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Interrogating Marriage
December 11, 2007

**Contemporary Creations of the Family Name:
An Exploration of Social Variables in Patterns of Name Changing and Retention**

In April 2006, over a thousand Americans were polled on their opinions of possible Democratic candidates for the 2008 presidential election. The most interesting comparison was not between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama or John Edwards, but rather between Hillary Clinton and... Hillary Rodham Clinton. Amongst registered Democrats, the difference was negligible – less than one percent – but for Republicans her approval jumped drastically with the inclusion of her maiden name, from 16 to 23 percent; among Independents it increased from 42 to 48 percent. Inversely, below the Mason-Dixon Line, Clinton polled better than Rodham Clinton by a margin of 52 to 45 percent (Preston 2006). Clearly, for (Rodham) Clinton, the question of a last name was a pressing one, influencing her potential popular appeal – a year later, she dropped her maiden name from her national presidential campaign, while still retaining it in her work as a New York senator (Associated Press 2007). This negotiation seems quite disparate with the woman who remained known only as Hillary Rodham during her husband's years as governor of Arkansas, and only added on the Clinton as he began to pursue his presidential aspirations; it now seems like she must publicly adopt his name to pursue her own. At what cost, if any, is this transition made? How does name changing (or lack thereof) influence the ways in which married women are perceived? Is name changing merely a patriarchal relic, or is it a means of solidifying marriage and building families? Politics aside, Hillary Rodham Clinton is much like other contemporary women in her attempts to answer and answer again these questions.

A History of American Name Changing

The idea of American women maintaining their surnames after marriage was first purported by suffragist Lucy Stone in the mid-1800s, and carried on by other early feminist who formed the Lucy Stone League after her death (Suter 2004). In response, many state laws were passed requiring that women change their last names to those of their husbands' after marriage – laws which weren't challenged until the second wave of feminism took root in the 1970s. In 1975, the Tennessee Supreme Court overturned a law that required married a woman to vote under her husband's name (Goldin and Shim 2004) and this decision, coupled with others similar, gradually changed the legal presumption of name-changing. By the mid-1980s, all such laws had been repealed; women were allowed to use a surname of their choice after marriage (Suter 2004).

Now that different options were legal, many social factors encouraged nontraditional choices in naming. Women were marrying later in life, and more frequently had already earned advanced degrees under their maiden names, encouraging them to ensure professional consistency by not changing their names (Goldin and Shim 2004). Divorce rates were also increasing, leading to the question of whether to refer to divorcées by their maiden or married names – a question easily diverted by avoiding name changing altogether (Johnson 1983).

The sexual revolution was also occurring, which Goldin and Shim (2004) argue fundamentally changed perceptions of marriage, and subsequently marital name changing. They assert that the impact of oral contraceptives was particularly profound: “Armed with the Pill, a young woman could minimize the unintended pregnancy consequences of sex and delay marriage. She could plan an independent existence at an

early age – one not defined solely by marriage and motherhood” (146). By lessening the ties between sex, marriage, and motherhood, contraception allowed for women to postpone marriage in favor of schooling, and even once married, postpone children. The conclusion, however, that these changes fostered greater senses of self-identity in women and that greater self-identity led to greater name retention is one that begs the question of the relationship between identity and name, which will be explored in later sections.

During the same time that marital age was increasing and the Pill was exploding in popularity, the use of the prefix “Ms.” was also becoming more acceptable and widespread, allowing for more equitable language for referring to married and unmarried women. The *New York Times* marked this change in June 1986, stating:

Until now, ‘Ms.’ had not been used because of the belief that it had not passed sufficiently into the language to be accepted as common usage. The Times now believes that ‘Ms.’ has become part of the language and is changing its policy... ‘Ms.’ will also be used when a woman’s marital status is not know, or when a married woman wishes to use it with her prior name in professional or private life” (Editor’s Note: 1986).¹

Now that colloquial language could more readily accommodate a woman with a different last name than her husband, the potential for varying surnames increased. The common use of “Ms.” also allowed for a certain amount of ambiguity around a woman’s marital status, as well as the source of her last name. For example, if “Ms. Jones” is mentioned, it is impossible to know whether or not she is married, and thus whether or not Jones is her maiden or marital name. One can tell neither if she is married, nor to whom she would be if she were. This degree of removal allows even married women who have

¹ Prior to the implementation of this policy, the *Times* had been forced into awkward constructions when referencing women who clearly would chosen the honorific of “Ms.,” such as when mentioning “Miss Steinem, editor of *Ms. Magazine* and a founder of the [National Women’s Political Caucus]” (Klemesrud 1983).

chosen their husbands' names to solely own their name in a way that a more traditional term of address does not.

