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How Does It Feel When People Forget Your Name or Name You Incorrectly?

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Abstract

The present study investigated, using a questionnaire, how people feel (i.e., irritated, offended, and sad) when their own name was misprocessed (i.e., forgotten, uttered after a hesitation, mispronounced, or replaced by another person's name) during a conversation with friends and close colleagues. Participants reported relatively low negative feelings after such naming incidents. Nevertheless, they reported being more irritated and offended than sad for all the incidents. They felt comparable levels of irritation and offense, except for mispronunciations that caused more irritation. Although participants reported weak negative feelings, they reported reacting often to all incidents, either by reminding the interlocutor of their names or by correcting them. The contrast between weak ratings of negative feelings and high ratings of reminding and correction shows that using the correction as the only indicator of bother when the own name is misprocessed can be misleading. Finally, the intensity of irritation triggered by incidents with the own name was negatively related with the participants' propensity to misprocess other peoples' names, but was not related with scores at the Rosenberg self-esteem scale nor with the level of self-symbolic value of the own name.

Keywords: first name, naming, psycho-onomastics, self, identity, personal names

Introduction

Naming individuals is universal. No ethnographic study ever revealed a society in which people do not receive a personal name (Alford 1989). Even if naming practices may strongly vary across cultures (Hanks & Parkin 2016; Lawson 2016), all cultures developed a personal naming system. As a corollary, there are proper names in all known languages (Farkas 2020; Jeshion 2009). This universality is presumably due to two joint properties of proper names: economy and unambiguity. The use of a proper name to designate a person (or another individual entity) is more economical than producing a (relatively long) description whose efficacy in unambiguously designating a target person may change across the conversational contexts (Jeshion 2009; Stivers et al. 2007; Searle 1958). Some authors have speculated that the use of proper names to call people (or other individual entities) could have had an adaptive advantage at some point in human evolution (Semenza 2009, 2006). For example, it is clearly more efficient to warn a fellow human being of impending danger by calling their name than to shout a description of them. Another possible adaptive advantage lies in that the use of proper names makes referring to absent people easier (Stivers et al. 2007).

One important function of proper names is thus to designate individual (i.e., to single out an individual from all other individuals) [Aldrin 2016]. On identity cards, the uniqueness of the person stems from the conjunction of a face and a name (Le Breton 2003). Moreover, people interiorize this identification function of names, and consider that their name is an important attribute of their identity (Aldrin 2016; Snyder & Fromkin 1980). The strong relationship between names and identity reveals itself through a number of cognitive effects. The own name, like other self-relevant stimuli, is privileged during information processing. For example, one's own name is more easily perceived as a target than unfamiliar or famous names, and it causes more interference as a distractor (for reviews, see Sui & Rotshstein 2019; Cunningham & Turk 2017; Humphreys & Sui 2016). In regards to memory research, episodic recognition is better for items presented in association with one's own name than for items associated with other familiar people's names, such as names of actors (Turk et al. 2008). Moreover, we are better at recalling, in five minutes, surnames of known (familiar or famous) people sharing our own first name than surnames of people bearing a colleague's, a romantic partner's, or a parent's name (Brédart 2018, 2016). Another indicator of the link between one's name and identity is the *name letter effect* (i.e., the fact that people prefer the letters included in their own names to letters that are not in their names) [for a review, see Hoorens 2014].

Other studies have addressed the relationship between the own name and identity by examining people's explicit claims that one's own name is a symbol of identity. For examples, researchers asked participants to provide answers to the simple question: "Who are you?" or "Who am I?". In response, the majority of participants made explicit reference to their names (e.g., Bugental & Zelen 1950; for a review, see Dion 1983). In Norway, a survey showed that 84.7% of respondents liked their surname, only 4.5% disliked it, and the others did not know or were indifferent (Wilkstrom 2012). The vast majority (85.7%) of respondents who liked their surnames expressed an association between their personal identity and their names (e.g., "My surname is me"). Researchers have also addressed the effect of name changes on identity. In this context, Snyder and Fromkin (1980) recalled that the motto of the *Lucy Stone League,* a women's rights organization established in 1921, was "A wife should no more take her husband's name than he should hers. My name is my identity and must not be lost". In other contexts, name changes may be a means to declare a new social, gender, or cultural

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identity. For example, Thompson (2006) reported how young Korean American women explicitly expressed their new identity as bilingual and bicultural persons by adopting American first names while keeping their original Korean first names. In addition, the act of giving names to children may reflect a will to express ethnic or cultural identity (Aldrin 2009; Reed 2001).

