

NONTRADITIONAL NAME CHANGES FOR MEN:

ATTITUDES OF MEN AND WOMEN

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Recently, some men have taken their wives' last names upon marriage rather than following tradition. The goal of this study was to examine the attitudes that men and women have toward these nontraditional men. Ideological hegemony and social identity theory comprised the framework for examining participants' beliefs. A survey first elicited participants' extant sexist beliefs about men and the characteristics of a nontraditional man compared to a traditional man. An open-ended question further explored participants' opinions. The results indicated that benevolent sexism influences respondents' attitudes towards nontraditional men and that most respondents view nontraditional men as more nurturing and committed to their marriage than traditional men. The results further revealed a dichotomy of positive and negative attitudes towards nontraditional men indicating that society's feelings about nontraditional men are changing.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO NONTRADITIONAL NAME CHANGES

In January 2007, an article entitled “L.A. man sues to take wife’s last name” appeared on *USA Today*’s website. The case of Mike Buday and Diana Bijon, now known as Mike and Diana Bijon, sparked quite a controversy over breaking the tradition of the wife taking her husband’s name upon marriage. Before getting married, Buday and Bijon discussed Bijon’s desire to keep her last name because her family had no sons to carry on the patronym. Buday later explained to reporters that he had no affiliation with his own father, but considered Bijon’s family as his own. While seemingly a good compromise for the couple, Buday experienced difficulty in officially changing his last name due to lengthy court procedures and personal ridicule from some institutions, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles. Buday sued the state of California, citing gender discrimination and refusal of equal protection. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has endorsed the Bijons’ case and the state of California is now in the process of passing a bill to allow men to adopt their wives’ last names with as much ease as a woman has adopting her husbands’ last name (Kasindorf, 2007). More recently, *USA Today* covered a similar story of nontraditional marriage, highlighting some of the social ramifications. Donna and Mike Salinger faced confusion and denial by guests when they entered their wedding reception as the Salingers (Donna’s last name). The couple described their frustration with their wedding guests’ inability to understand why they chose a nontraditional route. Although this social phenomenon has not garnered scholarly



attention, some scholars cited in the article believe that more stories such as the Bijon's and Salinger's will surface (Friess, 2007).

The legal director of the ACLU, Mark Rosenbaum stated the inherency of this tradition "reflects the archaic notion of a woman's subordinate place in the partnership" (as cited in Kasindorf, 2007, para. 7). However, the tradition of a woman dropping her surname and taking a man's last name at marriage is deeply embedded in American culture, to the point that few people question it. The United States derived the traditional name changing practice during an era in which many in society considered a woman property of first her father and then her husband. The idea of taking a man's name indicates that the woman no longer carried one identity but two (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995; Weitzman, 1981). Additionally, before women had equal rights, men were more likely than women to attain professional titles. Thus, the tradition mirrored society and a man kept his name because of its professional associations. However, current American society asserts that men and women are equals and, women frequently attain professional status before marriage. As such, it no longer makes sense to assume that women should be the ones to change their names.

In fact, some men desire to change their last names to their wives' last names upon marriage (Friess, 2007). Despite the lack of scholarly research examining men who change their last names, a number of anecdotal sources confirm this small but growing trend. For instance, a magazine in Canada surveyed 537 couples about to wed in summer 2003 and discovered that 3% of men planned on changing their names to their wives' or hyphenate (Binks, 2004). A website with instructions on how to change one's name in

Maryland briefly addressed the subject, including the claim, “More men are changing their names for marriage,” though the website did not provide any statistical data (Maryland Legal Assistance Network, n.d.). In addition, a FoxNews.com article reported that a Wisconsin county clerk “estimated that one in every 100 grooms [in Wisconsin] takes the name of his wife” (para. 9). Scheuble and Johnson (1993) surveyed college students and discovered that many individuals, especially females, accept the idea of a man taking his wife’s last name, though few respondents said they would follow a nontraditional route.

The legal process required for a man to change his last name to his wife’s provides evidence that such a practice is culturally unacceptable. For example, currently in California, the man must first petition to have his name changed, pay over \$300 dollars (instead of the \$70 a woman typically pays), inform the public through a newspaper posting of his intent and then explain himself to a judge. This process is typical for a man who wants to hyphenate his and his wife’s last names as well. At present, only six states allow a man to change his last name with the same ease as a woman (Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, and North Dakota). Those men who have successfully changed their last names endure much more than a complicated legal process however. Forbes, Adams-Curtis, White, and Hamm (2002) interviewed 197 students on their perceptions of men who have hyphenated their names with their wives’; their results revealed that some respondents perceived men who hyphenate their names as more likely to “have homosexual tendencies...get a divorce...and commit adultery” (p. 170). The researchers also discovered that some women perceived men with hyphenated names as

less masculine. Research has documented how men and women feel about women who change, choose not to change, or hyphenate their last names (Etaugh, Bridges, Cummings-Hill, & Cohen, 1999; Forbes et al., 2002; Goldin & Shim, 2004; Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Johnson & Scheuble, 1996; Kline, Stafford, & Miklosovic, 1996; Scheuble & Johnson, 1993). Indeed, women have made great strides in gender equality by keeping their surnames after marriage, using situational names, and hyphenating names. Despite these strides, questions about why men do not have to make these decisions and why keeping their names is simply accepted have not been addressed. More specifically, the academic community has not addressed this issue despite that this tradition balks at the notion of a gender equal society.

Much research has revealed that both men and women value their names and view their names as representative of their identities (Johnson & Scheuble, 1996; Scheuble & Johnson, 1993; Twenge, 1997). However, upon marrying, most men and women expect women to abandon their feelings of connection to their last names and readily adopt their husbands' last names. On the other hand, no expectation exists for a man to assume his wife's last name and such a practice may be viewed as disgraceful and a loss of identity for the man. As such, the purpose of this study is to explore men and women's attitudes toward men who change their names, and potentially bring insight to why American culture might resist this notion of tradition change.

In exploring these attitudes, ideological hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) and social identity theory (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979) serve as the theoretical framework. Ideological hegemony provides the overarching context in which this study is situated.

The concept of ideological hegemony suggests that our culture functions under a fluid set of socially constructed beliefs about men and women's roles (Gramsci, 1971). The construal of men as naturally more powerful and authoritative than women underpins ideological hegemony. Furthermore, ideological hegemony can explain how and why power struggles between and within the sexes occur. According to Gramsci (1971), ideological hegemony plays an active role in constructing the day-to-day interactions between men and women that perpetuate stereotypes and sexist ideals. Therefore, ideological hegemony is fundamental in understanding why men who defy social norms by changing their names to that of their spouses may experience a negative societal reaction.

Additionally, social identity theory can assist in explaining why individuals want to conform to a specific category or classification while discriminating against another. Hogg and Abrams (1988) explained that individuals self-categorize themselves based upon the similarity of their views and attitudes to a group. For the categorization to be successful, the individual must view him or herself as part of the in-group and those who do not conform to group standards as the out-group. Patriarchal structure of American culture provides a straightforward mode of classification in which groups are polarized. The strict divergence between groups disallows in-group members to identify or participate easily with out-group members without feeling conflicted or being punished by other members of the in-group (and sometimes out-group as well). Men may experience difficulty when adopting their wives' last names because doing so clashes

with our culture's definition of masculinity and conflicts with the sense of self-identity men derive from the male group.

This ideological hegemonic approach to understanding how others will perceive nontraditional men and their naming practices along with the principles of social identity theory provides an appropriate lens through which to view this study. This study first reviews the history and social structures that keep the current system in place and discourage men wishing to change their last names to their wives' from parting ways with patriarchy. Additionally, the theoretical framework is reviewed in depth and a rationale provided for conducting the study. In the third chapter, a description of the participants, procedures and measures, and data analysis is provided. The results found are then explicated in the fourth chapter, a discussion of the results' implications comprises the fifth chapter, and a final conclusion ends the manuscript.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study is to understand the reaction contemporary society has toward men who subvert the traditional cultural practice of the wife taking her husband's last name at marriage by taking their wives' names instead. Specifically, I examine how communication in this culture may function to oppress individuals who undermine patriarchal traditions and do not appeal to a hegemonic standard. Social identity theory is used to assess how men and women view nontraditional men (men who take their wives' last names upon marriage) as constituting their identity in relation to the overarching traditional male group.

#### History and Name-Changing

The Western tradition of a woman changing her surname to her husband's upon marriage is rooted in the outdated view of women as possessions for men to own. A number of women's rights advocates, dating back to 1848, have taken issue with the expectation that the woman should be the spouse to change surnames. Elizabeth Cady Stanton introduced this issue at a women's rights convention in 1848, stating that names can constitute a great amount of one's identity. Stanton was the first person to criticize publicly the tradition of female surname changing. Women's rights advocate Charlotte Perkins Gilman also addressed women's surname changing as an issue of linguistic sexism (Foss & Edson, 1989). Until the mid-1800's when women's rights advocate Lucy

Stone declined changing her surname after marriage, no laws in the United States prevented a woman from keeping her surname (Boxer & Gritsenko, 2005; Scheuble & Johnson, 1993). People viewed this cultural tradition as so normal that no law enforcing the action was necessary. After Lucy Stone gained attention for her action (or lack of action), some states mandated that a woman take her husband's last name while others made the change optional (MacDougall, 1973). State laws enforcing women to take their husbands' names did not do so directly though. Rather, privileges such as obtaining a driver's license or a voter registration card were withheld unless a married woman shared her husband's last name (Goldin & Shim, 2004). In the 1930s, women began to speak out collectively about gender inequality and made great gains, although "social custom and norms assumed that a wife had no legal identity apart from her husband" (Scheuble & Johnson, 1993, p. 748). During this time, more women began to enter the workforce. World War II increased the number of women working for practical means. Earning an income often has a direct effect on women's perception of self and identity (Tichenor, 2005). As women's economic autonomy increased, the push for independence from men rose as well.

When the first wave of feminism hit in the 1970s, women managed to overturn all laws that overtly or covertly punished women for keeping their surnames. Throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s, interest in women who retained their birth names exploded. Scholars and non-academicians alike wrote prolifically on the impact of women keeping their names as well as legal and social advice for women who chose a nontraditional route (Foss & Edson, 1989; Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Jacobson & Insko, 1984;

Johnson & Scheuble, 1995; Kramarae, 1981; Lebell, 1988; MacDougall, 1973; Weitzman, 1981). The issue of nontraditional naming became an overall social issue, rather than exclusively a feminist issue (Foss & Edson, 1989). Johnson and Scheuble (1996) investigated the ramifications of this social change and found that women marrying after 1980 were more likely to retain their names or hyphenate their names than women married before 1980. During this time period, Atkinson (1987) reported that women who kept their birth names were perceived as “career-oriented, independent, assertive, well-educated, and feminist” (as cited in Foss & Edson, 1989, p. 357).