Because name-changing was no longer the legal assumption, the process for women to change their last name became more complicated. Although a marriage certificate will facilitate the name-change process for women in ways that it does not for their male counterparts, a new wife must still take steps to change her name on "her driver's license, vehicle title, voter registration, U.S. passport, bank records, credit cards, medical records, insurance forms, wills, contracts and, most importantly, Social Security and Internal Revenue Service document" (Goldin and Shim 2004: 146). Thus, it is not simply that a woman changes her name by getting married, it is an additional choice that she must make and implement separate from taking her wedding vows. The increased effort required for a name change forces a certain amount of consideration in making the choice of whether or not to change one's name, and, what to possibly change it to. This increased introspection in turn leads to important questions about one's relationship to one's name: to what extent is a name the expression of an identity? Does the changing of a name represent the changing on an identity? Perhaps most importantly, does entering into marriage lead to a change of identity that ought to be accompanied by a change in name?

Naming as Identity, Identity in Marriage

In a study exploring this complex relationship between identity and surnames, Intons-Peterson and Crawford (1985) found that, contrary to presumptions that women would be less attached to their premarital surnames (because of the expectation that they would change it), an equal proportion of undergraduate men and women identified a great

deal with their names. For undergraduates, this proportion was roughly half, for graduate students it was 60 percent. Furthermore, 53 percent of undergraduate women and 62 percent of graduate women believed that changing their surnames would change their identities, which makes it more startlingly that 61 percent of the younger women and 53 percent of the older women “strongly agreed” that they would change their last names at the time of marriage (1165-6). The implication here is that, although women are strongly attached to and derive a portion of their identity from their surnames, they still anticipate changing that aspect of themselves upon marriage. This statement is perhaps crucial to the understanding of why women choose or do not choose to change their names: they view it as an explicit expression of their understandings of their marriage.

The natural extension of name determining identity and marriage determining name is inevitably that getting married alters one’s identity. For generations, this conclusion was most likely a valid one. Historically, transitioning from Miss Jones to Mrs. Smith would mean a new home, a new role as wife, and most likely soon thereafter a role as mother. These fundamental changes would influence one’s identity and place in the world. Even in contemporary representations, the role of wife is understood as an altered state, a transition marked by the ever-glamorous wedding ceremony. Given the fact that marriage could now have very little impact on one’s daily life, popular culture influences have developed to create an identity of “married” that is distinct from “unmarried.” Kingston (2004) remarks:

What we were seeing was the Superwoman being replaced by the equally mythical Superwife living the life of the mystique chic. But as *Cosmopolitan’s* ‘Housewife Wanna-bes’ survey made clear, young women... had fantasies of a Martha Stewartesque domesticity... Only a few women expressed concern that they might lose their identity (as opposed to gaining a new one). (99)

Because of these cultural influences, there remains an identity of wife in popular imaginations that does not exist in legal and economic realities. As long as there is an identity to be gained through marriage, and as long as naming is associated with identity, a woman may either fully adopt or reject that identity by choosing whether or not to change their name. It is not simply a question of logistics or phonetic preference; depending upon each individual's understanding of their name and identity, there is something gained or lost in the decision to change or keep one's name. Not only can it change perceptions of oneself, but of the relationship as well.

Although the subjects in Intons-Peterson and Crawford's study were undecided on whether couples with non-traditional surnames were more likely to have egalitarian relationships, with one-third agreeing, one-third disagreeing, and one-third undecided (1169), it should also be noted that the study was conducted in 1985 – only recently after maintaining one's maiden name became legal, and still a year before the *New York Times* acknowledged the acceptability of the title "Ms." Thus, while their research provides substantial insight into the relationship between individuals' names and identities, it was conducted while the act of keeping one's last name still would have been quite radical. Their conclusions, that women identify as strongly as men with their surnames, and that it is *not* psychologically easier for them to change their names than it is for men (1170), would have implied that, given wider legal and social acceptability over the subsequent twenty years, a much greater proportion of women would keep the surnames with which they were born after marriage. As the evidence will show, however, this was not the case.

