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Amy Eshleman
Wagner College

Jean Halley
CUNY Graduate Center

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SELF-IDENTIFIED FEMINIST MOTHERS' NAMING PRACTICES FOR THEIR CHILDREN: ACCEPTING BEING "AS FEMINIST AS EVERYONE" ELSE

AMY ESHLEMAN 

Wagner College, Staten Island

JEAN HALLEY

College of Staten Island, City University of New York, Staten Island

"Feminist" and "feminism" refer first and foremost to a politics which developed out of consciousness raising and political activism. ... Although it signifies an ideological movement and therefore a metanarrative, this movement has never had a single, clearly defined, common ideology or been constituted around a political party or a central organization or leaders or an agreed policy or manifesto, or even been based upon an agreed principle of collective action. As a result, feminism has always for the most part consisted of diverse individuals, addressing sexual political issues in different ways. (Harris 10)

In this study, we apply these complexities of feminism, identified by Harris, to feminists' choices regarding the surnames of their children. Along with other progressive movements, feminism acknowledges that names matter. Across diverse perspectives within feminism, we do not want to be called girls, but women. We do not want to be called chairmen, but chair or chairperson. We want the title we earned, Dr., or the title we share with all women, Ms., not Miss or Mrs. Given this awareness, and given feminist scholars' privileged position in the world, we examine the often-patrilineal naming decisions of self-identified feminist faculty members.

Arlie Russell Hochschild with Anne Machung identified a critical distinction between ideology and practice that applies to the present sample of feminist scholars. Families may espouse one ideology while living an experience that seems contradictory, and justify both. Hochschild argued that families find themselves stuck in a stalled revolution. While feminist scholars might be particularly well poised to reinvigorate this revolution, most in the present sample were more likely to offer criticism of other women's decisions than to live feminist action in their own naming choices.

Women who are scholars have benefitted from the feminist revolution, yet in our domestic lives, women continue to do the lion's share of the labor. In the United States, most women experience an ongoing imbalance of power (see Hochschild with Machung). Indeed, economic journalist Ann Crittenden notes about childcare locally and globally that "the amount of work involved in unpaid childcare ... rivals in size the largest industries of the visible economy ... up to 80 percent of this unpaid labor is contributed by women" (8). Given the ongoing gender gap in domestic labor such as cleaning, cooking, and childcare in the United States, perhaps it should come as no surprise that the surnames given to

Address correspondence to Amy Eshleman, Wagner College, 1 Campus Road, Staten Island, NY 10301. E-mail: esh@wagner.edu

children still sharply preference men. Women continue to face a profound power imbalance.

Western feminist surname choices within heterosexual marriage have been explored in impressive detail (e.g., Stannard), but surprisingly few studies focus on surnames given to children. Nearly twenty percent of college-educated women in the United States who marry men are estimated to choose to keep their original surname (Goldin and Shim 150), and trends indicate this choice becoming more popular (Kopelman et al. 695). Lesbian couples often do not share a surname (Land and Kitzinger 378). Given that women in the academy are particularly likely to have a different surname than their partner, we focused on this population as one of particular interest.

Feminism has been credited as influential in women's choices for a nonnormative name for themselves (Hamilton, Geist, and Powell 163). Yet scholarly discussions rarely extend to feminist choices regarding children's surnames (cf. Lockwood, Burton, and Boersma). The ubiquity of patrilineal choices among heterosexual couples (see Finch; Johnson and Scheuble) and choices based on biology among lesbian couples (see Almack) may explain the relative neglect of this topic. Because scholars so often engage in critical thinking about sexual politics, we sought explanations from this population regarding their own choices and their assumptions about other women's choices.

Evidently feminist surnames for children—such as hyphenation, creation of an egalitarian family name, the mother's name for heterosexual couples, or a social parent's name for lesbian or gay families—are rare. In our examination of naming ideology and practice of the relatively empowered women of the academy, we argue that very real power imbalance affects even women in the positions enjoyed by our participants. As women navigate their demanding jobs at work and at home they must protect and care for themselves and their children. They must balance feminist ideology with choices that make their lives more manageable.

