

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

*A Name of One's Own: Identity, Choice and Performance in  
Marital Relationships*

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School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of  
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# Declaration

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dedicated to the memory of  
my mother's mother and my father's father

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## Abstract

With its origins in sociological debates about individualisation, personalisation and the transformation of intimacy, this research explores the long-neglected subject of the surnames of married women. Drawing on in-depth biographical interviews with 30 married or once-married women, respondents are found to engage in complex negotiations with cultural assumptions about wifhood, motherhood and the family when called to change surnames upon marriage. Through their interviews, women account for their surname ‘choice’ via a range of, often-contradictory, discourses – thereby identifying marital naming as an issue of tension and struggle for wives, as well as for women considering marriage. Their ‘talk’ frequently calls upon debates of social stability and change, as well as ideas of autonomy and connectedness. Overall, their narratives speak of social control and a dominant institutional structure in life – and women either accepted the norms of naming or dealt with the consequences. This finding was underscored by the responses of 453 people to a street survey.

For interviewees, the opposing role of surnames in marking out both individual identity and social connections led to conflicts. Relational identities were often placed in opposition to autonomy. Yet, women more frequently positioned themselves as interdependent negotiators rather than autonomous agents. For interviewees, surname ‘choices’ were imbued with social meanings and were not rated equally – their choice of surname either ‘displayed’ that they were ‘doing gender well’ or ‘doing gender poorly’. However, discussions of gender were largely absent or neutralised in the interviewees’ accounts, while women who kept their maiden names spoke about feeling the need to silence their naming decision. The research concludes that marital naming forms part of women’s exhaustive efforts at ‘relationship work’. Married women were accountable for their surnames as assumptions of marital naming were found to pervade notions about wifhood. Whatever surname an interviewee decided upon, she was responsible for conducting a gendered and classed performance, and her surname ‘choices’ involved both personal sacrifices and gains.

# Contents

Preface .....	8
Chapter 1 .....	16
Framing Naming.....	16
Old Issue, New Landscape.....	16
Research Focus.....	27
Naming the Issues.....	29
Chapter Summary .....	41
Chapter 2.....	43
Mapping the Literature: Trends, Attitudes and Motivations.....	43
Synopsis of Literature .....	43
Conceptual Literature.....	48
Theme 1: Trends in Naming.....	51
Theme 2: Attitudes Toward Naming .....	54
Theme 3: Making Decisions About Naming.....	62
Chapter Summary .....	73
Chapter 3.....	74
Research Design: A Reflexive Account .....	74
Naming My Approach .....	75
Analytical Framework.....	79
About the Street Survey .....	83
About the Interviews.....	93
Chapter Summary .....	103
Chapter 4.....	105
Maiden Names: Identities and Affinities .....	105
Maiden Names as Father-Owned.....	106
Maiden Names Family-Shared .....	111
Maiden Names as Non-Successive .....	115
Maiden Names as Place-Specific.....	118
Maiden Names as Personal Possessions .....	123
Maiden Names as Pre-Assigned Labels.....	127
Chapter Summary .....	130
Chapter 5.....	132
Marital Naming: Stability and Change .....	132
Surname Change as a Pre-supposed Notion.....	133
Surname Change as a Symbol of Marriage.....	142
Surname Change as a Sign of Commitment.....	149
Surname Change as a Personal Choice.....	154
Chapter Summary .....	159
Chapter 6.....	162
Marital Naming: Autonomy and Connectedness .....	162
Surname Change as Identity Theft .....	163
Surname Change as a Professional Barrier .....	169
Surname Change as Family (Dis-)Affiliation .....	176
Surname Change as Child-Centred.....	183
Chapter Summary .....	194
Chapter 7.....	197
Meanings of Marriage.....	197
Survey Findings.....	198
Marriage as a Pre-Supposed Notion .....	199
Marriage as a Sign of Commitment.....	202

Marriage as a Personal Choice .....	206
Marriage as Family (Dis-)Affiliation.....	210
Marriage as Child-Centred .....	213
Marriage as a Protective Force .....	216
Chapter Summary .....	219
Chapter 8.....	222
Re-Framing Naming .....	222
Re-Thinking the Paradox .....	223
Re-Framing the Issues.....	226
Final Conclusion.....	238
References .....	249
Appendix 1 .....	262
Marital Naming: Empirical Research .....	262
Appendix 2.....	263
Questionnaire Survey.....	263
Appendix 3 .....	267
Survey Demographics.....	267
Appendix 4.....	271
Survey Results.....	271
Appendix 5.....	290
Consent Form .....	290
Appendix 6.....	291
Interview Questions.....	291
Appendix 7.....	294
Interviewee Portraits.....	294
Appendix 8.....	324
Interviewees' Surnames.....	324

# Preface

## A Name of One's Own?

Here lies Catherine Turner  
late Anderson formerly  
Cochrane née Coxon and  
occasionally Magill

Catherine was my great-great-grandmother. The above epitaph might have appeared on her gravestone had she been wealthy enough to afford one. Her surnames<sup>1</sup> appear like a trail of breadcrumbs connecting her to the men whom she married, to her father and also her mother. Davidoff et al (1999) in their account of family life make reference to the psychic and social power of surnames. This is evident in the hordes of people scouring local archives to find past kin, they note. I have been one of those researchers. And, perhaps Catherine's name resonates with me since I discovered the tragic story it tells. Or maybe it is because neither she, nor her offspring, left behind any keepsakes for my generation to learn about their lives. There was nothing but a name for her poor family to pass along after their frequent visits to the pawn shop. Instead, Catherine's names tell a bumpy story through workhouse records and some recently unearthed certificates.

My knowledge about Catherine is speculative. The two of us never met as more than 100 years separate our births. My thoughts are no doubt sentimentalised, too. I have, at times, invented a life for her in the cramped back-to-back houses of Manchester in the late-1800s, but a more 'real' (or at least official) version of her life has appeared via the public records which feature her name. No doubt she never envisaged that a curious (or should that be irritating?) descendent would take an interest in her and her name, but the passage of time and new technologies mean I can piece together a rough version of her life. Of course, the social conditions in which Catherine lived have shifted dramatically since she was born, but the naming practices she followed have barely changed. And, it is her surnames that speak directly to my research project, as I explain.

Catherine was born in 1865 in Liverpool, but soon moved to the New Cross area of Manchester with her parents and surviving siblings, where cheap housing was

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<sup>1</sup> I use 'surname' rather than 'last name' or 'family name' because of its common usage in the UK where my study is based. I do, however, recognise its problems. Fowler and Fuehrer (1997:319), for instance, use 'last name' in their work in the United States since they view 'surname' and 'family name' as privileging 'patronymy' (or perhaps more accurately 'patrilineality').



available for factory workers. She then disappears from the records after being listed on the 1871 census of households, but reappears in 1887 when she admits herself to a workhouse. She is 21, unmarried and pregnant. Her baby, later blinded through measles, is named Norah. She is given Catherine's surname, which served as a clear sign of her illegitimacy, socially and legally. Spensky (1992:102) notes of unmarried mothers: 'She [the mother] started a female lineage which was obviously illegitimate since only male lineages can be legitimate.' This is a key instance of the 'social power' of surnames.

Catherine had a second child, my great-grandfather. She was still unmarried. This, I imagine, is why she avoided re-visiting the workhouse. The authorities may have viewed one illegitimate child as 'one (reformable) mistake', but more than one signalled moral, and even mental, deficiencies. Marks (1992) points out that the latter characterisation could lead to institutional detention. Thus, in reporting her son's birth, Catherine changes names to appear legitimate (and seems to invent an address where he was born). She assumes her late mother's maiden name<sup>2</sup> and passes herself as 'née Magill' on her son's birth certificate. 'John Coxon' is the putative father. The story is kept alive the next year when she is listed on the census as 'Catherine Coxon', a married woman, and her co-residing sister appears as 'Magill' to affirm the wedded status of her sister. It is a premeditated trick that shows again the 'social power' carried by surnames.

In changing names, the two sisters were clearly aware of the social respect and status afforded by using the 'correct' surname. However, Catherine's history is whitewashed in 1893 when she marries. She and her children assume the surname of her husband, and their past is covered. There is no need for lies or secrets, and their new surname can be passed to my grandfather like every other legitimate family name. The 'Anderson Four' could 'display' (after Finch 2007) themselves as a straightforward household and hide away from a frowned-upon background. Yet, her husband drifted away some years later and two more spouses followed. Each time, Catherine's surname changed with subsequent generations knowing her only as Granny Turner, after her last husband.

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<sup>2</sup> I use 'maiden name' not 'birth name' or 'pre-marriage' name, again, because of its common usage in the UK. This is, however, a problematic term. Indeed, Lassiter (1983:81) has remarked that it has as much modern relevance as the terms 'chastity belt' or 'droit de seigneur'. Moreover, 'maiden name' implies that a woman's name is subject to change, which is why no equivalent term exists for men. Yet, other terms have problems, too. 'Birth name' is not always accurate and 'pre-marriage name' suggests that a woman's 'married name' is different. I, for example, consider my 'maiden' and 'married' names to be the same.

It has been fascinating, yet not entirely cheerful, to discover that my grandfather's surname is not ancestral. In fact, he has found it rather disconcerting, and is glad his late sister remained blissfully unaware. Strathern (1999) has written about the effect that new family information can have on people, which is often incorporated into their sense of identity. But family details have been taken away in my grandfather's case. He is not from the Scottish family that he imagined. Rather than using a family surname, he views 'Anderson' as a substitute for the 'real' thing, like the maternal surname given to his father. It is, of course, impossible to know what Catherine thought of her naming situation. Indeed, I have probably unearthed details she always wanted to hide. That is because they reveal ways of 'doing family' (after Morgan 1996) absent from more idealised accounts, although such 'untidiness' was not unusual then or now (*ibid.*)

The hitherto silent story of Catherine Coxon Magill Anderson Cochrane Turner sheds light on issues of cultural and institutional change, economic and social disadvantage, social morality and class positioning. It also raises the curtain on issues of gender, identity and family relationships at the start of the twentieth century. It was, however, considerably difficult to 'find' my great-great-grandmother because of English assumptions about kinship, which called for her to change surnames with each marriage. Catherine is part of 'the hidden half' of my family, as Schaefer (1999) writes in her text on women's genealogy. This account, along with Carmack's (1998), speaks about 'discovering' and 'uncovering' hard-to-find information about female lineage. It seems that the heritage industry's most unexpected ability is to draw attention to the previously ambiguous or silent lives of many ordinary women.

My research into women's surnames reflects a demanding public appetite for tracing family histories as documented by several academics (e.g. Carsten 2000a; 2004; de Groot 2009; Mason 2008; Nash 2003; Smart 2007). But, a private interest in my maternal roots is not the only impetus for this project; it is inspired by my personal experiences, too. I had originally intended to conduct research on the symbolic meaning and use of various wedding 'traditions' (cf. Gillis 1996) such as fathers 'giving away' daughters, the wearing of white wedding dresses and matrimonial rings, hen night parties and also marital naming<sup>3</sup> practices. Yet, in probing these subjects, surname change stood out as a particularly long-standing and long-lasting change (even outliving a marriage in some cases). And, in thinking

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<sup>3</sup> I use 'marital naming' as a catch-all phrase for the surname practices of 'ever-married' women (i.e. those currently or previously married).

about the topic, I distinctly remembered being irritated as a youngster when my mother was addressed as ‘Mrs Anthony Wilson’. It was, perhaps, one of my earliest feminist thoughts.

Until I married in 2002, I had not realised just how many people expect a new bride to take her husband’s surname. I clearly remember my grandmother asking ‘What d’ thee call thee now?’ on my wedding day. And, since marrying, most of my married female colleagues, family members and some friends have done what I did not – by changing surnames. As children, they had no idea of the surname they would use later in life. Perhaps this was a trivial or exciting prospect? But, despite feeling certain from a young age that I would have a lifelong surname, I have encountered episodes of guilt since marrying. I recognise that I am disrupting a long-standing pattern that has seen my grandmother, mother, aunt, sister, and sister-in-law take or leave the ‘Wilson’ name. Should I really just ‘get over myself’ and switch? But, I like my name. And, it suits me: common, Anglo-Saxon, with a tendency to avoid attention. Plus, why should marriage prompt such a change, and why only for me not my spouse?

Taken literally, my surname means ‘son of Will’. I am clearly not anyone’s son. Ironically, my husband is the son of a William, although he does not use the name Wilson. Instead, he has a distinctly American surname. Whenever we travel to his home country, I join the procession of ‘US citizens’ at passport control. I am able to do this because we are classed as ‘a family’. But, it seems that ‘families’ have ‘family names’. I was made to realise this when challenged by an immigration official. He asked: ‘Do you have the same name as him?’, pointing to my husband. ‘No,’ I replied. He said: ‘Then how do I know you are married?’ I was most surprised. Are shared surnames really the key determinant of a marriage? Even if we shared a surname, would this mean we were married? Surely it could signal another relationship, or we could coincidentally share the name ‘Wilson’ – it is hardly unique.

The ‘displaying’ of one’s married credentials, I thought, was one avenue to explore in researching women’s surnames. Initially, I anticipated asking married women with unchanged surnames to share their experiences of challenging the norm. Had they also had their marital status questioned on account of their name, I wondered? But, I soon realised this approach was too narrow. Could I really assume that women with unchanged surnames were like me, while those with changed surname were our opposites? My research needed to take account of all women’s

stories. After all, we had all negotiated the customary call to change names, regardless of the outcome. And, this opened up the possibility of exploring, more broadly, the relevance and role of surnames within marital relationships, the factors pushing and pulling women to change surnames (or not), and the costs and benefits of different surname decisions.

Having decided, roughly, my research interest, I submitted a PhD proposal to LSE's Gender Institute in the summer of 2005. Two months later I received a letter of acceptance. It was certainly good news, but the wait had made me nervous. I was yet to receive feedback on my research ideas, and had started to question if my project was really of any interest. Who really cared about women's names? Surely, I almost convinced myself, it was an irrelevant issue? But, on my first day at the school, queuing at the IT helpdesk, I overheard a conversation. A student was requesting that her email address be changed to match her new surname. She had just been married. And, later that day, as I walked around the nearby Inns of Court, I noticed each chamber listing the names of its female barristers as 'Miss' or 'Mrs'. Why use titles so suggestive of marital status? Did none of these women use 'Ms' as their salutation? Or was this even an option?

These are just two of many name-related observations I have made in the course of my research. In fact, I seem to have become rather obsessed with names. I have spent far too much time checking if the names of celebrity women have been amended following their marriages or separations. It has not, however, always been easy to convince others of my project's relevance. I have needed to defend my research topic against accusations of banality and non-importance, just as I have needed to stand up for my naming decision<sup>4</sup>. At a conference for young researchers I was asked: 'Why would you want to study that?' Others have remarked: 'There's nothing to research, is there? Women either do or they don't?' Moreover, other people appear to have been offended by my line of enquiry. Marital naming, in these cases, emerges as a highly emotional topic.

That said, a more regular response to my work has been for people to tell me their naming stories. These encounters have sometimes started with a statement about names being simply labels, but have continued to reveal the contrary. Several stories have been conveyed by people who have married. One colleague in her 30s mentioned that her parents-in-law threatened to boycott her wedding unless she changed her surname. Her entire marriage, they claimed, would be undermined

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<sup>4</sup> It is mostly to women who enquire. Their next question is usually: 'What does your husband think?'

unless she did so. Her mother-in-law, she said, expected her to make sacrifices for the family, just as she had done years before. Similarly, a male acquaintance mentioned that his mother could not cope with his wife using a different surname, despite being supportive of women's rights. He said: 'It's as if we're not properly married', adding that his mother only ever wrote to his wife using his surname.

There have been many other stories. A colleague in her 50s told me she had initially kept her maiden name until her (male) boss wrote her a memo saying: 'Is Mrs Taylor<sup>5</sup>, Mrs Taylor or not?' She dutifully changed her name. I also overheard another colleague, again in her 50s, criticising the attitude of a male boss. She added to her complaint: 'And he's got *my* maiden name.' Clearly, from her statement, she judged her boss as undeserving of her childhood surname, despite not having used the name herself for many years. During another workplace encounter, a man in his 20s begged me not to encourage his fiancée (my colleague) to keep her maiden name. I found it amusing that I was perceived as some kind of name-witch – preying on the minds of soon-to-be brides.

Aside from these stories, other newly-wed women spoke to me about embracing their new surname. A colleague in her 30s said she 'always knew' that she wanted to take her long-time partner's surname when they married. *She* wanted to be part of *his* family, and she liked being referred to collectively as 'The Nobles'. Plus, she gained better customer service as 'Mrs Noble' than 'Miss Birch', she found. Similarly, another colleague in her 30s created a new email address ('mrs.rushton') after marrying, which not only signalled her change of surname, but marital status, too. And, on the topic of titles, although somewhat different, an engineering lecturer told me that she was referred to by her students as 'Miss' while 'Doctor' was used for her male colleagues.

Before I outline the structure of this manuscript, I have one final anecdote that emerges from a conversation I had with a male relative. His wife retained her maiden name when they married in the 1980s. But, he remarked, other people tended to prefer surname change because it acts as a social organiser. 'It's like putting all the folks in the same compartment', he said. He meant that surnames sort people out into groups. I returned home to notice my cutlery lying in a draw, mixed together. There were no separate compartments for knives, folks and spoons.

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<sup>5</sup> This name, and those following, has been changed.

## Chapter Structure

**Chapter 1** rationalises why I pursued a study of marital naming. I begin by estimating the current popularity of surname change by married women in England. This is presented as sitting awkwardly with ‘grand theorising’ on social change and family decline, and I argue that it rests more easily with empirically-based thinking on social continuity and the ways in which families are ‘done’ and ‘displayed’. The chapter also introduces my research questions and six central concepts which I rely upon in my attempt to better understand marital naming.

**Chapter 2** focuses on a small body of scholarly literature concerned with surname patterns and naming practices, mainly within the context of opposite-sex marriage. I present a synopsis of the research, commenting on its strengths and weaknesses, and point to gaps in the literature that are explored by my research study. The views of feminist thinkers and women’s rights activists on marital naming are also discussed.

**Chapter 3** considers the investigative methods and modes of analysis employed in my study of marital naming. It is written as a reflexive account of the journey I took in attempting to understand women’s negotiations with surname change and the ways in which the practice is culturally perceived. The chapter is not intended as a summary of how the research was conducted, but an account of what actually occurred when attempting to formulate and actualise my research strategy.

**Chapter 4** considers women’s maiden names. The chapter provides insight into women’s identities and affinities – along with their family lives – when it comes to surnames. I identify and explore six interpretative repertoires that emerged from the women’s accounts. These themes point toward various important issues with regards to gender and relationships, particularly in relation to notions of paternity and surname succession. All interviewees were found to have invested some meaning in their maiden names, and there was a palpable sense of connectivity in their accounts. But, in making these connections, surnames were used to set boundaries. I also discuss the replies of survey respondents who were asked about the sharing of surnames between certain individuals and the desirability of life-long surnames.

**Chapters 5 and 6** consider the ways in which interviewees navigated the customary request to adopt their husbands’ surnames. My conversations with interviewees generated a mass of rich and insightful feedback which I clustered into interpretative repertoires. These themes exposed a debate between social stability

and change, and also autonomy and connectedness. Specifically, **Chapter 5** explores repertoires concerned with the former and **Chapter 6** centres on the latter. The accounts given by interviewees reveal the complex negotiations that women enter into when dealing with marital naming – which can be further compounded by issues of age, social class and ethnic heritage. The narratives demonstrate that married women are always accountable for their surnames. And, whatever surname a woman decides upon, she conducts a gendered performance. The resulting problem can best be summarised within a paradox of ‘doing gender well’ – or ‘doing gender poorly’.

**Chapter 7** considers discourses of marriage. It is, of course, due to marriage that women are customarily asked to take their husbands’ surnames. Interviewees were found to rely upon some of the same discursive themes that featured in their ‘talk’ about marital naming. Yet, in some cases, contrasting, and even paradoxical, accounts of marriage were given. Importantly, woman’s interpretations of marriage were closely tied to her dealings with marital naming. Typically, but not exclusively, women who kept their maiden names emphasised that they had married for ‘practical reasons’ and distanced themselves from the feminine space of weddings and normative notions of marriage.

**Chapter 8** considers what is learned through my research. I return to my original deliberations about marital naming and attempt to offer a resolution on the basis of my research findings. And, in doing so, I re-situate my work within a wide body of sociological thinking and gender perspectives on families. I also return to the six concepts that were central to my thesis – not to present a ‘grand narrative’ of naming – but to point to patterns, examples and ideas that are useful in considering the use and symbolic meaning of the much underexplored topic of marital naming.

# Chapter 1

## Framing Naming

*WAG Coleen McLoughlin: 'I won't be Mrs Rooney.'*  
*Exclusive: She vows to stay a McLoughlin*  
(Daily Mirror 18 March 2008)

*Exclusive Coleen: Her First Interview as Mrs Rooney*  
(Sunday Mirror 31 August 2008)

The thesis of this study is that *names matter*, practically and symbolically. My research probes the symbolic meaning and use of one particular naming practice – surname change by married women living in England. The current mass take-up of a husband's surname by women in the UK appears counterintuitive to notions of individualisation, detraditionalism and empowered choice that resonate inside and outside of academia. That is, surname change by married women seems to contradict grand sociological thinking on the social change and family decline, and popular post-feminist claims about supposed gender liberation and equality. This chapter explores this apparent contradiction, introducing empirically-based feminist theorising, to rationalise why I pursued a sociologically-driven and gender-based study of marital naming. The chapter also introduces my research questions, as well as six central concepts which I rely upon when attempting to better understand how people interpret, interact with and contest the customary practice of surname change.

### Old Issue, New Landscape

Sociological arguments are often framed within a paradox, and my thesis is no exception (Crow 2005a; 2005b) – married women are increasingly independent but their surnames remain husband-dependent. I begin by estimating the number of women who change their surname post-wedding, and discuss how my approximation sits awkwardly with grand theorising on social change, but might rest more easily with empirically-based thinking on social continuity. The section also draws upon several media texts through which I introduce six concepts that are central to my study.

### *A significant trend*

Coleen, whose name opens this chapter, took her (current) husband's surname when she married at the age of 22 in June 2008. She is among millions of women to make



such a change, as has been the custom in the UK for some time (take-up dates vary, as I later explain). I have reached this enormous figure by considering two sources. First, the only count of women's surnames that I have found reports that 94 per cent of UK wives use their husbands' surnames (Valetas 2001)<sup>6</sup>. Second, the last census of English households states that 73 per cent of women (aged 16 plus) are, or have, been married (Office for National Statistics 2005). In England, this adds up to about 15 million discarded maiden names. A significantly smaller number of 63,000 women use a combined surname, and only 16,000 keep their maiden names. Therefore, surname change by married women can easily be considered an ongoing social phenomenon.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which surname change in the UK might have increased or decreased in popularity<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, as I discuss later, it is not entirely clear when the custom first entered common use. Ordinary observation might suggest a slight deviation away from the custom in recent decades, but it is still practiced by the majority. In focusing on the topic of surname change, rooted deep in familial culture, my research contributes to a body of sociological work on personal relationships that has emerged in the last decade. My research is also situated in the field of gender studies and responds to a feminist call to re-focus research efforts on women's everyday experiences (Jackson 2001; Nussbaum 1999). This is done by exploring the ways in which women negotiate surname change<sup>8</sup>. Importantly, not only do I explore the meanings that women give to their naming experiences, along with public attitudes, but I consider how these meanings might reflect, maintain or disrupt cultural ideas about women.

Despite being a major social phenomenon, surname change and alternative naming practices have received scant attention from UK sociologists (and data from elsewhere are not exactly abundant, as discussed in Chapter 2). This is remarkable since the call to change surnames post-wedding is shared by all women. Taking a broader exploratory analysis of personal names (i.e. first, middle and surnames) in the UK, Finch (2008:710) notes that sociological research is 'surprisingly sparse' on the topic of personal names given their social significance. Indeed, not only might

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<sup>6</sup> This figure is based on the findings of a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 1995 on behalf of the European Union. The survey explored public attitudes on a range of issues.

<sup>7</sup> Research from the United States, which uses the same naming conventions as the UK, shows a recent decrease in maiden name retention. Goldin and Shim (2004), using data from the Massachusetts' birth records, found a drop in surname retention between 1990 and 2000, and similarly for women listed in Harvard University's classes of 1980 and 1990.

<sup>8</sup> I am not using 'negotiate' to necessarily mean verbal discussion, but to suggest that various factors are considered when navigating the customary call to change surnames.

personal names provide important evidence about migration patterns, political authority, cultural movements, notions of ethnic or national identity and the history of social structures, but they can offer these insights when studying personal life:

- the impact of social change on family forms and relationships
- the social construction (or ‘doing’ and ‘displaying’) of families<sup>9</sup>
- the interplay between ‘tradition’ and ‘choice’<sup>10</sup>
- the relationship amid individualism and collectivism
- the role of religion, popular culture and longstanding affinities on family life
- the influence of gender on relationships, and also gender role expectations
- the negotiation of normative family practices, and how these are understood, defined and redefined.

The lack of attention given to naming, I suspect, derives from a paradox. Surnames change by married women has been deemed too ordinary a topic for researchers, but at the same time too explosive, to warrant scrutiny. In short, the normative often goes unexplained – a point on which I elaborate in Chapter 2. Thus, unlike other sociological points of interest focusing on marriage and kinship (say, child care or domestic labour, for instance), naming might be considered one of the ‘familiar’ and ‘obvious’ aspects of English kinship that Wolfram (1987:202) warns against overlooking in her classic anthropological text on ‘in-laws and outlaws’.

### ***The individualisation thesis***

Any study of naming is a study of time, as well as culture. My research is written amid and situated within claims about the demise of ‘the’ family and ‘the’ traditional within late modern or late capitalist societies. Sociological thinkers or ‘Third Way’ theorists (notably Bauman 2001; Beck 1992; Giddens 1991) have attempted to explain such social shifts via grand sociological thinking on topics such as globalisation, employment, power, consumption and relationships. Indeed, their intellectual efforts on the latter issue – relationships – have dominated sociological thinking on family and personal life for almost two decades. A collective tenet of this work is that relationships are now more fragile and flexible than in pre-modern societies – echoing Durkheim’s (1984/1893) idea of ‘mechanical’ to ‘organic’ solidarity.

Several concepts from ‘Third Way’ theorists are relevant to my research on marital naming. The first are ‘individualism’ and ‘individualisation’ – referring to the

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Doing’ after Morgan (1996; 1999) and ‘displaying’ after Finch (2007) – discussed later.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Tradition’ and ‘choice’ are complicated terms. I use inverted commas to signal when a speaker presents a tradition as ahistoric. And, likewise for when ‘choice’ is presented as a ‘free/individual’ choice rather than a ‘relational/contextual’ choice (see Smart and Shipman 2004).

loosening of traditional ties and sources of collective identity, along with a heightening of self-reflexivity, self-interest and self-direction within people's lives. For instance, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) claim that people become more desperate for love and companionship, as societies become more selfish and autonomous. Yet, they also maintain that heterosexual relationships are prone to failure because of changes to the nature of work and women's liberation. The idea of the 'individualised individual' is especially interesting in the context of naming. This is because, as Finch (2008:711) points out, in societies where individuality is prized, 'a name quite literally "personifies" the individual'. Yet, as discussed later, she also notes that names 'embody a sense of connectedness with families' (p.711).

Also relevant to my work is the concept is 'disembedding' – or the lifting of people from traditional networks and stable environments within late modern societies (Giddens 1990). The dawn of a more technological society forms part of this argument. Giddens claims that people living in such environments are no longer confined to face-to-face interaction. Certainly, in regards to names, these might be used to email or manage online accounts<sup>11</sup>. Changing surnames could even jeopardise an internet identity, as names are commonly used in search engines, especially in the context of 'reunion' and networking sites. Indeed, such difficulties are evidenced through the existence of maidenname.net – a website operating to find 'missing' women (or those misplaced/displaced through a change of names). Moreover, 'name change kits' are also promoted on websites to ensure the change from 'Miss to Mrs' is 'quick and easy' (as stated on [thenamechangekit.com](http://thenamechangekit.com)).

The aforementioned concepts can be said to contribute is a process of 'detraditionalism' which entails 'the decline of the belief in pre-given or natural order of things' (Heelas, et al. 1996:2). The 'natural ordering' of intimate relationships has changed in recent years as pre-existing forms are more widely accepted and/or new ones are invented. One such change is an increase in the rates of cohabitation before, or instead, of marriage (Office for National Statistics 2009b), which means couples living in differently-named households. Divorce is also commonplace and, along with re-partnering, can lead to the mixing of families. Such familial fluidity demonstrates that a change of surname is not necessarily for life.

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<sup>11</sup> Regarding, online identities, the authors of Wikipedia pages have been quick to adjust the surnames of celebrity women who marry or separate. On Coleen's page, for example, her surname was changed within hours of marrying (I checked) even though she had publicly stated that it would remain unchanged. It was the same for Peaches Geldof and Jade Goody. The reverse occurred for Madonna, Jordan and Kerry Katona and Heather Mills, whose maiden names were reinstated almost instantly on Wikipedia following their respective separations.

Moreover, other families might identify each other as ‘family’ without any link by blood or marriage. These factors, and maiden name retention, result in a whole host of differently-named family relationships.

Alongside the alleged shift toward individualisation and de-traditionalism, is a transformation in the nature of intimacies in late modern societies. That is to say, relationships are freely entered for their ‘own sake’, rather than being tied to an institution or ‘external criteria’ (Giddens 1991:6). This particular form of intimacy, known as ‘the pure relationship’, has led to the ‘democratisation’ of relationships whereby intimate bonds are based on a couple’s internal understanding of each other rather than such bonds being regulated by external laws or social expectations, according to Giddens (1992). Yet, whereas Giddens focuses on the potentially positive aspects of a change, such as greater choice and diversity within relationships, Bauman’s (2003) interpretation of an alleged shift in personal intimacy is less optimistic. He purports a move towards a more ‘liquid’ (or fluid and erratic) form of relationship and stresses that the abandoning of so-called ‘traditional’ family ties leads to the erosion of the systems of morality. This, in turn, prompts social breakdown as individuals are increasingly alienated.

In conjunction with theories of individualisation, my study is also written against a backdrop of post-feminist rhetoric on ‘empowered choice’ (McRobbie 2008). This discourse claims that women are free to control their lives. Indeed, in many respects, women’s lives in the UK have changed dramatically since the Second World War (Lewis 1992) – and even more so since surname change became commonplace. There have been some reforms to matrimonial law, while social and political tolerance has given women better access to education and employment. In addition, increased social, sexual and financial freedoms means women might spend years living alone, and may dismiss marriage altogether. Those who do marry, if post-feminist rhetoric is correct, are no longer hampered by gender-based expectations about marriage. Thus, maiden names might now be used for several decades and represent a range of successes considering that first-time brides in the UK (on average) marry at the age of 30 (Office for National Statistics 2009a).

I am not the first to suggest that the continued popularity of surname change in the context of other sweeping social changes seems contradictory. Others have noted that women’s collusion with a seemingly antiquated practice is perplexing (Johnson and Scheuble 1995; Noack and Wiik 2008; Scheuble and Johnson 1998; 2005; Suter 2004; Twenge 1997). These authors raise a further important issue – the

link between surname change and patriarchy (discussed in Chapter 2). They frame surname change as a remnant of a family system wherein women were owned by their husbands. A wife's adoption of her husband's surname, they remark, is symbolic of such subjugation and preserves a hierarchical structure. Suter (2004) takes the view that the continued take-up by women of their husbands' surnames is particularly perplexing, as many feminists have worked hard to secure women's naming rights. Ironically, people favouring surname change might frown upon its origins, but their 'choice' seems to mirror its standards, according to Scheuble and Johnson (2005).

### *The thesis of connectedness*<sup>12</sup>

There is an alternative perspective to the aforementioned thesis which has emerged from empirically-based theorising. The authors of such work, Smart (2007, and earlier works) in particular, contest the linear and 'broad brush' approach of the individualisation thesis in regards to personal relationships. Moreover, in her critique of the individualisation thesis, Smart (2004:1037) claims the work of its proponents such as Bauman (2003) and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) has produced an image of family life that is 'as dystopian as any produced by the pro-family right'. Smart's work, and other feminist scholarship, offers productive commentary for my research.

This feminist-led literature recognises the complexities and contradictions of family life and provides an alternative backdrop for my research. It is a body of work that highlights the persistent nature of the nuclear family ideal and also disrupts dominant ideas about social change. A particular instructive finding of such research is that the past exerts a powerful influence on modern life. Crow (2005b:4) uses the phrase 'backwards into the future' to describe such ideas. He reaches this notion by drawing on several studies which have found a desire for 'ordinariness' among 'blended families' and 'families of choice' (he uses Burgoyne and Clark 1984; Stacey 1996; 1999; Weeks, et al. 2001). The ideal of the nuclear family, in these studies, is shown to be pervasive. Indeed, despite fitting the mould of individualisation, the adult components of 'blended families' and 'families of choice', according to Stacey (1999:189), 'yearn nostalgically' for a lost world of 'Father Knows Best'.

Other research has drawn similar conclusions. For instance, most of the people responding to a recent survey in the UK agree that marriage is the best kind of

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<sup>12</sup> See Smart (2007:189).

relationship (Office for National Statistics 2009b). This corroborates Cherlin's (2004) claims about American marriage. He notes alongside his ideas on the growth of individualisation: 'Although the practical importance of marriage has declined, its symbolic significance has remained high and may even have increased' (p.848). Moreover, Gillis (1996:xv) argues that people interpret their experiences of family in relation to an idealised form – this is the family 'we live by' rather than the family 'we live with', in his analysis. Thus, if the nuclear family form is so valued, might this explain a desire to 'display' it so obviously though a shared surname?

That marriage holds a privileged position in UK society demonstrates that women's decisions are not made in value-free environments. Instead, they navigate common discourses of singledom and marriedom. The social stigma attached to the former, noted by Sandfield and Percy (2003), can make women feel anxious about remaining single or uneasy about marrying under pressure. Perhaps this contributes to a woman's decision to change her surnames. Meanwhile, women may also negotiate discourses about motherhood and its perceived responsibilities in society when dealing with marital naming. These issues call into question women's ability to freely negotiate choice. Indeed, it is because of such entrenched ideas about motherly duties that scholars such as Jamieson (1998; 1999), Ribbens McCarthy et al (2002), Carling et al (2002) doubt the disappearance of 'traditional' values as purported by the individualisation thesis.

Through the theses of individualisation and connectedness the debates between autonomy and connectedness, and change and stability, are revealed<sup>13</sup>. Scheuble and Johnson (2005), in their work on situational naming<sup>14</sup>, note that this split places women in a dilemma. They contend that surname change presents wifedom and motherhood as a woman's primary role, but note that this conflicts with other positions they occupy. They continue with this observation about situational naming: '...[it] highlights the conflict created in a society that values individual achievement and identity for women, but at the same time provides strong normative support for women who sacrifice their birth name as a symbol of their own identity in order to have a common family name' (p.150-151). These authors, rightly, note that the ways in which women cope with these conflicts has received little academic attention.

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<sup>13</sup> Kline et al (1996:609) use this phrasing in their study of marital naming, but make no connection to the individualisation thesis (and Smart's connectedness thesis emerges at a later date).

<sup>14</sup> This term refers the varying of a surname depending on the situation – usually it means a woman uses her maiden name at work and husband's surname at home.

### *Media discourse*

While marital naming has received scant attention from UK academics, the mainstream press provides important commentary. Given Fairclough's (1995:52) claim that media texts constitute 'a sensitive barometer of socio-cultural change' I have selected five extracts from UK newspapers from the last three years to demonstrate current attitudes to marital naming. The texts make use of six interlinking concepts that are central to my arguments about the importance of surnames: gender, normativity, choice, identity, relationships and performativity (each fully discussed later in this chapter).

Returning to Coleen, she was interviewed shortly after marrying England footballer Wayne. She mentions considering whether to keep her maiden name or use both surnames when married, but decided to change surnames after consulting her new husband. He wanted her to change her surname, so she did. In this extract, Coleen positions herself as an active, yet unequal, player. It is *her* action that enables Wayne to feel their marriage is special. She makes light of the decision to change surnames by saying she has 'got used to it now'. The performative aspect of changing a surname is demonstrated in her practising to write her surname:

*It also means a lot to Wayne. If you ask him what he finds special about being married, he'll say it's the fact that I took his name and we've now got the same surnames. It's nice and I've got used to it now – I've been practising signing my new signature. (Sunday Mirror 31 August 2008)*

Coleen mentions that she 'took' Wayne's surname. This might suggest 'Rooney' is now her possession, too. Yet, the following extract suggests married women simply borrow surnames – they can be returned only when a marriage ends. The next quote features another footballer's wife Cheryl Cole, who reportedly reinstated her maiden name on learning of her husband Ashley's infidelity. Like the previous extract, names are shown to carry (or 'display') powerful messages. Cheryl's decision on her surname seems to indicate that she also is being disloyal in this context to her husband's surname, after he was disloyal to their marriage.

*Cheryl Cole has sent out the clearest signal yet her marriage is over – by reverting to her maiden name. The Girls Aloud singer was met by a limo driver holding up a sign reading Tweedy, her old surname, when she flew into Los Angeles. (The Sun 25 February 2008)*

Performativity is a recurring theme. In the next extract, Billie Piper and her second husband, Laurence Fox, were reportedly tattooed with corresponding inscriptions shortly after they married. She acquired ‘Mr Fox’ on her arm, and he chose ‘Mrs Fox’.

*Billie and Fox branded with chav tattoos: Fox, 30, told This Morning he opted for the words ‘Mrs Fox 31.12.07’ on his inner arm while his wife [Billie Piper], 25, chose a basic ‘Mr Fox’ inscription. (The Metro 22 February 2008)*

The inscription ‘Mrs Fox’ is peculiar since Ms Piper is known as such, at least in her public persona. Madonna, rather unique in her use of a single name, made a similar statement by wearing a jacket emblazoned with ‘Mrs Ritchie’ on the back. These acts might be examples of post-modern irony, but it is curious that both women are more famous than their (now ex)-husbands. Indeed, Mr Ritchie was sometimes referred to as ‘Mr Madonna’ when the couple were married (The Evening Standard 13 October 2005). This appropriation might signal a victory for feminism, but equally it reinforces that surnames are a source of power. Madonna, who occupies a position of fame normally afforded to men, is excused from changing names, while her husband is given her name since he is less important. Her physical wearing of the label ‘Mrs Ritchie’ may have been a reaction to any suggestion that she was more masculine than her spouse.

However, in the two following pieces have a different tone. The first refers to Cherie Booth/Blair a figure who divides public opinion. The newspaper article refers to her use of two surnames. The commentary suggests Cherie is simply greedy for using her maiden name *and* her husband’s surname. It seems that being a senior legal professional was incompatible with her role as a Prime Minister’s wife. Thus, she needs to choose one or the other; otherwise she is abusing her power and selfishly profiteering:

*The way Ms Booth QC has cashed in on being Mrs Blair has looked like a bad case of having your feminism and eating it. Even her fans have got heartburn. (Daily Mail 27 September 2006)*

While the tone changes again in this final example. Rebekah Brooks (née Wade), head of News International, has changed surnames. As a hugely successful and powerful woman, the move shocked and disappointed Hanson, who writes this:

*How could you, Rebekah?: The newly married editor of the Sun has taken her husband’s name. What a shame, says Michele Hanson. (The Guardian 25 June 2009)*



This extract, and a similar piece in *The Independent* (25 June 2009), appear to be the only column inches dedicated to Rebekah's surname change. The other national newspapers (one formerly run by Brooks) simply mentioned the switch in passing – Rebekah Brooks (née Wade) or Wade (now Brooks). Hanson's disappointment is registered as Rebekah is 'the last sort of woman you'd expect to opt to take the back seat' since she is a 'smasher of glass ceilings, ruler of men'. Yet, Hanson writes, Rebekah has given up her maiden name 'like an ordinary little wife', even though her surname remained unchanged when previously married. Brooks is 'following (and reinforcing)' a recent trend in surname change by married women, Hanson speculates.

A similar point is made by Hughes (*The Observer* 8 April 2001), who evokes ideas about female 'retreatism' (Tasker and Negra 2007:109) in her article<sup>15</sup>. She reports that Madonna had consented to being 'Mrs Guy Ritchie' even though her surname went unchanged when first married. Hughes speculates this shift, as with other celebrity women, was not done to make life easier. Instead, the change was: '...a self-conscious means of marking a profound change in sense of self and wanting other people to witness it'. Madonna, she speculates, was aware that all women can marry and most can have children, but not all can have an enduring love relationship. Hughes states the singer marked this moment as 'transformative' by taking her husband's surname. If correct, this suggests shared surnames function to 'display' (although not determine) a successful family project.

If shared surnames display success, what is demonstrated by using different surnames? Goodman, writing for *The Guardian Weekly* (13-19 September 2001), uses public marriage announcements to speculate about this (as does Ingraham 1999). She states: 'Ms Smith, whose marriage will never make it, is keeping her name' and 'Ms Brown, a careerist who doesn't really believe in family, will keep her name' (p.35). In other words, keeping a maiden name displays a disbelief in marriage and is suggestive of its impending failure. Moreover, Goodman's reference to not really 'believing in family' seems to go against the individualisation thesis. If the conventional family unit has broken down as it suggests, why or how could maiden name retention be considered anti-family. And, why should it matter?

In their work on the nature of love, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim further reinforce the individualisation thesis by suggesting people are free to make their own

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<sup>15</sup> 'Retreatism' refers to the post-feminist idea that women can display empowerment by retreating from the public sphere.

decisions on the basis of ‘anything goes’, since moral codes and customs have waned (1995:34). This idea is evident in an article by Roiphe (2004) for *Slate* magazine where she writes that today people are no more shocked when an ‘independent-minded woman’ changes her surname than if she announces she will be a stay-at-home mum. Instead, modern-day wives simply make naming decisions on the basis of convenience and aesthetics. Their ‘fundamental independence’ – she claims – is not so imperilled that they need to keep their surnames. This statement has been made by a ‘more dogmatic generation’. Women now ‘cobble together names’ and take the attitude of ‘whatever works’ – whether this is ‘traditional’ or not.

So, do women freely negotiate choice about their surnames? Roiphe says not exactly. She notes that married women face bureaucratic pressures to change surname, especially if their children use a different surname. She also states that changing surnames might cause problems for the older, career-focused and repeat bride. Moreover, she claims it is ‘romantic’ and ‘pleasantly old-fashioned’ for women to use their husband’s name in social/family situations (e.g. being invited to a function as ‘Mr and Mrs John Doe’). But, in professional/legal matters, they may be ‘reassured’ to see their own names in print. This dichotomy is portrayed by Roiphe as playful rather than problematic. Ultimately, she notes, equality cannot be achieved by husband and wife when it comes to marital naming:

*There is in the creation of a family a kind of uncomfortable and thrilling blending of identity, a difficult obliteration of the distant self; in short, it’s one of those nuances, emotional moments that rarely fit into the categories rigidly set out by the purest forms of feminist ideology.* (Roiphe 2004: paragraph 6)

Roiphe’s references to feminism, and choice, are echoed in a final example from Stansfield, a journalist writing for the BBC website (15 July 2005). She says she took her husband’s surname because it was what she wanted. It was an ‘individual’ choice. Had she sold her sisters down the river, she asks? No, she replies. Choosing a surname enabled her to act independently, as intended by the feminist project. She claims to have been unaffected by outside pressure, despite noting that marriage is ‘steeped in custom’ and this pushes women into thinking they should make the ‘right’ and ‘traditional’ choice. Her change was the result of ‘gut instinct’ and definitely not tradition or anyone’s request. So, what consequences might this rhetoric have for feminism? How do other women talk about feminism and choice, if at all, in their accounts of surnaming? Might those who consider themselves feminist

face additional pressures and prejudices, as Mills (2003) suggests in her study of naming and political correctness?

The aforementioned extracts may well contribute to fears (and fantasies) about women's choices reflected in the mainstream media – especially those concerning work, marriage and motherhood (Faludi 1992). Indeed, when it comes to naming, it seems easy to pit women against each other – such as 'ordinary little wives' and women who 'cash in' on their husband's prestige. It might be assumed that my research, feminist in its outlook, would advocate maiden name retention as this seems counter-sexist or counter-patriarchal. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 3, I do not assume, in advance, that surname retention is a good thing. Moreover, it is not my intention to advocate for any of the 'choices' women make; nor will I promote or sanction any particular ways of living. Instead, my project seeks to understand what is meant by surname change, and alternatives to this practice, as told to me by a group of women who have been married and some of the people living in their communities. This is explained further in the next section.

## **Research Focus**

I have so far used this chapter to position surname change as not just a social phenomenon – but one that is also little understood. Furthermore, I have set out the contradictory sociological context in which marital naming is situated, and have drawn attention to media coverage of naming to demonstrate the topic's contemporary significance. This next section presents the aims and objectives of my study.

### ***Searching for meaning***

Little is known about the ways in which married women negotiate the customary call to change surnames, despite its magnitude (or because of, as I suggest in Chapter 2). My research attempts to bridge this gap by trying to understand what the practice – and the alternatives – means to ever-married women and their communities. In this respect, my research belongs to sociology more than other disciplines. Yet, my work is also located in the interdisciplinary field of gender studies. That is, I not only incorporate methods and approaches from sociology, but from other disciplinary areas that enable me to consider and analyse the phenomena of gender in relation to marital naming – including the ways in which gender is constructed and performed by my participants.

Returning to sociology, the search for meaning, originating with Weber (1922 [1978]), is something Smart (2007) points out in her work on personal life. She notes: ‘If sociology is to capture more clearly what matters to people in their everyday lives, it seems necessary to heed how they interpret their own actions and interactions’ (p.189). I have already mentioned my desire is not to take issue with women’s choices. Rather than ‘judge which side is “correct” or “morally wanting”’, Murray (2003:386) points out, the sociologist’s role is to ‘understand, contextualise, and re-construct’ the meanings that each side considers to be true.

As I discuss later in this chapter, names reflect personal and intimate lives, but also provide a link to a broader cultural and social context. My research focuses on both. That is (as detailed in Chapter 3), I focus on the individual reflections of 30 ever-married women to illuminate how they navigated marital naming in their own lives. I also attempt to explore public opinion toward marital naming conventions. I expect, at this point, that surname change will not be viewed as simply a custom of the past, continued for the sake of doing so, but it will be seen as meaningful. I do not, however, anticipate that its meaning will be singular, straightforward or objective. Rather, it will be context-specific, as well as contested and open to critique. The focus of my study is the precise meanings of surname change and its alternatives. I am especially concerned by what the practice means for women – and specifically what it signifies about womanhood, wifeness and motherhood.

### *Aims and objectives*

My research aims to better understand the ways in which naming is understood and conducted within the context of heterosexual marriage by exploring personal accounts (via a in-depth interviews) and public attitudes (via a questionnaire survey).

My objectives are:

- To improve understanding of the cultural meaning and significance of various marital naming practices in the UK.
- To obtain the perspectives of ever-married women on the issue of marital naming, and develop a broader understanding of how they negotiated the customary call to change surnames.
- To review public perceptions of marital naming, and the surnames given to children, including details of preferred practices and reasons for such choices.
- To critically assess women’s relationships with their (various) surnames, and to gain an understanding of the embodied nature of surnames (e.g. their role in the formation of bonds, identities and personal histories).
- To review the ways in which understandings of marital naming practices relate, if at all, to interpretations of marriage as an institution.

- To examine the wider sociological implications of marital naming within the theories of personal life and social change/continuity.

The specific questions that I seek to explore are:

- What are the views of survey respondents on marital naming? What are their perspectives on: who should share surnames; surname change by married women and men; surname options for married couples; and the passing of surnames to children?
- What does surname change mean to interviewees and how are its meanings constructed? What values does it represent? How do its meanings relate to those of marriage as defined by interviewees? Is there a relationship between ‘naming talk’ and ‘marriage talk’?
- How did interviewees negotiate the call to change surnames? How did they make sense of the call? How do they rationalise their decision(s)? What were the ‘push and pull’ factors? Did they select an alternative? What is the impact of operating outside the norm?
- How do interviewees relate to their maiden names? What role do maiden names play in identity construction (including ethnic, marital and professional)? What is symbolised through a maiden name?
- What is the significance of surnames in marital and family relationships, according to participants<sup>16</sup>? What is the role of surnames in ‘kin work’? What role do surnames play in ‘displaying’ family?
- How might attitudes toward marital naming practices reflect, maintain or disrupt cultural ideas about women, mothers and families?
- What do participants’ accounts bring to light about the persistence or disappearance of moral codes and traditional values?

## **Naming the Issues**

Having presented the scope of my research, I now return to the six concepts mentioned when discussing naming and the media: gender, normativity, choice, identity, relationships and performativity. These interlinking concepts are central to my thesis and resonate with much sociological work. It is by focusing on these concepts that my work represents a significant departure from previous research on marital naming, especially work concerned only with naming trends. The next subsections discuss each concept in relation to marital naming.

### ***Names and gender***

‘Gender’ is a central to my exploration of marital naming. I take the position that naming is a gendered process. This is because names are part of language and many feminist authors have demonstrated the gendered nature of language (e.g. Lakoff 1975; Spender 1987; Tannen 1992). It is gendered, in part, because naming represents a male reality. Not only have surnames mainly represented men’ lives

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<sup>16</sup> I use ‘participants’ when collectively referring to survey respondents and interviewees.

(e.g. their land or trade), but life-long surnames have been considered a 'right' for males (Miller and Swift 1976). Naming is not sexed. I am not female because 'Rebekah' is female – but my name has gendered (aged, racial and class-based<sup>17</sup>) connotations. Thus, being called 'Rebekah' can be considered part of my 'girling' process articulated by Butler (1993:232). And, my surname, while not biologically-fixed, would once have signalled my legitimate status, and perhaps could still today.

I also take the position that naming functions as a system of gendered organisations – just as gender itself is an organising technique (Ahmed 1998)<sup>18</sup>. It is through marriage that partners are labelled as either 'Mr' or 'Mrs' (with just a few women replacing the latter with 'Ms'). Both are explicitly gendered markers, but only 'Mrs' is connected to marital status<sup>19</sup>. Thus, a couple's relationship is constructed in a gendered way – with a wife being defined in relation to her husband. Moreover, this classification constantly reinforces her position as a wife, and also underlines the gender binary. A wife is her husband's other half, his female version – she is the 'Mrs' to his 'Mr'. I am curious to explore if, and how, this dichotomy plays out in women's accounts of marital naming. How, if at all, do they discuss gender in their accounts? What discourses do they draw upon?

Is it also possible that naming is a gendered burden? It is, after all, primarily women rather than men who are called to change surnames post-wedding. Scheuble and Johnson (1993) argue that this one-sided arrangement exists because of expectations about gender appropriate behaviour. Thus, might women's involvement in naming be considered 'women's work', thus unseen and undervalued? Or, to use di Leonardo's (1987) term, might naming be 'kin work' – or in Hobson's (2000) terms 'interactional work'. That is the work women do to keep relationships ticking over. Moreover, in my experience, the call to change surnames expects women to respond in a gender-specific way. That is, to comply without complaint. Is it the case that women are willing participants; and what are the costs of protesting (and, indeed, are women able to remonstrate)?

Finally, naming appears to form part of an influential set of power relations that are based on gender difference. It is not the case, as Clarke et al (2008) point out, that couples in same-sex relationships are called to change surnames. Although my research examines opinions about who should share a surname, including same-sex

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<sup>17</sup> My name is simply 'Rebekah Wilson' with no middle name since 'middle names are middle-class', according to my working-class father, at the time I was born.

<sup>18</sup> Of course, marriage and kinship are also widely accepted and practised modes of social organisation.

<sup>19</sup> At various points in time, 'Mrs' has taken on different meanings (Davidoff et al 1999).

couples, I do not focus on naming within gay and lesbian relationships. The appropriation of surname change by some same-sex couples is certainly intriguing – as are other rehearsals of marriage. However, my research focuses only on naming within the sphere of heterosexual marriage and post-marriage. It has been suggested by Giddens (1992) that heterosexual couples now live more equal and intimate lives through a ‘pure relationship’, as mentioned above. Yet, Brook (2002:49) notes that few feminists would suggest marriage is now ‘a gender-neutral field’. Similarly, in her critique of Giddens, Jamieson (1999) points out that personal life remains structured by inequalities.

### *Names and normativity*

‘Normativity’ is another central concept of my thesis. I take the view that naming, like language, is a normative aspect of a given culture. I have used the work of several historians (Davidoff, et al. 1999; McKinley 1990; Wilson 1998) to explore naming in relation to normativity. Surnaming, it seems, became a normative rule among the English around the 12<sup>th</sup> century – resulting from population growth and the adoption of written records. Its take-up, like most social norms, varied between social classes and social groups. It is especially difficult to isolate a date when women adopted surnames as written sources only occasionally reference women (and then only the wealthiest of these)<sup>20</sup>. Yet by 1538 when the Parish Register System was introduced, the allocation of surnames becomes more regular as marital births were henceforth required to be recorded alongside a father’s surname. And by the 1600s, most (legitimate) children automatically inherited their surname from their father<sup>21</sup>.

Surname change by married women is connected to hereditary naming<sup>22</sup>. Again, its take-up was slow and varied, depending on social class and geographical residence. Embleton and King (1984) estimate that the practice became a guaranteed norm around 1800, although Williams’ (1965) study of an English village found people referring to married women in speech by their maiden names. Thus, unlike marriage – which is rooted in ancient culture – surname change is relatively modern.

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<sup>20</sup> This is a recurring problem when researching women’s history.

<sup>21</sup> It was not until 1969 that the General Register Office required children’s surnames to be listed on their birth certificate.

<sup>22</sup> According to McKinley (1990), hereditary naming called a halt to surnames derived from women (i.e. matronymic names). Moreover, he points out that surnames ending in ‘daughter’ were quite common between 1300 and 1500 in some parts of northern England, continuing less frequently until the 1650s – although most connected children to fathers, not mothers (e.g. Will’s daughter not son, in my case).

This point is corroborated by Alford (1988) whose cross-cultural study found surname change to be more likely in technologically-complex societies. He observed that a bride's change of surname might have 'facilitated and expressed' her inclusion into a 'patrilocal, extended family' (p.89). Thus, while maiden name retention in the UK might be considered 'modern', surname change may denote cultural advancement in non-industrial societies.

Taking Embleton and King's estimate, it can be assumed that the last eight generations of married women in the UK (at least) have negotiated the call to change surnames. This, it seems, has been enough time for the practice to embed itself in a heterogendered social order. The way surname change pervades social life was noted by Wallis and Van Every (2000) when studying sexuality in schools. Take this example recounted by a primary school teacher:

*One summer three of the women teachers were going to get married during the holidays. At the last assembly of the term, the three women sat with their wedding veils on whilst the headteacher explained that after the holidays they would return as 'Mrs'. (p.417)*

The above scenario shows the institutional sanctioning of surname change. It demonstrates one of the ways in which children learn about (and come to expect and take for granted) surname change as the norm for married women. The quote also illustrates an instance of 'normalisation' as articulated by Foucault (1979) who argues that power no longer works through top-down imposition, but operates through normalisation. Moreover, a consideration of normativity allows for further integration of the 'individualisation thesis', as customary practices become less significant as societies modernise – along with classical sociological thought (notably Weber 1922 [1978]). Is this really the case for surname change? Considering the current take-up of surname change, and its appropriation by some same-sex couples, has its significance lessened?

Rather than losing significance, perhaps the meaning of surname change has just changed over time? For example, in their work on dowry practice in Turkey, Sandıkcı and İihan (2004) suggest traditions do not necessarily disappear as a result of modernisation, but that they change in status. Using the idea of 'detraditionalisation' they purport that tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive systems. They remark that traditions are no longer 'unquestionably true' and taken for granted, but 'become subject to public debate, reinterpretation, and renewal' (p.149). My research, since it is neither historical nor longitudinal, cannot



detect possible changes in meaning. However, it may point to the existence (or not) of different generational meanings. Moreover, I will be able to explore how marital naming practices are defined in today's supposedly enlightened age.

Meanwhile, drawing on McGuire (1964), is it possible that surname change is almost unanimously taken-up by married women because it is considered a 'cultural truism'? Might it exist as an essential truth or fact about women? This is a paradox Probyn (1997) observes in her work on 'new traditionalism' in which she writes about the material world being depicted as unchanged by the advertising industry. She notes, in this context, that the home is seen as an unchanging site, and 'mothers', 'kids', 'love' and 'life' are presented as "immutable truths" which only those feminists would not choose.' (p.131). That is, people hold assumptions about what is natural and inevitable about mothers, for example. Might such ideals (or illusions) about married women account for many cases of surname change?

### *Names and choice*

'Choice' is another theme of my thesis. Earlier, I pointed to claims about women's ability to freely negotiate choice. But if such choice exists, why is the same naming choice made so repeatedly? Halsbury's Laws of England (1994) explains that people are free to change names – providing it is not done to defraud<sup>23</sup>. Thus, surname change by married women occurs as a consequence of marriage, rather than law. A bride's new name, as with all individuals, is acquired through common usage. In my case, 'Rebekah Wilson' is my name because that is how I am commonly known, and remains so unless I decide to change it. The system is flexible because surnames were originally rather arbitrarily assumed. Yet, if I were to change names, legal documentation might be needed to prove I had done so. And here emerges a gendered difference. My marriage certificate would suffice as such proof, on account of this being the norm, if I assumed my husband's surname. But, if he wanted my surname, or if we wanted a new surname, a deed of name change would be required.

According to Stannard (1973), writer of several marital naming texts, the general right to name oneself has been consistently recognised by English courts. That said, recently Gross (1996) has pointed to occasional prohibitions. But, more often than not, English law has supported one's right to self-name, as also dictated by European and international standards. Surprisingly, I have found no literature on

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<sup>23</sup> Different rules apply if a person is changing names to meet a 'name and arms' clause in a will or settlement. Additionally, it is more difficult to change a baptismal name because these, in theory, are given by God, rather being arbitrarily assumed.

marital naming that makes reference to these provisions. Yet, such support has existed since the 1970s. The Council of Europe and The Committee of Ministers (1978), along with the United Nations General Assembly (1979), has explicitly requested that member states ensure all gender discrimination related to surnames be eliminated. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (1995; 1998) has twice returned to this issue, expressing surprise that its members have not yet fulfilled their commitments.

Failure to eradicate name discrimination is not surprising when one considers Coomaraswamy's (1994) writings on the rights of women. She points out that the United Nations article pertaining to names is contentious. Because of this, she renders it the most important provision of the convention on eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. It is contentious, she writes, because it assumes women can make free, or consequence-free, choices. However, there is a significant difference between 'free' (or 'individual') choice and contextual or relational choice, as observed by Smart and Shipman (2004) in their critique of the individualisation thesis. Indeed, the consequences of not changing surnames, as reported by Fowler and Fuehrer (1997), can be ridicule, alienation and suspicion about a woman's spousal and motherly commitment. I am keen to further explore the factors influencing a woman's 'choice', what is at stake for her and what her choice might reflect about society.

Many women might employ discourses of 'free' choice when talking about their naming decisions – as my research will explore. This is especially the case if one takes an individualised view of marriage. Commenting on marriage, Braun (2003) notes that such an outlook constructs marriage as a personal choice, rather than political act. Moreover, focusing on the wedding as a consumerist event, individualisation rhetoric seems pervasive. Boden (2003:16), who gives a sociological account of weddings, notes that they are spoken about as uniting two people who 'choose to commit to each other'. She also observes that bridal magazines tend to evoke 'themes of agency, choice and self-responsibility', and in her view this disguises the economic incentives driving the event (p.70). And, by encouraging women to take control of their weddings, Boden argues that such consumption is 'unquestionably assumed to be "women's work", an extension of their domestic role' (p.157) – which relates to my earlier point about naming being women's work.

### *Names and identity*

'Identity' is another theme of my thesis – not least because this is the main purpose of a name. It is compulsory in the UK for married parents and unmarried mothers to publicly record their child's name within 42 days of her/his birth<sup>24</sup>. It is only when newborns are named on a birth certificate that their existence is confirmed (this ends when they are named on a death certificate). This act of civil registration, Finch (Finch 2004:259) notes, is a requirement that 'underpins citizenship and social status' and forms a legal link between parent and child. But, of course, identity is far more complex than simply being a named person. Three particular issues are important to my study: dual identity; fluid identity; and identity as a negotiated performance.

On the first point of dual identity, as Finch (2008:709) observes, names have a 'dual character'. They mark out individuals and distinguish them from others, but also indicate social connections. This reiterates my point about autonomy and connectedness. This split, she points out, was noted by Elias (1991) in his sociological work on individuals and society. He argued that the 'first name-surname formula' provided a balance between the 'I-Identity' and the 'We-Identity' in human societies. It is here that Finch makes a particularly salient observation about Giddens' work. She notes that a life-long name could be said to provide 'continuity in one's public persona' that contributes to 'a stable sense of the self' (p.712). Such coherence in one's personal narrative, she notes, is something Giddens (1991:76) claims is 'at the core of self-identity in modern social life'. Similarly, in this respect, a change of surname could potentially disrupt one's identity. Yet, still referring to his work of modernity, she notes that changing names could signify a 'passage' in one's life that forms part of the 'creative construction of a personal narrative' (p.712).

On the second point fluidity, one's identity is not fixed. Rather, it is fluid. In saying this, I am not necessarily suggesting names should be flexible. Instead, I use this idea in the context of identity 'transformations' and how these changes might be gendered. I take the position that 'transformation' is a demand constantly placed on women. One only has to tune into mainstream media outlets to find women being told they can (and should) makeover their looks or sexual habits, for example (Otnes and Pleck 2003; Walkerdine, et al. 2001). Indeed, such a 'conversion' seems to be

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<sup>24</sup> Unmarried fathers are not statutorily obligated, under the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1953, to register their child's birth. However, a Government White Paper ('Joint Birth Registration') attempts to make this a legal requirement. It is a controversial move that has angered some women's groups since the legislation would enable fathers to access records detailing a mother's address, which could prove undesired in some cases.

the ultimate climax of romantic discourse. Might such reasoning be offered with regards to surname change? Is it said to transform women in any way? After all, it has been argued that women's lives are expected to change – and do change – more than those of men as a result of marriage (Bernard 1972; Lassiter 1983). The belief that women's identities are malleable might go some way to understanding marital naming.

On the third point of performativity, I consider identity to be a 'negotiated performance', as described by Reynolds and Wetherell (2003:493) in their work on singleness (and much earlier Goffman 1959). That is, one's identity is constantly reformed – being put together in various ways each time a person thinks or speaks. My research does not aim to demonstrate if, and how much, names might feature in this process. Instead, like Reynolds and Wetherell, I am interested in how women's accounts of naming connect to notions of identity. Do they talk about identity (perhaps a single or marital identity) when asked about their surnames. And, if so, how is this constructed? How do women define themselves in relation to their names? Are names considered helpful in forming an identity? How do names impact on the sense of 'family' identity? Moreover, how are women's identities perceived on the basis of their surname decisions?

### *Names and relationships*

A further theme of my thesis is that of relationships. For blood relations, hereditary surnaming has been widely used in England for some time. That is, most children inherit the surname of their father. The emergence of this practice, according to Wilson (1998), signals the arrival of patriliney as *the* system of family organisation in England. Indeed, as a scheme, it forms part of a wider system of patrilineality developed in late medieval times which was profoundly discriminatory toward women (e.g. they and their descendents were excluded from inheritance and succession arrangements)<sup>25</sup>. Hereditary surnames, as noted by Davidoff et al (1999:92), were used to 'create boundaries between belonging and not belonging', not least because it was easier to 'claim kin' if a common surname could be called upon.

Hereditary naming also had an impact on children's rights. A child given a father's surname – or mother's husband – was assumed to be legitimate. This is

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<sup>25</sup> Wilson (1998) notes that some wealthy families made great efforts to ensure property passed to daughters – if there were no male heirs. It was a condition of marriage in these cases that a husband and children would use the wife/mother's surname for the purpose of inheritance.

because, as Davidoff et al (1999) note, surnames have long been confused with blood ties. The authors explain that if children were denied their fathers' surnames, they were also denied admittance to his family and inheritance<sup>26</sup>. I am interested in exploring the contemporary usage of such language. Are surnames still conflated with blood ties, despite the existence of genetic testing? Moreover, might outdated or hidden ideas about 'legitimacy' emerge when surnames are discussed? Might surnames still serve to 'display' legitimacy, either by those wishing to distinguish themselves from an undesirable 'other' or by 'others' wanting to gain authenticity as a family?

For spousal relationships, Alford (1988) has linked surname change to patrilocal residence. Clark and Jackson (1995) make a similar link between surname change and a woman leaving her family of origin when married (such an alliance, they note, was to her advantage if she was later widowed)<sup>27</sup>. I am interested in the extent to a discourse of 'marrying into' features in women's discussions about marital naming. Is a surname change a method of forging positive relations with in-laws? Does it facilitate cross-family ties? Might such synchronisation count as 'kin work' for which women are often responsible? And how might a woman's family feature in this scenario?

Aside from in-law relations, I am struck by a suggestion advanced by Noack and Wiik (2008) regarding marital naming in Norway. They claim that new rights and obligations in Scandinavia make it difficult to distinguish marriage from unmarried cohabitation – thus a spousal surname might signal a key difference between the two statuses. They ask: Is there a perceived need to 'symbolically demarcate' marriage as 'qualitatively different' from unmarried cohabitation (p.517)? Moreover, they suggest surname change might provide approval for 'norm-guided behaviour', and be used to denote a couple's intent for 'a special and enduring relationship' at a time when the symbolic importance of marriage remains high (ibid.).

The authors explain that their work relates to Cherlin's (2004) claims about a decline in the importance of marriage at the same time its symbolic value is increasing. Their work also links that of Boden (2003:119), introduced earlier. She remarks that marriage might be perceived as 'romantic' at a time of high divorce

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<sup>26</sup> Stannard (1977:2) notes that, when her book was written, women could still be heard saying 'I bore *his* children' [original italics]. The phrases 'carrying his child' or 'pregnant with his child' commonly appear in the popular press (Nexis UK search 20 April to 20 October 2009).

<sup>27</sup> That said, sociological work, perhaps starting with Young and Willmott (1957), has observed close relations between mothers and their married daughters, especially in working-class families.

rates since couples can show themselves as ‘striving against the odds’ in order to ‘live happily ever after’. Similarly, in an account of naming and citizenship, Steele (2004:17) claims: ‘By taking responsibility for the preservation of the (patriarchal) “family unit”, and by demonstrating this commitment by taking their husband’s names, many young women are assuming the primary responsibility for the success of the “family project” in the face of rising divorce rates.’ I am keen to explore women’s interpretations of marital naming in relation to their ideas about marriage. For instance, does it connect to ideas about success, monogamy and longevity?

### *Names and performativity*

‘Performativity’ (or, as I explain, ‘display’) is my final central concept. I take the position that naming is a performative action within the study of gender, identity and relationships. I have stated that naming marks a person’s existence, but that it is not a single event. Instead, it is an ever-occurring process as names are constantly being reconfirmed. A name declares and makes public one’s personal identity and their family connections. There might be a few occasions that names are particularly relevant, as is the case at weddings when a new ‘Mr and Mrs Wilson’ might be announced. But the name ‘Mrs Wilson’ goes on to be reinforced on a daily basis unless a woman contests the change, in which case she may be challenged<sup>28</sup>. Routine naming occasions might not seem as profound as those uttered at a formalised ceremony, but they can still assume important meanings in certain settings.

By viewing naming as an activity, I draw on Finch’s (2007) idea of ‘display’. That is, naming is a method of confirming and communicating ‘family’ – along with the use of narratives or domestic objects, for instance. Indeed, Finch (2008:42) points out that names are one way of displaying the ‘family-like’ character of relationships. This might be done, she notes, through the taken-for-granted elements of naming (e.g. passing on a father’s surname) or the more proactive choice of a name. The concept of ‘display’, which I outline in the next paragraph, invites comparisons to performativity theory, although Finch suggests caution in making such links since performativity theorists tend to focus on individual identity rather than social interaction. Moreover, she notes that the performance metaphor, central to Goffman’s work, does not adequately capture the interchange between an actor and audience as she intends for ‘display’.

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<sup>28</sup> Brook (2002:59) notes: ‘The utterances of wedding ceremonies have long been used to illustrate the import of performative speech acts: one becomes married, by social convention, as the words ‘I do’ are spoken.’

Since ‘display’ is offered within the frame of sociological work on families, I find it particularly helpful in considering references to marital naming as women’s work. As a concept, it complements and builds on Morgan’s (1996; 1999) influential work on ‘family practices’ – or the fragments of everyday life that are taken for granted. Morgan’s ideas have served to re-frame ‘family’ as an interactive process rather than an institutional structure. Thus, sociological thought (in the UK, at least) tends to emphasise ‘doing’ rather than ‘being’ a family. Finch (2008:721) remarks that the idea of ‘family practices’ as fragments of everyday life ‘captures perfectly the significance of names’. Yet, while acknowledging the significance of Morgan’s work, Finch (2007:66&73) proposes that families need to be ‘displayed’ as well as ‘done’ as the ‘contours and character’ of a family are not always readily apparent.

Moreover, Finch (2007) proposes that ‘display’ is used as an analytical tool for understanding processes through which contemporary families are ‘displayed’ to others as being ‘family-like’. It is also presented as an activity through which family relationships are demonstrated, legitimised and conveyed to others. ‘Display’ concerns not only the naming of members, but shows that certain relationships work ‘in a family-like way’ (p.70). Thus, ‘display’ could take the form of a narrative prop for speaking about the values or moral tales of a family, such as ‘The Wilsons don’t do this or that’. The desired outcome of ‘display’ is to signal that certain actions constitute ‘doing family things’, thereby confirming a relationship as a ‘family relationship’ (p.73). Thus, as Donovan et al (2008) suggest, ‘display’ does not necessarily confirm the qualitative character of a given relationship nor the complexity of a relationship, but is concerned with appearing to ‘do’ certain family practices and being recognised for doing so.

The ability to ‘display’ requires an audience – although Finch tends to avoid this word, as one’s ‘audience’ could be oneself. Indeed, it is only with an audience in place that a couple can be declared married. Again, drawing on Boden’s (2003:79) work on weddings, she observes that such consumption is mostly concerned with ‘showing’ guests that one’s relationship is a success and will be for life. Moreover, she notes that the ‘showing’ of success is much more likely to be carried out by brides than grooms (which links to my earlier point about transformation). I am interested in using the concept of ‘display’ to develop these ideas, especially given the diversity and fluidity of contemporary relationships. Is it possible that surname change is used to ‘display’ being a proper wife. And, might it serve to reinforce the

general perception that marriage is superior to all other forms of intimate relationship?

To illustrate how ‘display’ might work, I have taken a quote from a participant featured in Boxer and Gritsenko’s (2005:3) study of marital naming in the United States and Russia:

*Taking on my husband’s last name was an outward sign of our union. It served to make me feel that I was ‘really married’ [I was 17] and that I had a new identity as his wife, by law...*

This participant, in no uncertain terms, describes surname change as ‘an outward sign’ of her union. The couple, through *her* changing names, are displaying a united front – perhaps to friends, children or even more widely. Moreover, in changing surnames, she also demonstrates her marital status to herself. Such ‘display’ was accompanied by the feeling of being ‘really married’. This, I take to mean, that her new marital status was legitimised. Other participants in this study referred to surname change in similar ways: ‘It’s a sign of unity and solidarity’ or ‘It is a symbol that we have created a new family’ (p.3). Indeed, Boxer and Gritsenko note participants’ regular use of words such as ‘sign’, ‘symbol’ or ‘meaning’ to account for their change of surname.

