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"I Now Pronounce You...Uhh": A Qualitative Autoethnographic Exploration of Women's and Men's Marital Surname-Choice Experiences

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"I Now Pronounce You…Uhh":
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Experiences
By
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This thesis paper has been examined and approved.

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Abstract

Walker, J. L. G., M. A. Department of Communications, College of Arts and Humanities, Minnesota State University, Mankato. April 2012, "I Now Pronounce You Who?": A Qualitative Autoethnographic Exploration of Women's and Men's Marital Surname-Choice Experiences. Thesis Advisor: Dr. Kristen Treinen.

Marital name change has been a topic of fierce debate in social settings and has received some attention from academia, but largely scholarship on marital name change focuses on female choices and their rationale. Using a combined in-depth qualitative and autoethnographic approach, I sought to understand the connections between name and identity.   I interviewed 11 heterosexual, married women and men about their marital name choices to explore the possible name-identity connections. Choosing a surname requires some type of pre-choice negotiation, either individually or with a partner, and several post-choice negotiations, such as with family members and the process of changing your name. On a daily basis we use our names, and we do not often think about everything our name does and says for and about us. If our names are brought to our attention, such as when we experience self-perceived gaps between our names and our identities, we begin to see the connections they have to other aspects in our lives. Names often cease to become merely a label and begin serving other functions.

Group affiliations, relationship status, and gender performance are all characteristics I found implicated in marital name-choices my interviewees made.   When individuals made unconventional name choices, such as the man adopting the woman's surname, they may face negative perceptions from others. Through the influences our names have on our views of ourselves and our perceptions of others, our names influence our identities. My research found choosing a marital name can be an empowering action giving name-choosers a sense of agency over their identities. Given the potential for agency, both women and men should be able to make their name choices without fear of social retribution.

Acknowledgements

There are many people whose guidance was instrumental in completing my thesis, and I want to use this space to recognize their work.

I want to extend a very special thanks to my thesis advisor, Dr. Kristen Treinen. The hours upon hours you put in reading, editing, and making sense of the mass of ideas I'd bring to our meetings in your office were what truly brought this project together. Thank you for giving me my first exposure to engaged critical scholarship and social power dynamics.

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Finally, I wish to thank my amazing partner Ben. Without his inspiration, support, and example, I never would have found my love for studying and teaching communication. Without him knowing me so well and his loving care, I would never have found peace with my name/identity issues or been able to complete my research. He reinvigorated my desire to spend my life making meaningful contributions to the world. I love him with all my heart and couldn't hope to spend my life with a more perfect partner.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Names are an important key to what a society values. Anthropologists recognize naming as 'one

of the chief methods for imposing order on perception.' ~David S. Slawson

Words have meaning and names have power. ~Author Unknown

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Before I got married in October 2009 I had to make a decision about my last name, and I wanted to make sure my partner Ben was involved. Was I going to change it to Ben's or was I going to keep my own? Ben and I began discussing our potential name choices about three months into our engagement, but the conversations we had were infrequent and averaging maybe once each month. We talked about a lot of things during those discussions. One of the most important things for us was we wanted to have a single, unified, non-hyphenated family name. Then it became more complicated.   Tucked between flower arrangements conversations, bemoaning the over-involvement of my mother, and the printing/folding/stamping/ribboning/sending of invitations, our conversations about naming were of minimal, but persistent concern. My name choice was like that pile of papers and mail and junk that sits on a table, then gets moved around from place to place until you have time to actually go through and evaluate all the things that make up the pile. We finally evaluated what made up our pile of negotiations a few weeks before our wedding when we had to purchase our marriage license.

Of the potential names we could choose, Ben and I only seriously considered the options that involved me changing my last name from Germain to something else. From the onset, I felt uncomfortable about simply taking his name, Walker, but I couldn't figure out why I felt uncomfortable. Perhaps I just didn't want to do what everyone else seemed to be doing and

become a Mrs. Ben Walker. I wasn't opposed taking Ben's name, but I did want to *at least* have

the conversation to decide what would be the best for us as a couple.

> We talked briefly once about Ben taking my name, but quickly moved away toward other

options. He said

> Julie, if it is important to you, if it is something you feel strongly about, I will take your
>
> last name in a heartbeat. But if it's not something that is important to you, I would be
>
> honored if you took my name.   I know it's kind of sentimental, but I've always imagined
>
> that my wife would have my last name. I support what you want to do, but I just wanted
>
> to tell you what I was thinking.

When he said this I realized my feelings were not strong one way or the other. After all, it was

just my name. We did joke about creating a new last name by combining our names, but

nothing, including Walmain or Gerker (pronounced Jerk-er) were appealing choices for us.

> Ben recognized, perhaps even before I did, my desire to maintain at least some sense of

my name, and he suggested I drop my given middle name (Louceil) and replace it with Germain.

While I loved his intuitiveness in recognizing what might make me happy, the choice wasn't

right for me because of the connection I feel with Louceil. My middle name was created to

honor four of my grandmothers (Grandma Mary <u>Lou</u>, Nana Ro<u>ceil</u>, Great Grandma <u>Lucille</u>, and

Great Grandma Ce<u>ceil</u>ia). I take pride in being a strong female leader and following in the

footsteps of my mother and my namesakes. Maintaining my name connection to the strong,

caring, kind, selfless, and powerful women of my family meant more to me than keeping my

surname. Though I kept feeling unsure, we eventually had to make a decision. I was to become

Mrs. Julie Louceil Walker.

I left behind my birth surname and took Ben's for two main reasons. First, we both knew if I chose any type of non-traditional name option we would both, undoubtedly, be subjected to negative evaluations from family and friends, clerks, tellers, and employers. Despite our reasons, we knew others would make their own judgments, and they would evaluate both us and our relationship based on their perceptions of appropriate name choices. For example, we anticipated my family would probably associate our decision with our somewhat different gender roles in the relationship. Ben and I have fairly open gender role concepts. I tend to be the one fixing cars and receiving tools as gifts. Ben writes beautiful poetry and short stories. There are at times when we have to fight through our behaviors and who we feel we are "supposed" to be, but we are generally happy allowing each another to be who we are, and we fit together well. Despite our comfort, Ben has never quite fit into the roles and behaviors of what it means to be a man in the Germain family. Before we were married he had never shot a gun. He didn't drink. He didn't hunt. He didn't know how to change the oil in a car. We knew if he adopted Germain as a surname, his feminine characteristics (coupled with my masculine characteristics) would almost certainly mean ridicule from my family for us both due to our gender performances.

Second, we very much wanted to share a last name for practical purposes. We felt (and still feel) there is symbolically more family unity when everyone shares the same last name. We had both known the hassles experienced by families whose children and parents had different last names. We could accomplish that by hyphenating our names, but neither of us wanted to do that; my rationale came from the stigma I associated with hyphenated names. I remember my dad and brothers always making fun of people with hyphenated last names, asking questions like "do you think she plays for the WNBA?" Ben and I also wanted to begin creating a sense of family unity that would begin with us and one day extend to our children. Others would easily be able to tell

we were all part of the same group, and feeling like a part of the same group would be easier with the same last name. So, I checked the box. My full married name on our marriage license application is Julie Louceil Walker.

At first, I was really proud to take Ben's name. My first day back, I put on my new "Julie Walker, Assistant Manager" work badge. Everyone at work offered congratulations, asked questions about the ceremony, and wanted to hear my favorite parts of the wedding. I don't remember specifically who the first person was to call me by my new name, but I do remember feeling odd signing my new name because it didn't feel like it was *my* name. After checking in a vendor at work, I realized my first time signing "my" name was just another task in my day, hardly even worth mentioning. We sign our names sometimes ten times in a day, but the casualness with which my momentous moment passed was dull and insignificant when considered in conjunction with the way I felt about myself after getting married. I was myself, but I was joined to another person. I was an individual, but I was also part of a couple. I was someone's permanent plus one. In committing to my relationship, in blurring together our lives to one partnership, I began to lose a sense of myself. Losing my name made me feel like I'd lost of sense of self.

Though incredibly happy my commitment to Ben would be recognized by everyone, I remember feeling disconnected. My name didn't seem like it labeled who I was anymore; my pre-married and post-married identities seemed to change somehow. The shift from being called "Ms. Germain" to "Mrs. Walker" was jarring, and those who already knew me did not seem to significantly alter their perceptions of me. I am left to wonder if those who met me just after I became Julie Walker would recognize the identity I carried as Julie Germain. My relationship status changed, which altered the way people treated me, but the shift was more dramatic than

just my relationship status. Logically I understood because to them I'd made a huge, life-long commitment on October 10th, 2009. For me however, my emotional side didn't understand because my commitment to Ben had taken place over a year earlier under the moonlight in my parents' backyard when Ben told me on Christmas day he was going to ask for my dad's permission to marry me. Of course, I wouldn't sense as much of a change because my relationship shifted to fully committed before I began trying on veils. In losing my name, I felt as though my life and work as Julie Germain had been lost, and I wondered why I had to lose my accomplishments and identity to make a new life with Ben. I realized, then, there were still some things to go through to make in the pile of papers and mail and junk to make sense of my relationship to my name.

When Ben and I travelled home for our first Thanksgiving as a married couple, we ran in to a few of my friends from high school at the store. I felt weird re-introducing myself to them as a married woman. I realized that being a Germain in my hometown meant being part of a well-respected family, full of religious fervor, musical and academic talent, and dedication to hard work. My parents' visible roles as Deacon and business administrator at our church along with my older sister's and brother's accomplishments meant my family's reputation preceded me. Sometimes the Germain connection meant special perks, such as removal of overdraft fees for my checking account or a special price for a car purchase. I went on to forge my own reputation as a scholastic achiever, community server, and visibly active church member. Being a Germain in my hometown meant being (connected to) something special.

A few weekends later I travelled to visit some of my college friends. Upon arrival, my former roommate exclaimed "Julie Germain!" and threw her arms around me in a fantastic hug. She then corrected herself, and she commented on how weird it was to call me something else.

In college, my best friends and I all referred to one another by our first and last names. As we got married we each have to relearn the shapes of our names, which made me reflect on who I was during my college years. As a forensics speaking competitor, I earned a high honor my sophomore year when I was chosen to represent Wisconsin for the Interstate Oratory Competition, a national persuasive speaking competition. A plaque bearing the name Julie Germain hangs on the wall of my alma mater, but people who didn't know me as that name don't recognize my accomplishments. After serving as president of several organizations, being selected as one of the top ten business management majors, and having my full birth name Julie Louceil Germain printed on my diploma, I felt my presence and accomplishments at my alma mater were tied to me being Julie Germain. When Fowler and Fuehrer (1997) interviewed five women regarding their naming practices, several participants indicated a woman "giving up her name would be tantamount to erasing her past identity, accomplishments, and family connections" (p. 319), which means my experiences are not entirely unique. I felt as though my connection to my former life had somehow been sacrificed by becoming a Walker.

Rationale

Why did I have to lose my accomplishments and identity? How did my name change fit within the cultural pressure to choose? How did I arrive at my final decision? Getting married necessitates a name-choice decision, and couples have several options to choose from (see Table 1). The most traditional choice in the United States is the Mr. and Mrs. Hisname. Johnson and Scheuble (1995) found 90 to 95 percent of couples in the United States choose the Mr. and Mrs. Hisname option. Beyond sheer numbers, Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested "that ordinary events routinely have major impacts not only on the participants but also on society," (p. 49)

Table 1

Possible Naming Options for Men and Women

Option	Action Taken with Male Surname	Action Taken with Female Surname
Mr. and Mrs. Hisname *Example*: Mr and Mrs. Smith*	Stays the Same *Example: Mr. Smith stays Mr. Smith*	Changes to Man's *Example: Ms.** Johnson becomes Mrs. Smith*
Mr. and Mrs. Hername *Example: Mr. and Mrs. Johnson*	Changes to Woman's *Example: Mr. Smith becomes Mr. Johnson*	Stays the Same *Example: Ms. Johnson stays Mrs. Johnson*
Mr. His and Mrs. Hers *Example: Mr. Smith and Mrs. Johnson*	Stays the Same *Example: Mr. Smith stays Mr. Smith*	Stays the Same *Example: Ms. Johnson stays Mrs. Johnson*
Mr. and Mrs. Newname *Example: Mr. and Mrs. Anderson****	Changes to New Name (Chosen by Couple) *Example: Mr. Smith becomes Mr. Anderson*	Changes to New Name (Chosen by Couple) *Example: Ms. Johnson becomes Mrs. Anderson*
Mrs. (Hers) His *Example: Mr. Smith and Mrs. (Johnson) Smith*	Stays the Same *Example: Mr. Smith stays Mr. Smith*	Adds His Name as Her Surname and Shifts Her Surname to Her Middle Name *Example: Ms. Johnson becomes Mrs. (Johnson) Smith*
Mr. and Mrs. Hers His (or His Hers) *Example: Mr. and Mrs. Johnson Smith*	Adds Her Surname to His Surname (2 surnames separated by a space) *Example: Mr. Smith becomes Mr. Johnson Smith*	Adds His Surname to Her Surname (2 surnames separated by a space) *Example: Mrs. Johnson becomes Mrs. Johnson Smith*
Mr. and Mrs. Hers-His (or His-Hers) *Example: Mr. and Mrs. Johnson-Smith*	Adds Her Surname to His Surname (2 surnames separated by a hyphen) *Example: Mr. Smith becomes Mr. Johnson-Smith*	Adds His Surname to Her Surname (2 surnames separated by a hyphen) *Example: Mrs. Johnson becomes Mrs. Johnson-Smith*

Notes: *The examples in this table use the birth surnames of Smith for the male and Johnson for the female.
**The titles Ms. and Mrs. are used here to convey marital status. Both Mrs. and Ms. carry implicit meanings, Mrs. is the more conventional title. See Crawford, Stark, and Hackett Renner (1998), Kissing 'The Girls' Good-Bye (1975), Lawton, Blakemore, and Vartanian (2003), and Malcolmson and Sinclair (2007) for conversations of female name titles before and after marriage.
***The new names usually come from some family name, often a mother's maiden name (ex: Sommers or Weisenbeck), mixing together the couple's birth surnames (ex: Walmain), or choosing a new name (ex: a couple adopted "Vincent" because they liked it).

suggesting even if we do not choose to get married or formally pair ourselves with one another person, we are all impacted by the choices made by those who do.

Kline, Stafford, and Miklosovic (1996) suggested the reasons why some people make the name choices they make including not wanting to lose their identities, wanting family unity, and simple indifference. Researchers such as Hoffnung (2006), Johnson and Scheuble (1995), Stafford and Kline (1996), and Twenge (1997) explored factors influencing naming practices, such as class, education levels, and mothers' practices. These studies illustrated reasons why Ben and I felt like there was pressure to make the "right" choice to create the perceptions we wished to convey. As I pointed out earlier, we knew both my family and Ben's family would have trouble with our decisions. To our faces they would probably accept our decision with reservations, and behind our backs we expected they would probably talk to one another saying things like, "Why would they do that?," "I mean, I think it's sweet, but who do you think really made that decision?," or "I'm glad they're happy, but I just don't understand."

The choice we made with our names impacts the perceptions others had and have of us. By choosing the conventional Mr. and Mrs. Hisname option, we blend in to the other roughly nine out of 10 couples in the United States. Had we chosen something as radical like Mr. and Mrs. Hername, we would have called to attention the embedded nature of conventional naming practices. Perceptions of others would most likely have questioned "Who wears the pants in that relationship?" and "Why would they ever do that?". When others question our decisions or negatively or critically evaluate the way we choose to behave, we (re)examine our decisions. Our decisions begin requiring reoccurring evaluation rather than a one time negotiation. If enough people who are important to us question our decisions, we may begin to question our decisions and the values, beliefs, and experiences that led us to our decisions. In this way,

perceptions of others impact us and the way we see ourselves. The questions, then, become things like whose perceptions impact us the most, how do we recognize their perceptions, how many negative perceptions does it take to challenge our decisions, and how long do these impacts last? Ignoring the impact of negative evaluations by our friends, family, and colleagues ignores a significant consideration undergirding our decision. Family and friend considerations also highlight implications name choice has on identity.

Researchers across several disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, and feminist research, have addressed reasons why women change their names. However, the number of research articles published within the communication studies discipline regarding name change during relationship transition is limited, and those studying how a name change may be associated with identity change are surprisingly limited. Also missing from research are the voices of men and the rationale they have for their name choices. I argue more research is needed in all these areas. Most published articles focus on the frequency of naming choices and the rationale behind the naming choices. Some feminist articles have decried the negative implications on identity for traditional naming practices associated with relationship formalization. However, across disciplinary lines few articles have focused on holistically examining self-recognized connections between identity and chosen naming practices by collecting data through the individual interviews. My study attempts to fill this particular gap in the existing research.

The identity implications resulting from our current patriarchal naming structure are another important aspect of my research. Suter (2004) suggested

the importance of studying women's naming practices lies in large part because naming

practices represent one of the insidious ways patriarchy continues to perpetuate itself.

Patronymy represents a concrete linguistic practice to study how patriarchy reproduces

itself in micro-level, seemingly private, everyday life experiences. (p. 84)

The current naming practice privileging of patriarchal norms emphasizes male surname

continuity. This can be read as placing greater symbolic importance on maintaining male

heritage while abandoning female heritage. Though we only need to make our name choice

once, we are consistently asked to provide our name. Patriarchy can be an especially pervasive

message when it becomes internalized through the mundane daily practice of signing our names.

Much marital name research took place in the mid-1990s during a peak in the

unconventional name choice trends. Kopelman, Fossen, Paraskevas, Lawter, and Prottas (2009)

found through analysis of wedding announcements printed in the *New York Times* over the past

35 years that non-traditional name choices in women peaked in the 1990s and has fallen slightly

in the 2000s. Between the 1980s and 1990s, the number of women name keepers doubled. With

cultural shifts and sitcoms such as *Friends* and *How I Met Your Mother* portraying alternative,

non-traditional naming choice options, it is important we continue researching marital naming to

understand the way we consider naming in the 2000s.

Research examining marital name choice and its potential connection with identity

implications is significant within the communication discipline for a number of reasons. First, as

has been explained, my study is attempting to fill the current research gap regarding the unique

dynamics present during the marital name change, and any possible implications it may have for

personal and relational identity negotiations. While scholars have speculated about these issues,

no direct research exists within communication studies.

Second, National Census research (Schoen & Standish, 2001) suggested that in 1995

between 85 and 90 percent of United States individuals (at some point in their lives) got married.

Current estimates (United States Census Bureau, 2012; United States Census Bureau, 2011) report the number of married people in the United States dropped from roughly 87 percent in 1995 to 77 percent in 2011. The percentage of people in the United States who are married unsurprisingly has decreased given the Center for Disease Control (2010) reported the percentage of United States residents who got married in 2009 was 6.8 percent while the United States Census Bureau (2011) reported the number of residents who got divorced was 10 percent. Goldin and Shim (2004) suggested the most likely reason for the decrease of unconventional naming in the 1990s may be due to social factors and a "drift towards more conservative social values" (p. 159). Despite the overall decrease in marriages over the past 15 years, if relationships exist between naming practices and identity implications, my findings still impact a significant portion of the population.

I conducted this research to make sense of my post-name change confusion. I felt like I'd left behind the accomplishments earned and my prestige-infused Germain surname for a rather anonymous Walker surname. I wanted to reacquaint myself to myself. I wanted to understand why my name change led me to feeling apart from myself. I wanted to reflexively examine the seemingly insignificant change to myself that on a daily basis challenged my sense of my self. I wanted to go back through my pile of papers and mail and junk to see what I was missing.

Understanding my name change consequences required not only looking inward and exploring my feelings and experiences, but also required understanding the hows and whys of other men and women. As Ben and I discovered during our name negotiation process, the marital names chosen impact both partners, though the impact's extent depends upon the context and the decision made. When a male and female become Mr. and Mrs. Hisname the reaction they generally receive will be significantly different than if they choose to become Mr. and Mrs.

Hername. When the female keeps her name, it doesn't just affect others' perceptions of her, it impacts others' perceptions of her partner. Thus, the decision can't simply be thought of as one person's decision without also examining the impacts on that person's spouse.

My research will yield interdisciplinary implications by adding clarity to the relationship between naming practice and identity implication. My findings have the potential to assist the psychology, philosophy, and feminism disciplines whose naming practice and identity scholars may benefit from new in-depth and reflexive data.

I hope my results will be used as a spring board into more equal opportunities for both men and women to have choices about the names they wish to utilize after formalizing their relationships. When I realized the gender role implications to our nontraditional name choices would have on our relationship identity and our personal identities, I decided (from my point of view) Ben shouldn't take my surname. I began to see how men who wish to make nontraditional name choices may feel they're not allowed to do so without paying a potentially heavy social price. Ideally my research will illustrate the need for more social acceptance for nontraditional name choices for both men and women. I know my experiences were not the same as others who perhaps embraced and enjoyed taking their spouses' names. But for those like me or others who were unhappy with their situations and the (lack of) choices, my research gives voices to their stories.

Objectives and Research Questions

To understand the relationship between marital naming practices and personal and relational identity negotiations, I interviewed individuals in formalized heterosexual relationships. I began my question creation process and data collection process using Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) as my framework (Hecht, 1993; Jung & Hecht, 2004).

The CTI was an appropriate starting point to explore identity implications because it untangles the complex interactions between personal and relational identities (as well as enacted and social identities) that make up an individual's sense of self. CTI's recognition of identity gaps and cognitive dissonance assisted with initial speculations regarding why choices were made. I had a framework within which I could examine why certain decisions made by interviewees may have led to identity implications. My research began using the following research questions as guidance for exploring possible themes:

RQ1) How do relational and communal forces impact naming practice choices?

RQ2) What relationship exists between naming practice choices and relational identity negotiations?

RQ3) What relationship exists between naming practice choices and personal identity negotiations?

CTI's focus on the interrelated impacts of personal, relational, and communal frames result in enacted identities, but I realized it did not capture the full extent of the analysis I was actually doing in and through my research. I considered my research process and began understanding how deeply my own name change process impacted my project, from informing my interview question creation to making sense of participant answers. I also began to recognize during my actual interviews that my participants weren't just sharing brief, separate answers to questions, but rather that they were sharing the narratives of their name choice decisions. At some points during the interviews, it felt like my participants would answer certain question with what almost sounded like a polished, practiced answer to a question, as if they'd prepared it in advance. I began recognizing the place of narratives, both my own and my participants', as stories we told often. Stories we held in our back pockets for when people asked us the

questions. Stories crafted with punch lines and details designed to highlight our experiences and make specific points. I realized I needed to explore how stories might be impacting self-evaluations of name choice decisions.