Because of its explicit feminism, we are particularly interested in decisions regarding whether to hyphenate children's surnames. In a systematic survey of 600 married, heterosexual women in the United States, Johnson and Scheuble found barely more than one percent hyphenated the surname of their first-born child (425). In a nonrandom sample of twenty lesbian couples in the United Kingdom, Almack noted twenty percent chose to hyphenate their children's names (242; cf. Suter and Oswald). Hyphenated names in the United States are less likely to suggest the goal of preserving two influential family names in one's title (Mills 95; cf. Stodder), yet feminists may avoid hyphenated names because of this traditional association with class (Mills 99). We asked our respondents to explain why they did or did not choose to hyphenate.

Based on our interest in distinctions between ideology and practice, we explored patrilineal naming practice as a form of male privilege (Nugent 500). We predicted that the majority of respondents would have given their children patrilineal surnames, and we looked for acknowledgment of privilege in our respondents' decisions and in their explanations of other women's choices. In this analysis, we were aware of Mills's argument that choosing the mother's

surname tends to result in an alternate form of male privilege that generally advantages the maternal grandfather, as the common source of women's names when they do not to take a husband's surname (94). Nonetheless, when parents give a child a surname different from that of the child's father, they have clearly chosen to counteract prevailing norms. A choice to give the child the mother's name, regardless of whether it is shared with the maternal grandfather, may make visible the predominant male privilege in normative naming choices (see also Johnson and Scheuble 428 on the relatively large debate on this issue in comparison to its uncommon practice).

Another choice parents might select would be a surname that is distinctly the child's, differing from both parents' names. In addition to suggesting hyphenation as an equitable solution, Lombard proposed that parents might give children a surname that is an amalgam of the parents' names (130). Both hyphenated and amalgamated names require choices regarding prominence of each parent's name. Johnson and Scheuble found no families who created a new name for a child (425).

Mothers or fathers may also choose to give their surname as a child's middle name (see Johnson and Scheuble 428). When this option is practiced, the mother's surname is often given as the child's middle name. While surnames are regularly used in Western cultures, middle names are rarely recognized (see Edwards and Caballero 53).

While Lebell's approach was not scholarly, she argues compellingly that women's relative lack of power in comparison to men might create a quid pro quo system in which the mother exchanges the child's surname for the father's emotional, physical, and financial commitment (32). Johnson and Scheuble found that few parents openly admit that giving a child a father's name may enhance intergenerational connection between a father and a child (426). In this study, we examine the extent to which our respondents acknowledged power in their own decisions and in their speculation regarding other women's decisions.

Parents' explanations of their decisions regarding a child's surname rarely acknowledge male privilege. Common explanations for patrilineal choices include following tradition, arguing that it will be easier for the child, claiming that it was an aesthetic choice, prioritizing that the family share a name, and avoiding the conception that a child's parents were not married (Mills 100; Nugent 512; Scheuble and Johnson 750).

Mothers face conflict when considering nonpatrilineal names for themselves or a child. Because male privilege is often invisible, fathers are rarely questioned when they seek to maintain their advantage through patrilineal practice. In contrast, nontraditional choices may be perceived as the mother putting her own interests above those of her family (Nugent 510). Mills found that feminist professional mothers often claimed that a patrilineal choice was an aesthetic decision rather than a political one (97, see Nugent 512 for rejection of hyphenated names as discordant). While an aesthetic justification may seem perfectly reasonable to oneself and in conversation with others, why would the aesthetic choice nearly

always benefit the father's name? If parents chose based on the pleasantness of sound, one would predict that a mother's name would be preferred as often as a father's name.

The desire to share a family name has been offered as an explanation for patrilineal choices, with invisible male privilege driving the assumption that the family's name should be the father's name. In Scheuble and Johnson's survey of Midwestern college students, small majorities of men expressed that mothers should take the surname of the fathers of their children (750). The respondents were not equally supportive of creating a family name by having a husband take his wife's surname (750).