To ‘display’, it helps if the audience understands what is being demonstrated. As Finch articulates, actions need to hold socially recognisable meanings of ‘family-like’ behaviour in order to signify a family practice. This begs the question, as Finch advances, about whose version of family-like behaviour is being demonstrated? It is a point picked up by Donovan et al (2008:1) in their account of ‘display’. They reply with this question: ‘[To] what extent does “display” invoke normative models against which “others” are measured, deferring to moral discourses and familial ideology which [serve to] legitimate particular forms of experience?’ This is a key line of enquiry that resonates with my earlier remarks about the ideal nuclear family and notions of family legitimacy.

In addition, Donovan et al’s point about normative models relates to claims made by Noack and Wiik’s (2008:517) about marriage and cohabitation. They suggest common spousal surnames might be used to signal a marriage as bona fide and different than unmarried cohabitation. Moreover, the appropriation of surname change by some lesbian couples, done so to secure external recognition or acceptance (Almack 2005; Suter and Oswald 2003) suggests ‘display’ might reinforce certain norms of behaviour. It may certainly be the case, as Finch notes, that there is a



greater need for ‘display’ among those whose relationships are less readily recognisable as being ‘family’ relationships. But, do shared surnames serve to underwrite or reproduce certain ideas about ‘proper’ families – and indeed ‘proper’ mothers and wives? I will be looking for the existence of a master narrative in which certain relationships are said to be ‘done’ properly.

I have one final consideration. Suter and Oswald (2003) and Mills (2003) report that ‘family dis-identification’ was given as a reason for surname change by lesbian and feminist women. That is, surname change enabled some women to no longer ‘display’ a connection to an absent/abusive father or family. This again demonstrates the performative role of naming. It seems that naming is never an act of ‘non-display’ since names are always performative of something. This is an important consideration, since whatever is (and is not) ‘displayed’ through naming may be something women would consider when deciding on their post-wedding (or post-separation) surname.

## **Chapter Summary**

In concluding this chapter, I return to my opening remarks: the thesis of this study is that *names matter*, practically and symbolically. I have explained in this chapter that the customary practice of surname change by women living in England is an underexplored, underappreciated and ongoing social phenomenon. There are many unanswered questions, especially considering the lack of data on marital naming – and naming more generally – in the UK. As I have argued, the continuation of surname change by married women is puzzling since, although women are more independent than their foremothers, they are still largely dependent on their husbands for a surname. The persistence of surname change is also confusing as it appears counterintuitive to grand sociological thinking on social change and family decline. If people have become more individualised and detraditional, wouldn’t more women who marry retain their maiden names? Yet, as also pointed out in this chapter, the past continues to exert a powerful influence on modern life and the ideal of the nuclear family remains pervasive.

The chapter has carefully outlined and rationalised my research. It is not my intention to advocate for any of the ‘choices’ women make or promote any particular ways of living. Instead, my project seeks to understand what is meant by surname change – and the alternatives – as told to me by a group of women who have been married and some of the people living in their communities. I have speculated that

women's negotiations with marital naming will be complex and its precise meanings being context-specific, as well as contested and critiqued. My interpretation of these meanings will be assisted by considering and building upon the six central themes outlined in this chapter, namely gender, normativity, choice, identity, relationships and performativity. It is by focusing on these concepts that my work represents a significant departure from previous research on marital naming. In the next chapter, I turn to a small body of scholarly literature concerned with surname patterns and naming practices mainly within the context of opposite-sex marriage.

## Chapter 2

### **Mapping the Literature: Trends, Attitudes and Motivations**

For sociologists, marital naming is an underexplored, underappreciated and ongoing social phenomenon. This chapter comprises my attempt to explain why this might be and why further research is needed. My argument is that the near total neglect of research on marital naming within the field of sociology limits knowledge of this pervasive cultural norm, and restricts wider understandings of gender and kinship. In this chapter, I move away from the broad themes provided in Chapter 1 to focus on a small body of scholarly literature concerned with surname patterns and naming practices mainly within the context of opposite-sex marriage. I begin by presenting a synopsis of research that is currently available, and comment on its strengths and weaknesses. I then group the existing literature into three distinct themes, the findings of which are discussed in the remaining sections. When presenting these findings, I point to the lines of enquiry that will be explored by my own research study. The views of feminist thinkers and women's rights activists on marital naming are also discussed.

### **Synopsis of Literature**

In this section, I make a case for a UK-based study of marital naming to be conducted. I do this by drawing attention to a lack of primary research on the topic, and also by arguing that sociological insight could expand current understandings of how naming within marriage is 'done' and 'displayed'. I contend that scholarly knowledge about the subject could be much improved through the further use of questionnaire surveys and also interviews, and that a discursive approach is needed to analyse this material (fully discussed in Chapter 3).

### ***Too ordinary, too explosive***

Millions of women in the UK change surnames post-wedding, as I determined in Chapter 1, yet there is little empirical data on the subject. I was able to identify only one UK-based study of marital naming, by Mills (2003), which, although valuable, is limited in scope as it focuses only on female feminists working in professional occupations. Further knowledge, however, can be gained by considering work by Clarke et al (2008) who studied the ways in which same-sex couples make sense of marital naming. And, of course, a wide count of surname trends in the UK is given

by Valetas, in the previous chapter (although her main consideration is France). In addition, Tyler-Damon (2005), supervised by Leonore Davidoff, has conducted doctoral research into women's surnames, albeit taking a largely historical perspective on the subject.

What might account for this lack of attention? Goldin and Shim (2004), whose US study focuses on the prevalence of – and reasons for – surname retention, offer a possible explanation. They suggest the 'basic facts' of marital naming have escaped attention because none of the usual social science datasets contain the names of married couples (p.143). Certainly, surname 'choices' in the UK are not recorded. And, if they were, choices can change, and formal/informal names may differ. But, I consider other factors to be influential. It is perhaps more likely, as asserted by Duggan et al (1993), that few scholars deem marital naming important enough to warrant scrutiny. In my estimation, naming is considered to be a private and personal experience, thus excused from public debate. Moreover, the apparent ease with which women can switch surnames means the practice is perceived to be merely inevitable.

But, not only is surname change inevitable, it is also invisible. If changing surnames is viewed as only a routine, it becomes normalised through being mundane – not to mention an effective form of social regulation and power. It operates simply as one of many taken for granted assumptions about opposite-sex coupledness and marriage. Several feminist thinkers have commented on the 'taken-for-grantedness' of heterosexuality, including Ingraham (1999). Her text on romancing heterosexuality draws attention to the heterosexist (classist and racist) layers of America's wedding culture. She argues that critical assessments of sacred and valued practices and institutions are frequently resisted and suppressed by academics. They fear, she contends, their readers might view such accounts as 'personal attacks on themselves or on heterosexuals as a group rather than as institutional analyses or inventories' (p.9). Thus, the normative goes unexplained.

Furthermore, if Ingraham is correct, while some academics may steer clear of analysing sacred or valued heterosexual practices, potential research participants may be silenced. Patterns of naming, like other heterosexual beliefs and behaviours, are so culturally ingrained that they are protected from questioning. This is one of the claims Lebell (1988) makes in her account of naming in families. She argues that the subject of surnames is 'so emotionally volatile that most people would rather distance themselves by not thinking of it as a social issue' (p.30). So, any

interrogation of marital naming is likely to involve uncomfortable debates about heteronormative identity, kinship and relationships. Thus, paradoxically, marital naming as a research topic may have been deemed too ordinary and too explosive to warrant scrutiny.

### ***Too siloed, too infrequent***

Despite the lack of research from the UK, a limited number of studies have been published in the United States, as I discuss later. Unfortunately, however, they are scattered around the margins of social science literature. Ironically, my search for literature on names was complicated by issues of nomenclature. How exactly is this particular phenomenon defined? There are, after all, many search terms to use. For example, ‘surnames’, ‘last names’ and ‘family names’, not to mention ‘maiden names’, ‘birth names’ and ‘pre-marital surnames’. And, a whole host of other keywords such as ‘surname retention’, ‘double-barrelling’, ‘hyphenating’, ‘dual-naming’, ‘blended naming’ and ‘traditional naming’ also exist. It was only mid-way through my searches that the term ‘marital naming’ came to light. This difficulty emphasises just one inconsistency in doing research on women’s post-wedding surnames.

The extent of the literature on marital naming, as mentioned previously, is rather haphazard. It is also infrequent. The earliest published study appears to be Embleton and King’s (1984) work on marital naming in Canada. The remaining studies have since been published at about the rate of one per year. That said, there is an abundance of literature concerned with *first* names, starting with Cooley’s (1902) sociological work on the ‘looking glass self’. The majority of such studies, however, have a psychological focus (see Dralle and Mackiewicz 1981; Foss and Edson 1989; Stafford and Kline 1996; Twenge 1997). And, the findings of such psychological enquiries have been drawn on by feminist thinkers to protest against surname change. Stannard (1973), for example, used the principles of psychoanalysis to argue that men may unconsciously want their wives to imitate their mothers, thus want them to share their mother’s name.

Prior to Embleton and King’s work, Holt (1939) considered marital naming (in an unpublished thesis) as part of a wider investigation into the psychology of names. His claims, however, are dubious. Holt states that women who resist the call to change surnames are ‘usually maladjusted anyway’ (cited in Duggan, et al. 1993:91). Perhaps unsurprisingly, he provides no supporting evidence. He

conversely argued that men's surname change might cause severe emotional disturbance, such as the feeling of a split personality. Moreover, a further psychological study by Arthaud et al (1948) found that men and women tended to express greater satisfaction with their surnames than first names – thus implying that they associated feelings of identity and security with their surnames. It is, however, unclear if married women were asked about their maiden names.

Much of the literature identified in my search was published in journals of psychology, along with annals dealing with communication as well as a few interdisciplinary journals. The latter tended to offer feminist accounts from a range of perspectives, as do some of the psychological publications. Certainly, some studies explored and expanded on previously published findings but, as a body of literature, it lacks unity. Surprisingly, the field of sociology is not well represented in the literature on marital naming despite its interest in notions of gender, identity, kinship and culture. Indeed, Hamilton et al (2009) and Mills (2003) appear to be the only researchers to make clear use of sociological theory – the former in relation to gendered language and the latter in relation to the work of Bourdieu.

The absence of sociologically-led research, as outlined in Chapter 1, is remarkable since marital naming – and naming more widely – has the potential to be a fascinating subject for sociologists. This observation, however, is not unique or new. Indeed, several decades ago, Broom et al (1955) pointed to a lack of interest in naming when researching Los Angeles residents who petitioned for a change of surname. It is a gap to which Finch (2008) has recently returned. She notes: 'Sociological research on names and their use is surprisingly sparse given their social significance' (p.710). She also draws attention to sociological work on names by Elias (1991), as I referred to in the previous chapter. In total, 31 empirical studies from English-speaking countries were identified by my literature review, and two reviews of literature were located (see Appendix 1 for more details). The empirical studies can be grouped into three themes, the findings of which are discussed later (two of the studies deal with two themes each):

- **Theme 1:** Ten studies identify **naming trends**.
- **Theme 2:** Thirteen studies deal with **attitudes toward naming**.
- **Theme 3:** Ten studies focus on **women's naming decisions**.

### ***Too centred on North America***

In my search for literature on marital naming, it became clear that most research was conducted with participants in the United States<sup>29</sup>. The need for more diverse data on marital naming has been noted by Duggan et al (1993), Stafford and Kline (1996), Kline (1996) et al and Twenge (1997), but only limited evidence from other countries is available. Those countries from which data have emerged, and with naming practices similar to the UK, include Russia, New Zealand and various European countries (Bähr and Weatherall 1999; Boxer and Gritsenko 2005; Noack and Wiik 2008; Trost 1991; Valetas 1993; 2001). My search also uncovered data from Hong Kong, Japan, Peru and a range of non-industrial societies (Alford 1988; Arichi 1999; Lobo 1982; Ono 2003; Watson 1986). But, overall, current understandings of marital naming are primarily based on the replies of White populations living in the United States – and most often these respondents are surveyed while at university.

### ***Too quantitative in focus***

Of the 31 studies on marital naming, 23 make use of telephone or questionnaire surveys. There appears, however, to be just one limited survey of public opinion with regards to marital naming in the UK – this being a Eurobarometer survey (Valetas 2001). Thus, little is known about ways of ‘doing’ and seeing naming in the UK. Compared to surveys, limited use has been made of qualitative methods. Six studies have employed interviews, some more exhaustive than others, to explore personal experiences of naming. This is a particularly under-researched area. Indeed, Ho (1999) argues that researchers have essentially failed to capture women’s encounters and experiences of marital naming, especially the complex decision-making processes involved in choosing a post-wedding surname. The specific ways in which I will address these gaps in depth and breadth are discussed later in this chapter.

Aside from data collection, as I argue in the next chapter, a more comprehensive understanding of marital naming could be achieved by taking a discursive approach to analysis. This would allow for a more nuanced exploration of

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<sup>29</sup> The most nationally representative study from the United States found that only one per cent of its main sample had made a ‘non-conventional’ surname choice (Johnson and Scheuble 1995). It is also worth noting that, unlike women in England, those in the United States were denied their common law right to name themselves during the 1800s until 1972 (see Stannard 1977; 1984). The controlling of this right only occurred when married women attempted to retain their maiden names – prior to this the right had not been claimed. Such control bears similarities to the actions of many American states which have introduced new legislation about who can and cannot marry i.e. laws have been changed only when challenged.

the shared and multiple discourses used to explain naming decisions. Bähr and Weatherall (1999), researching marital naming in New Zealand, used such an approach. They contend that research on marital naming has so far failed to address the contradictory ways in which people account for surname change, and how these explanations reproduce or undermine feminist understandings of the practice. However, while identifying some ways of speaking about marital naming, they did not focus on women's negotiations. Thus, while their research provides excellent groundwork, there is a need to explore the narratives used by women who experienced the call to change surnames.

## **Conceptual Literature**

In this section, before discussing the research evidence, I outline the real and conceptual attention that women's rights activists and/or feminist academics have paid to marital naming. I highlight the protests made by early thinkers in America's suffrage movement (for a full account see Stannard 1977), and also those made many decades later by feminist academics concerned with sexism in language.

### ***Early protests***

The first recorded challenge to the widespread practice of surname change appears to have been made by members of America's early women's movement. Anxious to secure rights for women, these activists protested against surname change on the grounds it contributed to a loss of identity. Indeed, speaking in 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton referred to a woman's right to have 'a life-long name to mark her identity' (Stannard 1973:3). She drew similarities – during the abolitionist movement – between women's names and those of American slaves. A slave's first step towards liberty and dignity on escaping slavery was to lose his/her owner's name, she argued. The 'demoralising effect' of surname change on women and society more widely, she asserted, could not be overestimated (Stannard 1977:95). And, Cady Stanton dismissed the idea that names were meaningless labels by declaring that they often signified much and involved a great principle for their bearers.

At the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 – an early and influential women's rights meeting – delegates were referred to only by their first names, omitting the titles Miss and Mrs (Stannard 1973). This refusal to acknowledge marital status, Penfield (1987) declares, was the first time that women's names were modified in an official capacity to make a feminist statement. This first-name-only policy, Stannard reports, was directly influenced by the strong convictions of Elizabeth Cady Stanton



who, after marrying, added her husband's surname to her own and asked that she never be called Mrs Henry B Stanton. A more radical stance was taken by her contemporary, Lucy Stone, who is commonly believed to be the first American woman to break with convention and retain her maiden name after marrying in 1856. Indeed, Stannard notes that the term 'Lucy Stoner' was added to American dictionaries to describe a person who advocates surname retention by married women.

After Stone's death, a group of prominent feminists in New York formed the Lucy Stone League in 1921 to help women who wished to keep their maiden names after their wedding. The League had great success in informing the public about women's naming rights. Its achievements included persuading the US State Department to issue passports in women's maiden names and convincing banks to do the same for women opening accounts and signing cheques. The League also arranged transfers of property for married women using maiden names. Further local successes in New York allowed female residents to vote using their maiden name, open telephone accounts and be issued with library cards. The League also assisted professional women who wanted their place of work to accept their maiden name as their legal name. However, it failed to persuade the Federal Government to allow female employees to request payroll cheques in their maiden names (Stannard 1973).

The efforts of these feminist women, however, did not occur without criticism. And, it is possible to draw parallels with modern-day commentary on women's surnames. For instance, Stannard (1973:7) remarks that, in the 1920s, '[t]he right to a name of one's own came to be regarded as much ado about nothing, or worse, the neurotic symptom of a castrating woman who was reluctant to fulfil her psycho-biological role of wife and mother'. Similarly, she refers to an article in Harper's Magazine in 1927 that declared 'the Lucy Stone League's "constant clamour about maiden names" was "the most inane" of all the demands of the old feminists' (p.7). And, it seems that such condemnation impacted on women's decisions. An anonymous author writing in the American journal *New Republic* in 1926, for example, announced that after six years of marriage, social pressures and her husband's refusal to contribute to household tasks, she had been won over by surname change (ibid.).

### *Linguistic activists*

A new generation of feminists re-opened the debate on marital naming in the 1970s as attention shifted to sexist and racist language<sup>30</sup>. Some feminist women assumed 'liberation names' to undermine male patterns of naming. Others adopted their mother's maiden name or prefixed this name with '-child' or '-daughter' (Stannard 1984)<sup>31</sup>. Such renaming, Van Den Bergh (1987) claims, was a powerful tool of empowerment. She argues: '...being able to exert control over language as illustrated in the act of naming and renaming constitutes power' (p.134). Not only is renaming said to instil a sense of control in individuals, but it sends a message to those in power. Spender (1987:25), for instance, argues that liberation names, at the very least, 'raise consciousness about the role men's names have played in the subordination of women', and at best, 'confound traditional patriarchal classification schemes which have not operated in women's interest'.

Notwithstanding 'liberation names', there seems to be little experimentation with surnames. Indeed, Wilson (1998) observes that since the nineteenth century, only the surnames introduced by immigration (many of which have also been Anglicised) have been added to the UK surname repertoire. But why view them as fixed? Is it not the case that they are historically arbitrary and non-literal patronyms? I, for example, am not the son of Will and, if I looked back ten generations, only 10 out of 2,046 members of my family would share the 'Wilson' surname, according to Lebell's (1988) estimation. Moreover, since names form part of language, and language is a human product, surely they can be modified?

The permanency of male surnames has resulted in a life-long surname being considered a 'right' for males, according to Miller and Swift (1976). Indeed, Spender (1987) notes that men are far more likely to be addressed by their surname than women. Moreover, Spender expresses the view that, due to surname change, history has become a story of male family lines since it is almost impossible to trace women's ancestry. She illustrates this point by referring to Liddington and Norris (1978) who ran into difficulties when researching women's suffrage in Lancashire. They explain: '...one of the most active women, Helen Silcock, a weavers' union leader from Wigan, seemed to disappear after 1902. We couldn't think why, until we

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<sup>30</sup> Feminist-leaning works dealing with surnames, such as those by Emma Goldman and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, appeared in the interceding years.

<sup>31</sup> According to Queen (1997), lesbian women have often changed surnames on coming out, as well as changing first names if derived from a male name.

came across a notice of “congratulations to Miss Silcock on her marriage to Mr Fairhurst” in a little known labour journal’ (cited in Spender 1987:25)

Miss Silcock’s example frames surname change as a manifestation of patriarchy, as do claims made by several other feminist thinkers (e.g. Kanowitz 1969; Kramarae and Jenkins 1987; Lassiter 1983; Maggio 1988; Matossiah 1987; Pearson 1985; Weitzman 1981). Surname change is said to be one of many ways patriarchy, as a system of rule, has become institutionalised. Lebell (1988), writing on this issue, warns against focusing solely on the problems that surname change generates for individual women. This, she states, detracts attention from the ways in which women as a group are devalued within society. She does not claim surname change *per se* subordinates women, but it validates, normalises and maintains the following assumptions<sup>32</sup>:

- women’s names are serial and provisional
- women’s names are tenuous, interruptible and inconsequential
- women’s shift from single to married should be greater than it is for men
- women should always wear the title ‘wife’
- women’s identity is primarily derived from being a wife
- women’s sexual respectability is dependent on being married
- women receive names, men own names.

The campaigns initiated by Stanton, Stone and their contemporaries were continued decades later when, in 1970, the National Organisation for Women passed a resolution advocating surname retention for American women. A few years later, the Centre for a Woman’s Own Name was established, giving advice to women on their naming rights. Advice was also made available in the form of ‘how-to’ guides and through legal publications (see Embleton and King 1984; Foss and Edson 1989; Stafford and Kline 1996; Stannard 1973; 1977; 1984). In the UK, advice on marital naming was issued by the National Council for Civil Liberties in a booklet by Coussins (1978) in response to letters it received. It was published one year before the United Nation’s Convention (1979) committed signatory states to ensuring equal naming rights for husband and wives.

### **Theme 1: Trends in Naming**

Returning to the themes mentioned earlier – trends, attitudes and motivations in surname ‘choice’ – this section focuses specifically on surname trends. Seven primary studies (based on samples of between 70 and 1109 people) and three

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<sup>32</sup> I have also used Fowler and Fuehrer (1997) to make this list.

secondary studies focus on trends. That is, the authors of these ten studies seek to identify the characteristics of women who use a certain type of surname. Their findings are given below. All except one study were conducted in the United States.

### ***General patterns***

A pattern emerges from the literature on surname trends, based on women living in the United States. It suggests that surname retention is confined to highly-educated women who are career orientated and marry later in life. These characteristics, along with those outlined below, might also extend to women with hyphenated surnames, as some studies merge the two under the label of ‘non-conventional’ surname users. It seems that, compared to women who change surnames, those using alternatives are more likely to:

- work in full-time jobs
- attend school to a high level
- mother later-than-average (if at all)
- marry (initially) later-than-average
- marry in non-religious ceremonies
- focus on their careers and/or earn a high salary
- hold ‘untraditional’ views about marriage and gender roles
- originate from outside the US and/or are ‘of colour’
- have a mother who did not change surnames<sup>33</sup>

The above findings on general patterns of surname ‘choice’ are corroborated across two or more studies. There is, however, conflicting evidence about the role played by other characteristics on a woman’s ‘choice’ of surname: her birth decade and decade in which she married; her level of religious and also feminist orientations; her participation in pre-marital cohabitation; her husband’s educational and familial background; and her levels of autonomy/control/agency. Conversely, the following have been found to have little or no impact on a woman’s surname ‘choice’ (but this might be due to a lack of sample diversity): the commonness of her surname; the size of her community<sup>34</sup>; her interest in motherhood; her desired number of children; and her level of marital satisfaction, commitment and quality.

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<sup>33</sup> Johnson and Scheuble (1995) found that women were five and a half times more likely to use an alternative to surname change if their mothers had also done so, but there was no significant effect on the surname used by women married to sons of such mothers.

<sup>34</sup> Johnson and Scheuble (1995) did find, however, that southern US states had far higher rates of ‘non-conventional’ naming than other states because maiden names were often used as middle names.

### *Areas for further study*

The findings presented in this section are valuable since they identify some of the factors that relate to surname ‘choice’. Still, they oversimplify the process of naming. It is, by no means, the case that the aforesaid characteristics determine a woman’s ‘choice’ of surname. That is because, for example, most women in the United States switch surnames – whether they are well-educated or not (Goldin and Shim 2004). Moreover, surname ‘choices’ (and the meanings ascribed to these) are not static. It is certainly the case that surnames may be changed in the case of divorce and remarriage. This is why my research will focus less on ‘naming trends’ and more on ‘naming talk’. The aim, in carrying out this research, is to identify the nuances that are lost when looking at widespread patterns in the UK. In my estimation, women who make the same surname ‘choice’ will interpret and experience this decision in different ways.

The findings on naming trends create an uncomfortable tension, as I mentioned when discussing media discourses in Chapter 1. They seem to pit women against each other in some sort of ‘name wars’ – with those who retain their maiden name appearing to be more enlightened, but less endearing. My research attempts to move away from this consequence by focusing on processes rather than outcomes. By that I mean exploring the varied journeys women take to reach their desired (or maybe undesired) ‘choice’ of surname. In this respect, my work reflects Edwards and Caballero’s (2008) work on the selection of first names for children born to parents of mixed heritage. These authors note that studies of first names often focus on ‘outcomes, using birth registration data sets, rather than processes’ i.e. the ‘doing’ of naming (p.43). Returning to surnames, research on surname patterns tends to give narrow explanations of marital naming as it focuses on individual characteristics. My research will attempt to paint a broader picture by exploring how the meanings ascribed to surname change might reflect, maintain or disrupt cultural ideas about women.

Lastly, trends reported in this section indicate a split between traditionalism and modernity, upon which some authors have commented. For example, as I have noted elsewhere, Scheuble and Johnson (2005) claim that the practice of situational naming is indicative of a modern-day conflict, where society simultaneously values women’s individuality and achievements, but gives strong normative support to those who forego their maiden names (a symbol of their identity) to achieve a common ‘family’ surname. Such contradictory expectations regarding individual achievement

and feminine responsibility are also noted by Gerson (1985) and Hoffnung (1998), but the ways this (supposed) conflict is negotiated and played out with regards to naming has not been fully considered. Therefore, my research will explore the ways in which women navigate the tensions between modern opportunities and traditional constraints.

## **Theme 2: Attitudes Toward Naming**

Having considered naming trends, this section focuses on people's attitudes toward marital naming practices. My literature search identified 13 studies focusing on the topic of attitudes, of which a highly varied number of people were sampled – between six and 10,472. The respondents were married and unmarried, and in most cases heterosexual. Most of the studies make use of questionnaire surveys and were carried out in the United States. The findings which emerged from these studies focus on the surname preferences of respondents, their tolerance toward alternative naming practices and their assumptions about women with changed and unchanged surnames. The key findings from each study, many of which relate to the key concepts I outlined in Chapter 1, are discussed below.

### *Name preferences*

Starting with people's surname preferences, 71 per cent of Britons prefer women to use their husband's surname, according to a Eurobarometer survey (Valetas 2001)<sup>35</sup>. This is the highest reported preference among 15 European countries, based on data from 1995. Only one per cent of respondents were found to prefer surname retention by women. In addition, the views of men and women differed little, but no other demographic information is provided. An earlier French study by Valetas (1993), however, identified age-related preferences. Interestingly, younger women (aged 30 or less) were found to hold more 'traditional' views than their immediate elders. Similarly, Intons-Peterson and Crawford (1985) report a stronger preference for surname change among female undergraduates than female graduates<sup>36</sup> in the United States. Valetas suggests such differences could rest with young women's optimism about marriage, as it is only through divorce (usually encountered later in life) that the conflicting interests of surname 'choice' may become apparent.

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<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, Hamilton et al (2009) reported a similar statistic for the United States whereby 72 per cent of respondents agreed that it was better for a woman to adopt her husband's surname.

<sup>36</sup> The 'graduate sample' included graduate students, faculty and staff members at the same university.

When considering surname preferences, it is important to consider what each surname option meant to the individuals who took part in the research. For example, the women – of varying ages – interviewed by Suter (2004) said they did not oppose surname retention *per se*, but what it signified – or that it appeared to be an unappealing feminist and anti-family/anti-home statement. Her interviewees spoke of being comfortable with the traditional roles they had assumed, and they considered feminism to be an attack on this way of life. For these interviewees, women who retained their surnames were perceived as self-centred and too assertive. Similarly, a negative association between surname hyphenation and feminism was noted by Ho (1999:12), with one interviewee describing a woman with such a name as ‘a women’s libber’ and ‘a heavy hitter’ who was likely to ‘beat up’ the poor guys in her office.

A related issue concerns people’s surname preferences for children. With regards to those born to married parents, Twenge (1997) found that 80 per cent of female students at a US university favoured father-to-child surnames, and 12 per cent preferred hyphenated surnames for their children. Additionally, while ten per cent of her respondents planned to keep their maiden name, only one per cent favoured passing it to their children<sup>37</sup>. Some years earlier, Intons-Peterson and Crawford (1985) reported similar findings. Eighty-six per cent of female and 82 per cent of male undergraduates preferred patrilineality, as did 64 per cent of female and 68 per cent of male graduates. Married men were much more likely than single men to prefer patrilineality, and ‘women of colour’ favoured ‘less-conventional options’ (i.e. practices other than father-to-child surnames) more than White women.

### ***Name tolerance***

Twenty years ago in the United States, Foss and Edson (1989) observed substantial resistance to naming practices other than a wife adopting her husband’s surname. They note that the increasing amount of discourse about surname ‘choice’, namely from the media at that time, did not translate into widespread approval of, or mass take-up of, other options. A few years later, Scheuble and Johnson (1993) measured

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<sup>37</sup> Most young women surveyed by Twenge (1997) said they planned to give their child its father’s surname because it was normal, ordinary and simple. It was said to be in a child’s best interest and it would bring about family unity. For the feminist women surveyed by Mills (2003), family considerations outweighed other issues including feminist politics. Most of the women with unchanged surnames gave their children their father’s surname. Intons-Peterson and Crawford (1985) found that ‘women of colour’ favoured non-conventional surnames for their children more than White women.

acceptance levels among students at a Midwestern university in the United States with regards to surname ‘choices’. They found:

- Students were somewhat accepting of surname retention by wives and also of surname change by husbands.
- Female students were significantly more tolerant than male students – especially if a woman wanted to keep her surname ‘alive’ or had a professional career, if she preferred her own surname or if she had married later in life.
- Students generally said a woman should take her husband’s surname if it was her choice. Just over half said change should occur if a woman had, or planned, to have children.

Among the students surveyed, tolerance toward alternative choices of surname usage decreased in cases where participants wanted their first child to be a boy, and where large families were desired. This latter finding was particularly reinforced by male respondents. Tolerance toward alternative surname usage increased among those living in larger communities, those holding more liberal gender-role attitudes and those whose mothers were well-educated. Yet, being tolerant of alternative surname usage did not mean students preferred alternatives for themselves. Also, as the authors stated, students may be more tolerant than other sections of society since Perry and Birnbaum (1993) found only six per cent of a wider sample (i.e. not just comprised of students) agreed that Hillary Clinton should be known as Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Five years later, Scheuble and Johnson (1998) published the findings of a second attitudinal survey, this time with a larger and broader sample. People were found to be generally accepting of alternative surname practices – eight per cent strongly agreed and 41 per cent agreed that maiden name retention was ‘alright’ (women were found to be more accepting of this than men). But, importantly, tolerance levels decreased if a couple planned to have children – 77 per cent strongly agreed or agreed that a shared surname was best for those with children. The authors surmised that respondents might have been signalling a desire to protect their children from the ‘possible negative consequences’ and ‘potential complications’ of differently-named parents, but these issues are not explained (p.94). Tolerance levels were based on gender, levels of education, income, residency and religious beliefs, as well as age and political leanings.

In a recent study of marital naming in the United States, based on a random sample of about 800 Americans, Hamilton et al (2009) found:



- 72 per cent of respondents agreed it was generally better if a woman adopted her husband's surname – 34 per cent strongly agreed.
- 50 per cent of respondents agreed it was a good idea for states to legally require married women to take their husbands' surnames – 22 per cent strongly agreed.
- 47 per cent of respondents disagreed that it was 'OK' for a man to take his wife's surname – 31 per cent strongly disagreed.

In the UK, tolerance levels towards alternative surname usage – and their effects on women's surname 'choices' and experiences – are unknown. It may be possible to infer some support for Scheuble and Johnson's (1998) finding about tolerance levels decreasing for couples with children, as Duncan and Philips (2008) found that people's attitudes toward relationships become more 'traditional' when children were concerned. Moreover, some of the women interviewed by Mills (2003) suspected that surname retention would have prompted negative reactions from their extended families. Indeed, one woman reported that her in-laws had reacted with discontent and disappointment at her decision not to take her husband's surname. Another explained that, although surname retention was acceptable at her place of work, it was peculiar among her circle of friends.

### *Name assumptions*

Lastly, there is evidence from the existing literature that people are viewed differently on the basis of their surname 'choice'. These studies, as with tolerance levels, found responses to differ according to gender. Women, again, viewed those using alternative surnames more favourably than did men (although there were also in-group variations, for example, relating to levels of education). Meanwhile, Murray (1997) reports that men's views were sometimes intensely more negative than those of women – with the word 'bitch' occurring frequently (p.177). It seems that, compared to women who change surnames, those using alternatives were perceived as:

- younger and feminist
- less communal and home/family orientated
- more assertive/agentive/self-confident/independent
- more career-orientated, educated and industrious
- non-religious and of urban or North American upbringing
- less physically attractive (mainly by men)
- less committed to her marriage (mainly by men)
- less competent mothers and wives – unless a woman's surname was hyphenated.

Some of above traits could be regarded as positive or negative. Career-orientation, for instance, might be seen as desirable by some, but not others<sup>38</sup>. However, comments recounted by Embleton and King (1984:14-15), made by a range of people in response to their own refusal to change surnames, are obviously negative. These remarks include:

- ‘Don’t you love your husband?’
- ‘What’s wrong with your husband’s name?’
- ‘But what will you call the children?’
- ‘People will think that you’re just living together...’
- ‘But marriage will turn you into a new person...’
- ‘That’s just selfish.’
- ‘What does it matter anyway...?’
- ‘People will think your husband is weak.’
- ‘People will stereotype you as one of those feminist extremists...’
- ‘People will think that you don’t expect the marriage to last...’
- ‘But it’s always been done that way.’
- ‘But I’m sure that’s not legal.’
- ‘If you don’t change to his surname, you won’t get any alimony if you get divorced.’

Statements such as these were said to influence women’s motivations for using a particular type of surname. Some mentioned their husband had requested they take his surname, using reasons such as tradition, affection and acceptance to persuade them. One woman surveyed by Foss and Edson (1989:361), for example, was quoted as saying: ‘He said if I loved him I would want to change my name’. Similar issues were also noted by Mills (2003) in her study of female feminist professionals. Using her terminology, however, this group not only faced pressure from ‘conservative forces’ and ‘post-feminism’, but also from ‘hard-line feminism’. That is to say, those who changed surnames spoke about being perceived in a poor light by other feminists, who considered their choice a betrayal of feminist principles.

In the case of women who chose a hyphenated surname, the perceptions of university students were found to be generally positive – particularly women’s views of men who hyphenate (Forbes, et al. 2002)<sup>39</sup>. Men and women using hyphenated surnames, compared to the ‘average married man or woman’, were perceived to have more so-called ‘instrumental traits’ (i.e. ‘masculine’ qualities such as decisiveness and competitiveness), but only female students indicated that women with

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<sup>38</sup> Forbes et al (2002), in their study of hyphenated surnames, found that the direction of a perception depends on a perceiver’s ideas about traditional gender roles, how closely an individual conforms to such roles and the sexist attitude of the perceiver.

<sup>39</sup> This study does not explore class-based connotations (as might be relevant in the UK) or consider that women may inherit their spouse’s hyphenated name.

hyphenated surnames also had more so-called ‘expressive traits’ (i.e. ‘feminine’ qualities such as nurturance and affection). Men were seen to have both. The main findings were:

Compared with an ‘average married woman’, as referred to by Forbes et al:

- Women with hyphenated surnames were viewed as less anxious and worried, more outgoing, sociable and curious, more open to new experiences and more conscientious. They were seen as more career-oriented (but not less competent in terms of traditional roles), and as having a more androgynous role and gender identity. However, male students also viewed such women as less agreeable and friendly.

Compared with an ‘average married man’, as referred to by Forbes et al:

- Men with hyphenated surnames were viewed as more accommodating, good natured, agreeable, nurturing and committed to their marriage (by women especially). However, male students also viewed men with hyphenated names as less masculine than the ‘average married man’.

These replies differed somewhat depending on a respondent’s gender. However, there were in-group differences, too. Respondents high in ‘hostile sexism’<sup>40</sup> were found to view people with hyphenated surnames less positively than the ‘average married person’, especially men’s views of women. Women high in ‘benevolent sexism’<sup>41</sup> were found to view women using hyphenated surnames as ‘unconscientious’, ‘irresponsible’, ‘untrustworthy’ and ‘disloyal’ wives. Using Spence and Buckner (2000), the authors note that the ratio of ‘instrumental-to-expressive’ traits for men has remained steady for the last 25 years, but has become progressively smaller for women – i.e. women have acquired traditionally masculine traits without becoming less traditionally feminine. Also, men, but not women, rated women with hyphenated surnames as higher in relation to ‘masculine’ adjectives – i.e. women are starting to see ‘instrumental’ traits as gender-neutral or feminine, but men continue to see them as masculine.

Further differences between men and women were also tested by Intons-Peterson and Crawford (1985) in the United States. They asked participants (undergraduates and graduates) to specify the extent to which they, and other men or women, identified with their birth surname. They found:

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<sup>40</sup> Glick and Fiske (1997) refer to hostile sexism as encompassing subjectively negative (for the sexist) views e.g. dominative paternalism, derogatory beliefs and heterosexual hostility.

<sup>41</sup> Glick and Fiske (1997) refer to benevolent sexism, as encompassing subjectively positive (for the sexist) views e.g. protective paternalism, idealisation of women and desire for intimate relations.

- 61 per cent of male and 53 per cent of female undergraduates said their sense of identity would change if they changed surname – as did 73 per cent of male and 62 per cent of female graduates
- 86 per cent of female undergraduates, but only 57 per cent of their male colleagues, reported that men were likely to identify ‘a great deal’ with their surnames.
- 11 per cent of female undergraduates and seven per cent of their male colleagues indicated that women were likely to identify ‘a great deal’ with their surnames – even though 86 per cent of undergraduate women indicated that they themselves identified ‘somewhat/a great deal’ with their surname.

The Intons-Peterson and Crawford study found that surnames conveyed an important sense of identity to women and men, with both identifying with their surname to the same extent. However, both men and women underestimated the extent to which other women were said to identify with their maiden names. Most of the students they surveyed also perceived surname change to be legally, and psychologically, easier for women than men. Their sample, however, was undecided as to whether couples using surname alternatives shared a more egalitarian relationship than those sharing a surname. They were also asked other related questions:

- *Does a husband become legally responsible for his wife if she adopts his surname?* 36 per cent of female undergraduates and 19 per cent of female graduates/employees agreed. Such agreement increased in male respondents by seven per cent and 12 per cent, respectively.
- *Does a husband become the head of the household when his wife adopts his surname?* 36 per cent of male undergraduates agreed, but only seven percent of female undergraduates thought it was true. About 20 per cent of graduates agreed.
- *Would you endorse matriarchal naming systems?* More than 40 per cent of the undergraduate and graduate samples were undecided.
- *Does surname change imply a traditional division of labour within a marriage?* Generally participants – particularly females – disagreed.

This particular study offers few explanations as to why such views were held by both students and graduates, but respondents were also asked why women might change surnames. A key influence was reported to be ‘social/customary expectations’ (given by 89 per cent of men and 74 per cent of women). Additionally, most agreed that the views of family members were an important influence. Indeed, 82 per cent of male undergraduates and 70 per cent of male graduates agreed that their families expected them to retain their surname post-wedding, whereas 71 per cent of the female samples *strongly disagreed* with the statement that their families expected their surname to be unchanged post-wedding. It was also reported, albeit by far fewer participants, that women change surnames in order to combine their identity with

their husband's (given by 26 per cent of female and 11 per cent of male undergraduates). Some respondents in the graduate sample indicated that women changed surnames to signify reaching maturity, to meet their husband's request or to join his family.

### *Areas for further study*

The literature on attitudes toward surname usage provides some insight into ways of seeing (but not 'doing') naming within marriage. There are, however, clear areas for further development. Again, I note that little, if anything, is known about how accepting Britons are toward surname alternatives. Is surname retention, for example, viewed as radical, trivial, legitimate or irresponsible? Are people accepting of differently-surnamed spouses considering the diversity of UK households? Moreover, little, if anything, is known about the perceived value or significance of surname change and its alternatives. What might different surnames be seen to represent, if anything?

The findings presented in this section show that women are viewed differently on the basis of their surname 'choice'. Foss and Edson (1989), Kline et al (1996), Ho (1999) and Mills (2003) have found that women with unchanged surnames can experience hostility because of this action, such as being ignored and mocked, and even having the credibility and existence of their marriage doubted. Similarly, Fowler and Fuehrer (1997) found that surname retention resulted in a woman being ridiculed and alienated, and her marital and motherly commitments questioned. What is unclear, however, is the way in which women negotiate and deal with such opposition. Do they, for example, tolerate being misnamed, and eventually surrender to surname change?

It is likely that hostility toward surname retention limits a woman's ability to freely choose a surname. Indeed, some decades ago, Coussins (1978:12) pointed out that women writing to the National Council for Civil Liberties described their use of two surnames as a 'forced compromise' rather than a 'conscious choice', since they would have preferred their surname to go unchanged. Many years later, Scheuble and Johnson (2005), queried the extent to which 'situational' surnames (i.e. changing surnames depending on a given situation) were used out of choice. They suggest some women might see no other option but to be addressed by their husband's surname in certain situations? This begs the question, are women pushed into making the 'right' choice when it comes to surnames? And, what are the consequences of

making the ‘wrong’ choice. Moreover, how do women deal with opportunity of choice? A woman interviewed by Ho (1999), for example, is reported as saying surname ‘choice’ placed women in a difficult, unfair and stressful situation.

Lastly, Intons-Peterson and Crawford found that among their sample of students, surname change was not seen to imply a traditional division of labour within a marriage. Curiously, they added a caveat: female respondents were more likely than males to disassociate traditional marital surname styles from marital roles. How might this be explained? Is it the case, as Dryden (1999) observes, that young women are unable to make connections between gender inequality and modern-day marriage? Indeed, how do women negotiate the gender-bias of surname change? This issue is touched upon by Scheuble and Johnson (2005) in their work on situational surnames, who point to a shift in attitudes about marriage. They claim: ‘The notion of women as property is an anachronism, no longer supported by the legal system or accepted by the general public’ (p.143). However, in spite of this, they note that naming conventions still largely reflect this traditional view. Why is this? Does the customary nature of surname change mean equality is unnoticed or disregarded? How do women deal with this contradiction?

### **Theme 3: Making Decisions About Naming**

The final theme, discussed in this section, focuses on the decision-making processes women employ when choosing a surname. Ten empirical studies explore this issue, drawing on samples of between five and 362 women – most of whom had achieved high levels of academic and professional success. Some of the studies also refer to particular groups, such as feminist women, Catholic women and lesbian women. The studies make use of either questionnaires or interviews, or both. And, all feature women living in the United States (one also includes Russian women), except one British account. When presenting the findings from these studies, I point to the lines of enquiry that will be explored by my own research study.

#### ***Names and normativity***

As discussed in Chapter 1, the concept of ‘normativity’ is central to my thesis. I have noted the take-up of surname change as a normative or customary practice. The literature on marital naming shows that women frequently cite ‘tradition’ as a motivating factor for changing surnames. Many women were quoted as saying they had never considered any alternatives – or were not aware of other options. Indeed, as I speculated at the beginning of this chapter, the practice was said to be so normal

and so routine that it usually went unquestioned. What is interesting about women's appeals to tradition is that few, if any, felt it necessary to elaborate on this as a motivating factor. The response of 'tradition' was presented as an entirely valid and indisputable fact of life.

The complexities of 'tradition' are given limited attention in the existing literature. My research will pay close attention to this issue. Is it the case that surname change is accepted only on the basis of being time-honoured, as in Shils' (1975) assessment of a traditional belief? Do women change surnames simply for the sake of doing so? Or, does the practice involve certain meanings and intentions? If so, what values are recognised and upheld? And are these values supported by women? Moreover, in her work on bachelorette parties, Montemurro (2006) notes that traditions rooted in patriarchy are often romanticised by the wedding industry (i.e. a host of companies selling wedding paraphernalia), thus continue to be practised without the knowledge of why or how they originated. So how do modern-day women make sense of surname change, and does 'romance' feature in women's accounts?

Returning to the power of 'tradition', women who used this repertoire were also likely to view marriage as an institution with prescribed and unquestionable roles. It seemed to be viewed, according to Foss and Edson (1989:362), as a 'special, all-inclusive state' requiring 'accommodations and adjustments' so as to 'play the role properly'. Changing one's surname was such an adjustment. Equally, woman with unchanged surnames did not view marriage as an institution determining their behaviour. This is important. My research will devote attention to considering meanings of marriage, as well as marital naming, as a way to better understand the latter. If there are 'proper' and 'improper' ways of 'playing' marriage, could the same be true of naming? How might the concept of 'display' (Finch 2007), discussed in Chapter 1, be useful in considering the desired status of surname change? What exactly is going on when a woman first uses, and continues to use, her new surname?

In addition to reflecting on 'display', appeals to 'tradition' also provide an opportunity to consider 'detraditionalism' (and indeed 'retraditionalism'). Suter (2004), for example, in her work on naming, found that women married before 1970 made particular use of 'tradition' to account for surname change. Yet, this group was more supportive of new brides using surname alternatives than women married in the 1990s. Most of the brides married in the 1970s to 1980s, when explaining surname change, were found to speak about personal 'choice', identity issues and

administrative realities rather than tradition. (Boxer and Gritsenko 2005 report similar findings.) Those married in the 1990s, interestingly made more appeals to ‘tradition’ than brides of the 1970s and 1980s. Many women in this later-married group did not want their daughters to use surname alternatives – unless they were already professionally established. How might this paradox be understood?

Lastly, as mentioned previously, young women were commonly reported to anticipate surname change for themselves if, and when, they married. Twenge (1997) remarked that the unquestioning attitude of students in her study was quite striking. The women, she claims, clearly feared deviating from the norm and did not question why shared surnames were necessary, and why only women were required to switch surnames. Some women, she noted, found it hard to elaborate on their appeals to ‘tradition’, as previously mentioned. Goldin and Shim (2004), on this topic, identified a recent drop in surname retention among two datasets in the United States (as mentioned in Chapter 1). They suggest the practice may be a less salient way of supporting gender equality than in previous decades, or a drift to more conservative social values. This proposal, however, requires more attention.

### *Names and identity*

In the previous chapter, I explained that ‘identity’ is a key theme of my thesis, not least because this is the main purpose of a name. The literature on marital naming shows that ‘identity’ is cited as a key consideration in making surname decisions. Women who had changed surnames spoke about identity in three ways, as outlined below:

- *Having a married identity*: Some women spoke about married couples having a single identity represented by one surname. A shared surname symbolised ‘two becoming one’.
- *Assuming the identity of one’s husband*: Some women considered their husband’s identity/status as more important or higher than their own identity (which can be viewed as ‘male identification’<sup>42</sup>). A husband was said to be the ‘head of the household’ and this was ‘OK’ or ‘the way it should be’. Such women were ‘honoured’ to share his surname, and proud to be so closely connected to his identity (which can be viewed as ‘basking in reflected glory’).
- *Having a changed identity*: Some women spoke about ‘transformation’ – shifting from being single girls to married women. Changing surnames was said to signal a transformation from childhood (or girlhood) to adulthood (or womanhood).

Concerning a woman’s assumption of the identity of her husband, it would be interesting to further consider women’s negotiations with naming and identity in the

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<sup>42</sup> This term refers to the act of women placing men above women regardless of women’s comparative qualities (Barry 1984).



context of spousal relations. What role, for example, does naming play in one's marital identity? Regarding the concept of a changed identity, the 'transformation' women spoke about appeared to be positive. This finding supports Stannard's (1977) argument that women are trained to accept surname change as a positive alteration. Certainly, Kline et al (1996), on the basis of their research claim that women tend to view surname change as a neutral, or even positive, event. While the need to be 'transformed' or 'made-over' is a pervasive force in women's lives – especially with regards to marriage. Alford (1988:88) notes in his study of naming in 60 non-industrial societies that a woman's marital status is more likely to be symbolised through clothes and adornments than is a man's marital status. Again, how is this double-standard negotiated, justified or even resisted?

In contrast to changing one's identity, women who chose not to change their surnames spoke about maintaining a consistent identity. These women were said to value the continuation of their personal identity after marriage. Foss and Edson (1989:363), for example, report on women using the phrases 'because it is mine' and 'I am who I am' when asked about their unchanged surname. What is not clear, however, for all groups of women, is the relationship women had/have with their maiden names. Indeed, within the literature on marital naming, little attention is paid to this connection. What emotions are invested in such names? What do they represent? Do they, for example, link to specific memories or a woman's cultural heritage? What does it feel like to no longer share a surname with one's family of origin? Do they impart a sense of belonging and heritage? Do new surnames become one's own – or are they forever on loan?

An unchanged surname, according to the literature, can enable women to maintain an identity separate from their husband. Women who kept their maiden names were reported as saying this option allowed them to retain a sense of individuality. Moreover, those interviewed by Fowler and Fuehrer (1997) expressed 'great distaste' for the title 'Mrs' (and the words 'husband' and 'wife') as it defined them primarily as wives – which they considered only one aspect of their identity. The authors state that surname retention allowed women to distance themselves from 'traditional' ideas about wives, and that they could mark their marriages as an equal partnership. They also point out that their interviewees, all with unchanged surnames, seemed deeply committed to creating marriages that 'worked for them' rather stepping into a predefined role (p.317).

Those women with unchanged, and even situational, surnames also spoke about maintaining a professional identity and reputation. Changing surnames, it was reported, could lead to a loss of professional continuity and contacts. Moreover, women working alongside their husband were said to find surname change advantageous as their work was judged on its own merits. However, some women remarked that, had they married before establishing a career, they would have changed surnames. This supports a point I made earlier regarding the different journeys women might take to arrive at the same surname decision. But, there are further issues to examine. Is surname retention considered acceptable for professional women? And, if so, are these women seen to be demonstrating a male 'right'? Moreover, what might this mean for women without professional careers? Do they have fewer lines of defence against surname change? Is their maiden name considered less worthy of being kept because it does not tie them to a profession?

In appealing to the concept of 'professional identity', women using situational surnames also spoke about separating their lives at home from work. For example, Foss and Edson (1989:363) surveyed a women who remarked: 'I use my legal maiden name in all aspects important to me – publishing, copyediting, [and] membership in organisations. I use my husband's name to shield that important side of my life from public disruption (p.363)'. This quote clearly demonstrates the respondent's desire to separate her professional and private life, and suggests a woman's success (described as 'important') have no place in her domestic affairs. The use of dual surnames, Scheuble and Johnson (2005) suggest, can enable women to cope with two identities – professional and personal – that often appear to be in conflict. These authors report on situations where people consider it appropriate for a woman to use one surname or another. However, they do not explore why this might be the case. Why, for example, when dealing with contractors, do women use their husband's surname? Does this suggest that public positions of power are based on marital status, for instance?

### ***Names and relationships***

As mentioned in Chapter 1, blood and married relationships feature as a theme of my thesis. The literature on marital naming shows family relationships – creating new ones or maintaining those already begun – to be a motivating factor when choosing a surname. Those who switched surnames spoke about creating a new family unit whose identity (and unity) would be defined or demonstrated (and maybe

‘displayed’) through a commonly-shared surname. Women were reported as saying the creation of this new familial unit signified leaving behind their childhood and parents. Foss and Edson (1989) conclude from their study of marital naming that women who change surnames are primarily interested in their spousal and mother-child relationships, followed by cultural/societal expectations and lastly concerns about their own identity. The women in their study, they report, were more likely to view their individuality as being controlled by external factors rather than their own self-determination.

These findings are problematic for me, and I return to an earlier point about women being set in opposition or competition. Foss and Edson point out, in their ranking of women’s concerns, that one surname ‘choice’ is not better than another. But it is hard not to read their findings as evidence of some sort of ‘name wars’. Is it really the case, as they claim, that their ‘theories’ show the options from which women can choose? Or, do certain ‘choices’ have certain consequences? They also conclude that women with unchanged surnames prioritise their personal identity, followed by spousal and mother-child relationships, and then cultural/societal expectations. Those who hyphenate or create a new surname are said to value themselves and their relationships equally. But are these different concerns really ordered so distinctly by women – and in such simple terms? How do these factors interact? For example, could a woman appear concerned about her career on a superficial level, but be solely driven by the private need to provide for her family?

Continuing with Foss and Edson’s study, an exciting finding relates to agency, which requires further exploration. They assert, as previously mentioned, that a woman who changes her surname adheres to cultural expectations about marriage and acquires her identity through spousal and mother-child relationships rather than activities independent of her family unit. However, when interviewing those who changed surnames, they found that these women described themselves as making ‘deliberate and conscious decisions about their names’ (p.367). When asked to provide reasons for changing names, the accounts each woman gave enabled them to feel in control of their decision, and subsequently marital relationship. This corroborates Suter’s (2004) finding that surname change was framed as an active choice by interviewees, although she notes that this could be a product of her study’s design. It would be interesting to expand on these conclusions, especially considering my earlier comments about the concept of tradition as directing women’s surname ‘choice’.

The explanation of ‘family connections’ as a motivating factor for changing, or not changing, surnames provides a chance to examine what ‘family’ means. Is it the case that commonly-shared surnames are desirable because they make a pro-nuclear family (as well as a pro-marriage) statement? And, might a commonly-shared surname demonstrate that a family (as well as wifehood and motherhood) is being performed properly? This is clearly an opportunity to explore the concept of ‘display’, proposed by Finch (2007). This author builds on the idea that families are ‘done’ (Morgan 1996; 1999), which links to wider understandings of performativity, by suggesting families are demonstrated, legitimised and conveyed through certain actions that constitute ‘doing family things’ – a commonly-shared surname could be seen to represent on such form of ‘display’.

Meanwhile, women who retained their surname post-wedding spoke about their decision saying it was their way of upholding family and cultural connections. They mentioned they did not want to ‘sell out’ their father or be lost from their family’s history. Instead, they wanted their family to remain ‘in the picture’. Not only did they speak about family connections, but also about their cultural heritage. Fowler and Fuehrer (1997:319), for example, interviewed a woman who said her maiden name was ‘rich in old American history’ and she wanted to pass it on to her children. Moreover, a woman interviewed by Ho (1999) said surname retention was not just limited to academically trained women, but those educated about their family history. The woman said that if the history of her surname had not been explained to her she would have regarded it as easy to replace.

Combining one’s individual and marital identities, as previously mentioned, was a common explanation for using a hyphenated surname. The women citing this reason spoke about maintaining connections to their family of origin, while also sharing a surname with their husband and children. Like those with unchanged surnames, preserving their family’s cultural heritage was said to be important – but so was showing commitment to their new family. Foss and Edson (1989) describe hyphenation as a ‘practical solution’ that allowed women to show they are married while remaining connected to their birth family. However, their study was conducted solely in the United States – and Mills (2003) points out in her study of British feminists that some of these women felt unable to use hyphenated surnames because of negative class-notations.

Finally, a woman’s decision about what to do with her surname post-wedding creates an opportunity to think through ideas of relationality – i.e. the ways people

connect with each other and how meanings are constructed through these exchanges. As previously mentioned, the literature identified in my search has not explored women's relationships with their maiden names and what connections these might hold. Additionally, the existing research has not explored the role played by surnames in parent-child relationships. Does this dynamic change when a daughter takes her husband's surname? How does an unchanged surname impact on relationships with in-laws and with children if a mother uses a different surname? Does she feel excluded? Does 'display' take on other forms?

### *Names and gender*

Gender is a further theme of my thesis, as highlighted in the previous chapter. The literature I reviewed makes several references to gender politics. However, it shows no definite relationships between surname 'choice' and feminist orientation. Moreover, Mills' (2003) research with female feminist professionals found most had changed surnames – although those who had not changed their surname cited feminism as a main factor in their choice. This reflects earlier results from Embleton and King (1984) who point out that while surname retention is more common for women in academic and professional circles, it is the choice of only a minority of women. However, Twenge (1997) did find a relationship between feminist views and surname preference. The female students in her study who anticipated keeping their surname post-wedding were also in agreement with many feminist theories. Interestingly, none of these women explained that they arrived at their decision to keep their surname as a result of their feminist principles.

This finding by Twenge is fascinating. Why did these young women avoid references to their feminist beliefs? Did they fear being labelled as 'women's libbers', as mentioned earlier? Penfield (1987:124), writing about 'liberation names', notes that women in the United States were advised by their lawyers not to use 'ideological reasons or feminist causes' to justify their desire for an entirely new surname because the courts would reject their wish. Such feminist dis-identification, and its links to post-feminism, requires further examination. Take, for example, this quote from a 29-year-old woman cited in Kaplan and Bernays (1999:139) text on the language of naming: 'I wanted to buck the feminist viewpoint that in order to be a real woman you have to have your identity, and it's defined by what you're called. I know who I am and I'm going to follow the tradition that I choose.' She continued

by saying: 'It [changing names] makes a statement to the world that even though I'm professional, I still stand by my man.'

This statement suggests women are no longer compelled to change surnames, but that the switch has become a conscious choice. This 'choice', as mentioned previously, can be particularly difficult for feminist women to negotiate. Some of the feminist women surveyed by Mills (2003) reported that feminist colleagues expressed surprise at their decision to change surnames. One woman expressed the view that, among her peers, there was a strong feeling that she had compromised her feminist credentials and betrayed her friends by taking her husband's surname. Likewise, another woman said she was certain that her feminist colleagues thought she had 'sold out' by adopting her husband's surname. Mills reports that other interviewees mentioned being forced to compromise their feminist philosophy by choosing to change their surnames.

Furthermore, gender role *un*-traditionalism was found to account for an unchanged surname. As mentioned earlier, a woman keeping her surname was said to signal that she held 'untraditional' views about gender roles and marriage, and could be considered to be making a political statement to this effect. Those women who kept their maiden names were said to object to the gender-role stereotypes and sense of male-ownership implied by surname change. Both surname retention and hyphenation were described by women using these practices as symbolising marriage as an equal partnership. That said, those interviewed by Fowler and Fuehrer (1997:318) valued some 'traditional aspects' of marriage (e.g. monogamy and life-long commitment), but were keen to create new roles within marriage and promote 'unconventional' marriages as successful.

### ***Names and simplicity***

Simplicity, convenience and a desire to avoid any confusion were given as reasons by women for surname change – as well as surname retention and hyphenation. For the former, women were said to have changed surnames to avoid explaining their spousal relationship to others, to make record-keeping uncomplicated and to enable others to easily address them at social events. Foss and Edson (1989:362) found that for women who change surnames 'convenience takes precedence over issues of personal identity'. However, what is missing is an exploration of female sacrifice and altruism. Moreover, in her study of female students, Twenge (1997:425), notes the use of this phrase in regard to surname change: 'It makes things easier even if it is a

bit chauvinistic'. A further exploration of how women navigate such discourses of sexism, as discussed by Mills (2003), would greatly assist the understanding of marital naming decisions.

For those women who did not change their surnames, this 'choice' was said to be the most convenient surname option, either for the purpose of record-keeping or because the process of changing names was viewed as too complicated. The situation was somewhat different for women with hyphenated surnames, as this name combination was said to signal that a compromise had been made. Foss and Edson (1989:367), for instance, claim that women who use hyphenated surnames try to 'accommodate relationships' with their husbands without 'destroying' other relationships or 'sacrificing' their own identities. This attempt by women to compromise is also noted by Fowler and Fuehrer (1997), but these authors point out that combining names is a compromise made almost exclusively by women – which again creates a link to the topic of female sacrifice and altruism that could surely be explored further by researchers.

### *Names and aesthetics/apathy*

Finally, the aesthetics surrounding the 'choice' of surnames was cited as another factor in choosing a name. Some maiden names were said to be boring, difficult to spell/pronounce or positioned at the wrong end of the alphabet. Yet, the same justifications were given by women who did not take their husband's surname. The use of aesthetics as a reason for changing a surname (or not) is interesting because surnames considered 'less attractive' are equally distributed between men and women. However, according to Intons Peterson and Crawford (1985), men are less likely to adopt their wife's surname to rid themselves of a surname they dislike. These authors found that 50 per cent of the female undergraduates and 32 per cent of female graduates agreed, or strongly agreed, that they would take their husband's surname if their preferred it to their own. However, only 18 per cent of male undergraduates and 16 per cent of male graduates agreed to the same extent as their female counterparts.

Name apathy is a phrase used by Twenge (1997) when referring to comments about the arbitrary value of a surname. She reports on women's use of phrases such as 'not that big of a deal' when asked about surname change (p.426). Kline et al (1996) also reported on this concept, referring to it as a coping strategy – enabling women to disconnect their surname from their identity. Similarly, some women

surveyed by Foss and Edson (1989) remarked upon their maiden names as being trivial. Such remarks suggest women do not derive a strong sense of identity from their maiden names. This, however, contradicts earlier comments about commonly-shared surnames signalling a single family identity – a concept highly-valued by some women. Why bother changing surnames to match one's daughter if she views the name as a trivial label? This contradiction is noted by Bähr and Weatherall (1999). They remark that that the 'just a label' repertoire was used alongside comments about names being personally, socially and politically significant. This, they conclude, signals that there is no single understanding of marital naming practices, at least among their respondents.

### *Areas for further study*

This section has drawn attention to the issues involved in selecting a post-wedding surname, as reported by the small number of existing studies. These studies provide valuable data on the factors affecting women's surname 'choice'. But many questions remain unanswered, especially in the UK, as I mentioned repeatedly. What is remarkable from these studies, however limited, is that women (both lesbian and straight<sup>43</sup>) have been found to draw on similar themes when talking about their surname 'choices' – but that these are translated differently depending on a woman's 'choice' of surname. These themes – be they related to identity, families or gender politics – go some way to explaining the ways in which women negotiate the difficult call to change surnames. But the literature fails to make clear the meanings of surname change and its alternatives for women. More broadly, once these meanings are identified, it is important to consider the extent to which they reflect, maintain or disrupt cultural ideas about women.

The themes identified in this section also highlight the variety of complex issues involved in choosing a post-wedding surname. Not only was a single theme absent in the explanations of why women (and men) changed their surname or not, no single theme was inherently 'feminist' or 'conservative', as Bähr and Weatherall (1999) point out in their study. These authors contend that marital naming is spoken about in many contradictory ways, but people's methods for resolving such contradictions remain largely unexplored. Kline et al (1996) also make reference to such contradictions in the ways in which marital naming is discussed, which they

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<sup>43</sup> In Suter and Oswald's (2003) account of lesbian women, the only reported differences compared to straight women were that surname change was not associated with a commitment ceremony, and that surname sharing was not socially expected for same-sex couples.



label as ‘autonomy/connectedness’ and ‘stability/change’ (as mentioned in Chapter 1). As I have argued, understanding how these apparent dichotomies are negotiated by women and men is essential to gain a better understanding of marital naming choices.

## **Chapter Summary**

It has been my aim in this chapter to articulate what is known about marital naming practices – as well as the large amount that remains unclear or under-researched. It becomes apparent from the material presented that valuable research on naming conventions exists, but that many questions about surname change and alternative practices remain unanswered. There is ample scope to build on the findings and the gaps of current literature, and to do so by building on the six key concepts that I introduced in Chapter 1. To close this chapter, I re-emphasise four key points from my survey of available literature on marital naming:

- Marital naming practices are grossly under-explored in the UK – specifically within the discipline of sociology – despite being a pervasive social phenomenon.
- Current knowledge about marital naming practices is based on a limited number of studies – predominantly from the United States. There is little quantitative or qualitative data from the UK pertaining to naming trends, attitudes or experiences.
- Little is known about the contemporary meaning of surname change (and its alternatives), and how its inherent contradictions are understood and negotiated by women who marry.
- The near-total neglect of marital naming as a line of sociological enquiry not only limits knowledge of this pervasive cultural norm, but restricts wider understandings of gender and kinship in the UK.

In the next chapter, I turn to my research methodology to consider how the lines of enquiry identified in this chapter were empirically explored. It is written as a reflexive account of the journey I took when attempting to understand how women negotiate the call to change surnames and the ways in which their choices are culturally perceived. The next chapter, as I go on to explain, is not intended as a simple summary of how the research was conducted, but as an honest and open account of what occurred when attempting to collect data on the under-researched topic of marital naming.

## Chapter 3

### Research Design: A Reflexive Account

This chapter considers the investigative methods and modes of analysis employed in my study of marital naming. It is written as a reflexive account of the journey I took when attempting to understand women's negotiations with the customary call to surname change and the ways in which the practice is culturally perceived. The chapter is not intended as a simple summary of how the research was conducted, but an account of what occurred when attempting to formulate and actualise my research strategy. Therefore, the chapter gives details of the dilemmas I faced, along with the risks taken, the surprises encountered, the mistakes made and lessons learned. It draws attention to the realities of collecting data and reveals what – and ultimately who – lies behind my findings.

A reflexive approach allows for honesty and openness in reporting how, where and by whom data were collected (Ryan and Golden 2006). I applied this method when reviewing my early writings. This chapter originally began: 'Developing a research methodology is a complex and ongoing process.' It seems genuine enough, but simplistic. How about: 'Developing a research methodology is an unsettling process that makes it hard to sleep at night?' Or: '...is an exhausting process tiring your muscles and fatiguing your bones.' Or equally: '...is a deeply affective process that makes you feel helpless, tearful and alone.' This chapter attempts to move away from 'hygienic research' (Kelly, et al. 1994:46), whereby the complexities of doing research are censored, to an account that is more realistic (and consequently more rigorous).

Taking a reflexive approach is, however, intimidating. Indeed, I have debated if aspects of my research *should* remain hidden. What could be gained from showing any mess or confusion? What would be achieved, for example, by revealing that the face-to-face encounters with respondents cannot be standardised? Surely it would limit the validity and reliability of my findings. But, is this really the case? Ryan and Golden (2006:1198) suggest that, when discussing their quantitative study, 'a reflexive approach would not undermine the value of the research study but would [instead] add a depth of understanding about how, where, when and by whom data were collected'. And as I approached this chapter, I aimed for this understanding.

The chapter begins by explaining my motivations for researching marital naming. I then turn to my analytical framework and comment on using a 'thematic

discourse analysis' (Braun and Clarke 2006). The next section discusses my 'street survey' and I give details of how it was designed, how respondents were selected and from what geographical location. I also talk through the challenges I faced using this approach. The last section gives details of my interviews, including how they were designed and implemented. Again, I draw attention to the challenges I encountered when using this method.

## **Naming My Approach**

In this section, my research motivations are explained. Such detail is provided to make clear what influenced my decision to collect certain data in certain ways from certain places – and why these were interpreted in certain ways. The methods used to collect data are introduced (and later discussed in full), as is my use of a feminist approach. I also explain how my methodological outlook shifted over the course of my project.

### ***Me, my name and others***

'Enjoy your last Christmas as Rebekah Wilson' a relative wrote to me, shortly before I married. Many similar comments followed. They all made me feel rather uneasy, to say the least. That is because my name helps me make sense of who I am. It is part of me and I am part of it. And, as I wrote in my preface, it is a good fit – common, Anglo-Saxon, with a tendency to avoid attention. Moreover, considering my distaste for gender biasing (and my wanting to unsettle this), it went unchanged after I married. This, I quickly learned, was an unpopular view. Indeed, most brides I knew had changed surnames. Their desks at work were decorated with newly-named business cards, old surnames were crossed off the office planner and email addresses reconfigured. Surely others were enjoying life with an unchanged surname? What were their stories?

Those with unchanged surnames would be my research focus, I originally planned. I would focus on their stories, along with the discriminatory elements of surname change, the ways it belittled women's identities and the social pressures making it difficult for women to choose a post-wedding surname. It seemed like a feminist topic – one I would approach using feminist principles. I would not claim to be detached or inoculated from cultural influence (Bordo 1993; Harding 1993). Instead, I would take into account subjectivity (Code 1991). That is, I would attempt to understand the women's stories by considering their personal histories. I would

also relate to respondents on their terms and seek to create an equal balance of power (Edwards 1990; Oakley 1974; Stanley and Wise 1990).

The project, however, would not be carried out just for the sake of finding solidarity with potentially alike women. And, it would not be a historical account of feminism's encounters with marital naming. Instead, it would be a sociological and gender-based endeavour that explored women's negotiations with a specific cultural practice. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, experiences of marital naming are under-documented in academic research. I wanted to examine women's experiences of rejecting part of marriage's dominant storyline. I wanted to hear their stories, but also explore the social and personal relationships on which these depended. Crucially, I would focus on what women said – but attempt to link their accounts to larger structural patterns of privilege and domination (after Jackson 2001).

Consistent with a feminist approach, my research would be 'qualitatively-driven' (Mason 2006). I would enter into a dialogue with women who had retained their maiden names, through face-to-face interviews. What meanings, justifications and understandings would be offered? Did the women position themselves outside codes of romance or wifhood, for example? Not only was I interested in hearing their experiences, but how these were constructed through speech. Did they give agentic accounts or draw upon feminist rhetoric, for example? Such issues, as discussed in Chapter 2, have not been explored in the UK and those from elsewhere give insightful but insufficient attention to the way naming stories are told.

In referring to my topic as 'feminist' I recognise that marital naming relies on marriage, and feminist views on this institution vary (see Brook 2002). I may be disturbed by the heterosexist ideology that underpins marriage and its associated customs, but I am (so far) a successful product and consumer of marriage. It is a paradox Finlay *et al.* (2003) address when discussing the meaning, politics and purpose of marriage. Two of the authors express appreciation for their parents' marriages, but state: 'As radical feminists, we are troubled by and not unaware of the irony of being grateful for a structure that lies at the heart of women's, lesbians' and gay men's oppression' (p.411). Thus, as Finlay explains, I needed to recognise the privileged status of my straight identity. I recognise that my surname 'choice' stems from choosing to participate in an institution that protects and benefits heterosexuals (especially straight men) – and that such exclusivity exists despite the fact that a universal right to marry could impact positively on marriage as an institution and those to whom choice is denied.

### *Speaking for whom?*

As mentioned, focusing on surname retention seems like a feminist topic. Several feminist authors, mentioned in Chapter 2, have written in favour of this practice. Those retaining their surname, like me, were marginalised ‘Others’ and our voices had so far gone unheard (Harding 1987). Yet, stirred by post-colonial theorists (Alcoff 1991-2; Spivak 1988), I questioned this focus. Were women with unchanged surnames anything like me? Was I entitled to represent this group? What would be the result considering that ‘we’ might occupy greater positions of power (e.g. hold degrees and professional jobs)? Why ‘discursively colonise’ certain women (Pedwell 2002:73)? Why not unite ever-married women through their negotiations with change surnames instead of focusing only on their ‘chosen’ surname outcome?

In addition to re-considering who I was speaking for or about, I debated what I was speaking against. Feminist research is typically directed at promoting social change that improves women’s lives. But this goal sat awkwardly with my broader focus. It was surely wrong, as a researcher, to advocate surname retention (*my* choice) as a naming option. My research role, feminist or not, was not to take sides. I did not wish to add to any fantasies or fears about the choices women make. It is a position Back (2008:7) explains as: ‘Sociology is not needed to tell people how to live. We are interpreters not legislators.’ Therefore, rather than promote my choice, my role was to find meaning. I would focus on the ways in which women make sense of marital naming and explore the ways their naming decisions were rationalised. I would seek to understand naming as a cultural practice, rather than condemn women’s individual choices. Thus, I would focus on how the meanings applied by women might reflect, maintain or disrupt cultural ideas about women<sup>44</sup>.

### *A social barometer*

Earlier I mentioned that my views on surname change appeared unconventional to many people I have encountered since marrying. There is, however, no UK-based exploration of public opinion with regards to the topic, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Thus, to better situate women’s negotiations with surname change, and understand how the practice is constructed and interpreted more widely, I chose to collect attitudinal data. A questionnaire survey would be used as a social barometer,

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<sup>44</sup> This would enable me to explore experiences for marital naming, but I am aware this excludes an examination of surnames in non-married relationships (e.g. the naming of children, naming in same-sex relationships and the extent to which the practice and expectation of surname change might deter women from marrying).

providing insight into ways of doing and seeing naming. It would enable me to further explore the contemporary meaning of surname change and gauge the value/significance of the practice. Furthermore, I would assess levels of acceptance toward alternative naming practices, the extent to which surname change was valued and whether respondents subscribed to a ‘whatever works’ philosophy (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; 2002).