As described above, an important function of naming is to differentiate an individual from others. Researchers have stressed that the function of naming is also to underscore or signal a person's individuality (Jeshion 2009). Giving a name to a particular entity (person, animal, or entity of the environment) is recognizing that this particular entity is deemed important enough to possess its own individuality (Farkas 2020; Jeshion 2009). People reserve proper names for entities they regard as "worthy of being referred to as an individual" (Jeshion 2009, p. 385). Not referring to people by their name may have the purpose of maintaining impersonality (Farkas 2020) or denying their identity (Rachmani 2016; Watson 1986).

Given the strong link between the personal name and self-identity, one could wonder how people perceive and react to their name being misprocessed by an interlocutor. To the best of our knowledge, apart from a few anecdotal reports of people being offended by misnaming (Deffler et al. 2016; Aksholakova 2014; Snyder & Fromkin 1980), very few systematic investigations of this question were conducted. In a study of the implications of ostracism, King and Geise (2010) evaluated the reactions of participants to the fact that an experimenter that they met two days before had forgotten their names. Participants whose names were forgotten did not rate their mood differently than participants whose names were remembered. However, the former had lower scores on the Meaning in Life Questionnaire than the latter. Watzlawick et al. (2016) investigated to what extent Brazilian, German, and Korean participants were bothered by the mispronunciation and misspelling of their first names. They showed that the percentages of people who reported correcting often or very often both mispronunciations and misspellings of their first name was higher in Korea (respectively 58.9% and 71%) and Germany (41.4% and 61%) than in Brazil (35.5% and 49.2%). However, the (2016) study by Watzlawick et al. presents a limitation: the correction of the interlocutor's mistakes was the only indicator of the participants' bother when their names were not correctly spoken or written.

Therefore, the overall objective of the present study was to assess more comprehensively how people perceive and react when they are the target of misnaming, naming failures, and name-related mockery. More concretely, we asked participants about their feelings, and reactions when, in a conversation, an interlocutor cannot recall their first name, recalls it with hesitation, mispronounces it, or calls them by a wrong name. Hereafter, we will refer to these four kinds of naming incidents as *misprocessing*. Participants were invited to rate how irritated, offended, and sad they feel when their name is misprocessed. They also rated whether they remind the interlocutor of their name when it is either unrecalled, mispronounced, or confused. In addition to these naming incidents that should be unintentional, participants were asked to rate their feelings when their name was mocked. The study also aimed at assessing whether there is a relation between the level of self-esteem and the strength of negative feelings experienced when a naming incident occurs. High self-esteem can protect people against negative emotions triggered by incidents challenging their sense of personal value (Poggi & D'Errico 2018). Thus, it is possible that the higher the participants' level of self-esteem, the less they feel irritated, offended, or sad. Finally, we also assessed the extent to which participants themselves committed naming incidents and whether this is linked to their perception of and reactions to the misprocessing of their own name. We hypothesized that committing naming incidents could make participants more understanding and less reactive to the misprocessing of their name. We also assessed whether the strength of negative feelings was associated with the participants' perception of their name as a symbol of their identity: the higher the self-symbolic value of the name, the stronger the negative feelings experienced should be when the name is misprocessed.

Method

Participants

The minimum sample size necessary to evaluate a small size one-tailed correlation of 0.2 (midpoint between a weak and a medium correlation [0.10 to 0.30]) with a power of 0.80 at an alpha level of 0.05 was 153 (G*Power 3.1; Faul et al. 2007). We recruited a total of 186 participants (94 females, 90 males, and 2 non-binary) on the university campus and amongst social circles. They were aged between 18 and 40 (M = 23.9; SD = 4.7). Data from nine additional persons were collected but not included in the analyses (eight participants reported a medication and/or a medical condition that could affect memory performance, and one participant did not follow instructions properly). The participants' average educational level, as measured by the number of years

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of study (from primary school) completed to achieve their highest qualification, was 14.1 (*SD* = 2.0). The study was conducted in French with native French speaking or perfect bilingual participants. This study was approved by the local Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology, Speech Therapy, and Education Sciences of the University of Liège, IRB document No. 2223-110. All participants gave their written informed consent prior to participation.