Finch compellingly describes the complicated role of a "family" name (714). Finch was raised in a nuclear family that shared a patrilineal name, but she is now the only living member of the family to carry that name. Following her father's death, her mother remarried and adopted her new husband's surname. Finch's sister married and adopted her husband's surname. Finch persuasively argued that one's sense of being connected to a family is unaffected by surname.

We wanted to explore how feminist scholars might justify patrilineal family names. Many justifications for patrilineal choices seem driven by male privilege and contrary to feminist ideology and practice. One explanation is consistent with feminism: women may be more likely than men to feel alienated from the surnames on their birth certificates (Lebell 40). Although intrafamilial violence affects many boys, the greater extent of intrafamilial abuse directed at girls (e.g., Halley 141; Plummer 1231) may prompt more women to reject their given surname—generally their father's name. Intrafamilial violence could explain a woman choosing to change her own surname or to give her children a name other than her abuser's name. While violence in one's family of origin might explain some patrilineal choices, it cannot fully explain the overwhelming likelihood of choosing patrilineal names for children.

A different form of privilege occurs for lesbian partners. In her nonrandom exploration of the choices of coupled lesbian parents, Almack found that half of the families gave the children the biological mother's surname, including twenty percent overall who were given the social mother's surname as middle name (242). Fifteen percent of families gave the children the social mother's surname, including one family that gave the biological mother's surname as middle name. Almack noted that the biological mother often proposed the name choice for the child, treating the child's middle or surname as a gift that could be given to the social mother (246). Although motherhood could be socially constructed as equal between the birth mother and the social mother, Almack found that the biological relationship of the birth mother and the child carried power, including the implicit privilege to choose the name for the child. In contrast, in heterosexual couples, the non-natal parent is privileged in terms of naming.

In the present study, we are particularly interested in comparing the decisions of lesbian and bisexual women to those who identify as heterosexual. Among heterosexual respondents, we examine whether they described making radical choices related to gender that were distinct from their decisions regarding names.

Research Questions

Through an online questionnaire, we surveyed women college faculty members who teach topics relevant to feminism. Our sample explicitly focused on highly educated women working with ideology that challenges patriarchal traditions. We encouraged our respondents to share thoughts and conversations related to selecting the surname for their children. Respondents were also asked to explain why children in general are more likely to be given a patrilineal surname.

We predicted that many respondents would identify as feminist, but that few participants would have made expressly feminist naming decisions. Among feminists, we anticipated that those who identified with socialist feminism would be most likely to make naming decisions that challenged patriarchal norms. Heterosexual women who identified radical choices related to gender were predicted to be more likely to challenge patriarchal naming practice. We also explored whether lesbian, bisexual, and queer women made different choices than heterosexual women. Feminist respondents who made normative choices were expected to offer personalized justification for their own naming decisions, yet to provide broader critiques of patriarchal influence when asked to reflect on naming decisions of women in general.

Methodology

Participants

The survey was approved by the institutional review board of Wagner College's Psychology Department prior to distribution. We then contacted women faculty members teaching in gender studies, women's studies, or queer studies programs at schools within the consortium of The New American Colleges and Universities to solicit their participation via e-mail invitation. E-mail addresses were identified from school websites. When possible, individual faculty members were contacted. When schools provided only a departmental or program e-mail address, we asked the director to forward our invitation to relevant women faculty members. The e-mail also encouraged respondents to share our invitation to participate with relevant women faculty members.

We received a total of 26 responses from women who identified themselves as mothers. All participants identified themselves as feminist. The majority (73 percent) identified themselves as politically liberal or very liberal. Only two respondents identified as more conservative than liberal. The remaining 23 percent identified themselves as leftist, progressive, radical, or quasi-communist.

Twenty-one respondents (81 percent) identified as heterosexual. All of these respondents were legally married to their male partners. All three (14 percent) respondents who identified as bisexual were in committed relationships, including one who was married to a man. One bisexual respondent partnered with a man and another partnered with a woman expressed political stands against marriage. One participant identified herself as lesbian in a civil union not recognized by the state in

which she resided. One respondent who described her sexual identity as human was legally married to a man.