Conducting a survey would allow me to explore certain research questions. The replies given, I estimated, would contribute positively to feminist-based enquiry. However, I recognised that some academics have viewed such methods as running contrary to the aims of feminist research (e.g. Graham 1983; Mies 1983; Pugh 1990; Reinharz 1979)<sup>45</sup>. Yet, based on other readings, I did not view quantitative and qualitative methods as mutually exclusive. Oakley (1998:707), for instance, makes a case for ‘integrating a range of methods’ to create an emancipatory social science when discussing the gendering of methodology<sup>46</sup>. She gives examples of qualitative judgements made by researchers when constructing categories for statistical testing, and also of repetitive themes being counted in the case of open-ended interviews.

Rather than rehearse well-trodden feminist arguments about quantitative methods, subsequent sections of this chapter explain what mixed-methods offered my research. That is, how using interviews and questionnaires can usefully combine to strengthen the evidence emerging from research. I also draw attention to the similarities between the methods used, particularly in relation to emotional labour and power dynamics. I do not claim, however, that a better or truer picture of ‘reality’ was obtained by using both methods, but that mixed-methods provided particular ways of thinking about the customary practice of surname change. Claims about a ‘better’ or ‘fuller’ picture are based on a qualitative/quantitative binary that maintains interviews and questionnaires are different but complementary – ironically, similar to essentialist ideas about men and women (see Oakley 1998).

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<sup>45</sup> Reinharz (1992) draws attention to the ways in which statistics have been used to demonstrate the conditions of women’s lives.

<sup>46</sup> Oakley (1998) paid credit to the role played by large-scale quantitative surveys in the 1960s and 1970s as they enabled the extensive mapping of women’s socio-demographic position. It would not have been possible, according to Oakley, neither to demonstrate nor understand women’s oppression without examining their position relative to men’s in the spheres of employment, education, health and welfare, politics and government and domestic relations. She argues that qualitative methods alone cannot determine ‘the underlying gendering of structural inequalities that occurs in most societies’ (p.723).

## **Analytical Framework**

In this section, I present the analytical tools used for data interpretation. It begins with a discussion of thematic discourse analysis, which I used to organise and interpret the data generated. Then, I turn to Potter and Wetherell's (1987) concept of 'interpretative repertoires' to explain how discursive themes were identified. I also explain how using a questionnaire survey fits with this discursive approach, and how these data were analysed alongside the interviews that were conducted.

### ***Thematic discourse analysis***

My data were studied using a 'thematic discourse analysis' (Braun and Clarke 2006). I focused on the discursive patterns evident in the accounts of interviewees, but not the finer patterns of their language construction. I paid attention to the discourses women used when telling stories about their names. I searched for shared meanings and also for the ways multiple discourses interacted. And, importantly, I explored the ways these reflected, maintained and disrupted the cultural ideals that made such discourses possible. The reasons for taking a discursive-based approach are outlined below:

A discursive-based approach is:

- **Language-based:** It centres on language including how it is gendered and, more generally, a non-neutral means of expression. Surname change is language-based like naming itself, and naming experiences pass through a process of narration when being told<sup>47</sup>.
- **Cultural script:** It focuses on commonly held assumptions (or 'scripts') about cultural norms and practices. Surname change forms part of marriage's script and it is through this (heteronormative) lens that its meanings are transmitted and actions are judged.
- **Meaning-making:** It studies meaning-making through discourse. Surname change is a longstanding and much-used practice, but its meanings (shared and multiple) are unclear.
- **Storying of experiences:** It focuses on the structuring of experience into stories, through which people ascribe meanings to their lives. Surname change can be better understood through the ways it is storied in particular contexts, and the social and personal relationships on which such stories are dependent<sup>48</sup>.
- **Narrative hierarchy:** It considers the use of 'master narratives' and 'counter narratives'. Surname change may exist as a dominant storyline (relying on normalised ideas about women, families and relationships), but other narratives may run counter to this presumed order.

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<sup>47</sup> Jackson (1998:49) notes that narratives never communicate 'raw experience' since they entail a 'process of representation, interpretation and reconstruction'.

<sup>48</sup> This is especially noticeable in the area of personal life (where surname change fits) through the popular BBC programme 'Who Do You Think You Are?' where celebrities search for 'untold' stories about their ancestors (de Groot 2009).

- **Deconstruction:** It allows social values and assumptions to be deconstructed (as a product of the post-modern). Surname change can thus be explored not only through what is said about the practice, but in terms of how these ways of speaking link to larger structural patterns of privilege and domination.
- **Context-specificity:** It emphasises context-specificity within language use, thus undermining any notions of objective ‘truth’ (or ‘untruth’) within a participant’s account.
- **Reflexive:** It allows for a researcher’s role to be problematised, especially her/his relationship with participants.

By exploring the meanings applied to a shared custom, my analytical approach was sociological, with specific attention being given to gendered meanings. I am interested in the social institutions in which ideas about naming are embedded, mainly marriage and ‘the’ family, and the social norms and conventions that give rise to certain ideologies and patterns of gendered behaviours. I subscribe to Mason’s (2004:178) view that personal narratives are ‘part of a relational [discourse] more than an individualistic discourse’. Moreover, in her work on inheritance with Finch (2000:65), the authors point out that the construction of ‘generalising narratives’ plays a key role in ‘doing kinship’. Finch (2007) returns to the use of narratives in her article on ‘display’ wherein she positions narratives as a ‘tool’ of display. She writes: ‘Narratives are seen as stories people tell to themselves and to others about their own family relationships, which enable them to be understood and situated as part of an accepted repertoire of what “family” means’” (p.78).

In looking for discursive patterns, through a thematic discourse analysis, I recognised that variability could be neglected. Potter and Wetherell (1987) note that thematic accounts can focus too heavily on dominant views, thus losing sight of contradictions and inconsistencies. So I turned to their concept of ‘interpretative repertoires’ (Potter and Wetherell 1995) to emphasise the multiple and different ways in which women spoke about negotiating the call to change surnames. I began to analyse what I heard as soon as my first interview took place. I took post-interview notes on the bus and woke up with ideas about my new data. But, more systematically, an audio recording was taken and transcribed verbatim for each interview. I paid attention to the exact words spoken, repeatedly listening to the accounts. I noted down repetitions, hesitations, pauses and stresses, but did not use a complex notation system (e.g. Jefferson 1985). The transcripts were imported into a computer-assisted analysis programme<sup>49</sup> and coded using its grouping functions. The initial codes directly related to the questions I had asked in order to explore what was

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<sup>49</sup> MAXQDA, a software tool designed to assist textual analysis, was used.



said in response to each enquiry. The text relating to these codes was then re-read and re-organised to identify discursive themes, which are discussed below.

### *Interpretative repertoires*

In using a discourse-based approach, I attempted to identify discursive themes or ‘interpretative repertoires’ within the accounts of interviewees. Namely, I looked for regular lines of argument when reading their accounts. Potter and Wetherell (1995:89) refer to such repertoires as ‘broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images’. That is, statements or tropes enabling the significance of an experience to be defined and understood. More broadly, Blood (2005:61) defines such repertoires as ‘...a way of understanding the content of discourse and how that content is organised’ i.e. genres of explanation.

The discursive themes I looked for can be regarded as familiar or common ways of talking about objects and events. Wetherell (2001:23) has noted that people are rarely original, but use the following when communicating: ‘...accepted and conventional images, ideas and modes of talking’. Reynolds (2008:48) refers to these images and ideas as ‘knowledge scripts’ – that is ‘familiar and well-worn images that “everybody” knows and understands through shared cultural membership’. It was these scripts that I sought to recognise, not only to make these known but to explore their substance and connect them to broader systems of meaning.

In addition, I examined the various ways in which interpretative repertoires were used by interviewees. For example, when using the repertoires ‘surname change as (de)-affiliation’ some women spoke positively about joining their husband’s family and some spoke about creating a new ‘family unit’, whereas others talked negatively about leaving their childhood families. I also considered the gaps and silences within each woman’s interview – looking for standard ways of talking that were not drawn upon. Few women, for example, made references to love or romance in their accounts. Further to this, I paid attention to speech techniques such as the use of persuasive language, mundane facts and ‘extreme case formulations’ (Pomerantz 1986) – as these could be used to trivialise or gender-neutralise surname change, for example.

In the next chapters, I present the interpretative repertoires used by interviewees as neat and tidy categories. But this hides the intricacies of my coding process. Indeed, it is both satisfying and disheartening to see the interviewees’ words

appear as a list of themes, not least because real people hide behind them. The process of generating repertoires involved a considerable amount of re-reading and debate. Did a segment of text, for example, appeal to one repertoire more than another? Take, for example, the below response. It emerged when an interviewee named Alice was asked about the attachment she felt toward to her maiden name:

*Yes and I didn't marry [until aged] 40, 41 actually when I married so I felt that, and I was also, erm, my sister, obviously she married and she changed her name because that's what people did then, so she had a son, but his name is not Meadows. I don't have children, I married too late to have children. So, I thought, well, I've been Meadows for 41 years, I don't see why I should change. You know, it's done me very well. My husband was very relaxed about it and also I was self employed, so for business reasons I didn't want to change it, so I didn't change it, but then events, society conspired against it, it's very hard, it's very hard not to change, you've got to be very, very strong, not to change your name.* [Alice, 60]

Alice draws on many themes: marriage, generational change, family succession, motherhood, identity, spousal relations, women's employment and societal pressures. The computer-assisted package made it easy to tag the component parts of each narrative as I could gauge the extent to which a theme was used. But, at the same time, segments of text became divorced from their original context. Thus, I regularly referred back to the original transcripts. Additionally, while the computer-based package enabled interviews to be electronically sorted, I still found it necessary to print hard copies, highlight sections of text and scribble notes in the margins.

### ***Surveys as discursive texts***

The most significant methodological dilemma I faced was deciding how to analyse survey data. My first question was: Do questionnaires qualify for consideration as discursive texts? They are, most often, language-based tools and I paid considerable attention to the wording of questions to ensure they were basic and understandable. However, since the survey was intended as an attitudinal snapshot, I mainly relied on rating scales, with only a few open-ended text boxes. Thus, while respondents had some opportunity to actively construct their own replies, response options/values were largely pre-determined.

My second question was: How, if at all, can questionnaire data be used in the context of discursive-based analysis? I decided to use the survey data as supplementary to the interview data. The repertoires generated from the interviews would frame my discussion with survey data being used in a supportive way. Yet, in

trailing this, the numerical data sat awkwardly next to interviewees' accounts. The figures, often displayed in tabular form, interrupted the flow of my discussion. Thus, I decided to use key survey findings following the introduction of themes emerging from the interview data, while presenting more detailed survey data in an appendix.

### **About the Street Survey**

My attempts to collect data began with a survey of 453 Londoners. It was intended that this method would serve as a social barometer – providing data on the function and symbolic meaning of marital naming options. Passers-by in various locations would be asked to complete a questionnaire. This section details how the survey was administered and to whom. I also consider the challenges involved in using this method. A similar account is available elsewhere (see Wilson 2010).

#### *Designing the survey*

The survey was designed to explore attitudes toward marital naming. It was an awkward topic for a street survey. It was not an issue strangers might expect to be asked about. Indeed, Lebell (1988:10) argues that 'patronymy's contract' discourages people from such discussion. Moreover, she claims people are forbidden from pointing out its obvious biases and suggesting it might be unjust. Additionally, I recognised that the topic was potentially controversial or threatening. Ingraham (1999), as noted in Chapter 2, argues that critical assessments of sacred and valued practices and institutions are frequently resisted and suppressed by academics. They fear, she contends, their readers might view such accounts as 'personal attacks on themselves or on heterosexuals as a group rather than as institutional analyses or inventories' (p.9). The questionnaire, when completed (or shunned), would become an object by which I was judged, criticised and potentially mocked.

Such sensitivities were considered when piloting the survey. I also paid attention to questions asked by other researchers (Atkinson 1987; Dion 1987; Etaugh, et al. 1999; Forbes, et al. 2002; Ho 1999; Scheuble and Johnson 1993; Stodder 1998). My questions mainly focused on what surname change represented. A pre-determined list of responses was offered, with respondents replying through a rating scale. This was the part of my research where I had the most control, but was also the most hidden<sup>50</sup>. I attempted to make questions understandable (in my eyes),

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<sup>50</sup> My gender, age, ethnicity and size were not visible at this point. However, later, I became conscious of changing my north of England accent to a more southern and perhaps 'educated' voice as I performed my role as a university student.

but recognised that respondents' interpretations would be influenced by subjective experiences.

It is also important to mention the repeated piloting of the survey. Questionnaires are often presented as unproblematic instruments that appear from nowhere. My experience shows that creating a questionnaire can be a highly complex and time-consuming process. Questions were rewritten, moved, sliced and deleted. No doubt I could write a paper about how I agonised over my questionnaire's content, design and length: 'Should I split this question into two?' 'Should I move this question further down?' I was so pleased to finally see it printed that I hesitated about writing identification numbers on each copy for fear of spoiling them.

Questions were piloted by 24 people at three points to test their feasibility<sup>51</sup>. The first two rounds involved reading out questions to respondents. It was a time-consuming strategy requiring a quiet space and a good memory (respondents tended to forget question stems). They needed time to gather their thoughts, especially as the topic was unusual. It became clear that this approach would not work on a large scale or in busy public places. I also recognised that, even though respondents had verbalised their replies, I was in control of their words. The penultimate pilot and final questionnaire were designed to be self-administered and self-completed. The final version (see Appendix 2) included four, A4 pages. Respondents were asked to rate various statements referring to the following issues, and provide some demographic information. The questions related to:

- The status of marriage.
- Surname options for different groups.
- The symbolic character of surname retention (by women) and surname change (by women and men).
- The use of life-long surnames.
- The allocation of surnames to children.

Overall, the questions posed within the survey seemed to work well. Certainly, each respondent seemed familiar with the practice of surname change, but a few asked me to clarify the meaning of certain words or asked where exactly they should place their reply. There were, additionally, 45 people who approached questions on the first two pages as multiple-choice items rather than sets of single response items. Twenty-two of these were aged 60 and over. Indeed, for older people (especially

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<sup>51</sup> These people were mainly fellow researchers. All but six of them were known to me (some were aware of my naming decision). They represented a range of ages and relationships statuses. Round 1 involved eight women and two men, Round 2 involved six women and Round 3 involved seven women and one man.

those aged 70 plus), the questionnaire seemed difficult. I had, as later explained, aimed to canvass the opinions of various age groups, but failed to fully consider the physical requirements of completing a questionnaire. Yet, I became deeply embarrassed as they strained to read questions or hold a pencil. I tried to offer assistance by ticking boxes or turning pages. Additionally, the locations where questionnaires were distributed contributed to 34 being returned to me rather incomplete (as people were called away to see a doctor, for instance).

In carrying out the survey, I was prepared for people's lives not falling neatly into the boxes provided. Indeed, several respondents told me how marriage, divorce, remarriage, giving birth, adoption and immigration had caused problems with regards to their surname. One woman, who I later interviewed, apologised for her naming situation, whereby she was renamed through adoption and later marriage, who was desperate to be renamed when she divorced, and had been unsure how to name her son as he was not her estranged husband's child. Such situations also came to light when coding open-ended responses. Three women, for example, commented on taking pride in their husband's surname when asked about their post-wedding surname and six others added that they were 'forced' to change surnames.

### *Selecting a sample*

Since surname change by married women is so common in England, as well as many other countries, the survey was relevant to everyone (men and women alike). Admittedly, a random sample might have been desirable but this required a sampling frame. There was no such frame readily (and cheaply) available that would guarantee the representation of all groups of people. I took the pragmatic decision to conduct a face-to-face street survey to guarantee my desired response rate. The survey, for reasons of cost and convenience, would be carried out in Greater London. Not only could survey locations be easily accessed, since I live in the capital, but I would be on hand to conduct interviews when and where convenient to the women who volunteered to be interviewed.

As London is an extremely large and diverse (many residents are born outside of the UK), I recognised that my sample would be multi-ethnic and that respondents might use naming systems that differ to those of the UK. This diversity was beneficial to my study as it calls attention to the dynamics in which cultural practices operate within the UK. A multi-ethnic, and multi-classed sample, was also desirable as these characteristics influence ideas about marriage and families (Boris and

Bardaglio 1987; Edin and Kefalas 2005). Moreover, as Smart and Shipman (2004:506) note in their work on trans-national families: 'Marginalised ethnicities are not the flotsam and jetsam of modernisation.' Instead, their experiences should be incorporated into a wider analysis of social change. With this in mind, I selected three boroughs positioned at the bottom, middle and top of the English Indices of Deprivation (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2004): Tower Hamlets, Hounslow and Richmond. This focus, I hoped, would ensure that replies reflected a wide-range of experiences, although my non-random approach would restrict claims about representativeness and generalisability.

To secure a varied sample, I decided upon a quota requirement of 50 men and 50 women of different ages from each borough, totalling 300<sup>52</sup>. At least ten men and ten women per quota, aged 15-29, 30-49, 50-69 and 70 plus, would be surveyed in each borough. This would be sufficient to obtain a reasonable sense of people's attitudes. I focused on gender and age for three reasons. First, I wanted to analyse data with respect to gender and generational patterns. Second, as respondents would be approached on the street, gender and age were the only characteristics I could (somewhat) accurately guess. Third, existing studies of marital naming are largely based on the views of undergraduate students (Etaugh, et al. 1999; Intons-Peterson and Crawford 1985; Murray 1997; Scheuble and Johnson 1998).

The quota requirement relied upon my knowledge of cultural norms (or perhaps stereotypes) for appearance. I found myself asking: Would a tracksuit-clad youth talk to me? Would a veiled woman be suspicious of me? Knowing that the two quotas needed to be filled encouraged me to approach people who I might have normally avoided. But still, I felt out of my comfort zone. Should I interrupt the male builder doing a crossword on his break, the middle-aged business man using his laptop or the elderly woman enjoying her biscuits and tea in the library? Items such as books, laptops and mobile phones were used as 'barrier signals' (Fox 2004:85) to indicate a person was unavailable and also to demarcate their personal space.

The street survey was, as I imagined, labour-intensive. The vast majority of questionnaires, over 400, were not mailed out. Instead, I interacted with hundreds of strangers in an attempt to get my questionnaires completed. It was for this reason that I recruited five Master's students as fieldworkers (four female students and a male student). We initially split into pairs and each took questionnaires to one borough.

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<sup>52</sup> Five hundred and thirty questionnaires were printed, and four were sent to respondents by email.

The students worked for one or two days, resulting in 70 questionnaires being completed. Two additional methods were later employed to increase responses:

- I asked colleagues to invite those they knew living in the three boroughs, which resulted in 31 completed questionnaires.
- I asked three local newspapers to print an appeal for respondents, one of which did, resulting in one completed questionnaire.

Overall, the street survey amounted for 93 per cent of returned questionnaires. A total of 453 questionnaires were included in the final sample (see Appendix 3)<sup>53</sup>. Each borough returned the following: 136 questionnaires from Tower Hamlets, 175 questionnaires from Hounslow and 142 questionnaires from Richmond.

### *Locating potential respondents*

To further search for respondents, I initially planned to visit the register office for each borough. Such offices are primarily used for the registration of births, deaths and marriages. They are also used to give notice of a marriage/civil partnership, and are regularly used by family historians. Thus, I anticipated that many of those using such offices would already be thinking about naming, and would reside in the borough. This strategy would, however, exclude certain groups (e.g. those without newborns, fathers who need not be present for birth registering, singletons and those not marrying or becoming a civil partner). The use of such sites was also likely to be gendered, with women tending to be the ‘custodians of family ties’ (Otnes and Pleck 2003:16).

Permission to survey the users of register offices was not forthcoming in the time period allotted for fieldwork<sup>54</sup>. This led to the distribution of questionnaires on nearby streets, but it was difficult to stop people in their tracks. Instead, I looked for places where people might have more time (e.g. cafés, benches and waiting rooms). I peered through windows looking for potential recruits. I pleaded with receptionists and cashiers to gain access to patients and customers. I shouted over coffee grinders and mimed the ticking of boxes. They replied: ‘What’s it for?’ ‘Which university are you at?’ ‘How long will it take?’ I eventually took to contacting venues in advance<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> Nineteen questionnaires were deemed invalid and removed from the sample (13 had five or fewer items completed, two were attempted but left incomplete due to limited English, two respondents asked for assistance but had limited comprehension of the task at hand, one respondents took issue with the survey and requested it was removed and one respondent was under 16 years).

<sup>54</sup> It transpired that one register office rarely registered births because the borough it served was without a maternity unit.

<sup>55</sup> A fieldwork endorsement was written by my supervisor on university-headed paper and sent to venues when requested.

Several turned me down and others failed to return my calls (including youth centres, schools, nursing homes and department stores).

Even with prior permission, access was a problem. I queued with a group of sales representatives at one medical centre to speak to a receptionist. She wanted to check my credentials with the doctor despite seeing an email he had sent to me giving me permission to carry out research. I waited on her side of the desk listening to complaints from patients. They had been up all night with aches and pains, yet I would soon ask them to complete my questionnaire. I listened to private conversations like: ‘Has your mother had this cream before?’ These gatekeepers reversed the power-dynamic that usually exists between researcher and researched (e.g. Grenz 2002; Phoenix 1994; Smart 1984). They performed a show of managerial authority by allowing or disallowing access to their customers or patients.

Luckily, staff in public libraries were more accommodating. Sixty-four per cent of questionnaires were completed at libraries, with the remaining sites being cafés, pubs, community centres, doctors’ and dentists’ surgeries and a hair salon. The libraries attracted a range of people. Some read foreign newspapers, took a rest from shopping, sipped tea, used the internet or took their children to classes. It was here I started wearing a badge showing my name and institution, as requested by a library manager. It became part of my ‘personal front’<sup>56</sup> (Goffman 1959) and I felt naked without it. People focused on its wording rather than me. It also seemed to legitimise my performance as my ‘student’ character was seen as genuine. Indeed, a few respondents only took part because of my scholarly role or because they had a fondness for my institution.

The venues where I distributed questionnaires were gendered, classed, aged and racialised spaces. Indeed, this even occurred *within* certain venues. At libraries, for example, it was mainly young people who used computer suites, south Asians who used the foreign newspaper stands and elderly people who sat in the cafés. The venues also allowed me to observe how names were used to identify individuals and map out family connections. ‘The doctor is seeing the Choudhary children’ a receptionist said. I also observed gendered family practices such as men (in Richmond) using the library’s children’s corner with their youngsters on Saturdays or mothers (in Hounslow) who visited their doctor with their children during the week. Such patterns were anticipated and each borough was visited at least four times, including during the week and at weekends. Along with visits from

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<sup>56</sup> This refers to items or equipment needed in order to perform a social action.



fieldworkers, I paid half-day or day visits to each borough between November 2007 and February 2008<sup>57</sup>.

### ***Recruiting respondents***

The recruitment of survey respondents began before I got to fieldwork sites. I would be performing in front of potential respondents, but which character should I play: A student in jeans? An academic wearing glasses? A market researcher with a clipboard? Additionally, how should I approach people? I staged rehearsals in front of my bathroom mirror. ‘Hi there, have you got a minute?’ ‘Hi, I can see you’re busy’. This, however, failed to ease my anxiety about asking complete strangers to do me a favour. It did little to encourage me step off the bus when I arrived at fieldwork sites. And, did not prevent the sleepless nights I suffered before heading out, or the tired muscles I endured on my return home. I had considered the ethics of my project in terms of potential physical danger, but not in terms of these mental hazards.

While I have interrupted strangers before, requesting the time or directions is not the same as asking someone to engage with a research instrument. Not only did I need to enter their personal space but also call on their time. Both are precious commodities. It soon became clear that potential respondents wanted to remain anonymous even though they were using public spaces. My reluctance to perform in front of these people may result from my Englishness, as cultural standards on physical intimacy differ. Fox (2004), for instance, claims the English are obsessed with privacy<sup>58</sup>. But, my reluctance might also reflect the effects of individualisation on social interaction.

When I arrived at each venue, my assignment was the same: persuade those in each quota to complete a questionnaire. This was not, however, tackled in the same way each time. My performance varied according to time, place and audience (Goffman 1959). I might energetically approach people in the morning, but by late afternoon simply ask: ‘Can you fill this out before you go?’ My performance also depended on the rules and dynamics of the places where people were surveyed. The libraries, for instance, had strict policies about noise, but it was quite normal to strike

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<sup>57</sup> I made four trips to Richmond to distribute questionnaires (in November 2007 and January 2008), four trips to Hounslow (in November and December 2007 and January 2008) and three trips to Tower Hamlets (in February 2008). Fieldworkers made their visits during November 2007.

<sup>58</sup> British-based behaviours are noted by Bargiela et al. (n.d.). They point out, for example, when discussing politeness and naming strategies, that there are many situations in Britain where using a person’s first name is viewed as inappropriate or over-familiar.

up conversation with people in pubs. The people using public spaces also impacted on my performance, as I negotiated different positions of status and power. They interpreted my routine in different ways, either accepting it or refusing it.

Looking back, my audience had a major impact on my performance. I would covertly watch them from afar while I flicked through books or ordered coffee, scanning their appearance wondering who would be next. Nothing was said. No eye contact was made. I would observe their gestures, moods and predicaments and construct my opening line accordingly. I might say: 'I can see you are busy' or 'I know it's early'. I would seek out commonalities: 'Which university did you go to? Such performances correspond with Grice's (1989) 'co-operative principle'. That is, I tried to ensure that the purpose of my conversation was continued by others. Also, I tried to perform in ways that would elicit positive reactions, so I shifted my actions in response to the identities they brought into play.

Most often, my pitch was brief. I would make apologies for my questionnaire, despite it being a prized piece of work that I had spent months perfecting: 'Sorry it is so long.' 'If you get bored, you can always fill out one of these.' It is useful to consider these displays of humour, sympathy and even self-deprecation alongside Hochschild's (1983) work on 'feeling rules'. My emotions, as she suggests, were monitored, modified and managed on the basis of my audience. It was less embarrassing to perform to an audience of one than a group of people. So, I mainly approached those sitting alone, sometimes with small children. This excluded clusters of people such as mothers in libraries and teenagers chatting between text messages. And, at times, I approached a person sitting alone only for them to be joined by someone else which meant they afforded less time to the questionnaire.

Once a respondent agreed to take part, I handed over a questionnaire and retreated. I was no longer performing at this point, but was usually still on view. It was an interval that made me uncomfortable. Was I pressurising people by being around? What if they took issue with my questions? Such awkwardness intensified as I sat among those who had refused to take part or those who had given up. I hoped they would leave so my routine was not watched again. So, I lurked behind bookcases in libraries, and racks of leaflets in medical centres. These 'hiding' places served as a retreat, an 'escape hatch' (Murray 2003:391) to which I could withdraw. I was constantly entering the personal space of others and was fully exposed to their remarks be they polite or rude, friendly or hostile, joking or serious. My places of hiding protected me from such encounters and offered a retreat from performing.

From these ‘hiding’ places, I wrote field notes that inform this chapter. I jotted down thoughts about recent interactions, and about how people dealt with the questionnaire. This presented me with an ethical dilemma. Did it matter that I was watching people as a researcher rather than a member of the public? Was I misleading them into thinking I was someone else? Did they think I was an ordinary member of the audience unaware that I was watching their actions? Was it reasonable to note down private conversations, such as the women who apologised for her naming situation mentioned earlier? Similar to Birch (1998) and Murray (2003), I asked myself if I was being honest with people. I certainly felt awkward secretly noting their reactions and comments, but felt less uncomfortable when I did so from hiding places.

The mildest hostility I faced occurred in the form of whispery moans. Two women, for example, complained about Government interference in public life when I asked them to complete a questionnaire:

*What do they know about smoking, drinking, eating? They didn't live through the war. How dare they tell us what to do? Like this study. Are they paying you? People in the Government know nothing. They just read books. They haven't experienced the real world. They are all boys. Not like the old days when they were men. They need experience. Are you going to tell us what to think? It's a bloody nanny state. Why would you want to know how people live? What's the point? People just do what they want to do.*

They continued by complaining about the length of the questionnaire: ‘Especially for this time in the morning’ or ‘Isn't it awful?’ I joked with them saying they looked free enough, but they were not amused. One said: ‘I've come to visit the doctor, not to go to school.’ Another woman waved a questionnaire in the air and pointed in my direction as she spoke to a group of women about why she was delayed. A man prolonged the completion of his questionnaire, over-dramatising the effort involved each time I walked past.

I encountered more severe forms of hostility when I visited pubs. Pubs, during the day, tended to be male-only venues. A few men were courteous, but none seemed too interested. Dryden (1999), on this subject, notes that marriage tends to be portrayed as a female-only interest, despite it offering more to men than women. Some men made their disinterest clear. One said he was only at the pub to get away from his wife. I encountered other ‘jokes’ about nagging wives: ‘My wife drove me to drink, but I still haven't thanked her for it’, said one man quoting WC Fields. I

laughed along. I silenced my usual rebukes to avoid conflict and get questionnaires completed. But this raises a question: Is such collusion acceptable? When, where and for what purpose?

When surveying men in pubs it was difficult staying loyal to my role as a feminist researcher. Take for instance the characters I played: desperate female student and tolerant female patron. These roles were assigned to me on entering the pubs, again showing how the balance of power shifted within my research. A pub manager introduced me to some of his regulars: 'Could you help this young lady?' 'Could you spare a second for a lovely lady?' The men joked with the manager that he only wanted help when it involved a woman. They laughed about always having time to help 'a lady'. I smiled through gritted teeth, annoyed at myself for accepting this gendered power relation. This act of temporary rejection, I hoped, would ultimately enable me to understand more about my chosen line of enquiry.

These encounters show how my audience attempted to silence my performance. There were in fact several other men who waved me away or declined to take part without making eye contact. They often appeared too busy to be interrupted or laughed on learning the survey was about marriage (again marking out the topic as a female-only concern). Men certainly seemed less accustomed to being approached than women and less agreeable to my line of questioning. Their main concern was that my survey had a 'strong female bias' which made it 'sexist' in their opinion. A few pointed to their heads to show that my 'sexism test' had been found out. One man bawled: 'What's the point of me, or any other bloke, filling this out?'

Continuing with this issue, some men *and* women gave defensive responses, assuming that I was picking fault with their lives which corresponds with Ingraham's (1999) argument mentioned earlier. Female hostility to feminist-led research has been noted by researchers such as Millen (1997), Luff (1999) and Andrews (2002). These encounters produced uncomfortable feelings and much frustration. One woman, who I was unfortunate enough to meet twice, was particularly critical. She 'didn't agree' with my questions and said my questionnaire was 'meaningless'. She waxed lyrical about 'traditional families' where '*men* knew their roles'. 'Children suffer when mums work.' She asked: 'Wouldn't I be satisfied just to see my children grow?'

My reactions to these outbursts varied. Replying to the woman above, I spoke in no uncertain terms about increased opportunities for women (only to be asked if we really needed these). Yet, my typical reaction resonates with Grenz's (2002:21)

account of interviewing male clients of female prostitutes, whereby she ‘responded with “feminine” politeness to avoid insults and keep the interview going’. She refers to this as ‘obedience to power’, but also describes her silence as an ‘exercise of power’ since it enabled her to collect a particular discourse. Perhaps I too was exercising power by accepting the conditions that would return the largest number of questionnaires?

The man who questioned the point of my research, mentioned above, is the only non-interviewee to whom I gave details about myself. It was only by letting down my usual guard that I could stress why the research was important to me. Otherwise I avoided being drawn into conversations about my personal history, as this could lead to me revealing that my surname remains unchanged. Since this was likely to label me as ‘one of those feminists’ (Atkinson 1987; Embleton and King 1984; Murray 1997; Suter 2004), I feared it might turn people away. The student character that I emphasised in my performances presented me as single – assisted by the lack of a wedding ring.

Finally, other people were silenced in the research process. Some took issue with surveys in general: ‘I don’t do surveys.’ Some said the topic was a waste of time: ‘What’s the point?’. Some might have taken part but were too busy: ‘I have to get to the osteopath’. And, others thought themselves exempt: ‘I’m not married’, ‘I’m not a woman’, ‘I’m getting divorced’ or ‘I’ve been married too long’. Others thought the task was ‘beyond them’ or that they were ‘too old-fashioned’. One elderly man returned an incomplete questionnaire saying: ‘We don’t know about all these things like living together and swapping partners.’ It is difficult to draw inferences from such comments. Were my actions the cause of their refusal or were they simply performing their right to silence?

### **About the Interviews**

My second attempt to collect data involved interviewing 30 women. This method was used to explore women’s experiences of surname change (and its alternatives). Their stories were intended to build upon the survey findings by examining certain issues in greater depth. The next sub-sections explain who took part in the interviewees, how they were selected and what they were asked. The sub-sections are also used to reflect on the challenges I faced in conducting the interviews, and I make some comparisons between carrying out face-to-face interviews and distributing questionnaire surveys.

### *Selecting interviewees*

The questionnaire invited ever-married women to further participate in my research by being interviewed<sup>59</sup>. It was an open invitation, since ever-married women negotiate expectations about surname change throughout their lives. As I argued in Chapter 1, naming is not a one-off decision made post-wedding, but a (gendered) performative aspect of life thereafter. Moreover, naming is an ever-occurring process since names – and what and whom they signify – are reconfirmed on a daily basis. I was interested in women's immediate naming decisions post-wedding, but also wanted to explore the role of naming thereafter. Also, naming decisions are not necessarily made directly after a woman marries, but can be subject to modification at other points. My sample, therefore, would be multi-generational for these reasons and also because women marry at all ages.

As previously mentioned, I only invited ever-married women to be interviewed. But this invitation was not extended to men who had married, even though they were included in the survey sample. I do, however, recognise that an understanding of gender (and related gender-based practices) stretches further than focusing only on women. A woman's experience of marital naming was likely to be shaped by her spousal relationship. Yet, I decided the ways in which men negotiate the hierarchy typically involved in surname change was outside the scope of my project<sup>60</sup>. I did, however, take the opportunity to speak to a man who used his wife's surname, as an interviewee brought him to my attention, but his conversation is not included in my analysis, as he is a single case.

All the women I interviewed were survey respondents (although in one case, a male respondent suggested I contact his wife and she completed a questionnaire after her interview). They were asked to provide their contact details and, if an interview went ahead, they would receive £20 for taking part. The payment was one way of recognising and beginning to equalise an imbalance of power<sup>61</sup>. The offer of

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<sup>59</sup> Since my interview sample includes women who had married at some point, there is a possibility that their views are more 'traditional' than for women generally (non-traditionalists may avoid marrying). However, since most women in England marry (reported in Chapter 1), variation within this group is inevitable.

<sup>60</sup> Additionally, I realise that men might face pressure to defend, maintain and pass along their surname, for instance, Lebell (1988) notes that naming can place a burden on men as they carry the onus of their surnames.

<sup>61</sup> I did, however, face a dilemma when paying one interviewee. Our meeting had not gone well. She was disinterested and defensive. Indeed, she told me that she remembered neither me nor my project. Her answers were short and I took her cold shoulder personally. I had no idea why she had volunteered and, at that stage, thought nothing had been gained from the interview. These feelings clearly ran counter to my aim of balancing power relations, but I handed over my usual payment regardless.

payment may explain why 71 men and women offered to be interviewed (a figure much higher than I had expected), but this is difficult to judge. Two women asked about payment when invited to be interviewed, but others seemed surprised – yet pleased – when I passed them their payment saying it was unexpected. That said, eight women declined to be paid (one said she would donate half the money to charity and asked me to do the same, so it went to Oxfam).

Of the 71 people who volunteered to be interviewed, 28 were excluded (22 were men and six were never-married women). Details of the 43 eligible interviewees are as follows:

- Ten women volunteered in Tower Hamlets, 16 in Hounslow and 17 in Richmond.
- Twenty-seven volunteers were married/re-married, 11 were divorced/separated and five were widowed.
- Three volunteers were aged between 15 and 29, 13 were aged between 30 and 49, 24 were aged between 50 and 69, and three were aged 70 or more.
- Twenty-seven volunteers defined their ethnicity as ‘White UK’, 12 used the label ‘Asian/Asian British’, two identified as ‘White EU’, and two as ‘Other’.
- Twenty-five volunteers were using their (ex)-husband’s surname, ten were using their maiden name (it was either unchanged or changed post-divorce), and eight used situational surnames.

To select 30 women from the 43 listed above, I paid most attention to the surnames they were currently using. I wanted to include roughly ten women who were using their husband’s surname, ten who were using their maiden name and ten who were using situational surnames. This number would enable me to compare and contrast what surname change meant, and how certain naming decisions were understood and justified, and I would be able to explore similar, different and multiple reasons for arriving at particular surname decisions. It was certainly the case that women may have made different journeys to arrive at the same surname ‘choice’.

Potential interviewees were contacted soon after returning their questionnaire. This was to maintain a connection with interviewees, so they would remember me and my research project. I began setting-up and conducting interviews in November 2007. The sample was reviewed after each fieldwork session, as more women volunteered as interview candidates. I did not, however, consider the final four nominees as I had met already met my desired target of 30 women.

Thirty-nine of the 43 volunteers were contacted. Thirty-three<sup>62</sup> of these agreed to be interviewed and seven declined or failed to return my calls. Those

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<sup>62</sup> One woman cancelled, one failed to show, and the repeated rescheduling of another meant I had reached my target of 30 by the final date she suggested.

agreeing were generally contacted once, but four were called several times. Phone calls were short. Dates were set and meeting places arranged. Thirteen women invited me to their house. I got directions, wrote down bus numbers and heard about their weekly schedules: ‘Do you know Staines Lane?’ ‘I volunteer that day.’ ‘I’m getting my haircut.’ I cannot be sure why the women volunteered – a few said they were interested in genealogy, and a woman who had experienced a terrible marriage said she wanted other women to hear her story.

### *Interviewee sample*

The 30 interviewees had five things in common: all were women, all lived in London<sup>63</sup>, all had married at some point, all identified as heterosexual and all faced the prospect of changing names. They were characteristics I shared, along with three others: we had never spoken to each other before<sup>64</sup>, I was their audience and they were mine, and we had the potential to be equally exposed. Then, individually, I had points in common with some interviewees. It is useful to consider these relationships as they show the ways in which I connected to (and was distanced from) my interviewees. My position as a White female research student was negotiated next to other aspects of my identity and alongside the multifaceted identities of my interviewees. For example:

- **Salma and me:** We were the same age, both lived in London with our husbands, both had unchanged surnames and both our parents had met our future spouses just once before we married.
- **Wendy and me:** We were both born in Derbyshire, both moved to Lancashire as teenagers, both the first generation of university graduates in our families and both had husbands who were journalists.
- **Erica and me:** Both of us worked as researchers, both held Master’s degrees, both married Americans and both identified as feminists.

However, consider these points of difference:

- **Salma and me:** She married aged 17 (I was 25), she had five children (I have none), she was raised Muslim (I was brought up Christian), she had parents from Bangladesh (I have English parents).
- **Wendy and me:** She was 65 (I was 30), she was a retired doctor (I was a part-time student), she owned an expensive house (I rent a small flat).
- **Erica and me:** She was American (I am English), she had a large wedding (I had a few guests) and she had married twice (I’ve been married only once).

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<sup>63</sup> That they lived in London is no doubt significant, as married life for women living inside and outside the capital may differ.

<sup>64</sup> One woman shared my employer, but I did not know her personally.



These above points show that sameness takes on different forms, and that it also operates alongside difference. I was closest in age to Salma, closet in background to Wendy and closest in ideology to Erica. It may have made no difference to Salma if I lived in Lancashire, but it mattered to Wendy who recognised my accent immediately. The above points also demonstrate the extent to which my status as an outsider and insider constantly shifted and was negotiated. Sameness also provided me with certain cultural knowledge. I found it easy to ask about Erica about her Christian wedding, but was embarrassingly ignorant about Salma's Islamic wedding, again showing how my biography gave familiarity to particular settings.

It was easy to spot sameness and difference when my interviews finished, but these points were not always apparent until an interview started. This highlights the serendipitous and somewhat chaotic nature of research. Additionally, it was easy for me to identify points of commonality, but not for interviewees. I knew, for example, that my parents had limited knowledge of my spouse prior to us marrying, but Salma was unaware of this shared experience. Indeed, she positioned herself as being different in this respect, thus showing the often one-sided character of data collection.

There is, however, another way to analyse commonalities. They have been presented simplistically, and are perhaps superficial. It is possible that I was seduced by some kind of kindred spirit. Was it really that case that I knew my interviewees after I had spoken to them? I knew the names of their children, details about their marriages, and private details about eating disorders, spousal neglect and abuse, mental health problems and the death of children. Yet, looking around their homes, hearing them speak on the phone and seeing them interact with their children made the hour I spent with them seem rather limited.

The women's personal histories differed considerably, as previously mentioned. Stella, for example, mentioned buying an apartment in Westminster the day before, while Hannah told me about being evicted from social housing. Pen portraits of the women's lives have been written according to what each woman wrote on her questionnaire and said when interviewed (see Appendix 7). These are not standardised since each woman spoke only about certain aspects of her biography. It is impossible to fully represent each story on a single page, and depicting them in this way was a practical and ethical dilemma. I am accountable for how they are portrayed, but also responsible for making sure each account remains anonymous. Creating wholly pleasing portraits was not entirely achievable, but was

necessary in order to show the women as real and complex individuals rather than undefined and homogenous research subjects.

Aside from the pen portraits, I have summarised details about the women's relationship statuses. Fourteen were married to their first husband (one was 'living apart together') and 16 were separated, divorced or widowed (and were living alone, cohabiting with a partner or had remarried). The earliest marriage took place in 1955 and the latest in 2006. The youngest entry to wifehood was at 17 years and the oldest at 47 years. The shortest marriage lasted one year and the longest was 51 years (and counting). Other details include:

Interviewees:

- Ranged in age from 29 to 75.
- Self-defined as White European/American or Asian/Asian British.
- Were mothers in 23 cases.
- Observed one of four major faiths or none
- Represented a range of occupational groups (a third had professional occupations)<sup>65</sup>.
- Were born to married parents, with exception of one woman.

In terms of surnames, the interviewees had made a various decisions (Appendix 8 shows each woman's surname history). It was my original intention to make use of 11 different surname categories<sup>66</sup> when discussing marital naming – offering a more complex picture than presented by other researchers (Dralle and Mackiewicz 1981; Foss and Edson 1989; Goldin and Shim 2004; Kupper 1990; Scheuble and Johnson 1993). These categories were later abandoned for two reasons. First, I was uncomfortable with their hierarchical and judgemental nature, as they seemed to pit women against each other in some sort of 'name war'. Second, when data were collected, it became clear that naming is not hard and fast. Naming is not static or straightforward, as might be suggested by other studies.

### ***Interview structure***

The women were interviewed using a semi-structured format (see Appendix 6). It was not possible (or appropriate) to conduct interviews in a standardised way. Thus, I relied upon a list of broad themes, under which sat pre-determined prompts. This

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<sup>65</sup> Ten women had professional jobs, three had administrative/secretarial jobs, four were housewives/volunteers, six were retired (including a doctor and assistant headteacher), two were managers/senior officials, two had associate professional/technical jobs, one had a personal service job, one had an elementary job and one was not employed due to a disability.

<sup>66</sup> Traditional; Dual (hyphenated or not); Triple (maiden name as middle name); Situational; Successive (ex-husband's surname used when remarried); Blended; Newly-Invented; Coincidentally-Shared; Husband Changes; Non-Anglo Naming; and Surname Retention.

guide allowed for comparisons to be made between cases, but not wider generalisations. The use of this method, like the survey, involved a great deal of performing. I had to think about when to speak, when to be silent, when to make eye contact and when to take notes. There was a need to consider my responses, too. Should I be amused by, or sympathetic to, their stories? Like my experiences of face-to-face surveying, I was also confronted with anti-feminist remarks and was unsure about responding or challenging these comments.

Ultimately, my performances began before switching on my dictaphone. They began when a doorbell was rung or upon entering a café. ‘How did I get there?’ ‘Did I like soya milk?’ ‘Am I hungry?’ They told me about their jobs and children. It was awkward at times to shop chatting and formally start an interview. When the interview did start, each woman was given the chance to speak openly and at length. Our conversations lasted roughly one hour (on average). The interview themes were:

- **Family background** (e.g. did you share a surname with anyone close to you?)
- **Maiden name** (e.g. do you feel any attachment to the name?)
- **Dating and marriage** (e.g. why did you decide to marry?)
- **Decisions and choices** (e.g. what/who influenced your surname decision?)
- **Benefits, costs and impacts** (e.g. what does surname change/retention offer?)
- **Views on self** (e.g. by which name would you like to be remembered?)
- **Views on marriage** (e.g. what words describe your views on marriage?)
- **Equality** (e.g. to what extent are/were you (in-)dependent from your husband?)
- **Children** (e.g. what role, if any, do surnames play in family relationships?)
- **General naming** (e.g. are surnames meaningful?)

The interviews began as I outlined the research and the interview. Each woman was invited to reveal as much information to me as she was comfortable with and was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 5) to say she had been assured that her responses would be treated confidentially and safeguarded from misuse. Each woman read and signed the form, and a few asked for further information. The interviewees, apart from two, seemed at ease with the questions asked<sup>67</sup>. On occasion, I felt women born outside the UK reacted as if they were playing the role of spokeswomen for naming practices used in their home countries or attempted to show they were accepting of ‘my’ system.

The broad themes listed above were intended to produce ‘talk’ that would allow me to explore negotiations with surname change. I recognised, however, that I was creating a situation where the women were on display and that this could influence what was said. Dryden (1999) has noted that people tend to present their

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<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, these two interviews did not offer their first names.

relationships in socially acceptable ways when asked to discuss them. She notes, in her work with married couples, that women happily talked about such issues as gender inequality at work, but were more guarded in connecting such issues to their marriage. Some women tried to distance themselves from such 'talk' by giving hypothetical accounts of conflict, as this did not directly threaten their own relationships.

My questions also involved memory work. Feminist scholarship, Jackson (1998) notes, has a strong history of using remembered experiences to record and understand women's lives. She claims that researchers drawing on memories subscribe to the view that past histories have: '...something to tell us about our present selves, our individual subjectivities, [and] about what made us what we are' (p.51). Additionally, she points out that memory work makes individuals 'both subjects and objects of research and thus radically breaks with the hierarchical relationship between the researcher as "expert" and the researched as object' (p.51).

The use of memory work would impact on what was remembered by interviewees and how it was remembered. Suter (2004) refers to this in her work on marital naming. Her interviewees, married between 1940 and 1998, tended to reconstruct themselves as more agentic in retrospective accounts. As regards to my interviewees, they spoke in imagined and nostalgic terms about ways of 'doing marriage' (Morgan 1996; Morgan 1999) that were different to their own lived realities. Indeed, Smart (2007:16) notes in her work on personal life: '...in dealing with families, we are dealing with aspirations, yearnings, falsehoods and nostalgia, and this is emotive territory'. Such desires and reminiscences were evident in my interviews.

Finally, I asked women for their personal stories. These, as Schütze (1987) notes, were unlikely to be recounted in neutral ways. Instead, sensual memories would be brought into play. Recalled events would be remembered in terms of how they affected interviewees and how they reacted (Edwards and Middleton 1986). Such recollections might also spread much further. Those participating in Mason's study of residential histories told her about where they lived, but also constructed personal biographical narratives that 'brought into play key features in their life stories, their identities, their sense of self and their values' (p.164). My interviewees unexpectedly revealed a range of intensely private information about issues such as illness, death, abuse, poor relationships and spousal affairs. I had been keen to limit the negative consequences of being interviewed, but found it hard to find methods to

support my interviewees. I attempted to be sympathetic and encouraging, but knew that our relationships would be short-lived.

### *Interview setting*

The interviews took place in private homes, workplaces and cafés/restaurants. All were located in London (and one in Berkshire), thus I was easily able to accommodate the dates and times suggested by interviewees. The women were interviewed alone, except one who sat with her new baby for part of her interview. There were four other cases in which partners or children made appearances – and five where our conversation was interrupted by a phone call.

The most comfortable venue for interviewees seemed to be their homes. This setting was not only familiar, with evidence of family life scattered around, but typically quiet and private. Their homes ranged from large privately-owned houses with grand driveways and antique furniture, to more modest suburban residences, to a rather menacing tower block, whereas the public places were busier and noisier – and such environmental factors may have limited what was said. One interviewee in her 70s, for example, was clearly anxious about being overheard when telling me she was pregnant before marrying.

The interviews were carried out between November 2007 and March 2008. Sixteen women were interviewed on 16 different days. The days with multiple interviews were particularly exhausting as they allowed me little time to reflect individually on each encounter. One such interview was particularly long and emotional, as my interviewee recounted the psychological abuse inflicted on her and her son by her ex-husband. I felt guilty for rushing off to my next appointment. It was not only difficult to concentrate at my next interview one hour later, but the subsequent account made me doubt the significance of my questions. I also felt guilty again for shuffling my previous notes to the bottom of my bag and moving so quickly to my next informant.

The interviews produced around 30 hours of tape recordings, despite my anxiety about being able to facilitate ‘talk’. The interviewees, like survey respondents, knew what to expect from my performance. I adhered to set conversational patterns, and also to the rules and dynamics of an interview situation. I had worried, as with the survey, that the topic might be perceived as too sensitive or intangible. It was certainly the case that some women had never thought in detail about naming generally or within marital relationships (some said this was the case).

Indeed, women with unchanged surnames seemed to be better prepared for answering my questions. It seemed these women had rehearsed many times their reasons for being different. They were perhaps ‘well worn stories’ (Kehily 1995) concerning their identities and subjective histories. It is typically the case that people who make decisions outside the norm are required to justify their actions to others through persuasive reasoning (Ho 1999).

Lastly, as with the survey, I needed to build rapport with my interviewees. However, I was unsure how much to reveal of my personal history. Was this the time, unlike my visits to survey sites, to make known personal details about myself? Would this aid or hinder an interview situation? I cannot be sure which part of my identity they saw. As mentioned before, my experience of interviewing shows the often one-sided character of data collection. I was told many details about my interviewees’ lives, but they knew (and asked) little about mine. I was particularly keen to avoid questions about relationship status as this could lead to questions about my surname, and I feared this might influence their responses. Yet, as it happens, only three women asked if I was married or was likely to marry. I was amazed that most women spoke so openly about their lives and requested so few details about me – the stranger to whom they were entrusting so much personal information.

### *Selecting Pseudonyms*

Names are critical to my study. I therefore faced a significant challenge in disguising the identities of interviewees. The women interviewed spoke at length about the impact and significance of their names. What would be the result of changing their name? The peculiarity of this rests with the following: ‘Names not only identify us, they also describe us. Both first names and last dynamically project highly nuanced images that don’t lend themselves to easy verbal description’ (Lebell 1988:8). It was incredibly difficult to imagine a woman by another name, or find a replacement name that closely matched their actual name (also noted by Edwards and Caballero 2008; Taylor 2010).

Indeed, in cases whereby women had changed surnames, it was strange to hear their maiden name when it was revealed. I asked the women, when their interview started, if they had a previous surname. Sixteen gave a maiden name and five gave a previous surname (e.g. one used when married). It was an intriguing exercise mainly due to the haze of secrecy that seems to surround maiden names. Such names tend to remain hidden to those who meet a woman only after she has

married. This is no doubt why maiden names are used as security codes. Thus, asking the women to state this name was rather awkward. Had I asked for confidential data? Was I going against social etiquette? Was my curiosity too probing?

The first few interviewees were asked to pick pseudonyms for themselves. They too found it a difficult task. One asked: ‘What name do I look like?’ Others picked commonly-occurring names or names outside of their generation/cultural heritage. I considered the impact of this. A White woman in her 50s, for instance, asked to be called Amahl Peters<sup>68</sup>. I wanted to respect her choice, and perhaps it was exciting or empowering to invent a striking nom de plume (she mentioned occasionally thinking it might be nice to have an alternative identity), but I wanted to retain a sense of social and cultural accuracy. It was ultimately difficult to find names to suit each woman, since names carry certain connotations. Thus, I spent time replacing first names with those of a similar derivative/meaning and surnames with those of a similar classification. The task brought to life the highly nuanced nature of names, revealing their generational, cultural and class-based roots.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a reflexive account of the journey I took in formulating and actualising my research strategy. It was a voyage undertaken with the intention of collecting good quality data that, when explored through a thematic discourse analysis, would facilitate better understandings of marital naming. It was also a journey that I attempted with the aim of wanting to contribute positively to feminist-based scholarship, and more broadly to research focusing on personal life, families and relationships. My tour changed course at various points and I have spoken in this chapter of why and how my strategy was adapted. Indeed, this chapter was not intended as a simple summary or a ‘hygienic account’ (Kelly, et al. 1994:46) of how my research was conducted, but a realistic (and therefore more rigorous) description. This was done in order to reveal what – and ultimately who – lies behind the findings presented in Chapters 4 to 7.

My use of mixed-methods, that is face-to-face interviews and questionnaires, was explained in this chapter. I discussed my reasons for interviewing 30 ever-married women, and also made clear my decision to conduct a questionnaire survey with 453 passers-by in London. These two methods, I explained, would provide

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<sup>68</sup> The interviewee later emailed me, using this pseudonym, to tell me that she had bought something special for herself with the money she received from taking part in an interview.

insight into ways of doing and seeing marital naming. My discussion of using interviews and questionnaires as data collection tools focused on their similarities, which are often overlooked. I showed them to be highly interactive processes requiring specific performances that were dependent on one's audience. These performances, I noted, impacted on me personally and also on the material I collected. It has been important to narrate these performances to show the subjective, power-laden and multi-layered nature of research.

The chapter also presented my analytical framework. The benefit of applying a thematic discourse analysis, as demonstrated in the next chapters, is that it allows for the storying of experiences. I explained in this chapter that surname change can be better understood through the ways it is storied in particular contexts, and the social and personal relationships on which such stories are dependent. This type of analysis also allows for an exploration of 'master narratives' and 'counter narratives'. It may be the case that surname change exists as a dominant storyline, but other narratives may run counter to this presumed order. Furthermore, this analytical approach not only allows for surname change to be explored through what is said about the practice, but also in terms of how ways of speaking link to larger structural patterns of privilege and domination.

It was not easy to adopt this reflexive approach. I wrestled with traditional ideas about how research, especially quantitative, should be written. Were there aspects of my work that *really* should remain hidden? Would I seem incompetent even with several years of research training? Would my actions appear exploitative despite my endless worries about ethics? No, for these concerns are common to all researchers. The problem, especially when using quantitative techniques, is dealing with pressure to conform to 'normal' scientific procedures. The reflexive approach that informed this chapter, and my project more widely, enables my research to be better understood – and allows the material presented in the next chapters to be more accurately interpreted.



## Chapter 4

### Maiden Names: Identities and Affinities

My research into marital naming begins with maiden names. I have expressed the views of some feminists in Chapter 2 that the custom of surname change deems maiden names inconsequential, tenuous, provisional and interruptible. And, while this may or may not be the case, my literature review revealed nothing about women's relationships with their maiden names. Therefore, during my interviews, I asked each woman to talk about her maiden name. This chapter is an account of their replies. I imagined, rightly, that my conversations with women would centre on notions of identities and affinities. But I was also privy to rich descriptions of their family life. Thus, while this chapter centres on what women said about their maiden names, it also features their interpretations of 'family' as well as their experiences of 'doing' and 'displaying' family.

The accounts of the women I interviewed are presented as six interpretative repertoires, which I generated by looking for patterns of consensus and contradiction within each account (explained in Chapter 3). The repertoires, each used by at least eight women, appear here as neat and tidy categories but were formulated through my detailed analysis and re-readings of each script. I used the repertoires to explore the substance of each interviewee's account, while also pointing to some commonly-used terms and phrases. The repertoires are:

- *Maiden names as father-owned*
- *Maiden names as family-shared*
- *Maiden names as non-successive*
- *Maiden names as place-specific*
- *Maiden names as personal possessions*
- *Maiden names as pre-assigned labels*

It is not my intention in this chapter to simply map the relationships (if any) between surname 'choice' and the use of particular repertoires, but to look at the multiple and varied ways that maiden names were spoken about. Neither is it my intention to determine levels of agreement with the questions I posed. Rather, I aim to discuss the meaning of each repertoire. In fact, not only would such a count be a crude representation of the women's replies, it would be almost impossible to achieve since the women's 'talk' was sometimes inconsistent – often contradictory.

This chapter is based on each woman's reply to three prompts (see Appendix 6). They were asked to speak about any attachment they felt to their maiden name, the symbolic significance of their maiden names and the possible role their maiden names played in forming their identity. I also include less directly prompted 'talk' in the chapter, as well as discussing the replies of 453 survey respondents to two questions. I asked respondents about the sharing of surnames between certain individuals, to which respondents replied using a five-point agreement scale. My next question was close-ended. I asked about the need for life-long surnames, and respondents were asked to explain their response using an open-ended textbox. The replies given are presented through a standard numerical count, but for ease of reading, all survey-related tables appear in Appendix 4.

### **Maiden Names as Father-Owned**

Surnames have long been linked to male bloodlines, and 16 women used a repertoire that I have labelled 'father-owned' when talking about their maiden names. The work of Davidoff et al (1999) on family life is instructive in this instance. They note: 'Unlike women, who have bodily evidence of their maternity, men can never be certain of their paternity. Giving a man's name to children born within a marriage, whatever the real circumstances of their conception, attached them to the husband and father and enables them [children] to inherit his property' (p.93). That is, surnames serve to 'display' – but not determine – paternity, as well as paternal ancestry (or just 'ancestry' as some interviewees spoke of male lines as a person's only source of lineage). Moreover, in my study, surnames were said to 'display' a father's ethnicity, religion and nationality, along with his traits and reputation in cases where fathers were well-known within a local community.

The central message of the 'father-owned' repertoire is that maiden names 'display' paternal relationships, which some women emphasised via loving tributes, and also by talking about legitimate bloodlines. Only one woman using the repertoire said she disliked her father, but others tended to speak with paternal admiration. Primarily, it was middle-class women who used the repertoire, referring to the prominent positions held by their fathers at work and/or in their local communities. Working-class women used the repertoire – but only if their father had risen to a high rank or succeeded in the face of adversity. Those using the repertoire also tended to use the 'identity theft' narrative reported in Chapter 6 when asked about surname change. This could be because their fathers had worked hard for the 'family name';

or because the daughters of high achieving men were also high achievers themselves and their successes were represented in their maiden names.

The first account I use is from Bala, who was born in Kenya to parents of Indian heritage but moved to England in the 1970s. She spoke about a deep affection for her maiden name, which she would have desperately liked to keep when she married. The name, Bala said, represented her father's story of survival and she could express daughterly admiration by using his surname. Her parents were orphaned as babies, and while her mother was given the invented surname 'India', her father was given his father's surname after it was found on an invoice left in the house of his deceased parents. Bala said her family would have been at a loss without this paperwork. She said: 'I don't know what we would have done' without it. I asked her to talk more about her attachment, and she replied:

*I felt I belonged with it [her maiden name], yeah, we were very proud. I think we were proud of my dad really, sort of, from nothing he got to wherever he got to and the name, you know...It [his surname] became like a solid name that did things.* [Bala, 49]

Bala, widowed for about ten years, mentioned she wanted to remarry, but was unsure if she would change surnames again. She hoped her new husband would love her enough to tolerate her taking back her maiden name. She made this comment, which relates to Mason's (2008) text on 'tangible affinities' within kinship, as she said:

*It would be strange really if a man with the name Asthana [her maiden name] came along, you see, that would be, even if he was the ugliest man and probably the thickest, I would still sort of feel an affinity, it's crazy, because of the name. Yeah, it's only a name, but to me it means so much.* [Bala, 49]

Bala spoke of an affinity existing between her and a stranger of the same surname. She mentioned being attached to him despite his appearance and astuteness. Her maiden name had a psychic or spiritual quality that Mason might refer to as an 'ethereal' affinity. The reason for her attraction, she said, was because the surname was shared with her father. She said:

*...I adored my dad, yeah and still do. I mean, if I do anything, sort of people ask the Holy Spirit to help you or something else, I say to my dad 'please help me'. I don't know if there is an afterlife or not, but yeah. To me, he was everything.* [Bala, 49]

At this point, I turn to the use of surnames to ‘display’ links to past kin. Finch (2007) advises that ‘display’ be considered in terms of ‘degrees of intensity’ rather than in relation to certain types of family (p.72). It seemed, for Bala, that her attachment to her maiden name had intensified with the passing of her father. Indeed, she spoke about losing part of her identity when he died. I asked Bala, as I did most interviewees, about the name by which she wanted to be remembered. She explained that she had already instructed her children to use only her maiden name on her cremation plaque. She said: ‘I want to go how I came’ – suggesting her maiden name was part of her core identity.

A similar account is given by Catherine who explained that her attachment to her maiden name stemmed from being ‘a daddy’s girl’, in her words. She had twice used different surnames after marriage, but had returned to her maiden name in her 30s. Insistent that her surname would never again change, Catherine said she had used it for such a long time, and that it also signalled a connection to her much-loved father who had recently passed away. Likewise, in line with the Bangladeshi custom, Salma did not inherit her father’s surname, but said such a link ‘would have been nice’ – because without it she was ‘just an individual’. She, too, spoke about the passing of her father:

*I know my dad’s in my memory, but I would have known that he, you know, whereas Salma Begum, I’m just an individual, whereas if I had my dad’s surname behind me, I would have thought, yeah, remembered my dad more.* [Salma, 29]

Earlier I mentioned that women using the ‘father-owned’ repertoire emphasised legitimate bloodlines. To illustrate this, I return to Bala who remarked that her father was ‘glad’ to have his ‘own’ surname rather than an invented surname, like that of her mother. Her use of the word ‘own’ raises questions about naming rights and legitimacy that are best explored through Amy’s narrative. This interviewee was born to unmarried parents in the 1960s and put up for adoption. She joined a new family, aged six months, and assumed its surname<sup>69</sup>. She used this surname until she married – but had been desperate for a new surname since separating from her husband in 1990. Yet, she felt unable to choose a new name, as she explains:

*Erm, no, I don’t [feel attached to my maiden name]...I got married and took on my husband’s name which was Finlay, and despite the fact that, erm, we split up in 1990, I’ve been really left, I feel adrift*

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<sup>69</sup> Amy was also given new first and middle names by her new parents, which she said angered her because the changes denied her familial history.

*name-wise because I feel unable, it is difficult to go back to the name Archer because I know it isn't really mine. I don't like to keep the name Finlay because I know that's not mine, but people attach such importance to names in society because it established your identity, who you are and where you came from. Erm, and it was really difficult to erm, if you don't really have a proper family name.*

[Amy, 44]

Amy told a moving story about the lack of a 'proper' family name. Indeed, she was the only interviewee who was unsure of her parentage, and the only one to say she felt insecure in her roots. As with the adult adoptees in Carsten's (2000b) study, Amy's birth parents occupied a prominent place in her imagination. Moreover, not having a 'proper' surname prevented her from divorcing – as doing so would leave her without a surname. This comment is interesting since I have so far discussed names as being shaped by social practices. But this remark indicates the reverse – that names can shape social practice. For Amy, this meant the decision on whether or not to file for divorce.

Returning to the theme of bloodlines, Amy did not consider herself a legitimate recipient of her adopted parents' surname. She was not a *real* 'Archer'. Therefore, the surname she shared with her adoptive parents 'displayed' a family-like arrangement, but hid her past/parallel relationships. Amy spoke about feeling attached to her maiden name as a child, but remarked upon losing her claim to the name when she married. Thus, she said, she was unable to re-claim the surname upon divorcing, adding:

*I think my mum and dad, my parents sort of felt because I had been away from Archer, the name Archer for so long, I don't know, I just think, I think they felt awkward about me going back to the name Archer and so that leaves me in a position, do I take on a whole new name?*

[Amy, 44]

Amy's naming situation was troublesome for her, but had also affected her adoptive parents. Her parents were uncomfortable, she said, about her re-assuming their surname as a divorced woman. A possible solution, Amy said, was to marry her current partner and take his surname. She described this as a 'sensible option', adding that it would be the first time that she had a 'family unit' of her own.

There were others who encountered the dilemma of legitimacy in naming. Gale was one such interviewee, although her comment refers to her husband's surname which she did not use. Her narrative again illustrates the confusing nature of surnames and bloodlines:

*...although my husband's name is Bissmire, biologically, he's not Bissmire. There was a Mrs Bissmire before the First World War and she had two children and Mr Bissmire went away to war, never came back, never reported as dead. She ran, she had a house and had a lodger, who was Mr Andrews, who was from Scotland, but they became a couple and because she had children, he took the name Bissmire and they had two further children, including Steve's father. And, so, Mr Andrews took the name Bissmire. So, actually, if there is any name in the family, it should be Andrews really. [Gale, 54]*

In her account, Gale speaks of 'Bissmire' as illegitimate – it was not the family's 'proper' name since it was not passed through a 'proper' bloodline (i.e. male to male). She talks of her husband as being incorrectly named as his grandfather was actually Mr Andrews and not Mr Bissmire, despite him taking on the latter surname. Gale's account is fascinating for what it says about a man's surname. That is, it is always fixed. Even if a man's surname is to change, this has no real bearing, because his 'proper' name remains under the surface.

Such reference to bloodlines leads me to Carsten (2007:407), who has written about the 'geneticisation of kinship' in Euro-American culture, where a high value is placed on biogenetics. This rings true for my study, but it might not be as culturally limited as Manya, born and raised in India, also employed this way of speaking. She was insistent on keeping her maiden name, and spent time telling me its origins, how it was changed under British rule and how its spelling was distinct to Sikhism<sup>70</sup>. Yet, she said this history was more significant to her father and brother than to herself. 'I guess for them it is because it is the bloodline, but for me, it is just me and it just suits me I guess', she added. Manya, as a daughter, seemed unable to use ancestry to defend her surname 'choice' saying instead that her name was simply 'suitable'.

A final example when considering the 'display' of bloodlines is that of Grace – who was unusual as she took her mother-in-law's maiden name. I asked her to talk about this uncommon arrangement. She replied: '...it would be a real kick in the teeth for her [mother-in-law] if suddenly we reverted to Marc's dad's name...' This was because her husband had been raised by his never-married mother. She went on to say that her husband did not 'feel like a Humphries' (i.e. his father's surname) because he was 18 years old when he first met his father. This comment echoes Mason's work on 'tangible affinities', introduced earlier. The use of the word 'feel'

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<sup>70</sup> Suchita and Rani also mentioned that their ancestral surnames had been changed under British rule in India. Additionally, Greta said her mother's family changed from Icelandic to Danish surnames when Iceland was a colony of Denmark. Grace said her husband's surname was shorted to avoid anti-Semitic behaviour.

in Grace's account points out that kinship is not only – or always – fixed through shared bloodline, but is something that can be experienced, too.

Finally, I constructed the 'father-owned' repertoire on the basis of what was said about fathers by some interviewees. But I have also included what was unsaid about mothers. I again turn to the work of Davidoff et al (1999) who point out that, since paternity is uncertain, female lines are a more reliable method of documenting genetic relationships. The authors also refer to strong links between children and maternal relatives (which may be class-based), yet 'maternal talk' was largely absent from 'maiden name talk'. This seems to support Finch's (2008:712) observation that children's names embody 'male generational communities'. Moreover, this occurrence is curious because eight women said changing surnames reflected their desire to have children. Thus, they had changed surnames to 'display' a connection to their children, but did not speak of such a connection to their own mothers.

### **Maiden Names Family-Shared**

In the previous section, I focused on father-daughter relationships. But 12 women also spoke about collective identities, likenesses and endeavours when asked about their maiden names. Therefore, I have identified a second repertoire called 'family-shared' to denote references to a family collective. This repertoire is also intended to capture common utterances, such as when women spoke about their maiden name as 'the family surname' and 'our surname' along with phrases such as 'we were the Oakes', 'I was of the Beck family' and 'he was a Hughes' – the latter being used to denote a trait that was specific to a family<sup>71</sup>. Most often, such 'talk' revealed a nuclear family arrangement, but was occasionally used to refer to wider group of members who shared the same surname.

I begin with the concept of collective identities, and Finch's (2007) concept of 'display' again proves a useful tool of analysis. My first case is Wendy, a retired doctor, who had used different surnames at home and work. I asked this interviewee if her maiden name had played a role in forming her identity. Her reply indicates that surnames are used to 'display' family membership. A shared surname, for Wendy, meant there was no confusing who was, and was not, included in a family unit:

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<sup>71</sup> This turn of phrase was also used to refer to women who, for example, 'were a Wilson' but became 'an Anderson' upon marrying.

*Yes, I think your name does, doesn't it [play a role in forming your identity]? It's who you are known by to other people and you are part of the family called that name... but that has changed a lot. But, if your name is Fuller, you come from the Fuller family, or you did then, erm. So, yes, I think it was quite an integral part of my identity in those days and indeed throughout my career I suppose, yes.*

[Wendy, 65]

Wendy spoke about family life being more complicated (or less easy to define) than it was when she was younger. The supposed simplicity of bygone families was 'displayed' through a singularly-named household. Delyth, who was in her 50s, made a similar statement when I asked her about childhood surname, as stated below. There is a hint in both her and Wendy's account that improper names might 'display' improper families, which I discuss further in Chapter 6.

*I grew up in Liverpool in the '50s and it was a fairly conventional family. A mum and dad, who were married, already married when I was born. And I was the eldest child of three. We took the family surname and my mum was always known as Mrs and my dad was Mr. There was no divorce or separation. My mother was later widowed and didn't remarry, so there were no complications in terms of any decision needing to be made about what the family name would be. It was completely conventional, straightforward.*

[Delyth, 58]

I move from collective identities to collective likenesses, which were mentioned by three women when asked about their maiden names. I again turn to Mason (2008:30) who commented on family resemblances by saying they are '...personally affecting for people' and are '*highly charged with kinship*' (original italics). I have selected a passage from Gale's account, who said she was always told she 'looked like an Oakes' – the surname she had used for most of her life – only temporary changing surnames during her first marriage because of a clerical error. She said:

*I've always thought 'I'm an Oakes', you know, in my local, in my family, I class myself as an Oakes, and I had quite strong Oakes looks as my uncles and aunts would say, so in that sense, I suppose I always did associate with Oakes.*

[Gale, 54]

The final way of speaking that I have included in the 'family-shared' repertoire is talk about 'family' as a collective endeavour. I have selected lines from Isabel who had changed surnames and continued to use her ex-husband's surname. I asked Isabel if her maiden name had played a role in forming her identity. She replied: 'Erm, don't know. It's the only one I've ever had, so I suppose it was, in that we were sort of "Oh, it's one of those Bishops", erm, [laughs].' Interestingly, she was of



the opinion that her ‘Bishop’ status remained intact, despite not using the surname. Her comments bring to mind Young and Willmot’s (1957) classic text on family and kinship in East London, where families were spoken about as having one status. They were described as being small groups whose identity could be traced to a house – such as those ‘from No. 22’ or ‘37’ – with each member affecting another’s social standing (p.163).

After discussing two repertoires focusing on shared surnames, I now introduce my survey findings based on this topic. I asked respondents to state the extent to which individuals should share surnames. The results show a considerable disparity in people’s preferences for shared surnames among ‘normative’ and ‘non-normative’ groups. Indeed, the replies show people to be far more conventional than reformist when it comes to considering surnames. For example, 55 per cent of respondents agreed that married couples should share a surname – but only seven per cent agreed to the same extent for unmarried cohabittees. All responses are provided in Appendix 4 (Tables 4.2a-c), but the main findings were:

- **Siblings:** 58 per cent of respondents ‘agreed/strongly agreed’ that siblings should share a surname.
- **Parents and children:** 56 per cent of respondents ‘agreed/strongly agreed’ that parents and children of both sexes should share a surname.
- **Married couples:** 55 per cent of respondents ‘agreed/strongly agreed’ that married couples should share a surname.
- **Parents and unmarried daughters:** 48 per cent of respondents ‘agreed/strongly agreed’ that parents and daughters should share surnames, until the latter marry.
- **Same-sex couples:** 9 per cent of respondents ‘agreed/strongly agreed’ that same-sex couples should share a surname.
- **Unmarried cohabittees:** 7 per cent of respondents ‘agreed/strongly agreed’ that unmarried cohabittees should share a surname.

