



What Life Is Like for People Who Have Unfortunate Names

"No, not *that* Beyoncé."

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Most parents spend a lot of time deciding on the best name for their child, but sometimes it seems like they're deliberately trying to sabotage their kids. That's what seemingly happened to a girl named Beyoncé whose story was posted on [Humans of New York](#) this past weekend:

**Humans of New York**

Arts/Humanities Website · 12,576,405 Likes · April 4 at 12:07pm



"Sometimes I hate my name because it always draws attention to me, and I'm not a very social person. My family moved this year from Pennsylvania. I was so scared the first day of school that someone would notice me. I wouldn't even adjust my seat because I thought it would make a noise. One time I really had to cough, but I held it in. When the teacher started calling attendance, I got really nervous, because every time people learn my name is Beyoncé, somebody starts singing 'Single Ladies.' And some did, of course. But the second day of school wasn't too bad. Because everyone knew my name."

Some of the comments are super funny—we love how these people are taking their familiar names in stride. But it would also be completely understandable for them to be straight-up peeved since research has shown that people place a lot of emphasis on names.

[One study](#) from Ohio University found that people subconsciously predict career success for people with names that match up the gender stereotype associated with a profession. Another [study](#) found that there are three times as many Eleanors at Oxford University than there are in the general population and that there are also a proportionately high number of Peters, Simons, and Annas at the school. On the flip side, there's less than a 30th of the number of women named Jade, Paige, and Shannon at Oxford than there is in the general population. And a [study](#) published in the journal *Psychological Science* found that grad students with the initials C and D had slightly lower grade point averages than students whose name started with an A or a B.

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Clearly our names have some kind of an impact on how we interact with other people—a fact that licensed clinical psychologist Kelly Tonnelli, Psy.D., confirms. “When we learn of someone’s name, we begin creating a picture of them in our minds, which we either confirm or reject,” she says. “When our mental picture does not match reality, it can be disconcerting.”

So for example, if your name is Beyoncé and you're a terrible singer, people might be thrown even though you never claimed to have Grammy-level skills.

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But if you share a name with someone famous, what are you supposed to do about it? Ignore it, or go ahead and acknowledge what everyone else is thinking?

[Ildiko Tabori](#), Ph.D., resident psychologist at The Laugh Factory, says it's best to just touch it with something like, “Hi, I’m Katie Holmes, but not *that* Katie Holmes,” and move on. Worth pointing out: Tabori says that people tend to assume you have some kind of connection with a celebrity if you share the same name and are more likely to interact with you in a positive way—especially if they're a fan.

And hey, at least it's a conversation starter...