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Women's Post-Marital Name Retention and the Communication of Identity

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This study describes how identity is symbolically communicated through women's post-marital name retention by examining the factors influencing women's choices, the communication around the decision, and how the non-traditional last name is present (or not) in interaction. This study uses symbolic interactionism and critical feminism as orienting frameworks for the collection and analysis of data. Data was collected through twenty-three face-to-face interviews, and was analyzed using constant comparison and thematic analysis. Findings indicate that women who retain their names expect to do so, based upon identity-related concerns of ancestry, professional stature, and feminism. Additionally, women who engage in non-traditional marital naming engage in communication of their choices with others whose responses range from affirmation to confrontation. Findings indicate that a layered theoretical approach to the questions of naming and communication is warranted in order to generate understanding of decision-making, identity negotiation, meaning, and the use of names to communicate identity.

KEYWORDS naming, communication, identity, women, post-marital

Last names function as legal and practical labels for identification and as such are particularly salient forms of identity and address (Carbaugh, 1996), serving not only as an reflection of identity, but of identity itself (Piaget, 1965; Fowler, 1997). In social interaction with others, names provide a basis for identification and "may shape how others react to us, which then affects our own self-appraisal" (Twenge, 1997: 418). From this perspective, "one's choice of a last name, then, is nothing less than the 'principal' resource by which one is addressed and known" (Carbaugh, 1996: 113). Accordingly, the act of naming serves identity, relational, and social functions as it "represents who we are" and may "identify us and describe us in relation to others" (Fowler, 1997: 1).

Names function as labels that are subject to formal and informal changes, are highly significant and memorable, and are "meaningful, non-trivial objects of study"

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(Darden & Robinson, 1976: 423). Because names serve as expressions of identification by the individual and function as marks for identification by others, they are symbols rich with meaning, and deserve examination as symbolic artifacts (Scheuble & Johnson, 1993). As symbolic labels, names can be manipulated, announced, and discussed with insight (Darden & Robinson, 1976). Viewing names as symbolic identity markers positions this manipulation, announcement, and discussion as identity negotiation (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Of particular interest to this investigation is understanding the meaning(s) of post-marital name retention to women. Specifically, the goal of this study is to describe how identity is symbolically communicated through women's post-marital name retention by examining the factors influencing women's choices, the communication around the decision to retain the name, and the ways in which the non-traditional last name is present (or not) in ongoing interactions.

Literature review

Women's marital surname choices may be divided into two primary categories present (and named) in the literature: traditional and non-traditional. Traditional surname choices denote the adoption of a husband's surname by a woman at the time of marriage (Kline et al., 1996; Twenge, 1997). This choice is predominant among contemporary married women in the United States (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995).

Non-traditional surname choice contains a greater degree of variability, including name retention, hyphenation, and the construction of new names. A small percentage of women are joined by their husband in their decision (Allyn & Allyn, 1995; Basow, 1992; Kupper, 1990). Women who keep their names after marriage overwhelmingly cite negative ramifications of careers and identity should they change their names, as well as a need for autonomy (Kline et al., 1996). Women in the professions (Kline et al., 1996; Twenge, 1997) and especially in "more liberal work roles" (Scheuble & Johnson, 1993: 751) more often keep their own names. Though personal and career identity provided the largest explanation for name-keepers' choices, their own family identity was also a factor (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995; Scheuble & Johnson, 1993; Twenge, 1997).

The seemingly disparate choices of women's marital surnames are unified by a common emphasis on identity. As Hecht (1993) observes, identity is present in every communicative behavior. Because our names serve as markers of our identities in both cognitive and psychological self-constructs, as well as within our interactions, they embody and communicate our identities.

Women's marital surnames are rendered more important to an understanding of the intersection of naming and identity because the choice of a marital surname reflects the negotiation of identity at multiple stages (Hecht, 1993). As a marker of personal identity, the marital name offers a unique opportunity to engage in the naming, or remaking (Suarez, 1997) of the self and may "potentially signal an identity through a code, through a discourse of identification consisting of associated symbols, motives, meanings, and norms" (Carbaugh, 1996: 119). This modification and definition of one's self-image reflects the negotiation of "self-images constructed, experienced, and communicated by the individuals within a culture and within a

particular communication interaction" (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 39). Further, the negotiation of the marital surname choice by a couple demonstrates that "identity becomes a property of the relationship because it is jointly negotiated" (Hecht, 1993: 79). Additionally, the use and presentation of a non-traditional or alternative naming choice engages ongoing negotiation with a larger social community (Hecht, 1993) or generalized other (Charon, 2001), where women may meet pressure, resistance, or acceptance when presenting their choice.