Therefore, I analyzed my and my participants' stories through the framework of narrative inquiry. Including my own autoethnographic narrative inquiry has been a frightening, difficult, and extremely vulnerable endeavor. I find myself struggling for words, hiding behind my more comfortable, safe academic lingo rather than embracing my developing voice. I will talk more directly about my exploration of autoethnographic inquiry in Chapters Two and Three, however as has been done in this chapter, I will weave my own story throughout all chapters of this thesis.

Précis of Chapters in Thesis

Chapter One explained the experiences that led me to studying marital name choice and the implications my study has on individual and relational identity. Chapter One justified the study of my topic, as well as introduced my research method. Chapter Two will explore the existing literature regarding naming practices and identity implications using a narrative voice. Chapter Two will explain in detail Hecht's (1993) Communication Theory of Identity, Langellier's (1989) overview of personal narratives, and it will provide the working definitions of personal name and identity used throughout this thesis. Chapter Three will explain the method I used to create, conduct, transcribe, and analyze my interviews. Specific themes and findings will be discussed in full detail in Chapter Four by weaving together observations, theory, autoethnographic reflexivity, and my research participants' voices (via specific quotations). Chapter Five will explain my results to illuminate the relationship between naming practices and identity implications, discuss my study's limitations, and suggest areas for future research to explore.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Names, once they are in common use, quickly become mere sounds, their etymology being

buried, like so many of the earth's marvels, beneath the dust of habit. ~Salman Rushdie

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To understand a name you must be acquainted with the particular of which it is a name.

~Bertrand Russell

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Autoethnographic research often uses narrative voice in place of traditional academic

voice. Ellis (2004), for example, wrote a narrative novel explaining how to include the self in

ethnographic writing by compiling a series of real and created scenes and characters situated in a

classroom setting. Following Ellis's style, I have written my literature review in a narrative

format as a series of conversations I had, some of which were actual conversations, some of

which were created by combining conversations I had and research I have done. Ellis defended

the narrative writing style, writing "combining literary and ethnographic techniques allows me to

create a story and engage readers…in the same way a novel engages readers in its plot" (p. xx).

My focus on personal narratives, as explained in the following sections, further justifies my style

choice. My conversations describe the following topics: the Communication Theory of Identity

and a history of recent major identity scholarship, personal narratives, names and naming

theoretical conceptions, and a recent history of marital name-choices in the United States.

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My thesis chair Kristi and I sat together in her office on an unusually warm January day

during the final semester of my graduate work. Our weekly meetings had become a highlight of

my semester and a chance to allow all my thoughts and concerns and fears and questions about

my thesis work to tumble out. She would catch my ideas, organize them, and create a sense of

order from the mess of theories and themes I'd veritably vomited onto her desk. My purple

fieldwork notebook lay open between us while my laptop gently whirred next to it on her desk.

This week, we were celebrating how I'd finally finished transcribing my interviews by

discussing how I would be analyzing my interview transcriptions. "Remember when the

Communication Theory of Identity was the newest, greatest thing you'd ever discovered?" she

asked me.

<p style="text-align:center">∾∾</p>

  "Kristi, I think I found my identity theory to base my study off of," I exclaimed as I sat

down in her office during the second semester of grad school. I couldn't wait to tell Kristi about

this revolutionary new theory I'd found and how much sense it made of my lived experiences.

"Have you ever heard of Michael Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity?" I asked, "I read a

couple of articles and I love it!" Kristi took a sip of her coffee and told me she remembered

reading it in grad school. She said in the 1990s it was a big deal, not in a revolutionize-identity-

scholarship way, but in the way it combined major 20th century identity theorists' theories.

I asked what she meant and took notes in my purple thesis notebook as Kristi explained

how the four identity frames identified by Hecht coincided and were probably influenced by

major theorist predecessors. She asked me to describe Hecht's definition of identity, and I

responded by describing how he thought identity is created through internalization and

negotiation of ascribed identities by others, but that it is performed and adjusted through our

interactions. "Right. Each of those parts of identity you just said Hecht recognized as being four

frames through which we see and understand the world" she says. I nod and name the four

frames: personal, enacted, relational, and social. "And these four frames aren't segments of your

identity, but rather are the ways we can look at your identity and what influences your identity"

she says. I again nod, and I describe how hopefully the frames overlap one another and when

they don't we start feeling off-balance. "Exactly," she says, "Hecht called that off-balance feeling an identity gap and attributed them to cognitive dissonance caused by frames being out of alignment. When we look to recent identity theory history, we can see major influences to how Hecht identified the frames."

Kristi explained how before the 1900s, identity was considered something bestowed upon people when they were born, a sort of substantial soul endowed to an individual at birth. She explained how this idea continued until people began questioning if the identity could or should really be considered a fixed noun. In 1902, she said, Charles Cooley theorized about the "looking-glass self" or the concept that our identities are influenced by the way we reflect on ourselves from the vantage point of others and the evaluations they have on us. "So that kind of started the idea of the relational frame then? Figuring out who we are based on the judgments of others?" I asked. She said it was the beginning, but not the only influence.

She then described George Herbert Mead's 1934 book where Mead argued identity can't simply be explained by looking at how others' evaluations impact us. Mead suggested we need to explore how social interaction and the explicit evaluations of others influence the way we create and recreate our identities. "Yes, I've read some Mead!" I excitedly said, and described how I felt like it was inherent in Mead's argument that identity couldn't be considered stable, but instead it needed to be formed and reformed through the social experiences we have with others. Kristi agreed: "Yes, that's true, and his theory is one of the often cited reasons why identity scholarship began requiring an understanding of the roles communication plays in the negotiations of the self. Connect this to the *personal identity frame*." I suggested that because the personal frame is our self-concept, or the way we see ourselves as created through social interaction, Cooley and Mead's theories helped construct how people form and reform their

selves based on feedback and judgment as ascribed by those with whom they interact based on

the positive and negative reinforcement of their identity characteristics. Identity can't be seen as

static, but instead as a constantly evolving entity. Kristi agreed, and extended our discussion to

include the *communal identity frame*: "in the same way our specific relationships impact the way

we see ourselves, the generalized other of public opinion, such as how specific gender roles are

to be performed, also impacts the ways we see and evaluate ourselves."

Kristi then got up and walked to her bookshelves. After perusing for a few moments, she

pulled from the shelf sociologist Irvin Goffman's 1959 book, handed it to me, and explained how

Goffman brought forward the next major argument in identity literature: identity as a

performance to be viewed through an explicitly theatrical lens. Through viewing identity as a

constantly evolving entity, Goffman suggested we actively perform our identities in our social

interactions. "That connects to Hecht's enacted identity frame because the way we behave and

communicate, even when we're not talking about our identity, is the way we portray to others

who we are, which in turn impacts our personal identity" I offer. "That's right," she says, "and

the troubles can come when the way we act doesn't match the type of people we are." I told

Kristi the story of sitting for a job interview once where I embraced a much more feminine

gender portrayal because it seemed to match what the interviewer wanted and I really wanted the

job; "that would be an identity gap," I concluded.   Exactly, she said.

The *relational identity frame*, Kristi explained, then is the last piece of our identity

puzzle. Our relational identities are joint conceptualizations of the self originating in specific

relationships, such as father-daughter or employee-boss, and negotiated with our role-partners.

While we are in some of those partnership roles, our relationships also have their own identities.

"You are married, Julie," she said, "and the relationship you and Ben have has its own identity, a

sort of Brangelina type thing where people see your identity as a couple." "Tying this all together," I said cautiously, "I think I understand. Our personal identities are influenced by both actual and perceived specific and generalized others' judgments of our enacted identities, and the multitude of relationships of which we are a part necessitate a multi-faceted personal identity, all of which create a non-static identity which is both a noun and a verb." "Exactly," Kristi said.

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"Yeah, I got a little excited about finding a framework for my thesis. I think I might finally have my other analytical framework chosen," I said to Kristi, coming back from my musings to our present conversation. I continued, "I think I want to use personal narrative." I explained how it made perfect sense to include personal narrative in my analysis because as I listened back on my interviews, I remembered reading in Rubin and Rubin's (2005) qualitative interviewing book how you can tell people are telling you stories when an extended answer doesn't quite match the question you offered or when their answers change a little bit with a tone shift or becoming more polished sounding. Kristi responded "that sounds really interesting, but check with Leah about personal narrative. She knows more about them than I do."

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Leah began directly: "okay, personal narrative. You probably don't want to go with Labovian analysis of personal narrative because he focuses on more of a semantic type of, analyzing line by line type of thing." Cramped in corner of the graduate teaching assistant office, a place the size of a small classroom housing 12 people, seven desks, and a wall of old communication journals, Leah and I discussed personal narrative theory. Raising her voice to be heard above the helicopter-like computer motors, Leah continued "I think you are probably better suited to look at Langellier's (1989, 1999) work on personal narratives and more specifically on family narratives, like the Trujillo (1998) piece we'll read in a few weeks.

Incidentally, Langellier's work is coming up next week for our grad readings for Performance Studies."

Leah and I were sitting in the graduate teaching assistant office amid a bank of computers and seven desks cramped into one of those special corners of the university that helps me remember where graduate teaching assistants are situated in the university food chain. "Personal narratives, as Langellier described them, well, there's lots of ways she described them. Personal narrative is a story-text and it's a performance. Personal narrative is built through conversation and it's a social process. It's political in nature and it's contextually situated. Narrative is the way we, as Langellier (1989) herself would say, 'organize events and human actions into some sort of whole' and 'give form to the understanding of a purpose in life (p. 267)," she explained. On my laptop we pulled up Langellier's 1989 overview of personal narrative literature and 1999 argument connecting personal narrative to performance (performance as a noun) and performativity (performance as a verb). Langellier argued personal narrative surrounds us, situates us amid privileged or marginalized groups and experiences, and is situated liminally between a variety of forces, including written and oral communication and public and private interaction.

"When you say contextual, do you mean socio-historically or do you mean to a specific audience?" I asked. "Yes," she responded with a smile, and explained by quoting Langellier:

From a pragmatic perspective, personal narrative performance is radically contextualized: first, in the voice and body of the narrator; second, and as significantly, in conversation with empirically present listeners; and, third, in dialogue with absent [audiences]. Personal narrative performance is situated not just within locally occasioned talk –a

conversation, public speech, ritual – but also within the forces of discourse that shape

language, identity, and experience. (1999, p. 127)

Leah's explanation made sense and reminded me of the Scheuble and Johnson (1993) article I'd

read where the answers given by males participants to female interviewers were more accepting

of unconventional naming than males participants to male interviewers. As Leah continued

answering my questions and walking me through personal narrative, I became really excited

about the possibilities I now had for analyzing my data.

We must consider how personal narrative is also constituted by and constitutive of

society, culture, and identity, and because of the openness of its potential content, it can capture

the mundane experiences we usually ignore. Leah explained Langellier's (1989) view that

culture is made up of the stories we tell one another. The sometimes mundane behaviors we

share in our stories influence and are influenced by what we deem appropriate (as determined by

our interactions with others). "I feel like personal narratives and the way we tell them are part of

the ways we enact our identities, but they are also part of the way we actively tell others the

acceptable ways to behave, and they make up the stories that influence the way we culturally and

communally know we are to behave," I said,   "Yes," Leah answered, and showed me where

Langellier stated "telling personal narratives *does something* in the social world. Personal

narratives participate in the ongoing rhythm of people's lives as a reflection of their social

organization and cultural values" (1989, 261, italics in original) and "personal narrative

performance *constitutes* identities and experience, producing and reproducing that to which it

refers. Here, personal narrative is a site where the social is articulated, structured, and struggled

over" (1999, p. 128, italics in original).

"But let's connect this back to the family," Leah suggested, "think about how personal narratives that occur within family settings are important in your study." I considered how Langellier (1989) described how a family's stories shape individual family members by narrating good and bad choices, appropriate behaviors, how the family fits within society, family misfortune, and what it means to be a member of the family. I thought a moment, then responded, "well, because Langellier described family stories as being both emergent from and constitutive of culture at large, I would say personal narratives involving family members or emergent from events concerning the family could become constitutive of the family group, even if the stories may not be objectively verifiable." When Leah asked me to explain, I described how when narratives are performed for audiences they can, at times, be slightly modified versions of actual events or feelings, or they might be altered for dramatic effect, or they might be changed to make a specific point. "What I'm saying," I ended, "is when a story is told, it becomes a part of our enacted identity, and even if it has been changed from the original version or events of the story, it becomes the way others see the individual and potentially the way the individual sees her or himself, or her or his family." "I think you've got it," Leah affirmed.

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"Okay, let's switch gears here just a little bit. Tell me the way you're conceptualizing names for your thesis, Julie," Kristi said. While I'd gone to speak with Leah, Kristi ventured online to sort through her massive collection of daily emails. She pulled her eyes from the screen and turned her chair back to face me before I began explaining my conceptualization.

I began by explaining how at first I thought of a name as a way to label ourselves and others, a way to distinguish us from others and, as rhetorical scholars argue, a way to give an entity existence. Citing Weaver's (1974) definition of a *definiendum* (or thing to be defined), *genus* (the group of which the *definiendum* is a part) and *differentia* (the way the *definiendum* is

unique within its group), I described how when I was born, my name was given to me almost immediately and was written on an identification bracelet, on cards, on cakes. My birth genus was Germain (the group of which I was a part) and my differentia was Julie Louceil (the way I was distinguished within my group). My name labeled me within my family, and others could refer to me by my name. Without a name, people would have had to refer to me in a more distanced and abstract way through pronouns ("She is happy, she is crying") which could refer to any female, and instead of the more intimate connection via name calling ("Julie is happy, Julie is crying"). Others labeled me and used my label as a way to refer to me.

Labeling is part of a name's function, but I quickly realized it is not an effective way to entirely conceptualize names because based on Auron Technology's (2009) estimation, there are roughly over one thousand Julie Walkers in the United States, making my name NOT a way to distinguish me. We could have unique labels if we were all assigned a number at birth, but Emens (2007) found a United Nations resolution declaring children have the right to a name from birth and may not be identified only by a number. She went on to suggest the name as a label notion may have to do with individuals not connecting names with larger societal and historical movements and events.

I described how I'd continued reading studies and realized a name does more than label a person. Names also may carry connections to family, ethnicity or heritage, religion, or other groups, which can serve as everyday reminders of group affiliation (either positively or negatively). "Connection to a family group is often a central name function, and it can further carry with it a connection to family ethnicity or heritage," I explained, "for instance, Germain is my birth family name, which carries with it my French heritage from my dad's side. de Pina-Cabral (2010b) suggested the concept of triangulation, or seeing where we fit in our groups,

helps us see our selves through our family identities, which helps us see where we fit into our world." Kristi suggested there can be a sense of permanent group membership by connecting your name to your family. She asked "what about when names are given?" I talked about my own name, given to me at birth when I joined my family, and described the family group affiliation connected to that process both in whom I was named after and when I entered my family. But I also realized I took on a name when I became confirmed in my teenage years at church meaning perhaps names are ways to tie to religious groups as well. "Okay, a name labels individuals, but it also ties them to groups they are a part of. Now, tie this all back to identity for me," Kristi directed.

"Well," I said, "the connection between name and identity has been suggested and contested by scholars across disciplines and time periods. For instance, several scholars such as de Pina-Cabral (2010a), Edwards and Cabellero (2008), Emens (2007), Fleming (2011), Siegel (2010), and Stannard (1973) agreed names and identities are connected, but disagreed on the extent to which and ways they are connected. Some people see personal names a way we can label ourselves, or have a sort of short-hand for our identity." I explained how many feminist writers equate a woman's name as being intimately connected to her identity, while others view names as being a periphery item of identity. "What I keep coming back to is how identity is formed and reformed based on evaluations we have from our specific interactions and the expectations of the larger groups like society or other subcultures we are a part of," I continued, "and our names connect us to things like our family group, sometimes our religion, our ethnicities. Our names symbolically connect us to our group affiliations, and almost become the way of unifying our multiple group affiliations, which then serves as a symbolic version of who we are. My name connects my affiliations to specific family members, to the family I married in

to, to my partner, to all of these different things in a layered intertextual way. And every day, every time I use my name, I have the potential to be reminded of those connections."

"Does everyone see those connections?" she asked me. "No, and I don't see them every time," I replied, "I think it has to do with Heidegger's (1962) concept of ready-to-hand, present-at-hand." Heidegger, in some of his later work, suggested the world is populated with objects that are ready-to-hand, as long as the objects are working. When we pick up the television remote and press power, we don't often think about what all that remote has to do to turn on our television because we don't have to. The tool we are using is working for a specific purpose and there's no need to think about why it's working or how it's working. But the present-at-hand part comes in when we press the power button on the remote and the television *doesn't* turn on. All of a sudden we become very aware of the object/tool we have in our hand as being a tool that doesn't work. We begin thinking about how it works and what it's connected to and why it's not doing what it's supposed to be doing. Summing it up, I said "even though I don't always think about my name being connected to my identity and to groups I'm a part of and labels me within my family, my name still does all those things. After I changed my name when I got married, my name had times where it became present-at-hand. I started to see the ways my name was connecting me to my identity and my group affiliations because it felt like the connections I had were broken."

Names don't have the same symbolic meaning for everyone as they do for you, Julie, Kristi pointed out. How do you reconcile that with your description of names? "We can't deny surnames are one of the ways other people can see our affiliations for various groups, and our group affiliations impact perceptions of us," I responded, "Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004), Sloan Rust (2000), Etaugh, Bridges, Cummings-Hill, and Cohen (1999), and Shah, et al. (2010)

found we associate others with groups and behaviors based on their names, and this has been researched in connection to job interviews outcomes, perceptions about personality, recognition of ethnicity, or even associating others based on their family name. If my last name was Feingold and I was from Wisconsin, people assume some connection with the Democratic Wisconsin senator, which may make them question if I'm related to him and might cause speculation about my political party affiliations or other family characteristics. Our name may point to group affiliations of which we are *not* a part, but others may read into our names and make judgments or alter their perceptions of us. We can't ignore what our names say about us and how they impact others' perceptions of us. We know others' perceptions impact the way we see ourselves to varying degrees dependent on the way we see ourselves. Even if we, ourselves, don't see our name being connected to our identities, our names still impact the way others see us."

"Okay, a name is connected to various aspects of a person's identity, then how does this tie to marital name change," Kristi directed. To answer Kristi's question, I drew from my knowledge of the history of name change in the United States to contextually situate how the Mr. and Mrs. Hisname became the norm.

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"Ben, you're not going to believe this!" I exclaimed. I'd been reading the Boxer and Gritsenko (2005), Kupper (1990), Stannard (1973), and The Center for a Woman's Own Name (1974) accounts of United States female name-choice history all morning as we drove to visit my parents in Wisconsin. The sun shone through our car windows, and Ben's sunglasses flashed a light beam over my notes as he checked traffic. "You know how prior to the 20th century women were not allowed to own property, and they were considered property that was transferred from their father to their husband when they got married," I asked. "Yeah," he said.

"Well, marital name change was part of denoting the change of ownership," I said, "but it gets deeper than that. Name change also was connected to antiquated biological views of how conception worked." I explained how biologically, it was not until 1827 that the female ovum was discovered and not until 1875 that people realized women played a part in actually conceiving of and contributing to children and heredity. Prior to 1875, it was thought the men's semen were embryos planted into a woman's uterus, and children were thought to be direct descendants of men alone. "Though the biological understanding shifted," I concluded, "the social convention remained the same." "Wow, that's just…wow," he said, shaking his head.

Lucy Stone, who kept her birth name, and others like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Harriet Beecher Stowe, who both took the Mrs. Hers His option, were credited as being the first women fighting for the right to choose their own names after marriage rather than being expected to take their husbands' names, I explained. "These women and others who followed encountered structural barriers to their name changes," I explained. Many were not allowed to vote in local school elections (for which they'd won the right to vote) with their birth surnames. Many were not allowed to register for passports in their birth surnames. For those who, like Lucy Stone, were allowed to keep their name after marriage they had to add "wife of Husband's Name" after their signature on legal documents. "I can't even imagine doing that!" I said. "Yeah, you don't even like it when people call you Mrs. Benjamin Walker" Ben good-naturedly kidded. "You're damned right I don't. That's never been my name and it'll never be my name," I said cheerfully. I grabbed his hand and continued.

I described how around the 1920s the Lucy Stone League was established to fight for women's rights to maintain their birth surname after marriage. Their motto, according to their Lucy Stone League (n.d.) website, is "My name is the symbol of my identity which must not be

lost," and their goal was initially to establish the legal right for women to keep their birth names after marriage. Unconventional female name choosers fought several legal battles in search of judicially recognized surname-keeping after marriage, and they continued fighting until a 1972 appellate court verdict. Publications such as such as the one issued by The Center for a Woman's Own Name (1974) talked about the process of keeping your name, which according to Choffee (1981) issued more than 25 thousand copies of the booklet between its original printing in 1973 and the subsequent printing in 1980.

"Listen to this," I said, "the Maryland attorney general in 1972 stated the woman's surname legally changes to her husband's surname at the time of marriage without her even doing anything. Mary Stuart took the issue to court and was denied her name choice" (Kupper, 1990, p. 20). I explained how upon hearing of her denial, the motor vehicle administration threatened to revoke her driver's license unless she re-registered under her husband's name. Only when she brought her case to the court of appeals was the decision reversed and she was allowed agency over her name. "Prior to the 1972 court case, were there others who successfully navigated through the courts?" Ben asked. I answered "while some prominent women before the 1970s were able to have their request to keep their birth surname processed through the courts, women without the resources for legal representation, or even some women with lawyers were denied the right to keep their name after they were married."

I shared with Ben how despite the shift away from actual legal statues preventing unconventional name choices, Emens (2007) described societal pressures influencing the ways laws and statues are enforced and perceived through the clerks and other individuals whom enforce and explain the laws on a daily basis. Hamilton, Geist, and Powell (2011) suggested almost 75 percent of people surveyed said it's better for women to change their names, even

though the respondents had much more egalitarian answers for other questions. So if their data

is at all representative, many clerks probably share the same views. "If that's not enough, Emens

(2007) contacted clerks across the country regarding male name changes, and found in Alabama,

Georgia, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina clerks claimed a woman's name still changed

automatically to her husband's name when they get married" I said. In other states, clerks

strongly advocated for conventional options, and other clerks still were not accepting of

unconventional male name choices. "Socially, we are still expecting women to change their

names when they get married, and when they don't, they seem to suffer negative evaluations of

their characters," I continued. Family members may question the commitment of Mrs. Hername

choosers, despite research which suggests there are no differences in the commitment of women

regardless of their name choices. Employers may question if a woman is more standoffish and if

she will be a "team-player." Women who keep their names are thought to not adhere to

traditional gender roles, caring more about their professional and career lives than they do about

their families.