Similarly, during this time period, title of address emerged as an off-shoot of the naming issue. Historically, men have always been referred to as “Mr.” whether or not they are married. Women’s titles however, were (and still are in many cases) used to differentiate between a married woman, “Miss,” and a married woman, “Mrs.” (Etaugh, et al., 1999). Jacobson and Insko (1984) described the unfairness of the disparity when they noted, “[In] a male-dominated society, men have the power to name and to label, so that, while men are not usually identified in terms of their relationships with women, women are often identified in terms of their relationships with men” (p. 388). As such, the term “Ms.,” a title as ambiguous as “Mr.,” emerged as the response to this inequality.

Beginning in the 1990s however, fewer and fewer women took advantage of the nontraditional route paved by women throughout history. As Goldin and Shim (2004) discovered, the plateau of surname keeping in the 1990s has now turned into a decrease in surname keeping. The researchers revealed that current studies on surname keeping/changing may have underestimated the amount of surname changers because



some women who keep their names upon marriage often later adopt their husbands' name. Frequently, the issue of changing one's name years into the marriage is associated with the advent of children into the family (Johnson & Scheuble, 2002). The change from retaining her surname to assuming her husband's originates from men's and women's perceptions of a single name as showing more family unity. In addition, fewer and fewer couples choose to hyphenate their names as well (Jayson, 2005). Goldin and Shim (2004) also suggested that the decline in women's nontraditional name changing practices may be attributed to a return to more conservative values, a decrease in the pressure that women in the 1980s felt to exert their newfound rights, or simply that it no longer represents a necessary way to signify equality.

Similar to the thought process of nineteenth century America, overturning laws preventing or discouraging men from changing their last names has been viewed as unnecessary, as men and women have never challenged the normative naming practices for men. The only comparable situation involving men who employ nontraditional naming practices is when husbands hyphenate their names with their wives' surnames. Men who hyphenate their names are a recent phenomenon and some research on women who hyphenate their names also includes mention of men who hyphenate. The only conclusion drawn about men who choose nontraditional names in the United States implies those with more sexist beliefs often attribute less masculinity or perceive a loss of masculinity to these men (Forbes et al., 2002). However, hyphenation for men is not as bold an action as completely changing one's surname. History has no precedent for understanding how, why, and what happens when men violate this social norm.

## Tradition and Name-Changing

The tradition of patronymy, or a woman taking her husband's name upon marriage, reveals a number of themes in our culture as well as the mutually influential natures of tradition and social norms. According to Lebell (1988), the concept of patronymy includes three inherencies:

1) Males are to have continuous, uninteruptible names, *a name for life* [italics in original]; 2) Females are to have interruptible, serial, provisional names. Women are to use their husband's names upon marriage; 3) Children are to be given their father's last name, the patronym, thereby establishing and assuring patrilineality (pp. 10–11)

As Lebell's definition of patronymy demonstrates, our culture justifies this tradition as opposed to nontraditional naming practices (keeping separate names, hyphenating the names, or the male taking his wife's name) by insisting on the consistency of taking on males' names and thereby making the decision of naming children much easier. Johnson and Scheuble (2002) discovered that even when parents have different surnames, they typically give the father's last name to the child, and the mother's last name may sometimes serve as a middle name for the child. However, Johnson and Scheuble (2002) made an interesting argument for reversing the patronymy tradition and solving the problem of both naming children and tracing family lineage. They noted, "This social norm makes less sense in a society with relatively high rates of marital disruption and remarriage, and where mothers generally have custody of children" (p. 428). However, tradition often usurps other practicalities.

Overall, the vast majority of couples follow tradition, despite the fact that no laws exist today with regard to who may change his or her surname (Johnson & Scheuble,

1995). Although a number of reasons exist for this continued practice, one common theme stands out among others, that patronymy is romantic. For example, Intons-Peterson and Crawford (1985) noted that although men and women both view their identities as very much tied to their last names, pressures from society, family, and religious figures often convince women to change their names. However, Kline et al. (1996) revealed that most women do not feel any animosity toward changing their last names; instead they view it as a symbolic way to unite two people and an indicator of commitment. Granted, most people feel that adopting the same name allows for greater family unity, though not adopting the *husband's* name might be seen as an insult or lack of commitment to the relationship (Jacobson & Insko, 1984). Stafford and Kline's (1996) study supported this notion and confirmed that many men would feel as if their wives did not love them as much or were not as committed to the relationship if they did not change their last names. In general, men and women view women who take their husband's name as having fewer agencies. However, this perception is notably positive because it emphasizes the communality and acceptance of traditional women participating in traditional marriages (Etaugh et al., 1999). Boxer and Gritsenko (2005) too noted that women's narratives about marriage strongly emphasize surname change as symbolic of love, commitment and unification. As a male and a proponent of gender equality, Biffle (2006) aptly noted, "Oppressive cultures always romanticize the tools of their oppression" (para. 9).

Scheuble and Johnson (1993) investigated the intersection of education and tradition in order to determine whether the level of education affected tolerance of nontraditional naming practices. They discovered that most college students responded

somewhat favorably to both women and men who choose nontraditional names, including men who take their wives' surnames. Notably, female college students displayed much more acceptance of nontraditional naming choices than did male college students. However, despite the acceptance of those practices, the majority of male and female college students answered that they planned to take a traditional route for themselves. Scheuble and Johnson offered the explanation that college students may be more willing to accept a departure from traditional naming practices because they are exposed to many professors who, due to publishing issues, choose a nontraditional last name upon marriage. In stark contrast to Scheuble and Johnson's findings, some evidence has indicated that outside of the educational community, both males and females are far less tolerant. In a poll about Hillary Rodham Clinton's decision to keep her surname as a middle name, 94% of respondents (the general public) disagreed with her choice, which might suggest a disparity in tolerance between society as a whole and those exclusively with higher education (Perry & Birnbaum, 1993).

### Ideology and Name-Changing

Indeed, Western culture ideologies about gender equality guide the beliefs on the symbolic nature of name-changing. The widespread social acceptance of men as more powerful and thus more worthy of keeping their names stems from Gramsci's (1971) concept of "ideological hegemony" (as cited in Pyke, 1996, p. 529). Hegemony involves the construction of broad social and cultural rules that govern power relations between the sexes (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003). Those social and cultural rules frequently shift and

change depending upon the time period and emphasized values. According to Acosta-Alzuru (2003), the shared meanings and practices created by society sustain the notion of men as naturally more powerful and authoritative. In other words, hegemony employs a number of strategies to construe those shared meaning and practices as common sense—an ideology. Therefore, ideological hegemony functions under three premises: social traditions represent the best interests of everyone, not just the dominant group (men), the current system in place is easier, has always been done this way, and will always be done this way, and glossing over what could potentially be a source of contention for men and women helps sustain a cooperative society (Pyke, 1996).

The perpetuation of masculine ideals does not occur in a vacuum. Both men and women actively participate in facilitating male dominance through ideological hegemony. The media too plays an important role in disseminating the belief that all men can achieve power and should want to achieve power. Donaldson (1993) argued that the media spreads hegemonic ideals by creating male prototypes in the form of heroes that embody conventional masculine traits. By sensationalizing masculinity, the media encourages men to hold themselves to the hero's standard and for women to desire the heroic male. Thus, few men have yet to stray far from the role of provider and protector of women, and as Glick and Fiske (1996) discovered, women simultaneously resist hostile sexism but embrace what they call "benevolent sexism." The concept of benevolent sexism refers to men's desire to protect women, provide intimacy, and appeal to women's feminine qualities of compassion and sensitivity. Kilianski and Rudman (1998) confirmed this notion in their study, noting that a woman can both resist and

embrace sexism against them depending on whether they categorize it as hostile or benevolent. Research over the last two decades has indicated that sexism in every day interactions is less obvious than previous studies implied (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1983; Stephan, Stephan, Demitrakis, Yamada, & Clason, 2000). The concept of benevolent sexism underscores these assertions; by obscuring sexism as a positive action directed at “helping” women, ideological hegemony is enforced and fortified. The subconscious beliefs that men and women hold about the way things should be, or the natural order of men as protectors and women as needing protection serves to reinforce the idea of men as more valuable (Pyke, 1996).

Although many women and men strive for gender equality, the pervasiveness of ideological hegemony creates a dialectical tension between gender equality and inequality. Stephan et al. (2000) posited that the hegemonic structure of society places the wants and needs of men and women at odds with one another in political and economic spheres. The researchers furthermore asserted that placing women’s interests in opposition to men creates a perceived threat to the patriarchal structure which in turn heightens men’s awareness of their positions of power. Thus, men’s attitudes toward women, and possibly their attitudes toward other men who subvert the cultural norm, reflect ideological hegemony.

Men who subvert the cultural norm can include heterosexual, nontraditional men or homosexual men. Ideological hegemony does not support or encourage homosexuality. In fact, because heterosexuality constitutes the driving force behind hegemony and hegemonic masculinity, homosexuality also creates a threat to heterosexual men’s

dominance in the patriarchal hierarchy (Donaldson, 1993). Hegemony operates under the premise that masculine men embody traits and behaviors such as courage, physical strength, dominance, bread-winning, and a strong heterosexual drive. Ideological hegemony strives to make this stereotypical masculine man seem normal, commonplace, and desirable. To emphasize these behaviors as masculine and “normal,” women and homosexual men must be effeminized as much as possible. Homophobia underpins ideological hegemony and in turn, homophobia is integrated as a necessary aspect of being truly masculine (Beynon, 2002; Hill, 2006; Hunter, 1993, Kimmel, 1994). Thus, men who enact feminine behaviors can be categorized as homosexuals. Ideological hegemony provides an underhanded means of deterring men from performing nontraditional gender roles and rewards those men and women who embrace “normalcy” by elevating their status in the patriarchy.