This study seeks to expand the understanding of a particularized symbol in communication and naming studies. The choice of marital last name is central to identity and "a potent site of communication and culture" (Carbaugh, 1996: 119). As a symbolic artifact, women's non-traditional last name choices help to communicate personal identity, relational identity, and social/cultural norms and change (Carbaugh, 1996; Charon, 2001; Fowler, 1997; Goffman, 1959; Suter, 2001) yet, despite identification of the name as a symbol of identity, no research to date has offered a theoretically-based description of how the name operates in communication. Accordingly, this study poses the following questions:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between post-marital name retention and identity negotiation?

Research Question 2: How do women understand the meaning(s) of post-marital name retention?

Research Question 3: How is the ongoing use of the name employed to communicate identity, if at all?

Method

Data was collected from interviews conducted with twenty-three married women above the age of eighteen who had retained their own names. Demographic items, including age and length of marriage, were found to be consistent with previous findings (Brightman, 1994), and are reported in Table 1.

Participants for this study were identified through purposeful sampling. Purposeful or criterion-based selection (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) sampling allowed for the selection of participants who have the characteristics necessary for inclusion in the study. For the purposes of this study, purposeful sampling was used in order to capture the limited variation within a fairly heterogeneous population (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Recruitment was initially targeted to women's professional associations and email groups, and snowball sampling was subsequently used to recruit additional participants. Each participant completed an Informed Consent Form and demographic questionnaire before the start of the interview. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to start the interview, prompt participants in naturally occurring discourse, and to serve as a reminder of the topic areas to be included as part of the conversation.

Data analysis began with transcription of the interviews. Each interview was transcribed in full and read against a playback of that interview. Constant comparison (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used to analyze the data. First, each discrete unit of data was recorded on a separate note card, along with a code that identified the

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC BY PSEUDONYM

Participant (pseudonym)	Age	Age at Marriage	Number of Marriages	Children	Education	Occupation
Amelia	38	34	1	Y; 1	Grad./Prof.	Education
Samantha	29	29	1	N	Grad./Prof.	Education
Krista	58	44	2	Y; 4	Grad./Prof.	Education
Grace	38	35	1	Y; 1	Grad./Prof.	Education
Alana	35	26	1	Y; 1	Grad./Prof.	Education
Jade	33	38	1	N	Grad./Prof.	Student
Kim	40	31	1	Y; 1	Grad./Prof.	Business
Jane	30	29	1	Y; 1	College	Business
Sharon	29	24	1	Y; 1	Grad./Prof.	Management
Elise	38	33	1	N	Grad./Prof.	Education
Shelley	33	28	1	N	Grad./Prof.	Student
Hilary	34	34	1	N	Grad./Prof.	Education
Greta	39	29	1	Y; 2	Grad./Prof.	Education
Jill	39	24	1	Y; 2	Grad./Prof.	Education
Andrea	45	34	1	Y; 2	Grad./Prof.	Other
Michelle	40	21	1	Y; 2	Grad./Prof.	Education
Lauren	36	21	1	Y; 2	Grad./Prof.	Education
Jennifer	28	28	1	N	Grad./Prof.	Education
Kate	43	29	1	Y; 2	Grad./Prof.	Education
Kelly	45	25	1	Y; 3	Grad./Prof.	Education
Natalie	38	33	2	Y; 2	Grad./Prof.	Student
Rebecca	30	28	1	Y; 1	Grad./Prof.	Business
Ann	44	40	1	N	Grad./Prof.	Other

corresponding interview (Jackson & Heckman, 2002). The note cards were categorized first according to which topic or question in the interview protocol was being addressed. A second step reviewed the initial assignment for fit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and reassigned as necessary. Subsequent stages of categorization resulted in the emergence of themes within each set. Continual reading and assessment of accuracy of fit continued throughout this process. This process[1] employed multiple readings in order to identify emergent codes, to map related categories, and to preserve the native voice of the women who participated in the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Results

Results of the data analysis are analyzed according to the research question addressed during specific points in the interview.