"How do male name changes fit into these social conventions?" Ben asked, as we pulled

onto my in to my childhood home. I shared the new goals of the Lucy Stone League include

fighting for equal name opportunities for men and women to change or keep their names as they

desire. Even today the male-name choice phenomena has been almost entirely overlooked by

research, save for a few people like Emens (2007) and Mahoney Frandina (2009) who have

started telling their stories. Ben opened his car door, turned back to me and asked "well, it's a

good thing you're looking into that then, isn't it?"

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"You see," I said, returning to Kristi's question about how marital name change connects

to identity, "conventional marital name change is connected to sexist notions of societal roles

and marital roles of our past. Name change was socially determined, just like the ways behaviors were explicitly gendered. It was, and is, expected for women to get married and it was, and is, expected for women to change their names. Gender role norms and marital role norms translate into the expected behaviors we have for how women and men are supposed to enact their identities. They also privilege some identities over others, such as the hypermasculinized male identity enactments over more feminized male identity enactments. I think about how movies like *The Hot Tub Time Machine* (Pink, 2010) feminize a character who hyphenated his name when he got married, and then celebrate at the end when the trip back in time resulted in his name losing the hyphenation to restore his masculinity. What I'm trying to say is that men are expected to not change their names. Women are expected to change their names. With these expectations, people who do not follow group norms become Othered. Being an Other is another group membership denoted by our name choice, and it's something we can be reminded of every day, every time we use our full name."

"Connecting this to personal narrative," I continued, "because I assume you'll be asking me about how that's connected next—." I had to stop talking, because Kristi burst out laughing. After a moment, I began again: "Our personal narrative stories about our names require having something to talk about. Redman (2005) argued we use narratives to make sense of who we are; using narratives to keep together a self that is constantly evolving with our experiences. Especially when we experience gaps in our identities, we can connect prior events to our current experiences and suture up those breaks in our sense of self. Developing my personal narrative helped me to recognize several important negotiation considerations, such as my desire for my new family to have a unified name and for Ben to fit within my family. The themes I use to justify my behaviors metaphorically suture the identity gaps I've felt between my enacted

behaviors and my disconnected sense of identity." I explained how, in telling my stories to other people throughout my interviews, I was able to, as Redman described, tease apart the details of my story to see with more clarity how they fit together. "Personal narrative became a method to create a more fixed coherence that I could use to understand and make meaning of my experiences," I explained.

Family narratives become implicated when we consider how the stories told in families and the ways surnames are portrayed through stories become constitutive of what it means to be a member of the family. I pointed to Davies (2011) research with children and her findings illustrating the name is integral to how a family is constructed and of what it means in terms of identity to be a member of the family. Davies further asserted "the use of surnames then offers one window onto how family relationships are created and recreated, and displayed to others" (p. 567). Kristi looked at the ceiling to think through what I said, nodded, and took a sip of her coffee; looking back to me, she said "okay, tell me more." Trujillo (1998) argued family narratives, like personal narratives, teach lessons of morality, create connections between family members, and define what it means to be a member of the family through the telling and retelling of the stories. "When we consider how naming stories, the negotiations that led to them, and the resulting consequences or support of name choices," I concluded, "the name decisions people make and the stories people tell about their choices can be important narratives stressing values crucial to family membership."

Kristi leaned back in her chair, pushed tips of her fingers together, and thought silently for a moment. Laughter from the graduate teaching assistant office and students talking in the offices of other professors could be heard while we both contemplated my conceptualizations. Sachi popped her head into Kristi's office; "Kristi, I just want to ask you about, oh Julie, how are

you doing?" "I'm doing alright," I said, and explained Kristi and I were going over my

conceptualizations of identity, personal narratives, names, and marital name change. "Tell Sachi

the essential arguments you're making, Julie, and let's see what she thinks," Kristi suggested.

"Okay," I began, "the short version of the long conversation we've been having is that

identity is not a static thing someone just has, but instead that it's both a noun and a verb.

Identity is a constantly evolving perception of who we are as influenced by our interactions with

specific others, relational roles, cultural expectations, and our experiences and evaluations of

each of those interactions. The cultural framework in which we live positions our identities to

begin somewhere and though we have agency over who we are and how we see ourselves, we

also need to take into account how the judgments of others impact the way we self-evaluate.

Identity is also performed, or enacted through communication if you will, in our everyday lives

through our social interactions, which situates identity within the communication discipline."

"A name serves several functions," I continued, "including labeling us as an individual,

but also connecting us, in our views of ourselves and/or in the perceptions of others, to the

groups of which we are a part. Our group memberships, such as family, religion, or ethnicity,

yield perceptions about us based on the perceptions of those groups, which are culturally- and

contextually-situated perceptions. The way we choose to either change or maintain our name

when we get married becomes important because not only do people evaluate our behavior as

being either appropriate or inappropriate, but our names also can change the way we see

ourselves or others see us. The way we tell the personal narrative stories of our name changes

indicates the things we found important in our stories, and can illustrate important relational

roles that may translate into important family narratives. Since family narratives constitute what

it means to be a member of the family in the same way narratives illustrate cultural norms,

narratives such as what I collected in my interviews are an important way to see how cultural norms are impacting the ways identities are created and maintained through the telling of personal name narratives. Does that make sense?"

Sachi thought for a moment, looked at Kristi, and asked "What do you think?" Kristi said "I think it's a good framework for analysis and I can't wait to see what comes from the interviews. What do you think?" "Well," Sachi responded, "I feel pretty much the same way. Let's see what you can do, Julie!"

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Name and identity concepts have been explored separately through a great deal of literature. In my study they have been explored through the theoretical lenses of the Communication Theory of Identity and Personal Narrative to conceptualize the intersecting overlaps. Methodologically, I chose to utilize a mixed-methods approach to study name-identity connections. The following chapter explains and justifies my methodological choices.

Chapter Three: Methods

In terms of an identity, an identity reflects an individuality, by definition. And, if there is a

quality present, it is recognizable and it can be named. If you can't name it, it means you don't

recognize it. ~Robert Fripp

Names, once they are in common use, quickly become mere sounds, their etymology being

buried, like so many of the earth's marvels, beneath the dust of habit. ~ Salman Rushdie

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When I sit down to a meal, I expect the food I eat to satiate my hungers and quench my

thirsts. I expect the same thing from the research in which I engage. Choosing an appropriate

method for data collection and analysis required me to consider what I hoped to accomplish with

my research. Unlike the apparent goals of much quantitative research, I did not begin this

research to create widely generalizable findings. I do not wish to (nor do I believe I would be

able to) proclaim the Truth about marital name change and make it applicable to everyone.

Instead, I wish only to reflect the lived experiences of myself and others, providing multiple

subjective truths without giving authority to any one voice. You will note that I've been using

(and will continue to use) the term conversation partner, and I use it because the interactive

interviewing technique I'm using employed that term. My interviewees were not simply sources

for data collection; they built, explained, and rejected the themes on which my whole study is

built. Through their work, I was able to conduct my research.

Through a multitudes of interwoven stories, I sought what Rubin and Rubin (2005)

described as narratives capable of "permitting us to see that which is not ordinarily on view and

examine that which is often looked at but seldom seen" (p. vii). Through telling the stories of

multiple individuals exploring their (dis)similarities, we can begin seeing both the individuals

and the groups to which they belong. Metaphorically speaking, I wanted to examine both the

trees and the ways the trees interact with and form the forest.   I do not claim to tell the stories of all trees, because each are their own unique topiary, however I do hope through illuminating the symmetries and configurations of some, we can all gain some perspective on our experiences.

My initial methodological paradigm peaked my interest, but left part of me feeling empty. I originally intend to interviews various individuals about their experiences, followed by a content analysis on the interview transcripts. I had a step-by-step plan for my method. I collected interview data, transcribed the interviews, and realized I had left out a vital narrative of the story: my own.

My dry, academically-voiced initial drafts were more disappointing than an overcooked piece of meat at an expensive restaurant. They left me feeling unsatisfied and thirsty for more nourishing and full-bodied analysis. While I expected my writing to be a flavorful, palate-evoking piece, I realized I missed the authenticity of my own experiences and the narratives experienced in my own life as they related to those shared by my conversation partners.   My topic grew "out of personal experiences that [left me] puzzled [and] frustrated" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 44). My initial dry writing did not made me feel as though I had authentically plunged myself into my analysis. I realized I could not take my own voice and experiences from my writing.

My decision to change my name when I got married was motivated by a number of factors (as discussed in Chapter One), some of which were not immediately apparent in the moment I made my choice to become Julie Walker. Through reflexive consideration I was able to describe the many influences impacting my choice. A mixed-methods approach was necessary to understand the intertwined name-choice influences, both before and after the

choices was made. I used a combination of in-depth qualitative interviews and autoethnography to satisfy my hunger for understanding.

Justification for Qualitative Methods

Past research on naming practices utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative studies exceeded the number of qualitative studies, and the quantitative studies examined topics including the numbers of women and men making name choices, decision rationale, and name change and its gender implications (e.g. Forbes, Adams-Curtis, Hamm (2002); Gooding & Kreider (2010); Hamilton, Geist, and Powell (2011); Kopelman, Fossen, Paraskevas, Lawter, and Prottas (2009); Sloan Rust (2000)). Qualitative approaches examined information such as reactions individuals have faced regarding their choices, the views on marriage and its connection to name change, and opinions regarding when husbands should take their wives' names (e.g. Choi and Bird (2003); Foss and Edson (1989); Fowler and Feuhrer (1997); Scheuble and Johnson (1993)). While the information gathered through the quantitative research is useful in understanding naming choices, my goal was to gain an understanding of the relationship between marital name choice and identity. Rubin and Rubin (2005) reported "things are not always true or not true, [but] they may be true in part, or true in some circumstances or at some times…nuance implies that there are multiple shades of gray" (p. 132). Capturing the shades of gray in my participants' and my narratives were needed to address my questions.

Qualitative research created the possibility of what Denizen and Lincoln (2005) called a "*bricoleur*" or "a maker of quilts, or…a person who assembles images into montages" and

whose "choices regarding which interpretive practices to employ are not necessarily made in advance" (p. 4). Denizen and Lincoln argued

> the gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (method, analysis)…these traditions locate the researcher in history, simultaneously guiding and constraining the work that is done in any specific study. (p. 22)

Jenks (2002) explained, "who I am affects what I observe, what I write, and how others will react to what I say" (p. 184).   Therefore, at the end of my explanation of my method I will state my theoretical assumptions and the contextual situation from which my analysis and conceptualizations were derived.

Mixed method.

Denizen and Lincoln (2005) argued "qualitative research is inherently multi-method in focus" in "an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (p. 3). My research sought to explore the complex relationship between name and identity implications through explicit representations of various narratives. I also sought clarity in my own cognitive dissonance caused by gaps in my identity frames. Hesse-Biber (2010) suggested "mixed methods assist the researcher's total understanding of the research problem" and "aid in the development of a research project by creating a synergistic effect" (p. 4). She also contended

> focusing on a range of qualitative approaches can provide a broader theoretical lens through which to look at novel and often thorny interdisciplinary research problems and issues. (p. 16)

As discussed in Chapter One, the relationships between name choice and identity have been

examined by nearly every area of the social sciences. To gather a more complete picture, I used

in-depth interviews and narrative autoethnographic inquiry.

In-depth interviews.

The nature of my research questions necessitated qualitative interviewing as part of my

method. Many studies seeking to understand the rationale behind naming choices have utilized

interviews (e.g. Johnson & Scheuble 1995; Scheuble & Johnson, 1993; Suter, 2004; Twenge,

1997). Detailed, situated narratives and rich data are required for explaining the situational

factors, relational impacts, and complex views of personal identity, especially given the limited

number of communication researchers examining these phenomena. Rubin and Rubin (2005)

highlighted the importance of seeking details as one of the ways to justify the use of qualitative

interviewing. They suggested

> if what you need to find out cannot be answered simply or briefly, if you anticipate that
>
> you may need to ask people to explain their answers or give examples or describe their
>
> experiences, then you rely on in-depth interviews. (pp. 2-3)

Rich data is needed to continue broadening the communication research on name-identity

connections.   Reinard (2008) discussed how the interviewer can also record "a respondent's

manner and nonverbal actions" (p. 373). Collecting nonverbal mannerisms highlighted the rich

and in-depth data helpful in illustrating the shades of gray in conversation partners' narratives.

Autoethnographic narrative inquiry.

Chase (2005) defined narrative inquiry as "a subtype of qualitative inquiry" characterized

by "an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them" (p. 651).

Narrative inquiry pays homage to the performative nature of an individual's identity (the way we

enact/communicate our identities) while at the same time framing within the context of that person's life where the rest of the story fits. Langellier (1999) described personal narrative as a scholarly venture where "theory and experience are interdependent…altering the dominant relations of power and knowledge" (p. 137). Chase described how narrative inquiry "highlights the uniqueness of each human action and event rather than their common properties" (p. 657) which was exactly what I was hoping to do. My focus on each story's distinctive characteristics made narrative inquiry is an appropriate method.

While analyzing interview transcripts it quickly became apparent that I had unconsciously been engaging in autoethnographic narrative inquiry. Reed-Danahay (1997) described autoethnography as the anthropological study of a scientists own people; Ellis (2004) further characterized autoethnography as "the process as well as what is produced from the process" (p. 32). Throughout my research process I was analyzing myself and my interactions to understand how "interactional, social, cultural, and historical conditions" mediated my experiences (Chase, 2005, p. 651). I began this study thinking I would conduct in-depth qualitative interviews, but I realized I could not divorce my life and experiences from my research experiences.

During my interviewing and analysis stages, I tried on the explanations of my conversation partners. For instance, I explored how my name change made me feel disconnected from my extended family. I could not deny the impossible or cover up the truth when I began writing my findings. I was, quite literally engaging directly in what Chase described as a "way of understanding [my] own and others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (p. 656) through "the refracted medium of narrator's voices" (p. 666). Autoethnographic

voice was imperative. Therefore, I needed to break "from traditional social science practice" and "use the first person…thereby emphasizing [my] own narrative action" (Chase, p. 65). Using my voice and my story makes me much more vulnerable, but it also more authentically represents my involvement in my research and the involvement the research has had on my life.

Adopting an autoethnographic voice was part of my attempt to de-emphasize my writing voice as an all-knowing bearer of Truth in favor of being the bearer of multiple stories and meanings. My desire to be a *bricoleur* of my own and others' stories rather than the Stater of Themes as Facts was an attempt to "undermine the myth of the invisible omniscient author" (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 666). I do not have solid, true for all answers about the names individuals should take when they get married or the state of married name choice in the United States today, but I can contribute to sharing the experiences of myself and others. Sparkes (2002) championed the call to "encourage acts of witnessing, empathy, and connection that extend beyond the self of the author and thereby contribute to sociological understanding in ways that, among others, are self-knowing, self-respectful, self-sacrificing, and self-luminous" (p. 222). Through my autoethnographically voiced, narrative inquiry styled qualitative method I can help others find their own meanings in their own lives.

Summary.

Qualitative interviews gather what Geertz (1973) described as "thick description." By coupling in-depth interviews and narrative autoethnographic inquiry, I added "rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to [my] inquiry" (Denizen and Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). My procedural design was based on Kvale and Brinkman's (2009) seven stages of interview procedure and Rubin and Rubin's (2005) responsive interviewing process; it is discussed in the next section.

Preparing to Collect Stories (Data)

Prior to beginning data collection, I purposefully planned what I sought to accomplish and the ways I would position myself to capture the stories of my participants. I decided to explore others' experiences of changing or not changing their names when they got married and the resulting (or lack of resulting) effects that change had on their identities. Based on Rubin and Rubin's (2005) suggestion to "determine what is of sufficient interest and importance to research" (p. 39), I initially focused my research not as much on the rationale behind why people made the choices they made, but instead on the couple's pre-choice negotiations and the after-effects of their choices.

I attempted to embrace Rubin and Rubin's (2005) responsive interviewing method. Their approach "allows a variety of styles yet incorporates what is standard in the field" and is "a dynamic and iterative process, not a set of tools to be applied mechanically" (p. 15). Responsive interviewing requires the researcher to give up some of the control over how interviews will flow and challenges the interviewer to treat the research process as a dynamic, ever-changing-to-meet-the-needs-of-participants type of engagement, which sometimes requires researchers to "modify their questions to match the knowledge and interests of interviewees" (p. 15). Rather than depending upon a completely linear progression from literature review to analysis, my process was more fluid. Rubin and Rubin defended this process, writing "what appears chaotic is merely a continuous redesign…this approach to design ensures that when you finish gathering data, you will have answered your research question and have sufficient material to produce a rich and nuanced report" (p. 62-63). My project design embraced the responsive interviewing methodological design, therefore the rest of the chapter will attempt to recreate some of the overlapping segments of my research method.

I began by creating research questions to guide my thoughts to limit my research goals:

RQ1) How do relational and communal forces impact naming practice choices?

RQ2) What relationship exists between naming practice choices and relational identity negotiations?

RQ3) What relationship exists between naming practice choices and personal identity negotiations?

Despite my explicitly written research questions, I was careful to not restrict myself to only exploring the concepts framed in these questions. As Heidegger (1962) argued, "every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought" (p. 24); Heidegger was illuminating the ways questions delimit the types of answers we seek. My research questions guided my data collection process but did not entirely define how I conducted my research; they were subject to change and evolvion as I pursued new themes identified through analysis of the narratives. After creating my research questions Kvale and Brinkman (2009) suggested defining and delimiting the population to be included in my study.

I knew I wanted to collect a diverse group of stories to weave together a comprehensive picture. Rubin and Rubin (2005) contend

the philosophy of responsive interviewing suggests that reality is complex; to accurately portray that complexity, you need to gather contradictory or overlapping perceptions and nuanced understandings that different individuals hold. (p. 67)

The goal of my study was to provide a space where the voices of previously unheard individuals could be heard. Much of the current research focuses on the choices made by women. Ignoring men implicitly ignores the thoughts and feelings (or lack thereof) men might have regarding their

own name choices. This study included both men and women, and only one partner from any

given couple to maximize the variety of stories I heard.

Moreover, when looking at the current research, I also found it lacking voices depicting

rich narratives from both traditional (Mr. and Mrs. Hisname) and nontraditional (any other

Table 2

Relevant Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Sex	Name Choice	Approximate* Age Range	Years Married	Number of Children
Marisa	Female	Mr. and Mrs. Hers His	30-50	9	0
Katherine	Female	Mr. His and Mrs. Hers	30-50	16	0
Ratnu	Female	Mr. His and Mrs. Hers	30-50	11	3
Isabelle	Female	Mr. and Mrs. His	30-50	19	2
Elizabeth	Female	Mr. His and Mrs. Hers	30-50	10*	2
Bob	Male	Mr. and Mrs. His	50-75	45	3
Alex	Male	Mr. and Mrs. Hers	30-55	9	2
Brock	Male	Mr. His and Mrs. Hers	30-55	16	3
Joshua	Male	Mr. (New) New and Mrs. (His Hers) New	30-55	7	1
John	Male	Mr. and Mrs. His	20-30	2	0
Stephen	Male	Mr. and Mrs. His Hers	30-55	7	2

Note. * Estimation based upon factors from interview

options) name choosers. Originally I intended to interview 20 individuals, half male, half

female, half traditional, and half nontraditional resulting in five individuals' stories for each

subcategory. In actuality, I interviewed 11 individuals: six males and five females. More

illustrative descriptions are provided in Appendix A. While I initially thought it would be easy

to categorize participants into either traditional or nontraditional categories, the cultural

situatedness meant these categories were too constricting. I instead categorize my participants

only as male or female. After careful consideration I decided to include only heterosexual

couples in my study because naming practices. Non- heterosexual couples do not have the same

kkkkj[strictly prescribed social rules for acceptable naming practices. Non-heterosexual couples do not represent my experience and are outside the scope of my study, and as such have not been included in my participant pool. Specific demographic information for each participant is listed in Table 2.

I next completed Kvale and Brinkman's (2009) designing stage, which involved deciding how I would find participants and planning the questions I intended to ask participants. To find my participants I utilized snowball sampling, which Reinard (2008) defined as a "selection of events based on referrals from initial informants" (p. 447). The snowball method is well suited for finding participants engaged in deviant behavior (such as nontraditional naming practices). To maintain continuity, I recruited all participants via the snowball technique.

I began crafting my interview questions based on my research questions. I knew these questions were subject to change based on the "topics, concerns, and meanings" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 33) important to and emergent from my interviews, but I also knew I needed main questions to translate my "research topic into terms that [my] conversation partner [could] relate to and discuss" (p. 135). Carefully, I word my questions to highlight areas of participants' stories about which I would be most interested in hearing while avoiding gender bias or privileging one choice over others. The questions were open-ended to capture a broad depth of rationale and experiences. The initial list of questions I conceptualized is listed in Appendix B.

Beyond having an idea about what types of main interview questions I planned to ask, I knew I would also need to ask follow-up questions. Langellier (1989) described the importance in personal narrative storytelling of how not every narrative performed in social settings is a fully developed narrative. She argued sometimes a narrative is told as a "kernel story" (p. 254) or a shortened version of a story for which a different level of importance is placed on a certain

aspect based upon the context in which it is told. Langellier highlighted the emergent nature of participants' stories when she suggested more fully developed stories can be elicited from kernel stories by the audience's questions and feedback. I gave feedback and asked follow-up questions throughout my interviews to capture developed narratives.

Data Collection

I finished planning my process and submitted my plan to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. The IRB required minor modifications, but then approved my research plan (see Appendices C, D, and E for details). During the summer of 2011, I began my snowball participant recruitment. I emailed all the professors in my department, giving them a brief overview of my study, my desired participant profile, and a potential recruitment script they could use when contacting potential participants. Following the initial contact from my professors, I contacted potential participants by phone or by email to set up a time when we could meet. When that plan did not yield enough participants, I began widening my net of potential snowball starting points to include professors at other universities. Eventually I was able to gather the total 11 interviews through various snowball starting points. To gather a variety of viewpoints, Hesse-Biber (2010) suggested analyzing "prior data gathered from the same research project in order to make comparisons with previous findings" (p. 51). Through examining the stories I'd already heard, I was able to seek conversation partners whose narratives might offer additional insights.