Correlates of Name Changing or Retention

Despite the psychological evidence of identity attachment to one's name, social factors allowing for (or even encouraging) name retention, and increased acceptance of nontraditional naming, the percentage of women choosing nontraditional marital surnames is still quite low. As Brightman (1994) succinctly states: "Nine out of ten American wives use their husband's last name. The wives who break tradition are affluent achievers" (9). Estimates widely vary based on definitions of what is "traditional" and "nontraditional" and the population surveyed, from 1.4 percent (Johnson and Scheuble 1995) to 29 percent (Hoffnung 2006). Despite this experimental variability, there are many distinct characteristics highly correlated with an increased likelihood to retain one's name: higher levels of education² (Scheuble and Johnson 2005; Scheuble and Johnson 1993; Goldin and Shim 2004), marrying later in life (Hoffnung 2006; Scheuble and Johnson 2005), tendency to identify as a feminist (Hoffnung 2006), commitment to one's career and full-time employment (Hoffnung 2006; Scheuble and Johnson 2005), higher level of income (Brightman 1994), having a secular rather than religious wedding ceremony (Goldin and Shim 2004), and less value of the role of motherhood (Hoffnung 2006). These characteristics paint a clear picture of women who keep their names. They are more likely to be committed to elements of their life that may minimally include their partner such as their own education, career, and income, variables that can reaffirm identity independent of marriage. This conclusion reiterates

² Goldin and Shim (2004) found women were more likely to keep their surname both if they had increased years of schooling and if they went to more prestigious institutions of higher learning, specifically Ivy League universities, Top 25 liberal arts colleges, and Seven Sister colleges.

the suggestion that some identity is lost in the name-changing process, or, rather, that a highly-developed sense of self makes one less likely to change one's name.

Although there is clearly a noticeable and easily defined fraction of the population that keeps their premarital surname after their nuptials, for most women, there is at least some variation of name change. In fact, after an increase in the number of women keeping their names in the 1980s, the proportion of women who kept their names actually decreased from 1991 to 2001, though still remaining slightly higher than levels in the 1970s (Goldin and Shim 2004). This pattern could represent an initial surge of women who chose to keep their names as a political decision, as a radical act to show solidarity with the feminist movement and assert an equality that they felt existed within their own relationships. As time passed, name-keeping became less surprising, and while some women chose to do so for their own personal and professional reasons, felt no politically motivated peer pressure towards this effect.

There still remain many cultural factors that support name-changing: tradition (Suter 2004), family and peer expectations (Intons-Peterson and Crawford 1985), and logistical simplicity – changing to a husband's name never requires an explanation. There are other, more unexpected, reasons as well. While traditional feminist approaches seemingly support name-retention, it is easily forgotten that premarital names are often passed from father to daughter in a way that is just as patriarchal. For some women, the act of name-changing represents sharing a name with a partner whom they have chosen, instead of keeping their father's name. If the options are simply choosing between two men's names, neither is more feminist than the other. Furthermore, many women make the choice to change their name in order to have the same name as their children. Name-

changing becomes a way of ensuring family unity, sometimes becoming the defining characteristic of nontraditional families. Viewed from these perspectives, name-changing becomes the more radical and socially challenging option.

Analysis of Name Changing Discussions

Although many studies have explored correlates between name changing and retention, most of these articles have used demographic data (state birth records, published marriage announcements) or brief surveys, measures that look at whether or not women have legally transitioned from one name to another at a certain point. However, there is a much wider spectrum between name-change and name-retention. Scheuble and Johnson (2005) showed that married women show different situation use of last names, for example using one name socially and another professional. This result was particularly substantial for women who hyphenate their last names. Other than this study, however, most explorations do not explore the subtleties of naming – for example, women who use different names in different settings, women who retain their premarital name as a middle name, couples in which both partners change or hyphenate their name, or couples that use creativity in constructing last names for their children. In addition, strictly demographic characteristics cannot tell you precisely *why* these women are changing or retaining their names. Although variables such as age, education, and income clearly impact patterns of name changing, each woman is likely to offer a unique explanation as to why she made the choice she did. These subtleties will be explored here.

Methods. To answer these questions, I found numerous discussion boards and weblogs that addressed these complex questions. Ultimately, four sources were included:

a discussion board on the website of *The New York Times*, postings on the online community *Metafilter*, and comments left on the blogs *Tennessee Guerilla Women* and *Feminist Mormon Housewives*. Clearly, based purely on reputation and name, the readership of these forums will not represent the general populace, and those posting will be more likely to have more complex experiences with their name changing and retention experiences. However, the point of this study is not to represent a generalizable sample, but rather to give voice to how naming decisions were made, and to explore which name-changing options were taken for what reasons.

Quantitative analysis. One-hundred and seven of the blog posts were coded for gender, marital status, region, sexuality, naming patterns for partners in a marriage, overall opinion of male surname change, and naming patterns for children. Blog post were selected if they fulfilled two of the criteria – up to fifty posts from the *New York Times* and up to twenty posts from each of the other sources. More posts from the *Times* were included because those posts were the most likely to include valid responses for all of the response categories. Because of the coding criteria, the vast majority of posts selected were for those in heterosexual relationships (76 of 107 currently married; 100 of 107 heterosexual). The criteria were not meant to exclude those of varying sexual orientations; however it became an inadvertent effect. The posters who were in same-sex relationships primarily comments on the illegality of their seeking a marriage, or commented solely on whether or not they would change their name without speaking to the other variables. Because they were substantially excluded from this analysis, their opinions and patterns of name changing will be explored in later sections.

