Namesakes: The Experience of Sharing One's Full Name with a Celebrity

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The study investigates the relationships, attitudes, and emotions about oneself, one's identity, singularity, and relatedness as they emerge from qualitative, in-depth interviews with Israelis who happen to share the same given name and surname of famous Israelis. Analyzing their experiences resulted in three core themes organized along two axes: a substantive axis covering identity and namesake and an instrumental axis related to non-typical functions of the name as well as intersubjective management and onomastic strategies. These two axes, highlighted through namesakes, intersect in the real-life experiences of the interviewees, helping to inform a theory of personal names.

KEYWORDS namesake, given name, celebrity, Israel, Hebrew, identity.

Introduction

Typically, common nouns classify objects into sets, whereas proper names usually mark singularity. As Mill (1843) notes, it is not the qualities of the name but its uniqueness. To serve this function successfully, the proper name must be consistently linked with the specific object to which it points and be noticeably distinct from any other signs not referring to that object. Most societies not only grant their members individual given names but also legally acknowledge the right of each person to a name.[1]

Challenging what he termed the "functional fallacy," de Pina-Cabral (2012, 23)[2] offers a holistic perspective according to which "the individualizing reference that a name provides is always combined with other functions of names." Proper names are not confined to logical calculi and semiotic constructs; they emerge from and belong to real life. Thus, it is this very non-denotative quality of proper names as signifying marks that enables, and like vacuity, draws in, condensing and displacing narratives and functions (Freud 1900, 295; Ephratt 2008; see also Seeman 1979 and Nadav et al. 2011). Condensing narratives into a name attaches significance to the signifier (that which de Pina-Cabral (2012, 32), following Montaigne, calls the "name" as opposed to "the thing"), displacing it from its initial, semiotic, signifying function to a holistic, real-life setting.

The experiences of individuals who happen to share their full names (given name as well as surname) with other people seem to comprise a unique prism for exploring, illuminating, and understanding the questions raised above: names and identity, the individuating function of names, and the relationships between the various functions. As de Pina-Cabral (2012, 27) points out, in most cases, when namers (usually parents) decide on a name, they are ignorant of other people's intentions. Therefore, such parallel deliberations, underlying two distinct narratives, might result in what de Pina-Cabral terms "proper-name homonymy." Describing a namesake[3] as a homonym reflects the case in which different people have what seems to be the same name with the same sound but in fact have different names, each condensing a unique narrative. This is indeed a case of homonymy, not polysemy.

The stock of given names seems unlimited in modern Israeli-Jewish society. In addition to the use of existing names, new names are regularly created.[4] Nevertheless, the chance of unrelated people being namesakes increases if the given name and surname are common. The prospect of such Israelis being aware of, let alone acquainted with, their namesakes depends on many parameters such as place of residence, occupation, age group, and education. A special group that is familiar to many is celebrities, including political figures, people in show business, famous scholars, religious authorities, sportspersons, and notorious criminals. Given that celebrities' renown exceeds their personal circles, their namesakes know who they are. Being famous makes the namesakes' experience public.

The study's design

We investigated the relationships, attitudes, and emotions concerning the self, one's identity, singularity, and relatedness as they emerge from qualitative in-depth-interviews with Israelis who happen to share both their given name and surname with famous Israeli personas.

Participants and data collection

To answer the research question "What is the experience of individuals sharing their full name with celebrities?" we used qualitative grounded theory (Hutchinson 1988, 125). We reached interviewees either via a communication posted on electronic media or by telephoning people listed in electronic telephone directories who had the same full name as celebrities.

The study is based on interviews with 20 Israeli Jewish participants: eight women and 12 men, who, after being informed about the topic of the study, gave their explicit consent to participate as interviewees.[5] Echoing the gender proportion among the celebrities, the interviewees covered 13 different celebrities: 14 living,[6] one dead (see [14]), one assassinated (see [4] and [23]), and one missing (see [6] and [25]). The celebrities, as well as the interviewees, came from varied occupations.

The interview was freely structured. The initial question posed to each interviewee was "GN-SN[7] [uttering the interviewee's full name in a mode of appellation], what is your experience of your name?" As interviewees lived in every part of the country, we conducted the interviews, which lasted half an hour on average, over the telephone. We

recorded those who agreed to be recorded. For those who did not, we transcribed the interview in detail while interviewing them. Unlike most studies in which the name of the interviewee can be masked, this possibility was ruled out here. All of the interviewees read the parts drawn from their interviews and consented to our using their narratives (including their full names) in the study and publication.

Data analysis

The excerpts from the interviews as well as texts drawn from external sources such as newspaper articles, internet blogs, and comments all constitute the narratives of lived experiences. Unlike quantitative methods using surveys to test predetermined variables, identifying themes from narratives in grounded theory involves going back and forth from the excerpts' wording to categorizations and patterns, looking for similarities and differences. This iterative comparison goes on until satiation is achieved, when adding more material does not appear to require changing, adding, or modifying the themes. We then re-examined these phenomena in light of the relevant materials, conceptualizations, and theories discussed in the professional scientific literature.