As mentioned earlier, some research indicates that our society is shifting back to a more traditional value system. The peak of the Feminist Movement has passed and many women take their current rights for granted, allowing more conservative messages to seep back into our media and education systems (Boxer & Gritsenko, 2005; Goldin & Shim, 2004). Additionally, French (1999) noted that many women feel overexerted from filling the role of a professional and a homemaker simultaneously and long for a change in cultural expectations for women. Though most men support equality in theory, Sigel (1996) observed that few men actually take a strong stance on equality in the home with regards to housework and childcare. Men often claim that women are naturally inclined and more suited to domestic work and child-rearing and that men themselves are better

suited to aid their wives in domestic activities than take full responsibility for the chores (Singleton & Mayer, 2004). In viewing men as “helpers” and women as domestically inclined, men and women perpetuate traditional gender roles. Pyke (1996) underlined this theory, commenting, “By obscuring gender inequality in ideologies that *appear* [emphasis in original] gender neutral, logical and practical, the embeddedness of masculine privilege in institutional life becomes less vulnerable” (p. 530). Trivializing the idea that a man could take a woman’s last name secures the “natural order” of men as superior and women as inferior. The overarching patriarchal ideology that males carry inherent supremacy and females’ needs and wants are ultimately inferior to men’s underscores patronymy. For the duration of our culture, patriarchal ideology has made the potential need for revision of the name-changing tradition invisible.

### Culture and Masculinity

Cultures construct ideals of masculinities and femininities often in vastly different ways. The role of a man and the behaviors associated with manliness vary according to culture, time period, age and ethnicity (Peoples, 2001). Many individuals believe that gender roles are biologically divided and that men and women simply think and act differently starting at birth. However, Pleck (1995) asserted that men and women perform masculine and feminine behaviors throughout their times in the social realm. The performance is so constant and pervasive it becomes a much more salient factor in creating one’s identity. Constructions of masculine behavior are not stable but continually change depending upon time and place. Donaldson (2003) argued that continual



improvements and fluctuations in technology, trade, and industry require that the role of male change to keep up with society's expectations of the "contemporary" male.

Consalvo (2003) claimed that the media represents one such channel for producing masculine ideals. In Western culture especially, the populace looks upon the media as an authority on how to perform masculine and feminine behaviors in a socially acceptable way. However, the media presents a wide range of masculine and feminine behaviors that vary in acceptability. Beynon (2002) posited that multiple masculinities exist that are not all one collective, dominant group. In other words, not all men in this culture live at the top of the social hierarchy because varying degrees of masculinity occupy different levels within the hierarchy. While the patriarchal structure still privileges men over women, the demarcations of power depend upon race, class, sexual orientation and other more subtle aspects such as education, social activities, religion, political affiliations, values, and moral beliefs. The ideology of Western culture dictates that only a select group of men truly comprise the masculine ideal—white, middle-class, heterosexual males—otherwise known as hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculine men have the power to render the men in lower ranks comparatively powerless within their 'privileged' group.

Lorber (1994) noted that our culture defines men and masculine behavior not only in terms of sameness to one another but in contrast to women. Therefore, in order to conform to what our society defines as manly, men must strive to act in ways associated with masculinity while simultaneously staying away from any behaviors rated as feminine. In order for masculinity to work, social rules create a dichotomy between men

and women. For men to embody gendered attributes such as strength, leadership, and independence, they must first know what not to be—weak, submissive, dependent, or any other characteristic of the female archetype (Howard & Prividera, 2006). Male and female adults teach boys early in life how to enact manly behaviors by praising stereotypical masculine behaviors and punishing any behaviors that could possibly be construed as feminine (Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeFranc, Cherry, & Napolitano, 1998). This division inherently creates the gendered system of power with masculine attributes seen as more desirable than feminine attributes. This gender system helps people to organize and categorize the differing behaviors of men and women and therefore know what to expect for themselves and others. More importantly, the gender system creates a standard against which every man will be judged by men and women. However, because women hold less power, Kimmel (1994) argued that what men truly seek is the approval of other men. Men constantly judge themselves against others and others against themselves.

The newest shift in defining masculinity in modern culture stems from what some males refer to as “reverse sexism” (Digby, 2003). A growing group of disgruntled men have argued that the efforts of feminism have been so robust and effective that women now experience advantage and men now face the opposite side of gender privilege (Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000). Cameron and Lalonde (2001) discovered that men who strongly identified with traditional sex-roles especially disbelieved that women were disadvantaged. This counterattack to the women’s movement has characterized a new aspect of what it means to perform masculinity. Men who sympathize with women, or

agree that they comprise a disadvantaged group may be viewed as less masculine by other men.

O'Neil (1981) proposed the concept that rigid roles and societal expectations for how men should act create an internal gender role conflict that often has external ramifications, such as anger, violence, inability to express emotion, and less satisfaction in some relationships. O'Neil discovered that gender role conflict occurs throughout a man's lifespan and may invade almost every area of his life, although it may or may not be apparent at all times. Kimmel (1994) agreed that the social structure of power forced upon men is terribly oppressive, and thousands of men in America feel fear that they will not measure up to the standard of real manhood in other men's eyes. This fear leads to shame and shame leads to silence about the way women and other minorities are treated, perpetuating the gender division and maintaining gender inequality.

### Nontraditional Men

Not all men continue to contribute to this cycle however. A number of men in recent years have bypassed the rigid boundaries of what it means to be a "man" and have chosen to embody some feminine characteristics and participate in activities previously assigned to women only. For instance, Dodson and Borders (2006) investigated men who choose nontraditional careers, such as school teachers, nurses, secretaries, or other careers which have typically been delegated to women. Interestingly, the researchers discovered that men in traditional careers such as engineers or doctors felt a higher level of gender role conflict than did the men in nontraditional careers. Although much

research (O'Neil, 1981; O'Neil, 1990; O'Neil & Egan, 1992) suggests that both traditional and nontraditional men feel confined by the rigid imposed sex roles, Mahalik et al. (1998) noted that boys and men choose to handle gender role conflict in a variety of ways. Some men may overcompensate by acting as stereotypically male as possible to avoid the possibility of others perceiving him as feminine. In contrast, some men will actively seek ways to reduce the feelings of conflict. Ihilevich and Gleser (1993) discovered four defense mechanisms that these men use to maintain face when overcoming gender role conflict: deny the significance of the threat to one's manhood, master or pretend to have mastered the threat by trivializing its meaning, stay away from situations that may cause notable stress with regard to socially unacceptable behaviors, and consciously disallow others from attacking one's well-being. When men engage in these mediating behaviors to overcome gender role conflict, they enter the gray area between masculine and feminine roles McGuffey and Rich (1999) have labeled the "gender transgression zone" (p. 502). Currently and historically, our society has relegated the practice of name-changing to women, meaning that men who decide to subvert this cultural script may experience life in the gender transgression zone.

Conceptualizing what constitutes a nontraditional male can be a slippery slope. The concept of a nontraditional man, or a male who does not embrace ideological hegemonic ideas and behaviors, is highly understudied in the communication discipline. Nontraditional men constitute an interesting sub-group of males, considering that patriarchal culture highly values and rewards males who perpetuate hegemonic principles. Although some research has investigated nontraditional males perception of

their group status in comparison to traditional males (Cameron & Lalonde, 2001), little research exists regarding how nontraditional males negotiate their identity. Cameron and Lalonde (2001) asserted that nontraditional men may have difficulty in conceptualizing their own identity because society offers them no appropriate outlet for their expression of self. For example, women who choose a nontraditional name have experienced some difficulty, but for the most part, the society tolerates women who hyphenate or keep their surnames. Men, on the other hand, have not experienced a cultural shift as dramatic as the feminist movement and therefore are deemed inappropriate for veering away from their closely defined social and gender roles.

### Backlash against Nontraditional Men

In early 2007, an online article appeared about a California man suing the state for sex discrimination against him when he wanted to change his last name to his wife's. The online article that reported the story stated that when the man visited the Department of Motor Vehicles to change his name on his license, the employees laughed at him and a female employee told him, "Men just don't do that type of thing" (*California man files lawsuit*, 2007, para. 12). Currently, only a few empirical studies exist about heterosexual men who defy social customs, and very few address name changing as a men's issue.

The studies that do focus on nontraditional men examine the backlash associated with deviation from social norms. McGuffey and Rich (1999) studied young boys and girls at a summer camp and observed boys who acted outside of their gender role. The researchers noted that two of the boys who lacked coordination, had longish hair, and

were smaller than the other boys routinely received taunts and threats, and their peers ostracized the boys and labeled them homosexuals. McGuffey and Rich noted that the fear of being labeled a homosexual is a defense mechanism that males use to keep other males in order. However, a number of the girls in the summer camp engaged in “men’s” activities without reprimand from either sexes.

McCreary (1994) reported that women and men evaluate males who transgress gender boundaries much more negatively and severely than females who transgress boundaries. Similarly, our culture tolerates women much more so than men who choose nontraditional last names after marriage. Sirin, McCreary, and Mahalik (2004) posited that one explanation for this occurrence may be that in our society, men have a higher ranking than women. Therefore, if a man transgresses his gender role and takes on feminine characteristics, he moves downward in the ranking, whereas a woman who transgresses her gender role and acts more masculine moves upward, gaining status and respect. Since the change in rank is more substantial for men, others perceive this as weakness, and for women, the change indicates strength. Granted, when a woman transgresses gender boundaries, she is often labeled a homosexual as well. However, Herek (2000) surveyed both men and women and discovered that lesbians are less harshly judged than gay men, thus adjusting for the gap.

Due to the fact that surname changing has typically fallen into the woman’s domain, men who change their last names may be seen as less dominant than their female counterparts (Forbes et al., 2002; Scheuble & Johnson, 1993). Hill (2006) investigated relationships between “feminine” heterosexual men and women. As Hill noted, the term

“metrosexual” has gained widespread popularity through the media and society, is the latest accepted term for feminine heterosexual men, and is sometimes substituted for the more neutral and conservative term “nontraditional men.” These men display masculine characteristics, but avoid over-the-top macho men type behaviors. They often have careful grooming habits and display what society calls “feminine” attributes such as compassion and emotion. Many men with these characteristics also support the feminist movement and have open beliefs about gender equality (Kirsch, 2003). Hill (2006) stated that “nontraditional men may be excellent relationship partners since femininity in men is associated with good conflict resolution strategies and higher relationship quality” (p. 155).