Before beginning any single interview, there were several standard steps I took. Prior to interviewing actual participants, I conducted a mock interview with Ben to test drive my

questions. I prepared before actual interviews by examining my interview notes to see if any questions needed to be altered or added. The refinements I made also corresponded to anticipated characteristics of the individual's story, such as tailoring them to male or female experiences. I made these changes to capture what Rubin and Rubin (2005) described as "nuance [that] highlights subtlety of meaning" (pp. 132-133). They suggested "as you learn more about what is important to your interviewees, you add main questions regarding issues they have raised that you now know more specifically to address your research concerns" (p. 156). I then checked to see my audio recorder was in working order. Rubin and Rubin suggested "this record becomes the data that you analyze, first to figure out what follow-up questions to ask and later to develop the themes and theories that will be the product of the study" (p. 110). Without my audio recording, I knew I would miss the specific details and audible nonverbal messages in my participants' stories. On the off-chance my audio-recorder stopped working, I did make sure to take field notes regarding conversation partner answers.

During the interviews themselves, I attempted to elicit the highest amount of nuanced data as well as to create a nonthreatening and open sharing environment. I was concerned with the image I portrayed because Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested

being seen as a professor has plusses and minuses. On the plus side, professors are known for asking questions, so the role justifies your doing a lot of investigation, but on the down side, professors evaluate people and judge what they do not know, and that way are seen as threatening. (p. 85)

Though I am not a professor, my graduate teaching assistant status seemed to be equated with a professorial status in the interview settings. Rubin and Rubin elaborated: "Interviewers are not expected to be neutral or automatons, and who they are and how they present themselves affect

the interview" (p. 30). My actions and behavior were part of what set the tone of an interview; consequently it was important to ensure I was creating a tone conducive to egalitarian sharing. While appearing as a professor meant I could ask more follow-up and clarifying questions than would normally be proper in a social situation, it also meant some conversation partners seemed to hold back or carefully phrase some question responses. Thankfully, in most cases we were able to overcome formality.

Part of the way I behaved to create an informal environment was to engage in what has been variously named interactive interviewing and participation as reciprocity (as well as other labels). Interactive interviewing involves the researcher sharing her or his own stories with the participants, and it is an important part of in-depth interviews and autoethnographic study. Ellis (2004) defended the practice, arguing "it's a more self-conscious, collaborative process than reflexive one-on-one interviews…you learn more by interacting with each other" (p. 65). She described how "interactive interviews try to access a deeper level of information-the emotional, intimate realm" (p. 66). Throughout each interview, I would include more or less of my own story, depending on the conversation partner.

Some might argue researchers should distance themselves from their subjects. Ellis (2004) countered that notion:

> Since the account the interviewee gives is socially constructed in a particular place and time, for a particular hearer, for a particular purpose, under particular conditions – for example, the interviewer selects the questions – the interviewer is always a vital part of the narrative. (p. 61)

My influences on the interview cannot be divorced from the responses I received. By sharing my story and the beginnings of my thematic analysis with participants I verified my work and

further included my participants' understandings of the phenomena. Together we could find the meaning behind the stories shared by others and experienced by me because, as Ellis suggested, "the meaning is in the details and the response" (p. 142). Common topics I mentioned included my rationale behind certain questions, stories shared by other conversation partners, and my own name choice experiences. Embracing the shared responsibility for storytelling in engaged autoethnographic work was called for by Holman Jones (2005) and Sparkes's (2002). I was able to include my own "vulnerable [self], emotions, body, and spirit" in "celebration of concrete experience and intimate detail" (Sparkes, p. 210) because as Ellis pointed out "including the subjective and emotional reflections of the researcher adds context and layers to the story being told about participants" (p. 62).

One major concern when using interactive interviewing is the "was I participating enough, or too much?" (Ellis, 2004, p. 122). Rather than worrying about my overall level of interview participation, I focused instead on the nonverbal messages conveyed by my participants while I was telling my stories. If my conversation partner responded positively to hearing my stories, if hearing my stories elicited additional details or deeper exploration of their own considerations, or if my partner seemed to embrace our dialogue more fully, I continued my level of sharing. When my sharing ceased to be nonverbally supported by participants, I would reduce my self-disclosure.

Analysis and Data Collection

Subsequent to collecting my first few interviews, I began transcribing and analyzing my data. Transcribing my data meant typing out word for word the related parts of any interview and annotating the sections where either I or my conversation partner discussed something tangentially related, but not directly impacting the focus of my study. I chose to not type every

interview word-for-word because in some instances, my conversation partner would tell a long story unrelated to our conversation, such as one participant who shared a story about the history of housing prices. In the interview I found it was sometimes necessary for my conversation partner to express these unrelated stories to make them feel like they had more control, but since they were not related to my study I cut them from my transcriptions.

After I started my transcriptions, I began analyzing the data. Rubin and Rubin (2005) explained initial data analysis stages:

> Analysis begins early on when you examine the first few interviews to make sure your
>
> project makes sense and concerns matters important to your conversation partners.
>
> …based on this ongoing analysis, you then modify main questions and prepare your
>
> follow-up questions to pursue emerging ideas. (p. 202)

Once a relationship had been established and I had heard most of my conversation partners' own rendition of their name choice stories, I would say "other participants have noted this influence" or "I have noted this reaction from friends. What are your thoughts on that? How does that match or not match your experiences?" I included my conversation partners in my analysis, giving individuals a chance to evaluate others' stories through the lenses of their own experiences. I could also talk through additional viewpoints regarding emergent themes. At the end of my interviews I also asked all my conversation partners if there were other questions they wish I would have asked or if I should change the wording of any questions during the interview. Rubin and Rubin suggested this type of feedback helps reformat your interview questions to the language of your participants, as well as ensuring you are not missing any important details during your interviews. Madison (2005) explained:

Questions will naturally evolve the more time you spend in the field and the more

experience you have with participants…spending time closely listening, observing, and

interacting in the field while compiling…a foundation of knowledge and experience upon

which you may…craft your questions. (p. 26)

Appendices B and F include two variations of my questions.

One observation I noted early in my data collection was the presence of stories being told

throughout my interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2005) differentiated between narratives and

stories, recommending

in a narrative, the speakers put together what they believe actually occurred, recognizing

that what they say might be incomplete because they only saw part of what happened or

only remember a piece of what went on. In contrast, a story is told to make a point or

present a theme, either stated or implicit, irrespective of the accuracy of the details. In

telling a story, events may be edited or reordered, and exaggeration may be added for

effect. (p. 109)

Rubin and Rubin explained stories tend to be told "with little fumbling or backtracking" because

they have been told "many times before" (p. 175). Stories could also be noted when told as

adventures, "marked by a change in speaking tone" (p. 175). Other stories occurred when a long,

thorough answer was given to a question for which the story did not really answer the question

(Rubin and Rubin). In noticing the stories my conversation partners were sharing, I began to

recognize how some of the answers to questions I asked were actually pre-formulated responses,

kept in the mind of the storyteller for when asked about her or his marriage, name choices, or

experiences. Additional discussion of interview storytelling will be explored in Chapter Five.

Following the completion of my 11th interview, I completed all transcriptions and began my final analysis.

Final Analysis

My final analysis began by exploring for emergent themes from the data I'd collected. Rubin and Rubin (2005) state "the objective [of qualitative analysis] is to discover variation, portray shades of meaning, and examine complexity" (p. 200). I explored the interview data in search of "concepts, themes, events, and markers explicitly raised by the interviewees" (Rubin and Rubin, p. 210). Using Rubin and Rubin's suggested methods, including "looking at the tension between what people say and the emotions they express," "tonal shifts," (p. 210) and examining the responses to specific main questions I asked of all participants, I searched for stories. I explored the reoccurring themes within the frameworks of Hecht's (1993) Communication Theory of Identity to explore how relational and personal frames were influenced by experiences.

At first, I became a little discouraged because it seemed like many of the themes I found were very obvious themes or very apparent concepts. However, the goal of autoethnography is to think through the everyday experiences we have in hopes of understanding the mundane. Wallace's 2005 commencement address to Kenyon University featured a story which illustrates the concept of understanding the mundane:

> There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?" (para. 3)

What Wallace argued with his commencement address was we need to stop and examine that which surrounds us, but of which we pay little attention on a daily basis. Through examining the environment in which we live, we can discover previously unarticulated influences and considerations in our world.

During my final analysis stages I began writing my thematic results section (Chapter Four) and realized how much I had been inadvertently utilizing autoethnographic method. With this realization came another: I needed to use an autoethnographic voice. I revisited already written sections of my write-up and infused them with the stories I'd left out. I did so to engage in Gergen's (2002) call for autoethnographers to write in such a way that "hierarchy implicit in traditional writing is removed" (p. 15). Learning how to use an autoethnographic voice required me to struggle with attempting to balance the more personal tone with my academic writing training. Holman Jones (2005) described the autoethnographers labor. She said "speaking in and through experiences that are unspeakable as well as inhabiting and animating the struggle for words and often our failure to find them" (p. 772) are among the chief difficulties in engaging in autoethnographic writing. I bled my story on to the pages, fearful for the implications my sharing might have on evaluations of me and my relationship, on my scholarship and my identity as a scholar. I am clumsy with words, ham handed and stumbling as I try to find the language to convey my story. I can only hope to eventually reach a writing voice close to autoethnographers such as Andrew Sparkes (2002), bell hooks (1994), and Ira Shor (1996) whose writing styles transport me to a distinctive place and by whom I am shown the minutiae of the water surrounding me. For now, I continue forging ahead, developing my writing style in the hopes that one day I can achieve their high levels of provocative, accessible grandeur. In the next section, I explain my assumptions and positionality.

My Assumptions and Positionality

Identity is my communication focus because without knowing where you begin, you cannot purposefully know where you are going. Exploring my identities and assumptions before exploring my research analysis is important because where I am positioned influences the way I analyze texts and themes. I am a white, middle-class, educated, married, woman; I do not think I'm a dyed-in-the-wool heterosexual woman, but my sexuality in terms of life- and sex-partner manifests itself in the heterosexual category. I bring assumptions about how the world works to my research. Through my graduate school experiences, I have come to understand and recognize the structural and social forces used to privilege some groups and subordinate others. I try to carefully examine how my positionality, based on my experiences and background from a power-wielding perspective, colors my analyses.

My research is just as influenced by my paradigmatic assumptions as it is by my positionality. My ontology and epistemology most closely resemble those of the interpretivistic paradigm. Ontologically I identify as a social constructionist (reality is created through interaction and facts do not exist outside shared experiences). Epistemologically I identify as a subjectivist, by which I mean I can only understand situations through perceptions of those directly involved with the activities. How we make meaning is based upon our experiences (which are always unique). Thus the overarching assumption based on these meta-theoretical perspectives is: *There is no one truth; truths are extracted from the meanings individuals ascribed to situations.* Since beginning my communication scholarship, I've felt pulled toward the critical research perspective where the focus is using research to empower disenfranchised and marginalized groups in an effort to decrease oppression. Axiologically, my friend Liz best stated my beliefs: "if you *can* make something better, you are *responsible* for making it better."

This realization, coupled with my assumptions regarding multiple, subjective truths built on individual meanings, brought with it further questions. What do I do when a participant implicitly suggests one identity characteristic but explicitly denies that characteristic? In examining my beliefs and talking with other scholars, I realized my final axiological assumption: *research is for gathering data, not for explicitly engaging critical theory goals*. Explicit and implicit messages differing within an interview is not an invitation to "correct" that research participant. The area for engaging my critical (as opposed to my interpretive) research side is during the dissemination of research results (in other words, in publications and conferences) and the actions I take in supporting community groups, social movements, and empowering classroom pedagogy.

Summary

This chapter explained the methodological choices I made in creating my research study. By combining qualitative in-depth interviewing with autoethnographic narrative inquiry, I have embraced the mixed methodology called for by Hesse-Biber (2010) to more deeply understand the everyday lives of my research participants and myself. Through the collection of interview data coupled with my own lived experiences, I analyzed the data thematically to pull out interesting concepts through which we might all better understand the forces at play in heterosexual name choices. I explained how and why I collected my data in the way I did and can now move forward to discussing the results of my research.

Chapter Four: Results

The name we give to something shapes our attitude to it. ~Katherine Patterson

You ask, 'What's in a name?' I answer, 'Just about everything you do.' ~Santiz Morris Mandel

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Chapter One of my thesis described in great detail my story of choosing my name. My story was the impetus behind my research and led me to my research questions:

RQ1) How do relational and communal forces impact naming practice choices?

RQ2) What relationship exists between naming practice choices and relational identity negotiations?

RQ3) What relationship exists between naming practice choices and personal identity negotiations?

I gathered several personal narratives, some with uninterrupted flow and some in bits and pieces, through qualitative interviews. In keeping with the narrative style of my previous chapters and analysis method, I present the findings of my analysis in a chronological order, beginning with pre-choice name negotiations and ending with post-choice outcome negotiations.

Several formatting cues have been included to clarify the themes. Each single-indented heading will state a major theme, and the quotations found underneath will illustrate the concept. In the style demonstrated by Flemons and Green (2002) "for the sake of readability… [I]'ve attempted to convey…the coherence of each of the conversational strains" but I "haven't [extensively] textually indicated the sometimes sizable lapses of time between different points raised in the conversation" (p. 88). Very often long narratives were told, and as Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested, "it is important for them to get the story out completely. Follow-up occurs, if at all, only after a story is finished" (p. 190). Quotations from the interviews have been

combined from different sections of interviews to make them read as a cohesive whole to more fully convey the stories shared by my conversation partners.

I found negotiations took place both before and after couple members made their choices. Before, the negotiations took place primarily within the couple, and several things influenced the choices made by the couples. Post-choice negotiations involved the social explanations and structural procedures necessary to enact a person's name choice. Organizing my literature chronologically walks you through the lived experiences of my conversation partners.

Pre-Choice Negotiations

One of the questions I asked near the beginning of every interview was "during your engagement or before, did you talk with your partner about what names each of you would take?" Usually I would follow that up with something like "can you tell me what that conversation looked like?" Kline, Stafford, and Miklosovic (1996) suggested nonconventional female name choosers "reported discussing with their husbands how they would feel and, with friends and family, they raised their own issues, feelings, and concerns" (p. 610). The pre-choice negotiations differed depending upon the couple.

Nearly all couples went through some type of pre-choice negotiation. Alex's negotiation was fairly leisurely:

> We did talk about it, like, over several months just kind of returning to the topic…And we just kind of kicked around different options…We didn't have any real strong opinions about it. And then at a certain point we just kind of gelled around taking her name. And, uh, yeah. That, I think it happened over weeks and months. It wasn't like we just sat down one day and made the decision that day because we didn't really have any kind of time pressure on it. (Interview, November 9, 2011)

Alex's negotiations were explicitly verbalized conversations intended to make a name decision with his partner.

Katherine and Stephen encountered and had to navigate strong name-choice opinions in their negotiations. Stephen's wife was adamant about keeping her name:

It was one of those things where when we were deciding about the details of our marriage, I just thought, you know, yeah, [she'll] take my name…And she immediately, uhm, kind of stuck up her hand and said "wait a minute, what do you mean?…I don't want to give up my name." And so we had an impasse and…you have to…kind of retreat, think about it…It was…at least a 3 or 4 day argument, and, uh, we don't fight a lot. We, we have conflicts and stuff, but that was definitely not our style, so it was kind of a tough time too, like "how are we gonna get through this?" (Interview, January 13, 2012)

Katherine shared how she mentioned early in the engagement her decision to keep her name. Her fiancée's frustration led to nearly a year's worth of negotiations. Ultimately, Katherine said

I got tired of having the conversation and I said something to the effect that "it feels more like...do you want to get married so that I have the same name so you can say 'this is my wife' or do you want to get married because you love me and you want to spend your life together with me. And if the answer is the second one then drop the first thing."

(Interview, August 20, 2011)

Katherine's name negotiations were not about making a choice with her partner, but instead about justifying and fortifying her choice because she made the choice independently. Foss and Edson (1989) suggested some women feel connected to their birth names as though the name contains a core sense of themselves or the one constant in a lifetime of changes.

Isabelle and Bob did not discuss with their partners the names they would choose. While filling out the paperwork, Isabelle thought about how long her name already was and, in the moment, "just decided to just go with his name because it would be so much easier" (Interview, August 22, 2011). She described why they did not talk about her post-marriage name: "it wouldn't, it wasn't that important. If I would have wanted to keep my maiden name I think [my husband] would've said 'fine.' Uhm. No, I don't think we talked about it" (Interview, August 22, 2011). Bob relayed he and his wife did not really talk either: "it was just kind of assumed I guess at that point in our life…it was just kind of assumed that when you got married, uhm, you would take your, the wife would take the husband's name" (Interview, October 26, 2011) . The negotiations each couple went through involved some aspect of weighing important factors they believed influenced or were influenced by the choice they made, which will be explored next.

Most people's decisions had some rationale, but other considerations and influences were shared through the course of the interviews which were not explicitly identified as concrete reasons for decisions. I, for instance, might not have been able to articulate my concerns about how Ben's masculinity was going to be perceived when I made my decision. Today after much consideration and teasing apart of my rationale, I've been able to verbalize how large of a role that subconsciously played in my decision. Each influence and consideration played a role in how decisions were made and perceived. Similar to the approach taken by Hamilton, Geist, and Powell (2011), it is not my intention "to demonstrate causality, as these are likely complex cases of mutual reinforcement" (p. 161), but I do think it is important to note where some influences originated to clarify sources of self- and other-evaluation. The four main subthemes were Group Affiliation, Relationships, Simplicity, and Representative Possession.

My group affiliations influence appropriate and accessible name choices.

Several comments and narratives shared by conversation partners illustrated the influence group affiliations had on their name negotiations. When I describe groups, I mean collections of people who share characteristics and, by their designation or in the perceptions of others, are classified as sharing some characteristic or quality. Group affiliation appeared to influence acceptable name choices and exposure to alternative choices.

The social groups (such as the friends) a person interacted with appeared to influence their considerations and decisions. Elizabeth shared her feeling of freedom to choose the name she desired: "some of my friends did keep their own names and some of them didn't. Uhm. So. It's probably an equal mix. So it just depended on who you were and what you wanted to do" (Interview, September 15, 2011). Stephen explained his friend Joshua, another person I interviewed contacted him and "said [Stephen] was an inspiration to change his name" (Interview, January 13, 2012). Brock suggested part of the reason he and his wife decided to (at least initially) share a last name was because

> if we had different last names, you know…people would see our last names on the
> mailbox and see that we were living together and think "oh, well, they have different last
> names, they're obviously not married" as a result and "they're living together and that's
> wrong" and I didn't want that being 20, 21 at the time. (Interview, December 11, 2011)

Acceptance amid social groups, even groups of which individuals are a part but do not heavily participate, can influence decisions.

Another group discussed during interviews was feminists. Both Stephen and Katherine talked about the political nature of the name change. Katherine said her choice "wasn't, like, a

political statement or a feminist statement or anything that was…it was very personal"

(Interview, August 20, 2011). Stephen's choice was decidedly anti-establishment:

> I've always fancied that I wanted to think of myself as kind of a feminist…it's kind of a
>
> defining theme I think in my whole decision to make that, kind of my life mantra, it's like
>
> "why do we have to do things because that's how they've always been done?" (Interview,
>
> January 13, 2012)

Ratnu said she was surprised how, even with all the feminism in the United States today, marital

name choice is "such a big conflict here, you know?" when considering how little conflict it

caused in her experiences in Kerala, India (Interview, August 20, 2011). Foss and Edson (1989)

similarly found a connection between nonconventional name changes and political views and

taking a political stance. Stephen and Katherine highlighted in their stories what many people

seem to consider when they are making choices: will others associate my decision with the work

of feminist activists?

The marriage cohort group, or the group of people who get married in the same time

period, also appeared to be indicative of appropriate choices for some people. Bob suggested the

pervasive presence of traditional names when he got married in the 1960s, or perhaps the

absence of nontraditional choices, made name decision less of a choice and more of a

predetermined outcome for most people (Interview, October 26, 2011). Elizabeth shared she

> kinda grew up in an era where there was never anything I couldn't do because of my
>
> gender, so I just assumed that that's gone leaps and bounds now for people who are 20
>
> years younger than me…I've become comfortable with it, that I don't feel like I'm
>
> justifying it anymore like I did, *had* to back then. So to me that it's still an issue for
>
> you…I think, uh, well, to me…it seems like most people still change their name when

they get married, but nobody thinks too much of it if you haven't. (Interview, September

15, 2011)

Katherine was also surprised that there might be some of the same issues she faced when she got

married s many years ago being faced by people in today's cohort (Interview, August 20, 2011).

Suter (2001) suggested the choice women felt they had when they got married influenced the

acceptable choices available for their daughters. The perceptions of people from other marriage

cohorts appeared to influence name choices.

Historically, social class or stature also influenced acceptable name options. Those in the

upper echelon either through money or fame impacted the choices a person could make. Emens

(2007) suggested "we generally accept the continuity of each spouse's name, unblinking, from

the famous men and women who marry." Bob suggested when he got married, a woman could

keep her birth surname if she was, "you know, a classy lady…quite often it helps to identify with

where [women] are coming from and I guess that's why they choose to do that" (Interview,

October 26, 2011). He told a story of a relative who kept her name, but did not have the social

status he felt was necessary to do so: "she kept her maiden name and we always kind of, kind of

made fun of it because (*Bob and Julie laugh*) because…she was like a music teacher or

something like that and we just thought, 'well, you know, she's, she thinks she's someone

special'" (Interview, October 26, 2011).   Less explicitly, class may influence perceived

acceptance of appropriate gender roles, which may in turn impact name choice. Alex described

how the equality in marital roles may be tied to specific societal forces, such as socio-economic

positionality (Interview, November 9, 2011). Class and culture impact the freedoms couples

have to attempt to create equality in their relationships. When considering how equality may be

tied to societal forces, as well as the way some couples equate relational equality with name

equality, it may explain part of the infrequency of nontraditional name choices made by members of certain socio-economic groups.