Findings

Before detailing the themes emerging from the namesakes' narratives, it is important to point out two issues that surfaced during initial attempts to approach potential interviewees via telephone or email. The first issue was the not uncommon occurrence of namesakes who were unwilling to participate in the study. Those who declined to participate gave two socially motivated reasons that are very indicative of the way they experience the onomastic coincidence that made them namesakes: the desire to remain anonymous and the issue of inappropriateness. These reasons were cited more often when the celebrity had a poor reputation or when the potential interviewee belonged to a close-knit community such as an extreme religious group that does not engage with the general Israeli community.

The second issue was the shadow of the celebrity looming over their namesake. To allay any fears that the interviewer was a journalist or an intruder, the interviewer introduced herself by her title and full name, asking whether she had reached GN, using only the person's given name. The addressees' spontaneous response, "It is not me you're looking for," was particularly telling, given that, at that point, they had no idea we were looking for those with celebrity namesakes and that all these people had common first names. This innocent, straightforward response not only coincided with statements in the interviews but also captured many themes elicited from the narratives.

Core theme (A): non-typical functions of the name

As we have seen, the typical functions of personal names are to address, to refer to, and to name (singulate). A core theme emerging throughout the interviews was the non-typical functions of the name.

Theme I: the non-traditional, referential function of the name

The signature function of common nouns is the referential function (Jakobson 1960, 353), which underlies many of the anecdotes that our celebrity namesakes recounted in their interviews. These fall into two groups: the name as conveying information and the name as the object of falsification.

The name as conveying information.

> [1] Gilad Sharon, namesake of <*the son of Israel's eleventh Prime Minister Ariel Sharon*>,[8] ordered a stove to be delivered to his home. The salesman asked him whether he wanted it to be delivered to their farm (Riterman 2004).
>
> [2] Etti Alon, namesake of <*the former deputy head of investments at the Trade Bank, who was sentenced to 17 years in prison for embezzlement*>, recalled an incident when she called her bank, asking about a loan. Upon giving her name, the teller said that she (the teller) must get approval from the bank's manager before she could continue with the telephone call.

These two stories tell of the celebrities' namesakes acting as customers conversing over the telephone with a supplier. Asking the customer in [1] whether he wants the product to be delivered to the farm[9] reveals the interlocutor's use of the name as a descriptive noun, paving the way for making generalizations such as information on where the customer lives. The teller's determination in [2] to forward the application to the bank's manager had nothing to do with the customer's records or application but resulted from the teller taking the customer's name to be informative, describing the caller as the famous thief who robbed the Trade Bank and caused its collapse.

The status of proper names has puzzled philosophers of language (see Mill 1843; for an overview see Rey 2015). Here proper names crept in, further challenging the notion of *a priori* knowledge and conceptually determined truth that is systemic rather than empirical. Arguments containing proper names (arbitrarily linked to their bearer and thus indeed learned from experience) by no means fall into the intuitive, analytic end of the spectrum (see e.g. Searle's (1958, 173) handling of the logical status of "Tully = Cicero.

If names habitually carry meaning (see Frege [1892] 1960: 56–78) and so provide information, examples [1] and [2] would lack a story point (see Wilensky 1982). What makes them a story is the enigmatic role played by the name. In [1] the point is the tension between the true identity of the customer and the salesman's self-assurance regarding the identification of the customer that results in over-familiarity. In [2] the name (connotation) initiates a conflict between the innocent intention of the customer and the threat experienced by the teller.

In a way, a celebrity's name functions in a manner similar to a trademark's "anonymous function" (see Wilkof and Burkitt 2005, 20–41), reducing the consumer's search due to the brand's reputation (see Landes and Posner 1987, 270). The multiple namesakes not only provide information but also appear as misreferences that are experienced as deceptions, much like infringing on a trademark. This result leads to the next theme.

The name as the object of falsehood and mistrust.   Quite often, the celebrities' namesake interviewees referred to the celebrity with whom they shared their (full) name as "the well-known GN-SN." For these interviewees, such expressions seemed objective descriptions differentiating them from their celebrity namesakes. Expressions such as "the other GN-SN" do the same job, objectively placing the name (and not the familiarity) as an anchor (see "Core theme (C): strategies").

[3] Aviva Avidan, namesake of <*a known but not nationally popular singer*>, recalled bumping into the singer Aviva Avidan and her agent on the street. The singer asked her to present her ID card to prove to the agent that this was her real name.