It is fair to conclude that the majority of respondents endorsed normative naming conventions. That is, most agreed that married couples, parents, children and siblings should share a common surname. Surprisingly, the youngest age band of respondents aged 15 to 29 signalled the highest level of agreement with regards to the sharing of names between married couples, and also by parents and children. Moreover, since there was no widespread disagreement with these three practices (only between eight and 16 per cent disagreed), it can be inferred that patrilineal naming certainties resonated among my respondents. A further striking discovery supported my previous statement is the extremely low level of agreement regarding shared surnames for same-sex couples and unmarried cohabittees, which I address below.

Within the sample group, there was also support for the sharing of surnames by parents and daughters, until the latter marry. But it was not quite the majority. This is a curious finding, since 56 per cent of respondents agreed that parents and children should share a surname. So why is there a drop for daughters when presented singularly? The fall seems to be the result of respondents aged 50 or less, as this group may be of the opinion that shared family names do not necessarily mean that women need to change surnames. Or, perhaps some were uncomfortable in agreeing with a statement that seemed contrary to public discourse on gender equality? There was also a difference in the numbers of men and women agreeing with surname change for married daughters – 52 per cent of men agreed/strongly agreed with this idea, but only 44 per cent of women agreed similarly.

Returning to the statement which received the strongest level of agreement, almost six in ten respondents agreed that siblings should share a surname. This is an interesting finding because it introduces the notion of lateral – rather than intergenerational relationships – on which I have focused so far. An explanation for this strength of feeling may arise if one considers identity as relational. This is because if my siblings are ‘of the Wilson name’, then so am I – and our surname is just part of our collective identity. Moreover, our shared surname provides a sense of common fate, along with mutual rights and obligations within our family relationship.

My question about same-sex couples sharing a surname incurred the greatest level of neutrality as 36 per cent of respondents replied ‘neutral’. It is possible that respondents were unsure about the relevance of patrilineal naming for same-sex couples, or may have been conflicted by the gendered nature of naming that becomes so obvious when the heterosexual norm is disrupted. Moreover, my statement about the surnames of same-sex couples might have raised questions among respondents about the groupings which they perceived to constitute a ‘proper’ family.

Additionally, my question about shared surnames for unmarried cohabitantes received the highest level of disagreement – 53 per cent disagreed/strongly disagreed with shared surnames for unmarried couples who live together. This could mean that this type of cohabitation rids couples of the trappings of marriage. But, it is also possible that respondents did not consider such relationships to be important – or permanent enough – to warrant a change of surname.

## Maiden Names as Non-Successive

The notion of male lineage is mostly powerfully expressed through a repertoire I have labelled ‘non-successive’. Used by nine women, their accounts acutely illustrate the authority held by patrilineality as a system of social organisation, which informs gendered assumptions about the rights of inheritance. The main point expressed through this repertoire is that reproductive male lines are the only possible route for surname succession, and it is these lines that form the basis of one’s ancestry. It is an assumption that can have serious consequences for women, as Teichman (1982) writes in her account of illegitimacy: ‘When male blood is what delineates a family every married couple wants a son, for without sons the family itself will die out’ (p.95). Indeed, the phrase ‘die out’ in the context of surnames was common among those using the ‘non-successive’ repertoire.

While several women used the ‘non-successive’ repertoire – it was mainly those from all-female generations and those whose brothers were child-free. It was also used by a woman whose husband was an only-child, and another woman who was given the middle name ‘Hope’, as this was the surname of a parental friend who was without children. Meanwhile, a woman spoke about her brothers ‘bearing the lineage’ of her family – a responsibility from which she removed herself. I begin my analysis with Grace who fits into the first group, as she was from an all-female generation within her family. This interviewee, like others without brothers, spoke of herself as the concluding branch of her family tree. I asked her if she felt attached to her maiden name and she said:

*...my dad doesn't have any family, you know, brothers and sisters...so there isn't really any Drakes in our sort of line of the family anymore, apart from my mum, dad and my sister. Erm, so in that respect, it is a shame that I don't, you know, that there won't be any future Drakes in our family line. Erm, yeah, because we are a small family, so, in that respect I do feel quite attached to the name...* [Grace, 33]

Grace had recently married and used her husband’s surname. Her sister, she guessed, might keep her maiden name if she married her long-term partner. Yet, even still, Grace said her family line had ended. I asked if anyone had voiced concern about the discontinuation of her maiden name and she said the issue had not been raised in her family. She signalled out her father’s lack of commentary, adding that he was not ‘sentimental about things’ – thus suggesting that concern for a name is extravagantly emotional.

In the previous quote, Grace spoke about being part of a small family. Indeed, she said the uniqueness of her maiden name meant it immediately conjured-up an image and relationship with her parents, sister and parental grandmother (whose husband she had not known). Yet, she also shunned the name's significance because it was shared by so few. The name did not invoke a dynasty, as would be the case for an unbroken male-line:

*I have thought quite a number of times over the years it is sad that there wouldn't be any more Drakes, but I guess we don't have a kind of a big Drakes clan that I've ever belonged to. Erm, and it's always been this more nuclear sort of family that I've felt a part of, erm, so, it's not as big a deal.* [Grace, 33]

My exploration of the 'non-succession' repertoire also includes responses from interviewees whose brothers were child-free. It was brothers, Bala said, who could be relied upon to continue a family name. Yet, in her case, her brother was not a father, so her maiden name would 'die with him', she said, which was 'sad'. This sentiment was echoed by Delyth, whose late-brother had no children. She remarked upon surnames being 'an issue' in her family because her only brother was gay and not predicted to become a father. Delyth spoke of feeling 'a little sadness' about her maiden name 'coming to an end'. But, she said the feeling was not enough to compel her to hyphenate her children's surname – or even give them her maiden name. She added:

*....so there had been an issue, discussion about the ultimate fate of that family name because actually it was dying out because his [Delyth's father] brothers and sisters, his brother had no children and his sisters their kids had different names. So that actual branch of the family stops at our point there... But, we took no steps, and I took no steps to actually double barrel the name in order to keep it.* [Delyth, 58]

In these 'non-successive' accounts, huge emphasis is placed on reproductive male lines. Men, it seems, have a supposed duty to continue using their family's name. To explore this viewpoint further, I turn to Gina who spoke of her unusual case. Her brother, she explained, had been sex-reassigned. She said this relative, who she referred to as her brother not sister, had taken on a 'totally different name' since his reassignment. She said there was nothing left of his previous identity. I asked Gina about the provenance of his new name, to which she replied it was 'completely new'

and ‘nothing to do with the family’. Through her words and tone, Gina suggested her brother’s new name ‘displayed’ a lack of family loyalty.

Finally, as several women expressed sadness about the discontinuation of their maiden names coming to an end, I asked if they had considered preserving the name through their husbands and children. Three women, Esme, Delyth and Grace, had asked their husbands about this possibility. This was a question that I asked all women, but it was clear from the women’s replies it was not a question for which husbands were held to account. One of those who asked her husband was Esme, who spoke about ‘having a feeling’ that her three brothers would not become fathers – which later proved true. Grace and Delyth also said they had posed this question. Yet, when I asked for details, it appeared that all such conversations were brief or even dismissed. Indeed, Delyth said raising the topic was a ‘perverse’ way of saying to her husband ‘what are *you* going to do then [about your surname]?’ It was never a ‘serious runner’, she said.

My question about a husband adopting his wife’s surname prompted particularly interesting replies from Grace. She said it was ‘just sort of out of interest’ that she had asked her husband about changing surnames. It was merely an innocent enquiry. She framed her question around her maiden name coming to an end, but said he declined the possibility:

*He was just like, and he’s by no means a kind of sexist type of bloke and he was just like ‘oh no, you know, because Carr’s [his name] really important to me’ and I suppose he’s never thought about giving up the Carr name, erm, it was just something that he wouldn’t do.*

[Grace, 33]

In presenting her husband as someone who cared about his surname, Grace distanced her husband from any accusation of sexism (she spoke of his name being Anglicised to avoid anti-Semitism). She also made this fascinating comment about the possibility of men taking their wives’ surnames:

*...I think that’s interesting because it really does, it’s just a tradition isn’t it and, erm, I know if, I think, it’s very easy to take a husband’s name and it’s just accepted by everybody as you know something that is done. I do think if, if you start, if you want to introduce a wife’s name, somehow it becomes much more a sort of political point and erm... and it becomes much more of a bigger deal... people would see it as more unusual, they’d have more questions about it, it’s not a reason not to do it, but unless you feel very strongly about it, it’s something that’s very important to you, it does seem to be quite a tricky thing to do.*

[Grace, 33]

By depicting women's surname change as 'just a tradition', the practice is trivialised and deemed gender-neutral – meaning it now has nothing to do with being a woman. The word 'just' was a linguistic device used by several women to downplay the seriousness of their naming decisions<sup>72</sup>. Reversing the practice of surname change, Grace said, would politicise and inflate the issue of naming – another comment that serves to belittle its current female-bias. Her use of the word 'political' suggests women's change of surname is a domestic issue, and matters of the home should be free from political interference. Those deviating from tradition, she said, required a good reason and should prepare themselves for defending their choice.

There are, of course, many ways of developing and preserving a family's heritage. Although as Curasi et al (2004) point out in their work from the United States, there appears to be gender-based rules about appropriate inheritance, such as clocks for men and Bibles for women. And, although women often become the custodians of family ties (Otnes and Pleck 2003) and are construed as 'cultural carriers' (Peterson 2008), those in my study did not regard themselves as the curators of their family's name. Thus, surname succession can be viewed as one aspect of kin-work which excludes women, even if surnames 'die out' without their assistance. The women using the 'non-successive' repertoire neither regarded it as their duty, nor did they see themselves as able to carry on their family's lineage. It may be the case that women are held responsible for producing and raising the next generation, but strangely they did not speak of any claim to the names of past or present family members.

### **Maiden Names as Place-Specific**

While many of the interviewees spoke of affinities for people in their discussions about their maiden names, 21 women also talked about relationships between names and geographical places<sup>73</sup>. As a result, I have labelled a fourth repertoire 'place-specific' to capture such narratives. The central message of this repertoire is that names 'display' relationships to land, race and social class. Most women were aware of the place from where their maiden name was said to originate, and some even spoke of the migration patterns of like-named family members. Such knowledge, however, varied greatly in terms of the detail supplied by the women. This section

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<sup>72</sup> The word 'just' was also used by women who 'just' had registry office wedding and those who said surnames were 'just' labels.

<sup>73</sup> Some women grouped their family in terms of geographical location, such as Flora who spoke about 'my family in the Isle of Man' and 'my family in Scotland'.

reports on those women who spoke in the most detail about geographical places, rather than those who referred to distant places inhabited by remote ancestors. That is, I largely focus on real, rather than imagined, communities.

I discuss two issues when exploring the ‘place-specific’ repertoire: connections to particular places, and the sense of belonging and stability they impart; and the racial/ethnic character of surnames, as well as the pride and prejudices these can awaken. I begin with Taylor’s (2010) commentary on identity and place. She notes that, despite people’s increased global mobility, where someone lives continues to have ‘a special contemporary relevance for identity’ (p.2). Indeed, all but seven of my interviewees could be considered migrants, and their maiden names were said to ‘display’ links to such places. These were especially strong for women with unchanged surnames as their maiden names provided them with a ‘sense of rootedness’ (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992:6) and ‘displayed’ these roots to others.

Beginning with connections to particular places, Flora had spent her childhood moving from place to place on account of her father working for the armed forces. It was because of this mobility that Flora spoke about the importance of her maiden name in terms of a fixed geographical place – her birthplace on the Isle of Man. She explained that, on returning to the UK, her family would stay on the island where there were many like-named people. I asked her if the name played a role in forming her identity. She replied:

*Oh, yes, yes, erm, and I’ve, I connect it to having been very peripatetic and moving around that, to have somewhere that, er, I belong to and I still have some very strong contacts over there [Isle of Man] that it was important. And, also, to, so that I, I could be separate from, separated from other people, and they’d be a reason why I’d, I wouldn’t belong in any particular place because I belonged somewhere else that was shown by name. [Flora, 57]*

Recounting elements of her nomadic childhood, Flora said she had continued to move around the Middle East and Africa as an adult. Thus, her maiden name (which she still used) was described as being a sign of ‘stability’ and ‘belonging’ for her family, she said<sup>74</sup>. It connected her with a larger community and provided her with roots. Flora explained that, as well as showing (or ‘displaying’) her independence, her unchanged surname demonstrated that she was aware of being Manx rather than English. I asked her to explain what her father, who was also Manx (her mother was Scottish), thought of her surname ‘choice’, and she said:

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<sup>74</sup> I return to the issue of ‘stability’ in Chapter 6, as some women explained their change of surname in terms of providing stability for their children.

*...because we've moved around a lot, and having lost something in the way of the culture and history to which, if I'd have been brought up in the Isle of Mann altogether, er yes, I think he [father] recognises that it's important for me and I think that's quite pleasing for him.*

[Flora, 57]

My research led me to another woman who had moved away from England, this time to Germany at the age of five, due to her father serving in the armed forces. I asked if her name had played a role in forming her identity, to which she replied:

*Very much so because, as I lived in Germany, I was the odd one out, although I still maintain a German accent [laughs] from that time because you speak like your peers, erm yes, it was something special, I was something special, I was from [unclear], yeah. Walker in Germany was something special...I was proud of it.* [Catherine, 52]

Catherine moved back from Germany to London, aged 30, and reverted to her maiden name. The move was part of a trial separation from her husband, which later became permanent. Catherine's name transition gave her the feeling that she was back at her roots. She said: '...it was easier in England. Walker, I mean it couldn't be more English.' Moreover, she said the name 'made more sense' after returning to the UK.

Both Flora and Catherine spoke about a connection to their birthplace, but others spoke about places to which they had a familial connection – Scotland in particular. Five spoke about their Scottish links, but only one was born in Scotland. The interviewee born the furthest away was Erica, who moved to England from the United States in her late 30s. She spoke of her family embracing their connection to Scotland, even though it was initially assumed that their surname originated in Ireland. She said:

*Well there is some confusion because my family, because it was spelt Mc, they were convinced that we were Irish because how they made the distinction was Mac versus Mc. We've since learned that's not really a very strong association of immigrants [unclear] coming into this country. Things got changed anyways, so, but, I think they were, I think they thought we were Irish. Not that we did a huge deal at St Patrick's. It sort of felt like now I have this identity I'm kind of Irish, until we found out we were Scottish [laughs].* [Erica, 40]

Erica retained her maiden name during her two marriages. The Irish connection she originally claimed through her surname is not unusual for White Americans (Nash 2008). Indeed, Negra (2006:11) points out that Irishness is fast emerging as the 'ethnicity of choice' for White Americans. Indeed, so Irish was Erica's surname, that



she said it made her 'feel Irish'. Such feelings of Irishness, however, were thrown into disarray on learning of her distant Scottish ancestry.

In the discussion of connections to particular geographical places, I focused primarily on how maiden names provide a link for women to other lands. But one interviewee spoke in terms of close physical proximity. Gita used 'Gill' as her maiden name – after the name of the land owned by her family in the Punjab. Yet, growing-up in this region during in the 1950s, her ownership of the name was so obvious that she had no need to introduce herself as 'Gill'. This changed over the years, as her family moved to new places, and people from lower castes adopted the name – but Gita used the phrase 'our people' to refer to everyone using her maiden name. She explained that it was only upon arriving in England that she needed to take a surname. She said '...when you go anywhere [in England], they ask you your surname'. Initially at least, she used the surname Kaur, as is required of Sikh women, adding that the names of Indian settlers were so unfamiliar to English people that she could have used anything.

The accounts featured in my discussion of the 'place-specific' speak about the racial/ethnic character of surnames. It was because of this that maiden names could be a source of pride and prejudice for some women. I first turn to Stella to explore this concept as she mentioned being proud of her 'good English name' and told me that the name appeared in the Domesday Book. I asked if the name had played a role in forming her identity, and she said:

*I'm very proud of my country, erm, I don't think I'm a racist, anyway I hope not, but erm, I love England...I just love to feel, you know, England is my backdrop, you know...* [Stella, 70]

Stella spoke with pride about her 'good English name' which stemmed from her love of England, her country of birth. But, her comment about appearing 'racist' hints at a surname hierarchy that might stand between a person and social acceptance. This was demonstrated in Gina's narrative, as she used a Dutch maiden name growing-up in Norfolk. Asked if she felt attached to her maiden name, she replied: 'I quite liked the fact of being different', adding '...at that time [1950s-60s] still people who came from abroad were unusual. Yes, yes, I liked it, it was exotic, I suppose.' My question about the meaningfulness of a Dutch name also prompted a positive reply: 'Yes, very much so...I'm proud of the Dutch side of it, yeah.' However, she also said:

*When I was in teenage years, you know, if you tried to write VD [Van der] Reyden, you got 'oh, you've got VD' you know, ignorance of a*

*foreign name, which you know, nowadays you would have somebody up for being racially discriminatory [laughs], but in those days...*

[Gina, 57]

The possibility of racial discrimination was especially clear in Rani's account. This interviewee, born and raised in India, explained that her father changed her family's surname following the partition of British India. She quoted him as saying: 'We're independent now. We don't have to carry on using the same name.' Rani and her family were Brahmins, a group subject to regionally-based discrimination in India despite being from the highest caste. She explained that her new maiden name still identified her as a Brahmin, but did not tie her to any particular region. She spoke of feeling no attachment to her original surname because her father had presented the name as 'a thing of distortion' and 'of foreign rule', in her words. Yet, she said the new name had played a role in forming her identity.

Rani's narrative also demonstrates that surnames can 'display' racial/ethnic heritage. This is also signalled in Delyth's account, as she did not embrace her name's heritage on account of it placing her at the 'bottom of the heap' as an Irish Catholic in Liverpool during the 1950s. She said:

*As a child in Liverpool, it was a dis, actually, it wasn't a disadvantage but it was perceived to be a disadvantage because Liverpool in the 50s and earlier, if you were Irish Catholic, you were bottom of the heap. So, you didn't advertise that you were Irish Catholic. So, there was no big deal made of name heritage. So, you know, if Irish people had a particular look or a particular colour, I would be that colour because the genes...we didn't look any different so there was no need to then talk to your children about your heritage so I had no idea really about the significance of the name until I was older.*

[Delyth, 58]

Delyth spoke about silencing her name's heritage, thus giving a contrasting account to Erica's American narrative. She also said her maiden name was specific to a particular place in Ireland, from which her grandfather journeyed to England. Delyth added: 'It's not just a name like Smith.' Her reference to her grandfather brings me to a final example in my discussion of the 'place-specific' repertoire. The account is from Salma, who was born in England to Bangladeshi parents. She said that in her culture, village names carried more weight than surnames since a forefather's origins were hugely important. When asked if her maiden name had played a role in forming her identity, she replied: 'None at all'. But, asked if it identified her as Bangladeshi,

she said: ‘Yes, definitely, straight away. You’re either a Begum or an Akhtar in Bengali.’<sup>75</sup>

The ‘place-specific’ repertoire shows surnames to be distinctly linked to geographical places. While maiden names, for some women, immediately tied them to places, and for others their names conjured up ideas about their native lands and communities. This occurred across all age groups, and was shared among women who had both geographically static as well as mobile upbringings. Moreover, folded into this repertoire it was possible to observe issues of ethnic, racial and national identity appearing – along with issues of racism. Thus, surnames may represent personal heritage and familial roots, but also shows that they have a political function as well. Yet, the links to place and identity were largely based on male links, demonstrating a strong correlation with the ‘father-owned’ repertoire. Indeed, interviewees tended to use the words ‘ancestry’ and ‘heritage’ to refer to their forefathers. And, for several interviewees, such heritage was disguised by their change of surname after marrying, as I will discuss in Chapter 6.

### **Maiden Names as Personal Possessions**

So far, I have discussed repertoires that focus on belonging – to fathers, families and places, as well as belonging to the wrong gender in the case of the ‘non-successive’ repertoire. My fifth repertoire centres on self-belonging. I have labelled this repertoire ‘personal possessions’ as eight women described their maiden name as an integral part of themselves<sup>76</sup>. They also spoke about the ways in which this aspect of themselves was projected or ‘displayed’ to others. This repertoire clearly links to my comments about identity in Chapter 1. Indeed, the accounts I use to discuss this repertoire speak directly to Finch’s (2008:709) observation that names have a ‘dual character’, and specifically the role of names in isolating individuals rather than connecting them to others.

When asked about their maiden names, some women found it difficult to separate themselves from their name. These tended to be women who had retained or returned to their maiden name. An example is provided by Jackie who reluctantly changed surnames when she married in the 1970s, but reverted to her maiden name

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<sup>75</sup> Salma pointed out that ‘Begum’ is a common surname for women of Bangladeshi origin living in the UK, but others were unaware it is a Muslim honorific title for certain women.

<sup>76</sup> The idea that surnames might be female-owned is challenged in cases of divorce, as some women said ex-wives ought to (or would want to) return their husband’s surname if they separated or divorced. This suggests that women’s surnames are borrowed rather than owned, as I discuss in Chapter 6.

after separating from her husband a few years later. I asked if her maiden name had played a role in forming her identity. She agreed, saying:

*Erm, difficult question [whispered]. I reverted back to it very quickly, so yeah, yes, I suppose, that is who I see myself as. A lot of the things in my life are based on beliefs, on my sense of identity and I identify myself as 'Williams', so yeah, I think it probably has, difficult to be precise about what though [laughs].* [Jackie, 52]

In this account, Jackie referred to herself as 'a Williams', even though she it was difficult to explain exactly why this was the case. There appeared to be some connection between this interviewee and her name. Similarly, Alice found it difficult to separate her name from her identity. She had resisted changing surnames when she married, but had started to use her husband's surname aged 60, after being married for 20 years. I asked if her name had played a role in forming her identity, to which she replied:

*Yes, I suppose so, I mean, I didn't analyse it, I just thought: 'I'm Alice Meadows, I've been Alice Meadows for 41 years and just because I'm married to this person why should I change my name?'... I just felt that that's who I was. That was my identity and marriage, why should that alter my identity?* [Alice, 60]

Alice spoke of a strong attachment to her maiden name, and said her name need not change as a result of marriage. The merging of names and identity was also evident in Manya's account. I asked if she felt a strong attachment to her maiden name, which she still used, and she replied:

*Yes, it could have been anything, but I guess because I was given it at birth it you can say so...That's why it's important, I think, because I do know people who are like 'oh my god this is my surname and I'm so proud of it' and I'm like 'yes, this is my surname and this is who I am' so, yeah. That is just me rather than making a big hullabaloo out of it...* [Manya, 32]

Manya rejected the idea that names were just labels, but distanced herself from people who took too much pride in, and were too serious about, their surnames. Yet, she thought her maiden name was important enough to keep after she married. I asked her about this potential contradiction, to which she replied: 'I think that is more selfish in a sense because it is my identity rather than, erm, to do with anything else.' Her use of the word 'selfish' suggests that women who use their maiden name when married are dangerously self-absorbed. Selfishness, or narcissism, has long been employed as a means for 'denigrating woman and delegitimising feminist

politics' (Tyler 2005:40) – but Manya seemed comfortable using the term as a source of agency.

The 'personal possession' repertoire was also used by Bala who was extremely attached to her maiden name. I have mentioned that this attachment stemmed from the pride she felt in her father. But she also spoke about the literal meaning of her maiden name, which she connected to her own character. She said that her maiden name meant 'free as a bird', adding:

*...that was really nice to think you were free, you know, you didn't belong anywhere and yeah... It came from, I think, the Moguls and things like the princes...They didn't need to answer to anything... Whereas Chaudhary [husband's surname] means, erm, like a worker [laughs]. So it's not very nice [laughs].* [Bala 49]

In talking about the literal meaning of her name, Bala drew a class-based distinction. As her husband's surname meant 'worker', it represented being the 'bottom of the list really', she said, whereas her maiden name implied the opposite – a sense of freedom. Bala imagined her maiden initials, 'BA', standing for 'Bachelor of Arts' and her married initials that signified 'Before Christ'. Thus, she draws an interesting distinction between enlightenment and antiquity in relation to her unmarried and married life. She also said her husband prevented her from attending university, but she eventually gained a degree after his death – perhaps making her maiden initials all the more meaningful.

Those women using the 'personal possession' repertoire talked about how their maiden names represented an integral part of themselves, but also mentioned how this was 'displayed' via certificates showing their maiden name. Erica spoke about 'display' when referring to the academic papers she published as a university student. The appearance of her name in print, in her words, 'meant something beyond just my name.' I asked if she felt attached to her maiden name, and she replied:

*...you know how sometimes you Google yourself? For a long time, my name came up first in the results and then, about five years ago, this glamour model, poses in the nude, came up, my name, Erica McLeod ... I was so shocked that I actually went out and bought my domain name Ericamcleod.com so she couldn't use it [laughs]... I don't actually know if it is her real name...but I thought 'why would you take Erica McLeod if it weren't your name?' It's not like, you know, Bunny Simmons.* [Erica, 40]

Erica's account of her online name search, through which she discovered her adult entertainment namesake, links to a point raised in Chapter 1 about how the internet is changing women's relationships to their names. Moreover, the notion of name ownership is particularly strong in this account. Indeed, Erica questioned the authenticity of her namesake's identity, implying that her own claim to the name was stronger as she had used the name since birth. And her attachment to the name was so strong that she felt compelled to protect its integrity by controlling its internet presence. I asked if she viewed her name as a brand name, and she agreed, thereby her name might be constructed as a 'reflexive project of the self' – to use Giddens' phrase (1991:9). Yet, if maiden names also mark social connections, perhaps the only true self-project would be to abandon pre-given names and choose one's own?

The 'personal possession' repertoire constructs names as being somehow akin to bodily extensions. The use of this repertoire, as I mentioned earlier, links closely to my comments about identity in Chapter 1. It was in my first chapter that I pointed to a salient observation made by Finch (2008) in her discussion of Giddens' work. She notes that life-long names could be said to contribute to a stable sense of the self, which Giddens (1991) claims to be at the centre of self-identity in modern social life. This might be true for Erica, mentioned above, whose self-identity was continuous through her unchanged name. However, still referring to Giddens' work of modernity, Finch notes that changing names could signify a 'passage' in one's life that forms part of the 'creative construction of a personal narrative' (p.712). Again, just like the dual character of names, this appears to be another contradiction – but one that may also serve to be a gender burden, as I discuss in Chapters 5 and 6.

Finally, in my discussion of the 'personal-possession' repertoire, I introduce my survey findings. I asked respondents a closed-ended question: 'Do you think people should keep the same surname for life?' As shown in Table 4.10a (Appendix 4), an equal number of respondents were both for and against this concept – just over a third in each case (34 per cent replied 'yes' and the same replied 'no'). A further 18 per cent were unsure and 11 per cent gave no reply. I also constructed another response option at the analysis stage for the three per cent of people who said they agreed with the concept of life-long names, but not for married women. This gendered caveat also appeared when I analysed the responses given to an open-ended question, as I explain.

Following my question about life-long names, 286 respondents gave a reason for their answer, as requested, by using an open text-box. Those who replied 'yes'

and ‘no’ to my question about life-long surnames gave these answers as their top three replies (see Table 4.10a in Appendix 4):

- **Yes, surnames should be lifelong** (n=114):  
Ancestry = 29 per cent – e.g. ‘keep roots alive’ and ‘keeps up family history’  
Identity = 25 per cent – e.g. ‘because it’s your identity’ and ‘keeps individuality’  
Simplicity = 19 per cent – e.g. ‘reduces confusion’ and ‘makes life easier’
- **No, surnames should not be life-long** (n=160):  
Flexibility/choice = 29 per cent – e.g. ‘it’s a free country’ and ‘depends on person’  
Marital naming = 21 per cent – e.g. ‘change at marriage for women’  
Life changes = 19 per cent – e.g. ‘divorce and remarriage’ and ‘adoption’

Opinion was split among respondents on the symbolic nature and function of surnames. For some, surnames were said to provide a stable identity, whereas others pointed to the need for flexibility and choice. Similarly, some respondents indicated that surnames were autonomous of their origins, but the opposite was true for others who made reference to ancestral and marital connections. But, responses were not always gender-neutral. Indeed, around half of those giving ‘flexibility/choice’ as their reply gave a gender-based example to illustrate their point, such as a married woman choosing to change surnames. Similarly, those stating ‘life changes’ regularly gave a woman’s divorce as an example of a circumstance that might prompt surname change. Thus, women’s names are again highlighted as relational and capable of relocation. It is also worth pointing out that despite references to flexibility and choice, at least nine out of ten respondents had followed ‘tradition’ when selecting their own post-wedding surnames and surnames for their children (see Tables 3.13 and 4.12a).

### **Maiden Names as Pre-Assigned Labels**

The five previous repertoires discussed in this chapter suggest that maiden names are imbued with important, recognised meanings. However, in contrast, my sixth repertoire refers to maiden names as ‘pre-assigned labels’. This repertoire, used by 19 women, emphasises the aesthetic and arbitrary nature of surnames. It is a repertoire with two specific functions: it was used to downplay claims about surnames having meaning; and it was used to detach women from appearing too self-interested or emotionally involved in their maiden names. Both of these functions operate to reduce the effect of surname change – making the custom a matter of no concern if surnames are accidental, women suggested.

I start my discussion of this repertoire with reference to the aesthetic value of a maiden name. This includes utterances about taste – some names are ‘pretty’ or ‘unusual’, while others are difficult to spell or pronounce. The latter, as noted in the ‘place-specific’ repertoire, could result in women receiving a hostile reaction<sup>77</sup>. The desirability of a name featured when I asked women if they felt attached to their maiden names, with those who disliked their names replying negatively. This was the case for Esme – born to Jewish parents – who explained that her maiden name related to one of the 12 tribes of Israel. But when I asked if the name had played a part in forming her identity, she said:

*No...Could have been anything couldn't it, yeah. I mean some people don't like their surname do they, so they are pleased when they get married so then they get the opportunity to change it, I mean, yeah, I liked it, wasn't something I thought about really.* [Esme, 54]

Esme's use of the word ‘people’ is interesting. Indeed, she and 14 other women used a generic term when seemingly referring only to women. Pomerantz (1986), in her text on everyday conversations, notes that inclusive words such as ‘all’ and ‘everyone’ are used to defuse responsibility – they are a way to neutralise a certain state of affairs and make them value-free. Esme's use of the word ‘people’ positions surname change as a universal practice and erases its bias against women. That means, although surname change is a distinctly female practice (or obligation), interviewees who used generic language rendered it gender-neutral.

As mentioned by Esme, some interviewees spoke about disliking their maiden name so much that they were happy to change it. The language used in these instances was quite strong at times, as was the case for Jean who remarked that she ‘couldn't wait’ to rid herself of her maiden name. It was not always clear what made a maiden name unappealing, but for Helen the class-based nature of language was significant. She had been given the first name ‘Hilda’ in memory of a cousin who died just before Hilda was born, and her maiden name was ‘Hughes’. She said she ‘hated’ the name and the ‘double H thing’ caused her to be teased. She said:

*It might sound quite daft to you, but as I say, I hated this H business...Because also, because I was north London, I haven't consciously changed my way of speaking, but I suppose I must have a bit, although my father's family weren't badly spoken but you see they would say Elen, Elen Ughes...Which was awful because if you lived in*

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<sup>77</sup> It is worth noting that surnames deemed less appealing are shared equally by men and women, and the fathers of interviewees had continued using such names, passing them to their children, seemingly without concern.



*a council house in the north of London you didn't pronounce your Hs  
[laughs].* [Helen, 74]

Helen's account emphasises the class-based nature of language. The strong accent of her contemporaries, according to this interviewee, signalled her class position and it was not one she viewed positively. Indeed, she spoke about her desire to move away from her familial background.

The 'pre-assigned label' repertoire also captures 'talk' about the arbitrary nature of names. Thirteen interviewees commented on the random allocation of their maiden name, and this was why seven said they were not attached to the name. In this respect, maiden names might be considered the result of fate, just like the families that the interviewees were born into. Common utterances were 'a name's a name' and 'a name's just a label'. Such comments, however, were used alongside the other five repertoires I have discussed. Indeed, no interviewee solely drew upon the 'pre-assigned label' category. To illustrate this, I have selected three passages:

**Esme** who spoke about her maiden name dying out said: *'...if I'd known that my brothers weren't going to have children, I would have probably, we probably would have kept my name, but I mean, at the end of the day, it doesn't really matter.'*

**Gale** who spoke about viewing herself 'as an Oakes' said: *'... it is only a label really, I mean, in the end it's your father's, you know, there is no reason particularly why I'm Oakes.'*

**Isabel** who spoke about being 'one of those Kings' said: *'A name's a name. I don't really get very uptight about it, if someone spells my name incorrectly, which frequently happens, I don't go off in a huff and puff like some people do.'*

These comments from Esme, Gale and Isabel serve to downplay the significance of surnames. The last utterance from Isabel relates to my earlier comments when referring to surname attachments being too sentimental. Margaret also said she was 'not one of those people that's desperately interested in the historic background of their name or heritage'. Not only do these remarks lessen the power of surnames, but they might also be considered as forms of individualisation speak. That is, the women who spoke in this way were sensitive to the arbitrary nature of the social world (Giddens 1992). If this was the case, and names were not viewed as guaranteed certainties, there would be no need to hold onto a name. And, this would allow for them to be swapped on the basis of their aesthetic merit.

The 'pre-given label' repertoire, as discussed, constructs maiden names as acquired through fate rather than being carefully selected. Indeed, the women using

this repertoire had not invested any time selecting their maiden names, and neither had their parents (with the exception of Salma). Their maiden names were taken onboard with limited, or no, thought. However, what is difficult to establish with regards to this repertoire is whether or not maiden names were viewed as simply pre-given labels because women are expected to change surnames when they marry. Considering the repertoires ‘father-owned’ and ‘non-successive’, surnames can be viewed as male-owned, but my research cannot determine the extent to which men might use the ‘pre-given label’ repertoire when talking about their surnames.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has explored the relationship between women and their maiden names. It provides considerable insight into women’s identities and affinities – along with offering a fresh perspective on their family lives – when it comes to their surnames. I identified, explored and discussed six interpretative repertoires which emerged from the women’s accounts. While these were not always drawn upon in consistent ways by interviewees, overall the women had invested some meaning in their maiden names, and there was a palpable sense of connectivity in their accounts. Connections to people and places were said to be ‘displayed’ to others via maiden names, but such names were also personally demonstrative of intimate connections. But, in making these connections, surnames were also exclusive and used to set boundaries. This was noticeable in the absence of mothers from the women’s accounts, and in the exclusion of women and non-biological kin from surname entitlements.

The repertoires discussed point toward the important issue of gender within personal relationships. They are significant for what they can reveal about notions of paternity and procreative ties. Familial roots were shown to be framed around male communities, and the women’s ‘talk’ about their maiden names echoed a general genealogical assumption about heritage – that it lies in the hands of men. The repertoires also demonstrate the relevance of collective identities and endeavours within the project of ‘family’. Yet, this project was found to revolve around idealised notions of ‘family’ and so-called legitimate bloodlines. It was not, however, only links to people that were spoken about with regards to maiden names, as interviewees also emphasised relationships between their names and real or imagined places – although these were linked to male communities, too. Maiden names were also said to be demonstrative of women’s identities and achievements, but some

women suggested that surnames could be dismissed on the basis of their arbitrary nature or changed/retained on account of their aesthetic worth.

Taken collectively, the six repertoires can be assessed in relation to Smart's (2007) text on personal life. She makes reference to two dominant accounts of personal biographies: the 'essential roots' narrative and the 'choice' narrative. The first of these, which focuses on 'secure roots and a known heritage', formed a large part of my discussions with women in regards to their maiden names (p.106). The latter 'choice' narrative, which focuses on self-made biographies and self-chosen life projects, featured less in my conversations. Moreover, the 'essential roots' narrative sits comfortably with the first four repertoires I discussed herein, while the 'choice' narrative is more representative of the latter two repertoires that focus on taste and personal ownership. But, as Smart points out, neither narrative adequately captures 'the complexities and layers of the process of biography building' (p.106). Indeed, rather than draw exclusively on one repertoire, my interviewees employed several ways of speaking, often giving inconsistent and contradictory accounts that are undoubtedly indicative of the unregimented and constantly shifting beliefs, values and practices of a given society.

# Chapter 5

## Marital Naming: Stability and Change

In this chapter, I consider how the women in my study navigated the request to discard their maiden names and instead use their husbands' surnames. How did these women understand the call – and what influenced their decisions? What motivated them to respond to the dilemma in particular ways? These questions generated a mass of rich and insightful feedback from my conversations with interviewees. I dealt with this, at the analysis stage, by clustering the discursive themes into sets addressed by the interviewees. This lengthy process of finding patterns within the often muddled and intricate narratives led me to create eight resounding interpretative repertoires. This chapter discusses 'talk' from respondents which is situated around the stability/change debate, while I use Chapter 6 to focus on narratives related to autonomy/connectedness. Four of the eight repertoires are discussed herein:

- *Surname change as a pre-supposed notion*
- *Surname change as a symbol of marriage*
- *Surname change as a sign of commitment*
- *Surname change as a personal choice*

The above repertoires structure this chapter. I created each theme on the basis of what women said when asked to discuss their surname 'choices'. My prompts focused on: the ease and symbolic nature of a woman's decision; factors motivating their choice and the availability of choice; the impact of their choice on their sense of identity and relationships; and the costs and benefits of their surname choice. I added a few different prompts for women who had, and had not, changed surnames. Again, I explore the substance of each narrative, while also commenting on the function of certain utterances. For example, as Boxer and Gritsenko (2005) noted of similar interviews, words such as 'sign', 'symbol' and 'meaning' commonly featured in my interviewees' narratives of marital naming.

To support and develop my discussion of marital naming repertoires, I draw upon findings from my survey of 453 people who were asked several questions about the symbolic nature and function of surname change. They were also questioned about their surname preferences for married couples, and were invited to comment on what – if anything – surname change, or retention, demonstrated about women.

Again, I discuss key findings from the survey, but complete tables can be found in Appendix 4.

### **Surname Change as a Pre-supposed Notion**

The prevalence and conceptual power of surname change as a practice required of married women was evident in the replies of all interviewees and survey respondents – regardless of their surname ‘choice’. I have attempted to capture such ‘talk’ in a repertoire labelled ‘pre-supposed’. It is a discourse which displays a dominant institutional structure – in this case a story for women about the importance of accepting the status quo or dealing with the consequences. Yet, although the repertoire was widely used by women to rationalise surname change, older women expressed surprise at the continuation of the practice by modern-day brides. So, it should not be deduced that because the widespread practice of surname change was constructed as a pre-supposed notion that it is without meaning, but instead that it forms part of a ‘coping economy’ and women’s continual engagement in ‘kin work’ or ‘interactional work’ (di Leonardo 1987; Hobson 2000; Peterson 2008).

#### ***Never gave it a second thought...***

In her account of May Day customs, McGrath (2004:83) observes that rituals serve as ‘automatic decision-makers in everyday existence’. Indeed, most interviewees who changed surnames spoke of their choice in these terms, and considered ‘tradition’ to be a reasonable explanation for taking their husbands’ surnames. Yet, despite such appeals to ‘tradition’, few interviewees explicitly said that it was because they were women that they received the call to change surnames. In fact, some women spoke about ‘people’ changing surnames rather than ‘married women’ doing so. Moreover, despite appealing to ‘tradition’, only one interviewee embraced a traditionalist identity by saying her faith provided sense to her life. Surname change may appear a prevalent practice with little alternative, yet women did not refer to a ‘golden age’ of the family or other idealistic concepts at this point.

There are numerous examples to illustrate the way in which the ‘pre-supposed’ repertoire was constructed, but I start with three short quotes from my interviewees. Isabel, who married in the 1960s, presented surname change as a pre-determined reality by saying: ‘Never gave it a thought... you got married, you became Mrs Whatever.’ And, Rani, a 1970s-bride, spoke of surname change as such an old tradition that it seemed natural: ‘I come from a tradition where women change

their names, so it was second nature anyway to expect that something should happen...’ Meanwhile, Hannah, a 1980s-bride, said: ‘...it’s not something you really think about is it, at that time? It’s just a name. You accept it and you get on with it.’ Her use of the phrase ‘just a name’ seems to trivialise her taking of a new surname. And, her posing of a question invited me to confirm the truthfulness of her statement.

All three of these women were married in different decades, but each appealed to the ‘pre-supposed’ repertoire. These women, despite being separated by 22 years in age, spoke of their generation of brides as being distinctly stifled by tradition. Common utterances from these women and others related to phrases such as ‘in those days’ and ‘at that time’ when speaking about surname change. Interviewees married in the 1950s were especially disposed to present themselves as part of a particular generation of surname changers. I asked these women if they could give examples of particular generational constraints, and Helen responded by talking about sexual guilt and control. She spoke about needing to take a letter from her vicar on a visit to her family planning clinic just before marrying, adding: ‘Can you imagine that today?’ She said:

*I had to get the letter from them, from the vicar, to take to them to get a cap, you know, so, yes, that’s how, I couldn’t be, I had to be Mrs on their books a few weeks before...the wedding.* [Helen, 74]

For Helen, it was necessary to be known as ‘Mrs Gordon’ and not ‘Miss Hughes’. Her change of name (and title) showed she was married, thus her sexual activity was considered legitimate by the clinic. This account speaks of a generational constraint placed on women who marry. But there were also class-based constraints as demonstrated through the accounts of Delyth and Jackie. These two working-class women, who were raised in northern England, married in the 1970s. I asked them, as with all interviewees, if they had felt able to question the practice of surname change. Delyth said she could, but had changed her surname nonetheless, whereas Jackie felt powerless against the custom, despite not wanting to change her surname. Delyth explained her point of view:

*I did go through it and I did question it... Yeah, in my own head because it was the late 70s and you know, I kind of bucked the trend in many ways as to what girls do from my background. It was just the normal thing that I would do [i.e. question the practice] because women then were beginning to think about these things.* [Delyth, 58]

Delyth married aged 29. She had finished university, become a teacher and bought her own house. Thus, as she said, she ‘bucked the trend’ of social class. Her new

social position enabled her to question what she may have otherwise taken for granted, she remarked<sup>78</sup>. But, Jackie told a different story. She married aged 20 and spoke of her educational aspirations being curtailed, she said it was ‘pointless’ to question surname change as no other choices were offered, adding that if participating in tradition was optional, it would lose its meaning. Jackie added:

*...this was in the early '70s. [In] those days, people still asked you if your husband was going to allow you to work...And you became your husband's property very much. The institution of marriage was beginning to fray at the edges [but] at the time I first married, it certainly hadn't. There was absolutely no question of not changing my surname.* [Jackie, 52]

Jackie, if not Delyth, spoke of a time when husbands presided over the economic liberties of their wives. She uses the preclusion of married women from paid employment to illustrate the dominance of husbands over wives, as a married, dependent woman, had no choice or reason, to retain her surname.

### ***I wish I'd stuck to my guns...***

The ‘pre-supposed’ repertoire encompasses ‘talk’ about the impact of not changing surnames and ways in which women deal with this decision. I asked women with unchanged surnames to recount other people’s reactions to their choice, and they spoke about it causing shock, confusion, irritation and disappointment – especially from older relatives. They also mentioned that their choice was ignored, dismissed or even mocked. The dismissal of a woman’s choice of surname led to regular misnaming, and I asked the women how they reacted. Generally it was said to be brushed off as an innocent mistake, except in legal matters. None of them spoke of being confrontational when they experienced misnaming – even though such mistakes were annoying and uncomfortable<sup>79</sup>.

An example of the prevalence and acceptance of deliberate misnaming arises in Gale’s account. This interviewee had briefly changed surnames during her first marriage, but returned to her maiden name after divorcing. She continued using her

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<sup>78</sup> That said, when Delyth was asked about the name by which she would like to be remembered she toned down her pre-marriage achievements, such as her degree, describing them as ‘conventional’ – even though they were not. She said: ‘I would never ask to be known by my maiden name because all my achievements are actually in my full name, you know, the name I’ve got now.’

<sup>79</sup> Mistakes were also made with women’s titles. It was said that mothers and women above a certain age were assumed to be married and thus use ‘Mrs’ as their title – and that ‘Mrs’ was the preferred and only title for married women. But again, women said they complained about misnaming only in legal situations. For example, Jill said protesting about titles would be ‘annoying’ and ‘irritating’ to others, and it would get a relationship ‘off to a bad start’ and seem ‘a bit sniffy’.

maiden name after remarrying, but was often misnamed on account of her children using a different surname. She said:

*I mean people would call me you know, teachers would call me Mrs Bissmire, I mean, I wouldn't correct them, but I would never call myself Mrs Bissmire, and, I still won't, but, you know, if somebody calls me Mrs Bissmire like the postman or something, I'm not going to say 'oh, no, you never call me Bissmire, I'm Oakes'.* [Gale, 54]

Gale conceded defeat to being misnamed. Indeed, it seemed to be an accepted part of keeping one's maiden name. But, by not correcting such mistakes, women's surname choices were trivialised. Such complicity speaks to Elizabeth's (2003) work on marriage in which she refers to negotiating one's identity on the basis of the shifting relations of power. Married women, she writes, wanting to exert a feminist identity might find this to be overridden by 'patriarchal definitions of the marital self' and 'interactions with powerful others' (p.429). Thus, a woman's desire to use her maiden name may be jeopardised by discourses that continue to circulate and be certified by 'powerful' segments of society.

I mentioned that Gale briefly changed surnames when married to her first husband. This occurred, she said, through a clerical error and she actually wanted to keep her maiden name. She, along with Alice, spoke of a domino effect whereby appeasing one party by changing surnames resulted in a complete change of surname. Yet, in recalling these experiences, the two women partly, or wholly, blamed themselves for not standing by their choice, as illustrated in this passage from Alice:

*I wish I'd stuck to my guns actually and not started changing because I might have been stronger if I did it again. And as I say, it's pathetic because I could have stopped it. It was the mortgage company doing it without asking me. That's what started it and if I'd jumped on it then and got it changed back I might have been able to regain control but I didn't and then it ran away with me.* [Alice, 60]

Alice's self-blame is clear in her account. Even though she had been incorrectly named by her mortgage company, she blamed herself for not standing firm. She said: 'I'm quite ashamed that I've given in really'. And her self-blame resonates with much feminist theorising on topics such as childlessness, relationship breakdown and rape (Brownmiller 1977; Maushart 2001; Todorovaa and Kotzeva 2003).

Alice and Gale referred to maiden name retention as a struggle, as did others who (at least initially) retained their maiden name. I asked them all how they dealt with this conflict and they remarked 'being patient' and 'not making a fuss' and



'keeping quiet'. I illustrate examples of this type of self-censorship through Manya's account, as the narrative also links to debates about stability/change. The 32-year-old spoke about being wary to discuss her wish to keep her maiden name with her soon-to-be husband. However, he broached the subject first. She recalled:

*I kind of kept mum about it at the time because I thought let's test the waters before I say anything and then he made the mistake of turning around and saying 'let's be a modern couple and keep our surnames' and I just thought wonderful...This is absolutely fantastic and I said 'yes'. I completely agreed to it and I didn't think he, I think he said it just to earn some brownie points [laughs].* [Manya, 32]

But, before long, Manya's husband admitted his suggestion had been a joke and he would have preferred her to use his surname. I asked her how she felt about this U-turn. She was upset and her disappointment was exacerbated because she was pleased that her future husband appeared 'modern' – a trait she valued having surpassed what was expected of an Indian woman from her cultural background. Moreover, since her husband had refused his mother's attempt to change his surname to her maiden name following her divorce, Manya had expected him to be more understanding. Asked about the name by which she wished to be remembered, Manya chose her maiden name. But, she added: 'I'm not going to be there to print the card, so it will be in my married name because that's what my husband would do...' It seemed sad that Manya's husband would override her naming preference after she had passed away.

***I'm sure women are much more sensible nowadays...***

The 'pre-supposed' repertoire included 'talk' about the generational constraints for women who married in the 1980s or earlier, but they did not speak of surname change as timeless. Instead, several expected that younger women would not change surnames if and when they married. For example, Maude said modern-day brides were 'much more sensible' than her generation of 1970s brides who struggled to meet the image of the 'perfect housewife'. Younger women were said to have much more autonomy than their foremothers and were able to make choices about their lives. Moreover, because younger women held jobs prior to marrying, and often owned property, surname change was said to be either more difficult or irrelevant to modern-day brides.

These comments expose a debate between stability and change. Interviewees made reference to ‘postmodern family statistics’ (Stacey 1999:189) such as marriage being weakened and marriage not necessarily signalling success any more. They also doubted the significance of ‘family names’ when unmarried cohabitation was so popular, when divorce and remarriage were common and when so many children were born to unmarried parents. Moreover, they commented on an apparent decline in male dominance and the male breadwinner model. It was because of such empowerment that four women of varying ages expressed surprise that younger women continued to adopt their husbands’ surnames. However, in practice, this seemed anything but the case, as Alice spoke of observing an increase in the custom among women in her social group. Turning to an account given by Grace, a recent bride in her 30s who adopted her husband’s surname, I asked her if she felt keeping her surname was an option, she said yes, but added:

*I think there’s a bit of a trend at the moment towards people changing their names, where a while back, just a few years ago friends who were getting married weren’t changing their names, but now, erm, a lot of women I know are, erm, sort of professional women are changing them, erm, at work and at home and it doesn’t have any impact on you know your career and how you do professionally, as far as I can see, erm, so, I suppose it’s just, I suppose in the sort of year that I was planning on getting, you know planning my wedding, I did notice that quite a few friends had changed their name and, erm, I thought, I thought it was quite nice.* [Grace, 33]

As, Grace was a well-educated woman with a good job, I was not expecting her to describe surname change as being ‘quite nice’. Indeed, she seemed aware that her words might appear contradictory to her status as an educated young professional. Indeed, when I interviewed her she was on maternity leave and said her mother was ‘lucky’ for not needing to work as a young mum. But she quickly amended her statement. Perhaps to legitimise her surname ‘choice’, she mentioned that several of her colleagues, or their spouses, had changed surnames:

*I think, a lot of people at work, I guess, erm, have had themselves or partners changes names, so it’s nothing unusual, erm, a few people at work are married women and have kept their names, erm, but, it’s very much seen as a personal preference and nobody’s, nobody thinks it’s unusual one way or the other, I don’t think these days.*[Grace, 33]

Grace defended her decision to change surnames by saying it was ‘nothing unusual’. She also gender-neutralised the practice through the word ‘people’ – discussed in

Chapter 4. She said changing surnames was easy and had no impact on a women's career. Indeed, Grace made no reference to any conflict, apart from guessing that using two surnames would be 'a bit of a pain'. But, in contrast, Manya spoke of surname retention as being difficult. Also in her early 30s, she remarked upon needing to hide her name. I asked her if the retention of her maiden name was stigmatising, and she said:

*I didn't really think about it, erm, if there a stigma, there is, yeah, but I think I have learned to be a little more careful about whom I reveal, I kind of avoid it, I wouldn't like go in someone's face and say 'I haven't changed my surname'...If it is important, yeah, it's a need to know basis kind of thing, if you need to send someone a cheque then you need the name and bank account...* [Manya, 32]

Challenging the idea that traditional expectations about surname change have weakened, Manya spoke about her surname 'choice' as shameful and taboo. She was careful about making her decision public. Instead, Manya said she consciously avoided raising the topic of her surname with others, and the extent to which she censored herself indicates that she (and others mentioned earlier) was of the opinion that her naming decision was incorrect, improper and/or insignificant.

***It's not 'Oh I want his name because we walk around hand in hand'...***

Interviewees who changed surnames did not talk in starry-eyed terms about the practice, and none gave sentimental accounts when I asked them about using their husbands' surnames for the first time. This might be because some had been married for many decades, and some were now separated or divorced. But, it is also possible that the practice forms part of the 'coping economy' (Peterson 2008) or 'interactional work' (Hobson 2000) – changing surnames is simply about women 'getting on' and 'getting by' in a society that does not enable them to view their surnames as their own. Indeed, Hobson notes that a woman's take-up of the ready-made position of 'emotional manager' in relationships can be a 'tactical' move, using De Certeau's terms (1988) – meaning that women 'make do' in situations where they have limited power.

Indeed, it is curious that so few interviewees made references to love and romance, as this seems in opposition to popular assumptions about marriage. When exploring the women's accounts, only Helen, Wendy and Catherine spoke about romance or love as influencing their change of surname. Moreover, Manya apologised for a lack of romance when talking about marriage as a personal choice,

and Flora added to her pragmatic account of partnership that she had ‘obviously’ experienced a huge rush of passion in her decision to marry. Delyth, in contrast, said her change of surname was decidedly not a romantic gesture:

*...I’m exceptionally independent. And when I say, I mean I do a lot of things on my own, do a lot of separate things, so it’s not ‘oh I want his name, you know, because we walk around hand in hand’ and all the rest of it. It’s not like that at all.* [Delyth, 58]

Delyth distanced herself from the idea that changing surnames is romantic. She also joked about not doing a ‘Mr and Mrs bank account’. That said, when asked to recall her experience of first using her husband’s surname, Delyth was one of only five interviewees to reflect nostalgically on the occasion. But, for other women, my question about using their husband’s surname for the first time conjured up seemingly mundane activities, such as renaming bank accounts and passports. Moreover, it is possible that ‘romance talk’ was absent because surname change was constructed as sustaining family well-being (discussed in Chapter 6), rather than an activity that was self-indulgent. Overall, the ‘pre-supposed’ repertoire constructs surname change as natural and effortless, much like popular notions of motherhood, wifeness and marriage (Heyn 1997; Maushart 2001).

### *Survey responses*

The ‘pre-supposed’ repertoire can be further explored as I presented respondents with ten statements about the symbolic nature of surname change and asked them to indicate their level of agreement with each (see Tables 4.4a-d in Appendix 4). The replies most relevant to the ‘pre-supposed’ repertoire were:

- **Surname change by married women is ‘expected’** – 65 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Surname change by married women is ‘meaningful’** – 48 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Surname change by married women is ‘just the way things are’** – 42 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Surname change by married women is ‘romantic’** – 32 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Surname change by married women is ‘out-of-date’** – 23 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Surname change by married women is ‘sexist’** – 19 per cent agreed or strongly agreed

These results are noteworthy for what they say about surname change, especially about surname change being expected and discriminatory. Two-thirds of respondents agreed that surname change by married women was expected, but only two in five

agreed with its inevitability. Of particular interest to the debate on stability/change is that less than a quarter of people agreed that surname change was an out-of-date practice. Most surprisingly, only 18 per cent of respondents aged 15 to 29 agreed that the practice was out-of-date, compared to 27 per cent of those aged between 30 and 69 years. Meanwhile, only 19 per cent of respondents agreed that surname change was 'sexist' (17 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men), meaning that only one in five people viewed women's change of surname upon marriage to be a discriminatory practice based on gender.

Furthermore, I presented respondents with nine questions about the function of surname change (see Tables 4.5a-e in Appendix 4). Again, I have selected the responses most appropriate to the 'pre-supposed' repertoire:

- **Surname change by married women 'makes life easier'** – 64 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Surname change by married women 'keeps traditional roles for women'** – 42 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Surname change by married women 'is too restrictive'** – 14 per cent agreed or strongly agreed

Almost two-thirds of respondents agreed that surname change 'makes life easier' – a statement that received the same level of agreement from men and women. There was, however, a gender difference in the replies given with regards to surname change being too restrictive. Just eight per cent of men agreed with the statement compared to 19 per cent of women. These findings resonate with my earlier comments about the 'coping economy' – or women being expected to 'make life easier' for others.

The replies to my statement about surname change 'keeping traditional roles for women' are somewhat ambiguous since it is difficult to determine if people thought such roles were good or bad. However, it is interesting to compare responses to my statement about sexism. Although two in five people indicated that surname change retained traditional roles for women, only one in five said the practice was sexist. Moreover, despite two-thirds of people indicating that surname change by married women was 'expected', only 14 percent said that the practice was 'too restrictive'.

Lastly, respondents were asked about their surname preferences (see Tables 4.3a-c in Appendix 4) and few generational preferences were detected. Instead, half of all respondents stated their preference for married women to change surnames. Of the generational preferences that were found, those aged 50 to 69 favoured maiden

name retention slightly less than younger respondents. But, conversely, those aged 15 to 29 reported a stronger dislike for women alternating between surnames in a variety of situations than those aged between 30 and 69. The biggest difference emerged through an analysis of gender – 42 per cent of women reported that they ‘liked or strongly liked’ maiden name retention, but only 26 per cent of men responded to the same extent.

### **Surname Change as a Symbol of Marriage**

I have labelled my second repertoire ‘symbol of marriage’ as 17 interviewees spoke about marriage as distinguishable through surname change. The central tenet of this repertoire is that marriage is ‘displayed’ through surname change. Women who had new surnames spoke about their name change as signalling to them, and others, that they were now married. Indeed, some said their new surname was their ‘married’ name. They talked about the title ‘Mrs’ as a means of display, too. But, the repertoire was also used by women with unchanged surnames who wished to distance themselves from being identified as married. I have labelled the repertoire ‘symbol of marriage’ to capture what women said, but ‘symbol of wifeness’ would be more accurate as men’s marital identity was not said to be displayed by his name.

#### ***I want us to be joined together in some way...***

Marriage was said to be ‘displayed’ through a woman’s change of surname. This sentiment was expressed by Isabel who, when asked what surname change represented, said the practice ‘tells the world you are married, doesn’t it?’ Her question invited me to confirm the truthfulness of her statement. Surname change was also said to validate a couple’s status as married, both privately and publicly. This was the case for Margaret, my oldest interviewee. I asked her to recall the first time she used her ex-husband’s surname and she spoke of realising her new, married identity as she sat at the airport waiting to embark on her honeymoon:

*It was while we were sitting...at [the] airport. My mother just said ‘Mrs Lowe’ and you know I, it took a moment or two to realise that she was actually addressing me with my new name...it came home to me ‘well this is it you know’, I’ve got partly a new identity and, you know, a married women and I’ve taken on somebody else’s name.*  
[Margaret, 75]

Margaret’s account is about a life transformation, as her changed surname symbolically detached her from her previous identity. It was significant as she

referred to the practice as representing the Biblical ‘one flesh’ principle – two people becoming ‘one’ through a shared surname. And, Margaret continued to use her husband’s surname after divorcing in her 50s, and said she had never considered reverting to her maiden name.

This was not unusual, as Jean also continued using her husband’s surname after they divorced. Interestingly, these two interviewees, unlike other divorcees who now used their maiden names, had not initiated their separation or divorce. Thus, their loss, or at least change, of status was not of their making. I asked Jean if she viewed her former husband’s surname as her own, and she somewhat agreed:

*Yes, yeah I do, although I think I might be mistaken to be thinking like that, I’m starting to think, anyway... I haven’t really thought about it. I didn’t want to change back to being Buckle [maiden name]. I remember consciously thinking that, and also, perhaps there might have been a slight element of I didn’t initiate the separation and divorce and I didn’t want it to happen, so there might have been some element of I was going to stay clinging on to it, but you know hanging on to it because it was sort of a remnant of what we had had.*

[Jean, 55]

For Jean, she continued to ‘display’ a married identity even though she was later divorced. But, another interviewee, Alice, spoke about her inability to engage in such ‘display’ even though she was married. This interviewee, who kept her maiden name for the first 20 years of her marriage, was ‘confused’ and ‘baffled’ by her naming situation. She said that she was proud to be married, especially after waiting so long to marry, but her unchanged surname did not ‘display’ her pride. She said:

*...you know when they call you out on holidays, I didn’t want them to say Alice Meadows and Peter Meades because I didn’t want to, that isn’t how I felt. This is where I start to get quite muddled. I want us to be joined together in some way but... what they used to do is, I booked it, it was in my name, so they called him Mr Meadows, which he didn’t mind, but I felt well that’s a bit mean... So, that’s when I started booking as Meades and that’s when I changed my passport.*

[Alice, 60]

By not changing surnames, Alice’s relationship with her husband was not instantly recognisable. This was distressing for Alice because it was not ‘how she felt’ – her relationship was closer than others might think. She was unable to participate in what Hobson (2000) refers to as a new ‘language’ of couplehood – that ‘a couple’ is partly achieved through acquiring a new language of intimacy<sup>80</sup>. Moreover, Alice’s

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<sup>80</sup> Boden (2003:133), drawing on this idea, observes that couples can struggle with this new language even if they have been married for some time. The language of marriage did not come ‘naturally’ to

reference to being called out in a crowd signals that she wanted to ‘display’ her marriage. Her account resonates with Noack and Wiik’s (2008) claim that a shared surname might signal a key difference between the statuses of married and unmarried cohabitation, as I discussed previously in Chapter 1.

*I like being married, so yeah, I use Mrs...*

In addition to my questions about surnames, I also asked interviewees about the use of titles. Their replies are included in my discussion of the ‘symbol of marriage’ repertoire as they demonstrate the cultural capital to be gained, not just through marriage but, by ‘displaying’ marriage. I turn to Jackie who reverted to her maiden name after marrying for just a few years in the 1970s. She said that to deal with her annoyance of using a title, she randomly switched her title depending on her mood. But her seemingly agentic narrative seemed more calculated. She said:

*I just call myself whatever I feel like at the time. I don't think my marital status is anybody else's business these days. So, perhaps if I'm talking to the Inland Revenue on the phone and I need to get heavy with them, I'm Mrs [laughs] a middle-aged Mrs, there's a lot more authority there than a middle-aged Miss or Ms. If I'm out socialising, I'm Ms, you know, I don't worry about it anymore.*  
[Jackie, 52]

Jackie’s response demonstrates that certain forms of ‘display’ are appropriate in targeted situations. Moreover, her account suggests that public positions of power are based on the appearance of marital status. This notion of power was also mentioned by Grace who had recently started using ‘Mrs’, but seemed uneasy in her enthusiasm. I asked her which title she used and she replied:

*I actually do use Mrs...But, that's only because I'm still in that sort of honeymoon period and I like, I like being, I like being married, so yeah, I use Mrs, and sometimes I even, you know, if someone, say I'm on the phone to the bank or something like that, sometimes I even do just say, yes, 'it's Mrs Carr' as opposed to using my first name, and I don't know why I do that, but, it's very old fashioned...* [Grace, 33]

I mentioned earlier that Grace seemed aware that her words might seem contradictory as a young educated professional. Indeed, she seemed almost apologetic about using the title ‘Mrs’, which she described as ‘old fashioned’. She added that women tended to be taken more seriously when they addressed

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all her participants which she attributes to a language of ‘consumption’ rather than ‘couplehood’ in the build-up to their weddings.



themselves as ‘Mrs’, but was uncomfortable in making this statement because it sounded ‘sexist’.

Speaking of sexism, women with unchanged surnames were irritated that titles for men did not ‘display’ marriage. There was particular outrage about the phrase ‘Mrs Gordon Brown’, for example, as this was said to ignore or obscure a woman’s identity. Yet, although being annoyed, some women said the practice was simply ‘proper’ etiquette. Moreover, the more ambiguous title ‘Ms’ was not generally liked by most interviewees. It was said to sound ‘horrible’ and ‘awkward’, and was referred to as ‘meaningless’ and ‘asexual’. An interviewee who had used ‘Ms’ for decades spoke of the negative reactions it prompted. She said lots of people particularly men, ‘hated Ms’ and failed to understand why it was used. Indeed, Jill and Flora (who used the title) said ‘Ms’ had prompted more resentment among people than their decisions to keep their maiden names.

In addition, two interviewees could use the title ‘Dr’, but their accounts of this differed. Wendy, who had worked as a GP, said she had no interest in using ‘Dr’ outside of work (discussed further in Chapter 6). Indeed, she remarked upon being ‘very anxious’ to separate the roles of doctor and wife/mother. Rani, in contrast had a PhD, and always used ‘Dr’ as her title. She liked the anonymity it provided, as it signalled neither her gender nor marital status. I asked Rani if the title was an advantage, and she replied:

*After being widowed, it [the title ‘Dr’] has been an advantage, erm, I suppose yes, you know it also helped me, erm, feel better about my image. You remember I said I was not very good looking, so what on earth is this, at least I have some brains! Yeah, I’ve got a PhD to prove my ability!* [Rani, 58]

Rani’s account conveys a well-rehearsed dichotomy, as she places good looks in direct opposition to intelligence. Yet, her narrative may be more complex. Rani was an Indian woman who married a White Englishman. Initially, they lived in India and she spoke about the disparity in the couple’s physical attractiveness which caused other people to puzzle over their pairing. It was hard to convince others, she said, that they had married for love. Thus, to confirm her legitimacy, she was able to improve on the title ‘Mrs’ by using ‘Dr’ instead.

Another interviewee used the title ‘Lady’ as her late-husband had been knighted in the 1970s. I asked her what she thought about the title, and she initially said she was undeserving of the title, didn’t want it, and that she seldom used it. This

was because it recognised her husband's work in the armed forces, while she had been overlooked as simply a housewife. 'It doesn't really belong to me', she said. Moreover, she added that because of her working-class roots being called 'M'lady' made her 'toes curl'. But when I asked her by what name she would like to be remembered she remarked that 'Lady' was not that bad since her husband would never have been knighted if not for her support. After all, she looked after their home and children so he could dedicate himself to his career.

*The second thing I did was leave his name...*

A shared surname, as mentioned above, was said to clearly 'display' marriage. However, such a connection was not desired by some interviewees with unchanged surnames, or by women who had initiated separation/divorce. I asked those who had kept their maiden names why surname change was not preferred. They spoke about a need for anonymity and distance from their spouses. That is, the practice of surname change would lead to the merging, sidelining or even obscuring of a wife's own achievements, her opinions, identity and heritage. This type of 'talk' was distinctly different from Margaret who spoke of the 'one flesh' principle. Moreover, surname change was said to 'display' an unequal and/or conventional relationship, and this caused an issue for women wanting to present their relationship as an equal partnership. Jill, for example, said of marriage: '...it's not a take-over bid.' It was also mentioned by women with unchanged surnames that it was not necessary to constantly 'display' being married – or indeed ever 'display' this status. The latter was remarked upon by Gale, who spoke about being disinterested in making a 'big fuss' about marriage.

*At the time, I think, because I liked Oakes, it was shorter, Yanofski as well is a slightly difficult name, erm, and I'd never been a particularly showy person so I didn't particularly want to, it wasn't that I want things to be made a fuss of, that I'd got married, sort of thing, so I just, I didn't particularly want things to change. [Gale, 54]*

Gale said some people had been hostile to her unchanged surname, as did other respondents. Such opposition to surname 'choice' may have arisen because these women dared not embrace surname change as a 'display' of marriage. This line of reasoning resonates with Heyn's (1997) writings on the mystique of marriage. She writes that women are taught to believe that marriage is a women's natural habitat, and that they should revel in the transformation from singledom to wife. Thus, by not

changing surnames, women may be seen to be expressing doubts about a role they are supposed to embrace.

Lastly, the ‘displaying’ of marriage through a shared surname was said to be problematic for women who had walked away from their marriages. Three of these, whose marriages were short and child-free, had reverted to their maiden names after separating from their husbands. They spoke with much joy and relief about ‘erasing the past’ and starting life again with their maiden name. This is shown to great effect in Jackie’s narrative who spoke about leaving her name, as well as the north of England, after separating from her husband:

*I left him, erm, fairly abruptly...six weeks later I moved to London to start a new life there and that was completely in my maiden name...I was Jackie Williams from the minute I got off the train at King’s Cross. Well, before actually, the first thing I did was leave my husband, the second thing I did was leave his name. I just reverted back as quickly as I possibly could, I even saw a solicitor to find out how quickly I could do it, and what I had to do. [Jackie, 52]*

Indeed, Jackie described her husband’s surname (which she said she ‘never fit me’ and ‘never felt right’) as ‘a chain’ and that losing his name was ‘a massive weight lifted’. She spoke of her ‘total elation’ on being informed by her solicitor that she could revert to her maiden name with little effort. Reverting to her former name within six weeks of her separation she said, incensed her ex-husband, as well as her friends who were not wholly supportive of her separation. They believed dropping her husband’s surname was a step too far, even though many already considered her a ‘social pariah’, she said.

In addition to those who reverted to their maiden names post-marriage, two others were considering doing the same. I have mentioned one of these, Amy, in Chapter 4. This interviewee was desperate to divorce, but said she was prevented because there was no obvious replacement for her surname. She said:

*I just want away from it [his surname] because whilst I am using that name I feel I can never be free from Garry, erm, and I mean he, he got into trouble, he is actually in prison for life. So, really that is something that I desperately want to, I went to a solicitor to, erm, ask about divorce and she said, erm, you know, I could get a divorce, but I just thought, well it’s best to sort out what I’m going to do with my name first. [Amy, 44]*

Amy felt she had no surname. She spoke about losing any claim to her adoptive parents’ surname and was ignorant of the names of her birth parents. I asked her if

any other surname might be significant, but she knew of none and said inventing a new name would be ‘a bit strange’ so late in life. Yet, marrying her new partner offered a solution. She said: ‘...at least now I would have a name...I wouldn’t mind that’. This was the ‘most sensible’ option, she said, as it would help her to create a new family unit and new identity.

Separation and divorce had been emancipatory for those reverting to a former surname. And riding themselves of a former spouse’s surname was said to be part of a healing process. But, their accounts demonstrated that women’s surnames are uncertain and situation-dependent – borrowed rather than self-owned. Moreover, their comments signal that a shared name is designed to support the institution of marriage – which is then subverted by changing names post-separation. Other interviewees mentioned being confused by women who continued to use their ex-husbands’ surnames. Zulema, for example, who preferred the naming practices of her native Spain, said it was ‘ridiculous’ that her sister-in-law used her ex-husband’s surname, as she was now living with a new partner. Similarly, Delyth was unsure why her divorced sister did not retake her maiden name since she had neither children nor an advanced career, and had ‘never pined for’ the husband who left her. These conditions, of course, indicate other situations on which a woman’s surname is said to be dependent.

### *Survey responses*

The ‘symbol of marriage’ repertoire is concerned with the ‘display’ of marriage. I presented 16 statements about what surname change and retention might demonstrate, and respondents stated their level of agreement with each statement (see Table 4.6a in Appendix 4). These replies are most relevant to the ‘pre-supposed repertoire’:

- **Surname change/retention demonstrates ‘being proud of her marriage’** – 54 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement for surname change, but only 21 per cent replied likewise about surname retention.
- **Surname change/retention demonstrates ‘being proud of her husband’** – 47 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement for surname change, but only 16 per cent replied likewise about surname retention.
- **Surname change/retention demonstrates ‘being in love’** – 40 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement for surname change, but only 14 per cent replied likewise for surname retention.
- **Surname change/retention demonstrates ‘being a good wife’** – 26 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement for surname change, but only 11 per cent replied likewise for surname retention.

The survey responses, in several cases, showed large differences in what was ‘displayed’ by surname change, and conversely surname retention. Certainly these differences may account for some of the hostility experienced by women with unchanged surnames. The first three findings listed above are particularly divisive. But the difference between the views of surname change and retention is not as large in the last instance, although a fascinating result emerges in the replies when analysed on the basis of gender:

- **Men: Surname change demonstrates ‘being a good wife’** – 28 per cent replied ‘not at all’ to this statement.
- **Men: Surname retention demonstrates ‘being a good wife’** – 38 cent replied ‘not at all’ to this statement.
- **Women: Surname change demonstrates ‘being a good wife’** – 44 per cent replied ‘not at all’ to this statement.
- **Women: Surname retention demonstrates ‘being a good wife’** – 47 replied ‘not at all’ to this statement.