Opinions of naming preferences were coded into eight categories: 1) both partners use male's last name, 2) both partners use female's last name, 3) no change in either partner's last name, 3) female hyphenates last name, 5) both partners hyphenate their last names, 6) the female adopts the males surname and uses her premarital surname as a middle name, 7) a new name (other than a hyphenation) is created for both partners,³ and 8) other (which was used for a variety of possibilities, primarily when a woman switched back and forth between which name she chose to use in what setting). The frequencies for each of these options are shown in Table 1. By far the most common option was no change for either partner, which could partially be attributed to the population being reflected. The second most common option was the traditional one of both partners using the male's last name.

Table 1.

Naming Preference

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Both Partners Use Male's Name | 24 | 22.4 | 22.6 | 22.6 |
| | Both Partners Use Female's Name | 4 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 26.4 |
| | No Change | 51 | 47.7 | 48.1 | 74.5 |
| | Female Hyphenates | 5 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 79.2 |
| | Both Partners Hyphenate | 5 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 84.0 |
| | Maiden Name as Middle | 7 | 6.5 | 6.6 | 90.6 |
| | New Name for Both Partners | 5 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 95.3 |
| | Other | 5 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 106 | 99.1 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | 99 | 1 | .9 | | |
| Total | | 107 | 100.0 | | |

³ Interestingly, this option – perhaps one of the most creative solutions to the name change dilemma – is often demographically coded only as a female name change, since the most common way of implementing it is to have the male partner change his name before the ceremony and have the female partner adopt it after the marriage. Thus, on paper it appears to be a straightforward female using male's name pattern, instead of the more liberal approach that it actually embodies.

Chi-square crosstabulations were conducted for naming preference with gender and marital status; both tests were found to be statistically insignificant ($p = 0.289$; $p = 0.193$, respectively – results shown in Appendixes A and B). The relationship with gender was maintained when naming preferences were reduced to only the binary classification of “Traditional” and “Nontraditional” ($p = 0.343$; Appendix C). For this population of primarily name-changers, there is no significant difference in their decisions based on gender of marital status.

Posts were also coded based on their opinion of children’s naming. The responses were coded one of four ways: 1) given the father’s last name; 2) given the mother’s last name; 3) given a combination of the mother’s and father’s last names, with the same last name given to all children; and 4) given a combination of mother’s and father’s last names, with variation between the children’s name. The latter option was used for couples who chose to give some children the mother’s name and other children the father’s last name, usually based on birth order and gender. If both parents had changed their name to either a hyphenation of the two premarital surnames or a new name altogether, the children were coded as (3), having a combination of both parents’ last names. The relative frequencies for each of these options in shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Naming Preference for Children

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|---|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Father's Last Name | 40 | 37.4 | 61.5 | 61.5 |
| | Mother's Last Name | 5 | 4.7 | 7.7 | 69.2 |
| | Combination of Parents' Names (children same) | 13 | 12.1 | 20.0 | 89.2 |
| | Combination of Parents' Names (children vary) | 7 | 6.5 | 10.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 65 | 60.7 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | 99 | 42 | 39.3 | | |
| Total | | 107 | 100.0 | | |

Even amongst this group of respondents who show a high frequency of premarital surname retention, the most frequent response by far was to give the children the father's last name only (40 of the 65 valid responses).

Comparison of traditionality of partner naming preference and child naming preference revealed a predictable but significant relationship between the variables ($p = 0.002$; Tables 3 and 4). Those who chose a traditional partner naming choice almost exclusively chose traditional child naming options, while those with non-traditional partner naming choices were equally likely to choose traditional or nontraditional options when naming their children.

Table 3.

Traditionality * Traditionality of Children's Naming Crosstabulation

| | | | Traditionality of Children's Naming | | Total |
|----------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| | | | Traditional Choice | Nontraditional Choice | |
| Traditionality | Traditional Choice | Count | 15 | 1 | 16 |
| | | Expected Count | 9.8 | 6.2 | 16.0 |
| | | % within Traditionality of Children's Naming | 37.5% | 4.0% | 24.6% |
| | Nontraditional Choice | Count | 25 | 24 | 49 |
| | | Expected Count | 30.2 | 18.8 | 49.0 |
| | | % within Traditionality of Children's Naming | 62.5% | 96.0% | 75.4% |
| Total | Count | 40 | 25 | 65 | |
| | Expected Count | 40.0 | 25.0 | 65.0 | |
| | % within Traditionality of Children's Naming | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | |

Table 4.