With regard to their own surnames, thirteen (50 percent) of the respondents used the name from their birth certificate, ten (38 percent) used their husband's surname as their own, one used a name she had chosen for herself, one used both the name on her birth certificate and her husband's name (without a hyphen), and one hyphenated the surname on her birth certificate with her lesbian partner's surname.

Materials and Procedure

The survey was administered online using mod_survey shareware. Participants were asked to identify the source of their personal surname and to describe any thought processes that occurred when they made decisions regarding their surname. Participants were asked to report whether they were married or partnered in a committed relationship, including whether the laws of their state could recognize their partnership. Participants indicated their sexual identity and described their political orientation. They were asked whether they considered themselves feminist and were given an opportunity to describe their feminism or their choice not to identify with feminism.

Participants were also asked if they have raised a child or children. Mothers were asked to identify any relationships they had with others with whom they shared parenting and the gender identity of those individuals. They were asked to identify the source of their child's or children's surname(s), to explain why they made that choice, and to describe any discussion process with their partner, friends, and larger family about the choice. They were asked to explain why they decided against naming options they had rejected. Participants were invited to offer an explanation for why women are less likely to give their children their own surnames than a male partner's surname and to describe what they considered to be the best solution for children's surnames.

Findings

All respondents expressly self-identified as feminist, offering quite individualized responses to an open-ended question regarding the form of feminism. Based on responses to all open-ended questions, we grouped mothers into three categories based on sexual identity and whether they described making what we have termed radical choices related to gender, but distinct from naming practice. Examples of radical gender choices found in the sample included civil disobedience through officiating at a same-sex wedding and adopting as a single mother.

Eighteen mothers in the sample identified as heterosexual and did not describe any radical gender choices. Three mothers identified as heterosexual and described radical choices regarding gender. Five mothers identified their sexuality as different than heterosexual.

Heterosexual Respondents Who Did Not Identify Radical Gender Choices

Eighteen respondents did not identify any radical choices that were distinct from naming decisions. All of these respondents identified as feminist, as heterosexual, and as married to the fathers of their children. None of these respondents had given a child her own surname, one had a child with a complicated surname that included hyphenation, and seventeen had given their children their partner's surname (see Table 1).

Only one of these respondents described giving a child a name other than her partner's surname. This respondent's daughter's surname officially consists of the mother's surname followed by a space and then the father's own hyphenated surname. The respondent noted a desire to provide her daughter with flexibility regarding her surname and an openness to her daughter using any part of the child's official surname. She predicted, "Eventually, she will probably settle on a simplified surname." She mentioned that her "husband had lots of trouble with his hyphens growing up."

Most respondents presented their reason for making a normative naming choice as unique and special to their situation and as a practice that did not challenge their feminist ideology. Most did not acknowledge that their personal choice might be antithetical to their feminism, yet they readily offered feminist analysis and acknowledged male privilege when asked about the norm of patrilineal surnames. They seemed to claim that their personal choices were exceptional; they did not give in to tradition but instead had a special reason for going with tradition. Their reasons included having a name that was awkward to say or difficult to spell. One respondent wrote, "My last name is long ... and unwieldy and definitely can't

TABLE 1 Child's Surname by Mother's Feminist Choices, Sexual Identity, and Surname

<i>Heterosexual Respondents Who Did Not Identify Radical Feminist Choices (n = 18)</i>	
<i>Source of Child's Surname</i>	<i>Source of Mother's Surname</i>
Mother's Surname (n = 0)	
Hyphenated (n = 1)	Mother with Birth Certificate Name (n = 1)
Partner's Surname (n = 17)	Mother with Birth Certificate Name (n = 6), Mother Who Adopted Husband's Name (n = 10), Mother with Birth Certificate Name and Husband's Name (n = 1)
<i>Heterosexual Respondents Who Identified Radical Feminist Choices (n = 3)</i>	
<i>Source of Child's Surname</i>	<i>Source of Mother's Surname</i>
Mother's Surname (n = 2)	Mother with Birth Certificate Name (n = 2)
Hyphenated (n = 1)	Mother with Birth Certificate Name (n = 1)
Partner's Surname (n = 0)	
<i>Respondents Who Described Sexual Identity Different from Heterosexuality (n = 5)</i>	
<i>Source of Child's Surname</i>	<i>Source of Mother's Surname</i>
Mother's Surname (n = 0)	
Hyphenated (n = 3)	Mother Self-Identified as "Human" with Name Chosen for Herself (n = 1), Bisexual Mother with Birth Certificate Name (n = 1), Lesbian Mother with Name Hyphenated With Partner (n = 1)
Partner's Surname (n = 2)	Bisexual Mother with Birth Certificate Name (n = 2)