For the speaker in [3], she was indeed the real Aviva Avidan (see also de Pina-Cabral's [2010] "ontological weight").[10] However, our interviewees often talked about "the real/ true GN-SN" (Hebrew *amiti*), referring not to themselves but to the other/famous namesake (see [22b]). The interviewees' use of "true" or "real" referred not to themselves and not to the name but to the personhood tagged by the name. In effect, they were saying that the true GN-SN was not them, because GN-SN was in fact the entire "sense" of the specific celebrity, encompassing their characteristics, life story, and fame. In doing so, they not only attributed falsehood to a name — in this case, their own name — but also conveyed a sense of fakeness. There is the celebrity, the real GN-SN, and there is me, the fake one (see below under "Core theme (B)").

One outcome of the name as the object of falsehood is mistrust. While in Pennesi's (2016) study Facebook considered the use of a non-registered name as fraud, for the celebrities' namesakes their use of their own registered name was mistrusted, considered a bad joke, or fraud and impersonation in the more severe cases. The use of "dressed-up" to describe the celebrities' namesakes (see Riterman 2004), even if done in humor (see "Core theme (C): theme I") to celebrate Jewish Purim (a holiday where people don costumes), implies mistrust as if their name were a frivolous costume. The next example is a case where the name was considered fraudulent and led to disregard:

[4] When Yitzhak Rabin, a young Jewish orthodox man from Bnei-Brak, namesake of <*IDF Chief of Staff, Israel's fifth Prime Minister, and Nobel Peace Prize winner (assassinated while in office in 1995)*>, and his future *fiancée* wanted to announce their coming engagement in a local newspaper, they were turned down, solely due to mistrust of the *fiancé*'s name (Riterman 2004).

The namesake is using his true name, in fact his legal name, but this use is suspected and mistrusted. With most Israeli celebrity names (clearly all celebrities who are not actors), the namesake affinity relates to two official legal names.

Theme II: the non-traditional, speech act function of the name
The typical chief constituent of the vocative voice is the personal name of the addressee. Thus, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (Matthew 27:46; Psalms 22:2) is an example of the vocative, turning to God as the addressee. Narratives collected in our material revealed the celebrity namesake's unconventional, non-vocative use of the renowned name activating the addressee, thus serving the conative function (Jakobson 1960, 355). Phrased in different ways and nuances, the power of a name to open doors and serve as a conversation piece kept recurring. The interviewees described how mentioning their full name in a first encounter was a good way to start a friendly conversation or engage in business dealings. Self-employed people noted that their name often made the difference between a potential customer turning them down and allowing more time for negotiations.

[5] Ehud Barak (a certified tax consultant from Kiryat Bialik), namesake of <*IDF Chief of Staff, and Israel's tenth Prime Minister*>, said proudly that: "Frequently, at work, the name is just perfect." He explained: "When I call a drowsy income tax assessor […] I wake him up from his siesta with the name; it helps us make a connection."

The same point kept recurring regarding impromptu encounters:

[6] Ron Arad, namesake of <*the Israeli Air Force Lieutenant Colonel who was lost on a mission over Lebanon in 1986, officially classified as missing in action but widely presumed dead*>, said that even though, when hitchhiking, it is not a must to give one's name, let alone one's full name, he chose to do so because he could strike up a conversation and reward the driver by giving him a story to tell (see [25]).

The name serves here not to evoke its bearer but to activate the addressee. By so doing, it is in fact a speech act. The name (a verbal sign) acting as an icebreaker is a tricky case of using conventional language — names — for achieving an effect. Doing so exceeds the conventional functions attributed to personal names.

The name may also close doors due to the effect of the name but not the intention of the addresser (the namesake). Etti Alon described the painful experiences she had in the wake of her namesake's imprisonment:

[7] Etti Alon (see [2]): "Every phone call, people became fearful, asking, 'What, who am I talking with?' They would stutter, not knowing how to proceed. They would hang up on me."

Later in the interview she said:

"For a long time, I was looking for a job. At the beginning, when I wrote 'Etti Alon' I got no responses. No one took any notice."

However, when she used her legal name of "Esther Alon" on her applications and CV (see [22]), she received positive responses and found a job.

Rennick's paper (1969) studies the experiences of people (mostly Jewish) who bore the surname "Hit(t)ler" in the 1930s and 1940s. Although the cases are not Israeli, we cite two examples which illustrate extreme cases of a name closing doors:

[8] "In March, 1936, a Rumanian rabbinical candidate, *Israel Hitler*, was informed that, although he had passed his examinations, his chances of receiving his degree would be immeasurably increased by a change-of-name" (p. 203; see [29] and [30]).

And literally closing doors:

[9] Rennick (1969, 204) tells of a Polish Jew named Adolf Hitler, who had been refused a visa to enter Germany only a few months before the occupation of Poland.