While in theory nontraditional men may seem like every feminist woman’s dream man, scholars have suggested that these men often turn women off because women are so unfamiliar with men who do not assert their dominance. For instance, a woman in a relationship with a nontraditional man may sometimes feel unsure how to handle day-to-day situations in which the man does not take control (Hunter, 1993). Obviously, that statement does not hold true for every heterosexual couple involving a nontraditional male, but it suggests that men who challenge traditional scripts may encounter new and different problems with their partners, and most certainly will experience uncertainty and fear from external sources. For example, several online forums address the name change issue, and the feeling from the (assumedly) males who post comments is one of outrage and fear toward the name changer. In a forum that responded to the sex discrimination lawsuit publicized in January 2007, several respondents posted comments such as:

“Secure enough?? I think the proper description is *sufficiently emasculated* [italics in original],” “It’s obvious who wears the pants in the family and it isn’t him! What a wuss!” and “Let him take his wife’s name if he agrees to be called the wife on the marriage certificate” (Uglybiker, 2007, Msgs 14, 17, 25). Despite the anecdotal evidence of a backlash, several research studies revealed that university educated women prefer men with feminine or androgynous characteristics, albeit only when described using feminine traits, not actually the word “feminine” (Beggan, 2001; Leaper, 1995). Scheuble and Johnson (1993) noted that despite the return to more conservative values, tolerance for women’s nontraditional naming practices has increased, lending hope that society may become more accepting of males’ nontraditional name changes as well. To examine the ways in which nontraditional males are negotiating their roles and how traditional males may react towards nontraditional males, social identity theory will now be described.

### Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) functions under the presupposition that human beings can employ reflexive thought to compare, contrast, and ultimately categorize themselves with respect to social defined groups comprised of similar individuals (Stets & Burke, 2000). By identifying one’s self in relation to social groups, a unique identity is created. This self-categorization process consists of individuals assessing their perceived personal values in relation to others and either identifying with a particular group or defining one’s self in opposition to another group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Identification/discrimination of social groups provides a basis for understanding and creating one’s self-esteem



(Maltby & Day, 2003). Social identity theory states that people want to feel positively evaluated both internally and externally. Thus, identity is created in the management between one's own feelings about the self and evaluation by family, peers and other social structures.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), the basis of social identity theory lies within the concept of socially constructed in-groups and out-groups. An individual will elect into an in-group when he or she considers the in-group characteristics as advantageous in comparison to an out-group. Inherent within social identity theory is the notion that people will feel intrinsically motivated to achieve positive self-esteem by identifying with positively perceived groups. The researchers asserted that if an individual feels negatively about a group in which he or she resides, that person will use three basic strategies to redefine him/herself. First, the individual will try to distance him/herself from that group by exiting or dissociating from the group. This distancing may appear in the form of decreased imitations of in-group behaviors or increased affinity for an out-group. Psychologically, someone might spend less time mentally aligning with an in-group and more time enacting the favored out-group's behaviors. Usually, an individual will dissociate from an in-group only if he or she perceives the out-group as more personally beneficial or ranked in higher status than the current group. Tajfel and Turner called these strategies *social mobility strategies*. Second, the individual might try to redefine characteristics of the in-group so as to create a more favorable rating in comparison to out-groups, otherwise known as utilizing *social creative strategies*. Finally, the individual might engage in competition with the out-group to initiate a

change in the comparative rank of each group, which the researchers referred to as using *social change strategies* (as cited in Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish & Hodge, 1996).

Determining which strategy to use when deliberating a departure from an in-group depends on the degree to which an individual perceives inferiority of his or her in-group. A number of factors can influence how an individual passes judgment on the inferiority of a group. Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, and Mielke (1999) reported that determination of “stability or instability of status inferiority, legitimacy or illegitimacy of status inferiority, and permeability or impermeability of group boundaries” all influence how a person negotiates his or her identity in relation to a group (p. 231). Stability or instability refers to the degree of likelihood that a change in status will occur. If an individual perceives his or her in-group negatively and stable, then the individual will most likely seek a strategy that creates distance from the group or purposefully incites change. Should an individual perceive instability with regard to the negativity of the in-group, he or she might choose a creative strategy that causes the individual to view the group with a more positive valence. With regard to legitimacy of status, the individual must determine the degree to which he or she feels the socially constructed characteristics of the group are valid. For instance, Swim, Aiken, Hall and Hunter (1995) revealed that existing social structures frequently deny the existence of gender discrimination between men and women. In the researchers’ study, all respondents, both men and women, significantly overestimated the number of women employed in typically male-dominated jobs, suggesting that many people believe discrimination against women no longer exists in the workforce. The denial of gender discrimination, especially from the female

respondents, constitutes an endorsement of illegitimacy of inferior status. Finally, an individual can determine whether or not to label his or her in-group as inferior based on the permeability or impermeability of the group's boundaries. If a person does not perceive that he or she can leave the in-group, then that person will deem his or her particular in-group as less inferior. This negotiation of status particularly applies to gender defined groups. For some people, the boundaries between male and female characteristics do not allow overlap and thus cannot be permeated. One would feel much more alliance with a group he or she perceived as inescapable. However, an individual who perceived gender boundaries as permeable would employ a social creative strategy, such as embodying androgynous traits, or a social change strategy, such as taking an active stance against perpetuation of male-female inequality.

Conversely, if an individual views his or her in-group as stably and legitimately superior, SIT asserts that he or she will actively engage in behaviors that sustain the dominant status (Cameron & Lalonde, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Behaviors enacted to preserve dominance have direct relevance to the success of social change. If a socially dominant group views a potential social change as threatening to the group's status, that social change could be effectively censored. When an individual inherently belongs to a group, such as gender, SIT maintains that an individual will feel a stronger affiliation and more support for that in-group than an out-group. Research on SIT frequently emphasizes the importance of gender-defined group identification in creating the self and in understanding the motives behind protecting or rejecting group status (Dambrun, Duarte, & Guimond, 2004). In order to understand how individuals elect into or support an in-

group, social hierarchies must be considered. Sidanius and Pratto (1999) stated that three main hierarchies exist within all cultures: an age based hierarchy, patriarchy, and an arbitrary set system. An arbitrary set system includes any kind of socially constructed classification that is linguistically and culturally supported, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, national affiliation, or any other kind of significantly recognized social group. With regard to gender-identification and SIT, patriarchy and the arbitrary set system are the most salient and influential hierarchies. In considering gender, patriarchy and the arbitrary set system become intertwined hierarchies. Patriarchal structure emphasizes the dominance and superiority of males over females. While sex characteristics of males and females are biological, gender differentials are socially constructed through an arbitrary set of beliefs influenced by patriarchy (Spender, 1998).

According to Cameron and Lalonde (2001), the relationship between gender-related ideologies and social identification is inversely proportionate between males and females. Traditional females do not report as high levels of gender in-group identification as self-categorized, nontraditional women do. However, traditional men report significantly higher gender in-group identification than nontraditional men do. The degree to which males and females support in-group values determines the strength of their gender-derived social identity. Moreover, Cameron and Lalonde suggested that traditional men were less concerned with gender-related stereotypes than were women and nontraditional men and more readily dismissed or denied their group status as higher than women's group status.

Héritier (2002) confirmed the superiority and higher value of males as a universally agreed upon principle (as cited in Dambrun et al., 2004). Thus, according to SIT, males should perceive their gender group as superior and act in ways that promote the status quo and discourage any social change that might threaten their standing. Burn (1996) contended that gender inequality manifested in social structures can encourage a lower status group (i.e. women) to strive for gender equality while simultaneously prompting a counterattack from a high status group (i.e. men) that would want to preserve dominance and maintain the status quo. Contrary to that assertion, not all males perpetuate their own in-group prominence and some men employ active strategies that would imply a distancing effect or an outright rejection of in-group values, such as changing their last names to their wives' last names. Very little research has examined how social identity theory can explain what happens when members of an in-group threaten the collective social identity. Maltby and Day (2001) reported that when intergroup discrimination occurs, members of the in-group will still report more favorably upon other in-group members than out-group members who threaten social identity of the group. However, the apparent backlash from men and women against the men who undermine traditional male roles and rituals varies greatly from this finding.

Cameron and Lalonde (2001) stated that men who support nontraditional sex roles do not identify with their gender in-group as strongly as more traditional men. The researchers asserted that sometimes "high-status group members will tend to distance themselves psychologically from the in-group if they reject the legitimacy of traditional intergroup arrangements" (p. 63-64). Social identity theory is crucial in understanding

how men react towards men who voluntarily opt out of their gender-defined in-group by linguistically subverting a culturally defined practice, such as taking the wife's last name at marriage. Since social identity theory surmises that an individual will only defy in-group customs if he perceives his in-group as inferior in status or less favorable in comparison to another group, men who depart from a culturally dominant in-group must have unique reasons for doing so. Social identity theory provides a framework for understanding how members of the dominant in-group perceived nontraditional men who have rejected in-group standards. Together, ideological hegemony and social identity theory can provide a framework to clarify the importance of understanding how nontraditional males are viewed in society.

### Rationale

Within the last several decades, the institution of marriage and the gender roles within them have undergone enormous changes. Women's rights have changed the way our culture views women and allowed them many more liberties and personal freedoms, including the right to be viewed as an individual and not someone's property. While women have made great gains with regard to equality and egalitarianism in the home and other relationships, ideological hegemony continually perpetuates deeply engrained beliefs about patriarchy and tradition. For example, the tradition of patronymy not only undermines women's gains but contributes to a cycle of gender inequality. Despite the long-standing entrenchment of patronymy in our society, scholars have only examined the effect it has on women and their alternatives and ignored the possibility of an

alternative for men (Suter, 2004). Although still quite rare, more men are choosing to change their surnames at marriage instead of having their wife make the change or hyphenating. The current social structure has much more rigid rules for men than for women, and as women continue to enter into the masculine domain, the rules for being a man may grow tighter and more restrictive (McCreary, 1994; McGuffey & Rich, 1999).