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 9.304 ^b | 1 | .002 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^a | 7.587 | 1 | .006 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 11.227 | 1 | .001 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .002 | .002 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 9.161 | 1 | .002 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 65 | | | | |

A more detailed crosstabulation of the various naming options (Tables 5 and 6) revealed a further statistically significant relationship ($p=0.000$), as well as some interesting patterns in what routes of nontraditionality were followed. For example, partners with no change were most likely to give their children the father's last name, instead of coming up with a combination name to give the children. This result is consistent with the finding of Johnson and Scheuble (2002), which showed that 90 percent of women with nontraditional marital surnames still gave their children their husbands' last names.

Table 5.

Naming Preference * Naming Preference for Children Crosstabulation

| | | | Naming Preference for Children | | | | Total |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|---|---|--------|
| | | | Father's Last Name | Mother's Last Name | Combination of Parents' Names (children same) | Combination of Parents' Names (children vary) | |
| Naming Preference | Both Partners Use Male's Name | Count | 15 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 16 |
| | | Expected Count | 9.8 | 1.2 | 3.2 | 1.7 | 16.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference for Children | 37.5% | .0% | 7.7% | .0% | 24.6% |
| | Both Partners Use Female's Name | Count | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | | Expected Count | 1.2 | .2 | .4 | .2 | 2.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference for Children | .0% | 40.0% | .0% | .0% | 3.1% |
| | No Change | Count | 16 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 28 |
| | | Expected Count | 17.2 | 2.2 | 5.6 | 3.0 | 28.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference for Children | 40.0% | 40.0% | 23.1% | 100.0% | 43.1% |
| | Female Hyphenates | Count | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| | | Expected Count | 3.1 | .4 | 1.0 | .5 | 5.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference for Children | 10.0% | .0% | 7.7% | .0% | 7.7% |
| | Both Partners Hyphenate | Count | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| | | Expected Count | 2.5 | .3 | .8 | .4 | 4.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference for Children | .0% | .0% | 30.8% | .0% | 6.2% |
| | Maiden Name as Middle | Count | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | | Expected Count | 1.8 | .2 | .6 | .3 | 3.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference for Children | 5.0% | 20.0% | .0% | .0% | 4.6% |
| | New Name for Both Partners | Count | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| | | Expected Count | 2.5 | .3 | .8 | .4 | 4.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference for Children | .0% | .0% | 30.8% | .0% | 6.2% |
| | Other | Count | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | | Expected Count | 1.8 | .2 | .6 | .3 | 3.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference for Children | 7.5% | .0% | .0% | .0% | 4.6% |
| Total | | Count | 40 | 5 | 13 | 7 | 65 |
| | | Expected Count | 40.0 | 5.0 | 13.0 | 7.0 | 65.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference for Children | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

All of the partners who made nontraditional efforts to take the same name (i.e. both partners hyphenate, both partners take a new name) gave the children the same combined last name, suggesting that the desire to create a family name was at the root of their decision-making.

Table 6.

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 76.310 ^a | 21 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 59.956 | 21 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.336 | 1 | .068 |
| N of Valid Cases | 65 | | |

This contrasts sharply with the non-changers, who were also likely to give their children different last names from themselves and from

each other (i.e. alternating last names or giving the child a combined name that neither parent has). Thus, when selecting which route of nontraditional naming to take, the decision of whether or not to create a family name seems to be at the root of the issue.

A final analysis shows the relationship between positive or negative opinion of male name change. Women were more likely men to have a positive view of male name change ($p = 0.002$), as were both men and women with nontraditional naming choices ($p = 0.005$), shown in Tables 7 – 10.

Table 7.

Table 8.

Gender * Opinion of Male Change Crosstabulation

| | | | Opinion of Male Change | | Total |
|--------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|----------|-------|
| | | | Positive | Negative | |
| Gender | Male | Count | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| | | Expected Count | 8.8 | 3.2 | 12.0 |
| | | % within Opinion of Male Change | 17.9% | 70.0% | 31.6% |
| | Female | Count | 23 | 3 | 26 |
| | | Expected Count | 19.2 | 6.8 | 26.0 |
| | | % within Opinion of Male Change | 82.1% | 30.0% | 68.4% |
| Total | Count | 28 | 10 | 38 | |
| | Expected Count | 28.0 | 10.0 | 38.0 | |
| | % within Opinion of Male Change | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | |

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 9.272 ^b | 1 | .002 |
| Continuity Correction ^a | 7.016 | 1 | .008 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 8.904 | 1 | .003 |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 9.028 | 1 | .003 |
| N of Valid Cases | 38 | | |