Research Question One

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Themes	Example
Expected	"It never occurred to me to change my name, ever."
Not that Kind	"I was never that girl … I've been very resistant to the idea all along."
Children	"for us the issue was what the kids' names would be."
Options	"I invited my husband to take mine but he declined and we did an electronic game as a combination of our last names, and I said why don't we both just adopt that as our name…"
Reconsider/Regrets	"We are the family that doesn't have the same last name. It never occurred to me how much I would have liked that."

Dominant themes. The theme most prominently expressed by participants in this study as they reflected on the story of their name was that it was "Expected," both for the self and for their partners. Participants in the study expressed that the decision to retain their names was not an act they viewed as a choice, per se, but rather as something they understood about who they are. In this portion of the interview, participants articulated a strong attachment to their names. Amelia (all participants are identified by pseudonym) stated simply, "I said I'd never change my name." Samantha echoed this sentiment, saying, "I don't think there was every any doubt in my mind that I was not going to change my name. I remember thinking in conversations hypothetically about marriage that I'd never give up my name, ever."

The theme of "Expected" was also found when women reported identity negotiation with their partners. During this part of the interview, participants were asked to recount conversations they had with their partners about post-marital name retention, and to relay the reaction they received. Many women report that the conversation was minimal, if it occurred at all. Most women voiced the same sentiment as Greta, who said, "There was never an expectation that I would change my name."

A second dominant, and related, theme that emerged from discussion of identity negotiation with the self and partner was "Not That Kind." This theme was initially coded with "Expected," but after multiple readings was determined to have a distinct meaning that warranted its own coding scheme. Highly related to the first theme of "Expected," "Not That Kind" speaks more directly to identity issues than the process of negotiation, either internally or through communication with the partner. Amelia gave voice to this theme when she stated:

> If he had a big problem with it that would have meant that he had really missed something about the kind of person I was and I would have made an error in judgment about this person understanding who I was and respecting me. I can understand him being like, having mixed feelings about it for a week but then okay get over it. But not being able to understand what it means in the context of who I am, that would have indicated, well, I'm not the person you think I am and maybe you're not the person I think you are.

The theme of "Not That Kind" was also identified in participants' discussion of their partners and their partners' responses to the decision of post-marital name retention. Participants in this study repeatedly voiced the sentiment that they would not be with "that type" of man. Samantha said:

> I guess I would say, I feel, any man or partner that would insist that you take on his name has got some issues in terms of what the tradition of marriage might be or what the has to be and to insist on you or to make that sort of request on you I think is unreasonable and problematic.

Minor themes. While women reported that their conversations concerning their married names were minimal, the conversations often focused less on the name each spouse would adopt and more on the question of what potential children would be named. Accordingly, a minor theme was identified as "Children." Characteristic of this theme was Shelley, who stated, "we had far more conversations about kids' last names than about mine."

Several women reported that, while expected that they would not take their husband's name, they were open to other solutions. In exploring these "Options," Lauren stated:

> I totally would have been open to changing my name totally and creating a new one, or both of us hyphenating or coming up with something together but I didn't want it to be one sided or another. (Lauren)

Finally, in response to whether the question of names was an ongoing one with their husbands, the responses revealed the code "Reconsider/Regrets." This code reflects a continuing process of communication and identity negotiation with the self and within the relationship and is coded to reflect the full picture voiced as this theme. While the participants in the study were in unanimous agreement that they would make the same decision again, a recurring sentiment voiced by women in this study was the fact that there were factors that made them "Reconsider/Regret" their decision. This secondary theme is closely tied to the secondary theme of "Children," as the prominent issue expressed was stated succinctly by Andrea, who said, "I hate not having the same name as my kids."

Despite this sentiment, women continued to assert that they would not choose to take on their husband's names, saying, "I'm happy I've done it" (Hilary). Rather, women expressed regret that post-marital name retention is "not a great answer" (Michelle), and that "I don't think you could come up with a really good solution for this" (Kate).