be hyphenated.” Some noted that it mattered very much to their male partner or his family that the children have the father’s name.

A few respondents offered feminist analysis of their own normative choices. One respondent identified that women’s own names are patriarchal, so “we never feel that attached to them to begin with.” Another noted that she was estranged from her own parents and “much closer to [her] husband’s side of the family,” so she wrote that “it made the most sense to honor [her husband’s parents] with that tradition” of giving the children his parents’ surname.

A respondent who kept her birth name and gave her children her husband’s name expressed feeling pressure to follow patriarchal patterns. “If we had gone with my last name, my mother-in-law would have been *very* upset (as would my father-in-law, but he wouldn’t say anything to me about it)” (emphasis in the original).

One respondent who took her husband’s surname as her own and gave her child her husband’s surname noted,

I have my partner’s last name and I wanted us all to have the same last name. Also, my husband wanted to give our child his last name (wow, that sounds so traditional! I guess it is). I thought about giving my daughter my maiden name as her middle name but I don’t particularly like it that much as my husband didn’t want to do that...I didn’t really discuss it with friends that much because I felt embarrassed that I was being a bad feminist. Interestingly, I did discuss it with professional mentors more than friends.

She also described the following regarding her own surname:

Growing up, I had always thought I would take my husband’s last name because I wanted to be part of a family that was the [whatever]. I liked that feeling of unity. However, during my engagement I struggled with whether I would take my husband’s name for a variety of reasons. One, I had published an article with just my maiden name so I didn’t want there to be any confusion in my professional community. The other issue was I felt like I was losing part of my identity or subsuming it to his if I took his name (sounds so cliché!). I compromised somewhat in that professionally I use my maiden name as my middle name but personally I only use my husband’s last name. I also like having the same last name as my daughter.

When explaining why women are less likely to give their children their surname than a partner’s surname, she identified the cause: “Patriarchy, which I am obviously a victim of!”

Several participants reported extensive discussion regarding their own and their children’s names. One respondent who kept her own name and gave her children her husband’s name reported,

When I married, my husband to be and I discussed how we would handle naming options. We discussed changing both our names by combining them into one name but felt it would be too long. Neither of us liked the idea of a hyphen. He suggested changing his but we didn’t like that idea either, so we each kept our own names. When we had children we gave them my last name as their middle names and his last name as their surname. We chose to do it this way as my name is very common and his is quite unique and sounds lovely.

This individual clearly sought to engage in a feminist process regarding these decisions. While she offered clear reasons for her choices, we question why such discussions so often end with the conclusion to honor the father’s surname.

Another respondent returned to her birth name following divorce from her first marriage (in which she had taken her husband's name) and kept her birth name in her current marriage, in which she was raising children. In spite of having reaffirmed her commitment to her own surname, she did not give that name to her children. About her discussion with her partner regarding naming their children, she noted, "I suggested alternating surnames—his for one child, mine for another—but my partner wasn't persuaded. Thus we reverted to convention and used the paternal surname." She further noted that she was pressured to take her first husband's surname.

The eleven women who took their husband's surname as their own offered differing reflections. Their reflections ranged from apparent pride at having chosen to take a husband's name to apparent regret for submitting to pressure. When asking about the origin of the respondent's last name, we offered choices such as "The name on my birth certificate" or "My partner's name." One woman who had taken her husband's name chose the response, "A name I chose with my romantic partner." She described, "I was happy to marry and take on my husband's name." She identified that her choice to give her children her husband's name "was the cultural norm of my community" and that hyphenation was "not culturally accepted." This respondent, like all others, identified herself as feminist, but unlike some offered no critique of normative naming practices.