Material and Procedure

The experimenter individually tested each participant. They were told that the study explored the perceptions and reactions of people when, in conversations with close acquaintances, their interlocutor was unable to recall their first name, recalled it with hesitation, mispronounced it, called them by a wrong name or mocked their name. Close acquaintances were defined as friends, close classmates, teammates, or colleagues but did not include family members or romantic partners. Five incidents—(a) forgetting, (b) hesitation, (c) mispronunciation, (d) misnaming, and (e) mocking, respectively—were described to participants as follows.

> (a) The interlocutor was unable to recall the participant's first name.
> (b) The interlocutor hesitated before recalling the participant's first name.
> (c) The interlocutor mispronounced the participant's first name (for example, the interlocutor said "*K**ir**sten*" instead of "*K**ri**sten*" or "*Jack*" instead of "*Jake*").
> (d) The interlocutor called the participants by a wrong first name (for example, a friend's or a colleague's
> name, according to the context).
> (e) The interlocutor laughed at their first name.[1]

For each incident, participants were asked whether it had happened to them (excluding childhood experiences). If so, they were invited to rate on a 7-point Likert type scale (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much so*) how (a) irritated; (b) offended; (c) sad they usually felt when such an incident occurred. They also indicated on a 4-point scale (*Never / Sometimes / Often / Always*) whether they reminded the interlocutor of their name (for forgetting incidents) or corrected the interlocutor (for mispronunciations and misnaming incidents). For each incident, participants had the opportunity to comment on their responses on a sheet of paper.

Then participants judged on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much so*) how much they see their first name as a symbol of their identity (i.e., self-symbolic value), how much they liked their first name, and how easy it is for French-speakers to pronounce their first name. Then, they were invited to rate on 7-point Likert type scales (1 = *never* and 7 = *very often*) how often they themselves committed the same five incidents.

Finally, the participants rated whether people (all kinds of people including parents, friends, colleagues, classmates, clients, and so on) called them by their surname or their first name in daily life. The following options were presented: (1) Only my surname / (2) Mainly my surname / (3) A little bit more often my surname / (4) Both equally / (5) A little bit more often my first name / (6) Mainly my first name / (7) Only my first name.

Finally, the participants filled in a French translation of the 10-item Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem scale (Vallières & Vallerand, 1990), which assesses one's self-worth via 10 sentences expressing positive or negative feelings towards oneself.

Analyses

We used five types of analyses besides the descriptive statistics presented below. (1) We used Cochran's Q tests to determine whether the occurrences of the four naming incidents, measured through dichotomous "yes"/ "no" responses, differed significantly. (2) We used McNemar tests as follow-up of the former to directly compare occurrences of pairs of naming incidents. (3) In order to measure the strength of associations between pairs of measures (e.g., self-esteem and feelings of offense) and their direction (positive or negative), we carried out Spearman rank correlation analyses. We used this analysis rather than its parametric equivalent because the assumption of pairwise normality was systematically violated (all *p*s associated with the Shapiro-Wilk tests were < .05). (4) Finally, we used ANOVAs (Analyses of Variance) to assess the presence of statistically significant differences between three or more means and/or between multiple factors (i.e., Type of incidents and Feeling) on a given measure (e.g., the intensity of feelings reported). For all performed ANOVAs, the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied when the assumption of sphericity was violated (Mauchly's test, $p < .05$). In ANOVAs, η^2_p represent effect sizes ranging from 0 to 1. (5) Where relevant, ANOVAs were followed up by paired comparisons using Holm's t-tests. In these analyses, Cohen's *d* represents effect sizes, whose classical benchmarks are "small" (*d* = 0.2), "medium" (*d* = 0.5), and "large" (*d* = 0.8; Cohen 1988).

