

A rose by any other name...

There was no end of confusion while growing up with one of the most basic facts about myself.

As you can see in this space, I go by 'Brock Weir,' but now it can be told that Brock is actually my middle name.

Mind you I've never really been referred to by my real first name, at least for nearly the entirety of my first two decades. Rather, I was called Brock in the day-to-day basically from Day 1.

Where do things get confusing, you might be wondering.

Well, the first degree of complication stems from the fact that I was named after my father, presumably at his insistence. So, there were two Brocks in the household to keep things both interesting and confusing.

Potential shortcuts were floated to restore some kind of order.

'Little Brock' was the first attempt within my extended family to bring clarity.

That only lasted for so long.

Then along came 'Brock Junior,' which maddeningly had longer legs than I would have cared for.

One family member tried to really streamline things by taking 'Brock Junior' and trying to make 'B.J.' happen - it didn't - while others attempted various nicknames ranging from 'Broccoli' to 'Squirt' (no, my family had no connection to the Green Giant family of jolly products), each with minimal staying power.

But wait, there's more.

The name 'Brock' wasn't the only detail that caused befuddlement amongst certain parties. It was exacerbated by the fact that my seldom-used first name was also shared by my father.

And his father.

And my grandfather's grandfather.

And my grandfather's grandfather's father.

I haven't done much research to find out where my first name got caught in the branches of my family tree and spread out like an invasive vine, but suffice it to say there were more than enough people going around answering to the name at any given point.

Of course, my own father simplified things - and still does - by referring to me by my elder brother's first name, so there's a lot I've become accustomed answering to.

It took me a while, however, to fully accept my first name - and that happened only by sheer necessity.

Enrolling at Carleton University in 2003, I obviously had to do so under my legal name. No biggie, or so I thought. I made a note in whatever documentation was necessary that the middle name was the go-to going forward, but that memo got lost somewhere along the line.

After frosh week was behind us and regular classes were the order of the day, the fun of having to explain myself to professors, teaching assistants, peers in both the classroom and in dorms, and to just about everyone else ? in both official languages!

Something eventually had to give, so it just became simpler to go by that dusty old name and correct the record only when it naturally came up.

Today, when I encounter those who knew me from my university days, it's a crap shoot which name ultimately comes to the fore, but I'm now able and comfortable enough to answer to either, sometimes both, with reasonable ease.

But growing up, I never truly realised this was something of a privilege.

Aside for any behind-the-scenes tussles between my parents back in 1985 over what names were to go on my birth certificate, and in what order, nobody seemed really all that put out whether I used my first, second, or even third name ? yes, there's a third one, just to spice things up! ? and was able to see what fit who I was and what I wanted to be.

How I wish everyone had that luxury ? and, of course, as someone who identifies as a cisgender male, it's much easier for me.

Not so for young Albertans who do not identify as cisgender.

Last week, Premier Danielle Smith, who, like me, opts to go by her middle name, announced several youth-related policy changes under the banner of ?Preserving choice for children and youth.?

?The government is introducing policies across several ministries to preserve choices children and youth have before potentially making life-altering and often irreversible adult decisions involving the alteration of their biological sex while also ensuring women and girls have the opportunity to participate safely and meaningfully in sport,? said the Alberta Government in its announcement. ?In addition, the government will improve access to health services for Alberta's transgender community and social supports for children identifying as transgender and their families.?

On the subject of how this will work in schools, they add: ?Parents must be notified and opt in to any instance when a teacher provides formal instruction on subject matter involving gender identity, sexual orientation, or human sexuality; all third-party resource materials or presentations related to gender identity, sexual orientation, or human sexuality in Alberta classrooms must be pre-approved by the Ministry of Education to ensure they are age-appropriate; parents must consent for their child aged 15 and under to alter their name or pronouns used by school teachers, administration and other educational staff; parents must be notified for their child aged 16 or 17 to alter their names or pronouns used by school teachers, administration and other educational staff.?

?Alberta's government is also developing a counselling pilot project to help youth identifying as transgender and their families work through often difficult and complex issues and discussions,? they concluded.

Reading this last paragraph, I couldn't help but think Canadians' collective sense of irony somehow dissipated over the prairies on its journey westward.

By identifying the difficulty and arguable complexity of said discussions, it should be quite evident why parental consent for those 15 and under to simply choose their preferred name and their preferred pronoun might not be feasible; if they come from a loving and accepting family, they will already be well-aware of their child's identity and the person they are becoming and it will come as no surprise. If parents are not already in the loop, the whys and wherefores should be abundantly clear.

For those youth ages 16 and 17, the same question on parental knowledge should be asked and, if parents are not, again, already in the loop, consider how this type of notification can make these ?difficult and complex? discussions even more so ? and potentially even dangerous.

Where does preserving a child or youth's choice dovetail into these scenarios?

It doesn't.

While I am thankful to have never been in this situation, I'm empathetic to those who are ? as we all should be.

Now, as far as names go, I'm grateful for an abundance of choice and the fact that, from as long as I can remember, the choice among the three, and any others that came to mind, was mine alone.