Another respondent described that she had taken her second husband's surname to replace her decision to take her first husband's surname. Her daughter continues to carry her first husband's surname. She rejected that there may be a "best solution" for children's surnames, stating that "I believe that each person and/or couple must come to terms with their own situation. Unfortunately, when women feel strongly about giving a child their own surname, they probably get a significant amount of resistance from people outside of their romantic relationship."

Heterosexual Respondents Who Identified Radical Choices Related to Gender

Three heterosexual respondents identified radical choices related to gender that were distinct from their decisions regarding names. Two had given a child their own surnames and one gave a child a hyphenated name.

Both of the women raising daughters who carried the mother's surname had made radical choices related to gender. Both of these respondents had kept the name on their birth certificate upon marrying men. We identified the first of these respondents as making a radical choice because she shared that as a clergy member, she had been charged for performing same-sex marriages. She described her choice to give her daughter her surname: "My husband and I decided that we wanted to pass on both of our names, the first being a boy, decided would be his and the second mine (regardless of gender—but it happened to be a girl)." The respondent shared multiple problems that arose with the Social Security Administration because of the nonnormative name. Following a complication based on the Social Security Administration assuming that the respondent had changed her own name upon marriage, her first child initially had two surnames without a hyphen, the mother's

name followed by the father's. The Social Security Administration essentially renamed the child by alphabetizing the two last names. The family responded by making the mother's name the child's middle name and the father's name the last name. The second child was given the father's name as the middle name and the mother's name as the last name. While this couple considered hyphenation, they rejected it for euphonic reasons.

The only other respondent raising a child with the mother's surname had made a radical choice by adopting as a single mother. She later married a man who also adopted the child. She noted that women are less likely to give their children their own surname than their male partner's surname "because socially it still implies that the child was born out of wedlock."

An additional heterosexual respondent was classified as making a radical choice because she married a man who identified as feminist. This respondent gave her child a hyphenated name.

Respondents Who Described Sexual Identity Different From Heterosexuality

We predicted that women who identified as feminist and as lesbian, bisexual, or otherwise queer would tend to challenge normative naming practices. Because queer relationships disrupt patriarchal family structures in multiple ways, we predicted that feminist mothers in these families would be more likely to engage in overtly feminist practice.

Giving the child the biological mother's surname is a form of normative naming practice within a nonnormative family structure. Sampling to increase the number of families with lesbian partnerships will allow for stronger replication of Almack and further exploration of whether women in lesbian relationships are more likely than those in heterosexual relationships to use nonnormative naming practices for their children.

Five respondents identified their sexual identity as lesbian ($n = 1$), bisexual ($n = 3$), or otherwise not heterosexual (writing in "human," $n = 1$). None of these respondents had given their children their own surname. Three had given their children hyphenated surnames, including two raising children with a male partner and one raising children with a female partner. The lesbian couple hyphenated their own names as well as the children's names; the respondent wrote, "We are a lesbian couple and wanted to signify our relationship through our name. We also wanted our entire family to share a last name once we had children."

The two respondents who gave their children their partner's surname identified as bisexual. One respondent raising a child with a man had chosen not to marry. She justified giving the child the father's surname as a way of establishing his parental rights, reasoning that a mother's rights would be less likely to be questioned. The second respondent was raising her children with a female partner. She noted that the children have her partner's surname because her partner is their biological mother. She would give her own surname to any biological children of her own. In response to our question about their discussion process, this woman

explained that the discussion was "very short." She wrote, "It seemed to be the logical way to proceed."

Feminist Analysis of Other Women's Choices

While most of our respondents took part in patriarchal naming practice, our respondents offered feminist analysis when asked about naming practices more generally. Respondents who gave their children their husband's surnames while keeping their own surnames seemed to seek to establish their feminism through responses such as, "Social pressure and cultural convention. I don't think it would occur to most American women to give their children their surnames." Another respondent identified "tradition" and fear "of being perceived as rocking the boat." She argued that women avoid "being identified as a feminist. Sad but true."