The themes that emerged during coding of answers to Research Question One were identified through multiple readings of women's accounts of their individual decisions and communication with their partners regarding the decision-making surrounding post-marital name retention. These themes reveal that, consistent with previous findings (Fowler, 1997; Kupper, 1990; Sutter, 2001), the participants in this study had a strong, positive affinity for their own names and choose partners who shared the values that underpinned their decisions (Allyn & Allyn, 1995; Kupper, 1990).

Research Question Two

TABLE 3

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Themes	Example
Identity	"What it's about for me primarily is my individuality, keeping my identity as a person."
Institution	"the name is hard to separate from how we traditionally think of marriage.
Lineage	"It honors my history and my identity in the sense of my heritage, my cultural heritage."
Common	"every woman I know did that and it was very common."
Aesthetics	"it's a unique name … I like the way it looks when I write it."
Experience	"I did change my name the first time I got married and it – I – it was miserable."

Dominant Themes. The most frequent theme coded in response to questions concerning the meaning of post-marital name retention dealt with "Identity." At the broadest level, women simply spoke of their name as being one and the same with their identity. By the same measure, women clearly rejected their husband's names as components of their identities.

Professional identity was a principle code under the larger theme of identity. Many women associated their names with their accomplishments and reputations. Additionally, the data revealed that, for participants in the study, feminism was a significant facet of the broad theme of identity. However, participants expressed two views of the role of a feminist identity. For some, feminism was a motivating factor, but for others, like Greta, feminism followed the decision to retain her name:

> Part of it now more is politics. At the time I can't say that was a huge reason or if it was I didn't articulate it in the way I would today. At the time I wouldn't have said I have these feminist reasons, but now I would definitely characterize those reasons as feminist. (Greta)

Two codes that emerged less frequently in the data but that were expressed with a great deal of force were "Mrs" and "Appendage." Surprisingly, a number of participants used the same terminology and phrasing, making these themes highly identifiable and salient to the participant's understandings of post-marital name retention. The code "Mrs" was expressed as rejection of the label and the associated meanings it carries. Jill stated that when a woman changed her name after marriage, it meant that "your own identity is Mrs and I had very strong feelings about that, I was not going to be Mrs anybody." Michelle also asserted "it was really important to me not to be Mrs," a sentiment also expressed by Jennifer, who proclaimed, "I am not going to be Mrs [His Name]."

Similarly, the code "appendage" was directly identified within the data, and this term was used repeatedly throughout, as by Amelia, who stated, "I won't give it up and become an appendage." Additionally, Elise stated, "it still feels to me — I never wanted to be a wife, a helpmate to my husband, you know?"

Taken together, these codes can be categorized under the larger theme of "Institution." Occurring with moderate frequency in the data, "Institution" encompasses the question of labels and roles, as well as the rejection of what the traditional cultural

view of marriage has offered women. This view was expressed by Sharon, who stated "it [changing one's name] totally represents the worst thing about marriage, the woman subverting to her husband, being conventional," a point Shelley made when she said, "it's about a transfer of property and I'm not property. There you go."

The theme "Lineage" articulates ties to past and existing groups of familial others, at the same time that it looks forward to children and the potential of future generations. Amelia typified this theme when she said, "none of us are breeders, really, and the [Her Name]s are vanishing," as did Hilary, who stated, "I'm the only female descent who has this name." Women expressed an understanding of the meaning of their names as associated with their family and culture of origin, saying that their name was a "tie to family" (Jill).

Minor themes. The data revealed that the names are potent symbols for women (Carbaugh, 1996), and that the meanings of the names women retain after marriage are multiple and complex. Personal identity (Hecht, 1993) drives most women's decisions, as they consider issues including professionalism, family/ethnicity, and feminism. Women are also guided by the meanings of the institution of marriage, and their concern for lineage. Among this group of participants, post-marital name retention has been influenced by their contact with others who have made similar choices, their degree of affinity their name of origin, and, in two cases, past experience with name change. The decision to retain a name beyond marriage is one with multiple motivators, and also multiple implications for the ongoing communication of identity.