Profession also seemed to suggest where unconventional female name choices were acceptable, which also delineates where they are not acceptable. Scheuble and Johnson (2005) suggested for women this may be because "in work situations, women's role as a family member is less salient, and their role as a separate individual who gains status and position from achieved criteria such as education, training, and experience becomes more central" (p. 150). Elizabeth noted "one of my friends who was in politics…she's hardly going to change her name" (Interview, September 15, 2011). When Joshua shared with his father his intention to adopt his wife's surname, his father was worried

> that somehow my professional career would be affected through this, uhm, you know, that's, I developed a type of reputation with my old last name and I would have to recreate that or that I would, uhm, which is ironic because I mean obviously a lot of women have to experience that. (Interview, December 21, 2011)

Bob agreed: if a woman "was in some profession where she had an established identity that she didn't want to, you know, disrupt," it was acceptable for her to keep her name (Interview, October 26, 2011). Goldin and Shim (2004) described in their analysis of Harvard graduates vs. other female name changers how "the quantitatively most important components in explaining these large differences are those concerning whether the woman "made a name" for herself before marriage" (p. 159). Hamilton, Geist, and Powell (2011) found half of their sample noted "that in the case of women's labor force participation, they were willing to bend their beliefs" (p. 168) rather than push the Mrs. Hisname option. While research explores the times it is okay for women to keep their names, it does not do the same for men who want to make the same choice.

Involvement in higher education and exposure to others in the educated group influenced conversation partners' decisions by providing alternatives to naming conventions. Hoffnung (2006) found when examining both New York Times marital announcements and a survey of college educated women that "brides with nontraditional names had higher educational levels than brides with traditional names" (p. 824). Ratnu suggested those in Kerala who make nontraditional name choices are "more…people who have gone to universities and things like that. Probably they feel, you know, they see other people doing it and, you know, they're okay" (Interview, August 20, 2011). Katherine clarified:

> When you're in that environment none of the women have changed their names, some of them are in same-sex relationships, you get exposed to a whole lot of different ideas of what relationships are. And how people related to each other too. So it all kind of just reinforced it that you don't have to do this traditional thing if I don't want to. (Interview, August 20, 2011)

Of the individuals who took part in this study and made nontraditional choices, five out of six had at least some post-secondary education beyond an undergraduate degree. Gooding and Kreider (2009) found a correlation between women's education levels and their name practices with an increasing likelihood of selecting an unconventional name by 9.8 times from a bachelor's degree to a doctoral degree. Exposure to academic settings provided exposure to alternative acceptable options for name choices.

Stephen, Joshua, Katherine, and Brock noted exposure to culture groups outside the United States also illuminated other available options. Katherine cited a wedding she attended in Germany as a teenager as the first time she recognized the possibility of husbands adopting their wives' names (Interview, August 20, 2011). Joshua said "I think [living in Thailand] definitely

allowed me to think more outside the box of, actually, a lot of people, the men don't just keep their name the same. You know. Around the world, so. Yeah" (Interview, December 21, 2011). Brock mentioned living in Costa Rica, where traditional naming involved both the mother and the fathers' surnames being included, separated by a space (similar to Mr. and Mrs. His Hers) influenced his acceptance of unconventional names (Interview, December 11, 2011). Stephen shared how his internet research illustrated different traditions in various cultures (Interview, January 13, 2012). The impact of knowing other choices are available and acceptable seemed to be an important influence for some name choosers and those evaluating choices.

My name communicates my relationships.

One of the most often cited reasons behind name choice was the desire to visibly show relationships between individuals. Nearly every couple who chose a single, unified last name said they wanted everyone to know and recognize their relationships with their spouse, their family, or their children. Kline, Stafford, and Miklosovic (1996) found women who changed their names to their fiancé's name did so to signify marriage and commitment.

Many couples agreed having one last name was important for creating a family unit, specifically in anticipation of having children, to illustrate the family relationship to others. Stephen shared "the one defining and unifying element we had, the point of agreement was that we wanted one name for our kids, and we wanted our kids to have the same last name that we do." Isabelle said having a unified last name means "we [my kids, my husband, and I] are identified as part of that unity that is declared" (Interview, August 22, 2011). Researchers, such as Twenge (1997), found women who changed their names to their husbands cited family union as an influence.

Some couples believed the name they chose symbolized the commitment of each partner to their relationship. Stafford and Kline (1996) surveyed college age women and men and found 21 percent of men felt female refusal to take their name meant they were not committed to the relationship. Alex put it simply when he said "it seems like you're more of a couple if you share the same last name" (Interview, November 9, 2011). Katherine speculated her husband may have feared she was not committed: "I think he was afraid that I didn't want to change my name because my mother had been divorced twice, so that might have had something to do with it" (Interview, August 20, 2011). Kline, Stafford, and Miklosovic (1996) compared name changers (Mrs. Hisname), keepers (Mrs. Hername), and combiners (Mrs. Newname) and found commitment levels did not vary, apparently debunking the myth of relationship commitment's connection to name choice. But, the truths people believe do not always depend on research findings; they depend on how we perceive our world. The way people associate names with commitment to relationships may indicate part of the power of names.

Part of the name choices made showed how people connected equality of marital relationship roles to the name-choice made. Marisa noted her choice was

> the biggest representation of how we feel for each other and the kind of commitment that we feel for each other, and that is equal…the equality was we balance each other out. And it makes sense why we would represent that, uh, commitment to each other in our names. It makes so much sense why we would do that, that there's equality in that. (Interview, August 5, 2011)

Bob, however, observed couples do not need to change their name for the relationship to have equality:

So I think [my wife] is aware of some things I don't do so well anymore. And on the

other hand I am aware that she needs more help on some things…So, you know, I think

we're working more as partners than, than as separate individuals. (Interview, October 26,

2011)

But as Joshua pointed out,

there could be a sense that, like, if one person just adopts the last name of the other that

somehow they are giving up, that person's power's increased and the other person's

power is decreased, sort of. I think the fact that we both changed our last names to

something else that was different, it didn't have that dynamic in it. (Interview, December

21, 2011)

Despite Joshua's assertions, several individuals said they and their partner valued relational

equality, and they wanted to show that part of their relationship through their name choice.

Nearly everyone I interviewed described something akin to what Foss and Edson (1989)

highlighted regarding women who kept their names: some people consider the name an

important family relationship connection. When Alex shared his choice with his grandfather, his

grandfather was upset. Alex hypothesized:

I don't think he was concerned about it being a different kind of thing to do, but I think it

was him taking it personally that someone was choosing not to have his last name, or that

his great-grandchildren wouldn't have his name. (Interview, November 9, 2011)

Stephen also adopted his wife's surname because, as he put it, "I'd kind of fallen in love with her

family…along the way… [so this was a] really meaningful symbol to her of how much of a

commitment I made to not just her but also her family" (Interview, January 13, 2012). Scheuble

and Johnson (2005) found wives would choose to be called by their husbands' names in family

situations. They speculated this may be the case because "in family situations, one's identity as a member of a family unit is more salient, and women often select the name that symbolizes their identification with this unit" (p. 150). Espousing the family name of a partner appears to make some kind of connection between the family history and character and the new family member.

We can also see the other side of family relationships being signified by names by looking at people who lacked connection to their families. Stephen noted his choice on some level was either unconsciously motivated or after-the-fact justified by what he felt was

> closure, in a way, for years of what I felt were psychological manipulation and, uhm, just a, a tainted and flawed legacy of a family name that really didn't hold a whole lot of honor for me…in hind sight it was one of those ultimate symbols that I had, it was a way that I've reclaimed some power, to bring it down to base terms. (Interview, January 13, 2012)

Similarly to Stephen's desire to sever his family connection, Joshua's wife did not feel connected to her birth surname as it was the surname of her absent father, therefore they decided to adopt a different family name from her side (Interview, December 21, 2011). Ratnu said "maybe if I had changed my name, like, probably, I don't know, every time I said my name I would feel more of a sense of belonging to his family" (Interview, August 20, 2011). Isabelle speculated part of the reason she did not feel connected to her own name was due to the lack of connection she felt with her in-laws:

> With my name, I don't have the emotional connection to it. It's just (*pause*) weird. I don't know how to put it. It sounds weird. Maybe because I have an emotional disconnect with his parents too…we're okay, but it's not the emotional (*pause*)

attachment I have to my family…and I associate that with the name. (Interview, August

22, 2011)

Whether or not people felt their names symbolized family connections, it is clearly a

consideration in the name-choice process.

Joshua, Elizabeth, Ratnu, Marisa, and Brock all described their considerations with

marital name choices being associated with genealogical and historical concerns in showing their

relationship to their past and future families. Elizabeth noted "I think your name gives you a

history. I mean, my name gave me a history. And that's probably why I don't want to change it.

Because my name went down in my family for, like, five generations" (Interview, September 15,

2011). Joshua shared "I think I value feeling connected to history" as part of his rationale as

well (Interview, December 21, 2011). Marisa said a major concern that prevented her and her

husband from creating a new surname when they got married was disruption of genealogical

charting of familial relationship history (Interview, August 5, 2011). Brock, however, was

unconcerned about genealogy: "it's not like, I hope that 100 years from now someone will be

able to trace our genealogical tree because it's messed up, or whatever. I understand that's

important, but it's not my concern now" (Interview, December 11, 2011). Despite not being

concerned about genealogy, Katherine recalled one of the convincing arguments her husband

accepted as rational for her keeping her name was that she was an only child and her name would

"die out" with her, thus somehow preserving the name of her family (Interview, August 20,

2011). Interestingly, Katherine told me had she had children, she would not have passed her

name to them. Whether the name bearer or someone else was considering a name choice, it was

clear name choices were influenced by the desire to maintain records of the relationships

between individuals.

In a slightly different type of relationship, Ratnu and Joshua referenced the influence a connection between a region or city and the social power names can have. Many names can be connected to various ethnicities; Isabelle even suggested some Portuguese names can even be linked to what region of Portugal the person is from (Interview, August 22, 2011). Davies (2011) found in studying children, how one participant's "personal name and surname mark out his and his family's national, ethnic, religious and cultural origin" (p. 565). Ratnu, in explaining why some people may choose to adopt a second family name, suggested "there's a lot of people who don't want to lose their family name so they have two family names, especially those people who probably come here, you know, go to other parts" (Interview, August 20, 2011). Joshua recalled "I think we foresaw ourselves living in Minnesota…and [that surname]…was a name that was more connected to Minnesota culture… accepting that last name was also a way to accept my identity more as a Minnesotan" (Interview, December 21, 2011). Johnson and Scheuble (1995) found a relationship between the Mr. His and Mrs. (Hers) His naming practices and the Southern region of the United States, which Stephen confirmed (Interview, January 13, 2012). Names can be connected to locations and some found it an important consideration when making their choices.

The influence of simplicity on my final name decision.

Similar to Twenge's (1997) findings, some conversation partners cited simplicity as an influence to their final name choice. When confronted with complicated pre- and post-choice processes and negotiations, some people simply choose the easier Mr. and Mrs. Hisname approach, both from social and paperwork perspectives. To that, Ben and I can relate. Our conventional choice meant our paperwork did not involve anything more than standard, conventional changes (e.g. name change on social security card for me), and we did not have to undergo any post-choice

questioning and negotiations from friends or family about how and why we were ignoring societal norms. Foss and Edson (1989) noted many women who kept their names did so because they valued the convenience of not enduring name-change paperwork. Bob said when he got married, "the wife changed her name. So that was, was kinda it I guess" (Interview, October 26, 2011). Katherine explained,

> when we first got married I kind of envied some of my friends for whom it was very simple. They were going to change their name and of course they were going to change their name. There was no argument, no worry, no second thoughts. I envied that sort of assuredness that this was the right thing to do and why would you do anything else?
>
> (Interview, August 20, 2011)

Whether paperwork process or social acceptance, making conventional choices appeared to be a more simple choice.

Much research cites the simplicity of sharing names with a couple's future children as rationale for choosing a unified surname. Isabelle ultimately decided to drop her three Portuguese surnames in favor of simplicity for herself and her children: "it makes things easier, it is much easier in the U.S. to just have [his surname]" (Interview, August 22, 2011). Foss and Edson (1989) argued "name convenience for the husband and children is given precedence over selfhood concerns of the woman" (p. 361), but they did not discuss this from the male perspective.

The anticipated post-choice difficulty and messiness of hyphenated names were cited as the main reasons why couples opted specifically not to hyphenate their names. Katherine shared "I don't want to be hyphenated; that's messy. I don't want to have to spit out [Hers-His] or [His-Hers] every time. I just don't want to" (Interview, August 20, 2011). Foss and Edson (1989),

however, found women hyphenated their names in auspices of balancing their own needs for individuality with their desired connections to their new families, which was not supported in my conversations. For some reason, every person I spoke with evaluated hyphenated surnames negatively.

My name is my name and it represents me.

Finally, when we think about our names, we sometimes consider them almost as a possession we have, a material object we own. In conjunction with this material object consideration, several people described descriptive and possessive considerations in their name change process. Most often described were the aesthetic considerations and the time they'd spent possessing their names.

Name aesthetics played a role for several people. When Brock and his wife were choosing surnames for their children's last names, he said they decided based on "the way that it phonetically sounded…alliterations with the letters and *all* these kinds of things to make sure they get a name that you really, really like…So really it was just how it sounded. That's absolutely nothing more than that" (Interview, December 11, 2011). John described (regarding his wife's name change which essentially involved dropping two letters from her surname) "as far as I know, it wasn't really a big decision for her, partially because our names are so similar. All she did was essentially shorten her name" (Interview, December 28, 2011). Alex noted he and his wife rejected one surname because it "is also the name of a foundation…and we didn't want to be constantly explaining 'no, we're not those [name],' you know?" (Interview, November 9, 2011). Stephen joked "sometimes you hear people's names and think 'wow, I'm glad I don't have that name.'" Scheuble and Johnson (1993) surveyed college age students about their name change plans and found women were more accepting of wives not taking their

husbands' surnames "if she does not like her husband's last name" (p. 751). Twenge (1997) also found name aesthetics influenced name choices women made. The way a name is perceived aesthetically appears to influence its appeal.

Research describes the length of time an individual possessed their name impacted the connection they felt to their name and their feelings about their names. My name can be traced back through my job history alone to the places I've worked and where I've lived in the same way the Smartphone application *foursquare* [sic] tracks our geographic locations. I was raised to expect that at some point I would get married and my name would change. Ben shared with me as I was testing out my interview questions that as a boy he always envisioned his future wife taking his surname on their wedding day and how honored he'd feel when that happened. John also used the word honored when he described his desire for his wife to take his surname (Interview, December 28, 2011). Emens (2007) argued my preparation to lose my name and the lack of preparation men have to lose their names may influence our name choice preferences. Women, as Twenge (1997) noted, have in some cases spent their lives preparing to change their name, but men do not typically grow up doing the same thing. When Brock's wife suggested he take her name, his said "well, I can't change that because that's my name!" (Interview, December 11, 2011). Especially when an individual has been referred to by her or his name for a long time, it takes time to process being known by any other label.

The pre-choice negotiations I found only directly included the members of the couple either as individuals making decisions or as a couple making decisions together. After the choice is made, the negotiations begin including new characters, such as family members and county clerks. With an understanding of pre-choice negotiations, we can now explore post-choice negotiations.

Post-Choice Negotiations

We do not make our choices or behave in a vacuum free from the evaluations of others. Whenever we enact our identities through our behaviors, others see those behaviors and judge them as either fitting the paradigm they have for us in their minds or not fitting the paradigm. Our paradigms are influenced by the socio-cultural contexts in which we were raised and in which we at any given time live. Therefore, the post-choice negotiations we go through are dependent on the socio-cultural contexts in which they are situated to give meaning to the choices we made. Traditional choices, as dictated by the socio-historical contexts, do not require as many post-choice negotiations because, as John reflected, "I don't think anybody even thought about [our decision] that much because it is the more tradition way to, I don't know, show that you're married or whatever" (Interview, December 28, 2011). Couples who made non-traditional choices had to deal with explaining their choices to friends, colleagues, and family members. I say imperativeness, as in, people HAD to have the conversations, because we have little choice about who will confront our choices. While not an imperative in all relationships, in some relationships it is important others understand our choices and behaviors.

Nontraditional name choosers all talked about how they expected their families to respond and most people were easily able to describe how they expected significant others in their lives to respond. Marisa even created a scripted set of reasons to explain their choice to family members:

I was prepared to say "well, here's what I think your grandma's gonna say and here's what I think your mom's gonna say, and here's what I think your grandma is gonna to say and here's what I think *my* mom's gonna say and *my* dad's gonna say and grandpa, bless his heart, he's 95 years old…here's what I think *grandpa's* gonna say."…because we

knew that it was going to have not only legal ramifications, but it was also going to have

personal ramifications. (Interview, August 5, 2011)

Several people expected older family members to have trouble initially accepting any other

choice than Mr. and Mrs. Hisname.

Most expectations people noted for individuals other than their grandparents and people

of that generation had more to do more specifically with the individuals hearing the news rather

than the decisions the couple was making. Joshua was not concerned about his parents' reaction

to his nontraditional choice: "my parents are generally pretty accepting people and I wasn't

worried" (Interview, December 21, 2011). Elizabeth, in considering her mother-in-law's

reaction to their nontraditional choice, thought "if we had lived closer, it might have been more

difficult, but we didn't, so it wasn't" (Interview, September 15, 2011). Marisa pointed out "I

mean you can't expect someone to change in 2 days…change is hard and change is slow and you

can't expect someone to just make an immediate change" (Interview, August 5, 2011). Elizabeth

also described how several institutions are "expecting that everybody will have the same name.

They just have to learn not to do that. And banks learn pretty quickly" (Interview, September 15,

2011). All couples said eventually anyone who had initial concerns about their name choices let

those concerns go.

After actually explaining the choices they made to family and friends, most reactions

people received were pleasantly surprising, and some were as expected. Alex described a

charming bank teller:

His first statement was "well, I'm not going to ask you why you're doing this" but…then

after a couple of minutes he was like "okay, so why are you changing your name?" And I

don't remember what response I gave, but I remember his response being "oh, that sounds

pretty cool." (Interview, November 9, 2011)

Many of the nontraditional name choosers seemed to indicate their expectations for resistance

were higher than the actual explicitly noted resistance they encountered. Some responses,

however, were exactly as the couples expected. After Brock's wife changed her name back to

her birth surname, Brock's grandmother-in-law reacted as expected: she questioned Brock's

wife's love for Brock (Interview, December 11, 2011). While the grandmother's comments

made Brock and his wife feel uncomfortable, they at least went in to making their choice having

anticipated her response.

Several unconventional name choosers noted the process of changing their name was

another negotiation they had. Stephen was expecting more resistance during the paperwork:

Maybe I wanted more resistance. But maybe it's one of those things, too, where if you

expect that you're going to run in to a problem or an issue and you get it all built up,

maybe you're exponentially less likely to have that happen, because we really didn't have,

um, much, much at all in the way of road blocks. (Interview, January 13, 2012)

Marisa noted her husband's structural negotiations:

This brick wall formed very quickly…And [the clerk] leaned back on her chair and that

smile that she had exchanged, uh, with me was gone. And she looked at him kind of,

almost, stern faced and she says to him "Why do you want to change your name?"…And

in that moment there's…the scholar in me that's going "wait a minute…Why didn't she

ask *me* that question? Why didn't she give *me* any of that distance? Why wasn't there

the brick wall for *me*? And why is there a brick wall for [my husband]?" (Interview,

August 5, 2011)

Joshua and his wife also negotiated problems when implementing their unconventional choice:

> So we went [to the county office] and we were like "this is our plan" and at least in [our]
>
> county, they said "well, you can change your name, she can change her name to your
>
> name, you can change your name to her name, you can hyphenate, but you can't change
>
> your name to a name that's not one of your own." (Interview, December 21, 2011)

Emens (2007) suggested the issues Marisa and Joshua encountered may have connected to

"desk-clerk law," or "what the person at the desk tells you the law is" (p. 764). She described

desk clerk law as the

> advice given by the government functionaries who answer public inquiries at state and
>
> local agencies [who] frequently mislead people and discourage unconventional naming
>
> choices as a result of ignorance or their own views about proper practice…informally,
>
> legal institutions [can] shape choices through "desk-clerk law." (p. 762)

Stannard (1973) advocated in her treatise on the status of naming "no woman should let an

ignorant clerk deny her that right" (p. 14), though she made no mention of men in her suggestion.

No other men who changed their names noted experiences beyond the normal hassles of

the name change process. Joshua noted how today colleagues do not recognize his adoption of

his wife's name because they simply assume she took his name. When he tells them, he said

their reactions are, for the "vast majority of people who then learn about it, I actually feel like

gain respect for me that I did that, and I almost feel that in some ways probably it's increased

peoples' respect for me overall. You know?" (Interview, December 21, 2011). Although the

process governing approved name change caused some problems, these problems did not seem to

be reflected in particular relationship encounters with specific others.

Many people described the post-choice name change process as daunting. Alex summed his name change process: "I remember there was just a lot of variety…None of it seemed really onerous by itself. It was just a reasonably large amount of things to get changed" (Interview, November 9, 2011). Stephen's assessment of the name change process differed: "I quickly discovered was an extremely laborious process of the details, the legal part, uhm, and having gone through that" he intends to tell his daughters one day the "story, it took me a year and a half to change my name" (Interview, January 13, 2012). At some point in their respective processes, both Joshua and Marisa's husband encountered unhelpful and uninformed clerks who made the process more complicated; "it definitely wasn't a very consumer advocate type of environment there" commented Joshua, (Interview, December 21, 2011). Joshua and Brock both had to appear before a judge for some part of their process. Emens (2007) suggested "the legal regime places significant costs on women who become Mrs. His Name, it typically places greater costs on women (and men) choosing other naming options" (p. 810). The name change process being a sometimes difficult process might be enough to prevent some people from making a name change choice.

Once parents, family members, and colleagues understood the choices made and the reasons behind those choices, most supported the decision made, even, in Joshua's case, defend the decision to others:

> Some of…[my mother-in-law's] friends made some comments that I think were a little bit disparaging *(seems to carefully choose his words)* about not following traditional, you know, I think someone said something about, you know, oh, they must not care very much about *(pause)* family or, you know, something like that…I think her mom kind of defended like "no, I think they are doing this because they really were, they *do* care about

family and that's exactly why they are making this decision." (Interview, December 21, 2011)

Suter (2004) suggested perhaps the reason for mothers' acceptance specifically was partially due to the "internal and external struggles [mothers] experienced [when making their choices]. They were anxious to see what their daughters [would] do in a society they perceive as exceedingly more tolerant to nontraditional naming practices than the one they married into" (p. 83). Reservations people had about unconventional name choices may have dissipated over time as others got used to the couple's decision or saw the couple not backing down.