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All the statistical analyses were conducted using JASP 17.1, except the Cochran and McNemar tests which were calculated with Jamovi (Jamovi does not include a specific option for the Cochran Q test but it can be calculated via the Friedman test option, see Statkat (2023) at https://statkat.com/stat-tests/cochrans-q-test.php).

Results

Properties of the Own First Name

Before reporting the results related to naming incidents, it is interesting to note that on average, participants judged that their first name was a relatively strong symbol of their personal identity [Mean (*M*) = 5.15, Standard deviation (*SD*) = 1.87, *Median* = 6]. They also liked their first name (*M* = 5.84, *SD* = 1.35, *Median* = 6) and judged that it was easy to pronounce (*M* = 6.49, *SD* = 1.10, *Median* = 7). There was a significant positive correlation between the self-symbolic value of one's own name and ratings of liking it: the higher the symbolic value of one's own name, the higher the ratings of liking it, Spearman's *rho* = 0.407, $p < .0001$. Participants reported that, during a typical day, people called them mainly by their first name (*M* = 5.94, *SD* = 1.01, *Median* = 6, corresponding to "*Mainly my first name*").

Occurrence of Incidents

A Cochran's Q test showed that the proportions of occurrence of, respectively, forgetting the participants' name (0.75), hesitating before uttering the participants' name (0.86), mispronouncing the participants' name (0.63), and calling the participants a wrong name (0.82) differed in a significant way across the four Types of incidents, *Chi square* = 32.7, *df* = 3, $p < .001$. Further, *McNemar tests* (*N* = 186, *df* = 1) indicated that Hesitation was more frequently reported than Forgetting and Mispronunciation, and Mispronunciation was less often reported than Misnaming and Hesitation, all *p*s < .05. The other paired comparisons showed no significant differences.

Comparing Feelings Across the Different Types of Incidents

The most informative analysis of the present data should have been a 4 (Type of incident: Forgetting, Hesitation, Mispronunciation, and Misnaming) X 3 (Feeling: irritated, offended, and sad) repeated measures ANOVA on the intensity of feelings reported. However, for repeated measures ANOVAs to be valid, each participant must provide data across all conditions (i.e., having experienced the four types of incidents), which was the case for only 67 out of the 186 participants (i.e., 36.02%). Consequently, we decided to run this analysis but to also examine the Incident by Feeling interaction (if it was significant) by means of separate one-way ANOVAs for each incident with the Feeling as the repeated measure factor. This strategy allowed us to include many more participants in each one-way ANOVA than in the omnibus two-way ANOVA (see Table 1).

The two-way ANOVA conducted on 67 participants revealed a main effect of Incident, $F(2.60,171.28) = 6.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.09$. Follow-up paired comparisons indicated that participants reported stronger negative Feelings for Forgetting and Misnaming incidents than for Hesitations, $t(66) = 3.60$, $d = 0.41$, $p < .01$, and $t(66) = 3.07$, $d = 0.35$, $p < .01$, respectively, and Mispronunciations, $t(66) = 3.35$, $d = 0.38$, $p < .01$, and $t(66) = 2.82$, $d = 0.32$, $p < .05$, respectively. There was no significant difference between Forgetting and Misnaming incidents, $t(66) = 0.53$, $d = 0.06$, $p = 1$, nor between Mispronunciations and Hesitations, $t(66) = 0.25$, $d = 0.03$, $p = 1$. Further, there was a main effect of Feeling, $F(1.72,113.26) = 16.29$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.20$. Participants reported being more irritated and offended than sad, $t(66) = 5.42$, $d = 0.37$, $p < .0001$, and $t(66) = 4.25$, $d = 0.29$, $p < .001$, respectively. There was no significant difference between irritation and offense, $t(66) = 1.17$, $d = 0.08$, $p = .24$. Finally, there was a significant interaction between these Type of incident and Feeling, $F(3.75,247.22) = 2.18$, $p = .016$, $\eta^2_p = 0.05$, suggesting that the differences between the three types of Feelings change as a function of the incident. As explained above, we followed up on this interaction with four separate one-way ANOVAs conducted on larger samples. For all incidents, participants were more irritated and offended than sad. The levels of irritation and offense were similar, except for mispronunciation where participants were also more irritated than offended. Descriptive data are presented in Table 1, and the results of the four ANOVAs and their associated post-hoc analyses are presented in Table 2. Ratings Were Provided on A 7-Point Scale (1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much so*). Standard deviations are in parentheses. The numbers of participants included in the One-way ANOVAs are specified for each type of incident.