As shown above, women were more likely than men to indicate that neither surname change nor retention was reflective of being a ‘good wife’. It is possible that they did this to distanced naming from the concept of wifeliness. This reflects my finding showing gender to be rendered invisible by women when marital naming was discussed. A woman’s decision about her surname, for example, is said to be based on ‘tradition’, but does not reflect gender-based assumptions. The same was not true for men.

### **Surname Change as a Sign of Commitment**

Surname change was not only referred to by interviewees as demonstrative of marriage, but specifically one’s commitment to marriage. Therefore, I have labelled a third repertoire ‘sign of commitment’ to account for this discourse. Its central tenet is that surname change binds a couple together. Indeed, the phrase ‘giving up’ one’s maiden name can be read as indicating devotion. However, although constructed as a discourse of intimacy, husbands do not change or modify their surnames after marriage. Thus, just as surname change was considered to be symbolic of coupledness rather than wifeliness, this repertoire was presented as a shared experience when it actually ‘displayed’ a one-sided commitment. Indeed, my question to interviewees about men changing surnames was rebuffed as unfair, amusing or absurd. My discussion of the ‘sign of commitment’ repertoire focuses on men’s lack of engagement in surname change, rather than vice versa.

*We feel like he is a hen-pecked husband...*

My conversations with interviewees focused on their surname ‘choice’. But on asking them to recount their decision-making processes, none volunteered that they had considered creating, as a married couple, an entirely new surname, or had thought about the possibility of their husbands changing their surname<sup>81</sup>. I specifically prompted interviewees about the possibility of their husbands changing surnames. But it was a suggestion which was greeted with amusement and/or bewilderment. However, after prompting, Esme, Delyth, Grace (who had also spoken of their maiden names ‘dying out’) said they asked their husbands if they would consider changing surnames.

But only one interviewee knew of an instance where a husband changed his surname. It was said to be absurd that a man would change surnames unless his surname itself was absurd – meaning the change would be to avoid embarrassment rather than signal marital commitment. It was also noted by an interviewee that a man’s change of name would signal that he was ‘a hen-pecked husband’ – or that he was too submissive and his wife too dominant. And, Rani, who used her maiden name as a middle name to keep her identity without ‘rejecting’ her husband, laughed about the possibility of him combining their names. Similarly, Catherine used a hyphenated surname in Germany during her first marriage, but when I asked about her naming options, she replied:

*...he could have taken [it], I could have stayed Walker, but he would have had to take [mine]. Yes, of course you could have [i.e. keep] your name, but then the husband had to hyphenate his and he didn’t want to do that... he couldn’t, Walker, why suddenly add something to my name? Even when you are some modern left-wing, ‘77, yeah it was very odd.* [Catherine, 52]

The disparity between men and women when it comes to surname ‘choice’ resonates with Walkerdine et al’s (2001:9) work on gender and social class. The authors write: ‘...women have long been invited constantly to remake themselves as the (changing) object of male desires...[and] have long had to face the recognition that the unitary subject is a fraud and that constant and perpetual self-invention is necessary.’ The

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<sup>81</sup> I asked most interviewees if they had felt able to choose their post-wedding surname. Six women struggled to separate surname choice from the choice they had made to marry; one equalled the other. Eight others said they had or had not been able to employ choice, for reasons already stated in this chapter and the next chapter. Additionally, five only spoke about the possibility of either surname retention or hyphenated surname. None spoke, without prompting, about creating a new surname or their husband changing surnames.

possibility of men being renamed (or ‘remaking themselves’) was seen as absurd – and even unprecedented – by interviewees.

*It will just make life so much easier for him...*

Women with unchanged surnames were much more likely than those who changed their surnames to say their husbands were open to surname alternatives. These women, as I have noted, spoke about being called by their husbands’ surnames by mistake, but the reverse also occurred – husbands were called by their maiden names<sup>82</sup>. I asked them how they responded and they described the mistakes as funny, sometimes embarrassing and usually quickly corrected. These responses were distinctly different to the ways these women dealt with their own misnaming.

To demonstrate this, I have selected two passages from my conversation with Alice. She had used her maiden name for the first 20 years of being married, but had started using her husband’s surname. This, in part, was because her husband was constantly misnamed:

*Because I did all the organisation and I booked in my name...poor old Peter got called Mr Meadows, not that he minds, he really doesn't mind, but I felt 'that is a bit difficult'...* [Alice, 60]

Alice pitied her husband for being misnamed. It was ‘mean’ and ‘unfair’ for him to be called by her maiden name, she said. Indeed, he was described as ‘wonderful’ for dealing with the problems caused by her reluctance to take his surname, as she demonstrated when talking about a friend who had passed away. This death, she said, had caused her to re-assess her surname:

*And, you know, as you get older you say: 'Well can it happen to me?' Peter will have problems because I've got a different name and bank account. It will just make life so much easier for him, so rather against my will [I changed surnames].* [Alice, 60]

Alice spoke about putting her life in order as she became older. She said her irregular behaviour might jeopardise her husband’s future. This concept relates to feminist theorising on relationships and the ethics of care (Brownmiller 1984; Gilligan 1998) as it asserts that women can be extremely negative in their self-evaluations due to cultural assumptions about care-giving. Moreover, it is clear that Alice is performing

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<sup>82</sup> This was also the case for women who continued to use their ex-husbands’ surnames while cohabiting with a new partner.

a great deal of ‘relationship work’ by changing her surname in her 60s (Maushart 2001). That is to say, Alice took specific responsibility for nurturing her marital bond.

Overall, the lack of involvement by men in marital naming corresponds more widely with men’s lack of involvement in marriage rituals. Montemurro (2006:7) observes that throughout history, cultural imagery has typecast grooms as being reluctant or uninvolved in weddings, thus emphasising the idea that weddings are feminine and men must be coerced into taking part. Indeed, drawing on the work of Currie (1993), Geller (2001) and Otnes and Pleck (2003), Montemurro points out that husbands-to-be are not only discouraged from taking part in wedding-related tasks, but are expected to be incompetent in completing such tasks. Any mastery of wedding-related tasks by a groom, she says, would be viewed as ‘doing femininity’ and outside of his proper role (Montemurro 2006:82; Otnes and Pleck 2003). Building on these arguments, men’s exclusion from marital naming also positions this activity as marriage-related ‘women’s work’.

### *Survey responses*

The ‘symbol of commitment’ repertoire can be further explored through the replies of my survey respondents. The following statements were used to explain the function of surname change (see Table 4.5a-e in Appendix 4 for full replies):

- **Surname change by married women ‘creates a bond between couples’** – 44 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Surname change by married women ‘makes marriage more real’** – 42 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Surname change by married women ‘keeps couples together’** – 21 per cent agreed or strongly agreed

Two in five respondents reported that surname change by woman created a bond between a couple and made marriage more real. And, more men than women agreed with these statements:

- Fifty-one per cent of men agreed that surname change created a bond, but only 37 per cent of women agreed.
- Forty-seven per cent of men agreed that surname change made marriage more real, but only 36 per cent of women agreed.

The idea that surname change ‘keeps couples together’ was not generally supported. But again, more men than women agreed – 27 per cent of men, but only 16 per cent of women indicated that surname change was a bond. These results are surprising



since it is women who are expected to change surnames, and because it is women – not men – who are socialised in marriage ideas. It appears that a woman’s change of name had more impact on men’s experience of marriage. Or, it might be the case that women played down the significance of surname change because of women’s participation in the ‘coping economy’.

Additionally, I questioned respondents about what surname change and retention might demonstrate, and asked them to state their level of agreement with each statement (see Table 4.6a in Appendix 4). These replies were given in relation to commitment:

- **Surname change demonstrates ‘being committed’** – 54 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates ‘being committed’** – 18 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.
- **Surname change demonstrates ‘being married to a real man’** – 13 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates ‘being married to a real man’** – 9 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.

Most respondents agreed that surname change demonstrated women’s commitment to their marriage. But, only 18 per cent of respondents agreed to the same extent about surname retention. Moreover, although there was little variation in the replies given to my question about ‘real men’, this could support my claim that marital naming is considered a ‘woman’s issue’. It shows surname change to be distanced from gender – i.e. women change surnames due to tradition or choice rather than gender politics. This explanation is further supported by just 19 per cent of respondents agreeing the practice is ‘sexist’.

Finally, I asked the survey respondents about the possibility of men changing surnames. Most responded neutrally, saying this was ‘unusual’, or that they had no experience of this practice (see Table 4.9 in Appendix 4). Those giving positive and negative replies were equally split. Most who replied positively referred to the power of individual choice; whereas those responding negatively remarked upon the stupidity of such a choice (words such as ‘nonsense’, ‘pointless’ and even ‘sick’ were used) citing the de-masculinisation resulting from such a practice. The replies show marital naming to be firmly positioned in a ‘tradition versus choice’ debate. That said, nine out of ten respondents had followed tradition with regards to their marital names and the surnames of their children.

## **Surname Change as a Personal Choice**

The repertoires discussed so far have focused on tradition and the outcomes of not following tradition for women. There was, additionally, some ‘talk’ about the possibility of being able to choose a surname by interviewees, hence my fourth repertoire labelled simply ‘personal choice’. There are two contrasting tenets of this discourse – that naming was a form of politics, but also that names were simply aesthetic labels and therefore could not be oppressive. Both tenets suggest that everything is open to change, and that choice should be possible.

### ***I feel that there ought to be a choice available...***

‘Talk’ about choice was speculative – married women ‘should’ be able to choose their surnames, no assumptions ‘should’ be made about women’s choices and alternatives to surname change ‘should not’ be seen as unusual. But, the replies of survey respondents told a different story. Indeed, three women who spoke about the need for choice said this had not been offered to them, as explained by Alice. This interviewee had recently begun using her husband’s surname after being married for 20 years. She said:

*Well, I feel that there ought to be a choice available, but I know that society makes it difficult. I mean, there’s lots of people who don’t give in and whether it’s easier now, I don’t know. But it seems to me that there are less people changing, less people not changing their name... there are so many couples now where they are not married that it seems to me that there should be, it should be easier, society should be making it easier.* [Alice, 60]

Alice says it should be – but is not – easier for modern-day brides to employ choice. This sentiment was echoed by Amy who said ‘...you’d have thought it would have changed a bit...’ because women had to ‘give up their identities’ for men. These narratives resonate with the idea that everything in a modern society should be possible – women should be free to make choices as individuals. Yet, as Alice points out, which is also reflected in my survey findings, the same gendered constraints remain in place as in past generations.

These continuing gendered constraints mean that women make ‘choices’ from a subordinate position (Barrett and McIntosh 1991). Steele (2004) explores this point in her discussion of naming and citizenship in Canada. She draws on the ideas of Cudd (1994), who has written about ‘oppression by choice’, to argue that women’s naming choices are ‘coerced’. That is, surname change is not a truly voluntary choice because women feel obliged to act in certain ways, and that other

options are either unacceptable or involve too much risk. Another perspective, however, is offered in Montemurro's (2006) account of hen parties. She draws on Durkheim (1953) to argue that moral obligations are created, enforced and performed because they make people feel better about themselves, rather than out of a sense of duty. Thus, a woman who changes surname knows the social rewards entailed in fulfilling this obligation.

Lastly, a further point arises from Toerien and Williams' (2003) work on weddings. These authors write about attending Christian weddings whereby a vicar passes the bride's hand from father to groom. Toerien points out that this clearly indicates the passing of property between men, but Williams suggests people view the ritual as merely old-fashioned, rather than symbolic of women's oppression. This begs the question, why not leave it out? William replies by saying it 'might make more of a statement' (p.433). Using this argument, it is not possible for married women to avoid dealing with marital naming. Women are accountable for their surnames and their 'choice' of name will always make a statement. But, as Montemurro (2006:54) points out: '...refusing to "do gender" still results in doing gender, most often interpreted as doing gender poorly' (after Lucal 2004).

***It not such a common old name like Hughes...***

Surnames were also presented as aesthetic items from which women could choose from on the basis of their charm. Seven women defended their surname 'choice' by saying their maiden name was, or was not, attractive. The reasons for one surname being more appealing than another were not always apparent, but prestige and status featured. Helen, for instance, said her husband's surname wasn't 'such a common old name like Hughes'. And, Jean said her new surname, beginning with the letter 'A', placed her first on a given list. She remarked: 'Perhaps it makes me feel more important, well not important exactly. You get noticed more...' Thus, such 'talk' was about using a label with greater societal esteem.

Not everyone spoke favourably about their husband's surname. Indeed, for some women, their new surname was troubling, and even disagreeable, rather than pleasing. Bala said her husband's surname, which she used, signalled 'bottom of the list' in India's hierarchical caste system. Similarly Rani, who had married a White man from England, spoke about the difficulties of using his surname ('Cheeseman') in India. She said:

*I thought 'what an awful name', you know, and I think I was a bit 'oh, couldn't he have a better surname?' you know. 'Why Cheeseman?' Because people in India translated it as, erm, cheese-seller, you know, paneer wallah and [people] said 'arh, you're a paneer wallah, why are you a cheese man, and not a cheese woman?' [laughs]. All sorts of teasing, so, yeah, it was awkward in the beginning... [Rani, 58]*

Rani added that the consternation about her surname was intensified by her husband living away. His absence made her feel 'more vulnerable' to other people's comments, she said, since there appeared to be no reason to use his surname. Confusion also surfaced through her use of a dual name, as she used her maiden name as a middle name. This middle name clearly identified her as a Brahmin, and being a cheese-seller was hardly the occupation on an enlightened Brahmin.

If one takes an individual view, as I argued in Chapter 1, it is easy to construct marital naming as a 'free' choice. Writing about marriage, Braun (2003) claims that in a highly individualised society, marriage is not seen as a political act, but a personal choice for heterosexuals. Similarly, the discourse of aesthetics in women's 'talk' about marital names serves to remove politics from naming. Moreover, the idea that surnames are chosen on the basis of their aesthetic worth places names into part of a consumeristic event evoking themes of agency and self-responsibility. But, just as Boden (2003:157) talks about wedding consumption as 'unquestionably assumed to be "women's work", and an extension of their domestic role', the same can be said of marital naming.

### ***Why should I have to change my name?***

There was some talk about feminism and gender equality among interviewees, mainly from those with unchanged surnames. One interviewee said she saw no reason for (female) feminists to 'insist' on retaining their maiden names. However, I had expected my conversations with women to focus more heavily on gender politics since male-bias in regards to surnames was so presumably obvious. But as I have noted already, women's 'talk' about tradition in regards to naming did not position its roots in patriarchy. Indeed, by drawing on tradition to such a large extent, surname change seemed to be excused as a remnant of a past era. And, in giving their accounts, interviewees engaged in much de-gendering of marital naming. There were just a select few who mentioned that the custom of surname change was unfair to women, while three said feminist politics had influenced their decision to keep their maiden name.

The three women who mentioned feminism were married between 1970 and the mid-1990s. And, although they appealed to feminism to explain their surname ‘choices’, each provided caveats to their statements. Catherine said her use of a hyphenated surname was inspired by her feminist views, but she strongly distanced herself from ‘diehard feminists’, she said, who engaged in ‘pathetic’ games of semantics. And, Alice defined herself as feminist, but ‘not outrageously so’, said this about being constantly misnamed:

*I think Peter's father, I don't think his parents even knew that I didn't change my name. They might have been confused. I mean it didn't arise because they just tended to, you know, they just sent cards, they just wrote to us as Mr and Mrs Meades. Yet, I didn't have to push that in their face. I mean they'd have just been, they wouldn't have understood why... You see I'm not very militant about these things. It was just what I, you know, I did it for me really.* [Alice, 60]

Alice described her surname ‘choice’ as personal rather than political. Yet, a third interviewee expressed the view that the label ‘feminist’ was automatically ascribed to any woman using her maiden name when married – and this was not a wholly positive marker. This interviewee, Erica, was the only interviewee to speak at length about feminism when discussing marital names. Indeed, she said that the issue of surnames had never been an issue with her first husband because he knew he was ‘dating a feminist’. She said:

*I think just blindly going into something without knowing the history behind things and what effects those decisions is a bad thing. Just kind of being ignorant of that is not like you're anti-feminist, you just don't know. The other thing is if you know all that and you still decide 'well I'm doing it for these reasons' you see that's anti-feminist.* [Erica, 40]

Erica embraced her feminist identity, as I had expected from other women who had retained their surnames. Indeed, I had imagined hearing more references to resisting institutional structures. After all, in his study of deviance and identity, Lofland (1969) points out that people are often deviant for the thrill it generates. But, while those with unchanged surnames did mention the importance of equality in married relationships, their individualistic behaviour did not feature. Indeed, no woman, regardless of her surname ‘choice’, spoke of her ‘right’ to change surnames, or likewise, that she was entitled to avoid a change of surname when marrying.

In the next chapter, I return to the absence of gender as the topic of surname choice was addressed as mainly a ‘family issue’ or ‘work issue’ or an ‘identity issue’.

This discourse, however, did not involve making gender comparisons, such as naming in relation to professional success for men. It was only in reference to the use of titles that women expressed agitation when noting gender inequality. These women, who kept their maiden names in some form (at least when they first married) asked why they, and not men, needed to be defined as married (or not) through a title. Indeed, men were said to be ‘lucky’ for having just one title rather than three, as in ‘Miss’, ‘Mrs’ and ‘Ms’.

### *Survey responses*

The ‘personal choice’ repertoire can be further explored through the survey responses. I have already pointed out that women who change surnames are said to be different to those who continue to use their maiden names when married. I also presented respondents with seven surname options for married couples and asked them the extent to which they liked each. Their replies clearly show that not all surname choices are rated equally in terms of their social desirability (see Table 4.3a-c in Appendix 4 for full results):

- **Wife uses her husband’s surname** – 53 per cent like or strongly like
- **Wife keeps her maiden name** – 34 per cent like or strongly like
- **Wife uses different surnames for different situations** – 19 per cent like or strongly like
- **Couple use a hyphenated surname** – 16 per cent like or strongly like
- **Couple blend/mix their surnames** – 14 per cent like or strongly like
- **Husband uses wife’s maiden name** – 9 per cent like or strongly like
- **Couple use an entirely new surname** – 6 per cent like or strongly like

Most respondents clearly preferred that married women use their husband’s surnames. It is also obvious from these replies (which are not reflective of age bias) that less conventional naming choices were not well-favoured. Indeed, fewer than ten per cent of respondents stated a preference for husbands changing surnames or couples inventing entirely new surnames.

Finally, respondents were presented with 16 statements about what was demonstrated by surname change and retention. Three of these relate to the ‘personal choice’ repertoire. They show:

- **Surname change demonstrates ‘being independent** – 15 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates ‘being independent** – 55 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.

- **Surname change demonstrates ‘being a feminist** – 10 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates ‘being a feminist** – 32 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.
- **Surname change demonstrates ‘being able to make a choice’** 31 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates ‘being able to make a choice’** 44 per cent agreed to ‘a small, medium or large extent’ with this statement.

My statement about ‘independence’ generated a disparity among respondents. The majority indicated that surname retention was indicative of a woman being independent, which correlates with my finding that surname change is said to be more demonstrative of commitment than surname retention. That is, women who retain their surnames are perceived as more likely to be autonomous than supporting her husband and family. There was less disparity in respondents’ views about feminism, but married women who retained their surnames were more likely to be viewed as feminist than those with those who took their husband’s surnames. It is somewhat more difficult to interpret responses to my question about surname ‘choice’ as the disparity is not as great. Replies could be indicative of it being difficult to determine if a women’s choice of surname is a ‘real’ or coerced choice – or awkward to state publicly that the latter might be the case.

## **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I considered how the women in my study navigated the request to discard their maiden names and use their husbands’ surnames instead. I did this by constructing and exploring four interpretative repertoires through which the practice of surname change was said to be understood and rationalised. The four repertoires were underpinned by notions of social change and stability. I further explored the repertoires through the replies of survey respondents to whom I had posed various questions about the symbolic nature, and use of, various surname options. The accounts revealed the complex negotiations that women enter into when dealing with marital naming – which can be further compounded by issues of age, social class and ethnicity. These women’s narratives signalled that the call to change surnames is presently unavoidable for women who marry and, whatever a woman’s reply, involved a performance of gender. The problem is, however, that a woman’s surname ‘choice’ either ‘displays’ that she is ‘doing’ gender well – or ‘doing’ gender poorly.

In making the transition to wifhood, interviewees confronted the powerful force of 'tradition' and its associated cultural assumptions. The repertoires I explored were discourses of social control. There was little room for personal agency – and those able to protest did so quietly and without direct confrontation. More specifically, rather than marital names becoming an issue to protest, the women's accounts suggest that surname change is part of the 'coping economy' in which they are regularly engaged – and 'doing' naming can be considered part of the 'relationship work' for which women are considered responsible. Naming, it seems, is not something for men to worry about, while women are 'confused' and 'baffled' by naming, as one interviewee said. The issue of marital naming was depicted as either a woman's duty – or her headache if she refused to follow the pack.

The issues surrounding and affecting marital naming do not exist in a vacuum. Indeed, some of my older interviewees said women were today able to exercise more choice than ever before. They said modern-day brides were no longer constrained by 'traditional' expectations about family life. But although often women made such statements, it was clear that gender constraints continued – especially those that expect women to compromise and make life easier for others, often their family members. Moreover, although surname 'choice' was presented as desirable, it was clear from the survey that these choices are not equally rated. And, in talking about choice, interviewees did not present surname change (or continuity) as a right – probably because names have never been presented as women's entitlements. Instead, women who 'chose' to keep their maiden names were expected to hide this deviation from tradition and consider it shameful – being subjected to mockery.

Finally, interviewees revealed much about their interpretations of marital naming. And the words they chose to explain their understandings show how inequalities were represented and reinforced in everyday talk. Interestingly, gender was either absent from the women's accounts, or interviewees attempted to gender-neutralise naming. For example, by presenting surname change as 'ordinary' or 'out of one's control' it became more than just an issue for wives to tackle. The interviewees who changed surnames were simply following the rules, rather than 'doing' gender. There were also episodes of silencing in the accounts of women with unchanged surnames, who spoke about having to tolerate misnaming. Moreover, this silencing functioned to further trivialise, sideline and ignore women's exhaustive efforts at 'wifework' and 'relationship work'. Marital naming is constructed as



simply a bureaucratic activity for which women are accountable – and, of course, expected to do well.

## Chapter 6

### Marital Naming: Autonomy and Connectedness

This chapter continues my exploration of the ways in which the women in my study negotiated the customary call to change surnames. I explained in the previous chapter that discourses of marital naming focuses on two processes: the interplay between stability and change within women's personal lives, and also those of autonomy and connectedness. The repertoires discussed in Chapter 5 predominately focused on the former, and this chapter focuses on the latter. That is, I explore the use of individualist and relational narratives in the women's 'talk' about their surname decisions. Again, as in Chapters 4 and 5, I also incorporate the replies of survey respondents into my analysis. Respondents were asked about surname change and the naming of children – for instance, if parents should have an equal chance of passing their surname to their children. The findings emerging from the survey are singularly revealing in what they say about surname practices, and also support and situate the interview feedback.

The interpretative repertoires discussed herein were generated through a thematic discourse analysis. As explained in other chapters, I considered the discursive themes present in each interview and drew out patterns of consensus and contradiction from each account. The themes are:

- *Surname change as identity theft*
- *Surname change as a professional barrier*
- *Surname change as family (dis-)affiliation*
- *Surname change as child-centred*

The material presented in this chapter is based on the same interview questions as in Chapter 5, namely why a surname option was 'chosen' and what this 'choice' represented. But, I also include women's replies to my questions about work and family life, including the naming of children. The women's accounts, as in other chapters, are revealing in terms of what they say about marital naming, but also in relation to broader issues concerning women's identities and positions in society. In Chapter 5, the call to change surnames was shown to involve much negotiation for women with cultural assumptions about marriage and wifehood. This chapter, in discussing autonomy and connectedness, focuses closely on issues of work – paid work and 'kin work'. It focuses on surnames in relation to women's individual lives and also the lives they share with others.

## **Surname Change as Identity Theft**

The concept of ‘identity’ is central to any study of names, if not only for the simple reason that names identify people. Names, as mentioned in Chapter 1, serve a dual purpose; to mark out individuals and distinguish them from others, but also to indicate social connections. In addition, I have labelled a fifth repertoire ‘identity theft’ to account for 13 women who included the notion of ‘identity’ in their narratives. The use of this repertoire corresponds with the surname ‘choices’ that women made during their lives. That is because eight women who retained their maiden names (in some form) spoke about ‘keeping’ their pre-marriage identity, whereas five others spoke about ‘losing’ their identity in taking their husbands’ surnames. Yet, in the discourses of both groups, agency can be observed. It is also possible to detect ageist assumptions about marriage in some narratives. Interestingly, all the women who used the ‘identity theft’ repertoire also used the ‘personal possession’ repertoire when talking about their maiden names – in both cases they described their maiden names as an integral part of themselves.

### ***I just felt that that’s who I was***

Surname change was said to be hard to comprehend by eight women who continued to use their maiden names in some form. These women spoke about the changing of a name as an uncomfortable, or even impossible, shift because their names personified their identities. A common utterance was ‘my name is who I am’ – a firm statement of a name crystallising one’s identity. Indeed, Jill said a name was ‘the only thing’ that encapsulated a person’s identity.

This way of speaking was clearly demonstrated in Erica’s account. This interviewee had married twice and retained her surname each time. She said her maiden name was ‘established’ and changing it was not practical. She also said:

*And I think also identity issues because I was practising his last name and I thought how can I be Erica Diederich? It doesn’t even sound right. I just couldn’t picture that, so decided to keep it. [Erica, 40]*

Erica was unable to imagine herself by any name other than her maiden name – the name was a self-descriptor. She, and others with unchanged surnames, spoke about the strangeness or impossibility of using a new name. It was a shift that would be immense and disorientating because names were an integral part of oneself. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 4, women spoke about names connecting them to other

people, places and themselves. This was remarked upon by Greta, who said she remained ‘the daughter of Stefan’ (as denoted by her surname), just as she still felt entirely Icelandic, despite marrying an Englishman.

Women who kept their maiden names said doing so maintained a stable identity; they feared losing a sense of ‘me’ in a change of surname. But, keeping a name was also spoken of as an act of self-awareness. This sentiment was especially strong in Manya’s account. Born in India, she said that she had surpassed what was expected of a girl living in the country. She valued ‘modern’ ideas about marriage, which was evident when I asked her what the retention of her maiden name offered, she replied:

*Well, more identity...the way that Indian girls have been brought up is, you know, you get married and you take your husband’s name and you kind of forget who you are, you lose who you are in that process and, I think, for me that is important because it keep me, it makes me aware of who I am. I am an individual...I don’t forget that.*

[Manya, 32]

Manya was constantly reminded that she was her own person through the retention of her surname after marrying. She was unhappy with Indian notions of ‘good’ wifhood as these involved wives ‘forgetting’ or ‘losing’ themselves in their husbands. Instead, she sought to subvert such ideas. Maintaining a sense of independence was crucial to Manya as she had seen much gender oppression in India, over which she thought she had triumphed by becoming highly-educated and immigrating to England.

### ***I don’t want to lose contact with people***

Interviewees who had changed surnames also spoke about a loss of identity through changing surnames, as illustrated in the account of Suchita. This corresponding interviewee, from India, echoes the aforementioned narrative of Manya. I asked Suchita about the disadvantages of changing her surname. She said taking her husband’s surname made it clear to her that she needed to leave behind her parental upbringing. Indeed, she spoke at length about ‘losing [her] parents’ on her wedding day. She added:

*...we [Indian women] feel very bad because we had to change our surnames which we had used a lot over so many years...throughout my school life, throughout my college life, throughout my post-graduation life, the surname I have used and I have got so many accolades. So I have to change that surname and accept another...man’s surname. So, that’s the thing we feel. It’s not good,*

*but we had to, erm, obey our rules, obey the custom, obey the tradition. So, we are abiding with that. Society is telling you [to] abide with these rules.* [Suchita, 33]

This discourse reveals a strong component of social control, as Suchita felt compelled to take her husband's surname despite it making her unhappy. Her narrative also indicates a powerful sense of loss because Suchita talks about her maiden name as representing the acquisition of many academic accolades. The latter issue was especially significant for Suchita because she had devoted many years to her studies, yet her husband asked her not to work. She may have felt that her academic achievements were no longer recognised.

The accounts of some women suggested that a husband's surname was a social alias that hid a woman's 'real' self. I have selected passages from Bala to illustrate this. She was unhappy about changing her surname, but said she saw no other option at the time. I asked her if she viewed her new surname as her own. She said no, remarking that it made her feel 'like someone totally different [was] living in my shoes'. It was not 'the real me', Bala said. I asked how she felt when first using her husband's surname and she told me about a bank account opened for her in her new name:

*Oh, they [in-laws] decided I would have a bank account because I didn't have one at mum and dads. They'd just give me the money or whatever...It didn't feel that this [name] belonged to me, you know. So I never really touched the money or anything because it didn't feel as if it was mine.* [Bala, 49]

Bala was so uncomfortable with the surname that had been forced upon her that she avoided making use of her money. Her use of the word 'belong' resonates with my discussion about 'real' surnames in Chapter 4 – that legitimate surnames are passed only through birth. Not only did Bala resist using her newer surname by staying away from her bank account, she also corresponded with friends, family and work colleagues using her maiden name. She said:

*If I ever get the chance to write Asthana, I always do write it. In my letters to friends I always put that name. And when my husband was alive I never let him see that I was putting that to my girlfriends in Kenya or wherever you know... I couldn't do that to the community because I'd be in big trouble [laughs]* [Bala, 49]

Bala adapted her surname according to her audience. She used her husband's surname in public to 'display' wife-like compliance, but privately used her maiden

name to maintain ‘the real me’, she said. But, the cost of her rebellion was high if she was caught. She added:

*I use it [her maiden name] only where my community [in-laws and their networks] can't see it. I have got to be careful. They just sort if make you feel as if you are a traitor I think, it's sad...So if his family found out, they wouldn't be happy at all. Luckily they don't email me, they just use the post!* [Bala, 49]

Bala and her husband lived with his large immediate family. Her refusal to ‘display’ allegiance to this family had potentially important implications. Not using the family’s surname was seen as an affront to familial expectations and also ‘displayed’ a lack of loyalty and respect to her husband’s family. However, Bala was keen to keep her old friends, despite being aware of her new obligations to her husband and his family.

The interplay between past and present identities featured in Grace’s account. Several years younger than Bala, she spoke about a virtual identity. Grace had changed surname post-wedding but was reluctant to rename her email and Facebook accounts for fear of losing old friends<sup>83</sup>. Moreover, Grace had spent time travelling before she married and was extremely proud of her much-stamped passport. She was reluctant to send for a replacement passport. I asked her how quickly she had adjusted other aspects of her life, and this was part of her reply:

*I want to be in the present a Carr and the future, but in terms of people from the past, erm, getting in touch with me, or you know finding out about me, erm, I don't want to lose, you know, contact with people because I've changed my name and suddenly, you know, people can't, people don't know who I am anymore.* [Grace, 33]

It is clear that Grace spoke of a dilemma of identity as her negotiation with surname change fractured her identity into three parts. She spoke of desiring to be a ‘Carr’ (her husband’s name) in the present and future, but said it meant sacrificing ties to her past. She presented her identity as fragmented since taking a newer surname. Her past and present were positioned as two distinct entities, even though she wanted them to align peacefully.

In some case, interviewees who had separated from their husbands spoke about the difficulties of living with a past marital identity. Indeed, in Chapter 5, I mentioned that some women had returned to their maiden names to start afresh with new, independent lives. These interviewees said resuming the use of their maiden

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<sup>83</sup> Five women spoke about the significance of personal names in relation to email. Bala, Zulema and Alice all said email enabled them to keep their maiden names in circulation.

names was symbolic of a return to their old identities. Jackie was one such interviewee. She spoke about separating from her husband and leaving north-east England as 'Jackie Moss' – to arrive in London as 'Jackie Williams', her maiden name. I asked her to comment on the significance of this, and she said it meant 'getting my identity back.' She added:

*I can still remember when I realised I didn't have to do anything. All I had to do was call myself 'Jackie Williams' and it was like 'wow, I'm back'. [Laughs]...I'd seen a solicitor in Croydon and I can still remember the feeling when I walked out of there on the pavement: 'Yes!' Total elation. It was a massive weight lifted off me. [Jackie, 52]*

Jackie described her unhappiness in taking her husband's surname, saying: 'I felt my identity was sacrificed'. Thus, in returning to her maiden name, she returned to her real self. She explained that her father had raised her to be 'quite independent' rather than thinking of herself 'as a chattel'. It is interesting that her feelings of independence were associated with feelings about her family, as this reinforced the notion that returning to her maiden name was especially reassuring.

#### ***If I would have got married when I was younger...***

The ease at which women changed surnames, some interviewees said, depended on their age at marriage. Indeed, Flora, Alice and Jill who kept their maiden names said they had done so in part because they 'married late'. They spoke about surname change being difficult to imagine for women whose names were already socially and professionally established. Alice was one such interviewee. She married at the age of 40 and said her surname had served her 'perfectly well' for those years.

In her account, Alice called attention to her tradition-defying role as a 'late' bride. She implied that changing surnames was desirable only up to a certain age, echoing narratives of normative heterosexual marriage. Not only are older brides seen as deviant, but suspicious and even threatening (Sandfield and Percy 2003). Alice compared her actions to what she might have done as a younger bride:

*Obviously I think, if I would have got married when I was younger, I would not even have thought about it, but I'd been single for so long and independent and in fact not expecting to marry, but by the time I'd got passed my 30s I thought 'oh, I probably won't marry now'. Erm, so I hadn't really even considered it, that I would change my name after that. [Alice, 60]*

Alice dismissed herself as a possible bride upon reaching her 30s. Since she had broken conventional rules governing an appropriate bridal age, Alice may have felt

less pressure to ‘display’ her wife-like qualities by changing surnames or she might have been socially excused from taking her husband’s surname. Or, perhaps, Alice had jeopardised her right to change surnames after failing to conform to the image of a ‘maiden’. It is also possible that Alice considered the practice of surname change as childlike. Indeed, she remarked that she and her husband were ‘grown-up people’ and therefore surname change for either party was an unnecessary gesture. This comment resonates with Montemurro’s (2006:107) observations of hen parties for older brides in the United States which assumed a different tone to these parties of younger brides. The author notes that older brides often avoided drawing attention to their age and viewed themselves as having outgrown the ‘college party’ atmosphere.

Further evidence that age was a factor in marital naming comes from five women who rationalised their decision to change surnames on the basis of being young brides. Their remarks suggest that youth did not provide them with opportunity to question ‘traditional’ expectations. I have selected a passage from Jean, who married aged 23. Asked what her wedding represented, she said it reflected her lack of confidence as a young woman. She also said divorce had ‘made me grow up rather a lot.’ I asked Jean to comment on the disadvantages of taking her husband’s surname. She said:

*Erm, well back then I didn’t feel there were, I think now, I perhaps would want to keep some of my own, if I remarried, it depends on what the [laughs] future name was going to be. I don’t think I would find it important, so important because I feel I’ve got more of my own identity anyway now, just more maturity.* [Jean, 55]

Jean associated her changed surname with a lack of maturity and identity. This way of speaking resonates with my comments in Chapter 5 about surname change and femininity. Indeed, Brownmiller (1984:16) asserts that femininity is characterised by ‘vulnerability, the need for protection, the formalities of compliance and the avoidance of conflict’. Moreover, Glick and Fiske (1997:121), in their work on sexist attitudes, claim that power differences between men and women are ‘rationalised through ideologies of paternalism’ – which involves attributing child-like qualities to women. Meanwhile, Jean spoke of herself as impressionable and obedient when first married, but added that she felt liberated from these constraints when she divorced.



### *Survey responses*

The 'identity theft' repertoire can be further explored through my survey. I presented 16 statements about what surname change and retention might demonstrate, and respondents stated their level of agreement with each statement (see Table 4.6a in Appendix 4). The following replies are most relevant to the 'identity theft' repertoire:

- **Surname change demonstrates 'being a new person'** – 27 per cent agreed to 'a small, medium or large extent' with this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates 'being a new person'** – 17 per cent agreed to 'a small, medium or large extent' with this statement.
- **Surname change demonstrates 'being selfish'** – 6 per cent agreed to 'a small, medium or large extent' with this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates 'being selfish'** – 16 per cent agreed to 'a small, medium or large extent' with this statement.

There was just a ten per cent difference in the number of respondents indicating that surname change, and surname retention, by a married woman demonstrated that she had 'become a new person'. Whereas about a quarter of respondents reported that surname change was in some way transformational, and just less than one in five said the same for surname retention – a figure which is curiously high considering that no change had taken place. A possible way to interpret these findings is to suggest that surname change by married women was toned down. That is to say, it was deemed ordinary rather than some sort of momentous event. It did not require any effort. Similarly, there was limited difference in the number of respondents indicating that surname change and surname retention demonstrated that a woman was 'selfish', although women who kept their maiden names were viewed as slightly more self-interested. Yet, as I report later in this chapter, such women were generally viewed as being far less family-focused than women who took their husbands' surnames.

### **Surname Change as a Professional Barrier**

My research was introduced with the paradox placing women's increased independence in opposition with their dependence on their husbands for a surname. I mentioned in Chapter 1 that such independence, in part, stems from women's increased activity in the labour market and wider economy. The issue of work was mentioned by interviewees when asked about surname 'choices'. I have attempted to capture such discourse by creating a repertoire labelled 'professional barrier' which was used by 15 women. It is essentially a discourse of social power, status and reputation. That is, women who kept their maiden names relied upon normative

masculinity (in this case, professional success) to rationalise their surname decision. Whereas women with unchanged surnames considered themselves unworthy of keeping their maiden names post-wedding because their professional status was limited. The accounts also draw a clear distinction between the public world of work and the private realm of the home.

***I have this work situation***

A reason for prescribing a maiden name after marrying – either wholly or at work – was to maintain a professional identity. Indeed, rather than talk wildly about maiden name retention (e.g. as an act of resistance or rebellion), women who followed this practice spoke pragmatically about the pitfalls of changing surnames mid-career. Such ‘talk’ was linked to comments about marrying later in life because, in doing so, women were more likely to have established a professional identity. This reasoning was also used by Gina and Isabel, who said their decision not to change surnames post-divorce was to maintain career continuity – which corresponds with my comments in the previous section about younger brides lacking a distinctive identity. That is to say, these two women had married before becoming professionally established.

To illustrate this, I have selected a passage from Alice. She had used her maiden name during her first 20 years of marriage, from the age of 40 to 60, but had recently (and rather reluctantly) started using her husband’s surname. She said:

*...because I have this work situation, and what I do, I work in theatre, and I also, my hobbies are amateur theatre, so I’m known as Alice Meadows, in huge, I’m still known as Alice Meadows in a huge area of my life, which won’t ever change, so I’ve still got that sort of security blanket.* [Alice, 60]

Alice’s use of the phrase ‘work situation’ seems to belittle her profession, which was a major part of her life and identity. She spoke several times during her interview about her avid and long-standing involvement in the arts, but presented such participation as problematic in the above quote. Curiously, Alice used the phrase ‘security blanket’ when referring to her maiden name; a familiar object providing comfort. The name, and what it represented, would always exist regardless of her marriage, for Alice.

The realities of maiden name retention and career continuity for interviewees echo my point about surname change being a feminised and classed activity. This is

because, by using the discourse of work (e.g. making money and being successful), maiden name retention was linked to notions of normative masculinity. Moreover, keeping a maiden name was an option more open to middle-class women who were able to be ‘successful’ in this way. Women’s professional successes enabled them to be more like men – which included having a life-long surname. Their elevated statuses enabled them to legitimately take part in a practice reserved for men. These women did not talk about gaining status and reputation through marrying, but through their empowered roles in the workplace. In this respect, life-long surnames can be considered a type of ‘symbolic capital’ (Bourdieu 1984) – a resource afforded to women on the basis of social power. The women who spoke of career continuity felt able to rationalise their unchanged surname through their positions of this social power – and were able to display such accumulated and earned power through their surname ‘choice’.

***I wanted them to be separate from my job***

The use of situational surnames – different surnames for home and work – was mentioned by six interviewees, but only practiced by two women. This form of naming indicates that different norms of behaviour are required of women in different settings (drawing on Goffman 1959). Interviewees explained that this form of naming enabled a married woman to maintain her professional identity by using her maiden name at work, while defining her life away from work by using her husband’s surname. It is a form of naming that demonstrates how the differing realms of the private and domestic sphere can influence women’s behaviour.

This form of naming was spoken about by Grace, a recent bride, who had adopted her husband’s surname aged 32. I asked her about the disadvantages of changing surnames and she mentioned that it could be an issue for ‘people’ who were ‘building a reputation’ in their chosen profession. She added that she had considered using different surnames at home and work, saying:

*I did think about that [situational surnames], yeah, but actually, I just thought, if I am going to change my name, you know, I’m just going to change it, erm, properly, and there was a sense of, erm, I was excited about changing my name and, erm, getting married, and it would have felt a bit half-hearted if I’d kept my name at work. [Grace, 33]*

Grace spoke of a correct way of ‘doing’ marital naming. She said keeping her maiden name at work would have felt ‘a bit half-hearted’. Her comments about

situational naming showing limited enthusiasm for marriage can be tied closely to the replies of survey responses, reported in Chapter 5, that surname change is said to be far more demonstrative of a woman's commitment to her marriage than maiden name retention. Similarly, her comments echo the 'commitment' repertoire (discussed in Chapter 5) whereby surname change is spoken about as binding a couple together.

The issue of commitment also featured in Wendy's account as she used her maiden name for practicing medicine while using her husband's surname at home. I asked her about the benefits of this situation, and she said:

*...the biggest advantage I felt was for the children who went to local comprehensive, state schools that they weren't labelled as a local GP's children. Probably everyone knew, but somehow it gave them a separate, they weren't lumbered with me as their mother. I can't explain that very well, they weren't lumbered with a label other than, what do I mean, erm... it meant that my children weren't automatically assumed to be, you know, they had so privacy as it were other than them being involved in my job...I didn't want them to be labelled as my children professionally, I wanted them to be separate from my job.* [Wendy, 65]

This narrative underscores the competing statuses in women's lives, as Wendy had a prestigious job and was a well-regarded figure in her community. She was also keen to be a 'good' mother and used her husband's surname at home to demonstrate to her children that she was committed. Yet, despite having an important job, Wendy spoke with some shame about this position. She remarked upon her children being 'labelled' and 'lumbered' with her as a successful mother. Indeed, later she said her children might regard her being a doctor as 'baggage', in her words. It seemed the Wendy could somewhat appease such conflict and feelings of guilt through her 'choice' of surname.

#### ***At the moment, I'm basically a housewife***

Interviewees with unchanged surnames tended to frame their naming decision on the need for career continuity. But other women who had changed surnames spoke about doing so because their careers were non-existent or trivial – thereby saying 'for career purposes' was the sole legitimate reason for keeping a maiden name. These women said there was more reason to change surnames (or less ability to choose) if a wife was economically dependent on her husband. Their roles did not afford the respect or social power needed to maintain a maiden name post-wedding. This way

of speaking again emphasised a male/female binary whereby maiden name retention is linked to the masculine world of work and surname change exists with the private feminine realm of the home.

One example was interviewee Suchita who said that in her home country of India the surnames of married women only went unchanged if they worked prior to, and after, marrying. She referred to such women as ‘feminists’, as they were ‘economically independent’ and ‘strong in their points’. She married shortly after finishing a post-graduate degree and her husband asked her not to work. Due to this, she said her ‘spinster name’ had ‘lost its existence’ and she was ‘living on’ the identity of her husband. I asked if her change of surname represented anything in particular, she said:

*Since I am not working, I am not meeting with other people, so everyone who is coming to visit me is knowing me [sic] as my husband's wife, better half, so I am known as Mrs Datta... he [husband] is representing everything so I have to bear with this surname. So whenever I am using it is giving [me] a social status. It's giving me [the ability] to operate the bank statements, to use the money what my husband [earns] because I am depending on him, totally depending on him.* [Suchita, 33]

Suchita said her life was represented by that of her husband. She was known post-wedding only in a domestic context and had no separate identity to her spouse, as might have been provided through paid employment. She later remarked upon her life being completely consumed by her husband. Indeed, she said only as her husband's status improved did her own status improve. Everything depended on him. Her status was gained directly from being a wife rather than any other professional or social role.

Suchita was one of five women who said that their surname was unimportant because their work was unimportant. These women acknowledged that maiden name retention might be desirable in some cases, but said their surnames were irrelevant at work – thereby implying that maiden name retention required a valid justification. One of these women was Audrey who used her maiden name for several years while working as a librarian, but now worked from home on volunteer projects. I asked her about her current surname, to which she replied:

*'...I work in my own name, for example, I have to pay [professional membership dues], actually I don't, I mean at the moment I'm basically a housewife, erm, I was working until quite recently...'* [Audrey, 59]

This narrative implies that being a housewife does not afford enough kudos to warrant the retention of a maiden name. While Audrey had been less involved in paid work in recent years, she did not judge her status to be determined by work and said her maiden name had lost its importance. Thus, she implied that maiden names only matter to women whose status reaches out wider than her home and family. On this subject, Choi and Bird (2003:450) note that the justification ‘for professional reasons’ rather than ‘for personal reasons’ can, at times, be the only palatable justification for maiden name retention when given to people who view this choice as ‘an anathema’. This is because ‘the marriage’ is viewed to be more important than the two individuals involved in the relationship. However, they add that, there is a general expectation within society that a wife’s status will be lower than her husband’s, and that she will rearrange her professional standing so as to support that of her spouse.

### *Survey responses*

The ‘professional barrier’ repertoire is concerned with a woman’s career. It can be further explored through some of the 16 statements that were presented to survey respondents, with the most relevant presented below (see Tables 4.6a in Appendix 4):

- **Surname change demonstrates ‘being career-minded’** – 42 per cent replied ‘not at all’ to this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates ‘being career-minded’** – 29 per cent replied ‘not at all’ to this statement.
- **Surname change demonstrates ‘being well-educated’** – 46 per cent replied ‘not at all’ to this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates ‘being well-educated’** – 39 per cent replied ‘not at all’ to this statement.

A distinction emerged when respondents were asked if surname change and surname retention demonstrated that a woman was ‘career-minded’. Just over 40 per cent of respondents said women who changed surnames were not concerned with their careers, but only 29 per cent responded similarly about women with unchanged surnames. Keeping one’s surname was reported as more a reflection of developing one’s career than changing surnames. My question about education was less divisive. About half of the respondents replied negatively when asked this question. That is to say, they did not associate women who changed their surnames with a woman being well-educated. And, slightly fewer said the same about surname retention – i.e. that

respondents did not relate maiden name retention with education levels. There were, however, differences between men and women:

- **Surname change demonstrates ‘being well-educated’** – 47 per cent of men replied ‘not at all’ to this statement, but 66 per cent of women replied in the same way.
- **Surname retention demonstrates ‘being well-educated’** – 44 per cent of men replied ‘not at all’ to this statement, but 54 per cent of women replied in the same way.

These results show that two-thirds of women did not associate a woman’s change of surname with her level of education. This finding might reflect the fact that most women change surnames, regardless of their educational achievements. Or, it is possible that some of these women had themselves changed surnames and might have been defending themselves from any suggestion that they were less well-educated than women who retained their maiden names. Indeed, the largest reported differences for women in regard to surname change and surname retention were related to statements about marriage and families – therefore, changing surnames was said to be reflective of connectedness rather than any personal attribute such as education.

Respondents were also asked: ‘Is it ever OK for married couples to use different surnames?’ The majority agreed (56 per cent) and interestingly women were slightly more in favour than men of this statement (seven percentage points, see Table 4.8a in Appendix 4). Only about one in five respondents disagreed with this statement (18 per cent of women and 27 per cent of men). So, if the idea of differently-named spouses was generally supported, why was this? I asked respondents, using an open-ended question, to give a reason for their answer. These were the most frequently cited reasons:

- **Yes, it is OK for married couples to use different surnames (n=207):**  
Choice = 37 per cent – e.g. ‘personal choice’ and ‘depends on an individual couple’s wishes’  
Career = 28 per cent – e.g. ‘wife uses maiden name for work’ and ‘professions like doctors, actors, stage names’  
Why not = 13 per cent – e.g. ‘what’s in a name?’ and ‘no reason why not’
- **No, it is not OK for married couples to use different surnames (n=69):**  
Marital unity = 23 per cent – e.g. ‘because it shows they are married to each other’ and ‘it doesn’t show commitment’  
Child welfare = 23 per cent – e.g. ‘their children won’t know who they are’ and ‘no basis for defining surnames of children’  
Confusing = 22 per cent – e.g. ‘confuses everyone’ and ‘would create a mess’

Survey respondents cited ‘choice’ as the main reason for different spousal surnames being deemed acceptable. In considering this response, I refer to my comments in Chapter 5 where women who change surnames were said to be different to those who continued to use their maiden names when married. So, although the concept of ‘choice’ may have been favoured, the implementation of such choice resulted in women being viewed unequally (for example, proud and less proud of their marriages). Moreover, as noted in Chapter 4, although the concept of ‘choice’ featured in the replies of survey respondents, at least nine out of ten respondents had followed ‘tradition’ when selecting their own post-wedding surnames and surnames for their children.

Additionally, survey respondents also indicated that different spousal surnames were OK if a woman wanted to keep her maiden name for professional use. Thus, although my statement about the use of different surnames was not gender-specific in this instance, it was interpreted as such. This reinforces my earlier comments about women being excused from following ‘traditional’ expectations if their careers afforded them sufficient social power and prestige. Some of the respondents who replied saying that it was OK for a married woman to use her maiden name at work added that she should always use her husband’s surname at home and in social situations. Moreover, other respondents were more relaxed and took an ‘anything goes’ approach to marital naming. Yet, I reiterate my point that, almost without exception, survey respondents followed the normative rules of naming.

Regarding survey respondents who rejected the idea that it was OK for couples to use different spousal surnames, their justifications reflect two interpretative repertoires: ‘surname change as a sign of commitment’ (i.e. marital unity) and ‘surname change as child-centred’ (i.e. child welfare). The third reply about different spousal surnames being ‘confusing’ also resonates with my comments on the ‘coping economy’ in Chapter 5 – that women being expected to ‘make life easier’ for others by changing surnames.

### **Surname Change as Family (Dis-)Affiliation**

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that surnames serve a dual function. They mark out individuals and distinguish them from others, but also indicate important social connections. I move away from the former in presenting a seventh repertoire which is used to capture narratives about family connections. I have labelled it ‘family (dis-



)affiliation' and it was drawn upon by 22 interviewees. It is a repertoire that includes discourses of belonging and non-belonging. That is to say, women who changed surnames spoke about fitting in with newly-acquired family members and 'displaying' new family affiliations. But, in doing so, women also spoke about becoming dis-affiliated with their families. The women's narratives also portray their identities as relational rather than autonomous, as well as revealing some of the tensions that rest between a woman's family of origin and her acquired family.

### ***I belong to a different set of people***

In discussing the (dis-)affiliation repertoire, I again draw on Finch's idea of 'display'. It is a helpful concept to consider when analysing the accounts of ten women who said their change of surname was reflective of joining their husband's family, whereas maiden name retention might signal a rejection of his family. There was also some cultural variation in the women's 'talk' on this subject. Three interviewees from India and Pakistan spoke in detail about moving into their in-laws' houses after marrying. Their change of surname was spoken about in terms of 'displaying' a shift in family loyalty.

One of these interviewees was Bala. Her marriage, one of expediency, was arranged by her parents when she was 19, and she spoke about moving to live with her husband and his large immediate family after marrying. She explained how her change of surname represented joining this new group:

*I suppose it was a sense of identity that I belonged to this house instead of the other house that I came from. And I belong to a different set of people. It actually felt like I was a possession and now belonged here, you know. It sort of gave me an identity but I had to change everything to have that identity.* [Bala, 49]

According to Bala, she says she gained a new sense of identity by moving to her husband's house, but this meant leaving behind her familial identity. Indeed, she even spoke about abandoning her most treasured possessions upon leaving her parents' house. Bala clearly engaged in much 'kin work' in changing her surname, whereby di Leonardo (1987), in her discussion of 'kin work', explored how women assumed responsibility for their husbands' family histories. In the case of Bala, she worked hard to strengthen her connection to her husband's family. She reluctantly accepted a new surname to fit in with her new family, despite this being an uncomfortable and difficult change.

Similarly, Manya spoke of the compromises involved in adjusting to life with her mother-in-law despite not changing her surname. She had lived with her husband and his mother on moving to England from India, but this proved to be a difficult arrangement. I asked her how other people had reacted to her unchanged surname and she explained the actions of her mother-in-law:

*...[she] was like 'you have left that family, you have come into this family, this is your family, that family is not your family anymore, you need to take on the traditions and the values of this family and forget all of that'.* [Manya, 32]

Her unchanged surname defied her mother-in-law's expectation of new belonging, and signalled unwillingness by Manya to separate from her family. Her surname 'displayed' a lack of loyalty, as well as a lack of respect, for her new family. Indeed, in his historical account of surnames, Wilson (1998) notes that surnames not only identify a family, but can embody its honour and reputation. Consequently, Manya said she had been so annoyed with her mother-in-law that she wanted to 'go home' – indicating that her 'real' family was elsewhere. Moreover, Manya pointed to the hypocrisy of her mother-in-law's reaction. Not only did the mother have regular contact with her own family, but she had wanted to revert to her maiden name after divorcing. However, her children refused take the name as their own. More specifically, this type of 'kin work' carried out by Manya's mother-in-law appeared strange, as she was asking Manya to use a surname that originated with her ex-husband's family. Consequently, the mother, matriarch of the family, was continuing to protect her ex-husband's surname despite wanting to drop the name herself.

### ***We are the Carr family***

Changing surnames was spoken about by ten women as being a signal for starting a new family away from one's own parents. A common utterance was the phrase 'family name' (e.g. Wilson is our 'family name'). Yet, although it is a convenient descriptor, this phrase served to disguise the gender-bias of a surname's origin. The surname that an interviewee took from her husband was simply labelled as 'the family name'. Indeed, the idea of a 'family name' was much supported by interviewees. I asked each woman if children's surnames should be inherited from their fathers, but they generally disagreed. Instead, women tended to say that their main concern was for a single 'family name' rather than for a father-owned surname. Of course, this preference opens up the possibility of surname change by married

men. But interviewees were largely dismissive of this option, as discussed in Chapter 5.

A similar linguistic feature was to talk about families as commonly-named units such as ‘the Wilson family’ or just ‘The Wilsons’. In this respect, families were conceived as single entities, as well as units with common traits (e.g. ‘the Gordons weren’t very good about money’ and ‘all the Hughes were atheists’). I asked Grace (who had recently married and changed surnames) to comment on her maiden name ‘Drakes’ and she said her parents and unmarried sister were ‘The Drakes’, whereas she was now ‘a Carr’. Her new surname marked a clear distinction between the two families. She added:

*I really like the fact that, erm, Marc and I, you know, are a family unit and I do think that the fact that we, you know, we do consider ourselves to be The Carr family, erm, and we sort of include Marc’s mum in that as well because she’s on her own, and it’s nice to be sort of The Carrs, and now we’ve got Chloe, you know, it’s nice and, erm, yeah, I think it does, I don’t think it would have a massive effect on our relationship if I wasn’t a Carr, but I just think we feel it’s, it’s a nice sort of, it just gives us a greater sense of being a family unit, I think.* [Grace, 33]

Grace took pleasure in her new surname, and said the name had ‘become an important part of my identity’ despite recognising she had only used the name for a year. Being ‘a Carr’ positioned her differently than her maiden name as it gave her a sense of family unity. It is significant that Grace was a recent bride and first-time mother. That is because, as observed in several studies since the 1950, couples starting out on new relationships tend to experience ‘a strong sense of “togetherness” and intimacy’ although such ‘emotional closeness’ is not necessarily long-lasting (Jackson and Scott 2002:204). In addition, Grace speaks of having a ‘greater sense’ of family through a shared surname. Indeed, returning to my point about families as single entities, Grace speaks for ‘The Carrs’ in saying ‘we’ feel more like a family. Her newer family was made real through a shared surname and it was recognised as such because of this commonality.

### ***I still have lovely feelings for my name***

In discussing the ‘family (dis-)affiliation’ repertoire, I have so far focussed on affiliation, but eight women also spoke specifically about issues of dis-affiliation. They spoke of their changed surnames as detaching them from their families, which was good (or bad) depending on the interviewee. I begin with Amy who spoke

positively about moving away from parental influence. This interviewee was adopted as an infant and later experienced a troubled adolescence. I asked her if she had considered surname choices other than her husband's surname, and while she said she knew other options existed, added:

*...I think my mum and dad, again, immediately thought, 'oh she'll change to Finlay' and the awkward thing is, because, when I'd had anorexia [then]...I went off the rails a bit...so I think in some ways they sort of thought 'great, you know, she's going to be Finlay and now she's going be off with another, sort of, she's de-camped to another surname'. So...when I got married, it was as much about me not just living with my husband, but changing my name to his, erm, leaving home, but it's also leaving their name in lots of ways.*

[Amy, 44]

By taking her husband's surname, Amy showed her parents that she had left home, was settling down and was no longer their responsibility. She was not their problem anymore after going 'off the rails' as a teenager. However, she was also keen to repair her relationship with them. She spoke of wanting to 'bridge the difficulties' between herself and her parents. Amy did this, in part, by conforming to their values and expectations. She used her new surname to show them that she was a reformed character and committed to her husband.

To the contrary, four women spoke with great lament about losing a connection with their parents and cultural heritage after changing surnames. One such woman was Bala, who spoke with much affection for her maiden name. She regretted no longer being identifiable as a daughter and sister through her surname, saying: 'I lost that little girl thing.' She remarked upon being a wife rather than a daughter, implying the two were mutually exclusive. People could no longer identify her as someone's daughter or sister – an association she greatly missed. She said:

*I still have the same feelings, lovely feelings [for my maiden name], yeah happy feelings that I belong to my mum and dad. It makes me feel like I belong to them rather than to the other lot yeah. It's them and us which it shouldn't be after 30 years.*

[Bala, 49]

For Bala, surnames clearly marked a dividing line between two families. Indeed, she later remarked that her mother referred to Bala's children by Bala's maiden name because using another surname would suggest they were not her grandchildren. She said her mother would see her grandchildren's use of their father's surname as meaning 'they are not hers'. Following the deaths of her husband and father, Bala said she felt torn between their two surnames. She regretted that her husband was

gone, but also wanted to keep her father's surname alive. She compared this situation to being 'in no man's land'. That is to say she was without the two men from whom she had inherited surnames.

### *On his signet ring we got 'Oakes'*

As mentioned in Chapter 4, some interviewees felt disempowered when it came to surname succession. This lack of connection to maternal lines was mentioned by eight women when talking about their children's names. They spoke about giving their children first names which reflected their maternal family histories and cultural heritage<sup>84</sup>. Such tradition stretched back several generations in some cases. Indeed, writing on this topic, Finch (2008:720) observes that giving children names enables parents to 'confirm and reinforce' important family relations and that 'the theme of continuity over time' features strongly. The women in my study spoke of giving children names from maternal lines to recognise a mother's family history and to compensate mothers for their children's use of their fathers' surnames.

To illustrate this type of naming, I begin with Maude. This interviewee gave her only child, a son, her maiden name as a first name. I asked if this was done to maintain a connection with her family name. She said: '...that's right, I mean obviously if I hadn't liked the name, I wouldn't have used it, but I do like the name..., so, erm, since we were all daughters it was continuing the name in that way.' Maude was from an all-female generation which meant it was significant to pass her maiden name to her son in order to preserve it. She remarked upon keeping 'Allen going' and that her parents, especially her father, were 'thrilled' with her decision.

Meanwhile, Gale would have 'quite liked' her children to use her maiden name, which she herself continued to use, but they were instead given their father's surname. She had considered giving her son her maiden name as a middle name, just like her brother and godson, but decided against this. I asked if her children had ever spoken about having a different surname and she said:

*No, because they've always known it. In some ways they quite like prefer Oakes to Bissmire, I think. Erm, and my son, the funniest thing was, he wanted a signet ring for his 18th [birthday] and he wanted a symbol on it. So we tried to find him, myself and my son, my husband wasn't really particularly interested. And, erm, but erm, [whispers*

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<sup>84</sup> Other links, such as ties to godparents, friends and neighbours were also mentioned, as well as names being inspired by famous intellectuals or celebrities, or by geographical places and languages.

*slightly] we couldn't find anything with the name Bissmire, so, it, on his signet ring we have got 'Oakes' [i.e. its family crest]. But we never dared tell his dad or his grandmother. We had to say we'd made it up.* [Gale, 54]

In talking about her children's surname, Gale revealed a secret. Her son's signet ring, given to him in recognition of his coming of age, bore the family crest of the boy's mother not father. Thus, although the ring was full of social meaning, its true symbolism was kept hidden from family members of a different surname. It was an act of non-disclosure that Gale found amusing, but was also associated with some anxiety.

In the above narrative of Gale, it is possible for agency to be observed. The same can be said for several other interviewees who told stories about their children's names. These are not necessarily about recognising a mother's heritage, but limiting a father's monopoly. For example, Stella, one of my oldest interviewees, refused to give her son an ancestral middle-name used by his father and two uncles. But she said her decision outraged her husband's mother. This interviewee said, in retrospect, she was surprised by her own actions. She said: 'I'm amazed, looking back that, I adored my husband then, that I had the courage to stick to that [decision].' Again, it is interesting that an interviewee's mother-in-law was so adamant to uphold her husband's heritage. Yet, this was something Stella, as a wife, did not want to do herself.

Similarly, two other interviewees refused to conform to the naming conventions of their Hindu families. One of these women was Bala, who gave her first-born child European first and middle names in an attempt to avoid the discrimination she faced using an Indian name in the UK. This caused enormous friction between Bala and her husband, and his parents ignored her for some time. She said of the situation: '...it was like a big thing you know, as if I had stolen something, it was really bad'. They forbade her from selecting and registering the name of her second child. Such conflict was also experienced by Suchita, who spoke about naming her daughter. She said:

*The thing that is very traditional in India is that the father's name, suppose the father's name starts with B letter, the son will, son or daughter, will have the same... Suppose my father-in-law is having, his name is Sushil, my husband's name is Sudhir. They wanted that my daughter to have a name with 'Su' but I protested 'no' she will be having a different name [slight laugh]...So I don't believe in these things....She is totally having a different name.* [Suchita, 33]

Controversially, Suchita went against the wishes of her in-laws in naming her child. It was only when her in-laws saw the child's birth certificate that they finally agreed to use the name. This act of resistance is remarkable considering that Suchita spoke of herself as having no status outside of being a wife. Yet, despite her limited social power, in the context of family life, Suchita asserted her authority by rejecting various Hindu naming and cultural traditions. She even refused to wear traditional dress, refused to be confined indoors after her baby was born and refused to have her daughter ritually washed.

### *Survey respondents*

The 'family (dis-)affiliation' repertoire can be further explored through my survey. I asked respondents, as part of a 16-statement question, the extent to which surname change and retention demonstrated 'being family focused' (see Table 4.6a in Appendix 4). They replied:

- **Surname change demonstrates 'being family-focused'** – 48 per cent agreed to 'a small, medium or large extent' with this statement.
- **Surname retention demonstrates 'being family-focused'** – 16 per cent agreed to 'a small, medium or large extent' with this statement.

A woman's change of surname was reported to be closely linked to being 'family-focused'. Almost half of respondents reported that surname change was demonstrative of 'being family-focused' to some extent, which was a substantially higher figure than for women who retained their maiden names. Although there was limited overall difference in men and women's responses to this question, at the top end of the scale (i.e. 'to a large extent') one in five men indicated that surname change demonstrated 'being family-focused' – whereas only one in ten women replied in the same way (see Table 4.6e). This was also the case for respondents who were, and were not, parents (see Table 4.6f).

### **Surname Change as Child-Centred**

My discussions about marital naming led several women, mothers and non-mothers, to talk about children. I have labelled this final repertoire 'child-centred' to account for this 'talk' from 16 interviewees. Their narratives employed discourses of 'good' mothering, and some interviewees used morally-charged language in their accounts. The repertoire was used by women who justified their change of surname on the perceived needs of their children. By changing from their maiden names to their

husbands' surnames, they remarked upon demonstrating to others that they headed-up a stable family. But, not all interviewees shared surnames with their children, and these interviewees spoke about the need to ensure a connection between a father and his children through a shared surname. Moreover, hyphenated surnames, or the regular changing of a child's surnames, was said to be harmful for children and demonstrative of a fragmented family headed by a reckless mother.

### ***People know you're the mother***

Twelve interviewees said their change of surname reflected a desire to become mothers. They wanted to use the same surname as their children, who after birth would be given their fathers' surnames. These women, who used their husbands' surnames (at least at home), spoke about surname change as the obvious choice since it enabled them to share a name with their children. But, the situation was less straightforward for women who retained their maiden names and those who were lone parents. Their accounts, which I now discuss, offer a fascinating insight into notions of motherhood, fatherhood, legitimacy and intimacy.

I begin with Gale and her husband, who married when their children were teenagers. The children were given their father's surname, whereas Gale used her maiden name. She had not considered changing surnames partly because her children were 'grown up' by the time she married and she had less involvement in their affairs. I asked her to explain why her children were given their father's surname and she spoke about her undeniable identity as a mother:

*...before I had children, and I worked with somebody who wasn't married and was having children, and probably I was influenced by her a bit in giving, in how we named the children, or what surname we gave the children, because she said 'people always know you're the mother, even if you've got a different surname, but they won't always know who the father is'. So maybe it is important that the father gives the surname to the child, so that it's known that he is the father, whereas, if they have their mother's name, it might be assumed their biological father is not their father.* [Gale, 54]

This type of 'talk' from Gale reflects legal assumptions about motherhood which are also based on a gestational connection (Sheldon 2005), along with notions of 'displaying' respectability and stability. Similar to Gale, another mother Greta said she did not share a surname with her daughter. She explained this decision by saying: '...everybody knows who the mother is, but, erm, it's the father who is the mystery, so it has to have some kind of [laughs] tag.' I asked Greta what guaranteed a



woman's identity as a mother and she simply said: '...she gave birth to the child.' A shared father-child surname, therefore, was seen to erase doubts about paternity (and possibly any associated rejection or stigma within a local community).

In the scenarios of mothering, Gale and Greta said father-to-child surnames were given to 'display' a father's identity. The women spoke of having privileged gestational relationships with their children, and thus their identity as mothers could not be dismissed. Their position did not need to be 'displayed' through a shared surname unlike that of their children's father, they implied. In this respect, it is possible to see father-to-child surnames as a form of 'patriarchal bargaining' (Kandiyoti 1988). As mothers, Gale and Greta went along with the patrilineal system of naming because it reinforced an otherwise ambiguous father-child relationship.

The use of names to 'display' intimacy and a familial relationship was also evident in the account of Amy. She had a child with a boyfriend after separating from her husband. She still used her former husband's surname and gave this surname to her son, even though her husband had not fathered the child. Asked why, she spoke of the relationships being 'messy' and 'complicated'. She remarked upon never having met the family of her boyfriend (son's father) and mentioned the need to 'sort out' this family had her son taken its surname. I asked her what her 15-year-old son thought about his surname, she said:

*...when he was little, up to the age of about eight, he really could never get to grips with the understanding that Garry [former husband] wasn't his dad, because he knew I was married to Garry and Garry, he may be came to see us sometimes, but, sort of, now he's older he understands that, but he still doesn't understand that he's not really a Finlay. Finlay is just a surname that's convenient, erm, but, you know, he'll probably have to work out what he wants to do with his surname later.* [Amy, 44]

Amy spoke of her son being confused about his parentage because he assumed that surnames were genetic markers. Yet, she pointed out that sharing a surname does not guarantee a biological connection. Amy also mentioned that her claim to the name 'Finlay' was not strong enough to authenticate her son's identity as 'a Finlay'. This comment reflects my findings in Chapter 4 where I wrote that surname claims were only guaranteed through male lines.

*If it was just the two of us...I'm not sure I'd feel as strongly*

The anticipation of becoming a mother was a greater motivation for changing surnames than becoming a wife, according to ten interviewees. Indeed, in their work on motherhood and work, Himmelweit and Sigala (2002) claim that motherhood is likely to be the single most important event affecting a woman's identity. This sentiment was captured by Delyth who, when asked if a shared surname brought anything substantial to her marriage, said: 'To a family, I don't know about just a marriage. If it was just the two of us...without our children, I'm not sure I'd feel as strongly...it's more the family aspect of it.' So, despite the repertoire 'symbol of marriage' being drawn upon by some women, the 'child-centred' theme clearly indicates otherwise. It positions the 'birth' of a couple with the birth of a child rather than as a result of marriage, or even cohabitation.

Not all the women who used this argument about marital naming were mothers when they were interviewed, but these five interviewees (who had each kept their maiden names) expressed the view that motherhood provided an extra layer of complexity to a woman's life which necessitated surname change. These women imagined that the arrival of children could potentially cause problems for couples who used different surnames. I asked these women to speculate on how they might deal with this situation. Interviewee Jill, who was in her 60s, made this comment:

*I guess I would have gone along with giving the father's name because you shouldn't in a sense hoist your own particular issue onto a child. It's probably better to let a child be the same as everybody else because peer groups are very important to children and so on. But, it always seems to me irrational that if you are only going to give it one name then it ought to be the mother's name because it's the one parent you can be 100 per cent certain about, whereas the father could be [laughs] and I don't think you can go one with this double-barrelled business, what do you do in the next generation? [Jill, 63]*

This narrative speaks about the ethics of care and also politics for parents. Jill took the view that parents should not express their political and social opinions through their children. Her use of the word 'hoist' is particularly interesting as it suggests that a weighty issue, such as naming might, restrict or cripple a child. She comments on it being in the best interest of a child to follow the naming norms of a society. In this respect, Jill presents family life as a private space and thus 'beyond' politics. It is similar to the way Grace spoke about husbands not changing surnames in Chapter 5, as she too implied that politics should be kept separate from family life.

### *That wouldn't have been fair on my daughter*

Central to the 'child-centred' repertoire was the notion of a child's needs coming before those of a mother. Ten interviewees spoke about using surnames to demonstrate – to their children and others – that they were caring and committed mothers. These interviewees were keen to be perceived as good mothers, as Lawler (2000) notes of mothers in general, and sharing a surname was one way this could be achieved. I have chosen to illustrate this discourse with a passage from Stella, who used an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986) when speaking about the benefits of a shared spousal surname. She said:

*...when there are children, erm, you must think more of the children and as I said before, children might feel they belong and you know it's like a security blanket for them. I'm sure you get, you know, I've heard of, erm, particularly from the Caribbean...I think when you are uprooted and you are sort of plonked down somewhere, you know, you don't feel the warmth of, erm, what's familiar around...I think psychologically you can sort of feel disoriented and unhappy...you feel as though you belong, even it's a rowing situation. [Stella, 70]*

Stella presented a clear moral absolute in her narrative – which is the importance of putting children's needs first when naming. Stella sought to legitimise her claim by drawing on (or inventing) an extreme case. She gives a racialised account of 'Caribbean' children being 'uprooted' and 'plonked down somewhere' to make her point that children need stability. She, and other interviewees, speculated that children who shared a surname with both parents (unlike those who did not) had a greater sense of stability, as well as belonging and identity. They also speculated that such children were equally connected to, and loved by, both parents. In turn, children should not be confused about their parentage and would take pleasure in being named in the same way as most other children.