As Beggan (2001) noted, the juxtaposition between how women of today say they would like men to act and how the overarching cultural structure tells men to act puts a considerable strain on men. As part of a larger social structure, males learn at an early age how to affect a socially acceptable gender script in which they must perform masculine traits while simultaneously staying away from any traits construed as feminine. Mahalik et al. (1998) noted that males who experience gender role conflict must respond with a socially appropriate defense in order to maintain their intergroup identity. The constant maintenance of a gender appropriate identity frequently causes anxiety in men and women. For men who identify with a traditional male role, gender role conflict can be manifested in their overt rejection of feminine ideals or appeals to feminine ideals. Similarly, women who identify with traditional sex roles in general may experience anxiety at the idea of a man who does not act in accordance with socially constructed stereotype of masculine behavior. According to social identity theory, nontraditional men may possibly endure verbal or other aggression from men and women for stepping outside of their traditional gender role as well as feel gender role conflict. Just as some women may feel pressure to change their names, most men may be feeling an equal amount of pressure to keep their names, but do not perceive that pressure due to an

ideology that justifies traditional practices as the norm (Boxer & Gritsenko, 2005; Scheuble & Johnson, 2005). Men who do observe inequality in patronymic practices may have a heightened awareness of the pressures put upon men to conform to hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, as Boxer and Gritsenko (2005) asserted, “Naming choices, especially when they reflect one’s social identity as a member of a gendered, ethnic or racial group have important repercussions for where groups fit into the extant hierarchy” (p. 1). This study in particular will shed light on the various attitudes that men and women have toward men who change their last names upon marriage. In addition, this study will be used to assess if men and women who have a positive attitude toward the traditional male role rate a nontraditional man as more feminine, whereas those who feel negatively toward traditional men view the nontraditional man as more androgynous or possibly more masculine. To assess these attitudes, the following question is proposed:

RQ1: How does one’s general attitude toward men predict how participants’ attribute masculinity, femininity, and androgyny to men who change their last names at marriage?

Moreover, how males in particular rate their own degrees of masculinity may impact their attributions of nontraditional males. As such, the next question will address males’ attributions only:

RQ2: How does a male participant’s perception of his own masculinity predict attributions of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny to men who change their last names at marriage?

Scholars now have the unique opportunity to observe the first stages of a potential cultural change, in which more men begin to stand up against other men and women for gender equality. This change could have theoretical implications for the communication



discipline. At present, how men and women interpret men who take an active role in working toward gender equality through nontraditional acts, such as taking their wives' last names upon marriage, is a vastly understudied topic. With regard to name changes and the role tradition plays in reinforcing stereotypical gender roles, scholars have only studied how these factors affect women, attitudes toward women, and women's identities. Like women who have been judged as less agentic and communal than the typical woman for choosing a nontraditional name at marriage, nontraditional men who openly violate social norms and reject traditions will most likely be seen by others as different from the average male (Sirin, McCreary, & Mahalik, 2004). As such, this question is proposed:

RQ3: In what ways are nontraditional men who defy social customs such as traditional naming perceived in comparison to males who enact traditional behaviors?

To date, no research has addressed the perceptions that others may have of males who renounce certain aspects of the traditional male role (Forbes et al., 2002). In order to ascertain individual's opinions about these nontraditional males, an open-ended question will also be posed:

RQ4: What do individuals personally think about a man who would voluntarily choose to take his wife's last name upon marriage?

By bringing to light research on nontraditional men and naming practices, the communication field will gain insight into perceptions of a growing subculture of non-stereotypical men and their every day communication acts.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

A triangulated approach to gathering data was employed for this study in order to make both generalizable predictions about a sample population's beliefs about nontraditional men and add breadth and depth to the thoughts, feelings, and motivations behind the quantitative answers (Flick, 1992). This study employed four quantitative survey instruments as well as a qualitative measure in the form of an open-ended question at the end of the survey. According to Creswell (2003), the use of mixed methods can increase understanding of the many dimensions within a study.

#### Participants

Participants consisted of 227 ( $M$  age = 33.37,  $SD$  = 13.046, range = 19-74) adults gathered through a network of the researcher's colleagues, friends, and family. Among participants, 58.6% were female ( $n$  = 133) and 41.4% were male ( $n$  = 94). The participants were comprised of 90.3% white/Caucasian ( $n$  = 205), 4% Hispanic/Latino ( $n$  = 9), 1.8% black/African-American ( $n$  = 4), 1.3% Asian ( $n$  = 3), and 2.6% mixed/other ( $n$  = 6). With regard to marital status, 23.8% of respondents classified themselves as single ( $n$  = 54), 32.2% as in a relationship ( $n$  = 73), 40.1% as married ( $n$  = 91), 2.2% as divorced ( $n$  = 5), 1.3% as separated ( $n$  = 3), and one individual (0.4%) elected not to answer. Eighty-two participants (36.1%) indicated that they had children, and 145 (63.9%) indicated that they did not have children. Finally, participants selected their religious

affiliation as follows: Protestant/Christian (55.9%,  $n = 127$ ), Catholic (13.2%,  $n = 30$ ), Muslim (.9%,  $n = 2$ ), Buddhist (.4%,  $n = 1$ ), Atheist (3.1%,  $n = 7$ ), Agnostic (14.5%,  $n = 33$ ), other (11%,  $n = 25$ ), and one individual elected not to answer.

### Procedures and Measures

Data were gathered online using [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) in order to reach a wide variety of individuals. Four versions of a survey were created to ascertain individuals' opinions about men who change their last names to their wives' last names when they get married. Male participants completed a survey with four different survey instruments and female participants completed a survey with three survey instruments. Each survey had two versions; one scenario described a man and woman marrying and taking the husband's last name, and the other scenario described a man and woman marrying and taking the wife's last name. Each survey link was emailed to an equal number of people and participants were solicited via a snowball sample. One hundred and sixteen participants filled out the survey with Scenario 1 and 111 participants completed the survey with Scenario 2. Participation in the study was voluntary and an informed consent and confidentiality notice was included at the beginning of the survey.

After responding to demographics questions, the male participants completed the Masculine Behavior Scale (MBS; Snell, 1989). The MBS measures the degree to which respondents adhere to stereotypical masculine behaviors. Each of the 20 items falls under one of four subscales: success dedication (how much an individual is interested in pursuing success), restrictive emotionality (to what degree an individual reveals his

emotions), inhibited affection (how much an individual expresses liking of others), and exaggerated self-reliance and control (to what degree an individual worries about maintaining independence and personal restraint). The items are scored on a five point Likert scale ranging from *agree*, *slightly agree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *slightly disagree*, or *disagree*. Point values were assigned from *agree* (+2) to *disagree* (-2). The responses were summed to determine whether the male engages in more stereotypical behaviors. A higher number indicates a higher alignment with stereotypical masculine behaviors ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

The male participants then moved on to the Ambivalence towards Men Inventory (AMI; Glick & Fiske, 1996). The female participants began the AMI immediately after completing the demographic questions. Although the AMI has been used previously as a measure of women's attitudes toward men, the AMI in this study was used to ascertain both men's and women's ambivalence toward men. Respondents viewed a prompt asking them to consider typical attributes of a man who changes his name at marriage. The 20 item inventory consists of two subscales. Ten of the statements indicate hostile sexism toward men and ten of the statements indicate benevolent sexism towards men. The instrument utilizes a Likert scale that asks participants to what degree (1-*strongly disagree* to 6-*strongly agree*) do they agree or disagree with each of the 20 sentences that made a statement about men in general. The degree of hostility ( $\alpha = .843$ ) or benevolence ( $\alpha = .834$ ) was determined by averaging the scores in each category. When developing the inventory, Glick and Fiske (1996) reported a high level of internal consistency reliability and predictive validity when creating the measure.

Male and female participants then completed a modified version of the Bem (1974) Sex Role Inventory, wherein the participants read a brief paragraph asking them to consider the attributes a man who would change his last name upon marriage would possess. The instructions for filling out the survey specifically noted: “We realize that every person is unique and it may be difficult to generalize about a particular individual. However, based on your personal experiences and beliefs, please rate the extent to which you think each statement applies to a male who changes his last name to his wife’s last name upon marriage.” The inventory consists of sixty items and utilized a semantic differential scale with ratings between 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (always or almost always true). This instrument assesses the perceived masculinity ( $\alpha = .996$ ), femininity ( $\alpha = .87$ ), or androgyny ( $\alpha = .728$ ) of a male who is designated nontraditional by his choice to change his last name upon marriage. Each of the items falls into one of three subscales of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. The scores for each subscale were determined by an average.

Next, the participants were presented with one of two scenarios. Half of the participants received a scenario that depicts an average male participating in traditional marriage customs. The other half of the participants received a scenario portraying a male who chooses to change his last name upon marriage. Then the participants rated the extent to which twelve adjective phrases describe the male in their particular scenario. The phrases are adopted from a study on perceptions of males with hyphenated names by Forbes et al. (2002). The adjective phrases were rated on a Likert-type scale (1-*strongly disagree* to 6-*strongly agree*).

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotations was performed. Utilizing the same format as Forbes et al. (2002), if the eigenvalue was over one then the factor was interpreted. Three factors emerged and were labeled “marital commitment” (eigenvalue = 1.406), “nurturing” (eigenvalue = 3.41), and “traditional” (eigenvalue = 2.215). One adjective phrase, “have a career” loaded on both nurturing and traditional; the adjective loaded slightly higher on traditional and corresponded with the loading on the Forbes et al. study and thus was included only in the traditional factor for this study. Two adjective phrases, “be liked by others,” and “have a separate bank account” did not load strongly on any factor and thus were removed from the analysis.

The organization of the factors differed from the original measure by Forbes et al. (2002). For instance, Forbes et al. included “have a separate bank account” even though it had a low factor loading because it had negative loadings for the other factors. However, in this study the other two loadings for this factor were low and positive as well. Additionally, the phrases included in each factor differed somewhat from the Forbes et al. study. In their study, the phrases “be highly educated,” “have a career,” “make more money than spouse,” “have homosexual tendencies” (reverse-coded item, for a decreased inference of being homosexual), and “have a separate bank account” loaded for the traditional factor. For this study, the phrases “have a career,” “make the first move for sex,” “make more money than spouse,” and “have homosexual tendencies” (reverse-coded item) comprised the traditional factor. The nurturing factor also differed between studies. The study by Forbes et al. had a high loading of “keeps a clean house,” “be a good parent,” “be liked by others,” and “have female friends” for the nurturing factor.

This study however had “be highly educated” in place of “be liked by others.” The final factor, marital commitment was the same for both studies, and included the phrases “get a divorce” and “commit adultery.”

Finally, the participants answered an open-ended question about their personal thoughts toward a man who takes his wife’s last name at marriage. Unlimited space was provided for the participants to type in their answers.

### Data Analysis

Data from the first three instruments were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The first three instruments are used to determine attitudes toward nontraditional males only. To answer Research Question (RQ) 1, the predictor variable of general attitude towards men was measured by the AMI and the outcome variable was a designation of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny. To answer RQ2, male’s perceptions of their own masculinity was assessed using the MBS and constituted the predictor variable. Thus, the outcome variable again was a categorization of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny.