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Table 1: Mean Ratings of Feelings as a Function of Type of Feeling and Type of Incident.

		Feeling		
		Irritated	Offended	Sad
Incident	Forgetting (N = 140)	2.41 (1.54)	2.56 (1.66)	1.97 (1.43)
	Hesitation (N = 160)	1.89 (1.25)	2.01 (1.28)	1.57 (1.10)
	Mispronunciation (N = 118)	2.37 (1.68)	1.81 (1.28)	1.37 (0.87)
	Misnaming (N = 153)	2.52 (1.71)	2.51 (1.75)	1.75 (1.28)

It is worth noting that the mean values presented in Table 1 may give the impression that participants had very weak negative feelings when their name was misprocessed. However, the percentage of participants who reacted at least moderately (i.e., giving a rating of 4 and over) to at least one incident reached 52.74% (96 out of 182 participants; 4 participants having experienced none of the 4 considered Types of incidents). These percentages were respectively 36.43% (51 out of 140 participants) for Forgetting incidents, 18.75% (30 out of 160 participants) for Hesitations, 29.66% (35 out of 118 participants) for Mispronunciations and 36.60% (56 out of 153 participants) for Misnaming. As shown in Table 2, these percentages suggest that participants were not always indifferent to naming incidents involving their own name. Significant differences are in bold

Table 2: Parameters (F, df, p, η^2_p) for the Four One-Way ANOVAs and the Associated Post-Hoc Holm's Tests (t, p, Cohen's d) as a Function of Incident

		Forgetting N = 140	Hesitation N = 160	Mispronunciation N = 118	Misnaming N = 153
Main Effect	F	11.78	15.16	30.95	29.75
	df	(2,278)	(1.82,288.97)	(1.74,204.08)	(1.74,263.85)
	p	**<.0001**	**<.0001**	**<.0001**	**<.0001**
	η^2_p	0.08	0.09	0.21	0.16
Holm's Post-Hoc Comparisons					
Irritated *vs.* Offended	t	1.24	1.42	4.39	0.06
	p	0.22	0.16	**<.0001**	0.95
	Cohen's d	0.10	0.10	0.42	0.004
Irritated *vs.* Sad	t	3.44	3.89	7.85	6.71
	p	**= .001**	**<.001**	**<.0001**	**<.0001**
	Cohen's d	0.28	0.27	0.76	0.49
Offended *vs.* Sad	t	4.69	5.32	3.46	6.65
	p	**<.0001**	**<.0001**	**<.001**	**<.0001**
	Cohen's d	0.38	0.37	0.33	0.48

Behavioral Reactions to Incidents

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was carried out to compare the estimated frequency with which participants reminded the interlocutor of their name (when the name was forgotten) or corrected them (for mispronunciations and erroneous naming) after a naming incident occurred. This analysis revealed no effect of Incident, $F(2,140) = 0.64$, $p = 0.53$, $\eta^2p = 0.01$. For all Incidents, the mean ratings were around 3, which corresponded to "Often" on the 4-point scale: $M = 2.99$ ($SD = 0.93$) for forgetting incidents, $M = 3.09$ ($SD = 0.97$) for Mispronunciations, and $M = 3.13$ ($SD = 0.94$) for Misnaming. This suggests that participants tend to not let naming incidents pass.

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Table 3: Correlations between the Intensity of Affective Responses (Feeling Irritated, Offended, or Sad) and (a) Scores at the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, (b) Ratings of Propensity to Misprocess (Forgetting, Hesitating, Mispronouncing or Calling by a Wrong Name) Other People's Names, (c) Levels of Self-Symbolic Value of One's Own Name. All the Correlations are One-Tailed.