Research Question Three

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Themes	Example
Interactants	"it does come up a lot. I'm surprised how much it comes up."
Messages	
Intentional	"I put a little gold star – 'the bride and the groom are keeping their names. . ."
Relational	"I think it sends a message that we value equality"
Activism	"it's a great way to raise awareness in a society of different groups of people."
Strategy	"I feel like I have a fluidity in my life, because there are times when I will adopt Mrs. [His Name] if it is advantageous."
Time	"People say things to me. I hope it stops, because I hate being angry about it all the time."
	"between year four and year seven [of marriage] it mellowed out."

Interactants. Participants identified a number of coding categories for those with whom they engaged in identity communication through, or about, the use of their names. Family members were most frequently nominated, but participants also reported coworkers, neighbors, and friends among those with whom they had communication about post-marital name retention. The final category of individuals with whom participants had communication about their name was the service and business sectors:

> One was making a reservation for an airline ticket and I was giving the names, saying my name is, spell it, my husband's name is, spell it, and the woman just said very outright, "Why didn't you change your name, Why would you do that?" (Jill)

Participants reported that across the categories of interactants, the question of their name was a frequent topic of conversation. Kate said, "It does come up a lot. I'm surprised how much it comes up," and Hilary asserted, "It's present for me every day. When I get the mail, the telephone. Everyday, when I talk to his parents because I know it's a huge issue for them."

Messages. A dominant code that emerged for Research Question Three is that of "Messages," which reflects women's sense of the purpose and symbolic use of their name. Some of the messages can be characterized as *intentional*, others as *relational*, and, finally, some as *activism*.

Participants expressed cognizance and deliberateness of intent concerning the use of their name. Many participants reported that they made an *intentional* effort to introduce their name into the interaction, whether by announcement or introduction:

> What I did at the back of our wedding program I wrote the bride and groom's contact information after the wedding and then I wrote [My Name] and [His Name]. I put a little gold star "the bride and groom are keeping their names." (Jennifer)

In addition, participants also expressed a willingness to correct those who used their husbands' names, again demonstrating intentional revelation and use of the retained name:

> How do you not correct someone who assumes that, they assume that my name is his, when we're around his family. I'm like I don't use that name, sorry, I'm not going to apologize for it. (Krista)

The intentional use of women's non-traditional marital surname was identified as a *relational* message. Participants in this study viewed their marital name choices as sending a message about the nature of their marital relationship. Women interviewed identified the symbolic meaning to be that of equality within the relationship, as illustrated by Grace, who stated succinctly, "I think it sends a message that we value equality."

Participants also reported that the message their name communicated was a form of *activism*. The deliberate use of the non-traditional marital surname was nominated by participants as an aspect of feminist action, or of being a role model for younger women. Alana stated that explaining her name is "an opportunity to educate people and that's not bad. A teachable moment." Several women saw their actions as opening possibilities for other specific groups of women, including Hilary, who said, "I think it's important in the sense of the women who come after me, for them as well, so the assumption isn't made."

Strategy. The women interviewed overwhelmingly reported using their names intentionally in order to express their identities and the nature of their relationship, while expressing frustration and anger with the challenges and negative responses they had received. However, many also noted that they have found the "name issue" to be one that they can work to their advantage, and, sometimes, with humor:

> I just find in getting through things and having somebody work on the furnace they're not somebody who needs a lesson in, whatever to get it done. If I just have to be the little wife to get it done, then fine, you know. (Kim)
> Only recently did I learn to say, yes, I'm Mrs [His Name] when the most important thing is actually to get something accomplished. (Sharon)

Many women, like Shelley and Jill, expressed having fun while using the name issue as a specific strategy concerning telemarketers:

> It's a great tool though when you get junk calls. You know they don't know you. It has some convenience. (Shelley)

Time

Two of the women interviewed were newlyweds, and their narratives of experience with post-marital name retention contrasted with participants who had been married for an extended period of time. Jennifer, who had been married for six weeks at the time of the interview, said:

> If we get things addressed to Mr and Mrs [His Name] I circle the last name and write return to sender no one at this address with that name. That's how pissed I am about it. People in his family will ask me ... I heard that you're not taking [his] last name, and they'll say something like you know I read that means you are more likely to get divorced? Why is that? Why aren't you concerned about that? Why are you keeping your last name? At this point I say, it's my fucking name. People say things to me. I hope that it stops, because I hate being angry about it all the time.