The fourth measurement varied from this format by comparing answers about traditional males to those about nontraditional males. Overall, more information about nontraditional males was collected and analyzed than data concerning opinions about traditional males. This measure constituted the only comparison between the two groups. A series of independent samples *t*-tests was used to determine the results from the fourth measure. To answer RQ3, the independent variable was either the traditional or

nontraditional male in the provided scenario. The dependent variable was the perceptions of marriage and social roles. For RQ3, the mean scores of the *t*-tests were compared.

To answer RQ4, a qualitative/interpretive methodology was utilized to analyze the open-ended question responses. An interpretive approach allows researchers to identify patterns and themes within the participants' responses that elaborate the quantitative findings (Creswell, 1998). Moreover, interpretivism is useful in understanding the meaning behind participants' responses instead of the frequency of the responses (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The goal in using this approach is to provide an interpretation of the ways the participants represented their beliefs (Denzin, 2001).

In the current study, I analyzed how the participants made sense of a male who changes his last name at marriage within the context of their experiences. Each response was considered as a whole while categorizing the emergent themes, however, several responses crossed categories and the more dominant theme of the response was categorized. Every attempt was made to retain the true intent and meaning of the response.

I examined the entire data set numerous times before beginning the categorization process. After thoroughly reading the responses, I identified major themes apparent in the data set using a constant comparative method to encourage clarity and distinctiveness within the categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, the initial review of the data yielded several potential categories. The coding procedure for this method of analysis necessitated that items within each category were compared, the category defined, and then the categories compared (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After a preliminary



categorization, I initiated an axial coding process to further define and structure the categories. The main focus of this evaluation was to identify connections between categories, take into account the context of the response, and detect similar themes across categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I reviewed the data set multiple times after creating the categories to ensure that the depth and true meaning of the response was categorized most appropriately. The final examination of the data set included a purposeful consideration of the data with regard to the goals of the study and the research questions. The results ascertained will now be explicated.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### Quantitative Results

A series of multiple regression analyses were conducted to ascertain the answers to the first two research questions. Research Question (RQ) 1 asked how one's general attitude toward men predicted how participants' attribute masculinity, femininity, and androgyny to men who change their last names at marriage. The average scores from the Ambivalence towards Males Inventory (AMI) were divided based on the two subscales, hostility towards men and benevolence towards men. The dependent variables were attributions of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. The level of benevolence towards men significantly predicted perceptions of masculinity of nontraditional males who take their wives' last names,  $R^2 = .139, p = .000$  (see Table 2). However, the hostility towards men averages did not significantly predict any attributions of masculinity  $R^2 = .139, p > .05$  (see Table 2). Overall, the AMI model was a significant predictor of femininity,  $R^2 = .029, p = .037$ . However, individual beta weights were not significant and thus the level of hostility or benevolence towards men did not significantly predict any attributions of femininity. Furthermore, neither levels of hostility or benevolence towards men significantly predicted attributions of androgyny,  $R^2 = .003, p > .05$ , for men who change their last names (see Table 2).

Two additional independent sample *t*-tests and a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to ascertain whether or not gender, age, ethnicity, religion, relationship

status, and if the participant had children affected how the levels of benevolence and hostile sexist beliefs influenced the outcome variable. In the independent sample t-tests, sex was a significant predictor with women being more likely to rank males' behaviors as hostile sexism. Whether or not a participant had children was not significant. The one-way ANOVAs indicated that ethnicity and relationship status were not significant. A difference in the hostile, benevolent, and overall AMI totals was found for religion, although the cell size was so small that the significance is not meaningful and thus was not added to the analysis. For example, the demographics included only one Muslim and thus that religion was found to be significant; however, one individual's response is not a meaningful predictor of general attributions. Each regression analysis was tested using a stepwise analysis to account for age and sex, but both factors were found not significant. Thus, age and sex did not influence how the benevolent or hostile sexism scores influenced perceptions of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny.

RQ2 was asked to determine the relationship between a male participant's perception of his own masculinity and his perceptions of men who change their last names at marriage. A series of multiple regression procedures analyzed the responses from the Masculine Behavior Scale (Snell, 1989) and the Bem's Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). A male participant's perception of his own masculinity was not significantly related to any attributions of masculinity,  $R^2 = .026$ ,  $p = .119$ ; femininity,  $R^2 = .026$ ,  $p = .112$ ; or androgyny  $R^2 = .000$ ,  $p = .918$  to men who change their last names at marriage (see Table 1). Additionally, analyses examining the covariates ethnicity,

religion, and presence of children were conducted. While some covariates were found to be significant, the small cell size affected the meaningfulness of the finding.

To answer RQ3, or how nontraditional men who take their wives' last names at marriage are perceived in comparison to males who keep their names, a *t*-test was conducted. The participants were presented with one of two scenarios. The first condition was a scenario about a man and a woman who get married and take the man's last name. The second condition described a scenario about a man and a woman who get married and take the wife's last name.

The results revealed that nontraditional males ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) were perceived as having higher levels of marital commitment than traditional males ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ),  $t(225) = 4.51$ ,  $p = .000$ . Also, nontraditional males ( $M = 4.73$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) were perceived as being more nurturing than traditional males ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = .70$ ),  $t(225) = 6.63$ ,  $p = .000$ . Not surprisingly, traditional males ( $M = 4.70$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) were perceived as being more traditional than nontraditional males ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ),  $t(225) = 4.79$ ,  $p = .000$ .

### Qualitative Results

The final analysis revealed eight dominant themes throughout the written responses. The eight themes were further broken down into pairs including: *Strong individual* vs. *Weak individual*, *Devoted husband* vs. *Submissive husband/Dominant wife*, *Decision should be made by the couple* vs. *Tradition should remain/Society will not accept it*, and *Making a statement* vs. *Questioning motives*. Each pair provides opposing

Table 1  
Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	Masculinity		Femininity		Androgyny	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall attribution	3.779	1.169	4.772	.667	4.233	.491
AMI Benevolence towards men ( <i>N</i> = 227)	2.652	.989	2.652	.989	2.652	.989
AMI Hostility towards men ( <i>N</i> = 227)	2.955	.955	2.955	.955	2.955	.955
Masculine Behavior Scale Attributions ( <i>n</i> = 94)	3.632	1.188	4.767	.657	4.206	.405
Masculine Behavior Scale Total	-1.766	11.924	-1.766	11.924	-1.766	11.924

Table 2

*Summary of Regression Analysis for Standardized Variables Predicting Perceptions of Sex Roles (AMI N=227; MBS N = 94)*

Variable	Masculinity			Femininity			Androgyny		
	B (SEB)	$\beta$	$sr^2$	B (SEB)	$\beta$	$sr^2$	B (SEB)	$\beta$	$sr^2$
AMI Benevolence towards men	-.379 (.083)	-.320*	.085	.038 (.050)	.056	.003	-.029 (.038)	-.058	.003
AMI Hostility towards men	-.112 (.086)	-.092	.008	.096 (.052)	.137	.015	.003 (.039)	.006	.00003
Masculine Behavior Scale	-.016 (.01)	-.162	.026	.009 (.006)	.161	.026	.000 (.004)	.011	.0001

*Note.* For benevolence and hostility towards men scales:  $R^2_{(masculinity)} = .139$  ( $p > .05$ );  $R^2_{(femininity)} = .029$  ( $p > .05$ );

$R^2_{(androgyny)} = .003$  ( $p > .05$ );

For Masculine Behavior Scale:  $R^2_{(masculinity)} = .026$  ( $p > .05$ );  $R^2_{(femininity)} = .026$  ( $p > .05$ );  $R^2_{(androgyny)} = .000$  ( $p > .05$ )

$sr^2$  is squared semi-partial correlation.

\* $p = .000$

viewpoints in a positive/negative format. Although not all of the responses were included in the analysis due to irrelevance to the topic, the responses were approximately 50% positive/neutral and 50% negative in their assessment of a male who would change his last name at marriage.

### *Strong Individual*

The first category included responses that indicated the participants had positive feelings toward a man who would change his last name to his wife's last name. Participants in this category described the man's personal characteristics as enabling him to break tradition. Responses included terms like "brave," "courageous," and "open-minded," or adjectives that spoke to the man's personality or strength of character. For example, one female, age 50 stated:

It takes a certain kind of strength to be at the vanguard of a change in a tradition. I would assume that the person is willing and able to think, since his path is not the path of least resistance in this day and age.

Another female, age 24, declared, "I think it shows great strength of character. It shows he does not care much for what the rest of the world may think. I think the man who does that is very brave."

Most of the respondents for the category made reference to the negativity they expect a man who changes his last name to receive from friends, family, and society in general. The respondents also indicated that they admired and supported a man who would break tradition despite the social repercussions. These respondents all acknowledged the personal difficulty involved in breaking tradition and revealed that

they believe doing so increases a man's personal strength. One female, age 35, responded, "Very progressive. Very self confident. I applaud him for being willing and able to take the criticism he will receive from society." Further commenting on the social aspect of taking the wife's name, one male, age 36, replied:

I personally would support such a decision. I think it is likely to offend the family of the man and please the family of the woman, but only because of traditional social conventions. I would enjoy seeing someone courageous enough to depart from a social convention like this that, in my opinion, is unnecessary. That is, as long as the reasons are sincere, and both members of the couple are okay with it.

While more females than males expressed support for a nontraditional male, the fact that males did support the decision provides interesting insight into how some members of an in-group respond to "deviant" in-group members.

#### *Weak Individual*

In this category, respondents took the opposite stance of the first category. These respondents indicated that the man is exhibiting a weakness of character by taking his wife's name. Responses for this category generally had a hostile overtone and included name-calling. These participants claimed that such a man does not live up to masculine norms and many denounced him as a "wuss," "wimp," "pussy," or as "not manly" or "lacking in some way." The adjectives used to describe who the man is personally cast him in a negative, feeble, or effeminate way. One male, age 25, stated, "Honestly, I would think he's a desperate male who would do anything to get married to anybody. You could substitute the girl with any other woman and the situation would not change." This man's response implies that a man who would change his last name is so hopeless



that he would offer up his namesake in hopes of a woman's acceptance. Another male, age 39, replied that while the decision was ultimately up to the male himself, he would still judge him as inferior:

I have no issue with a woman keeping her last name after marriage. If she wants to change her name, then, that's cool. If he wants to change his name to her name, that's cool too! But, that doesn't mean that I have to stop thinking about the fact that he is a walking, talking vagina. What a pusswad!