Table 9.**Traditionality * Opinion of Male Change Crosstabulation**

| | | | Opinion of Male Change | | Total |
|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|----------|-------|
| | | | Positive | Negative | |
| Traditionality | Traditional Choice | Count | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| | | Expected Count | 7.4 | 2.6 | 10.0 |
| | | % within Opinion of Male Change | 14.3% | 60.0% | 26.3% |
| | Nontraditional Choice | Count | 24 | 4 | 28 |
| | | Expected Count | 20.6 | 7.4 | 28.0 |
| | | % within Opinion of Male Change | 85.7% | 40.0% | 73.7% |
| Total | Count | 28 | 10 | 38 | |
| | Expected Count | 28.0 | 10.0 | 38.0 | |
| | % within Opinion of Male Change | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | |

Table 10.**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 7.941 ^b | 1 | .005 |
| Continuity Correction ^a | 5.759 | 1 | .016 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 7.375 | 1 | .007 |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 7.732 | 1 | .005 |
| N of Valid Cases | 38 | | |

These various analyses show the unique relationship between specific naming preferences and various social factors, but perhaps most interestingly it shows the relationship between the naming changing and the creation of the family name. For all unions, if a family name is to be created – one name that both partners and children will share – then at least one partner must change their premarital surname, if not both. Many women may follow tradition and change their names, not out of a sense of changing or giving up part of their identity, but because the priority of creating a family name is more important than preserving their premarital surname. This pattern is exhibited both by those couples that chose to take nontraditional routes towards creating a family name, where both partners give up their original surnames, as well as those who retain their names and given their children varying surnames. The division is not between those who change their name and those who retain their names, but rather between those that prioritize the creation of a family name and those who do not.

Qualitative analysis. Careful consideration of the content of the discussion board posts follows the patterns shown in the qualitative analysis.

For some families, the tie between name and identity is unquestionable, and the need for a family name is less important:

My name is my identity... I felt if I took his name I would be swallowed by his family, and lose my own.

My husband is happy I kept the name that was my identity for the three decades before we were married. We sure as heck didn't agonize over this or involve other family members in the decision. If anyone has a problem with our kids having the name of one parent and not the other, too bad. It's not the name that counts, but the life you live together.

There was no question that my wife would keep her last name, and furthermore, no hand-wringing or discussion followed. It did not dawn on me that people agonized over such decisions. The import of a monolithic Family Last Name is new and unnecessary.

For others, however, names are not equated with identity. For these families, even if retaining premarital surnames would be preferable, the creation of a family name is more important.

I don't like the sexism inherent in the name-change laws of most states, but beyond that who cares? Your name is not your identity. (I recently got married and went through all this. I changed my name to my husband's hyphenated last name.

I think a family should have a family name. Hyphenating is kind of what law firms do, with each partner maintaining individuality and the ability to break off without too much trouble. Start a family, give it a family name, believe in the family, give your all to your family, be proud of your family.

There is no reason why I should favor my father's name over my husband's name. They are all "somebody else's" name! ... I adopted my husband's surname so that my husband, children, and I would all have the same "family" name.

Because these individuals do not conflate naming and identity, nothing is lost in a name change. Furthermore, something important is gained – the family name which unites parents and children to each other. In none of the cases in which a woman completely changed her last name did she not also want to give that name to her children – whether or not that is her intention upon changing her name, a family name is being created.

Based on the commentaries given in the blog posts, this desire for a family name, rather

than tradition or family pressure, is what prompts many to change their surnames at marriage.

The hope of creating a family name can alternately lead to very creative solutions, as opposed to the traditional taking of the male's name. These families found a variety of options:

When my husband and I were engaged, there was no question that I would keep my last name; I was 30 years old with a very unique last name. My then-fiancée, however, felt that it was important for his entire family to have the same last name. Our discussion continued for many weeks, until he spoke with his elder sister. "Dummy," she said, "why don't you take her last name instead?!" He thought about it for a while, and realized that this simple idea solved his dilemma. He has happily carried his new family name for eight years, and when people ask him about it he says, "It was the easiest solution!"

My wife and I combined our last names into a single new name seven years ago, and we couldn't be happier with the decision. We have a family name, we don't have to decide what to name the kids, we don't have to deal with hyphens and middle-name changes, and in a nice twist, we got to drop a final male suffix (-son) on her part of the name when the name was created! It's the only choice that satisfies everyone (except those with nostalgia for male privilege).

The former post here represents an intersection between high identity-name association for one partner and desire for a family name; the latter represents low identity-name association and desire for a family name. For both families, the result is the same – all members with the same last name – though the solutions are unique and nontraditional.