Theme III: the non-traditional, contamination function of the name

When, instead of the name being a differentiator, the name bearer merges their identity with that of the celebrity, a unique phenomenon takes place in which the shared name acts as a channel through which contamination is transmitted (see Jakobson [1960] on the phatic function). The term "contamination" emphasizes the quality of the one-sided absorption due to contact with the name. The most widespread object of contamination is fame. Prima facie, the interviewees were respected individuals not widely known and certainly not achieving the fame of their celebrity namesakes. In fact, as they attested, it was their name that attracted public attention from journalists and the like (see e.g. [15]). Via their name as a channel, they experienced the glow of fame, which in itself was a form of contamination.

[10] Haim Guri, namesake of <*one of Israel's most renowned poets*>, looked back upon the exceptional honor he experienced of being interviewed on a local radio station together with the poet (see [24]).

When the celebrity is renowned for positive deeds or positions, their namesakes are tempted to wrap themselves in this fame.

> [11] Shimon Peres, a namesake of <*Israel's ninth president, former Prime Minister and a Nobel Peace Prize winner*>, noted proudly: "It reinforces me that I go about with such a name. I feel a sense of supremacy."
>
> [12] Aviva Avidan, a teacher who later on earned a PhD (see [3]), reflected that: "It is somewhat flattering, to a certain degree, as if I were famous, pre-doctorate era. It gives a feeling of being known."

It is as if she were weighing the contaminated fame that filled a void against that of her doctorate which made the need for a fictitious fame superfluous.

Fame is not the only object of the contamination. Some of the celebrities' namesakes experienced sharing the same full name as intimacy, which raised questions about similarities and differences. This comparison occurred not just with regard to positive characteristics. Thus, containment is primarily an internal personal matter of the namesake that occurs even if it is never communicated, but it might also lead to unusual interactions with others.

> [13] Ron Arad (see [6]) told of a policeman who gave him a traffic ticket, but after seeing the name on his drivers' license, reduced the fine.

It was clear to the policeman that the individual in front of him was not the missing pilot, but the contamination still occurred.

> [14a] Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, namesake of the man <*who is considered the reviver of the Hebrew language (1858–1922*>, said that: "It so happens that my Hebrew skills are good. I have a command of its grammar and I am punctilious. Sometimes, people would explain this by saying, 'Well, that's because you are Eliezer Ben-Yehuda,'" to which the interviewee added, "having nothing to do with the fact that I am most fluent in English" (see [19]).

The comment about English emphasized that the interviewee had ruled out not only contamination but also any justification for tying them together. He went on to say:

> [14b] "Since I am not related to him in any way, it is as if they are trying to attribute to me things I don't deserve. If you consider his name (in inverted commas) a pedigree ('*yiches*' as the religious say), then they treat you as if you have a pedigree. I do not have a pedigree; it is random. This is why I don't think I have to be treated differently than any other [person] whose name is neutral — not connoted with anybody" (see [19]).

This observation brings us to the next core theme.

Core theme (B): identity and namesake

The notion of the identity of the self has been the focus of many studies in many disciplines. Considered from a pragmatic perspective, the experience of identity (self or collective) is an outcome of the place granted to the individual and that granted to the collective along a spectrum. Studies have investigated the associations between identity and personal names in terms of strong ties (see e.g. Aldrin 2016; Amir 2014, 6–7; Joubert 1993) and weaker ones (see e.g. de Pina-Cabral 2010).

A core theme brought up by the interviewees had to do with their identity in light of a celebrity namesake. For them it was not an onomastic issue or a philosophical riddle to ponder. It was a practical issue they had to deal with — sometimes on a daily basis. Looking at namesakes and identity, two fundamental factors emerged: 1) the extent of an integrated true self and healthy self-esteem and 2) theoretical and practical attitudes towards names and naming. Individuals and groups vary immensely in the importance they attach to names (their own names included). The majority of the interviewees stated explicitly or implicitly that they valued names in general and their own names in particular.[11] Four modes of self-identity emerged from their narratives: challenge, imperviability, elevation, and digression.

Theme I: challenge
The coincidence of a celebrity namesake challenges one's self-identity. Despite the explicit opening question emphasizing the interviewee's experience, some interviewees talked constantly about the celebrity. When asked about this point, three explanations recurred. However, the following explanation provides an important perspective for the study:

> [15] Aviva Avidan (see [3]) justified her focus on her celebrity namesake by saying: "Because otherwise my name is a usual name, precisely as any other name. But since there is someone who has the same name, it places me, you know, in a different position. As if [I have] to test out the differences between us, [such as] physical appearance, occupation, etc."

Here, the coincidence of their homonymous names challenged the quest to reconfirm her identity by exploring what they shared and what made them different. The experience of fame, which we explained as contamination (see [12]), was one of the outcomes of this pursuit.