		Rosenberg	Propensity	Symbol
Incident	Feeling			
Forgetting (N =140)	Irritated	*rho* = 0.077 *p* = .818	***rho* = 0.180** ***p* = .017**	*rho* = 0.121 *p* = .077
	Offended	*rho* = 0.002 *p* = .511	*rho* = −0.135 *p* = .056	*rho* = −0.033 *p* = .650
	Sad	*rho* = 0.111 *p* = .095	*rho* = −0.030 *p* = .360	*rho* = 0.109 *p* = .099
Hesitation (N = 160)	Irritated	*rho* = 0.060 *p* = .227	***rho* = −0.182** ***p* = .010**	*rho* = 0.081 *p* = .156
	Offended	*rho* = 0.055 *p* = .754	*rho* = −0.127 *p* = .055	*rho* = 0.021 *p* = .395
	Sad	*rho* = -0.069 *p* = .192	*rho* = −0.007 *p* = .535	***rho* = 0.162** ***p* = .020**
Mispronunciation (N = 118)	Irritated	*rho* = -0.012 *p* = .447	***rho* = −0.203** ***p* = .014**	***rho* = 0.224** ***p* = .007**
	Offended	*rho* = 0.021 *p* = .590	*rho* = −0.062 *p* = .252	*rho* = 0.103 *p* = .134
	Sad	*rho* = 0.103 *p* = .132	*rho* = −0.086 *p* = .176	*rho* = −0.065 *p* = .765
Misnaming (N = 153)	Irritated	*rho* = −0.078 *p* = .167	***rho* = −0.156** ***p* = .027**	*rho* = 0.014 *p* = .433
	Offended	*rho* = -0.121 *p* = .068	*rho* = −0.085 *p* = .147	*rho* = 0.030 *p* = .355
	Sad	***rho* = 0.199** ***p* = .007**	***rho* = −0.142** ***p* = .040**	***rho* = 0.144** ***p* = .037**

Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Feeling Intensity for the Different Types of Incidents

Before starting to report the results of correlation analyses, it is important to note that the recommended sample size (N = 153, see the *Participants* section) was reached for two Types of incidents: hesitation (N = 160) and misnaming (N = 153) but not for Forgetting (N = 140) and Mispronunciation (N = 118) incidents. Thus, for these last two incidents, we estimated the achieved power of the analyses a posteriori. The achieved power was 0.77 for forgetting incidents and 0.71 for mispronunciation (i.e., a little below the desired power of 0.80) [G*Power 3.1; Faul et al. 2007].

Previous research suggests that high self-esteem may protect us against negative emotions elicited by incidents that could challenge our sense of personal value (Poggi & D'Errico 2018). Therefore, we expected negative correlations between mean scores at the Rosenberg scale and mean ratings of negative feelings for each Type of incident. Non-parametric one-tailed correlations (Spearman Rho) are presented in Table 3. Contrary to our expectation, almost none of these correlations were significant. The only significant correlation indicated that the higher the participants' self-esteem scores were, the lower their feelings of sadness were when they were misnamed.

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Relationship between Propensity and Feeling Intensity for the Different Types of Incidents

It is possible that participants who are more prone to incidents with other people's names are more tolerant or understanding of similar mistakes. If so, they might experience weaker negative feelings when their own names are misprocessed than participants who are less prone to naming incidents themselves. Data seem to support this hypothesis for the feeling of irritation. Indeed, there were significant negative correlations between the participants' propensity to forget, to hesitate, to mispronounce names, or to misname people, and the intensity of their irritation when an interlocutor committed the same incidents (see Table 3). There was also a significant negative relationship between the participants' propensity to misname other people and the intensity of sadness when they were themselves misnamed. No other negative relationships between feelings and incidents were significant.

Relationship between Name Self-symbolic Level and Feeling Intensity for the Different Types of Incidents

Finally, we expected a positive correlation between the self-symbolic value of one's own name and the intensity of feelings when naming incidents occurred. However, analyses only revealed a significant positive correlation between the name self-symbolic value and the intensity of irritation after mispronunciation of one's own name, but not for the other naming incidents (see Table 3). In addition, there were significant positive correlations between ratings of self-symbolic values and levels of sadness when the interlocutor hesitated before uttering the participant's name or misnamed them. There were no other significant correlations.