Some responses were less harsh, but still included passing judgment on his character or identity as a man. For instance, a female, age 28, stated:

I believe in this day and age that this is a very bold move. Society places such emphasis on the traditional roles of husband and wife including the namesake. I must admit that I would think of him as more passive, needed, a bit of a lower self-esteem and possibly a little bit less dependable.

Her description of what this man might be like goes beyond denouncing him as inferior as she makes inferences about his personality and aptitude as a human. In this same vein of criticism, a male, age 31, suggested that a male who would change his last name was probably less likely to have "serious professional ambitions." One female, age 57, made a reference to the importance of a man's name as part of his identity:

Having lived over fifty years, I think men haven't changed much through history so I think a man wouldn't be much of a man when he gives up his name. His name is what he stands for, isn't it? It's part of his pride.

While this response explicitly brings up the notion of names and pride, typical responses for this category suggest that a man who changes his last name is a weak, unassertive individual who has no pride in either his personal or professional life. This category provides support for the notion that men (should) value their names more highly than

women do, a finding that contradicts existing research on the subject (Johnson & Scheuble, 1996; Scheuble & Johnson, 1993; Twenge, 1997).

### *Devoted Husband*

Similar to the first category, these responses indicate a positive feeling for a man who changes his last name. This category differs from the first category in that the responses do not describe him as a person, but as a husband. Much like the first category, they described him as strong, but added that he makes this decision for the sake of his wife or the relationship. For instance, a female, age 19, described him as a “revolutionary, out-of-the-box thinker and believer,- a man who simply respects his wife's ideals and isn't afraid to break through the norm.” Other respondents declared that he must “have great esteem for his spouse” and that taking her name is “a wonderful gesture.” The individuals in this category made note of his egalitarianism, devotion, and respect for his wife. Frequently, the participants indicated that as an individual, he might not make this decision, but because of the relationship he has with his wife, he will do so, and happily. The responses have positive overtones, such as admiration for a man who would do such a thing. For instance, one female, age 24, stated:

I think that the man made a choice to support their wife in some sort of life decision. For example, if the wife was a famous musician, politician, or other public figure that had an important name, changing that name could be detrimental to the wife. If a man wants to support the wife, but also show his commitment to her, then this would be a strong way of making a statement about his level of commitment.

Another female, age 39, supported this notion:

I think this would be a man who cares deeply about the woman he is marrying.

Having the same name is important to him, which to me signifies a united front, but for some reason she needed/wanted to keep her own name. Perhaps she a doctor or a well known author and he was willing to take her name. I think that shows a certain amount of individuality and bravery. He opens himself up to ridicule - "You're whipped" - from other men in his life. Traditionally the woman takes her husband's name, so he's willing to buck tradition as well.

Again, much like the first category, the respondents acknowledged the negative response that males who change their last names will receive from others and the difficulty in deviating from tradition. One participant, a female, age 30, made the assertion, "I think a man who chooses to take his wife's name upon marriage is courageous because he's willing to buck societal norms. This means that he is willing to listen to his wife's concerns and adapt to her relational needs." This statement is interesting because it indicates that societal norms do not include a willingness to listen or adapt to one's wife. Some respondents noted that he might not be as assertive or dominant as a stereotypical male, but further description of him indicated that being an atypical male is positive. One female, age 24, said, "This man would seem to not be as dominate (sic) in the relationship. He would be more sensitive to the wife's needs." This participant views the male as less assertive than his wife, but in turn cares about his wife more. Similarly, a male, age 19, claimed:

He is obviously in love with the woman and not afraid of what others think or what kind of societal consequences will come from taking his wife's name. But he also isn't very traditional, is probably more liberal, and in a sense probably doesn't live up to "manly" standards.

By putting "manly" in quotation marks, this respondent may be indicating that "manly" standards are not simply masculine behaviors but overtly stereotypical standards, and thus was included for this category.

Additional descriptors for this category included “loyal partner,” “good husband,” and even “a strong father.” Only a few participants in this category described the husband’s role in his children’s lives too. A female, age 52, claimed, “He is secure in himself & his role in his own life/career. Also, that he is likely to be more involved in his children’s life than that of previous generations, that he ‘thinks outside the box.’” This response suggests that a more progressive man will also be more nurturing, which coincides with the quantitative findings.

#### *Submissive Husband/Dominant Wife*

This category is the antithesis of the previous category. These responses indicate that the man’s role in the relationship is that of a submissive. The recurrent descriptors for this category include describing the man as “lacking self-confidence,” “easily talked into things,” “a coward,” and “a feminine type male.” This category differs from the *weak individual* category even though a number of the responses pass a judgment on the man’s character in that it does so in relation to his role within the home and more specifically, with his wife. One participant, a female, age 32, declared, “[He] has no control and subjugates (sic) himself to his wife. He is looking for a woman to tell him what to do and how to do it. Like a Mommy.” Her response indicates that a man who takes his wife’s last name is so weak and needy that he can be compared to a child.

Moreover, these responses indicate that the wife is very dominant, possessive, and controlling, or that she “wears the pants in the relationship.” Rather than equality, the relationship is unbalanced in favor of the woman. For example, a male, age 25, asserted:

It's unacceptable. If she doesn't want to take his last name, that's fine, she doesn't have to. But taking her last name? It seems to me that such a notion would be setting the standard for the marriage from the very beginning as imbalanced. To give in to a request like that would be an ever present reminder that he apparently lacks the abilities to express how he feels and stand up for himself. The woman would always have the upper hand, which is not negative because she's a woman, it's negative because neither the husband nor the wife should feel they have an upper hand. Marriage is about being equals, supporting, understanding, and loving each other, and compromising because you love each other.

This example includes a subtle contradiction that speaks to the notion that tradition (patronymy) *is* equal and veering away from tradition indicates an imbalance of power. Several responses, such as this one, attacked not only the man's role as a husband but the woman's role as a wife as well. A male, age 23, described the act of a man taking his wife's name as "an over-assertive move [by the wife] to place the man in a subservient position," affirming the notion that taking another's name is in some way degrading. Similarly, another respondent, a male, age 30, spoke directly to the wife as debasing her husband:

[That] is possibly the most demeaning thing that could ever happen to a man. You might as well go ahead and hand over his balls. It's more than likely that he is not willing to stand for what he feels is right and he probably has a bully for a wife. Shame on her!

Again, this response indicates that man who takes his wife's last name is not only deferring to his wife, but that she is so overbearing that she has emasculated him. One respondent, a female, age 20, referenced the man's role in the home with regard to religion:

He is not following his role in the relationship as the leader of the household. God's plan for marriage is for the man to be the head of the wife, and I think that by taking her last name he is giving her the leader status.

While this response was not the only response in the entire data set referencing God or

the spiritual implications of breaking the tradition, it did reinforce the notion of the man's name being an indicator of his status above his wife and in his home. In stark opposition to the third category, some responses involved concern about the impact this decision would have upon the children. They indicate that the children might be confused or negatively affected. For instance, one male, age 21, responded that men who take their wives last names are "Un-traditional. They are not taking their role as the head of the household seriously from the very beginning and that is setting up for some bad side-effects for his life and his children's lives." Although the respondent does not indicate what the side effects may entail, he specifically notes that the children's lives will be affected negatively. In addition, the notion of a man's name designating his role as head of the household prevails again.

Finally, a male, age 23, provided a startling answer regarding his male "instincts" and "nature" as warranting judgment:

My first instinct as a male if I encountered another male who changed his name to his wife's, I would react aggressively viewing the other male as extremely weak and feminine. I would not be intimidated by him whatsoever. Scientifically I would see him as weaker because the wife would come across as the decision maker and the provider which is the antagonist of what nature would tell us about genders. I would see this person as lacking in his business life and never being promoted due to the lack of power. If he were to work at all I would assume that he would take a position where he was never in the spotlight and never in the middle of heated and aggressive discussions. I would view him as the opposite side of the bell curve from the alpha-male.

This answer richly describes how some males in the in-group would respond to other deviant in-group members, providing support for the notion of an in-group hierarchy.

This response also illuminates a number of dominant themes in Western culture including "nature" being the element that assigns males more power. Supporting this notion, a

female, age 22, replied that a male taking his wife's last name was "unnatural and demasculating (*sic*).” Appealing to the “nature” of men and women's roles reinforces the notion that a gender hierarchy perpetuates patronymy.

### *Decision Should Be Made by the Couple*

Within this category, the respondents attempted to refrain from passing judgment on the male. These respondents either stated they were indifferent, or stated they believed it should be up to the male or the couple and no one else's decision. The recurrent phrases throughout these responses included, “it's up to him,” “his choice and not mine,” “it's their marriage,” and “to each his own.” These responses indicated that a man's decisions as well as the decisions made within a marriage are solely the business of that male/couple. One female, age 58, stated, “I believe this man made his own decision. As long as they are both loving, caring, loyal spouses, their last name doesn't matter.” These respondents do not necessarily agree with the decision but state that it is a decision every man has to make for himself. A female, age 25, noted that she would not judge the man personally for changing his last name but that it would alter her feelings toward the couple:

I think it is an option that every couple should consider, although I can't remember hearing that it happens very often. It does not change my view of the man himself at all, but may impact the way that I think about the couple's behind-the-scenes deliberations.

Several answers suggested that the respondent has considered this decision with relation to society and tradition, but do not think it should influence the relationship. For example, a male, age 24, said, “I think it is a taboo in society, but it should be something

that the couple decides upon together. It doesn't affect the relationship one way or the other.” A female, age 24, added, “If it's cool with him, then good for him. Most men from traditional families might not be comfortable doing this, which I can understand.”

Some individuals in this category denied that name taking is an issue in today's modern world and thus the decision made between the couple is irrelevant. For instance, a female, age 62, declared:

This is 2008. Taking the wife's last name seems to me to be a very unimportant issue. Couples decide what is best for them, and sometimes they prefer her last name. I do not find it meaningful or important in knowing any other traits of either of them.

This response is enlightening, especially with regard to the respondent's age. Society tends to perpetuate the stereotype that older generations are more traditional. Instead, this respondent revealed that age does not play a strong role in interpreting men's nontraditional naming choices. On the other end of the age spectrum, a male, age 24, claimed “Last time I checked there isn't a law or “man code” saying a woman HAS to take the man's last name.” This respondent's answer suggests that no underlying messages in society force a woman to take a man's last name.