The interviewees making these claims took comfort in assuming their change of surname made their children happier, and that they had acted in the best interests of their family. Such feelings were evident in Gina's account. This interviewee divorced her husband when her daughter was at primary school. I asked her if she had considered returning to her maiden name, and she said:

*I think after we got divorced I did think about going back, erm not, but then that wouldn't have been fair on my daughter really. I don't, I work in schools, I think, you know when mum has got one name and the child has got another name, it's different if the child has got a different name to the father, but I think it needs to have the same*

*name, and it wasn't er, er, a thing that I would have changed her name back to my name.* [Gina, 57]

Meanwhile, Gina said using a different surname for her daughter would have caused problems. Her reasoning was not explained, although she seemed to imply that her child's patrilineal legitimacy may have been in question. May's (2008:472) research on 'good' mothering is instructive in this case. The author notes that, on failing to conform to social norms, people attempt to restore their 'potentially "spoiled" identity' by using narratives that brings their behaviour into line with cultural expectations. This was evident in May's study of divorce where the need to protect the interests and safety of children was central to her participants' arguments. This strategy was at play in Gina's account, as she contradicted the idea that names were just labels by suggesting that naming can be potentially harmful if done wrongly.

Similarly, Hannah spoke about protecting her children in the light of her 'spoiled' identity, but also mentioned protecting her interests, too. Her two children were given their father's surname, but Hannah changed their names to her maiden name after the couple split-up. I asked Hannah about the importance of this change. She initially said she was worried that her children may have been teased for not sharing her surname. And, she also spoke about her children needing to 'feel a sense of family' by using the same surname. But later, Hannah spoke of 'having issues' with her ex-partner and wanted 'to get back at him'. Changing her children's surnames helped her display her dominance in the relationship. Yet, despite seeming in control, Hannah was fearful, too. Her children had a Turkish surname and she worried her ex-partner might take her children to Turkey and she would be unable to bring them back. She said:

*I was frightened that they [husband and his parents] might try and keep them if I took them to Turkey...because my surname was different to theirs and theirs was Turkish and they might try, not his family...but, if he ever took them into that country, I might not get them back. So, I thought I'd safeguard it by actually changing the surname and then if he does try to keep them, I'll say 'yes but they've got a British surname, British passport, you can't do that'. So, it was a bit of both. It was wanting to keep a sense of family but also because I didn't want to be in a situation where they take my children and I don't get them back...It was just for my peace of mind really. You know, hoping that they won't be taken away.* [Hannah, 42]

Through this naming change, Hannah engaged in extra 'display' work to signal her status as a mother. Finch (2007) explains that this sort of activity becomes more

intense at certain times in a relationship, as circumstances change. Indeed, Hannah changed her children's surname in recognition of her disintegrating relationship with their father and in an attempt to make her family seem more like a 'proper' family (a stable relationship with reliable bonds). This was done via a shared surname and, importantly, a surname that signalled the 'correct' ethnicity. Therefore, Hannah's British surname was used to alienate her children's father and any allegiances to his home country of Turkey. She expected to have a greater claim over her children if their surnames matched and if their ethnic identities also corresponded.

***You've got children...all with different double-barrelled names***

In talking about 'good' motherhood, three interviewees distanced themselves from others who did not have 'proper' names. These women, all primary school teachers, remarked upon the use of surnames within their respective schools. Each used a moralising discourse in doing so. Their narratives suggest that commonly-shared surnames represented well-functioning and 'proper' families, whereas those with disparate surnames were fragmented and even unhealthy. In short, improper names were spoken about as resulting in improper families.

I begin with Delyth who had been the headteacher of a school in a working-class area of London for several decades. She said her experiences at the school had led to her to see the 'consequences' and 'perceptions' of families without shared surnames. I asked her to elaborate and she said:

*When I was growing up, it was dead posh [to have a hyphenated surname]. Now my perception of it is 'oh dear'. It is the parents aren't married and it's that the mother's had possibly multiple partners and that's usually borne out because the mother might have one name, the dad another name and then you've got children within a family all with different double-barrelled names and of course I'd have been aware of that because I had all the children in the school and you'd see these children in a family, multiple double-barrelled names denoting which father that child happened to have and from where I come from, from the child's point of view, I just don't think it's great for how the child feels about the family unit. [Delyth, 58]*

In her class-based account of naming, Delyth said hyphenated surnames no longer denoted class superiority, but rather inferiority. Indeed, earlier in her interview, she said hyphenated surnames (with the exception of some esteemed names) had become 'decidedly not [socially] upper-class' in the last 20 years. Such names now indicated to Delyth that a person was 'from a broken home'. Not only did such names indicate

a 'broken' home, but could even signal illegitimacy. It was for this reason, Delyth said, that her children's surname was not hyphenated.

Delyth focused on mothers – specifically those who were not married – who she perceived to change partners frequently rather than have a long-term partner, as might be expected of a married woman. It seemed, according to Delyth, that an unmarried mother's indiscretion and inadequacy as a woman was displayed through her children's different surnames. Her account suggested that relationships resulting in children must be fixed. Such permanency would be 'displayed' through a common surname rather than multiple (or often changed) surnames which suggested restlessness and fragmentation for a family. I asked her if mother-to-child surnames would be a better option, and she agreed saying that a shared surname would impart 'some sort of family identity' rather than indicating 'a fragmented group of people who happen to come together for this time'.

This emphasis on mothers was echoed by fellow teacher Helen, who said she was aware that shared spousal surnames were particularly important for children. She spoke about a perceived increase in divorce rates, adding that a mother's remarriage and subsequent change of surname could be very hurtful to children. She said receiving a letter to take home from school, addressed to 'Mrs so-and-so', was upsetting to a child when his/her surname was different. She spoke about a mother she knew who wanted to change her children's surname after remarrying. Helen said there was no reason for this not to happen if the children were happy, but their 'proper name was Walters' – implying that any name other than the father's was not 'real' or 'proper'.

On the basis of these accounts from school teachers, children's surnames seemed to change regularly. Indeed, Delyth said her school had a specific procedure for dealing with 'mothers' who wanted to change their child's surname. She said:

*And the children often changed their names, you know, and we had protocols in the school that everyone was aware of what you did when a mother came in and said 'I want my child now to be called this' 'As of this day, my child is to be called this'. So, we had a process, a management information system to deal with such [unclear]. In some schools, that would be very unusual but for us it was Mrs Such-and-Such is now Mrs Something-Else, the kids are to be this. Sometimes it was adding another name and making it double-barrelled, other times it was just 'my child is never to be referred to as this ever any more, it is now to be this' until a year later when they've got another name.*

[Delyth, 58]

These extreme cases cited by Delyth offered a perceived sense of disorder in some families due to issues of naming. Other interviewees spoke about the perceived unworkability of hyphenated surnames (mentioned later in this section). And, Esme, another teacher, made reference to such confusion:

*I mean having been in school with children with all sorts of different names and double and triple barrelled names, you know, it's just ridiculous...And we have all sorts of combinations where partners have swapped and there's such confusion. I suppose if you've all got the same name then at least the children know where they are.*

[Esme, 54]

Speaking about the use of various surname combinations, Esme also mentioned the 'swapping' of partners and thus condemned non-married relationships for parents. She suggested children had a better sense of identity through one unchanged surname. This displayed stability – a condition under which children are thought to thrive. Interestingly, she implies that surnames 'do' stability, despite the fact that relationships can easily be unsteady when surnames are shared.

Throughout my interviews, several women remarked that although hyphenated names were said to recognise the identities of both parents, opinions about the practice were generally negative. It was said that with certain surnames being incompatible, children might find them cumbersome, pretentious or plain difficult in terms of succession. Such comments included:

*I don't think you can go on with this double-barrelled business, what do you do in the next generation?*

[Jill, 63]

*...if it [the system] was changed and so women never changed their names or the name wasn't changed you couldn't do this two barrelled thing, that would get completely out of control because in about three generations.*

[Helen, 74]

*I mean I think now, you get an awful lot of double-barrelled names, which involve, but then I think that's usually because they are not married.*

[Gina, 57]

Hyphenated surnames for children were not only dismissed by interviewees on the grounds of aesthetics, but because they were socially irresponsible or because they represented further social irresponsibly (i.e. not getting married). That hyphenated surnames would result in social disorder was used to support the convention of father-child surnames. Similar reasons were given by women for not hyphenating their maiden names. Such names would sound 'ridiculous' or 'pretentious'. And,

Flora, whose surname was unchanged, went as far as to say hyphenated surnames were ‘absurd’ and ‘a clumsy way’ for women to try to keep her maiden name, she claimed.

Returning to Delyth, I asked her to comment on the perceived impact of a child’s surname being changed. She said some children were ‘quite proud and pleased’ to switch surnames because it often meant a ‘new man’ had joined their house. It gave children a sense of pride and belonging because their family ‘looked normal’, she suggested. Delyth also mentioned that a child’s new surname might mean a wedding had taken place, adding: ‘...amidst of all this family turmoil and names, there was also a really nice side to it.’ Acquiring a new surname, she said, signalled ‘a fresh start’ for the children and family involved. However, the situation was different if a man left a child’s house:

*If it [a change of surname] was because a man had left the house and the name had been taken off the double-barrelling or if they’d actually formally carried the father’s name and it was going to the mother’s name, then I could say to you ‘well you would see some upset’ but actually how much you’d attribute it to the name and more to the turmoil that had resulted in the mother marching in and saying ‘they are to be known as such-and-such from now on’. But, I think there is a lot of emotional manipulation around names within families and parents threatening other parents with the giving or the removal of a name...* [Delyth, 58]

Delyth drew a gender distinction between a child’s change of surname being positive if it reflected the presence of a man, but negative if it reflected his absence. She referred to the turmoil arising from a mother ‘marching’ into school and demanding a change of surname for her children. That Delyth, again, refers only to the actions of mothers suggests her view of naming is that it is ‘women’s work’. And, just like women’s involvement in other forms of work, her rights and choices are often marginalised.

### ***Survey responses***

The ‘child-centred’ repertoire is concerned with the passing of surnames to children and their well-being. It can be further explored through this statement about the function of surname change, which was one of ten presented to respondents:

- **Surname change by married women is ‘good for children’s well-being’** – 48 per cent agreed or strongly agreed



Survey respondents, in the main, agreed that a wife's change of surname was in her children's best interest. This idea was supported by 54 per cent of men, but only 42 per cent of women. The statement received the second highest level of agreement after 'makes life easier' and was more supported than any statement about marriage or spousal relationships. Additionally, survey respondents were asked: 'should parents have an equal chance of passing their surname to their children? The majority (53 per cent) replied saying 'yes' this should be the case – 48 per cent of men and 59 per cent of women (see Table 4.11a in Appendix 4). These were the most frequently cited reasons for favouring or rejecting my statement about equal surname succession:

- **Yes, couples should have an equal chance of passing their surname to their children (n=155):**  
 Couple's choice = 27 per cent – e.g. 'a matter of choice' and 'it depends on taste'  
 Equality = 25 per cent – e.g. 'both parents have equal rights' and 'seems fair'  
 Parental ancestry = 10 per cent e.g. 'because children have two family roots'
- **No, couples should not have an equal chance of passing their surname to their children (n=73):**  
 Father's surname only = 48 per cent – e.g. 'it should be the man's surname' and 'the male line should predominate'  
 Shared family surname = 14 per cent – e.g. 'importance of family surname' and 'doesn't help to create a "family"  
 Tradition = 14 per cent – e.g. 'I'm a traditionalist' and 'following established custom avoids arguments'

Survey respondents gave 'choice' and 'equality' as the main reasons for equality in the passing of surnames to children. Again, I reiterate my point that, although 'choice' was supported by survey respondents, this sample of people did not favour marital naming choices equally, and women who retained their maiden name were viewed less positively than those who took their husband's surnames. It is instructive at this point to consider Shanley's (2004:18) work on marriage, who illustrates that while most people today support equality as a general cultural value, there still remains 'deep disagreement about what kind of spousal equality we want and how best to achieve it'. Although survey respondents evoked themes of 'choice' and 'equality' when replying to open-ended questions, the more nuanced naming stories of interviewees show these concepts to be problematic.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter continued my exploration of the ways in which women negotiate surname change. It focused on the discourses of autonomy and connectedness. In addition, it featured common links with Chapter 5 on stability and change, for instance, when interviewees spoke about keeping a professional identity or changing surnames to achieve a sense of family. This chapter largely focused on questions of personal identity, namely: 'Who am I and what makes me who I am?' And, in reflecting on these questions, interviewees drew upon notions of power, belonging and commitment. They also drew distinctions between past, present and future identities, for example, when talking about using an ex-husband's surname or the prospect of becoming a mother. There was often a clear division between the narratives of women who used their maiden names and those whose surnames were acquired from their husbands. The former tended to talk more about autonomy and the latter about connectedness.

The women's 'talk' about autonomy and connectedness centred on paid work (i.e. labour market participation) and unpaid work (i.e. 'kin work', similarly 'relationship work' or 'interactive work'). Or, more simply, narratives focused on differences between a woman's public and private spaces in life. Interviewees with unchanged surnames tended to draw upon the former when rationalising their surname decision. Their careers were said to afford them some autonomy from the normative ideas of marriage. Their social status was said to be elevated through certain occupations. Thus, they were able to draw on a masculinist discourse (e.g. earning money and being successful) to rationalise (or excuse) their surname decision. They were afforded the privilege of continuing their surnames through their privileged positions in the workforce. Conversely, this resource was not available to women who deemed their job to be insignificant. Instead, such women explained their surname 'choice' on the basis of having limited social power.

Additionally, women with unchanged surnames positioned themselves outside of notions of normative femininity and marriage in referring to themselves as 'late' brides. They did not fit the accepted idea of a bride or 'maiden'. They spoke of being 'too old' for the paternalistic ideology used to rationalise surname change. Instead, they spoke about surname change as problematic once a personal identity had been established. It was odd, or indeed more difficult, later in life to imagine being known by a surname other than one's maiden name. Deviating from the norms of femininity and marriage meant it was unnecessary for these women to 'display'

themselves as wife-like through surname change. Conversely, younger brides spoke of having few lines of defence against changing their surnames. These narratives contribute to my argument that surname change is socially constructed as feminine and, thus, undervalued as women's work.

Aside from paid work, this chapter drew attention to women's involvement in 'kin work' – the work women do to help their families and community survive. Indeed, much of this chapter focused on the dynamics of family life, and how this intersects with notions of work, care and intimacy. In this respect, changing surnames fits with other literature on 'women's work', such as their curatorial practices in preserving family ties (Otnes and Pleck 2003) and their ability to nurture marital bonds and associated relationships (Maushart 2001). The doing of 'kin work', Hobson (2000:287-8) notes, is congruent with the ways in which women have come to be defined in terms of 'sensitivity' and 'sensibilities'. Yet, she claims that engagement in 'kin work' is 'tactical' in De Certeau's (1988) sense of the word. That is, in my study, a change of surname enabled women to make space for new affinities. They took the opportunity to mark out new family groupings and define their role within such relationships through their surnames. But this was not without problems for women, as changing surnames also meant establishing a separation from their families of origin.

A particular feature of women's 'talk' about marital naming was the strong pull of motherhood. Much of this was a moralising discourse about the ethics of caring for children. Changing surnames 'displayed' a mother-child relationship to one's children, as well as a wider social network. It also demonstrated the existence of a stable relationship rather than one that was fragmented. Such 'talk', with its strong moral theme of stable families, echoes other literature on parent-child relationships, such as work by Duncan and Edwards (1999) on lone mothers, Ribbens McCarthy et al (2000) on step-parenting and Weeks et al (2001) on non-heterosexual families (the authors' phrase). The feedback of interviewees and survey respondents in this chapter indicated that single 'family' surnames were highly-prized, whereas alternatives were too political and self-serving. But simultaneously, women with unchanged surnames prioritised the 'displaying' of father-child relationships through the passing of father-to-child surnames, as they spoke about their privileged gestational relationships.

Overall, interviewees made their surname 'choices' on the basis of important relational and contextual choices. None of the interviewed women said that surnames

were meaningless. Instead, they negotiated, and actively demonstrated, their choices everyday due to individual and collective identities – based on age, gender, heritage, class and ethnicity. But there were overlaps and conflicts in juggling the identities of wives, mothers, workers and autonomous individuals. The repertoires I created and explored speak of these competing discourses. Each woman was confronted with the customary call to change surname because they married and, because of this intimate relationship, they were faced with the pressure to display allegiances. A key strategy for dealing with this transition was to employ a discourse of normative masculinity (i.e. autonomy) or one of femininity (i.e. connectivity). Therefore, married women are always accountable for their surnames. And, whatever surname a woman decides upon, she will be responsible for conducting a gendered performance. A resulting problem can best be summarised within a paradox of ‘doing’ gender well – or ‘doing’ gender poorly.

# Chapter 7

## Meanings of Marriage

This chapter considers discourses of marriage in an attempt to better understand how interviewees negotiated marital naming. It is, of course, due to marriage that women are customarily asked to take their husbands' surnames. I have discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 the symbolic meaning of maiden names and have explored women's negotiations with the call to change surnames by using a thematic discourse analysis. The narratives of interviewees underscored a tension between social stability and change, and also autonomy and connectedness. This chapter looks more broadly at the particular meanings that interviewees ascribed to marriage. In doing so, women's narratives of marriage are found to be closely tied to the ways in which marital naming was spoken about. Indeed, with the exception of one new theme, the discursive themes featured in this chapter exactly mirror some of those used by interviewees when discussing marital naming.

The 'marriage talk' of interviewees is explored through six 'interpretative repertoires' which were identified through a thematic discourse analysis. This process, fully described in Chapter 3, involved searching for patterns across all 30 interviews. At the start of each interview, every woman was asked if she expected to marry, how she came to be married and what marriage involved. And, before their interview finished, they were asked to comment on marriage as a social institution. Additionally, at specific times during discussions, interviewees spoke about marriage without prompting. Five of the six repertoires that emerged also featured in Chapters 5 and 6, but a new theme – 'marriage as a protective force' – has also been added:

- *Marriage as a pre-supposed notion*
- *Marriage as a sign of commitment*
- *Marriage as a personal choice*
- *Marriage as family (dis-)affiliation*
- *Marriage as child-centred*
- *Marriage as a protective force*

Responding to questions about marriage, interviewees spoke about 'marriage in theory' and 'marriage in reality'. The former 'talk' was no doubt influenced by ideological and/or idealised constructions of marriage. After all, marriage is a practice with a strong and compelling cultural narrative (Jackson 1995). The latter 'talk' was influenced by each woman's personal experiences. The women married in

different decades, at differing ages and in various cultural settings. While marriage had not always served interviewees well (indeed, 15 women made negative comments about the practice), it was mostly referred to as a positive endeavour. There were just four women who made dismissive remarks, and Jackie was especially negative as explained later in this chapter. But all the interviewees had conclusive remarks, mediated through certain personal characteristics and experiences, about the practice of marriage as an undeniable influence on their lives.

## Survey Findings

To better understand what interviewees said about marriage, I begin with the replies of survey respondents to four short questions. I asked this group of 453 men and women about the status of marriage. Was it important and valued? They were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with four statements about marriage using a five-point scale, as shown below. The respondents gave these replies – with most agreeing that marriage was important (see Tables 4.1a-b in Appendix 4 for complete data):

- **Marriage is an important custom** – 72 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Marriage is the best relationship for couples** – 56 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Marriage is losing its importance**– 52 per cent agreed or strongly agreed
- **Marriage is in need of change** – 19 per cent agreed or strongly agreed

These findings support my discussion of marriage in Chapter 1. Indeed, 56 per cent of respondents agreed that marriage was the best kind of relationship for couples – exactly the same as a recent UK-based survey of social trends conducted by the Office for National Statistics (2009b). The above data also support Cherlin's (2004:848) claims about marriage – its 'practical importance' may have declined, but its 'symbolic significance' has stayed high (and may even have increased). Three out of four respondents agreed that marriage was an important custom, and only one in five agreed that the institution needed to be changed. Moreover, respondents generally agreed that marriage was the best relationship for couples.

Despite most respondents agreeing that marriage was an important custom, around half of all respondents also indicated that its societal importance was waning. There was less agreement with regards to my statement about marriage needing to 'change', with no majority response being given. Only one in five respondents

indicated that marriage needed changing. But, overall, responses to these four statements support Gillis' (1996) work on romanticised notions of the family. He argues that people interpret their experiences of family in relation to an idealised form – this is the family ‘we live by’ rather than the family ‘we live with’ (p.xv). That is to say, one’s real-life family might be fragmented and unreliable, but one’s imagined or symbolic family is forever caring and protective. This idea also echoes the narratives of interviewees who drew a distinction between ‘marriage in theory’ and ‘marriage in reality’, as I discuss in the next sections of this chapter.

### **Marriage as a Pre-Supposed Notion**

The concept of normativity has been a key feature of my research. Interviewees spoke about the norms of naming when asked about their maiden names and marital naming. In response, I created the ‘pre-supposed notion’ repertoire to account for women’s ‘talk’ about the custom of surname change. This theme proved to be a discourse of social control and a dominant institutional structure. The ‘pre-supposed notion’ repertoire was again drawn upon, by 20 women, when asked about marriage. The main finding of this repertoire, as in Chapter 5, was that interviewees spoke of having limited personal choice when it came to marrying or not. They spoke about marriage as a social expectation, much like changing surnames. Conversely, women who distanced themselves from ‘pre-supposed’ notions of marriage gave this as a reason for keeping their maiden names.

Present in the accounts of women using the ‘pre-supposed notion’ repertoire were references to the social norms of marriage: that they should seek to marry at a young age preferably and put off cohabiting<sup>85</sup> and mothering until this date. These norms led some women to put pressure on themselves, while others received pressure from their parents<sup>86</sup>. So intense was the anxiety for Gale that, as a teenager in the 1960s, she spoke of expecting to ‘commit suicide’ if she had not married by the age of 30. She and other interviewees said it was inevitable that women of their generation or cultural background would marry. Yet, just as modern-day brides would feel less compelled to change surnames, interviewees said young people, nowadays, would feel less obliged to marry.

In Chapter 5, I reported that, for married women, changing surnames could be a stumbling block as a professional. In addition, the issue of education and work

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<sup>85</sup> Nine interviewees cohabited prior to marriage.

<sup>86</sup> Only six women said their parents did not pressure them into marriage. Instead they mentioned that their mother and/or father were ‘quite modern’ or ‘independent’ or ‘very open’ or ‘intellectual’.

reappeared when I asked women if they expected to marry. Jill, who kept her maiden name, spoke of winning a free place at 'a very academic' fee-paying school. She said the school expected her to focus on university and a good career rather than worry about marrying. But, nine other women, married in the 1950s to the 1990s, remarked about their limited career options. Salma, married at 17, said 'I knew it [marriage] was coming' and I asked if this prospect was an exciting or worrying. She replied:

*It was a worry...because I wanted to finish my GCSEs first and then, I think my dad, because I was good at school, I think I got through to him saying that you know 'let me just finish my schooling...I've just about manage to finish school now and you don't want me to get no credit for it, you want me to get married and wash dishes' [laughs]. And that's exactly how I went about it in front of him, and he was alright about it.* [Salma, 29]

As indicated above, Salma said marriage was a priority for her Bangladeshi parents. She, and her sisters, knew that their parents would 'start looking for a groom' when they reached the age of 16. Salma explained that she undertook some vocational training after finishing school, but added it would be unwise for her to enrol in higher education since it would be cut short when she married. It was because of her cultural background that Salma was given an individual, rather than a family, surname which she kept after marrying. Yet, even though it was not customary for Bangladeshi brides to take their husbands' surnames, Salma said she would have done had her husband made this request.

Despite acknowledging the prevalence of marriage in society, however, not all of the interviewees had followed its prescribed script. Indeed, Alice said her surname went unchanged because she had deviated from the rules of marriage. She left home to live alone age 21, then lived with boyfriends, married at 40 and had no children. I asked for her views on marriage. She said:

*...there was enormous pressure to get married...I mean, it's what girls did. You grew up, went to school, went to work, met someone, got married, had children, der-der...and the other thing that happens is that as you go through your 20s, all your girlfriends get married and that puts enormous pressure on you...* [Alice, 60]

Alice, and others, spoke of marriage as an end-of-life narrative. That is to say, marriage was not spoken about as a new beginning or significant chapter, but as a woman's life reaching its climax. Yet, at the same time (as mentioned in Chapter 6) Alice referred to her maiden name as a 'security blanket'. It was a familiar object that would always exist regardless of her marriage. Nevertheless, Alice remarked



upon feeling pressured to marry sooner rather than later, and said ‘I felt better’ after marrying because she had spent a long time trying to reach this goal.

Alice based her surname ‘choice’ on not following the ‘traditional’ marriage script. She had not expected to marry after she turned 30, and spoke of marrying ‘late’ (as reported in Chapter 6). It was a similar story for Jean, who married aged 23. Asked if she expected to marry, Jean replied:

*I did expect that I would get married, yeah. It was sort of the normal thing to do in those days. In fact, if I hadn't, I think I would have been worried. I can remember in my early 20s thinking, being worried about being left on the shelf...I think it was pressure I put on myself really rather than anything else just to be accepted I suppose. I was very conventional in those days [laughs].* [Jean, 55]

Although she feared rejection and missing the chance to have children, Jean also remarked upon having ‘rushed into’ marriage – and cited this rush as a reason for taking her husband’s surname. Specifically, she associated her change of surname with a lack of maturity and self-awareness (as reported in Chapter 6). She remarked upon her ‘growing up’ only after separating from her husband, aged 35, and divorcing ten years later.

Responding to a question about their expectations, some women said they expected to marry but did not want to – whereas others said they wanted to marry but did not expect marriage to come their way. For instance, despite wanting to marry, Wendy feared that ‘no-one would want me’ so did not expect to marry. She was one of nine women who did not expect to marry – seven of whom used their maiden names in some form. Jill was one of these women who said she ‘still’ found it ‘quite surprising’ that she was married, because she had not been ‘desperate’ to marry. Other women, such as Grace, also positioned themselves outside of a romantic notion of marriage, saying they were not ‘starry-eyed’ or had grown-up disinterested in boys and wedding paraphernalia. Asked if she expected to marry, Grace said:

*It's funny actually because when I was younger I thought 'oh, you know, I probably won't get married' and, erm, I wasn't the sort of, I wasn't a sort of girly-girl in terms of you know having a dream of a perfect wedding or wedding dress. And I know when I was at university one of my friends had got like a scrap book of wedding dresses in it and I just thought that was very bizarre, erm, and quite strange and I never really thought about it you know in those terms.* [Grace, 33]

When discussing her doubts about marrying, Grace distanced herself from normative notions of femininity. The anticipation of marriage, for her, meant entering into a feminine space that she considered ‘strange’ and ‘bizarre’. In addition, Grace had taken her husband’s surname, and seemed aware that doing so might appear contradictory to her status as an educated young professional, as discussed in Chapter 5. Interestingly, she did not draw upon the ‘symbol of marriage’ repertoire to explain her changed surname, but used the ‘identity theft’ and ‘family affiliation’ themes (see Chapters 5 and 6).

An interviewee’s expectation of impending or eventual marriage did not mean she desired to marry, as was the case for Bala, who married aged 19. Her parents presented her and her sister with the photos of 11 potential husbands and asked them to choose their favourite. Her sister refused and ran away from home, but Bala complied. She said of the situation: ‘I didn’t even ask his name. It was crazy.’ Asked if she expected to marry, she replied:

*Yeah, unfortunately...they [parents] sort of said we could get a degree and then we could marry somebody really nice. But, erm, a lot of turbulent times occurred for Nairobi...so we [African Indians] were all thrown out...I think the marriage would have happened and possibly we could have seen who we wanted to marry. But, it happened so quick that they just got us married to whoever they found, who had the biggest home, the best degree, sort of a thing.*  
[Bala, 49]

Referring to her turbulent teenage years in Kenya, Bala said her stable life was disrupted by being forced to flee to England. The move saw her married earlier than expected – her parents possibly seeking to find her a new sense of stability through a new family. After marrying as a teenager, Bala had unwillingly taken her husband’s surname, and her ‘marital naming talk’ centred on her lack of desire to marry, as well as her reluctance to abide with the wishes of her in-laws and abandon her childhood (discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

### **Marriage as a Sign of Commitment**

Responding to questions about the meaning of marriage, 18 interviewees drew upon the ‘sign of commitment’ repertoire, also discussed in Chapter 5. This particular repertoire was a discourse of intimacy whereby marriage was spoken about as binding a couple together, as well as bringing stability and permanence to their relationship. They spoke about ‘being together’, ‘living life together’ and ‘declaring’

their commitment through a wedding ceremony. Interestingly, women who kept their maiden names in some form post-wedding typically had civil or small-scale religious weddings, unlike those who changed surnames. They also spoke about not liking ‘fuss’ or ‘being the centre of attention’ or ‘wasting money’.

Interviewees using the ‘sign of commitment’ repertoire referred to marriage as a ‘big’ or ‘serious’ commitment that was ‘displayed’ through a wedding ceremony, significantly, in front of other people. Boden (2003) notes in her work on ‘wedding consumption’ that weddings demonstrated to other people that a relationship was now binding and its success was long-lasting. Two interviewees took the symbolism in a different direction by saying that weddings were spaces for couples to demonstrate to each other the enormity of their commitment. In both views, marriage was said to change a relationship for the better and move it from a private space to one that was public. A relationship became ‘official’, ‘recognised’ or ‘formalised’ after a wedding ceremony.

Speaking about the enormity of the commitment, interviewees placed marriage at the top of a relationship hierarchy. In doing so, they drew a contrast between non-married cohabitation, as evident in Maude’s account. Asked for her views on marriage, she drew this distinction:

*...surely you can make a commitment without a piece of paper and I’m sure, I mean that is true, but I just think, I just feel that marriage is a way of people saying that, saying to the world ‘this is the decision I have made, I want to be with this person, I’m serious about it and committed to it’ you know in a way that, that, erm, just living together doesn’t do.* [Maude, 60]

Although she was not opposed to non-married cohabitation, Maude said it was a precursor to marriage – not as an alternative. She spoke about declaring to the ‘world’ that a relationship was serious, and there was a definite belief in her account that married couples could be identified as such, even by strangers. This interviewee was the only one to speak of marriage as a ‘new chapter’, and her change of surname (like her comments about marriage) ‘displayed’ to the public that she had started a new and significant relationship. Her narrative resonates with Noack and Wiik’s (2008) account of marital naming, reported in Chapter 1, who note that shared spousal surnames might signal a key difference between the otherwise overlapping statuses of married and non-married cohabitation.

Older interviewees also made generational references to draw distinctions between married and non-married cohabitation, noting that ‘living together’ was unacceptable for their generation of brides. For instance, Jill said her mother was ‘absolutely shattered’ when Jill moved in with her boyfriend in 1979 because ‘nice girls’ married before doing so. Another generational reference was evident in Hannah’s account. She married, under pressure, aged 23, but left her husband after just one year. The relationship had ‘changed’, she said, after ‘signing that document’. Her subsequent relationships were brief – the longest lasted six years with her children’s father. Asked for her views on marriage, she said:

*Marriage is great if you find the right person... and also it's a matter of, erm, staying as well because my, erm, my mum's mum and dad they were together just through thick and thin in everything they had, erm, five, four children and they went through everything and they just stuck it out. And at the end when granddad died and grandma was left she fell to pieces, her whole world just collapsed because he had gone. I mean they were so strong together. I mean they did their own things and they did things together. They were a team, they were a unit, they were one.* [Hannah, 42]

Unlike her personal story of unreliable and intermittent relationships, Hannah’s parental narrative is one of stability and permanence. She said ‘sticking it out’ was always a positive move; despite not doing so herself. Her nostalgic account resonates strongly with Gillis’ (1996) work on romanticised notions of the family (referred to earlier in this chapter). Hannah clung onto the image of her grandparents’ marriage and wiped away memories of her own marriage – it was the family she ‘lived by’ rather than ‘lived with’, as Gillis writes. Resuming her maiden name after separating, Hannah said: ‘...basically for me it was just erasing my past.’ She also gave her children her maiden name, too, in an attempt to make the family seem more like a ‘proper’ family, as discussed in Chapter 6.

Interestingly, eight of the 18 women using the ‘sign of commitment’ repertoire had chosen to separate or divorce. This shows, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, that women’s experiences of ‘doing marriage’ often differed from their idealised discourses of marriage. These women expected their marriages to succeed and, in talking about their failure, tended to employ a discourse of ‘relationship manager’ (Maushart 2001) – thereby making themselves accountable for their unsuccessful marriages. For example, Gina said she ‘didn’t believe in divorce’, but had to move away from her husband to protect herself and her daughter after he developed schizophrenia. Yet, she delayed divorce, fearing that her daughter might

accuse her of abandoning her father when he was ill. She also spoke of not reverting to her maiden name for the sake of her daughter, as reported in Chapter 6.

Still, the possibility of an intimate relationship ending was considered less likely if a couple was married, according to Alice. Asked for her outlook on marriage, she said:

*I think it [marriage] does make it harder, might make people more willing to have another go, if you know what I mean, more difficult to unravel. I'm jolly glad I didn't get married earlier. Relationships did collapse and I'm glad I didn't have to go through all that torment or expense.* [Alice, 60]

Similarly, Jean said marriage was harder 'to get disentangled from' than a non-married cohabitating relationship. These two statements stand in stark contrast to the 'individualisation thesis' that suggests individuals are self-interested and not duty-bound, making them less likely to stay in unsatisfactory relationships, as discussed in Chapter 1. On the contrary, Alice and Jean implied marriage was good because it was difficult to abandon.

Conversely, a central theme in the 'individualisation thesis' was evident in the account of Flora – that of flexibility and negotiation. Although she still referred to the enduring character of marriage, she said:

*I think it [marriage] is the best available option...as a way of providing a framework that can provide a long-term relationship that's robust enough to, to manage difficulties as opposed to a non-formalised relationship where there may not be the motivation to compromise and negotiate and to see the relationship change over time. Erm, if it's not in a formal relationship, the other options may come into play much more quickly...whereas if you've made an agreement, erm, then you see what's gone wrong with the agreement or how can you re-work the agreement.* [Flora, 57]

Speaking of finding flexibility in the confines of a structured institution, Flora referred to the role of spouses in negotiating a private, contractual agreement. This narrative strongly echoes Burgess and Locke's (1945) claim that marriage is moving from a social institution to a private agreement. Indeed, this is how she spoke of her marriage and her surname 'choice'. Asked how in her late 30s she came to marry, Flora spoke of 'tidying things up', joking that 'of course, there was a huge rush of passion' in her decision to marry. Keeping her maiden name, Flora rationalised this decision by employing discourses of flexibility and autonomy – she indicated that marriage was a contract with negotiable conditions.

Lastly, in considering the ‘sign of commitment’ repertoire in Chapter 5, I noted an absence of ‘romance talk’ in interviewees’ discussions about marital naming. Similarly, while several women drew on the ‘sign of commitment’ repertoire, only Catherine and Erica employed ‘romance talk’ in explaining a couple’s wedding promise. I asked Catherine for her outlook on marriage and she said:

*I still believe in marriage, I would for myself, yes, I think, official declaration for a couple, declaring to friends and society that they, I don’t know, feel in love and hope, hope, to stay together for the rest of their lives. Which obviously you can’t guarantee, but I think the celebrations through marriage of this, erm, I think are still positive. I would do it again.* [Catherine, 52]

Marrying as a university student in the 1970s, Catherine said her actions were ‘a bit left-wing’ and ‘very original’ at the time because she was not pregnant. However, her husband died shortly after they married. Thus, her use of the word ‘hope’ is interesting as it suggests that marriage offers no promise of longevity. She also referred to her ‘left-wing’ attitude when explaining why she hyphenated her surname post-wedding. But as I reported in Chapter 5, Catherine rebuffed the idea of giving her husband her surname despite the couple’s progressive social outlook.

### **Marriage as a Personal Choice**

The concept of ‘choice’ has featured in replies of interviewees and survey respondents throughout my research. Yet, while surname ‘choice’ was advocated by interviewees and survey respondents, not all choices were rated and treated equally in terms of their social desirability. Namely, keeping a maiden name was seen as a less positive choice than surname change. The ‘personal choice’ repertoire was used by 18 interviewees when asked about marriage. It was an individualistic discourse – meaning a person could choose whether or not to marry, who to marry, where to marry and what surname to use. Interviewees also spoke about choosing to marry the ‘right person’, at the ‘right time’ and for the ‘right reasons’. Yet, their narratives also reflected compromises based on situations out of their control. Indeed, nine of those using the ‘personal choice’ repertoire also used the ‘pre-supposed notion’ repertoire, a theme suggestive of an absence of choice.

The ‘personal choice’ repertoire was viewed by interviewees as a discourse of ‘rights’ – individuals had the ‘right’ to choose marriage (or not) and they would also seek to marry the ‘right’ person. Yet, despite stressing the importance of choice,

interviewees tended to imply that marriage was the better choice. They spoke of favouring marriage for themselves and others, despite their comments about personal preferences. Indeed, three women said they ‘believed in marriage’, such as Alice who remarked upon ‘longing’ for her 40-year-old nephew to marry. Similarly, others said that most people would be ‘happier’ being married than unmarried.

Interviewees who used their maiden names typically spoke about an individual’s right to choose marriage, or not. They expressed the view that marriage was not for everyone, as explained by Jill, who said marriage was ‘a wonderful institution’ but one that ‘doesn’t work for everybody’. Similarly, Alice offered this outlook:

*Erm [gasps] well, I think it’s a good thing but not necessarily for everybody. I mean it’s not necessarily necessary [laughs]. Erm, it works for us. I wanted to get married and I’m glad I did. I felt better afterwards.* [Alice, 60]

In this passage, Alice’s remarks resonate with Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (1995:34) work on the nature of love – that ‘anything goes’ in modern societies, rather than the repetition of accepted traditional roles. Indeed, this sentiment was used by Manya (who also used her maiden name) when asked for her views on marriage. She said:

*In, well in the modern world, it is just what works for whom... There is no romance involved, sorry... That is just my personality, that’s my outlook, erm, minimum amount of work required, so it is just my outlook on everything.* [Manya, 32]

Manya spoke of her pragmatic approach to marriage, and apologised for a lack of romance in her narrative. She may have worried about seeming cold or unfeminine in her dismissal of sentimentality. Indeed, in taking responsibility for her surname, which was unchanged, she referred to herself as ‘selfish’, suggesting she was dangerously self-absorbed. Marriage was an arrangement that ‘worked’ for Manya, but might not ‘work’ in all situations. Thus, while presenting a seemingly flexible account of marriage, Manya suggests marriage has a distinct meaning, and that the institution is only open to people whose relationship fits this bill.

The ‘personal choice’ repertoire sits in opposition to the ‘pre-supposed notion’ repertoire, where marriage was construed to be an obligation. And, a class-based difference was noticeable in the women’s use of these discursive themes. This can be demonstrated through the accounts of Flora, who used the ‘personal choice’

repertoire, and Jackie, who did not. Flora married, aged 37, years after finishing university and while working overseas. Asked if she had expected to marry, she said:

*...I mean growing up at the time, it was the first time where there were overtly more choices for women, and erm, if you weren't like an artist or a bohemian in the '40s and '50s or whatever, perhaps you could choose not to be married, but it was the first time options were available to explore relationships I think in a different way.[Flora, 57]*

Flora spoke about marriage as a flexible and private agreement, as discussed in the previous section. Her 'marriage talk' suggested a companionate approach to marriage, which Smart (2007:11) notes is 'always a classed concept'. That is to say, she said her marriage was a partnership, which resulted in her being able to use her maiden name. As with other women who did not change their surnames, she also spoke of a 'whatever works' approach to marriage, echoing the 'anything goes' philosophy of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995:34).

In discussing her life, Flora described herself as 'very peripatetic'. She had spent much of her childhood travelling and at boarding school, and lived an independent life in Africa until marrying. In contrast, Jackie referred to herself as 'provincial'. She had lived in the same town in northern England until moving to London in her 20s. Despite being five years younger than Flora, she said 1970s-wives were the 'property' of their husbands. It was because of her limited choices that Jackie left her husband and resumed using her maiden name. She continued to view marriage as inflexible, saying that she was 'suspicious of a state in which ownership of a woman is thought necessary'. She added that 'better ways of making commitments to a relationship' needed to be explored in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Interviewees also spoke about choosing to marry the 'right person' at the 'right time' and for 'the right reasons'. Women used this type of 'talk' in discussing their first marriages – but those who were separated or divorced mentioned that their faith in marriage might be restored by 'finding the right person'. Yet, these 'perfect match' narratives did not employ standard 'romance talk'. Instead some women spoke about testing out their compatibility with a partner by living with their partner or delaying a marriage proposal in order to become more familiar with their potential spouse.

Choosing the 'right person' (or not) featured heavily in the accounts of women whose husbands were 'found' for them. Six women in my study, from Asian backgrounds, had family-initiated marriages. I asked Suchita, who had recently



moved to London from India, about the process of selecting a spouse and she spoke of her parents' involvement by saying:

*There were some, when I was in college, some of the fellows...we had a chat, we were friends, but we never thought of marrying each other. That was the thing because from childhood, our mother and father, our parents, actually they just implant a seed on us that if you are going to do a love marriage then you won't come back to our home.*  
[Suchita, 33]

Suchita spoke about marrying the 'right person' – and that person was someone who met her parents' expectations as much as her own. In that respect, she needed to make a compromise. Indeed, she said her husband was an educated man with a well-paid job and 'very nice' family background, but was not handsome. She said:

*...but he is not handsome, that is the thing! I have compromised with my parents, since they have chosen him, they have selected him, so they are also having some options, I am having some options so we reached our options together...I have seen six or seven fellows like that. So, ultimately he [husband] was chosen.*  
[Suchita, 33]

Keen to find 'the right person', Suchita also wanted to adhere to her parents' wishes. Indeed, if she did not do so, she faced being ostracised by her parents. Interestingly, Suchita was one of the few women to employ standard 'romance talk' when explaining her journey to marriage. She spoke of meeting her future husband just once in a restaurant 'on a fine morning' and fixing a date for their wedding after deciding they were compatible enough to marry.

In general, most interviewees said they made adjustments, or even sacrifices, to ensure their marriage worked. Indeed, some described marriage as 'work', saying it involved much effort and did not come naturally. Again, this shows a difference between 'marriage in theory' and 'marriage in reality'. Salma spoke about the issue of sacrifice when explaining her choice of spouse. She elected to marry, age 17, one of the suitors her parents selected. Yet, her husband and his family expected her to surrender all contact with her family. Asked for her outlook on marriage, she said:

*I think there are positive sides to it [marriage], I think everyone has a bad day once in a while. Sometimes it can really pull you down marriage, and how your partner sees you or your family and all that. It really gets you down. Whereas they expect you more to like contribute to his side of the family, at the minute, my side of the family comes after, don't really matter.*  
[Salma, 29]

Salma spoke of an expected shift in family allegiance, and it was one that made her uncomfortable. Indeed, she mentioned that she and her husband only ever ‘rowed’ about the frequency with which she could visit her family. She wanted to see them more often, but he did not consider them to be important. She said her husband’s ‘mentality’ (and that of his father and brothers) was that a wife had to ‘forget’ her family when she married. Interestingly, Salma was given an individual surname in accordance with her cultural background, but said using her father’s surname would have meant he was ‘behind me’ – perhaps meaning she had his support and backing.

### **Marriage as Family (Dis-)Affiliation**

Throughout my research, I have referred to the dual purpose of surnames; they mark out individuals and distinguish them from others, but also indicate important social connections. Indeed, the concerns of parents, spouses, in-laws and children regularly featured in women’s descriptions of their maiden names and marital surname ‘choices’. This type of ‘talk’ was, in part, captured in an interpretative repertoire that I labelled ‘family (dis-)affiliation’. Again, families featured strongly when interviewees were asked about marriage. Thus, I refer to the ‘family (dis-)affiliation’ repertoire to explore the narratives of 12 women. The central tenet of this discursive theme is that interviewees sought out marriage in order to please their parents, but also wished to signal the start of a new family unit.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the ‘family (dis-)affiliation’ repertoire drew attention to the role of surnames in signalling the start of a new family unit. And, interviewees spoke in similar ways about marriage. Indeed, the word ‘unit’ was a common utterance – married couples had a shared fate and resources. For example, Amy described marriage as ‘tool for making a family unit’. The idea that a couple become a ‘unit’ or ‘one’ when they married was particularly evident in Hannah’s account. Asked for her views on marriage, she spoke of her grandparents’ marriage:

*And at the end when grandad died and grandma was left she fell to pieces, her whole world just collapsed because he had gone. I mean they were so strong together. I mean they did their own things and they did things together. They were a team. They were a unit, they were one.* [Hannah, 42]

Hannah gave a powerful account of ‘one-ness’. Indeed, her grandparents were ‘so strong together’ that her grandmother ‘collapsed’ when her husband died. Hannah, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, idolised her grandparents’ marriage which was said

to be dutiful and strong. Hannah evoked a consoling nostalgia that Coontz (1992) claims acts as a burden to most modern families. Indeed, Hannah experienced the dissolution of two serious relationships, each time using a change of surname to distance herself from her former-partners.

Most interviewees said they had been influenced by their parents' opinions about marriage, and some were keen to meet parental expectations<sup>87</sup>. While in one case, a respondent wanted to prove them wrong in thinking she would not marry. The extent to which interviewees felt pressured by their parents varied. For example, Jackie spoke of feeling significantly stressed after dating her boyfriend for three years in the 1970s. She was faced with the question: 'Are you actually going to get married or are you two going to split up?' She decided to marry – but when asked to recall the strongest memory of her wedding day, she said: '...we both realised that it was a big mistake...the marriage ended on our wedding day'. Similarly, Amy said she 'sort of felt a bit press-ganged' into getting married. She and her boyfriend planned to marry overseas, but decided against it upon returning to the UK. Yet, Amy said, as an 'only daughter' she felt obliged to go ahead with the wedding for her mother's sake<sup>88</sup>.

Six women, all from Asian backgrounds, had parentally-initiated marriages. And clearly, their parents played a decisive role in finding them a spouse. Indeed, I mentioned earlier in this chapter that Salma said 'I knew it [marriage] was coming', adding that her Bangladeshi parents prioritised the marriages of their daughters. Similarly, Manya remarked that 'it was kind of assumed' that 'everyone' in India married – especially women. Asked what she thought about this, she said:

*I really didn't have that many expectations...although my mother was getting worried. I was like 'don't worry, whoever is going to marry me is going to come to this house and take me away, so don't worry' and quite didn't really mean it. But it literally happened like that.*

[Manya, 32]

Manya spoke of her parents' eagerness for her to marry, saying her parents had 'struggled to get me married' and 'worried' that she would remain single. She had

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<sup>87</sup> Parental influence was evoked when women talked about one's outlook on marriage and decision to marry. The 'happy', 'secure' and 'successful' character of one's parents' marriage was said to be a massive influence on electing to marry, with some women saying it was significant that their parents had not divorced or had a 'difficult' marriage.

<sup>88</sup> Most interviewees were asked to compare their wedding to that of their mother's. Interestingly, only two out of 17 women said their wedding was similar to their mother's wedding. They either said their mother's day was simple and family-focused, whereas their own was glitzy and friend-orientated. Or, their mother's wedding was 'proper' (i.e. white wedding in a church) and/or a religious, grand affair, whereas their own was a rushed civil ceremony.

married, aged 26, and remarked upon this being ‘very, very late’ according to Indian tradition. Manya also said her mother and mother-in-law ‘bullied’ the couple into marrying, and that she didn’t even have enough time to pack her belongings before leaving for England. Her mother-in-law featured again in her account of marital naming, reported in Chapter 6. Manya implied that her unchanged surname defied her mother-in-law’s expectation of new belonging and signalled an unwillingness to fully join her new family.

The pressure exerted on women by other parents was less strong, but interviewees still spoke about feeling the need to appease their parents by marrying, as evident in Grace’s account. Asked for her opinions on marriage, she said:

*I wanted, in part, to sort of keep my parents happy, erm, and you know getting married, erm, I know that my parents, you know, in a way are quite traditional, and they’re pleased that we’re married now we’ve got a child. Well, we were married before we had the child, but they’re pleased that we did things that way round...they would have wanted to have had the wedding before they had a grandchild, erm, and so, I sort of felt like it would be nice to sort of respect that, erm, they didn’t put any pressure on us but I think it’s something that I felt you know would make my mum and dad, sort of, particularly my mum, happy.* [Grace, 33]

Grace’s parents were significant factors in her decision to marry, and in deciding when she should have children. She also spoke about returning to her parental hometown from London to marry, and that the ‘most special thing’ about her wedding was reading out her personally penned vows in front of close family and friends. Indeed, most often, interviewees brought their families into play when recalling her strongest wedding memories. They spoke about who attended, who was ill and who said what to whom, for instance<sup>89</sup>. The narratives featuring in this section resonate with Smart and Shipman’s (2004) critique of the ‘individualisation thesis’. They argue that marrying might not be ‘a simple “free choice” taken independently’. Instead, people might be attentive to the ‘wishes and desires’ of parents and other family members (p.495). Such behaviour, they observe, is far removed from the central doctrine of the ‘individualisation thesis’ whereby people seek marriage to ‘fulfil a psychological and emotional need’ or ‘gap in the psyche of the single person (p.497).’ Instead, special efforts are often made to fulfil the expectations of a parent.

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<sup>89</sup> However, the involvement of family was not always positive. Some interviewees said their wedding day was ‘dominated’ or ‘hijacked’ by family members (namely a mother or mother-in-law), and that they had limited choice about the day’s proceedings. Alternatively, others anticipated such ‘hijacking’ and chose a venue away from their hometown, or even excluded parents from the day in one case.

## Marriage as Child-Centred

In discussing their negotiations with surname change and when talking about their maiden names, several interviewees spoke about parenthood. Some women said they changed their surnames in anticipation of becoming mothers, whereas women with unchanged surnames spoke of their privileged gestational status as mothers, thus sharing a surname with their child was unnecessary. Again, 13 women used the ‘child-centred’ repertoire when asked about marriage. The central tenet of this repertoire is that marriage is a way of ‘doing’ morality, and surnames are one method of ‘displaying’ proper behaviour. Marriage was said to be better, or even necessary, for couples with children.

In using this repertoire, marriage and motherhood were spoken about simultaneously. That is to say, women spoke about the need to marry and be in a ‘proper’ relationship in order to have children. The interviewees said it was important, or even necessary, for couples to show ‘extra commitment’ or have ‘a written agreement’ if they had children. For instance, Hannah had said to herself: ‘...if I want children, I have to be married.’ Similarly, Maude spoke about wanting to become a mother, and made this generational comment when asked for her views on marriage:

*...for my generation, it goes along with having children. So, it's a bit like, you know, when you're little you may play with dolls and you think I want to be a mother but then, then for a while you think the last thing in the world you want to do is have a child [laughs]. And then I suppose the clock ticks and you think 'oh, maybe I better get on with it'.* [Maude, 60]

Maude was one of several interviewees who spoke of motherhood as the most significant change they encountered as wives, more so than becoming a wife – a change that was less monumental. A similar point was made in Chapter 6 in which some interviewees said it was unnecessary for couples to use the same surname if they were without children. They spoke of the ‘birth’ of a couple beginning with the birth of a child rather than as a result of marriage, or even cohabitation. Maude reasoned that it was because of her future child that she took her husband’s surname. Yet, she sought to keep her maiden name ‘alive’ by giving this name to her son as his first name.

Several interviewees made generational references when talking about marriage and motherhood. Isabel was one such interviewee who, in her 60s, said of her generation: ‘You didn’t have children out of wedlock in those days...’ Her

comment captures the periodic social panics regarding an unwed mother – which is especially pertinent in the case of Stella, an interviewee in her 70s. She married in the 1950s because she was already pregnant. Asked if she had a period of engagement prior to marriage, she said:

*No, no, well, I'll tell you, I was pregnant...and I'd never had an affair before Peter, you know, the chap I was engaged to, and, erm, you know I fell head over heels in love [with John] and then we did have this affair and I became pregnant. And then we married. But of course it was more difficult then, erm, than it is now because attitudes differed and it was a bit hard on me because I'd you know had a 98 per cent blameless life until that time [slight laugh].* [Stella, 70]

Although Stella was 'in love' with the child's father, she would not have married so quickly in different circumstances. Indeed, when asked for her views on marriage, she it 'it's a good thing, but really only because of children'. Stella added that she had 'no religious beliefs', but thought marriage was 'good for children', thereby employing a discourse of 'good' parenting, as discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to surname change.

Continuing with the theme of 'good' parenting, other interviewees spoke of the need for stability when raising children. They again drew a distinction between married and non-married cohabitation, and said the former arrangement was their preferred choice for couples with children. This was demonstrated by Delyth, who, was asked for her views on marriage. She replied:

*And, again, it's coming from the children's point of view. Well, it's not just the children's point of view, but you are probably not surprised that I'm first and foremost looking at it from that point of view because of the, at least, perceived stability it may give, the perceived commitment. I'm not saying it does make for a greater commitment because horses for courses and contexts and all the rest of it.* [Delyth, 58]

In her narrative, Delyth (an ex-teacher) appeared most concerned with the well-being of children in a relationship. This, she remarked was 'not surprising' because she was an ex-teacher. But, perhaps this was in a bid to avert criticism for making a controversial statement. Indeed, she seemed aware that her comment might appear too prescriptive, so added that what was suitable for one person might not be suitable for another. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995) work is instructive here, as they claim that nostalgia for permanence and stability within relationships results in a particular significance being given to children.

In addition, Finch's (2007) concept of 'display' is useful in analysing Delyth's narrative. This is because she says marriage gives the 'perception' of stability and commitment – thereby suggesting being married is just for show. She also speaks of the need for stability, but says marriage is unstable. Its outcome is not guaranteed. Delyth seemed aware of the rhetoric of choice, noting that people were different in order to show that she was not insensitive to the importance of individuality. A similar argument, about the well-being of children, was made by Isabel when she was asked about marriage:

*I think it [marriage] is very important for bringing up children, having two parents. I know people say it doesn't make any difference and may be in some cases it doesn't, but if it means so little why not get a piece of paper?* [Isabel, 64]

Isabel negotiated her way through this contradiction by expressing the view that marriage was both meaningless and important, as did Alice whose account I discussed earlier in the chapter. Interestingly, Isabel added that she was 'a fine one to talk' as she divorced while her children were young, which highlights the split in women's comments about marriage between 'in theory' and 'in reality'. Maude made the same 'special but superficial' argument, while also being aware of rhetoric on choice:

*...when I say I think people should get married when they get children, I don't mean that I feel, erm, I mean it's up to people what they do as long as they look after the children basically, you know, but, I mean, I feel myself that although, I mean, I wanted to get married...I wouldn't have wanted to have a child without marriage.* [Maude, 60]

This narrative from Maude is one of child welfare and she presents a clear moral absolute – stating that she would not have mothered without first being married. She reasoned that married relationships, unlike non-married cohabitation, were demonstrative of an integral commitment and gave children extra security. Similarly, Suchita spoke about non-married cohabitation and children, yet she made a slightly different point. She remarked upon 'living together' gaining popularity in her home country of India, and said she was in favour of this arrangement as a precursor to marriage. Yet, she spoke of a potential problem if a 'mistake' was made regarding children:

*...it [non-married cohabitation] has some bad effects if a child is born by mistake. So, what will be her or his children's status? Either he or she will be know as from my mother's side or from my father's side*

*because living together doesn't mean that he or she is his father or she is his mother. So, that is another bad effect in the society.*

[Suchita, 33]

The social status of children, Suchita said, was affected by their parents' relationship status. That is to say, children born to non-married parents were the product of an error, and their status was either improper or unknown. Her comment about not knowing if a child was 'from my mother's side or from my father's side' recalls much on my discussion in Chapter 4, whereby the project of 'family' was found to pivot around idealised notions of 'the' family and so-called legitimate bloodlines. Indeed, Suchita said her husband's surname 'Datta' was passed to their daughter, which meant the child was 'also from the Datta family'. And, she said that her maiden name had 'lost its existence' and was 'abolished totally' after her wedding.

### **Marriage as a Protective Force**

This final repertoire deals with the issue of legal protections offered to people willing and able to marry. This 'talk' is captured in a repertoire labelled 'protective force' and was used by 11 women. Significantly, ten of these women used their maiden name, or had delayed taking their husbands' surnames. This is interesting because, in using the 'protective force' repertoire, women emphasised that they had married for 'practical' reasons. I argued in Chapters 5 and 6 that women with unchanged surnames, in some instances, relied on discourses of normative masculinity when explaining their surname 'choice'. Again, they spoke about protecting their own interests when asked about marriage, but did not entirely dismiss the importance of spousal connections.

Women who made comments aligned with the 'protective force' theme spoke of the legal protections offered to individuals who were married. They tended to refer to the benefits of marriage for individuals in their application of the repertoire, but Audrey incorporated a more generalist and conservative tone when using the theme. Asked for her views on marriage, she said:

*I mean I have strong views on marriage that, you know, marriage is for life, that marriage is important, that erm, that it's what actually, you know, backs up sort of the fabric of society. And, the reason we have such awful problems is that we've gone too, we don't revere marriage. Erm, you know, so look at the tax situation, you know, all those things.*

[Audrey, 59]



The antidote to society's 'awful problems' was marriage, as Audrey claimed it protected society and morality. Indeed, she spent much of her interview talking about the hard work she had invested in her marriage balancing the needs of her demanding husband while he ignored her needs. Asked if her views on marriage reflected the realities of her marriage rather than a utopian version, she said: 'Maybe from my side'. Her comment about society not 'revering' marriage could have been directed at her husband. After all, he had referred to their marriage licence as a 'dog licence' on numerous occasions.

Aside from talking about society, other women said marriage was the safest, most intimate relationship for couples because it offered legal protections, as I explain. For instance, Jackie, who had been separated from her husband 26 years, deliberately remained so rather than divorcing, because it protected her from being 'quickly coerced' into marrying again. She said being separated gave her 'breathing space' and was a 'safety buffer'. A different legal allowance was mentioned by Erica, an American, whose second husband was British-Australian. She said the couple 'may have eventually' married, but instead needed to marry 'quite early' within the relationship to obtain a residency visa. She referred to liking a committed relationship, and marriage was the 'easiest' arrangement 'from a legal point of view'.

A further 'protection' (or method of determining legal guardianship) was mentioned by Alice who married in her 40s after being admitted into hospital for an operation following the diagnosis of breast cancer. Not being able to list her partner as her next-of-kin 'brought home' to her the importance of marriage and the couple married shortly after. Gale also mentioned this issue. She said her second marriage stemmed from her anxiety that her partner (who was in his 50s) might die when working overseas. Asked why she married, she replied:

*...I thought 'hum, Steve's going off [to work] for quite a long time, we are both older, he could die out there, or he could go, and if anything happens, then obviously you have got the house, you've got the two children'. It is just more complicated as you get older, so, it was quite a pragmatic decision really.* [Gale, 54]

Although Gale was unenthusiastic about marrying for a second time, she was encouraged to do so by the legal protections that it offered for her and her children. Indeed, the idea that marriage is 'just a piece of paper' was rebuffed in the context of next-of-kin protections. Those using the 'protective force' repertoire referred to non-married partnerships as legally less safe, and also less significant, than married

relationships, regardless of how much couples got along or how long their relationship had lasted.

Next-of-kin protections were also mentioned by Maude by drawing on a case reported in the media. Asked for her views on marriage, she spoke about the death of a soldier, whose girlfriend, with whom he had children, had no automatic right to his pension:

*I think it's particularly difficult for women, that's an awful thing to say, but it is, it is particularly difficult because I mean if you're, you're idealistic and you're in love and, erm, and you think 'of course we don't need a piece of paper' but then actually she [the soldier's girlfriend] did, didn't she [laughs]? She needed that piece of paper for security in the end. Ok, being in the army is a bit of a special case, but you know, you can die crossing a road couldn't you?[Maude, 60]*

In this statement, Maude made a gendered claim in saying widowhood was more difficult for women than men – perhaps referring to women's difficulties in accumulating pensions. She also implied that women were more likely to be persuaded by romance than men, thus less likely to consider the practical side of a relationship. She recognised that marriage could be a tedious bureaucratic procedure, unlike the excitement offered by love. But, she rejected the idea that marriage was a superficial arrangement. She made reference to the temporary nature of a relationship, and implied that couples should be prepared for the worst by defending their relationship with a legal protection – i.e. marriage.

Specific references to financial protections were more obvious in Jill's account. She spoke of moving in with her now-husband in the late 1970s, rather than marrying, because the tax rules for married women were unfair. She said this was 'one objection in principle' against marriage. But, the couple married 13 years later, after her partner lost his job and needed to join Jill's pension scheme. She said this was 'a good practical reason' for getting married. Similarly, Flora spoke about the benefits of marriage from a financial perspective, when she said:

*I think from the tidying [up] part, it's also the financial things that if you are two quite separate individuals, but in a relationship, erm, you have to make lots of small decisions about finance whereas if you have made a commitment to share things then you don't have to sort of worry about whether the money has come from this account or that account, erm, shared housing or expenses because it's, in the end, it's from one or the other, it doesn't really matter. [Flora, 57]*

Flora explained said her marriage, which she entered aged 37, resulted from a desire to ‘tidy things up’ and because it was ‘most secure-type of relationship’. She added that being married made things socially and legally easier for the couples, as she and her husband were working in Egypt at the time of their wedding. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Flora used a discourse of ‘companionate marriage’ and talked about a shared economic burden for both partners in the aforementioned passage. Her account focused on the sharing of spousal roles, and she spoke about married partners each being equally responsible for bringing something tangible and quantifiable to their marriage.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter focused on ‘marriage talk’ in an attempt to better understand women’s negotiations with the customary call to change surnames. Survey respondents were found to largely endorse the practice of marriage. Indeed, three quarters of this group indicated that marriage was an important custom, and only one in five said the custom of marriage needed to be changed. In respect to marital naming, this could offer an explanation as to why the majority of women ‘display’ their married status by changing names – because for them marriage is highly valued and changing surnames is perceived as a pro-marriage sentiment. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 5, women who take their husbands’ surnames were reported to be more committed to their marriages, along with being more proud of – and more in love with – their husbands compared to women who retained their maiden names. Wives who take their husbands’ surnames may be better invested in the complimentary meanings of their surname decision.

Additionally, interviewees mostly spoke in favour of marriage, despite some women perceiving the practice as an inflexible form of social control which involved some sacrifices (as well as an unsuccessful outcome for some women) – in the same way that surname change was spoken about in Chapter 5. A number of interviewees did, however, focus on the concept of ‘choice’ and the importance of selecting the ‘right’ spouse. But, such choice was ‘contextual’ and ‘relational’ (Smart and Shipman 2004:493). That is to say, women made choices about marriage (and motherhood) within a social frame of reference that recognised, rather than dismissed, the importance of parental expectations. Moreover, marriage was contrasted with non-married cohabitation, with the latter relationship being described as less indicative of a serious intimate commitment. As Noack and Wiik (2008)

observed, a shared spousal surname might signal a key difference between these otherwise overlapping statuses.

The six repertoires discussed in this chapter can be considered standard ‘talk’ with regards to marriage. For instance, interviewees predominantly spoke about marriage as a socially recognised practice offering the possibility of a committed and lasting bond between partners. And, aside from discourses of spousal intimacy, the role of a wife’s parents and her role in being a ‘good’ parent also featured in women’s accounts of marriage. These, of course, are conventional ways of speaking about marriage that most likely appear in everyday imagery related to heterosexual relationships. But, such themes also feature in same-sex descriptions of civil partnerships (Shipman and Smart 2007). The important aspect of such ‘talk’ for my study is the ways in which it mirrored women’s narratives of marital naming – which was also spoken about in terms of ‘displaying’ commitment and procreation. However, as demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, such ideas were problematised by issues of gender and power.

The recurrent themes discussed in this chapter show marriage, and marital naming, to be spoken about through a set of similarly defined meanings. Yet, that being said, not all women made use of the same interpretative repertoires. And, in some cases, interviewees gave contrasting, and even paradoxical, accounts of marriage. Taken as a group, the women in my study spoke about marriage in these ways: it was a public practice done for personal reward; it was a guarantee for life with no assurances of success; it was a personal choice requiring participation; it was a loving display of pragmatism; it was a deep relationship on the surface; and it was a rigid association offering flexibility. Moreover, at various points in their interviews, women spoke about ways that drew a clear difference between notions of ‘marriage in theory’ and ‘marriage in reality’.

Despite identifying six repertoires of marriage, it was possible to notice that other themes were missing or silent. In particular, interviewees did not explicitly mention heterosexuality, although it was implicit in references to a two-parent model of family life, for example. In addition, other potentially contentious issues were absent, such as references to monogamy, spousal hierarchy and the division of labour within a household. Moreover, aside from these more complex repertoires, references to love and romance were rarely expressed. And, marriage was rarely spoken about as a ‘next step’ or progression in a relationship. Yet, as Smart (2007) notes in writing about love, just because interviewees might not refer to ‘love’ using conventional

terms, this does not necessarily imply that such an emotion is missing from their lives. Overall, such themes may have been missing because they were perceived as compulsory aspects of marriage or because of retrospective rationalisation – interviewees were far removed from their weddings or marriages through age or divorce. Or perhaps it was simply down to issues of privacy, as noted in Chapter 3.

Significantly, the repertoires employed by interviewees mirrored some of those that they also used when talking about marital naming. However, a woman's use of a particular repertoire was mediated through certain personal characteristics and experiences. For instance, some interviewees said it was inevitable that women from their generation and/or cultural background would marry. And, as discussed in Chapter 6, a woman's opportunity to participate in education and employment affected the life choices that she was able to make. Social class norms and cultural definitions of marriage were also said to impact on a woman's ability to make choices about entering marriage (or not) and selecting a suitable husband. Most importantly, the ways in which a woman interpreted marriage was closely tied to her reactions with the customary call to change surnames once married.

The ways in which women who retained their surnames spoke about marriage is helpful when analysing their surname 'choice'. Typically, but not exclusively, women with unchanged surnames did not expect to marry and distanced themselves from romantic notions of marriage. They were keen to avoid entering the feminine space of 'wedding consumption', and tended to have civil or small-scale religious weddings. And some, on their wedding days, deviated from the norm by being older brides. Women with unchanged surnames also spoke of taking a pragmatic approach to marriage. Indeed, one interviewee apologised for a lack of romance in her account, while another spoke of marrying to 'tidy things up' and joked that 'of course' her decision to marry involved a 'huge rush of passion'. Indeed, almost exclusively, women who kept their maiden names used the 'protective force' repertoire, which emphasised their perceived autonomy within marriage and a contractual arrangement. Women emphasised marrying for 'practical' reasons, thereby again drawing on notions of normative masculinity to rationalise their surname 'choice'. But they did not dismiss the importance of spousal and familial connections in telling their marriage and marital naming stories.

## Chapter 8

### Re-Framing Naming

My research has attempted to facilitate a better understanding of the neglected topic of marital naming within the fields of sociology and gender studies. I analysed the nuanced naming stories of 30 women and conveyed the opinions of nearly 500 people who lived in the women's communities. I wondered how they made sense of the customary call for married women to change surnames. How did they interpret, interact with, or contest the practice? My study has provided insight into the multiple and varied ways of seeing and doing marital naming. It represents a new way of looking at the subject of marital naming by drawing on a wide body of literature on family practices and personal relationships. A consideration of the aforesaid academic work, missing from previous studies, opens up the particularly rich and intricate ways in which marital naming is understood and experienced. This chapter, which is split into three parts, reflects on what I hope can be learned from my research. I firstly return to my original 'independent/dependent' paradox, secondly I revisit the central concepts of gender, normativity, identity, relationships, choice and performativity identified in Chapter 1, and thirdly I consider what my research has to offer wider sociological understandings of marriage and identity.

In making the transition to being wives, or moving to live in England as a wife, the women in my study were all subject to the customary call to replace their maiden names with their husbands' surnames. Women interpreted this call in different ways and responded on the basis of their social positions (for example, being a 1950s bride, a 'mature' bride or a feminist bride). The replies of survey respondents demonstrated that surname choices (which are found to be quite limited for women) are not perceived equally. Wives who retain their maiden names were reported by the majority to be less committed to their marriages, along with being less proud of, as well as less in love with, their husbands compared to women who took their husbands' surnames. Most respondents said their surname preference for married couples was for wives to take their husbands' surnames – whereas other options such as husbands taking their wives' surnames and the creation of entirely new surnames were not well supported. Two-thirds of respondents said surname change by married women was expected, and about one in five said the practice was sexist and out-of-date. And, few respondents viewed the practice of surname change as restrictive for married women.

## **Re-Thinking the Paradox**

In this section, I return to my original ‘independent/dependent’ paradox and attempt to offer a resolution on the basis of my research findings. And, in doing so, I re-situate my work within a wide body of sociological thinking on families. I also return, broadly, to the interpretative repertoires that I identified in the women’s marital naming narratives, and comment how these relate to the multiple and contradictory meanings of marriage.

### *A perplexing paradox*

I introduced my research on marital naming through a paradox labelled ‘independent/dependent’. That is, I advanced a topic that seemed perplexing: married women are far more independent than ever before (as evidenced through increased levels of employment, earnings and education, for example), but their surnames continue to be husband-dependent. I pointed out that women are now better educated than in previous generations; that they marry and mother at a later age, if at all; and that they are generally better employed. And, yet I was puzzled at why married women continued to take their husbands’ surnames considering their advances in society. I framed my paradox within a set of sociological debates about stability and change, and also autonomy and connectedness, drawing on Kline et al’s (1996) work of marital naming. I introduced two theses attempting to explain social change and social continuity – namely the ‘individualisation thesis’ and the ‘connectedness thesis’.

Bearing in mind these two theses, I attempted to explore the independent/dependent paradox and expose its underlying meanings in relation to marital naming. I did not intend to advocate one surname ‘choice’; I explored how marital naming was interpreted by interviewees and understood by survey respondents. I was concerned that the continuation of surname change by married women appeared at odds with the ‘individualisation thesis’ that suggests people are free from family ties and connections. Instead, it seemed that women were either embracing, or constrained by, tradition. It seemed more likely, as claimed by Jamieson (1998; 1999), Ribbens McCarthy et al (2002), Carling et al (2002) with regards to motherhood, that married women remained duty-bound to conform to surname change as part of their perceived responsibilities as wives.

In response to the proposed independent/dependent paradox, I suggest that women changed surnames so that other elements of their lives maintained a sense of

stability and intimacy. That is, surname change is ‘done’ to ‘display’ that a woman’s marital commitment is unwavering, her devotion to her children and husband is secure and to continue a tradition that has long been established as ‘women’s work’. In doing so, women also preserve a gender hierarchy that affords married women little claim over their own names. Women who keep their maiden names also desire stability. But, in doing so, these women are perceived to lack care and connectedness. This is not the case in reality – both methods of naming are ultimately about seeking out connections and achieving a sense of belonging to people, places and/or professions.

In negotiating the call to change surnames, interviewees were not offered ‘real’ or active choice in the surname stakes. Instead, they spoke about facing structural constraints – which meant changing surnames was largely inevitable, unavoidable or done for them – unless they had a good enough excuse (such as ‘work’ or ‘divorce’). Women also expressed feelings of disempowerment with regards to surname succession. But, despite an absence of ‘real’ choice, a sense of agency seemed to be gained (by women who changed surnames) in responding to the status quo and through creating a new family through a shared name. Their agency was their investment in the norms of naming – despite some of these women pointing to the potential failings of this practice. Even though these women ‘chose’ to change surnames, they did not necessarily elect to follow other ‘traditional’ expectations relevant to their cultural/religious backgrounds, which involved giving their children non-customary first names in some cases.

In presenting the ‘change/stability’ paradox, my work resonates with much sociological thinking on families. Crow (2005b), writing on this subject, summarises a number of paradoxes in other academic work: lone mothers being ‘better off poorer’ (Graham 1987); domestic technology meaning ‘more work for mother’ (Cowan 1983); ‘backward toward the postmodern family’ (Stacey 1996); ‘being at home with a house full of strangers’ (Gillis 1996); and the ‘the strength of weak family ties’ (Granovetter 1973). Crow also makes two other instructive points. He re-states Granovetter’s observation that ‘paradoxes are an antidote to theories which explain everything all too neatly’ (p.7). And, he draws on Castells’ (2001) claim that there is ‘no shortage’ of paradoxes in today’s world.