Other participants expressed that they had once experienced this anger, but as time progressed they had become more sanguine about their name. In talking about the responses from others, and her anger about her name, Kim noted that, "between year four and year seven [of marriage] it mellowed out ... If someone calls me by [His Name] then I think this person's stupid but not that I have to clarify it if it's just a one time thing, as compared to like four or five years ago."

For participants in this study, communication regarding their decision to retain their name after marriage remained a communicative symbol of identity. Ongoing interaction regarding post-marital name retention indicates extended identity negotiation (Ting-Toomey, 1999) in which participants' choices are met with varied degrees of acceptance and resistance (Jackson, 2002).

Discussion

The considerations nominated by participants in this research reflect multiple points of interest for scholars. Most prominent among these considerations are the conclusions that naming is a communicative act that serves an identity function. While this finding is supported by the existing literature (Carbaugh, 1996), it is richer because it includes women's accounts of the deliberate and purposeful selection and use of the name in order to convey to others who they have defined themselves to be. Rather than simply asserting that the marital name is an identity label, this study points to theoretical implications for the study of naming and identity negotiation in communication.

The findings underscore the need for a layered theoretical approach to the study of identity and naming. This layered approach is advanced by Hecht (1993), who describes a process wherein "[a]lternative ways of knowing . . . are continually juxtaposed and played off each other and/or blended together," (76) and by Carbaugh (1996), who includes recognition of the social identity, integrated self and social practices, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and cultural theories in the development of a cultural dimension approach to the study of the "communication of social identities" (16). Hecht (1993) posits that four frames of identity implicate additional theoretical considerations. Rather than a singular approach that is constrained by a lack of context afforded to the frame in which identity is expressed, a discussion of the findings of this study should include the location in which identity is communicated (Hecht, 1993), negotiated (Ting-Toomey, 1999) and either accepted or rejected (Jackson, 2002).

Using layered theories of identity to understand and describe how women's decisions to retain their own names after marriage communicate identity requires first examining the personal decision that women have made. Participants in this study expressed that the decision to retain their name was a given and that it was an outgrowth of the kind of person they viewed themselves to be. The forms of identities emergent in the data, including professional, feminist, and family/ancestral are reflective of previous findings (Carbaugh, 1996; Kline et al., 1996; Kupper, 1990; Twenge, 1997) and have been greatly expanded in the data analysis section of this report. The verification of this finding through a review of the relevant literature strengthens the understanding of the non-traditional marital name is a significant symbol reflective of identity and provides a description for the communication process that accomplishes this significant naming and identity goal.

Because marriage is a dyadic act and a marital name reflects an interpersonal relationship, the personal understanding of identity must be shared. The second consideration implicates Identity Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey 1999). The view of self-symbolized in a woman's own name encompasses primary identities, including gender, ethnic and cultural, and personal identities that require integration with the new role and relational identities of "wife" and "married." The negotiation of the name then reflects identity meanings for the self, the other, and the relationship (Hecht, 1993). In further agreement with Identity Negotiation Theory, the findings of this study include the code of "Expected" and "Not that Kind," themes that are emblematic of the third assumption of the theory and implicating the dialectic of identity security-vulnerability if this finding is taken to mean that women who make non-traditional choices are likely to select spouses who are similar in their orientations to the cultural practices of marriage as a patriarchal institution.

Despite the relative prominence of dialectics in an explanation of women's post-marital naming in the literature (Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995; Carbaugh, 1996) that might be included in the personal frame, these concerns were not identified in the current data. While participants in the study conveyed points of difficulty in their decision (namely "Children" and "Options"), no theme reflecting a tension between personal and relational identities was identified in the data. This departure is one that warrants further exploration in future studies of dialectics in post-marital name retention as an "identity gap" between the personal and relational frames (Jung &

Hecht, 2004) that may lead to dialectics for some, but not others, who have retained their name.