Not everyone believed they were influenced by the judgments of others. For Katherine, post-choice negotiations did not impact her decision: "I don't really care what people…I really don't care…I think the big issue was [my husband]…he's the only one who I felt like it mattered. It doesn't matter…it shouldn't matter to anyone else…It doesn't really affect anyone else" (Interview, August 20, 2011). The negotiations others made in regards to the expected and actual reactions of others represent the ways specific enacted actions were chosen to respond in specific other relationships to generalized other constraints on appropriate (traditional) and inappropriate (nontraditional) name choices.

It's (not) important you call me by my "right" name.

After making a name choice around the time of marriage, we have to decide how much importance we were going to place on being called by the "right" name, or the name we choose, then navigate and negotiate conveying our choice to others. For some individuals, the name they are called is a part of how they see themselves, and being called by the "right" name is important; for others it was less important. Scheuble and Johnson (2005) found women would

most frequently situationally change the use of their name in instances of family and friends, but would also be less careful during

> introductions to people with whom they will have little future contact; when refreshing
>
> people's memories abut previous acquaintances; when dealing with clerks in restaurants
>
> or stores or with repair people; or using the last name by which the person with whom
>
> they are interacting addressed them. (p. 148)

They further found women were more careful with their names in encounters with the social security office or professional situations. Perhaps the rationale is because some situations require more diligence in ensuring an individual is correctly identified, such as with passports or official documents. Regardless of the urgency we feel about being called by our "right" name, it takes awhile for others to begin calling us by our "right" name.

How participants received mail was a topic that came up over and over again in conjunction with how others labeled them after the marriage. Isabelle described "initially when my dad would send letters, he would put the six names until I said 'dad, you don't have to do that'" (Interview, August 22, 2011). Elizabeth recalled "in the first years [my mother-in-law] would address letters to Mrs. [His]. But she got over that" (Interview, September 15, 2011). Brock described his experiences with mail:

> We've both kind of had problems with, and certainly [my wife] more than me, but when
>
> we get mail from older generations for "Mr. and Mrs. Brock [His]"…some people in our
>
> family, to this day, they'll either, they'll mail something to her…like they just don't
>
> remember, even though it was 12 years ago or longer. You know. Did you forget?
>
> (Interview, December 11, 2011)

For some, like Katherine, it was only through the mail she was referred to by the wrong name, but she guessed being referred to by the wrong name in printed social situations is probably not as much of an issue anymore:

> I don't think [my mother-in-law] ever [misspoke my name] verbally. I think I just noticed it like on cards and things that come mailed to us addressed to us, which doesn't happen hardly at all anymore with the days of email and Facebook. (Interview, August 20, 2011)

Foss and Edson (1989) found non-name-changing women encountered incorrectly addressed mail, however unlike the participants in my study, Foss and Edson reported family members refused to change their behaviors. This may indicate more acceptance for unconventional choices today.

Perhaps some of the written and verbal confusion people may come from the name materiality and the physical changes people have to make to call people by their new "right" names. Sekimoto (2011) defined materiality in communication as "making meaningful—and therefore bringing into existence—both the material (physical objects, natural phenomena, etc.) and the immaterial (abstract ideas, principles, values, etc.) into human perception, interaction, and engagement" (p. 54). The materiality of our communication is manifested in both the matter-like ways in which we must conceive of our messages (as situated within a time, place, and other rules of matter), as well as the actual ways our bodies must move to materialize the messages. When how we refer to an individual changes, we must change the way we move our mouths and our writing utensils.

As I've shared, when I got married my friends would occasionally refer to me as my previous "right" name ("Julie Germain!") before correcting themselves. Katherine noted the same phenomenon:

> I think it was weird for me to when all my friends changed their names because a lot of my friends had been friends since elementary school…sometimes I will still spit out the name that I knew them as, even though they've been married for 15 years most of the time I'll think of them as and it will surprise me because their old name will come out and we'll laugh and I'll think "where did that come from?" Uhm. I do remember that being hard on me when they changed their names…That's how they know you, so it takes awhile to kind of reprogram your mind to spit out a different combination I think. (Interview, August 20, 2011)

John talked about how he liked that he did not have to change his name because he "didn't have to consciously, every time I write my name, "oh yes, that's not my name anymore" kind of thing…because, you know, nothing changed" (Interview, December 28, 2011). Before my name change, I made sure to practice signing my new name. I remember feeling chagrined that my name would now include an uppercase W because it was my least favorite letter to write in cursive. Stephen said

> when I sign my name, I do have this moment like, "oh, yeah." (*Stephen smiles*) And every once in awhile I'll try to sign my old name just for the fun of it, and I realize how difficult it is now. (Interview, January 13, 2012)

Alex noted how long it took him to get used to his new "right" name:

> It was kind of an adjustment period to get used to calling yourself by your own name, like when you get your own name wrong it seems kind of embarrassing, but you get that a

little bit. I had people that knew about the change and heard me stutter on my own name

and things like that (*Alex laughs*)…But that maybe lasted, I don't know, I don't remember

real clearly when I ended that but maybe two or three months. Uh. And then the new

name was pretty automatic. (Interview, November 9, 2011)

Even though materially we must reconfigure our muscle movements in the ways we embody an

individual's name when it changes, after while saying and writing a new name becomes more

natural. As Brock suggested, "it eventually sinks in" (Interview, December 11, 2011).

When deciding how and when to tell others about the name individuals preferred to be

called, it seemed there were three schools of thought: explicitly explaining, casual mentioning,

and indifference. Similar to the concept of rhetorical sensitivity, for some people the choices

made were situational (rhetorically sensitive) and for others choices equated to the concept of the

noble self. Regardless of the choices made, each did seem to have some amount of situational

sensitivity. Marisa and her spouse choose to explicitly explain their choices to everyone:

I didn't *have* to tell them my name story. It was absolutely really unnecessary, I could

have just introduced myself as Marisa [Hers His] and no one would have known the

wiser because I wasn't trying to explain the name change…I *chose* to talk about the name

change, I *chose* to talk about why I changed my name and why [my husband] changed his

name…because [he] was doing it…For [his] grandma we just continually reminded, just

continually mentioned it. (Interview, August 5, 2011)

Perhaps Marisa's dedication to sharing her story and rationale stems from what Foss and Edson

(1989) described as "a particular pride and sense of commitment in identifying" (p. 360) with an

individual's marital partner via the visible name, while at the same time embracing the sense of

egalitarianism they together found in their name choice.

Both Stephen and Alex shared how they choose to allow people to learn of their "right" names more organically in conversation. Stephen associated telling people about his name with telling people about his artificial eye:

I've always kind of been used to having a tension for something that people know they would like to ask about but maybe feel that social morays or, or, or, custom and, or the manners that their parents taught them just tell them they shouldn't. For me, the name is similar. Uh, and so I, I've, I don't hold any punches if somebody wants to ask me about the story…but it's, it doesn't come up that much…At work, I've had just an offhand mention from different associates or co-workers and they'll say "so and so told me that you changed your name when you got married…" so yeah, definitely circulates around. (Interview, January 13, 2012)

But as Alex pointed out, for he and his wife "it's something that I can either choose to share or choose not to share. And let it come out whenever it comes out to any particular person…I don't think we're very intentional about it… Or at least I'm not" (Interview, November 9, 2011).

Katherine and Elizabeth both talked about how in their choices, they did not care if in social instances others knew their "right" names. Though Elizabeth made sure to correct insurance companies or other types of official communication situations, she "didn't argue with [my mother-in-law]. There were not arguments about it. You just knew that if she had a choice it would be the other way" (Interview, September 15, 2011). For Katherine, explaining her name parallels her perceived necessity to inform others about her marriage:

I didn't make a big deal out of it because to me it wasn't a big deal. So only if it was someone important like somebody was going to write down my name or I was going have a relationship with these people again in which they would need to know my last

name and I would correct them right up front so they wouldn't feel stupid five years from now. I still felt anybody who needs to know that we're married will know. I don't care if anybody else does…It doesn't really affect anyone else…There's just that little awkward moment where I have to say "This is my husband [His Name]. I have a different name." But it's not a big deal, it's just an, an extra step sort of thing. (Interview, August 20, 2011)

Thus, the choices made by the individual regarding who to tell, who to correct, and what situations warranted those actions seemed contextually based and connected to the importance they placed on being known by the "right" name.

Joshua best explained the empowering theme for telling others: "I can kind of decide how much power I want to give [my name change]. Who I decide to tell, you know, basically" (Interview, December 21, 2011). We do get to choose how much power we want to give our name choice. Joshua felt empowered by his name choice, but he noted he did not let it define him. Marisa felt empowered by her name choice and chose to use it as a way to define herself and her relationship (Interview, August 5, 2011). Katherine explicitly said "it doesn't really affect anyone else" when describing how she does not care about who knows or who does not. As she put it, "it's just a name" (Interview, August 20, 2011). The names we use are one of the ways others and we, ourselves, can (and do) identify one another. For some of us, our name serves, as Stephen suggested, a "very overt daily, many times daily reminder" (Interview, January 13, 2012). For others, a name serves is as a label by which to call them. For others, the situation and context dictate where on the name-as-definition-of-self defines them. The impacts individuals feel their name has on their lives impacts how much attention and care those

individuals place on ensuring their chosen names are used in social settings, which in turn can impact the way identity is perceived and enacted.

Summary

The conversations I had with my conversation partners provided me an immense amount of data regarding marital name choices and their implications for the individuals' identities. To explain that data, I chronologically organized my themes into pre-choice negotiations and post-choice negotiations to utilize the stories' own narrative flows.

The negotiations before making the choice and after the choice was made was one theme I explored. Pre-choice negotiations usually were between the members of the couple, and they occurred at a variety of paces depending on how adamant each couple member was about their ultimate name outcome as well as other contextual factors influencing the choices.

The influences and considerations people had for their name choices were separated into four main subthemes under the pre-choice negotiations: Group Affiliation, Relationships, Simplicity, and Representative Possession. Group affiliations influenced the appropriate and accessible name choices for group members, both from a personal and a perception of others standpoint. The behaviors of social groups, the desire to associate with specific politicized groups, marital cohort membership, social class or stature, and professions seemed to dictate the appropriate naming choices people within those groups could make. For instance, it was more acceptable for women with professional reputations connecting their names to their work to keep their name when they got married. Exposure to educated individuals and cultures outside the United States illuminated alternative options to the Mr. and Mrs. Hisname conventional choice in the United States today. I found exposure to alternatives appeared to influence what name options people chose.

The communication of specific relationships was a subtheme to the post-choice negotiations my conversation partners discussed. Very often, couples wanted to have one unified surname after marriage to denote to others their committed relationship to their spouse, their family, or their children. Creating a family unit in anticipation of future children was often associated with the couple choosing an option where both would end up with the same surname. Some couples believed the name change was a symbol of their commitment to the relationship, and in some suggested their name choice emphasized the egalitarian nature of their relationship. Nearly everyone I interviewed believed their surname shared some kind of connection with the family labeled by that surname. This was a positive thing for participants like Stephen who desired a relationship with his wife's family, but was a somewhat negative thing for participants like Isabelle who did not feel connected with her husband's family ((Interview, January 13, 2012) ; Interview, August 22, 2011). Genealogical concerns and the desire to recognize the relationship to family history were also expressed by participants. Finally, the relationship either perceived between a surname and a region or city carried with it a certain social power, thus affording social powers to those bearing those names.

During the name negotiations, conversation partners noted traditional name choices were simpler because they are the uncontested conventional choices, which made choosing the traditional name option appealing. Simplicity in recognizing family relationships was described, even over concerns of lost selfhood. The daunting post-choice name change process, which included a somewhat large number of steps and could take from a month to a year to complete could discourage some from desiring to change their names. Expectations about post-choice difficulties specifically associated with choosing to hyphenate your surname were listed by several participants, suggesting the hyphenated name choice has fallen out of favor.

Interestingly, it seems to have been replaced by the Mr. and Mrs. Her His, where the surnames are both included by separated by a space.

The object-like qualities of a name and the ways the name represents an individual made up the Possessive Representation category. Name aesthetics, including how names looked and sounded, influenced the decisions people made. The amount of time a person possessed their name and how long they had considered the possibility of changing their names influenced the negotiations they had. Emens (2007) argued our exposure from a young age to typical name choices predispose us to preferences regarding our married name choices. These early exposures were cited as the rationale shared by Brock explaining why he initially balked at changing his name despite his previous immersion in other counter-culture movements (Interview, December 11, 2011). To be known by a new label can be a difficult transition period.

Post-choice negotiations began by making expectations about how significant and insignificant others conversation partners and I would interact with would react to the choices. Most reactions couples received were either as they expected or they encountered less resistance. Unconventional name choosers noted in addition to social negotiations of their name, they had to negotiate their way through a process that privileged traditional name choices. Once significant others understood name choices, they usually supported the decisions, even defending those choices in some cases. The evaluations others had regarding name choices did not influence all conversation partners, but for those who it did, we had to negotiate those conversations and evaluations to make sense of our choice on a daily basis.

The attention people paid to being referred to by the "right" name, or the name they chose when they got married demonstrated a subtheme under post-choice negotiations.   How connected a person felt to their name seemed to dictate how often they corrected others in social

situations, but it did not influence official documentation such as with the social security office. Many participants described mailings they received as being the primary place they noted being referred to by the incorrect name. When considering the materiality of name change, as in the ways our mouths and hands have to re-form how we project the "right" name we are to refer to an individual by, it makes sense that it may take time for someone to call us by our "right" name. Decisions about how and when to tell others about a name choice usually were made within three schools of thought: explicit explanation, casual mention, and indifference. Employment of these three tactics depended on situational and contextual factors. Some nontraditional name choosers described how they felt empowered to tell others about their choices, and felt their name choice gave them agency in the ways their relationships, names, and identities were enacted.

The results discussed in Chapter Four provide the data necessary to answer the research questions. Chapter Five will explicitly illuminate the name-identity connections implicated in Chapter Four. Limitations and future research opportunities will also be described.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Our names are labels, plainly printed on the bottled essence of our past behavior.

~Logan Pearsall Smith

Proper names are poetry in the raw. Like all poetry they are untranslatable. ~W.H. Auden

༆

"Have you ever thought about if you would have made a different decision when you got married?" Kristi asked. Rather than our normal meeting location in her office, Kristi and I sat in the Student Union. On our table sat her large diet fountain soda and chocolate and caramel candy bar with my caramel latté and my purple thesis notebook. Around us the bustle of students having lunch while talking about their weekend plans intermingled with our discussion about completing my thesis. "Well, Ben and I talked about my feelings. I shared with him how I didn't feel connected to my Walker last name and I didn't feel connected to my past accomplishments. We talked for a really long time and went back and forth about several things, but he had a really great idea."

༆

The connection between our name and our identity appears to be a little tricky because when we use our names on a daily basis, we do not really think about everything our name does and says for and about us. Our names seem to be a ready-to-hand type of tool in most instances. Throughout my conversations, partners shared they'd never really thought about many of the questions I'd asked. Katherine, Isabelle, and Joshua especially highlighted how they'd not really thought about the questions I was asking until I'd asked them, which suggests we do not normally think about our names. In Stephen's words,

> You're asking a lot of questions that are making me realize that I have thoughts on that
> but I haven't ever really thought of the question in those terms...I hadn't thought a whole

lot lately about how big a decision it was and how much it means to me and what it

symbolizes, so I appreciate the opportunity to kind of remind myself of what that

decision means to me…I appreciate getting kind of into the deeper level of what it means.

(Interview, January 13, 2012)

Isabelle's story and my story, however, illustrate what it looks like when our names

become broken, or stop working the way we think they should. Our names become present-at-

hand and we begin seeing how our names connect to other aspects of our lives. Langellier

(1989) described personal narrative risks are derived from disrupting "culturally given,

sedimented narratives [which]…involves analysis of what constitutes the *personal* in personal

narrative. The risk of performing personal narratives raises questions about the nature of

personal reality and the situation in which storytelling occurs" (p. 269, emphasis in original).

Instances of this became apparent in conversations, such as when Katherine said "I have a sense

of continuity I guess that I've never thought anything of. I have been always Katherine [Hers].

It's just a name" (Interview, August 20, 2011). Her dismissive comment about her name's

importance was preceded by her exploring a meaningful connection to her name, all in the same

sentence. When people are given the opportunity to reflect, they often find a name is more than

just a label.

No more evident was the concept of a name being a ready-to-hand/present-at-hand tool

than when I asked my conversation partners to hypothetically make a different choice when they

got married. Bob and Marisa were unable to even imagine their lives. Marisa said

um….you know…it would be (*Marisa laughs*), it would be like imagining that I had blue

eyes all of a sudden. I can't! I absolu…I can't! I really cannot imagine it, even, even

hypothetically. I can't… It's so fundamental in who I am…now. (Interview, August 5, 2011)

Others, for instance John, could not quite describe how they'd feel different: "yeah. I, I'm not really sure how it would change exactly, what my identity would be if my name were different, but I know that I would definitely feel different" (Interview, December 28, 2011). Others like Isabelle very clearly described what they anticipated it would be like to make a different choice:

I think within our little circle, like him and me, there would be no difference. I don't, for my children maybe it would make it more difficult…And then within the bigger circle, I think (*pauses*) I think my siblings or his siblings wouldn't really think much of it just because they were raised in [the] same time we were, but I think for the older generations, they would probably question why we did that. And just having to explain it all the time would be "why did you do that? (Interview, August 22, 2011)

Alex shared his wife's thoughts:

[My wife] has said she kind of wishes that we had taken a third name because for her to not have a name change seems sort of like she just sort of was able to glide over that transition without the reminders I had, so in hindsight she wishes we would have taken a third name. (Interview, November 9, 2011)

In stepping outside our everyday experiences of our names, where our names serve a variety of functions from a verbal recognition of our(selves), we can anticipate how we might feel. Through examining our perceived ideas about what might happen if we would change our choices, we can better delineate how our choices impact us in subtle ways. To hypothetically change the choice we made, we can explore with more clarity the impacts the name we chose had, moving our name from the ready-to-hand tool to the present-at-hand status. The evaluative

lenses our personal narrative give us to explore our names, name choices, and the implications our names have on us is a useful way we can make sense of our name choice experiences.

<p style="text-align:center">ষ্ণ্জ</p>

"What was Ben's idea?" Kristi asked. "Ben suggested because we are combining both the Germain side of the family and the Walker side of the family that both of our names should be included. He suggested we both add Germain to our middle names," I shared. I could not have been happier with Ben's support of the identity struggles I was having in conjunction with my name choice. I continued, "We decided not to legally change our names because at this point it would cost a lot of money and it would be a gigantic pain in the butt." "What do you think you'll do about your kids?" Kristi asked. "Well, we figure we'll give our kids Germain as one of their middle names too and they can decide what they want to do with it when they get older" I answered, "but the important thing is at least they have a choice." What I was more excited about, truthfully, was how our re-negotiation of our names led to discussions about feeling connected to each others' families. We started talking about what it means to be a Germain or a Walker and it was really good for us to figure out aspects of our relationship's identity.   Our name negotiations led into other important identities conversations.

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I began my research because I did not feel like myself after I got married; I asked 11 people to help me understand, in the context of their name choice processes, their experiences and opinions regarding the connection between their names and their identities. From these 11 interviews, I found a dense and complicated answer, woven together from the narratives shared by my conversation partners.

A connection between names and identities was explicitly stated by some of the participants while other participants rejected a name-identity connection. Our names and name

choices connect us at varying extents to potentially defining aspects of our identities, such as ethnicity, religion, or family group. Based on Hecht's (1993) work, we recognize social evaluations result in identity implications; therefore our names convey messages about us and our relationships, and the meaning of those messages is derived from cultural standards. Mahoney Frandina (2009) described "one's own very personal label is not a trivial matter to most persons. In fact, naming involves important issues in the construction of one's identity" (p. 157). Therefore, through the influences our names have on our views of ourselves and our perceptions of others, our names do influence our identities.

My Name-Personal Identity Connection: Internal and External Links

The name-identity connection in my study most explicitly corroborated the name-personal identity connection. Recall the personal identity is the way we view ourselves that is influenced by evaluations of others. Name-personal identity connections were noted at internal and external levels. By internal, I refer to the name-personal identity connection was created within a person's self evaluation. By external, I refer to the name-personal identity connection others placed on the individual.

Stephen and Marissa were the most outspoken advocates of internal name-identity connection highlighted in Emens (2007) research. Emens explained "From a young age, we are identified by our names…They are words that we learn early to associate with our selves" (p. 769). John simply stated "I would say…it [your name] is a huge part of who you are" (Interview, December 28, 2011). Stephen shared a story which elaborated on John's statement:

> Good friends…know me as Stephen [Hers] or increasingly as just [Hers], and then it comes up that "well, no, my previous name was [His]" and then they, quite often I've gotten the reaction of "I can't see that, I can't see calling you Stephen [His], that just

seems so weird" and, uh, I don't know how to come at that, but it's obviously evidence

that not only have I built my identity with my name, but other people construct who I am

based on what my name is and when I tell them that "hey guess what, I'm not pulling this

out of my ass, it's not a very difficult leap for me to tell you to start calling me [His]

because legally my name is [His] and legally it was for the 30 some years before you met

me." It's kind of a mind-blowing thing for them, like "no, you're, no, you're Stephen

[Hers]!"… I'm sure there's symbology [sic] there…I even do it myself, that when I talk to

certain people or I create a picture of their name, so…Uhm…but there is, obviously, an

association that's built. (Interview, January 13, 2012)

Marisa agreed a name is very important to a person's identity when she described how her name

is "one of the first things I say, really, to anybody and it, it's who I am, it's a part of my identity"

(Interview, August 5, 2011). She went on to explain more clearly, referencing how she tells her

name-story often:

Julie: Do you think [your name change] still impacts the way you view your identity?

Marisa: Uh, yeah. On a daily basis. Um, I mean, I wouldn't still be talking about my

name (*Marisa laughs*)…I have a very strong reputation for myself. But [my husband's]

an integral part of that and so is my name and so is the commitment that we have made to

each other in our lives…and so, yes, a very, very integral part of my identity. (Interview,

August 5, 2011)

Stephen and Marisa's explicitly noted connection between name and identity, and others shared

the ways the connections they saw.