### *Multiple meanings*

Granovetter's idea that paradoxes allow for confusion is helpful when considering marital naming. This is because no single understanding of surname change, or its alternatives, was put forward by interviewees. Instead, their accounts incorporated themes of both stability and change, along with autonomy and connectedness. Kline et al (1996), in their study of marital naming, observe that spousal relationships involve managing the need for both autonomy and connectedness. They note that these two needs are situated at opposite ends of the spectrum of relationships, but that married couples negotiate the interplay of freedom and connectedness. They also point out that married couples behave in both conventionally appropriate ways, but also in unique and distinct fashions, too.

Moreover, marriage itself was also presented by interviewees as having multiple and paradoxical meanings. Interviewees, as a group, also spoke about marriage in these ways: it was a public practice done for personal reward; it was a guarantee for life with no assurances of success; it was a personal choice requiring participation; it was a loving display of pragmatism; it was a deep relationship on the surface; and it was a rigid association offering flexibility.

The paradoxical nature of marriage is noted by other authors. For instance, Cott (2004:33) argues that marriage is 'unique' in legal terms because it comprises a contract *and* a status – two concepts that are legally distinct and 'almost opposite'. Amato (2004:962), writing about the tension between institutional and individual views of marriage, remarks that marriage is intended to 'promote both institutional and personal goals'. He writes:

*On the one hand, people value the freedom to leave unhappy unions, correct earlier mistakes, and find greater happiness in new partners. On the other hand, people are concerned about social stability, tradition, and the overall impact of high levels of marital instability on the well-being of children. (p.962)*

These inconsistent messages about marriage resonate with the ideas of post-structuralist theorists such as Butler (1990), Sedgwick (1991), Stoler (1995) and Foucault (1981). These authors highlight the 'fragility' or 'leakiness' of heterosexuality and claim that marriage is instrumental in concealing its cracks. With this in mind, marriage can be said to function not in spite, of but because of, its contradictions – and is sustained through its own discrepancies. Moreover, in considering ritual practices more broadly, McGrath (2004:95) explains that repeating

the same behaviour can produce much ‘joy and satisfaction’, but can also lead to ‘anxiety and frustration’ related to the social pressure of needing to fulfil a ‘predetermined script’.

In using post-structuralism as a tool, one can become sensitive to the multiple meanings of marital naming since this approach allows for the possibility of shared, but also changing, understandings of particular actions. This idea of multiple and conflicting meanings can be found in Billig et al’s (1988) concept of ‘ideological dilemmas’. These authors highlight the possibility of people using competing arguments to make sense of their lives. My interviewees faced the conflicting values of stability/change and autonomy/connectedness when asked to change their surnames. Some women reconciled this dilemma by minimising their need for autonomy (for example, in talking about joining the husband’s family) and referring to change in relation to their new marital role (for example, planning for motherhood). Thus, despite a woman’s choice appearing paradoxical to me, it often to her made perfect sense in the context of her life.

The repertoires of marital naming used by interviewees emphasised the complexities of everyday life. Yet, in ordinary life (unlike an interview situation) people are not asked to recognise or resolve such conflicts. But, when prompted to talk, women provided arguments related to the themes of stability/change and autonomy/connectedness when talking about their names. However, while these debates rage, references to stability/connectedness can be considered the ‘master’ narrative (Lyotard 1984), while references to autonomy/change featured as a ‘counter’ narrative. That is, ‘talk’ about stability/connectedness was the dominant discourse in marital naming. And interviewees who changed surnames positioned their narratives against a backdrop of social expectations, which meant their claims about adhering to social obligations and regulations did not need to be defended or legitimised. However, in contrast, interviewees who kept their maiden names were more likely to use a counter-narrative (although not exclusively) which was more familiar with feminism when explaining their surname decision.

### **Re-Framing the Issues**

I introduced my research by introducing six concepts that have been central to my thesis. I return to these issues in the light of my findings – not to present a ‘grand narrative’ of naming – but to point to patterns, examples and ideas that will be useful

(especially to feminist researchers) in considering the use and symbolic meaning of the underexplored topic of marital naming.

### *Naming and gender*

My research, at a basic level, confirms my original standpoint that naming works differently for men and women. However, in their accounts, interviewees spent time removing gender considerations from their surname ‘choice’ rather than presenting it as a female-specific or male-biased construct. This was particularly noticeable, as reported in Chapters 4 and 5, in cases whereby interviewees said that ‘people’ (rather than ‘women’) changed surnames after they married. This is a worrying outcome, from a feminist perspective, as it serves to trivialise and de-politicise the custom of surname change. Moreover, by omitting gender concerns, it becomes less easy to criticise the practice as the differentiation that exists between men and women is neglected. And, more broadly, such an omission ignores the fact that upholding customary norms is also gendered, for example, as women tend to be responsible for organising family gatherings and recording momentous family occasions through photographs (di Leonardo 1987; Otnes and Pleck 2003).

The concept of ‘tradition’ featured heavily in the interviewees’ accounts as the customary call to change surnames post-wedding has long been the job of women. It is because of ideas about ‘tradition’ that the practice was normalised and reinforced as something only women do. The result is that surname change becomes ‘feminised’ and of little concern to men. Throughout my research, there was no evidence of a ‘mutual discourse’ (Giddens 1992) between spouses in women’s accounts. Rather, because marital naming was dealt with and ‘done’ only by women, some interviewees found men’s potential involvement laughable. It is unlikely that the segregation existing within naming will end if surname change by women is considered the default position. But, perhaps the appropriation of surname change by same-sex couples will enable naming to be viewed differently.

The interviewees placed considerable emphasis on ‘tradition’ – or the pre-supposed idea that married women change surnames. But another striking finding was the absence of ‘romance talk’. Because of this exception, and because women who changed surnames tried to downplay the importance of the practice, I proposed that surname change forms part of a ‘coping economy’ (Peterson 2008). This means that changing surnames is simply about women ‘getting on’ and ‘getting by’ in a society that does not enable women to view their surnames as rightfully their own.

Yet, while surname change might seem like an altruistic act, done out of women's concern for others, those who took their husbands' surnames were invested in the complementary meanings of their surname decision.

Issues of power and control, as I predicted, also featured in the women's accounts. The discourse of surname change was one of social control, and women said they felt disempowered from naming succession as this was construed to be a male-only entitlement. Additionally, keeping one's maiden name was one way to 'display' power which differed from men's access to power seen as a 'real' rather than performed attribute (I return to this topic later in this chapter). Moreover, as surname change is always done by women, it is associated with their status and roles as wives and mothers. Indeed, the idea of a man changing his surname was perceived as a joke, reinforcing my claim that surname change by women is not taken seriously. This reinforces my argument that naming is 'women's work' – which Delphy and Leonard (1994) note is undervalued simply *because* it is done by women.

Women who retained their maiden names subverted or neutralised the power structure of names. But, these interviewees said they did not have the same prerogative as men to keep their surnames. Instead, they were constantly accountable for their surname 'choice'. It is on the basis of this reality that naming can be said to form part of a bigger picture of gender inequality. Indeed, Jamieson (1999:491) argues when critiquing Giddens' idea of 'the pure relationship' that: 'Empirically, intimacy and inequality continue to coexist in many personal lives. Men and women routinely both invoke gender stereotypes or turn a convenient blind eye to gendering processes when making sense of themselves as lovers, partners, mothers, fathers or friends...the creative energies of many social actors are still engaged in coping with or actively sustaining old inequalities rather than transforming them.' Naming was not spoken about as a mutual spousal decision, but a decision resting with women that was limited by other gendered norms and practices, such as those related to nurturing and care-giving.

### ***Naming and normativity***

During my research, various people have asked me to suggest a 'better' method of naming than that which currently exists. Their motive was to have me admit that the present system is not perfect, but it's the best available solution. Their inability to imagine any alternative naming practices echoes Ingraham's (1999:164) work on

wedding culture. She writes: ‘Imagine, if you can, what American culture would be like without romance or the heterosexual imagery. If we give up the illusions they create or foster, we give up the state of affairs for which we needed illusions. What would take their place?’ What would marital naming look like if it was not based on gender differentiation? It was also said to me by some participants that if married men changed their surnames, naming would be ‘female-privileged’. However, the ‘male-privilege’ of the current systems (i.e. father- and husband-given surnames) tends not to be seen as such because it is ‘normal’ and constant.

The improbability of the development of new forms of marital naming was reinforced by interviewees who used surname hyphenation as an ‘extreme case formulation’ (Pomerantz 1986) to argue that any naming system but the norm would be ridiculous. It was accepted that people would have only one surname, thus normative naming was reinforced as manageable and rational. Additionally, survey respondents were, in the majority of cases, highly unsupportive of non-normative forms of naming, such as situational surname use by women, hyphenated surnames, blended surnames, newly-created surnames, surname change by husbands; and also the sharing of surnames between unmarried couples and same-sex couples. This suggests that men and women are ‘victims’ of ‘naming imperialism’ – meaning that the current system of naming is thought to be so pervasive that it is natural and universal.

As the norms of marriage are well known, it is noticeable when parts are missing or changed, as Otnes and Pleck (2003) observed in their study of lavish weddings. Some feminist couples in their study dealt with ‘old patriarchal symbols and rituals’ by giving them new, more egalitarian meanings – such as a white dress signifying a new life rather than purity and virginity (p.259). Yet, most often, feminist couples discarded old symbols and rituals from their weddings and expected guests to recognise such omissions as ‘political statements’ (p.260). Yet, as observed in my study, politics can be a tricky issue when dealing with issues relating to families. Indeed, Coltrane (1998) has argued that issues of women’s rights tend to get sidelined in debates about ‘family values’.

It is difficult to report on changes to the status or meaning of surname change because my study was not longitudinal. However, my research does show that the practice of surname change was taken for granted by participants. Indeed, two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that the practice was ‘expected’ of married women. This seems to contradict the central tenet of ‘detraditionalism’ (discussed in Chapter

1) – namely that traditions do not necessarily disappear, but are no longer assumed to be observed. Traditions, Sandıkcı and İhan (2004:149) claim, become subject to ‘debate, reinterpretation and renewal’ as societies modernise. But, as Adam’s (1996) argues, is there ever a point where one can step back and take a ‘before and after’ approach to life? Instead, on the basis of my study, it appears that naming norms still very much existed for my respondents.

Related to the concept of ‘detraditionalism’, I considered the process of ‘individualisation’ throughout my research. It is interesting to note that the ‘choice’ of keeping one’s maiden name – surely a sign of individuality – was seen to indicate autonomy for married women. Fifty-five per cent of survey respondents reported that maiden name retention demonstrated that a woman was independent, whereas only 15 per cent said the same about surname change. Fifty-four per cent of respondents also reported that maiden name retention demonstrated a lack of commitment, whereas only 18 per cent said the same about surname change. Similarly, whereas 54 per cent of respondents indicated that a woman’s change of surname signalled that she was proud of her marriage, only 21 per cent said the same about maiden name retention. Moreover, only 14 per cent respondents, or fewer, supported my suggestion that couples might seek a more satisfactory surname by blending names with their spouse – or by inventing an entirely new surname as they might do if living in a individualised world.

Because surname change is normative, women using their husbands’ surnames felt little need to defend their decision. In this sense, ‘tradition’ was a supportive convention. Indeed, because their surname ‘choice’ was so ‘normal’, some interviewees, initially, said they had nothing to say on the subject. This occurrence resonates with Lewis and Ramazanoglu’s (1999:44) study of White women’s accounts of ‘whiteness’ in which women positioned themselves ‘as existing outside any racialised hierarchy and isolated from racialised and exclusionary practices’. They failed to notice anything to talk about in regard to their privileged position.

The situation for women with unchanged surnames was different. They neither fitted the norms of marriage, nor the norms of singledom. Yet, although generally happy with their surname ‘choice’, they were more frequently accountable for their surname ‘choice’ than women who changed surnames. Interviewees who retained their maiden names attempted to defend their decision not to change surnames by saying, for example, that they married too late or they were not having

children. Indeed, women who kept their maiden names seemed to have far more rehearsed rationales for their choice than those who had taken their husbands' surnames. But, a problem here, as Finch and Mason (1993) observed, is that it is more difficult for women than men to have their 'excuses' be accepted as legitimate. Overall, it was impossible for these women to avoid the issue of marital naming because it was greatly assumed that marriage should impact on naming.

### *Naming and choice*

Throughout my research, 'choice' has been presented as a contentious issue in relation to marital naming. Interviewees were not given a 'true' choice of surnames post-wedding for three reasons: structural and affective constraints prevented some from acting out any alternative; women's naming rights are not well established; and different surname 'choices' are imbued with differently valued social meanings. Thus, as pointed out by Walkerdine et al (2001:81): '...in extremely contradictory economic, social and individual landscapes...everything is open to change but at the same time older patterns of gender remain firmly entrenched.' Indeed, women do not make their surname 'choices' without being informed by social and cultural factors, such ideas about 'good' mothering and 'proper' families.

However, the factors influencing women's surname 'choices' are not consistent or coherent. Scheuble and Johnson (2005) argue that surname change presents wifehood and motherhood as women's primary roles, but this stands in opposition to other positions that they occupy, for example, in the work place. Similarly, in a study of pre-marital hen parties, Montemurro (2006) notes that women received mixed messages about the concepts of independence and dependence; assertiveness and passiveness; and sexually available and unavailable as they celebrated their pre-marriage ritual. Yet, she points out that the dominant image of weddings and marriage has remained relatively unchanged – the 'star player' is 'a virginal vision in white' (p.191). These two sets of authors draw attention to the conflicting messages women receive from various sources about the importance of individual achievement and feminine responsibility in their lives.

The 'choices' women make about their surnames are done so in a context where their right to name themselves is not established. It may be the case that women, reflected in the mainstream media, are presented as empowered subjects (or even post-feminist heroines), but their right to name themselves is overridden by structural constraints that produce affective dilemmas. Despite the legal support for

their names, interviewees did not talk about naming in terms of their rights. Instead, it was taken for granted that men's surnames are life-long – signalling a 'real' entitlement given at birth. I reiterate an earlier point in this chapter that women's rights are sidelined in talk about 'family values' (Coltrane 1998). That is, when it comes to the politics of the family, vocal segments of society have used conservative ideology to claim 'women's rights' are problematic and even dangerous.

Marital naming is an emotive issue. The historians Davidoff et al (1999:97), when writing about family, note: 'Despite legal and customary norms, it [family] is not only a question of external definitions or rational choice, but goes deep into attachments, the tangle of desire and feelings of both love and duty.' That is to say, in the case of my work, naming is not emotionally neutral. Rather, as McGrath (2004:95) sums up in her work on customary practices, despite rituals being repetitive, they are 'far from emotion-free.' Instead, ritual behaviour has 'emotional overlays and can express love, longing, and loss' (ibid.). The women in my study made different 'choices' according to different senses of obligation and belonging, and made decisions on the basis of their perceptions of familial and individual success.

Specifically, Montemurro (2006) refers to the power of emotional expectations in her study of hen parties. Drawing on Hochschild's (1983) work on emotional labour, she argues that women are expected to carry out the role of bride with 'proper' feelings can often differ from their own sentiments. A bride's failure to perform conveys 'disregard and disassociation' from her gender community, and even the larger norms of society (p.56). Building on this work, a woman's refusal or failure to change her surname shows her to be non-embracing of her new role and that she could be 'doing' gender poorly (Lucal 2004). Her 'poor' performance is accentuated as brides are supposed to take centre stage when they are married. Thus, as Montemurro points out, brides are placed in a position where many people watch her and evaluate her bridal commitment.

Perhaps one way to detect if surname 'choice' for women is genuinely available is to return to this statistic which finds that 94 per cent of wives in the UK use their husbands' surnames (Valetas 2001). If choice was truly available for wives would there be such homogeneity in the practice of surname change? Yet, there is no absence of choice for women when it comes to marital naming. Whatever a woman does, or does not do, with her surname after marrying she makes a choice. This is because women who marry are caught-up in an inescapable cycle of potential re-



naming. A wife either agrees, reluctantly or not, to change her surname or disagrees and lives with the consequences. Perhaps the only way for a woman to avoid the complexities of surname change is to forego marriage – but even then her surname is referred to as her ‘maiden name’ rather than ‘her name’.

In their critique of the ‘individualisation thesis’, Smart and Shipman (2004) argue that ‘choice’ is a problematic concept because it is interpreted to mean ‘free’ or ‘individual’ choice. Yet, in sociological terms, choice remains ‘contextual’ and ‘relational’ decision – people choose between ‘socially constructed options’ or on the basis of ‘attentiveness to others’ (p.493). My research shows that women do not have freedom in choosing their desired surname. Instead, they make their decisions on the basis of structural and affective constraints, rather than on the grounds of ‘anything goes’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995:34).

### *Naming and identity*

My research draws attention to the issue of identity – and clearly demonstrates that the construct of identity cannot be separated from the realities of gender. Not only is surname change signalled to be ‘feminised’, but it requires that women should navigate gender-specific assumptions about wifeness, motherhood and families. Boxer and Gritsenko (2005) draw a similar conclusion in their work on marital naming: ‘... in making naming choices women do not only act as women, but as mothers or future mothers, professionals, representatives of certain ethnic groups, regions, religions, and other social categories. Gender identity issues are always difficult to separate from women’s complex forms of participation in their communities’ (p.8). More than being just ‘difficult’, gender identity is meaningless without the aforementioned interactions.

On the basis of my research, I argued in Chapter 5 that surname change is a ‘feminised’ activity, as it was spoken about as a female-only transformation. In her account of normative femininity, Brownmiller (1985:15) remarks that ‘[f]emininity always demands more...to fail at the feminine difference is viewed as a failure in core sexual identity, or as a failure to care sufficiently about oneself...’ She adds that the femininity principle is ‘composed of vulnerability’ and ‘the avoidance of conflict’ (p.16). Bearing this in mind, marital naming should not be viewed as just a negotiation of belonging and obligation, but as a negotiation of (and performance of) sexual and gender identity, too.

When dealing with the complex relationship between marital naming and identity, three dichotomies are revealed. The most obvious is that of the tension between the individual and the collective – or where surnames serve as individual markers and social connectors. A second is a male/female dichotomy (and binary) as discussed in Chapter 1, and the third is the separation between private and political identities. In regards to the individual/collective dichotomy, some interviewees placed relational identities in opposition to autonomy, as they sought to ‘display’ either individual and/or familial success. Interviewees were more frequently forced to position themselves as interdependent negotiators rather than autonomous agents, and certainly more likely to speak about the persistent demands of marriage than the utopian ideal of modern-day independence.

My emphasis on relational identities rather than autonomous identities brings me to the discussion of male/female dichotomy and my earlier points about femininity. Eichenbaum and Orbach (1987) point out that notions of normative femininity rely upon a relationship between women and men. But, that in seeking intimate relationships, women do so not only for the connection they provide, but because of the need for an identity. Such reliance on men was especially noticeable in the interviewees’ use of the title ‘Mrs’. Indeed, several spoke of certain situations where it was relevant, and indeed socially appropriate, to ‘display’ a married identity through this title – as it influenced the opinions of others. The title ‘Mrs’ was said to afford its users authority and respect, as they were instantly tied to their more powerful opposite male number – their husband.

### *Naming and relationships*

On the occasions when I was challenged by participants to invent a ‘better’ system of marital naming, there was a particular sticking point. How would families be spoken about if married women kept their maiden names? They could no longer speak of ‘The Wilsons’, for example. Yet, as I mentioned previously, family identity is hugely diverse. But, in my study, most survey respondents stated a preference for surnames to be shared between married couples and siblings, as well as parents and children. These findings resonate with the work of Cheal (2002) and Cherlin (2004) who suggested that family composition might have changed in recent decades, but that the cultural ideal of a ‘family’ has not weakened.

The preference for families who use the same surname firmly positioned naming as a type of ‘display’ (Finch 2007). Indeed, Davidoff et al (1999:96) notes

that surnames are one way to ‘visualise’ a familial relationship – along with ‘...similar appearance...customs and traditions held in common, emotional, material and financial interdependence, mutual affection or expectations of obligation and duty.’ And, just as families are not chosen, neither are surnames. Yet, these authors also remark upon mothers being burdened with upholding both intimacy and morality within their families. This observation supports my arguments about names and ‘women’s work’, as it is women who are responsible for (or burdened with the task of) creating and maintaining intimacy and solidarity through surnames.

Naming is also burdensome for women because of cultural discourses about ‘good’ mothers. In her account of lesbian parents and the task of choosing surnames for their children, Almack (2005:250) notes: ‘...at the point of having children and becoming mothers it is hard to escape a deeply conventional set of expectations and obligations attached to biological motherhood.’ For my interviewees, any thoughts about surnames tended to be overridden by the supposed needs of children to take their fathers’ surnames. The women’s narratives on this subject were often steeped in the notion that ‘proper’ families have ‘proper’ surnames (i.e. commonly shared surnames). This is not surprising when one considers Finch’s (1989) observation that moral reputations are crucially at stake within the realm of family life. It seemed, for interviewees that, fears about doing wrong by their children were a strong regulator of their naming choices. In addition, interviewees (in Chapters 4 and 6) spoke about ‘appropriate births’ and implied that moral reputations were dependent on choosing ‘proper’ surnames. In this respect, surnames can be seen to ‘display’ heteronormative family ideals.

Surnames are not biologically fixed, but were referred to by interviewees as definite genetic markers. And these links were given significant credence, as interviewees did not regard it as their duty, or did not consider themselves able, to continue their families’ lineage through surnames. They also spoke about surnames as ‘displaying’ paternity. Ingraham (1999:102) points to a long ‘historical need’ to display who fathered a child. Indeed, she draws on Biblical passages about adultery to make her point. Adultery, she argues, is punished more severely for women than men because of ‘patriarchal interests’ connected to paternity (p.104). A man cannot claim fatherhood if his wife has slept with another man. Two interviewees whose surnames differed to the surnames used by their children said this was reasonable because their identities as mothers were obvious, unlike the identities of their children’s fathers. Their choices, read sociologically, demonstrate a social function

of naming practices – that surnames were given to ‘display’ an otherwise tenuous affinity between a child and her/his birth father.

In discussions about surnames, interviewees expressed a desire for unity and attachment as their names were a complex system that intertwined belonging, identity, relationship-building and acceptance. Thus, my findings echo the ‘connectedness thesis’ proposed by Smart (2007) who opposes the theory of a declining level of commitment within families. Indeed, writing with Shipman (2004:503), she argues: ‘The individual and individualisation thesis seems to exist without parents, without kinship ties, and with concerns only for their [an individual’s] own psychic well-being.’ My interviewees made surname decisions to create new, or maintain, old connections. None had invented a new surname and this idea of creating a new surname was not supported by most survey respondents. Instead, interviewees desired surnames that ‘displayed’ important familial and cultural connections. Surnames, changed or unchanged, were shared possessions.

In a further critique of the ‘individualisation thesis’, Ribbens McCarthy et al (2002) claim that the argument of individualisation neglects the gendered dimensions of family life. Indeed, rather than rely on an individualistic discourse, my interviewees tended to speak of family connections and caring responsibilities, even when talking about divorce. All the interviewees expressed the view that they should be concerned about their surnames and the names of their children. This suggests there is something deeply meaningful about names. Interviewees spoke of being tied to their ‘names of fate’, given by their ‘families of fate’ or acquired through marriage. And, in their accounts and the replies of survey respondents, there was a sense that a ‘proper’ way of naming existed.

### ***Naming and performativity***

In her work on relatedness, Carsten (2007:422) makes this point: ‘Acting as kin is a crucial part of *being* kin’. This notion of ‘acting’ is a key feature of my work, and I chose to explore it through Finch’s concept of ‘display’, as explained previously in Chapter 1. I used the concept as an analytical tool for understanding the ways in which interviewees used names as vessels for ‘displaying’ to others their ‘family-like’ and ‘marriage-like relationships.

I have argued in this chapter that surname change is ‘feminised’. Thus, women who take their husbands’ surnames can be seen to ‘display’ femininity. Conversely, those using their maiden names, metaphorically, ‘boundary-cross’ or

‘boundary-trespass’ (Ginsberg 1996:2&4) in choosing a life-long surname. That is, they intrude on a male identity by sustaining a life-long surname. This was demonstrated in the accounts that interviewees gave of being misnamed. Their maiden names, rightfully theirs, were often considered fraudulent or untrue, as they should have been using their ‘married names’. Maiden name retention was a way for women to ‘display’ power, which differs from men’s access to power – as this is seen as ‘real’ not performed. In this respect, names are not only personal, but political, too.

Finch’s concept can also be extended to ‘displays’ of wifeness. Those women who changed surnames easily ‘displayed’ their credentials as wives – but this was problematic for women who separated from their husbands as they drew attention to the conflicting interests behind a name. A ‘display’ of wifeness was also achieved through the title ‘Mrs’ which was used to gain power in certain situations. This is perhaps unsurprising since marriage is ‘the’ idealised relationship according to most survey respondents. Indeed, almost three quarters of my survey respondents agreed that marriage was an important custom. If marriage is highly-valued by society, some women may see a shared surname as necessary or advantageous in order to ‘display’ their married status – even though doing so might be accompanied by some disadvantages.

In ‘displaying’ wifeness through a shared surname, women who changed surnames also ‘displayed’ their commitment to the project of ‘marriage and the family’. I have already shown that survey respondents were more inclined to view women with unchanged surnames as less committed to their marriages, along with being less proud of, and less in love, with their husbands compared with women who took their husbands’ surnames. Yet interviewees who changed surnames did not do so simply for the sake of acting out their duties. Rather, drawing on the work of Durkheim (1953), these interviewees knew of the social rewards offered in fulfilling these obligations, while women with unchanged surnames accepted that their actions would cause problems for others. For example (as discussed in Chapter 5) women with unchanged surnames were regularly misnamed, but tended not to confront this mistake.

Moreover, the sharing of a surname between an interviewee, her husband and their children was said to ‘display’ intimacy and stability. Indeed, one interviewee said marriage ‘at least’ shows ‘perceived stability and commitment’. The same was true for women with unchanged names who wanted to retain stability in other areas

of their lives. Yet, although surnames assisted women in ‘feeling’ certain ways (such as ‘married’ and ‘committed’), surname ‘choice’ did not necessarily reflect the realities of each woman’s lives. Shared surnames may have given the perception of stability in a woman’s life, but did not ‘display’ the full complexities of a relationship. Instead, shared surnames masked the complexities of identity and the negotiations that take place in order for relationships to be ‘done’ in the lives of respondents.

## **Final Conclusion**

In this final section I provide a summary of my findings, commenting on what has been learned through my research, as well as identifying some areas for further research. I also remark upon the wider implications of my work for the field of sociology. I end with some closing remarks about my own name, tying my project back to my original preface.

### ***Summary of findings***

My research has drawn attention to the complexities of marital naming – a long-neglected topic of study in the UK – through in-depth interviewing and detailed survey work. Interviewees were placed in a position, not of their making, where they had to choose a surname post-wedding. It was difficult for these women to resolve the issue because of the symbolic meanings applied to taking a husband’s surnames (or the appearance of rejecting one’s husband by not using his surname). The former option can be seen to express, reflect and normalise cultural values about mothers, wives and families – while alternatives are positioned as deviant and even unfeminine because they contest these ideas. The moral imperative for most interviewees was to discard their maiden names and take their husbands’ surnames instead. Thus, surname change is not continued simply for the sake of duty, but serves to reinforce long-sustained assumptions about gender and sexuality that women are required to negotiate.

Surnames offered interviewees the possibility of communicating or ‘displaying’ connections that can be considered local (for example, to family, or to a place, a job or a sense of identity) as well as also wider social connections (for example, to the institution of marriage or a political idea). In this sense, naming was both enabling and constraining. Interviewees did not seek out potentially more satisfactory names and this idea was not supported by survey respondents. This

finding speaks of the importance of family ties, the habitual character of family life and the power of 'family'. Indeed, to use Mason's (2008:30) phrase in reference to family resemblances, surnames are 'highly charged with kinship'. Ultimately, names are about belonging to families and community structures, and in the case of surname change, surnames are about belonging to an institutional structure which protects and benefits the interests of heterosexual couples.

But, surnames also signal the exclusion of certain elements of society. Indeed, Davidoff et al (1999:92) write: 'We use names to create boundaries between belonging and not belonging'. Interviewees spoke about not belonging to a male hereditary line and they did not consider themselves able to continue their surnames. Instead, male lines were said to be the only true way for children to inherit surnames. Survey respondents indicated that couples living outside of heterosexual marriage were not welcome to share in the tradition of a shared surname. Moreover, women who kept their maiden names were perceived by survey respondents as not integrating well into the wifely duties of commitment and marital pride. Instead, their actions belonged to a political sphere incompatible with family life – or even the wider spectrum of society.

My research has focused on a small group of women and members of their immediate geographical communities. These communities included men and women of various ages and cultural backgrounds. There is scope, however, for further research into men's experiences of naming. Understandings of naming and gender stretch further than focusing solely on women. And it would be instructive to explore men's relationships with surnames, as I did when exploring women's maiden names. It would be fascinating to learn about the ways men's accounts intersect with notions of power and privilege. Do men, for example, consider surname continuity a life-long entitlement? How do they negotiate the hierarchy typically reserved for women in marital naming? And what can be learned from the few married men who have changed surnames? What are their experiences? What is at stake for these men?

The replies given by interviewees and survey respondents were shaped by the conditions under which they lived, such as their gender, ethnicity and class roles. I have shown that surname 'choices' are not always made on wedding days or with a woman's approval – and the interpretative repertoires that I identified also show that marital naming has a variety of different meanings, while women arrive at their surname 'choices' through different routes. Interviewees were selected for my research on the basis of being married but were in no way a homogenous group as

demonstrated by their pen portraits (see Appendix 7). However, there is ample scope for further research to consider the use and symbolic meaning of naming in other family forms, and for a wider exploration of the sociology of names as proposed by Finch (2008).

### ***Wider implications***

While my research contributes specifically to academic work on personal naming, it has wider significance for the field of sociology. Indeed, my initial thoughts on naming were constructed to explore conflicting sociological arguments about the contemporary nature of personal relationships, the significance of ‘family’ in a modern-day setting and the dynamics of gender (in)equality in relation to naming and kinship. In this section I ask two questions: What does my research add to existing sociological work on contemporary marriage? And what does my study of naming practices add to a sociological understanding of how identities are produced and performed? In answering these questions, I explain how my research engages with, illuminates or extends existing sociological arguments about individualism and collectivism. I maintain throughout that greater consideration should be given by sociologists to the complex relational and emotional dimensions of people’s lives – including our own as researchers. And, I argue that identity is not a fixed attribute but an ongoing project involving significant, deeply gendered work.

In my research, I have explored how women experience, interpret and interact with one distinct marriage practice. And, in doing so, my investigation adds a rich layer of analysis to sociological debates about contemporary marriage. To aid my discussion, I begin by presenting three sociological models of (first-time) marriage in 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain and America: the institutional, the companionate and the individualised marriage. My argument is that any consideration of contemporary marriage should not lose sight of marriage’s institutional and companionate elements. Indeed, these models may offer a well-ordered perception of marriage, but are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Instead, my research points to the continuation, and co-existence, of institutional and companionate marriage, as well as overstating of individualised (or deinstitutionalised) marriage. I pay particular attention to the continued role of families in contemporary marriage – as well as the use of nostalgic narratives in women’s ‘talk’ on marriage.

Most importantly, I suggest that a different epistemological starting point is needed when seeking to understand contemporary marriage. This starting point



should be more flexible than the existing stage-by-stage model presented in standard textbooks – as such flexibility would allow for the overlapping of seemingly contradictory factors that comprise modern-day marriage. I begin with Burgess and Locke (1945), referred to in Chapter 7, who discussed a shift from institutional to companionate marriage. It was an observation that moved sociological thinking on marriage (albeit middle-class<sup>90</sup>) from an institution sustained by strong social norms, to a personal relationship based on love and friendship. However, marriage was still divided by a sharp division of labour, as noted by Cherlin (2004). And, unlike marriage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, emotional satisfaction was presented as a crucial component for marital success – although Cherlin maintains that such satisfaction was gained from successful role performances by spouses. Nevertheless, the parameters of marriage had shifted.

Companionate marriage, according to Cherlin (2004), began to fade in the 1960s and further declined in the 1970s as couples became more individualistic in their views. That is, their core satisfaction in life derived not from simply playing an acceptable marital role, but from the development of ‘their own sense of self’ and the ‘expression of their feelings’ (ibid: 852). A sociological view of individualised marriage centres on notions of love, flexibility, negotiation and emotional intimacy, with marriage being just another lifestyle choice existing alongside (or as a successor to) other types of relationships. However, against this emphasis on choice, my research offers an insight into the lack of choices for married women in their personal lives – thus contrasting sociological and/or post-feminist accounts of an enlargement of freedom and choice for women in recent decades. Nevertheless, this transition may account for a drop in marriage rates in the UK. But even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, marriage retains an important position in the country’s social order, with naming patterns indicating the centrality of marriage in women’s societal positions.

Despite claims about the rise of individualised marriage from Cherlin and others, my work suggests that the institutional components of marriage have not entirely disappeared. An example of continuing social control with regards to marriage, as demonstrated by my research, is the influential role played by family members (particularly parents) in an individual’s marriage. My study shows the continued relevance of families and their role in shaping women’s relationship decisions and experiences. Indeed, marriage is a time when people appraise their

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<sup>90</sup> I refer again to Smart’s (2007:11) observation that companionate marriage is ‘always a classed concept’, as reported in Chapter 7.

affiliations and consider how their lives are linked to others. I have drawn attention to the new relationships women adopt after marriage, as well as the tightening or weakening of their existing family links. These new relationships can be supportive or constraining – causing an easy or uneasy shift in one’s sense of family, identity and personal agency. My research adds to existing sociological work on a woman’s adoption of (or ‘marrying into’) her husband’s family – such as how this might enhance or undermine her position and impact on her sense of identity.

My research also questions the decline of companionate marriage. Burgess and Locke, as Cherlin (2004:851) notes, referred to a ‘breadwinner-homemaker’ marriage in their account of companionate marriage. Cherlin also notes that companionship was central to this type of marriage – but so was a gendered division of labour, with pride being taken by spouses in acting out ‘good’ marital and parenting roles. So what has changed? Scholarly and public opinion may suggest a weakening of patriarchal culture alongside legal developments, but my research reflects the enduring authority of patrilineality as a system, as well as differences in gendered ability to be ‘heads of household’. Indeed, my research points to the persistence of power-relations within kinship structures, their gendered nature, and the importance of attending to these issues in a field which often presumes that gender equality has been largely achieved. More sociological attention needs to be given to lingering patriarchal ‘rights’ (or male prerogatives) with regards to the representation of a family within a community, as well as related issues of family control.

Rather than signal a decline in institutional and companionate marriage, my research shows an acceptance of some of marriage’s most conventional elements, with normative naming practices being an obvious example. Indeed, as noted by academics such as Crow (2005b), Stacey (1996) and Gillis (1996), there is continued support for, and nostalgia towards, the prevailing norms of marriage among individuals who partake in heterosexual marriage – but significantly those who do not participate. My research touches upon such nostalgia by illuminating key narratives of tradition, ancestry, lineage, heritage and rootedness. These accounts were used to construct images of ‘proper’ families, ‘good’ mothering techniques and ‘normal’ childhoods. Such narratives were also used to create ‘authentic’ identities, as in the case of family membership or ethnic/regional rootedness. My research extends a ‘sociology of nostalgia’ – and related aspects of genealogical enquiry – by showing nostalgic yearnings to display deeply emotional desires that tap into

memories (real or imagined) about one's own past and that of distant kin communities.

Continuing with the theme of nostalgia, the concept is important when thinking about contemporary marriage, as the practice is shown to be 'something people *do* and something they *think*' (Lewin 2004:1006). Indeed, just as Gillis (1996:xv) identifies a tangible split in the families that we 'live by' and those we 'live with' – so it is necessary to recognise a divide or tension in what people say about 'marriage in theory' and 'marriage in reality'. My participants, and no doubt individuals more widely, applied meanings to marriage through links to culturally-specific pasts – particularly those lived by parents or grandparents. This had the effect of creating an idealised (and aspirational) vision of what marriage *should* be like. However, in reality, marriage often falls short of this theoretical model, as observed in national statistics from the UK, but also through sociological – often feminist – accounts of the more oppressive elements of marriage.

The everyday reality of marriage, as shown by my research, is that power-relations persist among spouses. This is not, however, an idea purported by the individualised model of marriage which assumes a balance of power between couples, along with greater role flexibility for spouses. Indeed, this idea of spousal equality (however elusive) draws on Giddens' (1992) theory of democracy. That is, the interpersonal domain is said to have undergone a progressive process of democratisation, spawning a new form of intimacy based on mutual discourse and negotiated agreement. Yet, my research provides a critique of this assumption of democracy. Indeed, a key point raised by my research is that closer attention should be paid to enduring kinship structures rather than their transformation, based on the gender inequalities found in surname change. The field of sociology, in endeavouring to understand social change, should not lose sight of persistent customs and traditions that may continue to reflect the underlying structure of society.

Ideas about individualism have also been used by some social theorists to explain familial changes. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001), for instance, argue that, over time, the concept of 'family' has become an association of *individual* persons. However, my research indicates that people take a great deal of pleasure and comfort in feeling rooted to real (as well as imagined) kinship communities. Indeed, it is through a sense of shared heritage and collective likenesses that people gain a sense of belonging and identity. Such bonds can be sparked, and reaffirmed, by marriage. Yet, such connections are not effortlessly maintained. My research shows marital

naming to be a form of gendered labour for women – an emotional labour fraught with tensions and difficulties. Indeed, I have described naming as a form of ‘kin work’ (di Leonardo 1987) and, in this respect, my research expands sociological understandings of gendered and intimate labour.

The models of marriage that I have discussed have allowed sociologists to make statements, often cross-culturally, about social change and stability. But, it is also important to remember that marriage is a lived experience which is unpredictable, as my research emphasises through women’s personal accounts. Smart (2007:3-4), in her work on personal relationships, speaks of ‘the flat world of most sociological accounts of relationships’ and her part-complicity in the ‘flattening out’ of the lives of ordinary people through various research project. By closely analysing women’s personal narratives, my research has attempted to capture the journeys women make to arrive at the decision to marry, as well as the social and relational factors influencing their values, beliefs and experiences. Therefore, while looking for general social patterns in the lives of certain women, individual uniqueness are emphasised to portray the differing ways in which social factors impinged on their lives.

However, in critiquing models of marriage, I am not suggesting that it exists without specific meanings. Indeed, marriage would be of little interest to sociologists if it was without meaning. But, when studying the practice of marriage, researchers encounter an aspect of social life that is intensely familiar, as well as being laden with emotional complexities. My research shows that participants do not select their replies from thin air, but give personal accounts that are charged with feelings of belonging and connectedness, honour and pride, shame and guilt, as well as duty or commitment. Thus, my work begins to extend sociological work on emotion in showing that the concept of ‘family’ is an emotional project. In addition, it shows that an individual’s affective investments in relationships allow for unequal power-relations to be overlooked. That said, my research also draws attention to the agency of individuals with regards to their investment in the social norms of naming. As researchers, we should not lose sight of these emotional complexities as this would limit our understanding of the issues surrounding marriage.

In focusing on naming practices, my study is also instructive when attempting to understand, sociologically, the concept of identity. The remainder of this section concentrates on what my study offers to sociological understanding of how identities are produced and performed. Again, in answering this question, I focus on

sociological arguments about individualism and collectivism. I also discuss the ways in which various versions of the self are interlinked, negotiated and contested – and argue that my work powerfully illustrates that identity is not something fixed, but is a project that evolves over a lifetime. I also reiterate my earlier statement that within the field of sociology, greater consideration should be given to the relational and emotional dimensions – and complexities – of people’s lives.

I begin my discussion with Lawler’s (2008) work on the sociology of identity. She claims that it would be difficult to understand social relationships without an understanding of identity. She argues: ‘...identity needs to be understood not as belonging “within” the individual person, but as produced between persons and within social relations’ (p.8). A primary emphasis of my research has been the interplay between individual women and their relationships – revealing much about the importance of collective identities. A substantial thread of my work was that women saw themselves as being part of a larger familial group. Identity, in this respect, is defined as a sense of belonging, connectedness and rootedness. And, family and kinship play an important role in providing members with a place to belong, connect to and be rooted.

Moreover, on the basis of my study, the creation, stability and preservation of family identity – as well as cultural or ethnic ties – should be considered extremely important to individuals. This finding, like those mentioned earlier, serves to contradict claims about the fragmentation of identities in contemporary society. Rather, the women in my study regularly drew on narratives of tradition, ancestry, lineage, heritage and rootedness. It was often through links to ancestral traits or kinship communities that the women in my study made sense of their identities. Smart (2007), in her account of personal life, encourages sociologists to consider the ways in which identities are built upon heritage, memory and tradition. An important observation of my work is the significance of kinship communities in the production of identity, as well as the influential role played by such communities in marital choices and experiences.

Returning to Lawler’s quote on social relationships, she implies that identities are neither fixed nor singular. This observation builds on Hall’s (1997/1990:51) notable comment that identity is: ‘...a “production”, which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, and not outside, representation’. By this he means that issues of identity are forever in flux. Indeed, with regards to my work, women acted not only as women in making naming choices, but as wives, mothers,

future mothers and employees. These versions of the self were interlinked for women – however contradictory – and clearly linked to larger structures of identity such as gender, class and ethnicity. The call received by married women to change surnames highlights the fluidity of identity and, importantly, can also be read as an example of where one or more identity may become relevant to a given situation. Moreover, the call to change surnames for women is an instance where gender and sexuality receive particularly focused attention.

My comments on who does and does not belong to a particular family, and who can or cannot be viewed as a mother, draw on another key observation made by Hall (1997/1990) – that identity always involves both sameness and difference. My research shows that naming plays on perceived differences between men and women. Indeed, my study powerfully illustrates the incredibly gendered nature of ‘identity work’ (or ways of constructing and negotiating identities) at the level of something as fundamental as a name. Specifically, my study shows the ways in which women can often harmonise their respective self-concept (or perception of self) with their performances of gender. This was shown through patterns of talking such as the embracing of new ‘in-law’ relationships, the distancing of families of origin and the separating of work and home-life. But, my research also reveals instances of deliberate non-performances of wifehood by wives as strategies for constructing or projecting a unique identity. These findings demonstrate that identity is a gendered project for women worked on and over during a lifetime.

Importantly, my research shows that marriage offers women a chance to signal – both to themselves and a wider audience – the nature of their relationship and a vision of family. This idea connects to Hall’s (1997) comment that it is through ‘meaning’ that individuals gain a sense of identity – who they are and with whom they belong. My research builds on this concept by asking what it means to be a ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ – thereby adding to a larger body of work on how identities of motherhood are made (and imagined) in practice. I found that answers to these questions were defined within the social contexts in which women were embedded, such as their class or generational background. However, my research also suggests that individuals commonly rely upon shared meanings (or ‘ready-made’ discourses) about the categories of ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ – thereby raising questions about the amount of choice available to individuals in the production of their identities.

Turning again to performances of identity, Finch’s (2007) concept of ‘display’ proves helpful in the context of family identity. I have mentioned when

discussing ‘kin work’ that familial identities are not always obvious, and also that ‘identity work’ is deeply gendered. Take motherhood, for example. Simply *being* a mother does not guarantee one’s identity as a mother, instead this identity role needs to be performed to, and understood, by others. Finch notes that, at crucial times, people are called to demonstrate that their relationships are effective in a familial way, for example, by taking part in a family meal at a restaurant. My research shows women to be regularly motivated or obligated to ‘display’ particular versions of ‘motherhood’ and ‘family’ that are defined and delineated by strong social ideals as to what constitutes ‘good’ mothering and ‘proper’ family life.

However, some acts of ‘display’ are not always desirable. Indeed, my research shows that such acts can be occasionally burdensome and stressful. The fear of a poorly received ‘display’ resulted in aspects of an individual’s identity being hidden or played down. These acts of non-display relate to Lawler’s (2008:125) observation of ‘wrong’ identities, which she uses when discussing social class – and the idea that middle-class identities ‘silently pass’ as normal. My study shows there is much to be gained from acting out the ‘right’ type of wifely and motherly identities in many contexts. Not to appropriately embrace these identity roles – or to disrupt their rigidity – can call into question the normalcy or authenticity of one’s identity. Additionally, my study draws attention to a perception that one’s ‘true’ identity lies hidden in one’s family make-up. Indeed, my participants often referred to ancestral links in their narratives to affirm, authenticate or legitimise their familial and cultural identities. There is still more to learn, sociologically, about the ways the past is experienced at a personal and family level.

Continuing with the theme of narratives, identities are partly established through the use of language. Indeed, Weeks et al (2001:11) note that it is through narratives that people ‘give meaning to their lives, and affirm their identities and present relationships as viable and valid’. This observation is expanded by Finch (2007) who maintains that narratives (or family ‘talk’) are tools for ‘displaying’ family relationships. My research demonstrates the need for researchers to pay close attention to the substance, style and power of biographical narratives, including their normative character – but also to their role as resources for women’s continual identity work. Yet, in doing so, narrative accounts should not be thought of as unproblematic facts, but as being socially and culturally located.

Finally, I have explored in some detail what my research offers to sociological understandings of marriage and identity by drawing on notions of

kinship, collectivism, nostalgia and rootedness. Importantly, I have drawn attention to the unquestionable role played by gender in family structures and performances of identity. But, I now offer a moment of self-reflection. In taking a reflexive approach, my work demonstrates the importance of considering the contours of our ‘researcher identities’ and how these impact on our work. I have recited in my research some of my performances of identity in collecting data – including how I wrongly assumed a potential affinity with like-surnamed women. Indeed, it was this belief that sparked my investigation. Yet, inspired by feminist research, I challenged myself to think more deeply about my ‘identity location’ to more clearly distinguish the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of my work. This was a daunting prospect, owing to traditional ideas about how research should be written. But, such reflexivity, allows for our research to be better understood – and allows the material we present to be more accurately interpreted.

### *Closing remarks*

Perhaps, in years to come, a descendent of mine will scour the archives to locate me, just like I found my great-great-grandmother. What will my name tell them? Maybe my unchanged surname will speak of my hopes for equality or my fears about losing my identity. Or, might it say something of my rebellious character or my affiliations to past kin? But my name, printed on a page, will not speak of any emotion. It will not express my satisfaction at being able to continue the use of my surname. Nor will it speak of my joy at marrying someone who respects my choice. It will not speak of my anxiety about failing to comply with a long-established social script. Nor will it say anything about my frustrations about the social pressures that continue to limit women’s opportunities inside and outside of marriage. This mixture of conflicting passions is crammed into just two small words – displayed on the front cover of this manuscript ‘Rebekah Wilson’.



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# Appendix 1

## Marital Naming: Empirical Research

Authors	Methods	Sample	Country
<b>Studies of naming trends:</b>			
Intons-Peterson and Crawford (1985)	Questionnaire	256	USA
Dralle (1987)	Questionnaire	70	USA
Brightman (1994)	Questionnaire	Unknown	USA
Johnson and Scheuble (1995)	Telephone survey	1109	USA
Stafford and Kline (1996)	Questionnaire	110	USA
Scheuble et al (2000)	Secondary data	N/A	USA
Valetas (2001)**	Secondary data	Unknown	EU
Goldin and Shim (2004)	Secondary data	N/A	USA
Scheuble and Johnson (2005)	Questionnaire	585	USA
Hoffnung (2006)**	Secondary data	N/A	USA
<b>Studies of attitudes towards names:</b>			
Embleton and King (1984)	Questionnaire	43	Canada
Atkinson (1987)	Questionnaire	325	Canada
Scheuble and Johnson (1993)	Questionnaire	258	USA
Kline et al (1996)	Questionnaire	110	USA
Twenge (1997)	Questionnaire	153	USA
Murray (1997)	Questionnaire	10,472	USA
Scheuble and Johnson (1998)	Questionnaire	935	USA
Etaugh et al (1999)	Questionnaire	222	USA
Bähr and Weatherall (1999)	Interviews	6	New Zealand
Valetas (2001)*	Secondary data	Unknown	EU
Forbes (2002) et al	Questionnaire	197	USA
Clarke (2008) et al	Interviews	30	UK
Hamilton et al (2009) *	Telephone survey	815	USA
<b>Studies of women's naming decisions:</b>			
Penfield (1987)	Questionnaire	20	USA
Foss and Edson (1989)	Questionnaire	85	USA
Kupper (1990)	Questionnaire	362	USA
Fowler and Fuehrer (1997)	Interviews	5	USA
Ho (1999)*	Interviews	7	USA
Suter (2004)	Interviews	35	USA
Mills (2003)	Questionnaire	36	UK
Suter (2003)and Oswald	Questionnaire	36	USA
Boxer and Gritsenko (2005)	Questionnaire Interviews	277 19	USA and Russia
Hoffnung (2006)**	Questionnaire	126	USA
<b>Secondary studies:</b>			
Dralle (1981) and Mackiewicz	Literature review	N/A	N/A
Duggan (1993) et al	Literature review	N/A	N/A

*All studies from English-speaking countries only*

*\* Unpublished conference paper*

*\*\* Study has multiple foci, so appears in the table more than once*

# Appendix 2

## Questionnaire Survey

### What's In A Name?

This survey is about surnames.  
It is part of a university project.  
It should take 5 minutes to complete.  
Your answers will be stored privately and securely.

#### Q1 How much do you agree with these statements?

Please ✓ one box per row

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>Marriage is:</b>					
An important custom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The best relationship for couples	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Losing its importance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In need of change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Q2 How much do you agree with these statements?

Please ✓ one box per row

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>Surnames should be shared by:</b>					
Married couples	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Same-sex partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unmarried couples who live together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brothers and sisters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents and children of both sexes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents and daughters, until they marry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Q3 How much do you agree with these statements?

Please ✓ one box per row

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>Surname change by married women is:</b>					
Romantic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Out-of-date	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Required by law	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expected by most people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unnecessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inconvenient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The right thing to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meaningful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Just the way things are	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Q4 How much do you agree with these statements?

Please ✓ one box per row

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>Using the same surname:</b>					
Makes life easier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keeps couples together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Makes marriage more real	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is too restrictive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creates a bond between couples	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a responsible decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Makes women more respectable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is good for children's well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keeps traditional roles for men and women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q5 To what extent does surname change by women demonstrate the following:** *Please ✓ one box per row*

	Not at all	A small extent	Neutral	A medium extent	A large extent
Being committed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being selfish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being well-educated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being in love	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being proud of her husband	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being in control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being married to a real man	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being a new person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being independent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being proud of her marriage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being family-focused	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being able to make a choice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being too fussy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being career-minded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being a good wife	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being a feminist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q5a Being a feminist is:** *Please ✓ one box*

A good thing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither good nor bad	<input type="checkbox"/>
A bad thing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q6 To what extent does keeping one's maiden name demonstrate:** *Please ✓ one box per row*

	Not at all	A small extent	Neutral	A medium extent	A large extent
Being independent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being too fussy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being a new person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being married to a real man	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being a good wife	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being able to make a choice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being well-educated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being committed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being proud of her husband	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being career-minded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being selfish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being in control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being a feminist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being in love	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being family-focused	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being proud of her marriage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q7 To what extent do you like these surname options?** *Please ✓ one box in each row*

	Strongly like	Like	Neutral	Dislike	Strongly dislike
Wife keeps her maiden name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wife uses her husband's surname	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wife uses different surnames for different situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Husband uses wife's maiden name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Couple use a hyphenated surname	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Couple blend/mix their surnames	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Couple use an entirely new surname	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Q8 Is it ever OK for married couples to use different surnames?**

Please ✓ one box

Yes  Please  
No  state  
Don't know  why

→

**Q9 What do you think about men who take their wives' surnames?** Please write below

**Q10 Do you think people should keep the same surname for life?**

Please ✓ one box

Yes  Please  
No  state  
Don't know  why

→

**Q11 Are you, or have you ever been, married or civil partnered?**

Yes  Please go to Q11a No  Please go to Q12

**Q11a How old were you when you first became married/civil partnered?**

Age at first marriage

Age at first civil partnership

**Q11b What surname option(s) have you used since becoming married/civil partnered?**

Please write below

**Q11c What surname option(s) has your partner used since becoming married/civil partnered?**

Please write below

**Q12 What is your current relationship status?** Please ✓ all that apply

Civil Partnered  Divorced/Separated  Remarried   
Co-habiting (unmarried)  Engaged  Single   
Dating  Married  Widowed

**Q13 Should couples have an equal chance of passing their surname to their children?**

Please ✓ one box

Yes  Please  
No  state  
Don't know  why

→

**Q14 Do you have children?**

Yes  Please answer Q14a and Q14b No  Please go to Q15

**Q14a How many children do you have?**

Please give number

**Q14b Whose surname were your children given at birth and why?** *Please write below*

**Q15 If you are happy to do so, please give the following information:** *Please ✓ all that apply*

**Your sex:**

Male   
Female

**Your age:**

|

**Your ethnic origin:**

Asian or Asian British       White UK   
Black or Black British       White EU   
Mixed race       Other

**Your qualifications:**

GCSEs       BA/BSc   
Vocational       MA/MSc   
A-levels       PhD

**Your religious belief:**

Buddhist       Muslim   
Christian       Sikh   
Hindu       Other   
Jewish       None

**Your occupation:**

**Occupation of main wage earner in your house  
(if this is not you):**

**Your sexual orientation:**

Heterosexual       Bisexual   
Lesbian/Gay       Rather not say

**Your postcode (e.g. NW10):**

| | | |

If you are a woman who is or has been married, please continue.  
If not, thank you for helping with this survey.

**If you are a woman who is or has been married:**

Would you be happy to answer some more questions in a few weeks?  
You will receive £20 for taking part.  
It will take 1 to 2 hours.  
Your name will be kept secret.

**Name:**

**Telephone number:**

**Best time to contact you:**

**Thank you for your time.**

# Appendix 3

## Survey Demographics

**Table 3.1 Sex of respondent**

	N	%
Female	237	52
Male	212	47
No response	4	1
<b>N=453</b>		

*A single response question (questionnaire number Q15)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 3.2 Age of respondent**

	N	%
15-29	119	26
30-49	147	33
50-69	130	29
70+	44	10
No response	13	3
<b>N=453</b>		

*A single response question (questionnaire number Q15)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 3.3 Ethic origin of respondent**

	N	%
White UK	230	51
Asian or Asian British	100	22
White EU	35	8
Other	31	7
Black or Black British	19	4
Mixed Race	6	1
No response	32	7
<b>N=453</b>		

*A single response question (questionnaire number Q15)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 3.4 Highest qualification of respondent**

	N	%
GCSEs	65	14
Vocational	18	4
A-levels	74	16
BA/BSc	119	26
MA/MSc	71	16
PhD	8	2
No response	98	22
<b>N=453</b>		

*A single response question (questionnaire number Q15)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

*Note: 26 per cent of respondents were aged 15 to 29*

**Table 3.5 Religious belief of respondent**

	N	%
Buddhist	5	1
Christian	161	36
Hindu	23	5
Jewish	2	<1
Muslim	43	10
Sikh	17	4
Other	8	2
None	87	19
More than one box ticked	1	<1
No response	106	23
<b>N=453</b>		

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q15)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 3.6 Sexual orientation of respondent**

	N	%
Heterosexual	307	68
Lesbian/gay	6	1
Bisexual	6	1
Rather not say	27	6
No response	107	24
<b>N=453</b>		

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q15)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 3.7 Occupation level of respondent**

	N	%
Retired	67	15
Professional occupations	64	14
Science and technology associate professionals	49	11
Full time student	48	11
Administrative and secretarial occupations	37	8
Managers and senior officials	35	8
Housewife/mother	21	5
Personal service occupations	13	3
Skilled trades occupations	9	2
Not employed/sick	9	2
Elementary occupations	7	2
Sales and customer services	5	1
Process, plant and machine operations	5	1
Vague	5	1
No response	79	17
<b>N=453</b>		

*An open response question (questionnaire number Q15)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

*Responses coded according to the Standard Occupational Classification (ONS, 2000). Available at: [www.ons.gov.uk/.../classifications/.../SOC2000/summary-of-structure.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/.../classifications/.../SOC2000/summary-of-structure.pdf) [6 July 2009]*

**Table 3.8 Is or has respondent been married or civil partnered?**

	N	%
Yes	242	53
No	168	37
No response	43	10
<b>N= 453</b>		

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q11)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 3.9 Age of respondent when first married/civil partnered**

	N		N
16-20 years	31	51-60 years	1
21-30 years	162	61-70 years	0
31-40 years	33	71-80 years	2
41-50 years	6	No response	218
<b>N=453</b>			

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q11a)*

**Table 3.10 Current relationship status of respondent**

	N
Married/remarried	162
Single	103
Divorced/separated	48
Dating	42
Cohabiting (unmarried)	39
Widowed	25
Engaged	5
Civil partnered	2
No response	42
<b>N=453</b>	

*A multiple response question (questionnaire number Q12)*

**Table 3.11 Current parental status of respondent**

	N	%
Yes, I have children	217	48
No, I have no children	198	44
No response	38	8
<b>N= 453</b>		

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q14)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 3.12 Number of children belonging to respondents**

	N	%
1 child	52	12
2 children	97	21
3 children	38	8
4 children	18	4
5 children	5	1
7 children	1	<1
No response	242	53
<b>N= 453</b>		

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q14a)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 3.13 Surname option(s) used by respondent since becoming married/civil partnered**

	Male respondents N	Female respondents N
Own surname (incl. maiden name)	90	11
Partner's surname	2	88
Own surname and partner's surname	.	18
Coincidentally share same surname	.	1
Own surname after divorce/remarriage	.	9
Own surname until parenthood	.	1
Partner's surname (own as middle name)	.	1
Family surname (origin unclear)	.	.
No surname	.	1
Vague	2	4
<b>N= 218</b>		

*An open response item (questionnaire number Q11b)*

*Respondents gave up to three replies (218 first replies, 8 second replies and 2 third replies)*

**Table 3.14 Surname option(s) used by respondent's partner since becoming married/civil partnered\***

	Male respondent N	Female respondent N
His/her own	20	115
Mine	64	1
Mine and own	8	0
Remarried and using new surname	1	0
Coincidentally share same surname	0	1
Vague	2	3
<b>N=214</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>120</b>

*An open response item (questionnaire number Q11c)*

*One respondent gave two replies*

*\*In some cases, couples had separated/divorced or a partner had died*

# Appendix 4

## Survey Results

**Table 4.1a Views on marriage**

Marriage is:	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
An important custom	167	37	159	35	61	14	26	6	13	3	27	6
The best relationship for couples	138	31	114	25	105	23	49	11	14	3	33	7
Losing its importance	69	15	165	36	72	16	69	15	29	6	49	11
In need of change	22	5	62	14	122	27	125	28	59	13	63	14
<b>N= 453</b>												

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q1)*

*Due to rounding, percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 4.1b Views on marriage – men and women**

Marriage is:		Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
An important custom	N	85	81	76	82	23	38	13	12	7	6	8	18
	%	40	34	36	35	11	16	6	5	3	3	4	8
The best relationship for couples	N	74	64	53	59	45	59	17	31	12	2	11	22
	%	35	27	25	25	21	25	8	13	6	1	5	9
Losing its importance	N	33	36	80	83	35	36	30	39	14	15	20	28
	%	16	15	38	35	16	15	14	16	7	6	9	12
In need of change	N	16	6	27	35	53	67	64	60	29	30	23	39
	%	8	3	13	15	25	28	30	25	14	13	10	17
<b>N= 449*</b>													

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q1)*

*Due to rounding, percentages may not sum 100*

*\*4 respondents did not specify their sex*

**Table 4.2a Views on shared surnames**

Surnames should be shared by:	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	%	N
Brothers and sisters	118	<b>26</b>	144	<b>32</b>	104	<b>23</b>	22	<b>5</b>	14	<b>3</b>	51	<b>11</b>
Parents and children of both sexes	106	<b>23</b>	146	<b>32</b>	108	<b>24</b>	30	<b>7</b>	21	<b>3</b>	51	<b>11</b>
Married couples	142	<b>31</b>	105	<b>23</b>	119	<b>26</b>	59	<b>13</b>	15	<b>3</b>	13	<b>3</b>
Parents and daughters, until they marry	89	<b>20</b>	128	<b>28</b>	133	<b>29</b>	40	<b>9</b>	14	<b>3</b>	49	<b>11</b>
Single-sex partners	11	<b>2</b>	31	<b>7</b>	164	<b>36</b>	105	<b>23</b>	88	<b>19</b>	54	<b>12</b>
Unmarried couples who live together	4	<b>1</b>	31	<b>7</b>	126	<b>28</b>	172	<b>38</b>	69	<b>15</b>	56	<b>12</b>
<b>N=453</b>												

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q2)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

**Table 4.2b Views on shared surnames – men and women**

Surnames should be shared by:		Agree or strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Married couples	N	85	57	46	56	48	70	23	36	8	7	2	11
	%	<b>40</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
Brothers and sisters	N	65	53	59	82	47	56	13	9	7	7	21	30
	%	<b>31</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>
Parents and children of both sexes	N	<b>55</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>78</b>	46	61	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	26	25
	%	<b>26</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>
Parents and daughters, until they marry	N	51	38	59	61	59	72	16	24	5	9	22	27
	%	<b>24</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
Single-sex partners	N	4	7	14	17	69	94	47	56	58	29	20	34
	%	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>
Unmarried couples who live together	N	1	3	17	9	56	69	77	93	38	30	23	33
	%	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>N=449*</b>													

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q2)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*\*4 respondents did not specify their sex*



**Table 4.2c Views on shared surnames – age**

Surnames should be shared by:		15-29 %	30-49 %	50-69 %
Married couples	Strongly agree	30	23	40
	Agree	28	25	17
	Neutral	28	32	27
	Disagree	10	18	15
	Strongly disagree	3	4	3
	Non- or multiple response	0	0	0
Brothers and sisters	Strongly agree	31	24	31
	Agree	29	43	33
	Neutral	34	21	27
	Disagree	5	8	4
	Strongly disagree	1	3	4
	Non- or multiple response	1	0	0
Parents and children of both sexes	Strongly agree	30	20	27
	Agree	34	40	34
	Neutral	27	29	28
	Disagree	7	10	8
	Strongly disagree	3	2	3
	Non- or multiple response	0	0	0
Parents and daughters, until they marry	Strongly agree	15	19	27
	Agree	30	29	34
	Neutral	41	35	26
	Disagree	11	13	9
	Strongly disagree	3	4	4
	Non- or multiple response	0	0	0
Single-sex partners	Strongly agree	4	2	3
	Agree	12	10	3
	Neutral	41	44	43
	Disagree	21	26	28
	Strongly disagree	22	18	22
	Non- or multiple response	0	0	1
Unmarried couples who live together	Strongly agree	2	1	1
	Agree	6	7	4
	Neutral	29	32	37
	Disagree	46	46	39
	Strongly disagree	18	14	19
	Non- or multiple response	0	0	0
<b>N=354</b>		<b>107</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>114</b>

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q2)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*Percentages not calculated for respondents aged 70+ and respondents whose age was unknown*

**Table 4.3a Surname preferences for married couples**

To what extent do you like these surname options?	Strongly like		Like		Neutral		Dislike		Strongly dislike		Non- or multiple response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Wife uses her husband's surname	112	<b>25</b>	129	<b>29</b>	116	<b>26</b>	22	<b>5</b>	12	<b>3</b>	59	<b>13</b>
Wife keeps her maiden name	67	<b>15</b>	88	<b>19</b>	141	<b>31</b>	52	<b>12</b>	31	<b>7</b>	74	<b>16</b>
Wife uses different surnames for different situations	30	<b>7</b>	58	<b>13</b>	97	<b>21</b>	109	<b>24</b>	69	<b>15</b>	90	<b>20</b>
Couple use a hyphenated surname	21	<b>5</b>	51	<b>11</b>	153	<b>34</b>	73	<b>16</b>	66	<b>15</b>	89	<b>20</b>
Couple blend/mix their surnames	18	<b>4</b>	46	<b>10</b>	131	<b>29</b>	77	<b>17</b>	92	<b>20</b>	89	<b>20</b>
Husband uses wife's maiden name	9	<b>2</b>	32	<b>7</b>	128	<b>28</b>	100	<b>22</b>	93	<b>21</b>	91	<b>20</b>
Couple use an entirely new surname	8	<b>2</b>	20	<b>4</b>	103	<b>23</b>	80	<b>18</b>	152	<b>34</b>	90	<b>20</b>
<b>N=453</b>												

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q7)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

**Table 4.3b Surname preferences for married couples – men and women**

To what extent do you like these surname options?		Strongly like		Like		Neutral		Dislike		Strongly dislike		Non- or multiple response	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Wife uses her husband's surname	N	59	53	64	65	52	64	7	15	4	11	26	29
	%	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>
Wife keeps her maiden name	N	21	46	33	55	75	66	29	23	23	8	31	39
	%	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>
Wife uses different surnames for different situations	N	13	17	28	30	45	52	48	61	39	30	39	47
	%	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>
Couple use hyphenated surname	N	4	17	20	31	71	82	35	38	44	22	38	47
	%	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>
Couple blend/mix their surnames	N	5	13	18	28	57	74	34	43	60	32	38	47
	%	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>
Husband uses wife's maiden name	N	2	7	14	18	58	70	45	55	54	39	39	48
	%	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>
Couple use an entirely new surname	N	3	5	9	11	46	57	35	45	80	72	39	47
	%	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>

**N=449\****A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q7)**Due to rounding figures may not sum 100**\*4 respondents did not specify their sex*

**Table 4.3c Surname preferences for married couples – age**

To what extent do you like these surname options?		15-29	30-49	50-69
		%	%	%
Wife uses husband's surname	Strongly agree	22	20	31
	Agree	36	36	26
	Neutral	31	35	30
	Disagree	5	7	6
	Strongly disagree	5	2	6
	Non- or multiple response	1	0	1
Wife keeps maiden name	Strongly agree	15	19	20
	Agree	29	25	21
	Neutral	41	43	30
	Disagree	11	9	19
	Strongly disagree	5	4	11
	Non- or multiple response	0	0	0
Wife uses different surnames for different situations	Strongly agree	2	9	11
	Agree	20	13	17
	Neutral	21	29	29
	Disagree	37	29	25
	Strongly disagree	21	20	17
	Non- or multiple response	0	1	1
Couple use hyphenated surname	Strongly agree	4	10	4
	Agree	15	14	12
	Neutral	45	37	46
	Disagree	23	20	18
	Strongly disagree	14	19	20
	Non- or multiple response	0	0	1
Couple blend/mix their surnames	Strongly agree	9	2	5
	Agree	15	12	13
	Neutral	39	32	37
	Disagree	21	25	21
	Strongly disagree	17	29	24
	Non- or multiple response	0	0	0
Husband uses wife's maiden name	Strongly agree	2	2	3
	Agree	13	9	5
	Neutral	38	38	35
	Disagree	26	25	32
	Strongly disagree	21	26	26
	Non- or multiple response	1	0	0
Couple use an entirely new surname	Strongly agree	2	4	1
	Agree	12	2	2
	Neutral	29	25	30
	Disagree	23	22	23
	Strongly disagree	34	45	44
	Non- or multiple response	0	0	0
<b>N=354</b>		<b>107</b>	<b>133</b>	114

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q7)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*Percentages not calculated for respondents aged 70+ and respondents whose age was unknown*

**Table 4.4a Views on surname change by married women**

Surname change by married women is:	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Expected by most people	72	16	224	49	58	13	33	7	10	2	56	12
Meaningful	51	11	168	37	95	21	60	13	19	4	60	13
Just the way things are	39	9	151	33	119	26	16	14	24	5	56	12
Unnecessary	49	11	116	26	103	23	83	18	41	9	61	14
The right thing to do	63	14	82	18	141	31	82	18	32	7	53	12
Romantic	39	9	105	23	132	29	93	21	36	8	48	11
Inconvenient	27	6	81	18	129	29	110	24	38	8	68	15
Required by law	34	8	69	15	114	25	96	21	76	17	64	14
Out of date	30	7	74	16	109	24	128	28	51	11	61	14
Sexist	25	6	59	13	107	24	133	29	61	14	68	15
<b>N=453</b>												

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q3)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

**Table 4.4b Views on surname change by married women – men and women**

Surname change by married women is:		Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Expected by most people	N	30	42	107	115	30	27	12	21	8	2	25	30
	%	14	18	50	49	14	13	6	9	4	1	12	13
Meaningful	N	31	20	78	88	38	56	26	34	11	8	28	31
	%	15	8	37	37	18	24	12	14	5	3	13	13
Just the way things are	N	19	20	68	80	59	60	26	38	13	11	27	28
	%	9	8	32	34	28	25	12	16	6	5	13	12
Unnecessary	N	17	32	51	65	49	51	37	46	28	13	30	30
	%	8	14	24	27	23	22	17	19	13	5	14	13
The right thing to do	N	38	25	44	38	65	73	32	50	10	22	23	29
	%	18	11	21	16	27	31	15	21	5	9	11	12
Romantic	N	20	19	52	51	64	66	38	55	17	19	21	27
	%	9	8	25	22	30	28	18	23	8	8	10	11
Inconvenient	N	9	18	27	53	73	54	45	65	26	12	32	35
	%	4	8	13	22	34	23	21	27	12	5	15	15
Required by law	N	18	16	32	37	60	53	44	50	30	46	28	35
	%	8	7	15	16	28	22	21	21	14	19	13	15
Out of date	N	8	22	28	46	51	57	59	67	39	12	27	33
	%	4	9	13	19	24	24	28	28	18	5	13	14
Sexist	N	11	14	25	34	46	61	62	68	37	24	31	36
	%	5	6	12	14	22	26	29	29	17	10	15	15
<b>N=449*</b>													

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q3)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*\*4 respondents did not specify their sex*

**Table 4.4c Views on surname change as expected – by age**

Surname change by married women is out of date	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
15-29	22	20	57	51	19	17	9	8	5	5	0	0	112
30-49	19	14	82	60	21	15	10	7	4	3	1	1	135
50-69	26	23	65	57	12	11	11	10	0	0	0	0	113
<b>N=360</b>													

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q3)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

**Table 4.4d Views on surname change as out of date – by age**

Surname change by married women is out of date	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
15-29	3	3	19	17	34	30	40	36	14	13	2	2	112
30-49	10	7	30	22	42	31	38	28	15	11	0	0	135
50-69	13	12	22	20	27	24	37	33	13	12	1	1	113
<b>N=360</b>													

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q3)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

**Table 4.5a Views on surname change by married women**

Surname change by married women:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Non- or multiple response		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Makes life easier	102	23	186	41	67	15	44	10	17	4	37	8	
Is good for children's well-being	87	19	129	29	77	17	77	17	32	7	51	11	
Creates a bond between couples	48	11	150	33	84	19	84	19	33	7	54	12	
Keeps traditional roles for women	65	14	123	27	93	21	82	18	32	7	58	13	
Makes marriage more real	63	14	125	28	73	16	89	20	53	12	50	11	
Is a responsible decision	44	10	131	29	107	24	83	18	29	6	59	13	
Keeps couples together	41	9	56	12	92	20	149	33	58	13	17	13	
Makes women more respectable	36	8	52	12	90	20	132	29	82	18	61	13	
Is too restrictive	9	2	55	12	132	29	158	35	38	8	61	13	
<b>N=453</b>													

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q4)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