Discussion

Being named by others is integral to our social lives and to our sense of individuality (Aldrin 2016; Jeshion 2009; Snyder & Fromkin 1980). The few studies on the topic showed that people assign high self-symbolic value to their names (Wilkstrom 2012; Dion 1983). Results of the present study, in which participants rated the symbolic value of their names (i.e., the degree to which one's own name was seen as a symbol of identity) and reported whether they liked it, are consistent with previous work. Indeed, participants gave relatively high ratings in response to these questions (M = 5.15 and M = 5.84 on a 1 to 7-point scale, respectively).

Given the high social and symbolic value assigned to one's own name, it was relevant to investigate how people feel when their names are misprocessed. We found that the intensity of negative feelings in reaction to a misprocessing of one's own name by an interlocutor varied across feelings. Overall, participants reported being more irritated and offended than sad. There was no significant difference between irritation and offense for most incidents (i.e., forgetting, hesitations or misnaming incidents), but participants were less offended than irritated when their names were mispronounced.

However, in all cases, the intensity of feelings remained relatively low, with means varying between 1.37 and 2.56 (see Table 1), well below the middle of the 7-point scale. This relative weakness of negative feelings elicited by naming incidents is in line with the findings of King and Geise (2010) that people whose name had been forgotten by an experimenter did not report more negative mood than people whose name was recalled. It is nevertheless important to note than more than half of the participants (52.74%) rated at least one feeling as moderate or stronger (rating of 4 or higher) for at least one incident, suggesting that people are not completely indifferent to name misprocessing incidents. Interestingly, ten participants spontaneously expressed, in their complementary comments, that they found that naming incidents were funny. For example, they made affirmations such as "I find this funny", "This makes me laugh", 'This amuses me", or "This makes me smile; it is generally the interlocutor who feels uncomfortable, not me". Therefore, some people experience positive rather than negative feelings when their own name are misprocessed. Future research should thus assess more directly the proportion of people experiencing positive or negative feelings in such situations.

In contrast with these relatively weak negative feelings, people reported they often react to incidents with their names, either by reminding the interlocutor of their names or correcting them (i.e., on average 2.99 for the forgetting incident, 3.09 for mispronunciations, and 3.13 for misnaming on a 4-point scale). This result indicates that, even if participants do not experience strong negative feelings when their own name is misprocessed, they do not ignore these incidents and tend not to let them pass without a reaction. Correcting a name misprocessing possibly involves a form of self-affirmation. But, more pragmatically, correction is a means

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to reduce the probability that the speaker makes the same mistake again. Avoiding naming errors and mispronunciations is likely to make communication more efficient and smoother in education and workplace settings or even in more informal contexts. In the present study, participants corrected interlocutors who mispronounced their names more often than those in the study by Watzlawick et al. (2016). In their study, the percentage of participants who often or very often corrected their name when it was not correctly spoken varied from 35.5% to 58.9% across countries. Here, the percentage of participants who corrected their name at least often was 71.19% for Mispronunciations and 77.12% for Misnaming. The percentage of participants who often and always recalled their name in case of forgetting was 72.14%. However, the comparison is difficult because the contexts in which mispronunciations occurred possibly differed between the two studies. Indeed, Watzlawick et al. (2016) showed that the frequency varied across cultural contexts (Brazil, Germany, and Korea) but none of these cultural contexts was similar to that in the present study. Importantly, the contrast between the weak ratings of negative feelings and the high frequency of reminding and correction suggests that it can be misleading to use the correction as the only indicator of bother when the own name was not correctly spoken as Watzlawick et al. (2016) did. From the present results, ratings of negative feelings alone would suggest that bother was low, whereas ratings of corrections alone would suggest that bother was important. Taking the two kinds of ratings into consideration thus leads to the more refined conclusion that, globally, incidents did not trigger strong negative feelings but participants did not ignore these incidents and usually responded by correcting or reminding others of their names.

Beyond the characterization of name misprocessing incidents and associated negative feelings, we were interested in individual factors that could modulate one's feelings to those incidents. We examined the impact of variations in self-esteem, propensity to name misprocessing and assignment of self-symbolic value to one's own name on negative feelings experienced following name misprocessing.