Some participants did not see their name and their internally influenced personal identity

as connected entities, which led them to dismiss the name as an unimportant label by which they

were called. Elizabeth and Katherine each said some version of "it's just a name." At one point

Isabelle felt very connected to her name because it connected to her ethnicity, it matched her

Portuguese appearance, it connected her to her birth family's behaviors, and it was associated

with her identity (Interview, August 22, 2011). Today, 19 years after her marriage, Isabelle felt

disconnected from her married name and viewed it as just a label. The types of comments

Kathleen, Elizabeth, and Isabelle used when describing what they felt their names lacked

illustrate as clearly in their missing links, the ways names could connect to internally influenced

personal identities.

While participants varied in the degree to which they saw their name being connected to

their personal identity, no participants believed their identities were encompassed by their names.

Alex explained

> I think [name and identity] are connected, but I also think the name is one small facet of
>
> my identity. So, I think it's a signal of something, but I don't think it defines me. I don't
>
> wake up thinking "Wow, I'm Alex [Hers] and the [Hers] is a defining thing about me."
>
> Yeah, I guess that's what I would say about it. (Interview, November 9, 2011)

Brock added how a name is "another label that's part of your identity" (Interview, December 11,

2011). Despite the name's importance as the label by which people refer to an individual

coupled by its place in co-building individual identity, it is one factor in that process.

Stephen explained his internal name-personal identity connection empowered him to

embrace his agency in enacting a new personal identity:

> Now that I have created this new identity, I do see myself differently. I see myself as
>
> someone who is a bit more spontaneous, outgoing, uhm, or, or strives to be, anyway.

And (*pauses*) I guess I have had kind of a personal identity shift with that too…it gets

back to… how do I want people to see me? (Interview, January 13, 2012)

Through making his name choice, Stephen embraced agency in his personal identity enactment,

actively seeking specific evaluations from others. The narratives Stephen shared with me

illustrated the way he frames the story of his name change and the rationale behind his decisions.

Through his narratives, he could make sense of his decision and use it to empower his identity

(re)formations; to this day he can continue his empowered agency because of his choice.

Evaluation and judgments, or the socially influenced aspects of personal identity,

undoubtedly influence the meaning behind names which illustrates the external name-personal

identity influences.   Choi and Bird (2003), Noordewier, Horen, Ruys, and Stapel (2010), and

Suter (2001) found participants had specific reactions to different people based on the names and

name choices they'd made. The perceptions of others, these external identity influences, become

important in the way we negotiate our personal selves. Ratnu suggested the surname an

individual carries is important, especially when the surname carries social significance within

some group (Interview, August 20, 2011). In the post-choice negotiations my conversation

partners went through, they had to explain and justify to others the rationale behind their name

choices. The evaluations and judgments made by negotiation partners regarding the enacted

behaviors of my conversation partners illustrates the external ways personal identities were

impacted by the marital name change process. Even though my participants did not explicitly

narrate the ways their identities were implicated in the negotiations, the external evaluations of

others still were something the participants had to negotiate on a personal level.

From these statements, we can summarize that for some individuals identity is co-built by

both themselves and others based in part upon the name. We are recognized by others partially

because of the name used to label ourselves, be it the name given at birth or a name we take on. In taking a surname, we construct our own versions of ourselves, and can take agency in the self we enact by making express decisions about how others will view us. We also connect our mental representation of others' selves with their names, because as Brock described, your name is "your face to everybody, you know, on paper and everything" (Interview, December 11, 2011). As Mahoney Frandina (2009) suggested, "Names implicate a sense of self" (p. 168) to both the individual and to others who encounter that individual. Supporting and combining Mahoney Frandina's notion to Brock's description, Treiman, Cohen, Mulqueeny, Kessler, and Schechtman (2007) described our name as among the earliest written language exposure children have. Thus, names are among the earliest ways we get a sense of how we are unique from others, and from that we begin building our understanding of who we are.

My Name-Relational Identity Connection: Internal and External Couple Implications

Our relationships with others develop identities of their own. In a simplified sense, the identity of a pair of people, say Ben and me, becomes something with an identity of its own. I'd like to think we are seen as a funny, odd couple who are good at entertaining guests and care deeply about our friends. Both during interactions within a couple (internally) and in the conversations outside the couple (externally), identity implications occur at least partially as a result of (and are logically then connected to) the relational identity of a couple. Also, the role of being an individual in a relationship impacts the perceived identity of each couple member.

Internal name-relational identity connections occurred during the transition to actually becoming married. Several people noted the process of changing their names highlighted the relationship transition, making it more special. Alex, for example, explained how,

the name change added kind of a helpful layer to [getting married]. It just kind of

supplemented all the other kind of changes and built on them in a kind of neat way…and

the, it sort of corresponded with it, just kind of those day to day reminders and sort of

catching myself with it and remembering the new name…it's kind of like the ring on

your finger, it's an adjustment…and it's a symbolic reminder of the change. (Interview,

November 9, 2011)

Joshua experienced some of the same excitement Alex explained, but noted,

I think it is still kind of exciting to have the different last name and feel like it's

something that I share with my partner together and that we're kind of creating a family

with, with this name a little bit…but I don't feel it's something I think about every day.

And, uhm, I think I wondered before I did the name change that this would just change

everything to have a different last name somehow…and I've been surprised on how little

it has changed anything, the fact that even a man to change which is more

unconventional. (Interview, December 21, 2011)

The importance of a name being a daily reminder of the married relationship they committed to

was something several people noted. John talked about hoping his wife felt her name change

was a daily reminder of the love and commitment she had for him (Interview, December 28,

2011). These examples illuminated the internal relational commitment and excitement the name

change elicited. Excitement about a relationship comes through in the way spouses treat one

another, which helps to create a situation where each spouse will view the couple's identity

positively.

The day-to-day emphasis on being married is important to note. A name is a daily

reminder of the new relational identity influences imposed by others and taken on by the couple.

In emphasizing the role of married couple (as opposed to engaged couple or dating couple), both the individual and others around the individual make specific judgments about how individuals are supposed to behave and things that are important to them. Often, I feel influenced by some unknown, unembodied evaluations telling me how I am to behave as a wife. But it is not always simply a generalized other whose evaluations how about my role as married person should be played that influenced me.

Being married carries with it certain social perceptions that influence the external relational identity negotiations. When people know Ben and I are married, it seems like we are seen as more mature, responsible, and expected to have certain aspirations. Evaluations of our relational identity by people external to our relationship seemed to at times take over the evaluations they had of us as individuals. Our relational identity became an important part of our personal identities through the external negotiations' influences. Post-choice negotiations for my conversation partners also indicated specific evaluations of enacted behaviors of couple members. When Brock's wife changed her name back to her birth surname, his grandmother-in-law questioned her commitment to the relationship (Interview, December 11, 2011). When one couple member's commitment is questioned, the fortitude of the couple itself is questioned, which can impact the couple's identity. The post-choice negotiations some couples faced illustrated the impact of external evaluations on the name-relational identity connection.

My Name-Identity Connections: Socio-Cultural Gender Role Implications

Socially prescribed gender roles influence both personal and relational identity-name connections in married couples. Suter (2004) pointed out people view name-choice as something they actively choose, but "in light of its sociocultural context, name-changing seems less of an active choice" (p. 85). While some scholars trivialize the importance of marital name-choice,

Hamilton, Geist, and Powell (2011) noted the "growing awareness of the value of a seemingly trivial aspect of language—heterosexual married women's surnames—for the study of gender" (p. 169). Our name change either explicitly makes or is assumed to communicate specific statements about who we are personally and how our relationship functions. Those messages have important implications on the perceptions others have on us, our relationships and our personal identities. As Scheuble and Johnson (2005) pointed out "violators of social norms are most likely to experience consequences of their decision, including personal stress and cultural stereotypes" (p. 150).

Unconventional name choosers had to fight instances of patriarchal influence. All of the male unconventional name-choosers noted they anticipated at least some degree of resistance to their name choices, and nearly all encountered resistance at some stage. The actual name-change process has been noted by many researchers as being difficult for male-name changers. Mahoney Frandina (2009) noted as of 2009 only seven states (Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, and North Dakota) statutorily allowed men to change their names when they got married. The number of states allowing male-name change has increased since that time, possibly in conjunction with the allowance of same-sex marriages and the relaxation in some areas of marital gender roles. For those states who do allow legal name change, the process can be difficult, especially when men encounter desk-clerk law, like Joshua and Marissa's husband did. Kline, Stafford, and Miklosovic (1996) found some women reverted back to the Mrs. Hisname option a few years into their marriages because they were tired of fighting the patriarchal system or bureaucratic difficulties; or perhaps it was because they encountered the negative perceptions Sloan Rust (2000) found, such as being perceived as more difficult and less affectionate and wholesome.

If someone's choice was viewed as being socio-culturally aberrant, they were subject to social scrutiny. When Bob heard I was to interview a man who'd adopted his wife's name, he asked why I thought he'd made that choice. I asked him his opinion and he suggested,

> I wonder if it could be that, that of the couple, that she is obviously the dominant one.
> That could have something to do with it. I don't want to make him sound like a wussy or anything like that. That's what I have sometimes thought. But there again that might just be a prejudiced thought that I have…like she's the one that wears the pants, putting it bluntly. (Interview, October 26, 2011)

Emens (2007) found similar language being used to describe a man who wanted to adopt his wife's surname. Scheuble and Johnson (1993) found college-age women were significantly more likely than men to think men should adopt their women's surname if they want to and men were more likely than women to think men should never change their surnames.

We cannot ignore the implications name choice has on individuals' perceived gender roles, both the ways others perceive the gender roles they should play, and the ways the individuals themselves begin evaluating their own identity enactments. Society tends to regard the duty (and privilege?) of the woman in a marriage to take on the man's surname. Bob shared his rationale for this belief:

> And, uh, uh, I think it's for the sake of unity, I think it's good for the wife to take the husband's name. But as you mentioned there is an identity that is lost along the way. And when connections are made along with that person in the past. She, you know, she was a Johnson or she was a Hanson or she was a Meyer or whatever it was. In order to get their bearings on who she really is, you know, when she take, has the husband's name, you know, her identity pretty much is, is gone. (Interview, October 26, 2011)

When women do not fill those conventional roles, they are subject to scrutiny, which may impact their personal and relational identities. Societal expectations yield externally located influences on our identities and they impact the ways we see ourselves and others; meaning we are unfairly limited in the choices we can make without social stigmas. Emens (2007) argued the social costs accompanying choices other than Mr. and Mrs. Hisname necessitated collective action to reassign social meanings in less sexist ways. She said "a stark tension between romance and equality exists only if there is no chance that he will change his name as well" (p. 783).

Part of the difficulty in teasing out the impact of a name and a name choice on an individual's identity is that there are several other changes occurring at the same time as the name change. However our name is the label, or the written version of what is used to represent our identities. As such, it does have power. Arguing our names impact or change everything about us is an overstatement. However, to diminish the impact a name or name change has on an individual is to ignore the multiple influences on our identities.

Let Me Tell You My Story

The telling of our name-choice personal narratives has the power to influence those around us in positive ways. A friend of mine once told me "the wise person is the one who learns from other peoples' mistakes." While it does not have to be the mistakes we necessarily have to learn from, we can learn by asking to hear and then listening to the stories others tell about their names. Langellier (1999) argued "personal narrative can educate, empower, and emancipate" (p. 129). Marisa told me she shares her naming story on the first day of every class, which means her story has been told to over 800 students (Interview, August 5, 2011). She said reactions to her story vary, but she is determined to help others see the options they have when they get married.

Even if we do not purposely tell our stories to influence the decisions of others, Langellier (1989) argued "all personal narratives are ideological because they evolve from a structure of power relations and simultaneously produce, maintain, and reproduce that power structure" (p. 267). One of the findings I believe is most interesting, and at the same time very expected, about my study was that none of personal narratives shared in the interviews were outside what I would have expected, but then again this research is not about finding the unexpected. My research here was talking about our mundane experiences with our names to help us all understand our connections to our names and, if we've made a choice to change or keep our names, to help us understand some of the feelings we may have encountered in conjunction with our choice. The narratives we tell are, in Langellier's view, "the primary mode for expressing the traditional attitudes of a culture because the stories recount an actual behavior-emergent from and constitutive of appropriate behaviors" (p. 253). In the retelling of our stories, we are maintaining or reforming our cultural traditions for acceptable enacted identities.

<div align="center">✄</div>

"Ultimately, Julie," Jim said, "what do you want to have happen from your research? What do you see your research doing for the field of communication, and how are you bringing in your critical perspective to your research?" Jim and I met to talk about upcoming conference submissions over a beer at a bar, and our conversation turned to my thesis work. "Honestly," I said, "I want everyone, male and female, to be able to make choices about their names in whatever way they wish when they get married or have a commitment ceremony, or whatever they choose when they commit to spending their lives with another person. Like Ivy and Backlund (1994) said, it's not that changing your name is inherently giving in to sexist notions. It's that it's *expected* women will change and men won't that's the sexist part." Jim, a more power-structure challenging member of the department nodded and, with narrowed eyes asked,

"How do you think you might want to do that?" "I want everyone to be able to make informed choices about the ways they might be impacted by their name decision," I answered, "I wish I could have considered all the things that influenced my name and would be influenced by changing my name. I feel like I would have at least been prepared for the ways it made me feel about my identity, you know?"

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"I think I've got it, Justin," I said. Working together as study buddies, Justin and I sat up into the wee hours of the morning in his apartment, drinking wine and trying to motivate one another to keep pushing through until we'd completed our chapters. "Okay, lay it out for me" he said, his eyes red from leaving in his contacts for too long.

"Alright, based on my interview data, I've found there is a connection between a person's name and their personal and relational identities. The strength of those connections relies on both internal, referring to either within the person or within the relationship, and external, referring to evaluations outside the individual or relationship, influences. Thus, identity is co-built by both individuals and other people based in part upon the individual's name. We are recognized by others partially because of the name others use to label us, be it the name given at birth or the name we assume at some point in our lives. In assuming a new name socially, we construct our own versions of ourselves, taking agency in the self we enact. We also connect our mental representation of others' selves with their names," I concluded. The dreaded follow-up, "does that make sense?"

"Yeah, no, I think it does," Justin said, "but what does that do for us? What are you saying we need to do?" "Good question, Mr. Pragmatist," I joked. "What I'm saying," I continued, "is that we need to recognize that refuting the name-identity connection is damaging to feminist goals for equality for the sexes both in personal and relational roles. And we need to

all consider our evaluations of the unconventional name choosers we encounter; instead of

jumping to negative evaluations which might deter others from making unconventional choices.

I also think it is important to take agency over the names we choose or do not choose to take on

during our relational formalization processes rather than simply making a choice because it's

what everyone else is doing. We need to consider what will be the right choice for our own

personal and relational identities so we are not misrepresenting our own selves and the ways we

wish to be perceived by others and ourselves. When we do that, we are ultimately fighting for

more gender equality." "Welp, that sounds pretty good to me," he said.

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"Tell us about your study's limitations," Sachi prompted. Dick, Sachi, Kristi and I

gathered around the rectangular table in the small meeting room for my thesis defense. Slightly

larger than an average professor's office we were a bit crowded, but making the best of a small

room. Coffee or tea sat in front of each of us and an assortment of baked breakfast goods I'd

brought in to entice my committee to endorse my thesis work was spread on plates across the

table. I looked to my notes and responded, "The main limitations were limitations in recruiting

participants and things I may have missed when asking for answers. I used the Snowball

Recruitment method to gather research participants, and I noted several respondents were from

the same social group, which limited the potential stories I heard about friend group negotiations.

My analysis of the male name-changers may have been colored differently if I'd sought more

varied experiences. On that same vein, I could have sought more participants of diverse

backgrounds and education levels. Only three females noted their ethnicity in my study and

while their stories were certainly valuable, I feel I could have understood more of the conflicting

power structures and gender roles facing name-choosers."

"Based on the vast amount of data you covered in your results section, I'm wondering what you think you missed" Dick said, flipping through my fourth chapter. "Well, part of the problem I encountered," I explained, "was many of my interviewees described having difficulty remembering details from five, 10, sometimes over 20 years ago. Missing those details in their pre-choice negotiations, especially for those from more than a decade before, is understandable but is also somewhat limiting to my study. Some people even described corroborating with their spouses before the interview to kind of get their stories straight, which may have impacted or changed what people saw as the influences in their lives. Incidentally, future research I suggest would be to interview each member of a couple separately, then together about their change to see how it might influence the way they saw their choices and negotiations."

Dick asked me if I believed the lack of specific demographic information was a limitation, and I said "yes, I do think it limited some of the comparative analysis I was able to do, but generally I believe throughout the course of our interviews if things like religion or other demographic concepts were important, the interviewee brought them forward themselves. Interestingly the male participants often defaulted to telling me their wives' stories. Langellier (1989) explained this phenomenon when she argued tellers decide what is story-worthy, or what is interesting enough in appropriate contexts to be shared. I'm afraid I could have done a better job fleshing out the mundane stories of male name-keepers to better understand their realities." My committee members nodded and continued asking me questions.

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"I'm so proud of you," Ben said, "I knew you could do it." We were walking down the hill from campus to go home to our apartment. He pulled away, put on his best game-show host voice, and began interviewing me as we walked: "Julie, you've just successfully finished and defended your thesis. What are you going to do now?!"

With the "microphone" in my face and the pressure on, I said, "well, I'm going to take a couple of days off, but then I'm going to keep working. There's so much left to do.   I mean, research-wise, communication studies researchers need to keep exploring the male-naming perspectives, both traditional and nontraditional because right now they're a voiceless group. I believe it's important to explore why people think it's such a bad thing for a name to 'die out' when kids don't have children. I also think it might be cool to look at why we feel we should only have one name, and if there would be situations where we could become empowered by our names that we could accept multiple name changes, like we did and Brock's wife did, or even like Saint Orlan did. I'd like to specifically research the long-term impacts of name-change on identities. Since many disciplines are studying names, name change, and the impacts these have, my work connecting identity to name is kinda a big cross-disciplinary deal. Well, and even just the fact that my research seemed to primarily support previous research in the field makes me feel pretty good about the quantitative studies that've been done. And even the parts that didn't match previous research all can be helpful in thinking about the ways our name may impact how we see ourselves. But we need to explore the cultural traditions of cultures *outside* the U.S. to see the options and negotiations they have."

"Your family and friends have been buzzing with excitement about the news. Do you have any messages for them?" Ben continued with game-show host enthusiasm. "Uh, I'm going to make sure my students and friends know about my research and my negotiations because, because they may not have considered their options or the impact of their options – to change or not to change? That is the question. People need to know there are alternatives to Mr. and Mrs. Hisname, but that they can choose that if it's right for them. Explicitly in those discussions I think we all need to discuss the acceptability of male name change. Social acceptance starts

within ourselves, and our acceptance can influence others' acceptance which can influence the freedoms men have to choose their own names."

He put away the "microphone" and kissed me. "Well, that was a little less than professional, Mr. Interviewer. What will my husband say?" I teased. Ben laughed and resumed walking next to me. "Should I plan to surreptitiously leave a copy of your thesis at our future children's' homes before they get married?" Ben teased. "I'd be alright with that, but I bet they'll roll their eyes" I replied. He laughed, stretched out his hand, and grabbed my pinky with his pinky. "I love you Benjamin Michael Germain Walker," I said. "I love you too Julie Louceil Germain Walker," he replied. I looked down at our hands and smiled, enjoying our walk home.

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Appendix A

Participant Descriptions

I realized that through the interview process I'd gotten to know my conversation partners to differing extents. Some let me in to some private and intimate details of their lives (or at least as I perceived them to be). Others kept our interview conversation at a fairly superficial and safe level. In the end I knew the stories of how these 11 people came to be known by their present names. I think it is useful to understand a bit about each conversation partner with whom I spoke. You will be able to begin painting your own pictures of how their lives and stories blend together, and yet you will be able to see how they remain completely individual in their own rights. Giving a back story on each conversation participant will help us understand the climate of name choice and negotiation in the United States today.

Marisa, (Interview, August 5, 2011)

Marisa and I got to know one another through a phone interview because she lives in New Mexico in the area near where she grew up. She is 33 years old, teaches at a university, and considers herself Nuevo Mexicana, which is a subset of this Hispana ethnicity. She and her husband first met when they were in the same language arts class in middle school; they began dating while they were in college and remained together as they both pursued Master's degrees. They wrote letters to one another all throughout college. They have been married for almost 10 years and do not have any children. Her husband is, in her words, "a very educated man and he's a very articulate man and he's a very well respected man." When Marisa got married, she kept her birth surname, but added her husband's name as a second surname, separated by a space. Her husband also changed his surname meaning they share a surname (Mr. and Mrs. Hers His).

Marisa shared many stories with me and, as she herself pointed out to me is "a natural

storyteller."

Katherine, (Interview, August 20, 2011)

Katherine and I became acquainted during a face-to-face interview at her home near St.

Paul, Minnesota. As we sat on her patio, she drinking a beer, me drinking a glass of water (I had

another interview to drive to that day after hers), she shared with me the story of her relationship

and name. She and her husband had been married for 16 years as of the week of our interview,

and they do not have any children. Katherine works for the State of Minnesota, and she grew up

not far from where she currently resides. She is an only child and a member of a small family.

When Katherine got married, both she and her husband kept their own names (Mr. His and Mrs.

Hers). Katherine was very concise with all of her answers, providing detailed responses, but not

mincing words or opinions.

Ratnu, (Interview, August 20, 2011)

Ratnu and I met at a Minnesota-based coffee shop chain location near her home near

Minneapolis, Minnesota. Our conversation took place outside at a patio set while I enjoyed a

blended ice coffee drink and she drank water. Across the parking lot from us were an oil change

shop and a very loud car wash. Ratnu shared with me the story of how she and her husband

came together through an arranged marriage 11 years ago set up by their parents according to the

caste traditions in Kerala, India. Ratnu and her husband relocated to Oman after their marriage

in India, and then moved to the United States. Ratnu and her husband followed the traditional

caste-appropriate naming practice in Kerala of not changing their names at the time of marriage

(Mr. His, Mrs. Hers). When they moved to the United States, she considered changing her name,

as some of her friends had, to follow United States culture. She decided not to because of the

paperwork it involved. Ratnu teaches finance at a university. At the time of our interview, Ratnu had two children and was expecting her third (she did not share the ages of her children). Throughout the interview, Ratnu was very patient with me as she explained the norms of Indian naming culture and was very careful to remind me that

> this is not reflective of the entire India. It's probably a little part where I come from or something like that. So, I mean, it's not, uh, very general…so when you do your study, I just want you to know that because it wouldn't be, probably if you speak to [someone else] she would have a totally different thing to say because she comes from a totally different background.