The respondent described previously who chose not to marry and who gave her child her male partner's name to establish paternal rights offered a similar argument. She explained traditional naming as springing from "patriarchal history and tradition of ownership." Another wrote that the practices arise from "custom, familial and social pressures."

When describing why other women do not give their children their own surnames, the respondent described above who identified that "Surnames are patriarchal" also noted she considered giving her children her own surname (also her father's surname), but acknowledged pressure from her father-in-law to follow tradition and give the children his surname:

In my social circles, most women keep their own last names, but give their children their partner's last names, so the choice seemed obvious. I did consider choosing my own surname for them so as to be a bit more feminist than everyone I knew, but then decided that being as feminist as everyone I knew was enough.

She added that "families are complicated" and "one size is not going to fit all." Yet in the case of naming practices, one size apparently fit all in her social circles.

Hyphenation Reveals Strong Feelings

The majority of our respondents rejected nonnormative alternatives. While hyphenation was the most common nonnormative choice, it was frequently criticized as too complicated, especially regarding individuals with hyphenated names deciding how to name their own children (see also Nugent 513). Some argued that hyphenation might work for others, but that their own surname or their partner's surname was euphonically prohibitive. Respondents offered that "hyphenation never appealed to me" and that "hyphenated last names are difficult to work with and clunky." One respondent was decidedly against hyphenation, reporting that "I thought it would be too long and would look ugly. I don't like hyphenated names." Respondents also expressed concerns regarding complications with institutions, such as the Social Security Administration and schools.

One respondent who gave her children a hyphenated name shared that “our families were opposed to the practice. They continue to see hyphenating our children’s names as an exercise in liberal idiocy.” Another respondent clearly connected her choice to hyphenate her children’s names with her own feminism as well as her husband’s feminism:

I never considered taking my husband’s name when I married. We briefly considered both taking a new and different name, but quickly decided to keep our own names and hyphenate our [children’s]. An imperfect, but symbolically accurate solution, we thought! ... My husband and I are both feminists, and are ethically opposed to the practice of handing down only the father’s name to children. Hyphenating seemed the best way of representing both families. ... The children come from both of us, and we wanted a name that reflected that.

Discussion

All of the respondents in our sample self-identified their ideology as feminist. Nonetheless, most of these women described patrilineal practice in their own family. Heterosexual respondents in our sample seemed to want to justify their own patrilineal decisions as special cases, working to maintain feminist ideology. Like participants in Nugent, our respondents rarely acknowledged male privilege when describing their own patrilineal choices. Nonetheless, critical feminist analysis was clear in respondents’ explanations for naming practices in general.

We are inspired to consider what being feminist means to this select group of faculty members who teach in gender-related programs. Can feminism be merely an ideology? To what extent must feminism be a lived practice? Did our respondents consider themselves to be engaging in feminist practice by simply considering non-patriarchal naming options?

As in Hochschild with Machung’s study, a sizable number of our participants espoused one ideology and practiced another when it came to naming their children. We see this as an indicator of feminism’s “stalled revolution.” We note that even our relatively privileged feminist participants have to manage their lives in a decidedly unfeminist world. Women with children who work outside the home tend to have two jobs and two shifts, as Hochschild’s work illuminates, one paid and one unpaid. Indeed, United Nations research shows that in industrialized countries, “women spend roughly one-third of their total working time on paid work and two thirds on work that is unpaid and unrecognized. For men, the proportions reversed” (Crittenden 77). Given this vast gender gap that working mothers must navigate in labor, perhaps it should come as no surprise that feminist mothers are also navigating a naming gap that privileges men’s names time and again.