Theme II imperviability
The namesake may value naming and their own name but experienced the latter and their identity as separate from that of the celebrity. Such interviewees kept saying things like: "I am I and he is he" or "each one is something else," in effect, downgrading the relationship with their namesake, stressing that themself and the celebrity had nothing in common, even though they bore the same full name. The overriding impression with such interviewees was of imperviability.

Theme III: elevation
The experience of having the same name as that of a celebrity may act as a catalyst, further strengthening the identity of the self. Regardless of whether the celebrity was a respected person or a criminal, the namesakes repeatedly emphasized that, onomastically (although none used this term), they were "the original GN-SN," as if claiming that the name (not the fame) belonged to them. It is worth noting that, in Israel, especially during the first years after the establishment of the state in 1948, officials were encouraged to Hebraize their non-Hebrew given names and surnames (but see note 13 below). Non-Hebrew names were associated with the Diaspora and perceived as the antithesis of the new Israeli. This notion of an original name emerges from surnames indicating a source, which as in trademarks (see Wilkof and Burkitt 2005, 20) serves as

a power function such as claiming rights and continuity (see also de Pina-Cabral 2012). Regarding trademarks and names alike, the function of the original source underscores not only identity and singularity (as in Mill's 1843 description of the robber's chalk mark in the Arabian Nights) but also, as is apparent from our interviews, reinforces the sense of self (or family) identity.

> [16] Haim Guri (see [10]) was very proud to explain that the name Haim Guri runs in his family. He was named after his father who died before he was born. Their surname came from their home town in Yemen "Qaro" (phonetic variation Q→G). He stressed that the writer (as he referred to the poet, see [24]) changed his name.[12]
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> [17] Ehud Barak (see [5]) explained (referring to the celebrity): "His name, his 'Barak' was Hebraized from 'Brog.' As far as I know, he bore this name for part of his life, 25 years. And I was Hebraized from the name 'Bankir,' which I bore until the age of two."

The contest over the right to the name becomes even more apparent in cases such as [17], which we can read as an attempt to tone down the fact that both names are not original and emphasize the interviewee's priority earned from nearly a life-long identity with the name "Barak."

Given that the direct, and in fact, sole tie between the namesakes and the celebrities was the shared full name, the internal experience appropriating the name to one's self — "I am the original;" "It is I who owns this name" — not only situates the celebrity as inferior but also attributes the celebrity's good name to the namesake rather than to the celebrity. The notion of a "good name" as reputation again ties the name as a signifier (a sequence of sounds or letters) with reality. A good name is not only a good signifier but also a short form for high esteem and a good reputation (see Allport and Schanck 1936). Interviewees who experienced the name as theirs, attributing the celebrity's name to themselves, absorbed the celebrity's name in themselves, magnifying their name and their self-identity.

The next example comes from Rennick (1969, 204; see [8]–[9] above):

> [18] Paul Hitler was a master sergeant in New Jersey, who in the spring of 1942 turned down his commanding officer's advice to change his name. The reason he gave was that, "It is my name and I have a perfect right to it. But Adolf hasn't. His name is Schicklgruber."

Unlike examples [16]–[17], originality serves here not to absorb the celebrity but to distance oneself as far as possible from him, leaving the pure, respectful name to its bearer and his family (see [29] and [30]). Note that Paul Hitler underscores this point by mentioning the Führer by his given name only, iconically eradicating his reference to "Hitler."

Theme IV: digression
Sharing one's name with another person (even a celebrity) may be experienced as degrading one's own name as part of one's self-identity. A unique group in our study was potential interviewees who chose not to participate in the study. They explained politely that, as we could probably imagine, their famous names had psychological and other outcomes that they would rather not share with strangers. It does not seem a coincidence that these people happened to be individuals renowned and appreciated in their own right. Regardless of whether the celebrity namesake was a positive or negative individual, these people were strongly motivated to ignore any connection with them.

[19] The intricate affiliation between self-identity, naming in general and namesake in particular, and reputation came up as an issue for Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (see [14]). In reply to the question about his experience of his own name, he made the observation that the coincidence of namesake "is something external. It is a name given to me; it does not define me; it is nothing more than a means of identification." Asking him to explain, he said that: "I have made significant achievements, locally and world-wide, making use of my own skills as well as acquired ones. These made me feel greater pride than bearing the same name as a celebrity, a name for which I have done nothing."

His concluding words not only explicate his ideals regarding name, self, and reputation, but they also illustrate a digression not necessarily resulting from a celebrity's negative reputation. It is the desire to be assessed on one's own merits, not having people "trying to attribute to me things I don't deserve" (see [14b]).[13] Fortunately, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda did choose to participate, illustrating with his story the case of individuals wishing to be treated for their own deeds, for what defines, signifies, and distinguishes them.

Making one's name vulnerable, thus damaging the identification with one's own name, was the thread that went through the interview with Etti Alon (see [7]). This interview was a case study in name digression and identity. Due to space limitations, only key excerpts are cited here:

[20a] "She ruined my name […]"

I am ashamed to say my name […].