**Table 4.5b Views on surname change by married women – men and women**

Surname change by married women:		Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Makes life easier	N	59	43	76	106	38	29	14	30	10	7	14	22
	%	<b>28</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>
Is good for children's well-being	N	47	40	67	60	35	41	29	47	13	19	21	30
	%	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>
Creates a bond between couples	N	26	22	83	66	42	39	28	56	12	21	21	33
	%	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>
Makes marriage more real	N	36	27	64	59	35	36	35	54	22	31	20	30
	%	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>
Is a responsible decision	N	26	18	71	58	51	55	30	52	11	18	23	36
	%	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>
Keeps traditional roles for women	N	30	35	60	60	52	41	34	47	13	19	23	35
	%	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>
Keeps couples together	N	27	14	31	23	47	44	66	82	19	39	22	35
	%	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>
Makes women more respectable	N	21	15	30	22	48	40	60	70	28	54	25	36
	%	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>
Is too restrictive	N	1	8	17	37	60	70	81	76	28	10	25	36
	%	<1	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>N=449*</b>													

*A series of single response items (questionnaire number Q4)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*\*4 respondents did not specify their sex*

**Table 4.5c Views on surname change as 'creating a bond' – Ever-married/civil partnered respondents and those never-married/civil partnered**

Surname change by married women 'creates a bond between couples'	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Yes, I have been married/civil partnered	30	<b>14</b>	92	<b>43</b>	37	<b>17</b>	41	<b>19</b>	15	<b>7</b>	1	<b>1</b>	213
No, I have never been married/civil partnered	14	<b>9</b>	43	<b>28</b>	41	<b>27</b>	39	<b>25</b>	18	<b>12</b>	0	<b>0</b>	154
<b>N=367</b>													

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q4)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 4.5d Views on surname change as ‘making marriage more real’ – Ever-married/civil partnered respondents and those never-married/civil partnered**

Surname change by married women ‘make marriage more real’	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Non- or multiple response		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Yes, I have been married/civil partnered	35	<b>16</b>	74	<b>34</b>	36	<b>17</b>	41	<b>19</b>	29	<b>13</b>	1	<b>1</b>	213
No, I have never been married/civil partnered	21	<b>14</b>	38	<b>24</b>	33	<b>21</b>	40	<b>26</b>	24	<b>15</b>	0	<b>0</b>	154
<b>N=367</b>													

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q4)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*

**Table 4.5e Views on surname change as ‘keeps couples together’ – Ever-married/civil partnered respondents and those never-married/civil partnered**

Surname change by married women ‘keeps couples together’	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Non- or multiple response		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Yes, I have been married/civil partnered	27	<b>13</b>	33	<b>16</b>	44	<b>21</b>	27	<b>36</b>	31	<b>15</b>	1	<b>1</b>	213
No, I have never been married/civil partnered	10	<b>7</b>	16	<b>10</b>	41	<b>27</b>	60	<b>39</b>	27	<b>18</b>	0	<b>0</b>	154
<b>N=367</b>													

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q4)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100*



**Table 4.6a Views on what surname change/retention demonstrates – %**

To what extent does surname change/retention by women demonstrate the following:	Not at all %		A small extent %		Neutral %		A medium extent %		A large extent %		Non- or multiple response %	
	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain
Being married to a 'real' man	47	47	5	4	21	23	4	3	4	2	20	21
Being selfish	46	42	4	8	29	21	1	6	1	2	19	21
Being well-educated	46	39	7	5	24	22	2	9	2	4	19	22
Being a feminist*	45	26	5	11	24	20	3	12	2	9	20	23
Being independent	43	16	7	19	21	14	6	18	2	18	21	15
Being career-minded	42	29	10	10	23	20	2	12	2	8	21	24
Being too fussy	40	36	6	6	29	25	2	7	2	6	21	20
Being a good wife	36	43	8	5	18	24	11	4	7	2	20	22
Being in control	37	27	7	13	27	16	5	15	4	8	20	21
Being a new person	32	40	15	8	19	21	8	7	4	2	21	23
Being in love	25	36	12	5	15	28	14	5	14	4	18	22
Being able to make a choice	24	17	12	13	24	20	14	16	5	15	22	19
Being proud of her husband	19	40	16	6	14	24	17	5	14	5	20	22
Being committed	19	35	19	8	14	25	15	6	20	4	13	22
Being proud of her marriage	18	35	15	8	10	23	22	6	17	7	18	21
Being family-focused	17	35	12	6	14	27	21	6	15	4	21	21
<b>N=453</b>												

*A series of single response items (questionnaire numbers Q5 and Q6)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*\* See responses in Table 4.7*

**Table 4.6b Views on what surname change/retention demonstrates – N**

To what extent does surname change/retention by women demonstrate the following:	Not at all		A small extent		Neutral		A medium extent		A large extent		Non- or multiple response	
	N		N		N		N		N		N	
	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain
Being married to a 'real' man	211	214	22	17	93	103	20	14	16	9	91	96
Being well-educated	208	175	30	24	107	98	11	40	10	17	87	99
Being selfish	206	191	18	36	130	97	6	25	5	11	88	93
Being a feminist*	204	118	23	50	109	90	15	52	11	41	91	102
Being independent	193	71	32	87	94	64	28	81	11	83	95	67
Being career-minded	190	129	43	45	103	89	11	54	11	37	95	99
Being too fussy	181	165	28	28	130	115	10	31	8	25	96	89
Being in control	169	122	30	60	124	74	22	68	19	35	89	94
Being a good wife	163	194	37	23	83	110	51	17	30	11	89	98
Being a new person	145	180	69	36	87	95	36	30	20	9	96	103
Being in love	113	163	60	24	68	125	64	24	65	17	83	100
Being able to make a choice	107	76	54	60	109	92	62	73	23	66	98	86
Being proud of her husband	88	180	70	25	62	108	78	21	65	21	90	98
Being committed	84	160	86	35	64	115	69	27	89	16	61	100
Being proud of her marriage	82	158	67	38	43	105	99	26	79	31	83	95
Being family-focused	77	160	56	29	62	122	93	27	69	19	96	96
<b>N=453</b>												

*A series of single response items (questionnaire numbers Q5 and Q6)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*\* See responses in Table 4.7*

**Table 4.6c Views on surname change/retention demonstrating ‘being committed’ – male and female**

Being comm-itted		Not at all		A small extent		Neutral		A medium extent		A large extent		Non- or multiple response	
		Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain
Male	%	15	35	14	7	14	28	17	6	25	4	14	20
	N	33	74	30	14	30	60	37	13	53	9	30	43
Fe-male	%	22	36	24	9	14	23	13	6	15	3	12	22
	N	51	86	56	21	34	55	31	14	36	7	28	53
<b>N=449</b>													

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q5 and Q6)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100 (Male =212 and Female = 237)*

**Table 4.6d Views on surname change/retention demonstrating ‘being married to a ‘real man’’ – male and female**

Being married to a real man		Not at all		A small extent		Neutral		A medium extent		A large extent		Non- or multiple response	
		Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain
Male	%	42	44	5	3	23	28	5	3	6	3	19	20
	N	89	93	11	7	50	59	10	6	13	6	40	42
Fe-male	%	52	51	5	4	18	19	4	3	1	1	20	21
	N	12	12	11	10	43	44	10	8	3	3	47	50
<b>N=449</b>													

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q5 and Q6)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100 (Male =212 and Female = 237)*

**Table 4.6e Views on surname change/retention demonstrating ‘being family focused’ – male and female**

Being family focused		Not at all		A small extent		Neutral		A medium extent		A large extent		Non- or multiple response	
		Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain
Male	%	15	31	10	7	14	30	21	5	20	6	21	21
	N	31	67	21	15	30	64	44	10	42	13	45	44
Fe-Male	%	19	39	15	6	14	25	21	7	11	3	20	20
	N	46	93	35	14	32	58	49	17	27	6	47	48
<b>N=449</b>													

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q5 and Q6)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100 (Male =212 and Female = 237)*

**Table 4.6f Views on surname change/retention demonstrating ‘being family focused’ – by parental status**

Being family focused		Not at all		A small extent		Neutral		A medium extent		A large extent		Non- or multiple response	
		Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain
Parent	%	13	38	12	7	12	24	20	6	22	5	21	21
	N	29	83	25	15	26	52	44	12	47	10	46	45
Non-parent	%	23	37	16	7	18	35	24	8	11	5	9	9
	N	45	74	31	14	36	69	48	15	21	9	17	17
<b>N=415</b>													

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q5 and Q6)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100 (Parent = 217 and non-parent = 198)*

**Table 4.6g Views on surname change/retention demonstrating ‘being a good wife’ – male and female**

Being a good wife		Not at all		A small extent		Neutral		A medium extent		A large extent		Non- or multiple response	
		Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain	Change	Retain
Male	%	28	38	8	7	20	28	17	4	8	2	18	20
	N	60	82	18	15	43	59	36	9	17	5	39	43
Female	%	44	47	8	3	17	22	6	3	6	3	19	22
	N	103	112	19	8	40	51	15	8	13	6	46	51
<b>N=415</b>													

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q5 and Q6)*

*Due to rounding percentages may not sum 100 (Male =212 and Female = 237)*

**Table 4.7 Views on being a feminist**

Being a feminist is:	All		Male		Female	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
A good thing	20	91	38	18	53	22
A bad thing	8	37	27	13	10	4
Neither good nor bad	44	200	87	41	113	48
Don't know	8	37	17	8	19	8
Non- or multiple response	19	88	44	21	41	17
<b>N=</b>	<b>453</b>		<b>212*</b>		<b>237*</b>	

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q5a)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*\*4 respondents did not specify their sex*

**Table 4.8a Views on acceptability of using different surnames**

Is it ever Ok for married couples to use different surnames?	All		Male		Female	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Yes	<b>56</b>	253	<b>53</b>	112	<b>60</b>	141
No	<b>22</b>	10	<b>27</b>	58	<b>18</b>	42
Don't know	<b>12</b>	53	<b>9</b>	19	<b>14</b>	34
No response	<b>10</b>	47	<b>11</b>	24	<b>8</b>	19
<b>N=</b>	<b>453</b>		<b>212*</b>		<b>237*</b>	

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q8)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*\*4 respondents did not specify their sex*

**Table 4.8b Reasons why different surnames are OK or not**

Reason	Yes, different surname are OK	No, different surnames are not OK	Don't know
	N	N	N
Choice	<b>77</b>	.	<b>3</b>
Career	<b>57</b>	.	.
Why not	<b>26</b>	.	.
Identity	<b>17</b>	.	.
Simplicity	<b>16</b>	.	.
Generic OK	<b>14</b>	.	.
Not part of marriage	<b>10</b>	.	.
Family reasons	<b>8</b>	.	<b>1</b>
Independence	<b>8</b>	.	.
Culture/religion	<b>6</b>	.	.
Equality	<b>5</b>	.	<b>1</b>
Aesthetics	<b>4</b>	.	<b>1</b>
With children	<b>3</b>	.	.
Anti-tradition	<b>3</b>	.	.
Without children	<b>1</b>	.	.
Unromantic	<b>1</b>	.	.
Marital unity	.	<b>16</b>	.
Child welfare	.	<b>16</b>	.
Confusing	.	<b>15</b>	.
Nonsensical	.	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>
Tradition/religion	.	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
Part of marriage	.	<b>8</b>	.
Improper	.	<b>6</b>	.
Wife's duty	.	<b>5</b>	.
Legalities	.	<b>1</b>	.
Vague	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	.
Not sure	.	.	<b>1</b>
<b>N= 285</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>9</b>

*An open response question (questionnaire number Q8)*

*Respondents gave up to three reasons (285 first reasons, 62 second reasons and 4 third reasons)*

**Table 4.9 Views on men who take their wives' surnames**

Views	Male N	Female N	Total N	
Choice	18	45	<b>63</b>	<b>Positive 153</b>
Why not?	21	27	<b>48</b>	
Positive qualities (e.g. progressive, dedicated)	13	16	<b>29</b>	
Reverse tradition	5	6	<b>11</b>	
I did this	2	0	<b>2</b>	
Unusual	19	39	<b>58</b>	<b>Neutral 179</b>
No experience	14	26	<b>40</b>	
Don't know	28	21	<b>49</b>	
Context-specific	9	5	<b>14</b>	
Wife's status	7	5	<b>12</b>	
Aesthetics	7	5	<b>12</b>	
Shared name	2	3	<b>5</b>	
Not unusual	1	0	<b>1</b>	
Illegal	1	0	<b>1</b>	<b>Negative 157</b>
Stupid/pointless/nonsense/sick	36	27	<b>63</b>	
Don't agree	19	20	<b>39</b>	
Unmanly	19	12	<b>31</b>	
Not for me	5	2	<b>7</b>	
Male lineage	5	2	<b>7</b>	
Prefer tradition	2	3	<b>5</b>	
Confusing/impractical	2	3	<b>5</b>	
Vague	3	2	<b>5</b>	<b>Other 5</b>
<b>N=364</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>191</b>		

*An open response question (questionnaire number Q9)*

*Respondents gave up to four replies (364 first reasons, 116 second reasons, 21 third reasons and six fourth reasons)*

**Table 4.10a Views on life-long surnames**

Do you think people should keep the same surname for life? Please state why (reasons given in Table 3.10b)	All		Male		Female	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Yes	<b>34</b>	152	<b>34</b>	72	<b>34</b>	80
No	<b>34</b>	156	<b>32</b>	69	<b>37</b>	87
Don't know	<b>18</b>	81	<b>17</b>	36	<b>19</b>	45
Yes, unless married woman	<b>3</b>	13	<b>5</b>	10	<b>1</b>	3
No response*	<b>10</b>	51	<b>12</b>	26	<b>9</b>	21
<b>N=</b>	<b>453</b>		<b>212**</b>		<b>237**</b>	

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q10)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*\* Despite giving no response, 7 gave a reason for/against life-long surnames – see Table 4.10b*

*\*\*4 respondents did not specify their sex*

**Table 4.10b Reasons for favouring life-long surnames or not**

<b>Do you think people should keep the same surname for life? Please state why</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Yes, unless married woman</b>	<b>No response</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	
Flexibility/Choice*	9	46	22	.	3	<b>80</b>
Martial name	.	33	1	12	1	<b>47</b>
Ancestry	33	.	1	2	.	<b>36</b>
Life changes	.	30	3	2	1	<b>36</b>
Simplicity*	22	4	7	.	.	<b>33</b>
Identity	29	.	.	.	.	<b>29</b>
Context-specific	2	8	4	.	2	<b>16</b>
Indifferent	.	5	6	.	1	<b>12</b>
Men only	.	4	.	4	1	<b>9</b>
Family identity	.	6	2	.	.	<b>8</b>
Why bother changing?	5	.	.	.	.	<b>5</b>
Negative aesthetics	.	6	.	.	.	<b>6</b>
Disguise/Reinvention	.	6	1	.	.	<b>7</b>
Why not change?	.	3	.	1	.	<b>4</b>
Family distance	.	2	.	.	.	<b>2</b>
Women still unequal	.	2	.	.	.	<b>2</b>
Translations	.	2	.	.	.	<b>2</b>
Inheritance	.	1	.	.	1	<b>2</b>
Law	2	.	.	.	.	<b>2</b>
Positive aesthetics	1	.	1	.	.	<b>2</b>
Equal	1	.	.	.	.	<b>2</b>
Vague	10	2	.	.	.	<b>12</b>
<b>N=286</b>						

*An open-ended question (questionnaire number Q10)*

*Respondents gave up to three replies (286 first reasons, 57 second reasons and 6 third reasons)*

*\* The arguments being made here are the same, but in reverse (i.e. keep/change surnames as one pleases or keep/change surnames, whichever is simpler)*

**Table 4.11a Views on passing of surnames to children**

<b>Should couples have an equal chance of passing their surname to their children? Please state why: (reasons given in Table 3.11b)</b>	<b>All</b>		<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Yes	<b>53</b>	242	<b>48</b>	102	<b>59</b>	140
No	<b>20</b>	92	<b>26</b>	55	<b>16</b>	37
Don't know	<b>14</b>	65	<b>14</b>	30	<b>15</b>	35
No response	<b>12</b>	54	<b>12</b>	26	<b>10</b>	24
<b>N=</b>		<b>453</b>		<b>212*</b>		<b>237*</b>

*A single response item (questionnaire number Q13)*

*Due to rounding figures may not sum 100*

*\*4 respondents did not specify their sex*

**Table 4.11b Views on passing of surnames to children – reasons**

<b>Should couples have an equal chance of passing their surname to their children? Please state why:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>
Couple's choice/why not?	42	.	3	<b>45</b>
Equality	39	.	1	<b>40</b>
Father's surname only	.	35	2	<b>37</b>
Shared family surname**	7	10	3	<b>20</b>
Parental ancestry	16	.	.	<b>16</b>
Why not?	14	.	1	<b>15</b>
Lone or unmarried mother	6	3*	2	<b>11</b>
Surname survival	6	.	.	<b>6</b>
Context-specific	8	.	3	<b>11</b>
Child's choice	10	.	2	<b>12</b>
Tradition	.	10	.	<b>10</b>
Male ancestry	.	8	1	<b>9</b>
Complicated	.	6	2	<b>8</b>
Hyphenated surname OK	8	.	.	<b>8</b>
Confusing	.	7	2	<b>7</b>
In theory	6	.	1	<b>7</b>
Identity	7	.	.	<b>7</b>
Child welfare	.	6	.	<b>6</b>
Immaterial	.	1	3	<b>4</b>
Ok, but prefer father's	3	.	1	<b>4</b>
Don't know	.	.	2	<b>2</b>
Aesthetics	3	.	.	<b>3</b>
Ok, but prefer mother's	1	.	1	<b>2</b>
For boys only	2	.	.	<b>2</b>
Affection	1	.	.	<b>1</b>
If good reason	1	.	.	<b>1</b>
Vague	2	4	.	<b>6</b>
<b>N=250</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>22</b>	

*An open ended question (questionnaire number Q13)*

*Respondents gave up to three replies (250 first reasons, 47 second reasons and 4 third reasons)*

*\*Father-to-child surnames preferred, except when mothers were unmarried and/or fathers were absent*

*\*\*These respondents made the same point – couples should decide upon a 'family' surname*



**Table 4.12a Surnames given to respondent's children at birth**

Whose surname were your children given at birth?	%	N
Surname of father*	89	185
Surname of both parents (origin unclear)	4	9
Married surname (origin unclear)	2	4
Surname of mother*	3	7
Surname of mother's husband ( <i>not child's biological father</i> )	<1	1
Individual surname	1	3
<b>N=209</b>		

*An open-ended question (questionnaire number Q14b)*

*Respondents gave up to three replies (209 first reasons, 1 second reason and 1 third reason)*

*\*Not clear if other parent used this surname too*

**Table 4.12b Reasons for giving child certain surname**

Whose surname were your children given at birth? Please state why:	Father's	Both parents	Married	Mother's	Individual
	N	N	N	N	N
Tradition/right thing	66	.	.	.	.
Shared surname	37	1	1	1	0
Patriarchy/Patriliny (Shows father as head/male ancestry)	28	.	.	.	.
Choice (Joint decision/father or mother's choice/free choice)	15	.	.	.	.
Mother's status (mother has no surname/mother might marry/mother unmarried/mother known from giving birth)	9	.	.	1	.
Simplicity	7	.	.	.	.
Religion	5	.	.	.	.
The law	4	.	.	.	.
No discussion	4	.	.	.	.
Aesthetics	3	1	.	1	.
Nationality (father's or mother's)	2	.	.	1	.
Pointless otherwise	2	.	.	.	.
Equal heritage	.	2	.	.	.
Own identity	.	.	.	.	1
<b>N=154</b>					

*An open response question (questionnaire number Q14b)*

*Respondents gave up to three replies (154 first reasons, 34 second reasons and 4 third reasons)*

# Appendix 5

## Consent Form

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: A NAME OF ONE'S OWN? IDENTITY, CHOICE AND PERFORMANCE IN MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

DATE:

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH: You have been asked to take part in an interview which forms part of a PhD research project at the London School of Economics. The purpose of the project is to explore attitudes towards the surnames of married women.

### PARTICIPATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Your participation in this research project involves a 1 to 2 hour interview with Rebekah Wilson, the researcher on the project. The interview will be audiotaped. All interviews will be kept confidential and will be fully anonymised. This means that personal information such as your name will not be used in any work that results from this research.

Results of this research project will be written up as part of a PhD dissertation at the London School of Economics. In addition, results may be published in an academic journal and discussed at conferences.

You have the right to stop the interview at any time. You also have the right to ask the researcher for the audiotape at the end of the interview if you do not want the researcher to have it.

### CONSENT

I understand the purpose of this research project and all my questions have been answered. I understand that my interview will be kept confidential and will be fully anonymised. I understand that I have the right to stop the interview at any time.

I give my consent to be interviewed.

-----  
Participant's Signature and Date  
Date

-----  
Participant's Printed Name and

-----  
Interviewer's Signature (witness)/ Date  
Name/Date

-----  
Interviewer's Printed

Contact:       NAME  
                  PHONE NUMBER/POSTAL ADDRESS

# Appendix 6

## Interview Questions

- 1. Introduction**
  - Confidentiality
  - Consent
  - Time
  
- 2. Family background**
  - Growing up – where, with whom and why?
  - Surname(s) used as a child?
  - Surname shared with anyone close (with whom)?
  - Is surname still used at all by anyone?
  - Position in family?
  - Relationship between parents? Jobs held?
  - Contact with maternal and paternal relatives
  
- 3. Maiden name**
  - Strong attachment to childhood name?
  - Meaning ascribed to the name?
  - Stories about the name?
  - Particular memories?
  - Symbolic nature (e.g. people, places)?
  - Role played in identity formation?
  
- 4. Dating and marriage**
  - Interest in marriage – did this change over time?
  - When and where she met her husband? Some details about him
  - How long they went out?
  - Did she ‘try out’ his name?
  - Did they live together before marrying?
  - Why the couple decided to marry?
  - When was the wedding? What was it like? Strongest memories of the day?
  - Did the wedding say anything particular about her? Did it differ from mother?
  - Changes made as a result of marriage (e.g. career/work, finances)
  - Are the couple still together?
  - Would she do it again?
  
- 5. Decisions and choice**
  - Time spent thinking about surname? Has she ever reflected on naming?
  - Did she talk it over with anyone? What were their comments?
  - Did she think about any other options?
  - Did she feel able to make a choice (naming rights)?
  - Ease of decision?
  - What influenced her decision (e.g. convenience, aesthetics, work)?
  - Any differences impact on decision (culture, nationality or religion)?
  - How would she describe decision (e.g. traditional or unconventional)?
  - What does the name represent (e.g. union, adulthood, independence, choice)?
  - Has name played a role in forming her marital identity?

- Would she make the same decision again?

***For name-changers only***

- Did she change names immediately?
- Memories of first usage? Signing/saying name? Emotions? How did others react?
- How did this feel?
- Does current surname have any particular meaning to her?
- Does she see it as her own?
- How does she view her previous name?
- Any ways in which the name is kept alive?

**6. Benefits, costs and impacts**

- Benefits of using particular surname option? What does it offer?
- Costs of using particular surname option? What does it take away (e.g. distant from own family, suspicion)?
- People's reaction to surname option (e.g. hostility, bureaucratic pressures)? How does she react?
- Any need to explain use of surname option? To whom (e.g. co-workers, parents, children)? How does that feel?
- How has name impacted on relationships (e.g. with husband, in-laws, children)?

***Name-keepers and others***

- How did parents/in-laws react?
- Impacts related to separation, divorce or widowhood?
- Remarriage?

**7. Views on self**

- Schooling/further education
- When she talks about family, who is included?
- Place of residence? Why (e.g. close to family, work, schools)?
- Form of address (e.g. Mrs or Ms?) How does this make her feel?
- Name(s) she'd like to be remembered by

**8. Views on marriage**

- Word used to describe views on marriage?
- What/who has influenced her outlook (e.g. parents or choice of work)?
- Does her marriage match description given?
- Role surnames play in relationship with husband?
- Does it bring anything particular to the marriage? What does it symbolise?
- Do views on surnames match views about marriage? Why (ideas about masculinity and femininity)?

**9. Equality**

- Extent to which she and husband are dependent and independent from each other?
- How does this affect the running household (e.g. division of housework and finances)?
- Is she happy with this arrangement (any pressures)?
- Do surname views fit views about married women's roles and responsibilities? What are these views (does feminism feature)?

**10. Children**

- Children/plans to have children? Age at births
- Surname used and why (e.g. protection, show a connection)? Who had the greatest say?
- Attempts to match first and surnames (for sons and daughters)?
- Role played by surnames in family (e.g. public link, family status)?
- Views on custom of giving children father's surname (e.g. erasure of mother, conflicting interest)? Is it preferable and practical?
- Remarriage, divorce
- Any problems?

**11. General naming**

- Meaningfulness of surname change? Important role to play? Any problems? Any stigma associated with certain names? Radical nature of alternatives? Is naming something to be worried about?

**12. Close**

- Anything else?
- Choose false name
- Closure

# Appendix 7

## Interviewee Portraits

Name	Jalila Almira Sehdev (née Ruhai)	Occupation	Housewife
Born	Pakistan	Age first married	24
Age	58	Relationship status	Divorced
Ethnicity	Asian/Asian British	Children, if any	One
Religion, if any	Muslim	Venue of interview	Café
Qualifications, if any	A-levels	Length of interview	1 hour 32 minutes

Parents

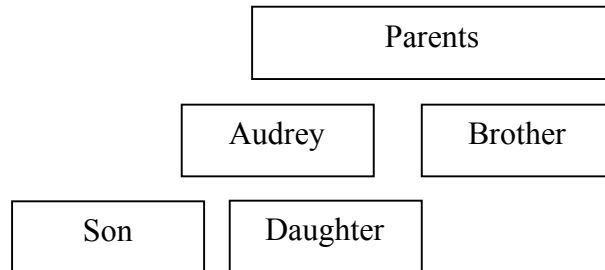
Sister	Brother	Brother	Brother	Brother	Jalila	Brother
					Son	

Jalila was born to a wealthy Pakistani family. Her father was a shopkeeper and her mother was a housewife. She had an arranged marriage in the mid-1970s, and moved to England shortly after to live with her husband. He was fifteen years her senior.

Jalila's marriage was very unhappy as her husband was abusive. The couple had a child once married, but no further intimate contact soon after his birth. They divorced in the 1990s, yet remarried. Later, they divorced again. Jalila spent many hours each week caring for her son who suffered from a mental illness.

Jalila had never undertaken paid work, due to her husband's wishes. Now divorced, she was thinking about getting a job, but at 59 years old, felt it might be too late. She lived with her ex-husband, but was awaiting a financial settlement from her recent divorce so she could get her own place.

Name	Audrey Peters (née Stewart-Hogg)	Occupation	Housewife/ volunteer
Born	Not specified	Age first married	30
Age	59	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Café
Qualifications, if any	BSc	Length of interview	1 hour 6 minutes



Audrey spent her childhood in Africa, the Middle East and the Far East. Her parents were foreign diplomats. She became a qualified librarian, and it was through work she met her husband. The couple lived in several countries after marrying and settled in Belgium. It was there her son was born, and her daughter two years later.

When Audrey and family later moved to London, they lived with her mother-in-law. She regretted agreeing to this arrangement, as it placed her under much stress, causing her to suffer with terrible nightmares.

Audrey felt dominated by her husband, but had worked when her children were young, despite his wishes. Of late, she was mainly involved in voluntary work. Her husband had been made redundant several years before and this had significantly strained their relationship. There was little money and he had become very dependent on Audrey. The situation had become more bearable since he had found work. She lived in an affluent neighbourhood in west London.

Name	Amy Finlay (née Archer)	Occupation	Unemployed (disability)
Born	London	Age first married	27
Age	44	Relationship status	Separated/ cohabiting
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	One
Religion, if any	Not given	Venue of interview	Café
Qualifications, if any	GCSEs	Length of interview	55 minutes

Adoptive Parents

Adoptive Brother

Amy

Son

Amy's mother was an unmarried Canadian university student who travelled to London to give birth. Her birth father, a pilot in the Canadian military, died in a training accident before she was born. She was later adopted as an infant.

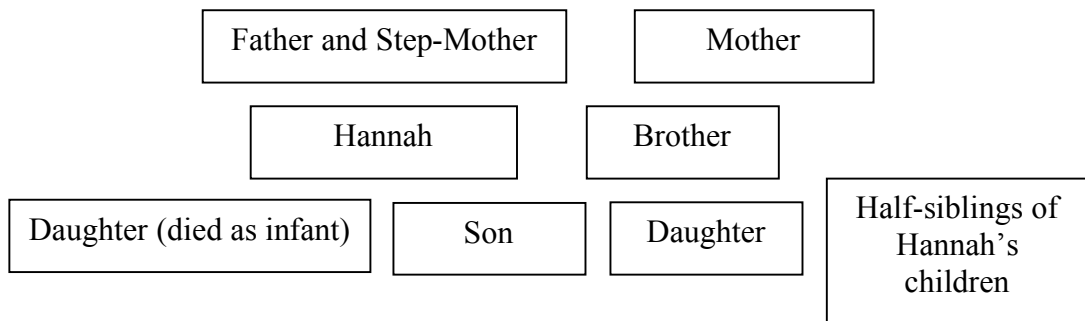
Amy grew up in Middlesex with her adoptive parents and their son, who was five years older. Her adoptive father was a chartered surveyor and her adoptive mother was a housewife. She attended private school until her father was made redundant, when her family moved house and she joined a state school

Amy had suffered with anorexia as a teenager and spent several years in hospitals and an adolescent unit to treat her depression. She moved north in the early 1980s where she met her husband. The couple married after seven years, but separated after five years due to his infidelity and substance abuse. After they separated, Amy became pregnant, but the relationship with the child's birth father was short-lived. She raised her son alone and his father died when he was aged eight.

Amy was not working due to ill-health. She had previously carried out secretarial and customer care work. She had lived with her son in a small flat, but had recently moved to a larger place and her new partner had joined them. She was contemplating marrying her new partner, once she was able to divorce her estranged husband.



Name	Hannah Pollard (formerly Spencer-Baldwin)	Occupation	Youth worker
Born	42	Age first married	23
Age	Isle of Man	Relationship status	Single
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Hannah's house
Qualifications, if any	GCSEs	Length of interview	54 minutes

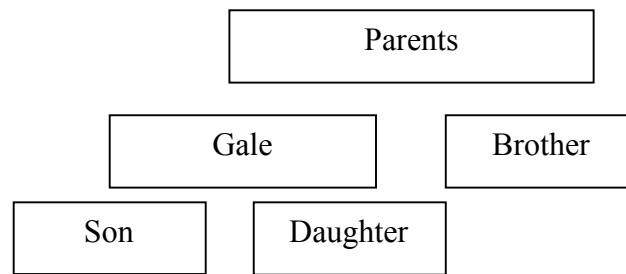


Hannah was born on the Isle of Man. Aged five, her parents separated and she went to live with her father until aged 18. Her brother lived with her mother and she saw both of them weekly. Both parents eventually re-married, but her mother divorced for a second time.

Hannah moved to England aged 18, but moved back to the island when she married aged 23. The couple separated the following year and later divorced. She returned to England after her marriage ended. She settled in north London and had several intermittent relationships – the longest being with her children's father.

Hannah later moved to east London where she was housed in council accommodation. She had lived in her present two-bedroom flat, with her two children, for seven years. She worked part-time at a local after-school club in a deprived area of east London.

Name	Gale Oakes (formerly Yanofski)	Occupation	Local government manager
Born	Hertford	Age first married	23
Age	54	Relationship status	Remarried
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	None	Venue of interview	Gale's house
Qualifications, if any	Master's	Length of interview	1 hour 2 minutes

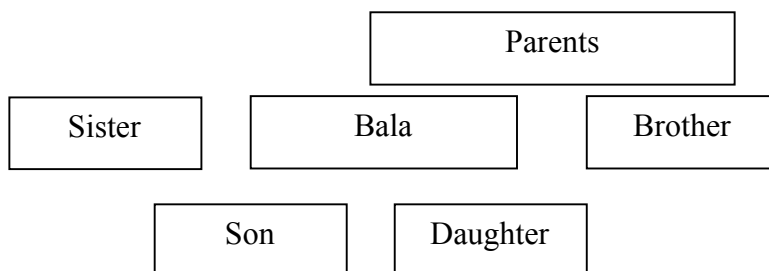


Gale lived in the same house in Hertford throughout her childhood. Her mother's family was local to the area, but her father's family had moved there from London. He had worked as a self-employed French polisher. Her mother cared for Gale's grandmother, but began working part-time when Gale was a teenager, mainly as a house cleaner.

Gale studied at university. She married aged 23, after undertaking postgraduate research. They had married quickly as her husband was about to take a job overseas, and his continual overseas work led to the couple divorcing seven years later. It was during her first marriage that Gale was introduced to her second husband.

Gale and her second husband bought a house together in 1984 and had two children in 1987 and 1992. They married in 2006, just shortly before her husband embarked on a long stint of working out of the country. It was her husband's first marriage. Gale worked in local government, and lived in suburban area of west London.

Name	Bala Chaudhary (née Asthana)	Occupation	Librarian
Born	Nairobi, Kenya	Age first married	19
Age	49	Relationship status	Widowed
Ethnicity	Asian/Asian British	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Bala's workplace
Qualifications, if any	BA/BSc	Length of interview	50 minutes



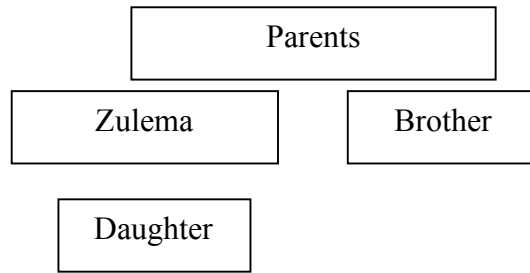
Bala's family were Indian Kenyans who were forced to leave Kenya when Bala was aged 13. They moved to Leicester. Her parents arranged for her to marry aged 19 in the late 1970s. Her husband was almost 20 years her senior. The couple had two children by the mid-1980s.

For the first ten years of her marriage, Bala lived with her husband's large extended family. It was an uncomfortable time. She was responsible for most domestic work in the house (as the youngest adult), and she was also expected to care for the children of her husband's siblings. Yet, Bala was often unpopular with her relatives.

Bala was eager to undertake paid employment, but her husband disallowed this. She was permitted to attend night school, but struggled with the workload because of her duties at home. She later obtained a BSc after her husband died and qualified as librarian.

Following her husband's death ten years ago, Bala had suffered panic attacks. She was keen to move away from Leicester and start a new life. She found out that a neighbouring family was moving to London and needed a housekeeper. She took the job and moved to the capital with her children. She lived in east London.

Name	Zulema Aldomar Thomas (née Aldomar Mendez)	Occupation	Teacher
Born	Madrid, Spain	Age first married	22
Age	57	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White EU	Children, if any	One
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Café
Qualifications, if any	PhD	Length of interview	55 minutes



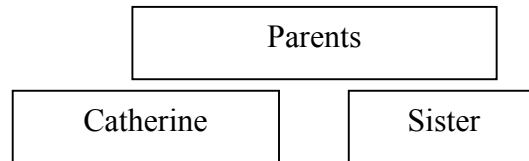
Born in Spain, Zulema lived as a child in a large apartment in central Madrid. She attended a French school in the city, as her parents were hostile to the ruling Franco regime. She completed a baccalaureate in 1968, and went on to study further in Spain and Wales.

Zulema's father lectured at a university. His anti-Franco stance, and that of his father, resulted in the two men being imprisoned for four years during the Spanish Civil War. Her mother was a doctor based in a research laboratory.

Zulema met her husband in the late 1960s. He was an Oxford student carrying out PhD research in Spain. The couple married in London in 1973, but they returned to Spain to live and work. They had a daughter five years later.

For many years, Zulema worked for an airline company. But, when her daughter was 11, they moved to the UK as the country offered better treatment for her diabetic daughter. She worked as a language teacher and lived in a suburban area of west London.

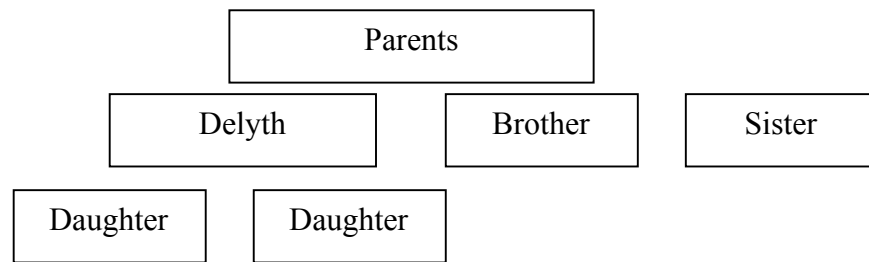
Name	Catherine Walker (formerly Hoffman-Walker and Glowienka)	Occupation	Technical author
Born	Near Bath	Age first married	22
Age	52	Relationship status	Single (widowed and divorced)
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	None
Religion, if any	Not given	Venue of interview	Café
Qualifications, if any	MA/MSc	Length of interview	37 minutes



Catherine was born near Bath where she lived until age five, when her family moved to Germany as her father was in the armed forces. She did all her schooling in Germany and moved back to England aged 30. Her mother did not work when Catherine was a child, but began working after she had left home.

Catherine married aged 22, while studying at university in Germany. Her husband, also a student, died in an accident two years later. She remarried three years later. Catherine and her second husband lived together in Germany for four years, until she took a trip to England and decided to move back. The marriage had begun to ‘fizzle out’ and Catherine made the move alone. The couple later divorced amicably. She lived alone in an affluent part of west London, but was in a 16-year-long relationship.

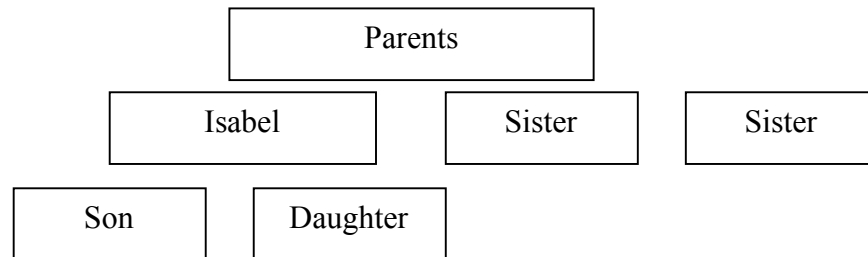
Name	Delyth Bryan (née Murray)	Occupation	Senior civil servant
Born	Liverpool	Age first married	29
Age	58	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	Not given	Venue of interview	Delyth's workplace
Qualifications, if any	MA/MSc	Length of interview	41 minutes



Delyth was born in Liverpool to working-class Irish Catholic parents. She left the city to attend university in south west England. She trained to be a teacher and later bought a house in west London where she worked at a nearby primary school. Delyth quickly became a deputy headteacher after graduating. She later worked as a headteacher for 20 years, and then took a high-status job in the civil service.

She met her husband in the late-1970s and they married within a year. The couple moved to Richmond after their first child was born. They later had a second daughter. Delyth lived in a wealthy area of west London with her husband and their two daughters in their 20s.

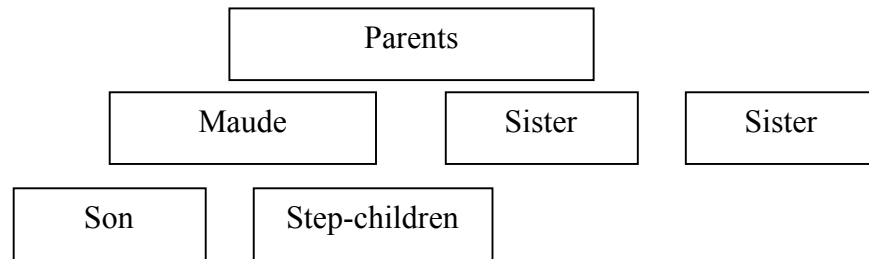
Name	Isabel Thackery (née Bishop)	Occupation	Retired
Born	Kenya	Age first married	20
Age	64	Relationship status	Divorced/ cohabiting
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	Not given	Venue of interview	Café
Qualifications, if any	GCSE, Vocational	Length of interview	31 minutes



Isabel was born in Kenya, but her family soon moved back to the UK, where they lived for a short time in Orkney and then in Cornwall. Her father had been a civil engineer but was regularly at home when Isabel was young due to illness. He died when she was a child. She continued to live with her mother, who worked as a part-time teacher, and two younger sisters.

Isabel left home aged 16. She started her working life in a large London department store. She married, aged 20, after dating her husband for four years. The couple moved to Bath where her husband was stationed in the armed forces. They had two children. They divorced acrimoniously when their children were teenagers. Isabel moved to Richmond with her daughter to be closer to her mother who had retired there, and her sister. Isabel lived in west London and shared a house with her partner.

Name	Maude Myerscough (née Allen)	Occupation	Librarian
Born	India	Age first married	32
Age	60	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	One (and step-children)
Religion, if any	None	Venue of interview	Maude's workplace
Qualifications, if any	MA/MSc	Length of interview	50 minutes

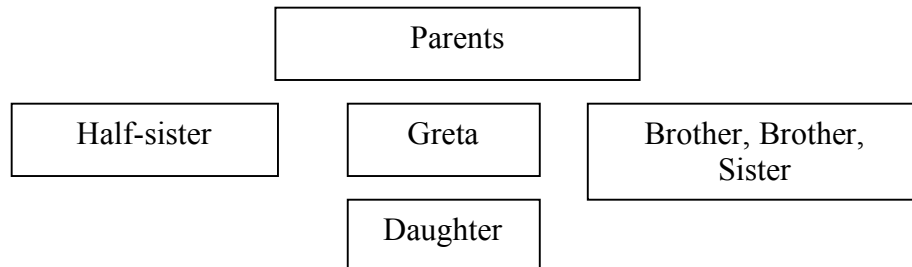


Maude was born in India, but her family soon moved back to Scotland. The family lived in several places in Scotland, but mainly in a market town in Aberdeenshire where she attended school. Her father was a dentist, but had also worked for the Indian Police Force. Her mother worked when she was a baby, but stopped when she was expecting her second child. She began working again when Maude was aged 17 when the family moved to Perthshire. She had two younger sisters.

Maude studied at a prestigious university in Scotland. She later moved to London where she worked at a university. She married aged 32 after dating her husband for about a year. Her husband was 17 her elder and had been married before. The couple had one son, and her husband had children from a previous marriage. She lived in a suburban area of west London with her husband.



Name	Greta Stefánsdóttir	Occupation	Teacher
Born	Iceland	Age first married	24
Age	49	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White EU	Children, if any	One
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Café
Qualifications, if any	BA/BSc	Length of interview	48 minutes



Greta was born in Iceland. She had three younger siblings, and learned of a half-sister when she was 13. Her father worked as an architect and her mother as a medical laboratory technician.

Greta went to university in London and she had lived there ever since. She met her British husband in Norway and moved in together. They married a few years later. Greta had worked in several part-time jobs, including art therapy, alongside caring for her daughter who had special educational needs. She began working full-time as teacher when her daughter was 13. She lived in east London.

Name	Erica McLeod	Occupation	Research and design
Born	Pennsylvania, USA	Age first married	27
Age	40	Relationship status	Divorced and separated
Ethnicity	White American	Children, if any	None
Religion, if any	None	Venue of interview	Restaurant
Qualifications, if any	MA/MSc	Length of interview	53 minutes

Parents
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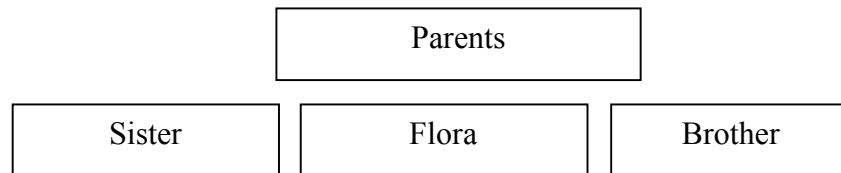
  

Half-brother	Half-brother	Erica
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Erica was born in Pennsylvania, USA. She had two brothers, who she later learned were half-brothers. Her mother had been married previously and her father adopted her two sons, aged four and five.

Erica met her first husband while undertaking post-graduate studies in cognitive psychology. They married when she was 27. They had dated for about three years, during which time they had lived together. They divorced after nine years. Erica moved to Paris where she met her second husband. They married after dating for six months and moved to London. The couple later separated and were planning to divorce. Erica continued to live in London and was hoping to gain British citizenship. She worked for a product design company.

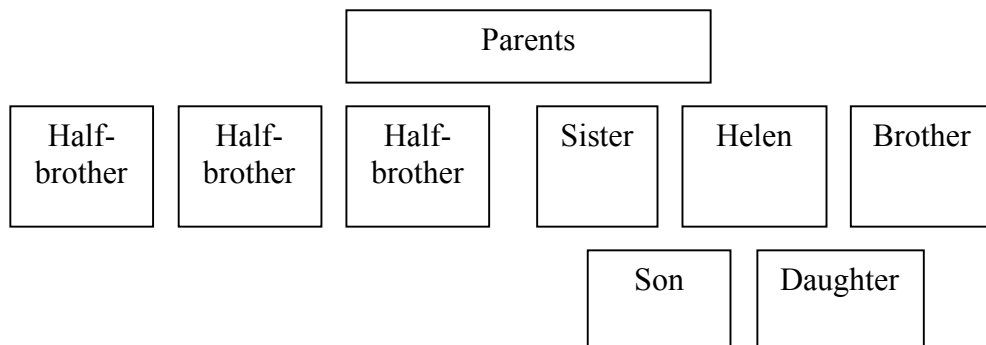
Name	Flora Quirk	Occupation	FE lecturer and psychological therapist
Born	Isle of Man	Age first married	37
Age	57	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	None
Religion, if any	None	Venue of interview	Community library
Qualifications, if any	MA/MSc	Length of interview	1 hour 2 minutes



Flora was born in Kent, but lived in several countries in the Far East as a child, as well as London, Scotland and the Isle of Man. She later lived in Sussex with her mother after her parents divorced. Her parents began their separation when she was 13 and finally parted company when she was 17. Her father worked in the armed forces.

Flora continued to travel throughout her life, and lived in Egypt and Sudan. She had worked in education for most of her career, either training teachers or working with disadvantaged learners. But, more recently, she had trained as a psychotherapist. She married a former university friend at the age of 37, who she had dated sporadically, although he was seven years older than her. They lived in Egypt together for a while, but later settled in east London.

Name	Helen Gordon (née Hughes)	Occupation	Retired teacher
Born	Enfield, London	Age first married	23
Age	74	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	None	Venue of interview	Helen's house
Qualifications, if any	BA/BSc	Length of interview	1 hour 2 minutes

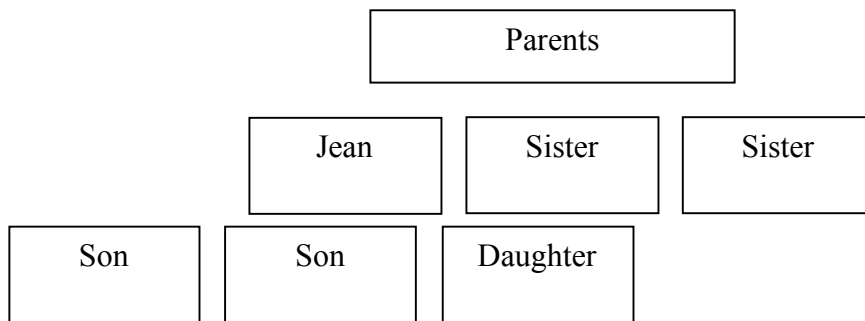


Helen was born to a working-class family in north London. Her father was a scientific instrument maker whose first wife died young. He later married Helen's mother and the couple had three children. Helen also had three half-brothers from her father's first married. She left school aged 16 despite being a high-flyer and wanting to attend college. She worked for a utility company for 12 years.

Helen met her husband aged 23 and they married five years later. She continued to work until her son was born. The couple later had a daughter. The family moved numerous times on account of her husband taking different teaching jobs. She herself trained to be a teacher aged 40, after much persuasion from her husband. She became a deputy headteacher of a primary school and was acting headteacher just before retiring.

Helen and her husband retired to Devon to live near their son, but she frequently visited London to enjoy its cultural events. She decided to move back to the capital, but her husband preferred the countryside and moved to Essex, close to their daughter. The couple had since 'lived apart together'.

Name	Jean Morgan (née Buckle)	Occupation	Teacher
Born	Beckenham, London	Age first married	23
Age	55	Relationship status	Divorced/cohabiting
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Three
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Jean's house
Qualifications, if any	A-levels	Length of interview	45 minutes



Jean was born in Beckenham, south east London, where she lived until age 12. She then moved to Hertfordshire for her father's work and stayed there until she went to teacher training college. Her father worked as a cost clerk and her mother as a bookkeeper.

Jean worked as a teacher. She met her husband while training to teach. He was her clarinet teacher. After marrying, the couple lived in Hampton and shared a house with Jackie's mother-in-law. They had three children.

Jean and her husband divorced when she was 45. They had been separated for ten years and her husband wanted to re-marry. She had lived with her partner of 17 years in a suburban area of south west London.

Name	Grace Carr (née Drakes)	Occupation	Research director
Born	Leicestershire	Age first married	32
Age	33	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	One
Religion, if any	None	Venue of interview	Grace's house
Qualifications, if any	MA/MSc	Length of interview	1 hour 6 minutes

Parents

Grace

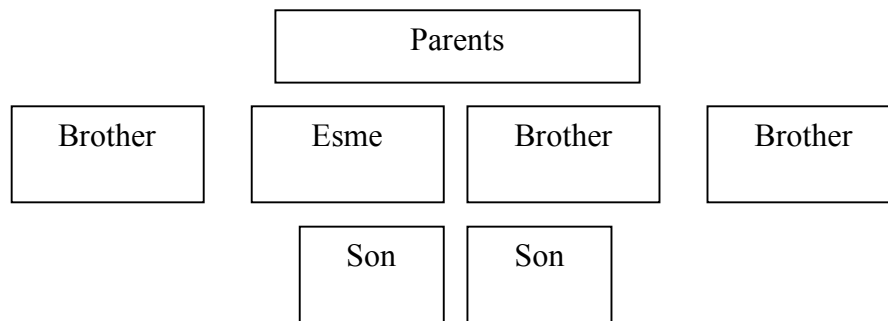
Sister

Daughter

Grace grew up near Nottingham. She lived with her parents and younger sister until she left for university. Her father had worked as a distribution manager in a large warehouse and her mother had recently retired after working part-time as a bank clerk.

Grace travelled to Australia after finishing university and lived in Sydney for a couple of years. She settled in east London upon her return. She met her husband through mutual friends in the late 1990s and they had recently married. She worked for a research company, but was on maternity leave when interviewed, after recently giving birth to her first child.

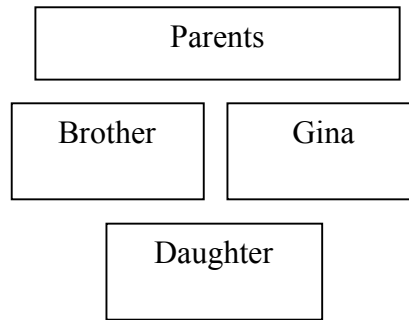
Name	Emse Bowland (née Asher)	Occupation	Teacher
Born	Harrow, Middlesex	Age first married	28
Age	54	Relationship status	Widowed
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	None	Venue of interview	Emse's house
Qualifications, if any	A-levels	Length of interview	30 minutes



Esme grew up in Harrow. Her father worked as a teacher and her mum was a bookkeeper. She left home to attend teacher training college. Her first teaching post took her away from London, but she moved back after one year.

Esme and her husband dated for about two years before marrying, and they married when she was 28. They initially had a flat in Twickenham, but moved to Hampton. They had two sons. Esme had always worked as a primary school teacher. She had reduced her hours when her children were younger, but was again working part-time. She was living alone in a suburban area of south west London as her husband had recently passed away.

Name	Gina Pryce (née Van Der Beck)	Occupation	Teaching assistant
Born	Norfolk	Age first married	25
Age	57	Relationship status	Divorced
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	One
Religion, if any	Not given	Venue of interview	Gina's house
Qualifications, if any	GCSE/Vocational	Length of interview	54 minutes

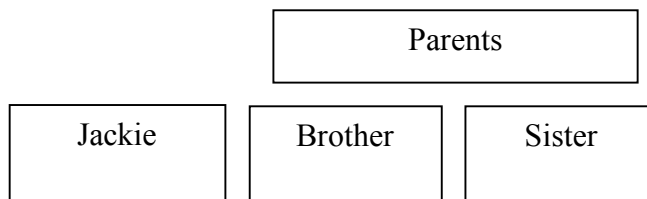


Gina grew up in Norfolk with her parents and brother, where she attended a girls' public day school. Her father was Dutch and had worked as an MI6 operative. He was sent to a concentration camp during the Second World War, but was reunited with her mother soon after his release. He went on to work as an education officer for the local council. Her mother was English and a housewife.

Gina was a qualified nurse and had run an intensive care unit at a hospital, but went on to work as a teaching assistant for children with special educational needs. She met her husband when he was at university. The couple lived together and married when she was aged 25. They had one daughter, but shortly after her birth Gina's husband developed schizophrenia. His illness caused them to separate after marrying for two-and-a-half years, and they divorced after five years. She lived alone in a suburban area of south west London.



Name	Jackie Williams (formerly Moss)	Occupation	Accountant
Born	Northumberland	Age first married	20
Age	52	Relationship status	Separated
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	None
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Jackie's house
Qualifications, if any	A-levels	Length of interview	1 hour 12 minutes

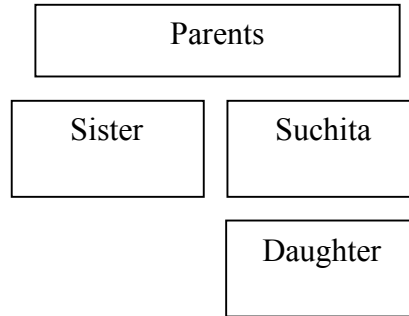


Jackie was born and raised in north-east England. Her father worked as a mechanic and her mother was a housewife. She left school in the lower sixth-form and took-up various low-paid jobs. But she returned to night school to take her A-levels and was accepted for a teacher training course. She completed six months of the course, but was unable to continue after marrying.

Jackie had dated her husband for three years and felt under pressure from her family to marry. She went ahead with the marriage but was unhappy. She left her husband four years after their wedding. She had found the pressures and expectations of married life too inflexible. Indeed, so great was the pressure that her only pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. She had been especially unhappy about not being able to continue her education.

Jackie moved to London six weeks after leaving her husband, but had never officially divorced him. They had been separated from 26 years and she did not know his whereabouts. She had embarked on several relationships since her separation, and had lived with a partner for 21 years. She currently lived alone in east London and was considering moving back to north east England to be near to her ageing father.

Name	Suchita Datta (née Nayar)	Occupation	Housewife
Born	Kharagpur, India	Age first married	23
Age	33	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	Asian/Asian British	Children, if any	One
Religion, if any	Hindu	Venue of interview	Suchita's house
Qualifications, if any	MA/MSc	Length of interview	1 hour 15 minutes



Suchita grew up in West Bengal, India. She lived on a university campus, in the employees' quarters, where her father worked as a professor. She lived on campus until she went to university, aged 18. Her mother had worked as a teacher, but stopped working when she married.

Suchita completed a post-graduate degree and began working as a part-time lecturer in English. This was her only experience of paid work, however, as she married a few months later and her husband preferred her not to work. Their marriage was arranged by their parents and Suchita was somewhat happy about this. She did, however, find her husband rather domineering. The couple lived with Suchita's in-laws in India but this relationship became strained after she failed to comply with local traditions and expectations. The couple moved to west London on account of her husband's job and had lived in the country for six months.

Name	Gita Gill (formerly Dhariwal)	Occupation	Retired
Born	Patilia, India	Age first married	22
Age	61	Relationship status	Divorced
Ethnicity	Asian/Asian British	Children, if any	One
Religion, if any	Sikh	Venue of interview	Gita's house
Qualifications, if any	A-levels	Length of interview	1 hour 24 minutes

Parents

Brother	Sister died as an infant	Brother died as an infant	Brother	Brother	Brother	Gita
						Son

Gita was born to a landowning family in Paiala, India. Her father was in the army, and after the country's Partition, worked in the Excise Tax Office. Her mother was a housewife. Kalvita lived in India until she married at the age of 20, and then moved to London to live with her new husband. Their marriage was arranged by her brother, who was living in the UK.

Gita and her husband had one child, but their marriage was not a success. She left her husband after less than two years and moved in with her brother. However, her brother returned Gita to her husband, but she left again. Her brother advised her to leave her son with her husband as it was thought this would persuade him to change his ways. But, instead, her husband asked his sister to live with him and raise Gita's son. Gita found this deeply upsetting. The couple later divorced. She never gained custody of her son and saw him only occasionally.

Gita lived with her brother after leaving her husband, working in his shop and later a factory. But her separation had caused the family some embarrassment and Gita became ill as a result. Afterwards, she suffered from depression. Her family bought her a house in the late-1970s, but she lost the house in the early 1990s after acting as mortgage guarantor for a friend who ran into financial difficulties. Afterwards, she moved into sheltered accommodation where she was employed as a manager. She later worked in a guest house which also provided her accommodation. Gita returned to sheltered accommodation in 2006.

Name	Alice Meades (née Meadows)	Occupation	Administrator
Born	Richmond, London	Age first married	41
Age	60	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	None
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Alice's house
Qualifications, if any	A-levels	Length of interview	53 minutes

Parents

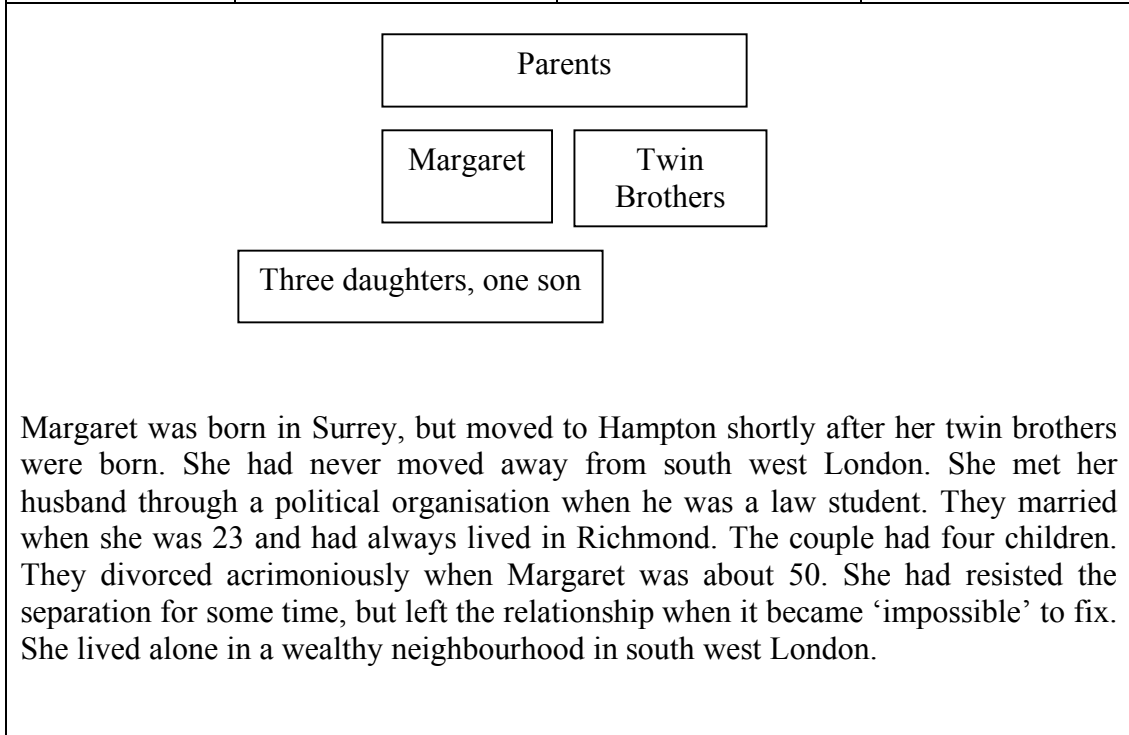
Sister

Alice

Alice grew up in south west London with her parents and older sister. Her father was a fire officer and her mother was a housewife. Her sister, who was 12 years older than her, left the family when she married, but later re-joined the family with her husband and young son.

Alice left home aged 21 and lived on her own. She went to secretarial college for a year and began to work. She had various brief and longer-term relationships, but had suffered with depression due to these relationships ending. She met her husband in the mid-1980s through a dating agency. They bought a house together after two years, and married a year later. He had been married previously, but neither he, nor she, had children. The couple lived in an affluent area of south west London, close to where Alice was born.

Name	Margaret Lowe (née King)	Occupation	Retired
Born	New Malden, Surrey	Age first married	23
Age	75	Relationship status	Divorced
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Four
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Margaret's house
Qualifications, if any	GCSEs	Length of interview	40 minutes



Margaret was born in Surrey, but moved to Hampton shortly after her twin brothers were born. She had never moved away from south west London. She met her husband through a political organisation when he was a law student. They married when she was 23 and had always lived in Richmond. The couple had four children. They divorced acrimoniously when Margaret was about 50. She had resisted the separation for some time, but left the relationship when it became 'impossible' to fix. She lived alone in a wealthy neighbourhood in south west London.

Name	Jill Tonner	Occupation	Retired librarian
Born	Birmingham	Age first married	47
Age	63	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	None
Religion, if any	None	Venue of interview	Café
Qualifications, if any	BA/BSc	Length of interview	38 minutes

Parents

Jill

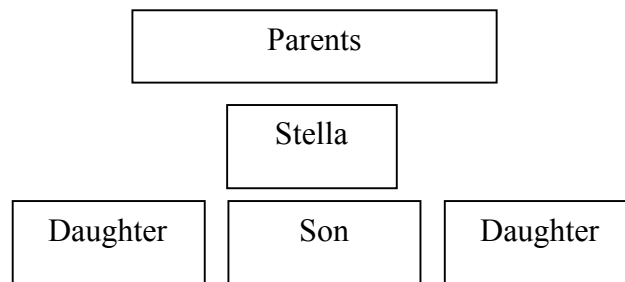
Twin Sister

Brother

Jill grew up in Birmingham where she lived until attending university aged 18. Her father worked as a chief engineer at a local factory. Her mother gave up paid work when she married. She attended a grammar school, unlike her twin sister. Her parents had been married for more than 50 years.

Jill had trained and worked as a librarian. It was at work that she met her husband and the couple lived together for 14 years before marrying. The couple lived in an affluent west London borough and did not have children.

Name	Stella Wallace (née Havelock)	Occupation	Retired
Born	South East London	Age first married	21
Age	70	Relationship status	Widowed
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Three (one now deceased)
Religion, if any	Christian	Venue of interview	Café
Qualifications, if any	A-levels	Length of interview	1 hour 42 minutes



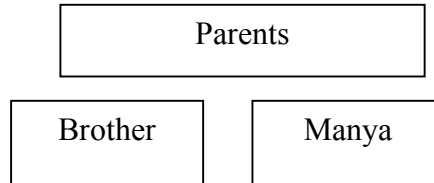
Stella grew up in south east London, but was evacuated to Dorset during the Second World War aged seven, and lived there until she was 13. She had some contact with her mother while she was living away, but not her father. Her parents had recently separated before she was evacuated. Her father went to live with a new partner, while her mother had several boyfriends who sometimes lived with her. Her father was a civil servant, and her mother worked part-time in a pub after she separated from her husband.

Stella began living with her mother again upon returning from Dorset, but their relationship was strained. She moved out, aged 17, and joined the women's Royal Airforce where she sat an exam to become a fighter pilot. But she left the forces two years later to train as a nurse. She worked briefly in a hospital, but did not work after marrying.

Stella and her husband married upon learning that they were expecting a baby. He was ten years older and a naval officer. The couple moved around the British Isles according to where her husband was stationed. They later had two more children and bought a house in west London overlooking the River Thames. They had also owned a country house, which Stella had recently sold to buy an apartment in Westminster.

Stella's marriage was not particularly happy. Her husband was regularly away from home and he had several extra-marital affairs. He rose to a high rank in the Royal Navy and was knighted in the 1970s. He had recently died, as had one of her daughters.

Name	Manya Chopra	Occupation	Clinical psychologist
Born	Mumbai, Indian	Age first married	26
Age	32	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	Asian/Asian British	Children, if any	None
Religion, if any	Sikh	Venue of interview	Friend's office
Qualifications, if any	MPhil	Length of interview	1 hour and 15 minutes

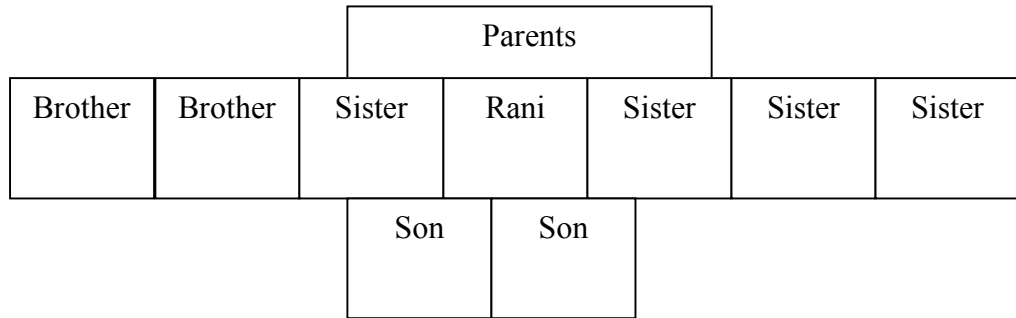


Manya was born and raised in Mumbai, India. She had lived with her parents and older brother. Her father was a financier and her mother was a housewife. She attended university until postgraduate level, but continued to live with her parents until she married.

Manya met her husband through a matrimonial advertisement placed in an Indian newspaper. Her husband was also Asian, and had been born and raised in west London. She moved to England shortly after the couple married where she lived with her mother-in-law for some years. She worked as a clinical psychologist.



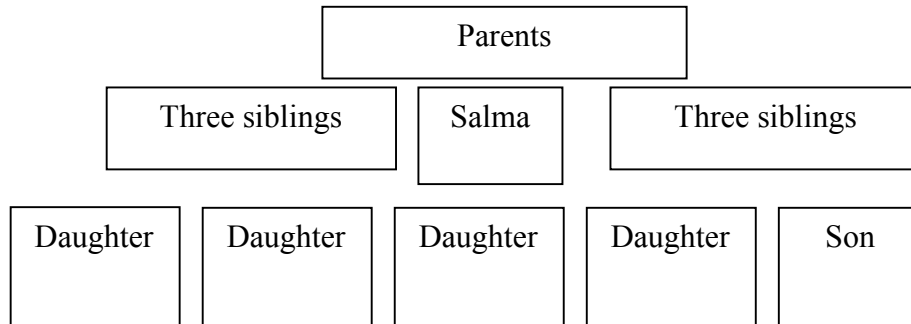
Name	Rani (née Chakraji later Sharma) Sharma Cheeseman	Occupation	Lecturer
Born	Orissa, India	Age first married	27
Age	58	Relationship status	Widowed
Ethnicity	Asian/Asian British	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	Hindu	Venue of interview	Community library
Qualifications, if any	PhD	Length of interview	49 minutes



Rani was born and raised in Orissa, India with her parents and six siblings. Her father was a lecturer in English. Her mother was a housewife and had also published her own works of poetry. Rani left for the UK in the mid-1970s to finish her PhD at a prestigious university. She received a Commonwealth Scholarship.

Rani met her husband while at university and the couple married when she was 27. He was ten years older than her. They lived in Brussels, India and the UK. They had two sons who were barely teenagers when their father died. Rani had been widowed for 14 years. She worked as a lecturer at a further education college in east London, where she also lived.

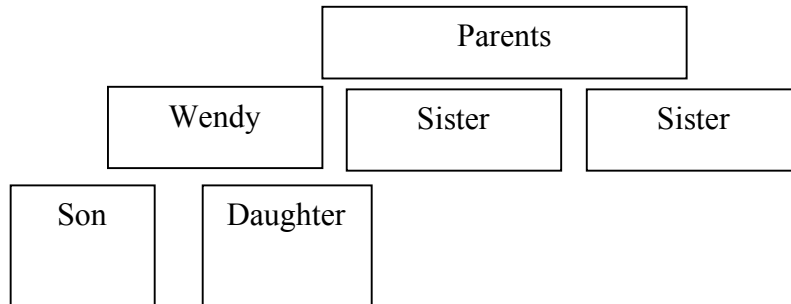
Name	Salma Begum	Occupation	Midday supervisor at a school
Born	London	Age first married	17
Age	29	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	Asian/Asian British	Children, if any	Five
Religion, if any	Muslim	Venue of interview	Community library
Qualifications, if any	GCSEs	Length of interview	36 minutes



Salma was born in London to Bangladeshi parents. Her dad worked in a factory and her mother was a housewife. Her parents were married until her father died in the early 2000s. She had six siblings, and she was the middle child.

Salma left school at 16 after persuading her father to let her sit GCSE exams. She married shortly after. She had briefly met her husband before they married, but the couple were largely unfamiliar with each other. She had five children ranging from ten weeks to ten years. She worked part-time at a local primary school in a deprived area of east London.

Name	Wendy Gooch (née Fuller)	Occupation	Retired GP
Born	Derby	Age first married	24
Age	65	Relationship status	Married
Ethnicity	White UK	Children, if any	Two
Religion, if any	None	Venue of interview	Wendy's house
Qualifications, if any	BA/BSc	Length of interview	41 minutes



Wendy was born in Derby, but moved to Rochdale as a youngster after her father got a new job. He worked in the public cleaning department of a local council, and her mother started working when Wendy was about 12. She had two younger sisters.

Wendy lived in Rochdale until going to university. She trained and later worked as a general practitioner. She met her husband, aged 22, on a sailing holiday in the north of England and they married two years later. The couple had two children and had lived in wealthy area of south west London for about 40 years. She had been retired from medicine for about seven years.

## Appendix 8

### Interviewees' Surnames

Jalila	Changed to husband's surname, but considering reverting to maiden name after divorcing for a second time.
Hannah	Changed to husband's surname, but reverted to maiden name when they separated.
Audrey	Retained maiden name, changing to husband's when first child was born. Used maiden name for many years at work.
Amy	Renamed by adoptive parents, changed to husband's surname, but wanted to take new surname since they separated.
Bala	Changed to husband's surname, but used maiden name with family and friends. Began using maiden name at times when widowed.
Gale	Retained maiden name when first married, changing to husband's after bureaucratic problems. Reverted to maiden name after divorce and retained this for her second marriage.
Zulema	Retained maiden name (Spanish format), adding husband's in certain situations. Tended to use his exclusively when in England, but also used part of her maiden name as a middle name.
Catherine	Hyphenated her surname when first married, later changing entirely to her second husband's. Used this singly until they separated and added a hyphen to her maiden name. Dropped his surname on settling alone in England.
Delyth	Changed to husband's surname.
Isabel	Changed to husband's surname and retained this on divorce.
Maude	Changed to husband's surname.
Greta	Retained maiden name (Icelandic format).
Erica	Retained maiden name during first and second marriages.
Flora	Retained maiden name.
Helen	Changed to husband's surname.
Jean	Changed to husband's surname and retained this on divorce.
Gina	Changed to husband's surname and retained this on divorce.
Grace	Almost exclusively changed to husband's surname after recently marrying, but used maiden name for some accounts.
Jackie	Changed to husband's surname, reverting to maiden name post-separation.
Esme	Changed to husband's surname.
Suchita	Changed to husband's surname.
Gita	Changed to husband's surname, reverted to maiden name some years after separating (created a new first name at this point).
Alice	Retained maiden name for 20 years, slowly adopting husband's surname.
Margaret	Changed to husband's surname and retained this on divorce.
Jill	Retained maiden name.
Stella	Changed to husband's surname.
Salma	Retained maiden name.
Manya	Retained maiden name, occasionally using husband's surname in certain cases.
Rani	Changed to husband's surname, using maiden name as middle name.
Wendy	Retained maiden name professionally, using husband's surname socially.