Isabelle, (Interview, August 22, 2011)

Isabelle and I got to know one another in the dining room of her beautiful home in semi-rural Minnesota. We talked while sitting at her table bathed in mid-morning sun over fresh coffee. Isabelle shared she was born in Portugal, but spent much of her childhood and early adulthood living in Germany. After attending school to become a pediatric nurse in Germany, she got a job working there. She met her husband, a United States soldier at a swimming pool. Their friendship eventually became a romantic relationship and, as Isabelle described, "Knowing what I was getting into, that I would have to leave my country, my friends, my family, everyone if I would go with this guy, it was quite difficult." Her husband quasi-proposed, as she described it, during one of his visits, and then officially proposed over the phone. Isabelle and her husband had two weddings 19 years ago: one with the justice of the peace in Texas on her husband's base and one in a Catholic church in Minnesota that her mother-in-law planned in its entirety because Isabelle was still living in Germany. After building herself back up in her credentials and independence (both of which she had to forfeit for United States citizenship), she began her

nursing career here. Isabelle and her husband have two children, ages 14 and 8. Isabelle

dropped her traditional Portuguese surnames (she was originally Isabelle(1) Middle(2)

Mom'surname(3) Dad's(4) Surnames(5)) to instead adopt her husband's birth surname (Mr. and

Mrs. His). When Isabelle spoke, it was always in a deliberate and careful manner, but her words

and manner conveyed a sense of unabashed warmth toward humanity.

Elizabeth, (Interview, September 15, 2011)

Elizabeth and I conversed in her office on a semi-rural Minnesota State School campus in

the morning before either of us had to be in classes.   Sitting amid stacks of books, papers to

grade, and lecture notes, Elizabeth and I talked while she occasionally checked to make sure the

email alerts she received were to ensure none of the messages were time sensitive, and I

carefully attempted to manage not spilling my coffee while balancing my field notes on my knee.

Her story was especially unique because she shared both what it was like to keep her name and

what it was like to change her name. Just out of college, Elizabeth married a man who was in the

military. As she described it, there were

> people in the 60s who got married out of college or who married their high school sweet
>
> hearts and it worked out fine, but there were a lot of people, married people, straight out
>
> of college, and it worked out to a certain point, but there were enough changes in people
>
> that things don't work out… And you don't always when you're, uh, 20 make the best
>
> choices of who to spend a life with.

In her first marriage, Elizabeth changed her surname and her husband kept his birth surname

(Mr. and Mrs. His Name).

After getting divorced, changing her name back, went back to Colorado to attend school,

and reconnected with a college friend who was to eventually become her husband. Elizabeth

described her second husband as "fairly influential in town as far as doing good works and, uhm, you know, we're financially solid and…and he helped raise kids as much as I did, so." Her situation supports Scheuble and Johnson's (1993) finding that women who anticipated keeping their name when they got married also expected more equal distribution of child rearing responsibilities. Elizabeth worked through her PhD for about 10 years while she worked full time to avoid having debts coming out of school. After graduation, she spent a year in Vienna, came back, and she and her husband got married (which was 15 years after they went to college together). In her second marriage, she decided to keep her name and her husband kept his surname (Mr. His and Mrs. Hers). After reaching financial stability, Elizabeth and her husband had a set of twin boys; to each boy, Elizabeth and her husband gave their birth surname (Boy His, Boy Hers) in an effort to allow them to have individual identities. Elizabeth was thoughtful in all her answers and pragmatic in her analysis of marriage and name choice.

Bob, (Interview, October 26, 2011)

Bob and I conversed in the living room of his suburban home in semi-rural Minnesota. He grew up in a small town in Minnesota, and he attended college for seminary. He described the story of meeting and falling in love with his wife in short like this:

[My wife] and I went at it strong [both laughed] and so we got engaged probably about 2, 2 months later [after we met]…yeah, it seemed like you know, we met and hit it off and decided that, you know, this was, uh, the one we wanted to spend forever with, you know, so. Yeah. Yeah. So, so that was in…uh, 63 that we met, uh, there was, uh, the school had a rule you, you couldn't get married until after your first year at seminary. So that's why we waited…we got married in 66 then, summer of 66.

Bob worked as a Lutheran pastor for a few years, and then he worked a series of other jobs including teacher, salesperson, and handyman. He is currently spending his retirement driving school busses and volunteering. Throughout their marriage, Bob and his wife adopted two children and had one child of their own. When Bob got married, he did not change his name, but his wife did change her name to adopt his surname (Mr. and Mrs. His). The conversation Bob and I shared was more formal in nature and I could tell that throughout our conversation he was being careful to wisely choose the words he said.

Alex, (Interview, November 9, 2011)

Alex and I became acquainted via telephone as his busy schedule was not conducive for an in-person conversation. He grew up in Ohio and moved to Minnesota for college. The oldest of three boys, he works for a large city in Minnesota. He studied in Germany for one year after college and then returned for his master's degree in public policy. Alex and his wife met just after he returned from Germany. The story, in his words, was

> it was kind of funny because I, well, I sort of had a plan worked out. I was starting grad school in the fall and I was hoping to, uh, meet a number of people and start dating someone by Christmas. We started dating about a week into school. We were introduced by a mutual friend…and then from then on basically we were together. Uh, we talked about, I don't know, marriage pretty quickly actually and [my wife] is a very blunt and non-filtered person so she, she mentioned in the first week of our relationship that if I asked her to marry her, she would say yes. So she didn't exactly propose, but she just kind of put that out there…I proposed at Christmas with her family. And then we got married in August of the next summer.

While Alex described how he and his wife are both very stubborn about the small things in their relationship, he said they are fairly easygoing about the larger decisions they have to make as a couple. When they got married, Alex took his wife's name (Mr. and Mrs. Her). Over the phone, Alex's voice rang pleasantly through and he and I laughed several times throughout his interview. Alex and his wife have two children (ages three and seven).

Brock, (Interview, December 11, 2011)

Brock and I talked with one another in the living room of his home in a suburb of a large Minnesota city. Our conversation was held next to a large Christmas tree decorated with a combination of homemade and store bought ornaments. During our conversation I drank water and accepted homemade cookies while Brock just drank water. Brock grew up in South Dakota and moved around both inside and outside the United States as a child and young adult. He met his wife while attending a mid-sized state college in Minnesota. During their two and a half years of dating, they mutually decided to get married and set the date for their June 1996 wedding before Brock formally proposed. Brock's story is unique in that when he and his wife got married, she initially took his surname and he kept his name the same; in conjunction with her feminist beliefs, Brock's wife preferred to be called Ms. as opposed to Mrs. (Mr. and Ms. His). Two years into their married relationship, Brock's wife decided she wanted to change her name back to her birth surname, and together they went through the process of changing her surname back and became Mr. His and Ms. Hers. They have three adopted children. My conversation with Brock was almost over when his wife and three children arrived home from an afternoon activity. At that point, I continued the interview with both Brock and his wife, but for the purposes of this study, I have only included the section where Brock and I spoke alone to keep a sense of consistency in my interviewing techniques throughout the study. As Langellier

(1989) pointed out, the addition of another conversation partner during storytelling experiences changes the audience composition and redirects the ways stories are shared in situ.

Joshua, (Interview, December 21, 2011)

Joshua and I spoke in a large Minnesota city public library on a sleet-covered weekday afternoon, which meant it was a cold day for Joshua, an avid commuter-biker. We initially sat in one quiet area but then were moved to a more private room by a friend of Joshua's who worked for the library. Joshua grew up in Illinois near the suburbs of Chicago and came to Minnesota for college. After college, he taught in Thailand for two years, and then he attended graduate school at a large state university in Minnesota. During graduate school, Joshua and his wife reconnected their college friendship; they became engaged in January of 2005 and were married in October of 2005. They have a two year old child. When Joshua and his wife got married, they decided to both change their surnames. To clarify their choices, let's call their birth surnames Joshua (James) Brunner and Felicity (Katie) Jorgenson (names included in parentheses are considered middle names). Felicity's mother's maiden name was Gundykunst and Joshua's mom's maiden name was Stutsgarden. Joshua's name changed from Joshua (James) Brunner to Joshua (Stustgarden) Gundykunst (Mr. (His) New)). Felicity's name changed from Felicity (Katie) Jorgenson to Felicity (Jorgenson Brunner) Gundykunst (Mrs. (Hers His) New). Joshua and I shared a quite pleasant, friendly, and frank conversation about the name choices he and his wife made.

John, (Interview, December 28, 2011)

John and I spoke over the phone and from the very beginning his profession of media broadcaster was apparent in the vivid language he used and his vocal enthusiasm. Rather than describing himself by the jobs he's had as some conversation partners did, he instead described

his personality. John and his wife met in a college theatre class and began spending time with

the same group of people. They began dating in November of 2006, he proposed in January of

2008, and they got married in 2010. John told the story of how he first met his wife's parents on

Halloween while dressed in drag, and as he described "I met her dad and the rest of the family

wearing a tutu and, you know, their daughter's bra and, all this other stuff. So. That was, that

was interesting." They are currently living in semi-rural town Minnesota where he got a

broadcasting job and she is working as a barista. John and his wife do not have any kids.

Stephen, (Interview, January 13, 2012)

My last interview took place with a man named Stephen in a bagel chain shop in the

suburbs of a large Minnesota city. During the interview Stephen and I drank coffee from

Styrofoam cups while Stephen ate a bagel with lox and all the fixings. Near us several other

loud conversations took place throughout our conversation. Stephen grew up in Tennessee but

moved to Minnesota in February of 2002 after being married for six years to his first wife. In his

first marriage, Stephen kept his birth surname (he did not mention the decision his first wife

made with her name). After living in Minnesota in a semi-rural town, he moved to a large

Minnesota city where he met his wife in a tea shop. When Stephen and his second wife got

married, he made his birth surname his middle name and his wife dropped her birth middle name

and adopted his birth surname (Mr. (His) Hers and Mrs. (His) Hers). They have two children,

ages six and 13. Stephen and Joshua are friends and were both referred to me by their mutual

friend, Alex. Stephen is a practicing Buddhist and told me that "in the warmer months" he is "a

fairly ardent kilt-wearer." During his childhood Stephen had an accident where he damaged one

of his eyes, and his glass eye was at one point a part of our discussion regarding his name. He

openly shared and was willing to explore his name choice decision and the resulting impacts he

saw it having on his and his family's lives.

Appendix B
Interview Questions Version One

- Tell me a little bit about yourself
  - Religion
  - Economic status
  - Ethnicity
  - Profession
  - Age
- Tell me how your relationship with your partner developed.
  - How long did you date?
  - Who proposed and how?
  - How long between the proposed formalization and the formalization?
- Tell me about when you formalized your relationship.
- How long have you been formally together?
- Did you live together before you got married?
- When you formalized your relationship, what did you decide in regards to the names you and your partner chose?
- How satisfied are you with your choice?
- Talk me through the paperwork process to get married and the process of the name change.
- What parts of changing your name did you like and what parts did you not like?
- How did you and your partner negotiate naming choices?
  - What did the conversation sound like?
- Did you think about how others would react to your decision (parents, friends, etc)?
  - Would you say that impacted your decision?
  - What was your mother's naming choice?
- Did you think about how societal expectations when making your decision (the traditional expectations of naming practices)?
  - What did you think of that?
- How did friends and family and colleagues react when they learned of your naming decision?
  - Were there any extreme responses? How did you respond?
- Imagine that you decided not to change your name or that you hyphenated or that he took your name-how would life be different do you think?
- After formalizing your relationship, did you feel like people saw your relationship differently?
  - How did you know? How did that show itself?
- After formalizing your relationship, did the essence of your relationship change?
  - If yes, how so?
- Do you think your partner saw your relationship as different?
  - How did you know?
- After formalizing your relationship, do you think your partner saw your identity as different?
  - How did that affect your relationship?
- After formalizing your relationship, did you feel like people saw you differently? How did you know?
- Do you think people's reactions were a result of your relationship change?

- o What makes you think so? How do people behave differently?
- After formalizing your relationship, did the essence of how you see your self change
  - o If yes, how so? What feelings, emotions, or behaviors changed?
- Did others' opinions make you question your identity (or your version of who you were)?
- Does your naming choice still affect you and the way you view your identity?
- Do you have anything else you'd like to share with me?
- Do you have any reactions to the things we've talked about today or any reactions to the questions you've been asked?
- What question do you wish I would have asked or should I have asked?
- Do you know of anyone who might fit the requirements of this study who you think would be willing to let me interview them? Requirements for the study include:
- Formalized Relationship Participant
- Heterosexual

Appendix C

Internal Review Board Proposal

I.   General Information
   a.   <u>Principal Investigator</u>
        Kristen Treinen, Ph.D.
        Associate Professor
        Department of Communication Studies
        207-B Armstrong Hall
        507-389-5535
        kristen.treinen@mnsu.edu

   b.   <u>Secondary Investigator</u>
        ***please contact this person regarding any proposal questions
        Julie Walker, Graduate Student
        612 James Avenue #205
        Mankato, MN 56001
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   c.   <u>Project Title</u>
        Investigating Naming Practices Relationship to Identity Implications through Interviews

   d.   <u>Proposed study dates</u>
        IRB Approval – January, 2012

   e.   <u>Location of the project</u>
        The site for study will be dependent upon the comfort of the individual being
        interviewed. It may include a public (restaurant, coffee shop, or public library), private
        (home), or Internet (Skype or similar program) setting per the wishes of the interviewee.

   f.   <u>Source of funding</u>
        Not applicable to project.

II. <u>General Purpose of Research Project</u>
        The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between naming practices chosen
        during relationship formalizations in heterosexual couples and the resulting identity
        implications. Naming practices will be considered either traditional (female changes
        surname to male's surname, male does not change surname) and nontraditional (any other
        naming practice choice). Identity implications will be explored using Hecht's
        Communication Theory of Identity framework within the contexts of the relational and
        communal frames, as well as utilizing his conceptualizations of identity gaps and the
        resulting cognitive dissonance. The study will attempt to answer the following research
        questions:
        RQ1: How do relational and communal forces impact naming practice choices?

RQ2: What relationship exists between naming practice choices and relational identity negotiations?

RQ3: What relationships exist between naming practice choices and personal identity negotiations?

III. <u>Project Description</u>

In order to conduct this study, the secondary investigator will recruit a total of 28 interview participants under the following breakdown: 14 traditional naming practice choosers, 14 nontraditional naming practice choosers. Within each category, there will be equal numbers of men and women interviewed (7 men and 7 women). This will be accomplished using a snowball sample as begun through casual conversations during the months leading up to the interviews at Speech competition adjudicator lounges, through colleagues, and other personal connections. The variety of locations from which these individual 'snowballs' have been started offer the potential for more broad data gathering.

Obtaining the Data (Interviews)

An individual interview will be conducted with willing participants regarding naming practice choices, the rationale leading to the choices, and the resulting identity implications. The secondary researcher upon IRB approval will begin recruiting study participants who fit the description listed below (see "Description of Subjects" section) using the Snowball Sampling method. The Snowball method recruits study participants by having initial participants refer the researcher to other potential participants who fit the research study description's needs. Initial participants will be found through casual conversations and professional connections forged at various professional and personal venues. Once a potential participant has been suggested, the secondary researcher will email, call, or face-to-face recruit the study participant (see "Oral Recruitment Script" and "Email Recruitment Script" documents). No referred potential participant will be forced to complete the interview or engage in the study. There will be no repercussions from the researcher or the participant that referred the potential participant for nonparticipation.

If the referred individual agrees to participate, a time and location for the interview will be established. The location of the interview will depend upon the preferences of the interviewee, but may include a public (restaurant, coffee shop, or public library), private (home), or Internet (Skype or similar program) setting. Interviews will begin by giving and explaining the Informed Consent form (see "Informed Consent Form" document) which the individual will sign prior to any interview questions being asked or answered. The recording device will begin recording and at this point the participant will be asked if recording the interview is acceptable; the participant's answer will be recorded as a part of the interview recording. The participant will at this point be assured again that their confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms assigned during the interview transcription process.

If the individual chooses to participate and signs the Informed Consent Form, the secondary researcher will at that point begin the formal interview process. If the Consent Form is not signed or the individual chooses to not participate, the secondary researcher will thank the interviewee for her or his time and the individual will be excused with no repercussions. The interviewee will be asked several open-ended questions (see "Interview Questions" document). The interviewee will not be forced to answer any question she or he chooses not to answer. Additional follow-up and probing questions may be asked to ascertain further detail regarding the participant's experiences and opinions. It is anticipated that the interview will take between one and two hours, depending upon how loquacious the interviewee is. While many pieces of personal information will be gathered throughout the interview process, the interviewee will be given anonymity during the interview transcription process so the only person who will know the actual identity of the study participants will be the secondary researcher. The interview will end with the secondary researcher thanking the participant and soliciting references for additional interview participants.

There are less than minimal risks to the individuals who participate in this study. The subjects will be informed of the voluntary nature of this study. They will be informed that they may withdraw from the study at any point without retribution. The subjects may benefit from this study in that they will have the opportunity to reflect on their rationale for naming practices and potentially how it impacted their transition between a nonformalized relationship to a formalized relationship.

Results from this study will be submitted for presentation at professional conferences and will serve as a pilot study for potential future research regarding naming practices relationships to identity implications.

IV.   Description of Subjects
    a. Expected ages of subjects: 18 to 65 years old
    b. Number of subjects: approximately 28 participants (7 men choosing traditional naming practice, 7 women choosing traditional naming practice, 7 men choosing nontraditional naming practice, 7 women choosing nontraditional naming practice)
    c. Characteristics of subjects: The subjects will be current members of heterosexual couples. These couples will have been formally engaged in a long-term relationship for at least one year and this relationship will be their first long-term formalized relationship.

V.   Protection of Subjects Rights
Subjects will be informed of the intent of the study, potential risks to them, and their rights regarding participation through a written notification and consent form prior to completing the interview. Any subject not interested in participating may choose to not participate without any retribution. All consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet owned by the primary researcher. After a period of three years, all forms and files related to the study will be shredded to protect confidentiality.

VI.   <u>Signatures</u>

In making this application, I certify that I have read and I understand the Policies and Procedures for Projects that Involve Human Subjects, and that I intend to comply with the letter and spirit of the University Policy. Significant changes in the protocol will be submitted to the IRB for written approval prior to these changes being put into practice. Informed consent/assent records of the participants will be kept for at least three years after the completion of the research.

_____   _____
Date   Principle Investigator

                                                               _____
                                                               Secondary Investigator

Appendix D

Naming Practices Relationship to Identity Implications

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Kristen Treinen and graduate student Julie Walker from the Communication Studies Department at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The purpose of the study is to understand the rationale behind naming practice choices and explore potential identity implications. Risks associated with participation in this study are considered less than minimal. The results of this study will be included in Julie Walker's Masters thesis. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- This interview is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop the interview at any time for any reason. We expect that the interview will take about one hour.
- You will not be compensated for this interview. There are no direct benefits from participating in this study.
- Unless you give us permission to quote you in any publications that may result from this research, the information you tell us will be confidential. Pseudonyms will be given during the interview transcription process. This project will be completed by January 2012. All recordings will be stored on a password protected computer until three years after that date. The recordings will then be deleted.
- We would like to digitally record this interview so that we can use it for reference while proceeding with this study. We will not record this interview without your permission. If you do grant permission for this conversation to be recorded on cassette, you have the right to revoke recording permission and/or end the interview at any time.
- Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato.

 (*Please check all that apply*)

[] I give permission for this interview to be digitally recorded.

[] I give permission for the following information to be included in publications resulting from this study, including direct quotations from this interview

[] I understand the procedures described above.

[] My questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

[] I agree to participate in this study.

[] I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject   _____

Signature of Subject _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____Date _____

This project has been reviewed and approved by the MSU Institutional Review Board Committee. If at any time you have any questions about this study or your participation, please contact Dr. Kristen Treinen at kristen.treinen@mnsu.edu or 507-389-5535. If you have questions about the treatment of human subjects, contact the Institutional Review Board Administrator at 507-389-2321.

Appendix E

IRB Approval

MINNESOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY
MANKATO

Kristen Treinen, Ph.D.
Department of Communication Studies
AH 210 S
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Mankato MN 56001

Julie Walker
612 James Avenue
#205
Mankato MN 56001

July 5, 2011

Dear Kristen and Julie:

Re: IRB Proposal, Log **#3851** entitled *Investigating Naming Practices Relationship to Identity Implications through Interviews*

Your IRB Proposal has been approved as of July 6, 2011. On behalf of the Institutional Review Board I wish you success with your study. Remember that you must seek approval for any changes in your study, its design, funding source, consent process, or any part of the study that may affect participants in the study. Should any of the participants in your study suffer a research-related injury or other harmful outcome, you are required to report them to the IRB as soon as possible.

The approval of your study is for one calendar year from the approval date. When you complete your data collection, or should you discontinue your study, you must notify the IRB. Please include your log number with any correspondence with the IRB.

This approval is considered final when the full IRB approves the monthly decisions and active log. The IRB reserves the right to review each study as part of its continuing review process. Continuing reviews are usually scheduled. However, under some conditions the IRB may choose not to announce a continuing review.

Sincerely,

Patricia Hargrove

Patricia Hargrove, Ph.D.
IRB Coordinator

Cc: File

Appendix F

Interview Questions Version 11

- Tell me a little bit about yourself
- Tell me how your relationship with your partner developed.
    - How long did you date? Who proposed and how?
    - How long between the proposal and the formalization?
- Tell me about when you formalized your relationship.
    - How long ago was that?
- Did you live together before you got married?
- What name were you given when you were born and what is your name now? Did you ever have any other names? Who were you named after?
- How did you and your partner negotiate naming choices?
    - What did the conversation sound like?
- Talk me through the paperwork process to get married in the state you got married in and the process of the name change.
    - What parts of changing your name did you like and what parts did you not like?
- What does being married in today's culture mean to you?
- Did you think about how others would react to your decision (parents, friends, etc)? How did your expectations about their reactions compare to the actual reactions?
- How did friends and family and colleagues react when they learned of your naming decision?
    - Were there any extreme responses? How did you respond?
- Do you feel like different names correspond to different portions of your life?
- Imagine that you decided not to change your name or that you hyphenated or that he took your name-how would life be different do you think?
- Does your naming choice still affect you and the way you view your identity?
- Do you feel that your identity and your name are at all connected? In what ways?
- Do you have anything else you'd like to share with me?
- Do you have any reactions to the things we've talked about today or any reactions to the questions you've been asked?
- What question do you wish I would have asked or should I have asked?
- Do you have a preference for a pseudonym for yourself and your partner?