Additionally, the posts provide evidence as to why male name changing will likely not become a standard. For those couples liberal enough to be comfortable with the option, they often do not see the sense in either partner changing their names:

I debated taking my wife's name when we got married, but decided that didn't make any more sense than insisting she take mine.

This sentiment was expressed in several posts, and represents high name-identity association on the part of both partners. As long as the partners recognize that

association in the other, the family name becomes less of a priority. For such couples, this reasoning usually just leads to name retention on the part of both individuals, and a compromised name for the children.

Overall, the analysis of the discussion board posts provide insight into the interpersonal variables that influence name changing and retention decisions. Primarily, it seems to be the interaction between naming and identity, along with comparative priorities of creating a family name that are most likely to determine what choice a couple will most likely reach. It is important to remember, however, the those following nontraditional naming choices make up only a small fraction of the general populace. Although many of these couples are making carefully reasoned decisions to use the male's surname for both partners, there is also quite likely to be a substantial proportion of women with high name-identity association that do accept their husbands' names because of tradition or peer and partner pressure. More explicit exploration of the intersection of these variables, particularly one that incorporates the wide variation of name-changing options, would shed light on this interaction.

Family Building through Name Changing for Same Sex Couples

For heterosexual couples, the decisions for or against name changing are purely a matter of preference. Although many individuals express the desire to create a family name that unifies the married couple and their children, there are many other ties that bind. More often than not, the marriages are legal across the entire nation, the children are biologically related to or legally adopted by both parents, and though naming choices might influence perceptions, they are by all common definitions a family. For same sex couples, name changing may be a way of cementing family bonds where biology does

not accommodate and legal standards fall short. For male-female marriages, it is viewed as more radical for each partner to maintain their name; for same-sex couplings, the more progressive option in contemporary understandings may be to name change.

However, Suter and Oswald (2003) show that those women in committed lesbian relationships have very similar concepts of name changing and retention as do their heterosexual counterparts. The same demographic correlates of age, education, and income were associated with name retention; the same pattern as observed for women married to men. Those women that keep their names do so because of strong identity ties to their name. One subject explained: “I like my name because I feel it’s a significant part of my identity. My name, in full, is who I am; it’s how I know myself and, in turn, how others know... Changing it, or even altering my name... would be changing or even denying a part of who I know myself to be” (2003: 72). This statement is indistinguishable from those of heterosexual women – for some subjects, their sexuality plays no role in their naming decisions.

For others in committed lesbian relationships, the creation of a family name is even more important because of their sexuality. Name changing is a way of publicly demonstrating family ties and emphasizing the relation of a nonbiological parent to a child. Furthermore, several of the women discussed being alienated from their families because of their sexuality; for them, changing to their partner’s name meant moving away from a stigmatizing family and into a more accepting one (Suter and Oswald 2003). Although many of these women attributed their desire for a family name to their sexuality and their need to reinforce in the face of a discriminating public, it is quite possible that these women were experiencing and expressing the same sentiment as women in

different-sex relationships that name-change to create a family name. For lesbians the creation of a family name may be imbued with more symbolic meaning, although there seem to be far more similarities than differences in their naming choices.

When it came to choosing names for their children, lesbian couples showed the same breadth of options as heterosexual couples. In twenty in-depth interviews with couples, Almack (2005) found that the most common naming pattern (with six families) was to solely give the child the surname of the birth mother. Other options included using the birth mother's surname with the social mother's last name as the child's middle name (four families) and both mother's surnames, hyphenated (four families). For all couples with more than one child, the children were given the same last name. Again, the pattern among same-sex couples is very similar to the patterns among different-sex couples, with the most predominant option to be giving the child one of the parents' last names. Some of the couples remarked that they followed tradition, in some sense, because they did not want their children singled out as having two mothers. The most common response, however, was that one name just seemed to make the most intuitive sense. The naming patterns of lesbian parents do not represent any drastic departure from heterosexual patronymic norms; they simply use one of their own names in the way a father's surname would most typically be used. Like the observations made for their own naming choices, same-sex partners show little deviation from heterosexual naming patterns when naming their children – though perhaps that would be the most radical option available to them.

Regardless of sexuality, the most important characteristics influencing naming decisions are the opposing forces of name-identity relationship and the creation of a

family name. Tradition dictates that, within heterosexual couplings, women be the ones to give up their premarital surnames. Yet, many women and couples are finding creative and nontraditional means of negotiating last names that do not sacrifice ties between name and identity, and still accommodate the goal of the family name: from the man that took his wife's first name so that she would take his last name (he now goes by his middle name, and together they are known as "The Rachels") (Dowd 2006), to the couple that held a interfamily softball game to determine which name they would use (Grossman 2007), to the politician that goes by one name as a senator and another as a Presidential candidate – the expansion of acceptable options can only lead to more equitable solutions for all partners and families.