[The interviewer's question: "Were you angry?"]

[Answer]: "I wasn't angry; the name was a tough obstacle. I was impressed by her prudence and guts […], and I am exactly the opposite of these things: my work involves dealing with money; I check on every shekel; trust is very important to me. […] A person that defies all my values. I feel the name is a burden […]"

As we shall show shortly, this burden, expressed in the first utterance opening our interview ("She ruined my name"), led Etti to return to her legal name (Esther),[14] a name she had never used. Now using her legal name, she refers to the experience of identity:

[20b] Recounting incidences that had occurred in response to her introducing herself as Esther (Alon), her interlocutor said, "I know you're Etti," she said that knowing she could now use Etti was a liberating experience (but see [20c]).
[20c] "You are going about all the time with two names. You have no identity of your own. […] Because although Esther and Etti are the same name, I have to hide behind this name. Ever since I was a child I lived and grew up with a certain name; you're accustomed to a certain name. If I have to say Esther to protect myself, it is a sort of self-defense […]."

"Esther Alon I say with much greater confidence."

As with most interviewees, after the initial telephone conversation, we sent Etti an email describing the study and asking her to participate. In each email, we indicated the research question when filling in the interviewee's full name. Referring to the email she confessed:

[20d] "When I saw the name Etti Alon on the email you sent me, you don't understand, I haven't seen this name in years."

[The interviewer's question: "How did you react?"]

[Answer]: "It was bam! I said, 'Wow, how did this get here?'"

Etti's rescue of herself by modifying her name leads us to the third core theme: strategies.

Core theme (C): strategies

Here we consider the strategies that the celebrity namesakes employed when introducing themselves, strategies they used to overcome technical issues and red tape, retain their identity, and obviate undesired reactions to their names. The strategies fall into two categories: intersubjective management and onomastic strategies.

Theme I: intersubjective management
The vocative use of the given name or full name is one of the major functions of a personal name (see "Core theme (A): theme II"). The addresser turns to their addresses by calling their name. For many of our interviewees, this seemingly mundane procedure is experienced as a moment of vigilance for which they have to prepare technically and emotionally.

> [21] Ehud Barak (from Netanya), namesake of <*IDF Chief of Staff, and Israel's tenth Prime Minister*>, said that when he received an unfamiliar telephone call, he was alert to the tone of the caller, verifying whether he is indeed the anticipated addressee or whether the caller wishes to intrude or tease.

The strategy is invoked right from the start as a means of self-protection. Whereas this excerpt focuses on the caller, the next excerpt tells the same story emphasizing internal concerns.

> [22a] Miri Regev (from Kiryat Haim), namesake of <*the IDF spokeswoman in the 2006 Lebanon War and currently Minister of Culture and Sports*>, told of what she termed "the first 60 seconds, being alert to the coming inevitable response. It never passes smoothly without comment. Each time I know I must overcome this obstacle."

Another intersubjective strategy is humor. Craik and Ware (1998, 63) show that: "As a distinctly human capacity, humor is generally acknowledged to be one of our most important resources." What stood out regarding personality characteristics (see above) was that the interviewees not only used humor as social conduct but also spoke in the interview of self-directed humor, indicating its value for coping with unpleasant situations arising from the shared name.

> [22b] Miri Regev (see [22a]) said: "It is a fact in reality. I take it with humor, forgiveness, and compassion. People impose their associations with her on me. It is like when in class we do brainstorming with the pupils, and I write Yitzhak Rabin (see [4] and [23]). All sorts of associations arise. I do not take their responses to heart — it is theirs — not mine. If the person has a sense of humor, he sees that I am not Miri Regev, so everything is taken with humor, and we move on" (see below).

Another strategy also apparent here ([22b]) is distancing oneself from the event, saying that it is not personal. The responses of hanging up on them and the jokes are not

directed at them. They are either directed at the celebrity or the namesake situation rather than at any person.

Theme II: onomastic strategies
Since people refer to themselves using the first person pronoun ("I," "me"), the use of a name (GN, SN, or full name) always refers to the second or third person or "that one." When the interviewees used the name, they referred to the celebrity, not to themselves (see "Core theme (A): theme III"). An extremely impressive example is Miri Regev's ([22b]) statement: "I am not Miri Regev" (compare [22]). We now look at the onomastic strategies that the celebrity namesakes used when talking about themselves.

