. It is an occupational hazard for people who make their living explaining. For psychologists, one of the most enticing explanations for adult behavior — especially in light of behavioral and Freudian theories — is found in the details of childhood experience. In order to caution his students against drawing connections too glibly, Brown University psychologist Lewis P. Lipsett began several years ago to look for an apparent cause-and-effect relationship that, in fact, could not possibly be.

To make his point, Lipsett pointed out to his class that the alumni archivist at Brown was named Mrs. Record, that the controller was Mr. Price and the purchasing agent Mr. Banks. A professor of music, he noted, was Mr. Fiddler. For emphasis, he added that the director of the Rhode Island Oceanographic Institute, Mr. Fish, had hired two colleagues named Mr. Saila and Mr. Seman. The head of the Rhode Island Audubon Society was Mr. Hawkes; Mr. Rowles was the chief executive, and Mr. Carr the manager, of the American Automobile Association.

"Now," Lipsett says, "with the unsolicited help of students and friends in the years since, I have received a vast amount of data supporting this purported non-relationship. There are so many instances of such non-connections that by now I have come to believe ... that there exists such a relationship. Maybe people do choose their occupations and preoccupations in part by their names — perhaps through some convoluted set of circumstances that support first a minor disposition that becomes a tendency, which becomes, alas, one's destiny."

How else, Lipsett asks, can one explain Professor Good of Brown University's Religious Studies department, who teaches a course on Divine Law and Divine Justice? And what about Dr. Harry Smiley, the Columbia University orthodontist? Can it be coincidence that Robin Fox and Lionel Tiger met at the London Zoo and began collaborative work there? That Dr. Stagge works with deer and Dr. Clear is an expert on vision and glare?

Lipsett has accumulated two thick folders of data for anyone who remains a skeptic. Sir Brain was one of the world's great neurologists. Professor Wisdom is a philosopher, and Dr. Ogle studies vision. Jeffrey Bland recently authored a book entitled *Junk-Food Syndrome*. Tomas Coffey, a book called *The Long Thirst*. Dr. Rehack is a Maryland dentist, and Dr. Pipes is a nutritionist whose professional interest is esophageal aberrations.

The evidence is difficult to escape, Lipsett says. While reading a recent *TIME* magazine cover story on cats, he learned of Lynn Litterine, a devoted cat lover, and of Dr. Perper a well known cat veterinarian. Disconcertingly, the article also cited Dr. Michael Fox, an authority on wolves.

Though the epidemiological evidence is overwhelming, Lipsett concedes that it is not always easy to understand the cause-and-effect relationship in individual cases. Was the Navy man who recently survived six days at sea on a raft fortunate or unfortunate to have been named Robert Tiller? In his own case, however, Lipsett is convinced of a simple causal relationship. "With a name like Lipsett, I would have had to study sucking and other oral behaviors of infants — and I did and I do."

—Wray Herbert



John Isely