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Appendix A Crosstabulation of Gender and Naming Preference

Table A1

| | | | Naming Preference | | | | | | | Total | |
|--------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| | | | Both Partners Use Male's Name | Both Partners Use Female's Name | No Change | Female Hyphenates | Both Partners Hyphenate | Maiden Name as Middle | New Name for Both Partners | | Other |
| Gender | Male | Count | 7 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 24 |
| | | Expected Count | 5.3 | .9 | 11.5 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.6 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 24.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference | 30.4% | .0% | 28.0% | .0% | 40.0% | .0% | .0% | 20.0% | 23.1% |
| | Female | Count | 16 | 4 | 36 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 80 |
| | | Expected Count | 17.7 | 3.1 | 38.5 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 5.4 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 80.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference | 69.6% | 100.0% | 72.0% | 100.0% | 60.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 80.0% | 76.9% |
| Total | Count | 23 | 4 | 50 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 104 | |
| | Expected Count | 23.0 | 4.0 | 50.0 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 7.0 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 104.0 | |
| | % within Naming Preference | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | |

Table A2

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 8.517 ^a | 7 | .289 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 13.066 | 7 | .071 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 2.170 | 1 | .141 |
| N of Valid Cases | 104 | | |

a. 11 cells (68.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .92.

Appendix B
Crosstabulation of Marital Status and Naming Preference

Table B1

Marital Status * Naming Preference Crosstabulation

| | | | Naming Preference | | | | | | | Total | |
|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| | | | Both Partners Use Male's Name | Both Partners Use Female's Name | No Change | Female Hyphenates | Both Partners Hyphenate | Maiden Name as Middle | New Name for Both Partners | | Other |
| Marital Status | Single | Count | 1 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| | | Expected Count | 1.4 | .2 | 3.5 | .3 | .4 | .5 | .4 | .4 | 7.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference | 5.3% | 66.7% | 8.3% | .0% | .0% | .0% | .0% | .0% | 7.3% |
| | Engaged | Count | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| | | Expected Count | .8 | .1 | 2.0 | .2 | .2 | .3 | .2 | .2 | 4.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference | 10.5% | .0% | 2.1% | .0% | .0% | .0% | 20.0% | .0% | 4.2% |
| | Married | Count | 14 | 1 | 38 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 76 |
| | | Expected Count | 15.0 | 2.4 | 38.0 | 3.2 | 4.0 | 5.5 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 76.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference | 73.7% | 33.3% | 79.2% | 100.0% | 80.0% | 100.0% | 60.0% | 100.0% | 79.2% |
| | Divorced/Separated | Count | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| | | Expected Count | 1.0 | .2 | 2.5 | .2 | .3 | .4 | .3 | .3 | 5.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference | .0% | .0% | 6.3% | .0% | 20.0% | .0% | 20.0% | .0% | 5.2% |
| | Remarried | Count | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| | | Expected Count | .8 | .1 | 2.0 | .2 | .2 | .3 | .2 | .2 | 4.0 |
| | | % within Naming Preference | 10.5% | .0% | 4.2% | .0% | .0% | .0% | .0% | .0% | 4.2% |
| Total | Count | 19 | 3 | 48 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 96 | |
| | Expected Count | 19.0 | 3.0 | 48.0 | 4.0 | 5.0 | 7.0 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 96.0 | |
| | % within Naming Preference | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | |

Table B2

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 34.242 ^a | 28 | .193 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 27.066 | 28 | .515 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .327 | 1 | .567 |
| N of Valid Cases | 96 | | |

a. 37 cells (92.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .13.

Appendix C
Crosstabulation of Gender and Traditionality of Naming Preference

Table C1

Gender * Traditionality Crosstabulation

| | | | Traditionality | | Total |
|--------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| | | | Traditional Choice | Nontraditional Choice | |
| Gender | Male | Count | 7 | 17 | 24 |
| | | Expected Count | 5.3 | 18.7 | 24.0 |
| | | % within Traditionality | 30.4% | 21.0% | 23.1% |
| | Female | Count | 16 | 64 | 80 |
| | | Expected Count | 17.7 | 62.3 | 80.0 |
| | | % within Traditionality | 69.6% | 79.0% | 76.9% |
| Total | Count | 23 | 81 | 104 | |
| | Expected Count | 23.0 | 81.0 | 104.0 | |
| | % within Traditionality | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | |

Table C2

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | .901 ^b | 1 | .343 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^a | .447 | 1 | .504 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | .861 | 1 | .354 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .402 | .247 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .892 | 1 | .345 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 104 | | | | |

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.31.

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