Many interviewees mentioned a strategy that falls between intersubjective management to gain time and make themselves known (see above) and an onomastic strategy. They noted that, when first meeting people or when calling an office, they never rushed to announce their name. Pure onomastic strategies go from modes of introducing one's name, through mild modifications of the name, to a radical change of name. The first such strategy retained the given name and surname but swapped their order:

> [23] Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (see [14] and [19]) described the experience of bearing the same name as the renowned Hebraist as an ongoing burden, a minefield he had to negotiate. He then said that: "Sometimes, I try to mask, change it [uttered using repair intonation]; I say 'Ben-Yehuda Eliezer' and hope that [people] won't make the connection."[15]

This strategy seems most interesting in its linguistic sophistication. Comparing this strategy with the following onomastic strategies, we see that here no substance was changed or added. What makes this strategy work can be explained by looking at idioms. Idioms are semantically and syntactically fixed, phraseological expressions, whose full meaning "is not a compositional function of the idiom's elementary grammatical parts" (see e.g. Katz and Postal 1963, 275). Given that the celebrity's name is famous and heard on the media constantly, it is perceived as an (onomastic) idiom, a fixed sequence not only connoting but also denoting the celebrity. The distancing effect is achieved by changing its idiomatic order, thereby severing the (onomastic) collocation.[16] Miri Regev's wording ([22b]): "I am not Miri Regev" depicts "Miri Regev" as an onomastic idiom denoting the celebrity.

Another common strategy to bypass the namesake is adding a modifier, commonly a role appellation (like an epithet) to the name.

> [24] Haim Guri (see [10]) introduces himself as "Haim Guri the fish man."

In adopting this strategy the namesake do not refrain from using their name, as is expected socially in such circumstances. At the same time, they differentiate themself from the celebrity, thereby taking the edge off undesired responses.

> [25] Ron Arad (see [6]) recalled a time when, following an argument he had with another officer, the latter asked him for his name. In response to his answer, "Ron Arad," the officer said: "That's not an issue to make fun of," to which the interviewee replied: "You're right, but that's my name."

After this incident, he kept introducing himself in the army only by mentioning his job, thus giving up the name as the expected mode of presentation.

Other onomastic strategies make use of a nickname, both as an onomastic phenomenon and as a disambiguating strategy. In Israel, as in many other cultures, some confine the use of their nicknames to intimate circles, while others use their nicknames on all occasions (see e.g. [20]; for an overview see Holland 1990).

> [26] Yitzhak Rabin (from Rehovot), a namesake of <*IDF Chief of Staff, Israel's fifth Prime Minister, and Nobel Peace Prize winner (assassinated while in office in 1995)*>, is habitually called Itzik (a widespread nickname) among family and friends. When introducing himself over the telephone, he first says "Itzik" and only later mentions his full name.

He explained that he does so in order to prevent his interlocutors from hanging up on him and to ensure that they will listen to him.

Interestingly, the use of nicknames, which came up frequently in the interviews as a strategy of abstention, a means of avoiding the namesake issue, seems to fly in the face of its prototypical function as a form of community naming (see de Pina-Cabral 1984, 149–150). It is worth mentioning that, in the US, initials commonly function as community naming (see Christenfeld et al. 1999), thus celebrity namesakes in the US serve the same function as Israeli nicknames.

> [27] Janet Jackson, namesake of <*the American singer and actress (officially named: Janet Damita Jo Jackson)*>, said in an interview that: "I always had the dream of making my name famous, and I knew, instantly, that the cloud of the Jackson family was way beyond any potential I had of making the name Janet Jackson famous. Not long after that, I did start going by J. J." (VHi 2014).

The last strategy presented here is a change of name. Bearing in mind the strong relationship between one's personal name and one's self-identity, this is the most drastic step. Most interviewees ruled out such a possibility, stating vigorously that this was their name and their self-identity. Interestingly, this strategy came up in comments online in response to Boker's write-up on being celebrities' namesakes. The respondents suggested changing one's name either by adding a suffix or changing the name completely. To give one example:

> [28] "It is indeed annoying. I would have changed a name or, somehow, made it longer, e.g. Gafni Aviv, Gafni is preferable to Geffen, or Ayelet Zohorevitch instead of Zoher […] what is the problem in changing it a bit […] not a problem to change it" (see Boker 2016, Rafael Stein, comment 13).

This seems a classic case of dealing with other people's problems as if they were simply a technical matter. Not having to deal with this issue themselves, they are good at giving advice to others. Nevertheless, there are cases of namesakes who have changed their name, seeking to distance themselves completely from the celebrity. At least four namesakes of "Igal Amir," who in 1995 was accused of assassinating Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, turned to Israel's population authority to officially change their name (Hayun 2015).

Rennick (1969) notes that "Hitler" (in various spellings) was not an uncommon East-European surname prior to World War II. Among these people, Rennick also found two complete namesakes (Adolf Hitler). Rennick followed these families in the US, who applied to the courts to legally change their name (the families are not Israeli; nevertheless, the cases are strongly tied with their Jewish identity).

[29] The first such surname change was recorded in 1934 when Max Hitler applied to become Hilton. In his petition he claimed that: "As a Jew, his name had subjected him to scorn, ridicule, and embarrassment" (Rennick 1969, 200).

