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The Up hot

WHAT'S IN A NAME

After 'Frozen,' a Baby Boomlet of Elsas

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For the first time in forever — or at least in over a century — Elsa has become a popular name in the United States.

There were more than a thousand baby Elsas born last year, making it the 286th most common girl's name. The name had not cracked the top 500 since 1917. The timing of this Elsa boom aligns closely, of course, with the late-2013 release of the hit Disney movie "Frozen."

Somewhat surprisingly, Elsa's sister, Anna, the true heroine of that story, has not seen a similar surge in popularity. While Anna has always been a relatively popular name, the movie did not provide much of a boost, and her name rose one spot in the rankings last year, to become the 34th most common girl's name.

If the popularity of these two names had remained frozen at their 2013 levels, we would be looking at 559 fewer Elsas and 215 fewer Annas in classrooms about five years from now.

This data comes from a complete count of the first names of newborns

getting Social Security cards, a data set that has recently been updated to include the numbers for 2014.

The male characters of “Frozen” all bear quite unusual names, but they’ve also all become more popular. Olaf, the lovable snowman who likes warm hugs, now has 22 baby namesakes, up from only nine the previous year. The rugged and roguish Kristoff shared a name with 32 baby boys last year, up from seven a year earlier.

And perhaps Kristoff was right to sing that reindeers are better than people, as the name he gave his trusty steed Sven has proved to be even more popular than his own, with 55 baby Svens born last year, up from 33 in 2013.

Even Oaken, the burly gay proprietor of the eponymous “Wandering Oaken’s Trading Post and Sauna,” has seen an uptick in popularity; the only two years in which at least five babies were given this name were 2013 and 2014.

Providing nearly unimpeachable proof that all publicity is good publicity, the evil Prince Hans has also found that his name is rising in popularity. Last year 132 baby boys were named Hans, up from 98 in 2013. (Parents, what were you thinking?)

Disney’s influence on naming patterns is not unique to “Frozen.” In each of the two years since the 2012 release of the film “Brave,” more than 100 baby girls have been called Merida, up from only a few in previous years.

By contrast, the movie “Cars” caused no observable boon in children called Lightning or Mater, although the entertainment business has proved successful at boosting even quite unusual names. In fact, 1943 — the year after Disney released “Bambi” — was the first year in American history in which at least five baby Bambis were born. (Bambi reached peak popularity in 1979 after the release of the song “Who Killed Bambi?” in a movie about the Sex Pistols, an influential punk rock band.)

In light of this data, it bears noting that Disney has recently released a new take on Cinderella.

While that name might strike you as an unlikely appellation for a modern American woman, Disney's previous film of this fairy tale, released in 1950, is largely to blame for the fact that there are around 100 women in their mid-60s — who I like to imagine are trying hard to keep track of their shoes — named Cinderella.

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