Within the present sample of feminist scholars, none of them raised the issue of women’s relative lack of power influencing the surname choices for their own children, although one identified herself as a victim of patriarchy when asked to reflect on other women’s choices. Respondents frequently referred to tradition, custom, and societal norms and pressures when describing other women’s choices. Six respondents (23 percent) identified patriarchy as a force in women’s decisions, three (12 percent) discussed economic concerns, and two (8 percent) identified

potential concerns that observers might assume a child was born to parents who were not married. Future research should explore whether less-enfranchised women may be more likely to articulate power as an influence in their personal choices as well as in explanations of women's choices in general. Cross-cultural and historical explorations may reveal use of names as a means for women to connect male partners with their children.

Future research might probe more specifically into the origin of a mother's surname and her own mother's surname to explore male privilege across generations in children's names. In the present study, one respondent shared, "My mother went back to her birth surname when she divorced. I decided not to change my name when I married because of her experience—but it was a little ironic, since my birth surname was her married name." This respondent acknowledged that keeping her own father's name was a feminist decision, yet one that benefits patriarchy. Her decision to give her daughter her own surname followed by a space and then her husband's hyphenated surname is described above.

The respondent described above as identifying her sexual identity as "human" chose a name for herself: "When I was 21, I gave up my birth name—first, middle, and last—and chose names that honored the woman that raised me and that reflected my conceptions of self." She gave her children a hyphenated surname that combined the name she chose for herself with her husband's surname. Future research could purposely recruit women with highly nonnormative names as well as more common name choices to further this discussion.

One limitation of the present research is that we did not directly measure the year or years that the respondents named their children. Future research should directly measure the year in which these discussions and decisions were made (see Mills 103). While Almack as well as Johnson and Scheuble focused only on names give to firstborn children, the present study suggests that there is value in asking whether this discussion continues for subsequent children. As mentioned above, we found one family that alternated the names for each child, giving the father's surname to the first child and the mother's surname to the second child. An additional respondent shared that she had discussed following this practice with her husband: "I was willing to [concede] that my daughter take my husband's last name because I felt it would be too much of a struggle with family members if she were to have my last name. [W]ith a second child that we hope to have, I think we should give him/her my last name and my husband's last name as his/her middle name. Right now, I don't know what we will do because my husband thinks it is nice if siblings have the same last name. But I think as family structures change, there are lots of siblings that have different last names."

Decisions regarding surnames are complicated—deeply personal yet socially constrained. Parents who thoughtfully consider their child's surname face an overwhelmingly popular patrilineal tradition that supports male privilege, a commonly expressed distaste for hyphenated names, and anticipated confusion if a child does not bear a father's name (see Twenge).

Hochschild with Machung revealed the stalled revolution, and we argue that this explains how feminist mothers currently make decisions about surnames for

their children. We remain hopeful for further progress within this revolution. Critical reflection may lead across generations to a willingness to endure complications (see Boxer and Gritsenko 8) for the sake of living in closer accord to one's ideals. Although the husband of one of the respondents endured obstacles because of his own hyphenated name, these parents passed on a complicated, and clearly feminist, name to their child.

We propose in future research that the relationship between feminist naming choices and domestic labor be explored further. Do heterosexual couples that make feminist choices in naming their children also make feminist choices in other aspects of their domestic and private lives? For example, is labor more equitably shared in these households, or do they remain unequal when it comes to the work of raising a family, as Hochschild with Machung found? Are these families that choose feminist names more likely to have a good fit between ideology and practice across dimensions such as domestic labor?

Ultimately, we wonder how the mothers in our sample will reflect on their decisions decades later. One respondent noted that when she had taken her husband's surname upon marriage, "I didn't make a decision: forty years ago, where I was living, women's names were automatically changed when they got married." We were inspired to read that this respondent's "daughter did not change her name at marriage ... and plans to give her children hyphenated surnames—and I feel delighted with her decision, personally, since she does not have to suffer the identity change that I did."

Historically, very few women chose to make nontraditional choices for their own surnames, but today there is much greater acceptance of this practice (Hamilton et al. 157). As Harris identified, "feminism has always for the most part consisted of diverse individuals, addressing sexual political issues in different ways on the level of the local and the specific" (9). As feminist scholars continue to teach critical thinking about patriarchal decisions, expressing political values through children's names may be more likely to be perceived as a viable option.

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ORCID

Amy Eshleman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8683-3622>

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