People with such undesirable surnames removed themselves from telephone directories to avoid unpleasant calls. When we consider the association between one's name and one's self-identity, we must keep in mind cases such as [18], where despite the unpleasant consequences, some people did decide to retain their names.

Conclusion

The three core themes that emerged from our interviews can be organized along two axes: a substantive, ontological axis covering the indispensable unity between the name and its bearer (Core theme (B)), and an instrumental axis in which the name and the self are separate, making the name a tool for managing the external world as well as that of the inner self (Core theme (A)) and the name as the object on which the tools operate (Core theme (C)). These findings illustrate and strongly support the claim that, once a name is granted to the named, an intrinsic, ontological connection is established between them, making the name an indispensable part of the person. The two axes (identity and instrumental) sometimes move in different directions but, in real life, evident here regarding the celebrities' namesakes, they intertwine with one another. Some of the experiences the interviewees have undergone due to being the namesakes of celebrities are unique to this setting. Others were only intensified by this setting, but in fact commonly hold for any experience of a namesake. As illustrated in the findings, they all serve as a magnifying glass, highlighting the themes and making them visible for investigation. One example is the issue of jealousy, which recurred in many variants across the interviewees. Some were jealous of people with unique names (e.g. Miri Regev, see [22]), thus yearning for the default case (or myth) in which the identity axis and the instrumental axis were aligned. For those accepting the coincidence of being a celebrity's namesake (having intertwined axes), those who shared their name with a positive individual expressed relief that their celebrity's namesake was such a person and not, as Gal Freidman (namesake of <*the Israeli windsurfer, Israel's only Olympic gold medalist*>) said: "the name of Goel Ratzon" (a convicted polygamist). In addition to gratitude, they also expressed empathy with those less "lucky" namesakes who shared their names with negative personalities. Finally, not surprisingly, the interviewees who had such names were envious of those sharing their names with positive namesakes. The very fact that jealousy was expressed and the varied responses of each interviewee underscore the intersubjective juncture traversing names, the self, the other and the collective.

In the well-known poem "Each Man has a Name," the Hebrew poetess Zelda portrays the complexity of human existence and its various layers through the giving of a name. The poem repeats the refrain, "Each man has a name, given him by […]" and then lists various namer's in one's life, beginning with God and one's parents and moving on to how one smiles (see Carmi 1981, 558). We conclude our investigation of the experience and themes evoked by a celebrity's namesake by proposing another verse for this poem: "Each man has a name given him by his name."

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. See e.g. Articles 7–8 in UNICEF's Children's Rights Document http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/rights_leaflet.pdf.

2. Thanks to Prof. Karen Pennesi for bringing de Pina-Cabral's challenging work to our attention. Unfortunately, we cannot respond here to crucial arguments made in his studies and so confine ourselves to the main ideas as they relate to the current study.

3. "Namesake" is used throughout the article both as a noun denoting the homonymous name and as an adjective referring to the bearer of such a name.

4. According to Aviel Kranzler from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, as of July 2016, there were 24,976 unique boys' given names (GNs) listed in the records and 30,767 unique girls' GNs. The 20 most common GNs were shared by 1,100,000 people, whereas the 20 most common surnames were shared by only 600,000 people. Thanks to Mr Kranzler for providing the data.

5. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Haifa.

6. The interview with Shimon Peres' namesake (see [11]) took place a few months before Shimon Peres' sudden sad death.

7. "GN-SN" is used throughout the article to stand for "given name" and "surname."

8. The biographic details on the celebrities and the English spelling of their names were retrieved from https://he.wikipedia.org/.

9. In Israel, there are scarcely any locations referred to as "farms." Sharon's "Shikmim Farm" is one of the few such places.

10. Karen Pennesi's (2016) work on Facebook's real name policy is the mirror image of the cases in de Pina-Cabral (2010). As to Facebook, people regard their true name as the non-registered one.

11. Due to space limitations, we will simply point out that, despite the fact that most of the women interviewees were not born into their celebrity namesake but married into it, they so strongly associated with their marital name that it was generally the interviewer who raised this issue. The only exception was Ofra Strauss, namesake of <*the businesswoman chairing the Strauss (food) group*>.

12. The poet Haim Gouri was born Haim Gourfinkel. His father, a member of Israel's parliament, Hebraized the surname for the entire family.

13. The interviewee's perception of his name as a means of identification is also related to the fact that, unlike his given name being most meaningful in the family context because it commemorated his late grandfather, his surname is not original (it is Hebraized) and so lacks any personal ties.

14. Etti is a hypocoristic of Esther, common among many Israeli women.

15. See also Carmela Menashe (Riterman 2004).

16. See Jubert 1993, 1128 on change of spelling as a disambiguation strategy applicable for script.

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