Third, the expression of the decision, once negotiated, constitutes both a communal and enactment frame of identity wherein women are expressing a core component of identity through a highly visible label in communication with others. The use of non-traditional marital names violates an ongoing cultural worldview of the institution of marriage (Jackson, 2002) and, in doing so, violates a social contract. Participants in this study relayed that this violation resulted in conflict when engaging in deliberative usage of their own name with others in interaction, highlighted differences, and garnered evaluation (Jackson, 2002). The response from others ranged from acceptance from those in similar peer groups to confusion from families and reproach from in-laws and others in the larger cultural communities and are reflective of co-created, quasi-completed, and ready-to-sign contracts (Jackson, 2002), respectively.

Limitations and directions

The participants in this study represent a heterogeneous population, and their relative similarity to one another is not automatically a cause for concern. However, some distinguishing characteristics within the targeted population (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995; Twenge, 1997), most notably, ethnicity, were not proportionately represented in the sample. Extensions of this research should target ethnic minority organizations or affiliations that may lead to the recruitment of women in this category. It should be noted, however, that despite this limitation the data revealed a concern for ancestry and ethnicity, indicating that the problems of sampling were likely weak.

There are three related areas of concern that have received even less attention in communication and naming research. First, of co-equal occurrence and interest is men's experience in marriages where non-traditional naming occurs. While the current study, and Kupper (1990), indicate that women who choose to retain their names are largely supported by their partners in this decision, interviews with men would significantly contribute to the understanding of the negotiation of relational identity. Similarly, a smaller subset of the population implicated in this study has opted to change both names at the time of marriage (Allyn & Allyn, 1995). Anecdotal accounts indicate few couples fall into this category, but their stories are considered to be significant and warrant investigation.

A third consideration in the study of names among couples points to future research among gays and lesbians. A cross database search of Communication Complete, PsychINFO, Social Science Abstracts, and Gender revealed that labeling and marriage are concerns within research and within the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) community, but no direct (Suter, 2001) references to naming were found. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the adoption of a common name, while an exception, is a growing trend among GLBT couples. As Sutter (2001) argues, a study of naming among GLBT couples would also serve to isolate and examine the "tradition of patronymy" (185) outside of the hetero-normative, patriarchal structure of heterosexual marriage. Together with the current data, these lines of inquiry would provide breadth and depth to the body of knowledge of naming, and extend the goals

of greater awareness and reflexivity of the meanings and messages present in naming choices.

Yoder (2001) describes three major components to qualitative data analysis performed through constant comparison, including data reduction, data display, and conclusions. Data reduction is the process of transforming and abstracting raw, textual data into codes that convey the essential meanings articulated by participants. Data display is achieved through the organization of information, whether narrative text or graphical display, that exemplifies the codes abstracted from the raw data. Drawing conclusions involves the notation of patterns and the grounding of the data within a theoretical framework in order to offer an interpretation of meaning. These major components are generally achieved through five non-linear stages (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Yoder, 2001), including organization of the data, generation of categories, examination and verification, consideration of alternative explanations, and formulation of findings.

Following Yoder's (2001) Graphic Overview of Qualitative Research Types, the concern for characteristics of language as communication content and the "identification (and categorization) of elements, and exploration of their connections" (8) to meanings held by participants in this investigation is best accommodated through the use of grounded theory. The grounded theory approach to the study of naming and communication also assists one in the comprehension of the meaning of action and the identification of common and unique themes.

Grounded theory addresses process questions of how experience and meaning change over time and in stages (Yoder, 2001). Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommend a descriptive analysis that separates distinct themes into codes and categories that shape structures. These structures are then linked in order to determine relationships and patterns among themes in the data. The interpretation of emergent themes and relationships is grounded in the data themselves and guided by theoretical constructs.

The goals and focus of this study are congruent with the criteria for qualitative inquiry generally, and for thematic analysis through grounded theory specifically. Accordingly, statistical viability is not a concern but closely read and extended thick description of participant voices is central to the integrity of the research and conclusions.

Notes

[1] The central feature of qualitative methods is the approach to data analysis. Maxwell (1996) likens the design and analysis of qualitative data to a "philosophy of life; no one is without one, but some people are more aware of theirs, and thus able to make more informed and consistent decisions" (3). Awareness of the process of data analysis provides a more informed and interactive understanding of the purpose and process of said analysis, and a better understanding of connections and relationships revealed in the conclusions of the study (Maxwell, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

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