First, because high self-esteem can protect people against negative feelings triggered by incidents that could question their sense of personal value (Poggi & D'Errico 2018), we expected negative correlations between scores at the Rosenberg self-esteem scale and ratings of negative feelings (irritation, offense, and sadness) for the different incidents. Globally, results did not support this prediction. There was only a negative correlation between scores at the Rosenberg scale and ratings of sadness when participants were misnamed.

Second, we hypothesized that participants who are themselves prone to difficulties with others' names would be more tolerant and experience negative feelings less when their own name was misprocessed, compared to participants who are less prone to such difficulties. Results showed that, indeed, there was a negative correlation between the propensity to misprocess names and the intensity of experienced irritation when one's own name was misprocessed. This was the case for every kind of naming incident: the more participants were prone to incidents with others' names, the less they felt irritated when their own name was misprocessed. However, this negative relationship was not found for the feeling of offence, regardless the type of incident and only for sadness when participants were misnamed.

Third, we explored whether the self-symbolic value of one's own name was related to the intensity of negative feelings experienced after naming incidents. We found a positive correlation between the name's symbolic level and the intensity of irritation after one's own name was mispronounced. The name's symbolic value also correlated positively with both the level of sadness after an interlocutor's hesitation before uttering the participant's name and the level of sadness when the interlocutor named the participant with a wrong name.

In sum, as illustrated in Table 2, only two systematic patterns of results come out from the set of correlational analyses addressing modulations by individual factors. First, the participants' propensity to misprocess names and the intensity of experienced irritation when one's own name was misprocessed were negatively related for the four types of incidents. Second, the intensity of sadness after having been misnamed correlated with the three individual factors investigated (self-esteem, propensity to misprocess names, and self-symbolic value of one's own name).

The current work was largely exploratory and future research could expand on our findings in multiple ways. First, our participants were asked to report on name misprocessing by close acquaintances (e.g., friends, classmates, teammates, or colleagues). It is possible that there are varying degrees of closeness within these relationships and the impact of that factor could be assessed. Using in-depth interviews could also allow addressing whether factors such as power asymmetry in the conversational context or belonging to an ethnic or gender minority may influence the degree of negative feelings in response to name misprocessing. Similarly, it would be interesting to evaluate whether emotional reactions change, and whether the almost total absence of sadness holds, when naming incidents occur in the context of conversations with close relatives such as romantic partners or close family members. As already mentioned above, ratings of positive feelings such as amusement when misprocessing of one's own name occurs should also be included.

Besides, it would be interesting to reproduce this study in conditions that allow comparing feelings and reactions of people that have names with different degrees of ease of pronunciation to evaluate the influence of this factor on the occurrence of naming incidents and on feelings associated with the different naming incidents. Indeed, participants in our study usually reported that their names were easy to pronounce (with a

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median of 7 of the 7-point scale). It is difficult to predict how the difficulty to pronounce a name may influence feelings associated with errors such as mispronunciation. On the one hand, repeated mispronunciation might trigger irritation, offense, or even sadness; on the other hand, it might lead the person to habituate to such incidents and experience weaker negative feelings. Likewise, a person who knows that their name is hard to pronounce may be more tolerant toward these incidents. Again, such reactions may or may not be modulated by cultural factors and belonging to minorities.

Finally, a limitation of the present study is that it is unsure whether participants responded based on episodic recollections of specific naming incidents or on the plausibility that such incidents could have happened to them. The two response strategies were possible when answering our questionnaire. Future research should include questions to clarify this point, or explicitly instruct participants to base their response only on episodic recollections of incidents.

Notes

[1] Ratings associated with this type of incident were not included in the analyses because the number of participants who experienced it was much smaller (N = 65) than for the other four incidents, far from the number of participants requested to carry out correlation analyses in good conditions (N = 153; see above).

Supplemental Online Material

Aggregated data are available at https://osf.io/meydz
The draft of this manuscript was posted on the preprint server of the Open Science Framework under the following URL https://osf.io/ugpw6 on 22 August 2024.

Disclosure Statement

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AI Disclosure Statement

No AI Tools or Technology were used to conduct the research or write this article.

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