#### *Tradition Should Remain/Society Will Not Accept It*

This category was charged with strong responses indicating that tradition should remain and men should not change their last names for any reason. The emotional overtone of these responses indicate a strong feeling that breaking tradition is unjustifiable and society would not accept it. The respondents in general made a reference to themselves as being “traditional” and thus the idea of a man taking his wife's



last name does not appeal to them. The respondents sometimes take the stance that “it has always been done this way” and thus should not change. Additionally, the respondents referred to a nontraditional naming practice as “odd,” “bizarre,” “strange,” or “weird.”

For example, a female, age 31, proclaimed:

It's just weird. I believe in traditions and the modern thinking and constant change I am not fond of. I don't even agree with women who will not take their husbands last name upon marriage or they hyphenate it. Come on people women have always taken their husbands name upon marriage for several reasons. Get with the program or don't get married.

The phrase “get with the program” indicates intolerance for people who choose nontraditional routes, another characteristic throughout this category. Further commenting on the role of traditional relationships in American culture, one male, age 25, replied:

Nothing wrong with it, it's untraditional and I would never consider taking my finances last name, because it goes back to "who's the man and who's the woman" just like it's the man that is supposed to propose, it's just tradition and expected.

This individual incorporates other traditional relationship practices such as proposing to assert that the tradition should remain in place. He suggests that men and women’s roles are fixed and anticipated by society.

Several responses in this category referred to religion as a justification for the tradition. One female, age 37, simply stated, “I don’t think it’s Biblical.” Another respondent, a male, age 24, elaborated on the subject:

I think the main purpose of marriage is to follow biblical traditions of the holy sanctity of marriage. Therefore if you are even following this practice, you should therefore take the man’s name as it is part of what marriage is. Otherwise you should just remain life partners...The man himself is no different really, just happens to be open to changes.

While this respondent withholds judging a man who takes his wife's last name, he denounces the act as un-biblical and, much like the female in the first example, seems to claim that if the partners do not take the husband's last name, they should not marry at all. One female, age 67, argued that taking a nontraditional naming route would impact the quality of the marriage:

I think it is not likely a man would take a wife's last name when marrying. Society would not accept it very well in his everyday life, and it would be a constant battle to defend his position which would become very old to him very quickly, and he would regret the decision, thus causing a great deal of stress and arguing in his life and marriage.

A male, age 60, replied similarly, speaking to the potential aggravation taking a woman's last name would cause the man, "It's a dumb idea because it goes against social convention and would therefore probably cause more hassle than it's worth." However, some respondents asserted that while the male should retain his name, women should have the option. One male, age 21, claimed, "Too new age for me. Although I am fine with the woman retaining her name, or hyphenating her own." Another male, age 21, stated,

I personally feel that one of the proudest reasons for parents to have a son is for that son to carry on their family name for generations to come. By choosing to change your last name to your wife's, you are essentially stopping that family name at yourself. If the wife really wants to keep her name that badly, she should consider hyphenation.

This response addresses a number of patronymic issues as well as insinuates that the decision to take the wife's last name is a move on the woman's part and not a mutual choice between the husband and wife. Additionally, the respondent implied that should the wife insist on keeping her name, she should still take the husband's name in addition

to her own. This respondent also mentioned the patronymic ideal of carrying on the family name. Another male, age 23, addressed this point as well when he stated, “I think that when a man and a woman marry, the man’s last name should be carried on. A man that would choose to take on his wife’s name is not going forward with his legacy. It’s retarded.” The concept of a legacy being passed down generations through a name resounds strongly throughout this category.

### *Making a Statement*

This category is the smallest, and includes responses that indicate that the male is making a social statement by breaking tradition. As opposed to decrying the male for changing his name, these respondents assumed that the male is attempting to promote an agenda such as liberalism or feminism. Within this category, respondents claimed the male was making “an anti-hegemonic statement,” taking a “step towards egalitarianism in our society,” and a “great show of modernism.” These answers commented on the social system in place as motivating a progressive-type male to defy traditional customs. The descriptions of the male are mostly neutral for this category, in that they address the action the man is making or his attitude instead of the man himself. For instance, one male, age 39, presumed:

He would likely be politically liberal, sort of defiant against traditional ways of doing things. Not necessarily feminine but of the attitude "if most of America does things one way, I'm going to do it the opposite just to take a stand."

Further commenting on the male’s mindset as well as his actions, a male, age 22, concluded:

The man is not worried about the traditional name change, nor is he concerned about what others will think of him with the woman's name. Perhaps he is trying to be "progressive" or make a feminist statement. He is definitely not going with the flow.

A female, age 27, considered the history of name changing and how the political climate at present is influencing the male's decision:

I think that historically, the reasons men have taken their wives names are not flattering to themselves. However in more recent years, I think it is often an attempt to show your open-mindedness and political correctness. I don't think it is very often a sign that they're being dominated by their wives on an emotional level.

Finally, one female, age 25, provided a detailed assertion about the progress made by individuals who elect nontraditional names:

I think it's a great idea! I only know one man who ever did this, and I found it very refreshing when I heard about it. I know he took the name, in part, for aesthetic reasons (i.e. he liked how her name sounded more than how his sounded) but nonetheless, it's a pretty interesting statement. Still, it is impossible to escape our patriarchal naming system--even though he's taking her name, it is her FATHER'S surname--and of course, marriage itself is inescapably a patriarchal institution. Still, when a man makes this type of gesture, it suggests that our society's ideals about marriage are changing--marriage is becoming a contract based on equity, rather than ownership or strict gender roles. I believe that a man taking his wife's name, though not always indicative of ideological leanings, certainly suggests a progressive move on the man's part.

Overall, the answers in this category suggested that a male who changes his last name to his wife's most likely is doing it to critique the political and social state of American culture.

### *Questioning Motives*

The final category constituted the largest number of responses in the data set and contains several related characteristics. As opposed to the previous category, the

respondents questioned the male's motives in terms of his own personal gain, and not as a political move or statement. In general, this category contains responses that inquire the "why" behind changing the last name. As with the other categories, the topic of tradition surfaced often, and was followed by a question for the male's reasons for departing from tradition. For instance, a female, age 24, replied:

I think that he is very clearly going against a strong tradition and I would be very interested in why he would want to do this. I don't think many men would have this motivation and many would see it as totally out of the question, so it would make me very curious to see if this man had a unique or very personal reason to do this.

The category is characterized by uncertainty of opinion because the circumstance or situation motivating the male/couple is unknown and speculation about why he might do this occurs. One male, age 22, aptly summarized, "He has a reason to do so, whether it be because his wife is completely overbearing and controlling or there is a shared belief between the two. Whichever case, there is an environmental motivation for such a behavior."

The respondents frequently commented that a man should only take his wife's last name if he has a "good reason." For example, a female, age 25, claimed:

Marches to the beat of his own drummer. But really he has to be either very feminine or very understanding. It's just part of our culture and there has to be a good reason to go against what you were raised with.

Another respondent seemed perplexed by what might comprise a good reason, the male, age 23, stated, "I have never heard of anyone doing that. Maybe if the person had a good reason I would understand and respect that decision but I cannot imagine why someone would do that."

Other respondents specified what might constitute a good reason. One female, age 25, speculated:

I would assume there was a reason for it. Perhaps she has an established career (such as a published scholar) and it wouldn't be wise for his wife to change her name. To prevent confusion by having 2 last names, perhaps he just agrees to take hers.

Another female, age 30, posited that the man “is not excessively tied to tradition or ‘what everybody else does.’ He may have some particular reason, such as a last name that's hard to spell or that an ex-wife is using.” A recurrent reason in this category is that he must hate his last name or have a poor relationship with his family. Responses in this part of the category included speculation that the male might have “a strange and unusual last name” with a “difficult spelling/pronunciation,” or the man’s family might be “politically dangerous or...violent.” The respondents provided a colorful description of why the man’s last name itself might justify taking the wife’s name. For example, a male, age 47, reflected:

Depends on what the man and the woman's last names are. The better last name should be given careful consideration. I think it would be great to choose a less difficult name over a more difficult name, i.e. length, spelling, pronunciation, etc. The only drawback that I can think of is how will others react and what types of judgments will they make that might cause the man to have to pay some type of unwanted price for going against generally accepted society norms.

Another respondent, a male, age 33, first made reference to the social aspect involved in changing a male’s name as well, and then qualified his answer:

Must have big brass balls because he's going to get never ending crap from other males. Either that or he has a stupid last name or one that's hard to spell or he truly dislikes his family and wants some separation from them.

A male, age 27, inquired as to the circumstances surrounding the male’s decision and

then conjectured, “Of course, his last name could be Hitler or Dahmer and he is trying to get rid of it.” From these responses, one could argue that a difficult or unsavory last name might be accepted as a more legitimate reason for changing one’s name.

Some responses often had suspicious or confused/inquisitive overtones. For instance, one respondent wondered whether or not the male is trying to hide or gain something by changing his name. For example, a female, age 28, discussed her feelings about the name changing issue and stated that she would consider the “social and career consequences when deviating too far from the norms of society.” Then she made a “sidenote” to her answer and questioned, “Why is he changing his name? Is he a criminal with something to hide?” This response provides evidence that some individuals feel that deviating from the norm is justification for suspicion of the male’s motives for changing his name. Another female, age 23, also questioned the male’s motives in terms of a number of factors:

I think he's a very strong man. Of course, in our society I would wonder what he's trying to prove or what statement he's making....I also might ask if he's trying to get away from some misdeed with the name change. I think this man would have to be pretty confident that changing his name would not damage his masculinity. This could go two ways - he could be a very confident, very loving man who wants to take his wife's name as a sign of love to her - perhaps he's an orphan or would like to become a part of her family in name because his family is riddled with problems. On the other hand - he could be a man that is easily bullied.

This response correlated with a number of the other categories. The respondent first stated that he is a strong man, but then questions his motives. She discussed societal repercussions, and then offered multiple potential circumstances for why the male might change his name. Other respondents similar to this one indicated that they feel positive about a man who would change his last name, but seemed confused about why he would

break tradition. Comparable to the previous example, respondents would typically provide two possible scenarios for why a man would change his last name. One respondent, a female, age 22, surmised:

I think he could be either two characters: a philosophically-educated man who adores and respects his wife and wants to subvert from the status quo in order to change society's view points on gender roles, or a shameless homosexual gold digger....hey you said be honest!

This respondent brings up an interesting point not made by anyone else in the data set: that the male might be not only a homosexual but also a criminal type who is looking to steal from his wife. However, she was not the only to address money as a potential reason for why a man would change his last name to his wife's. A female, age 37, claimed:

This choice is made against what our culture is taught. When a man changes his last name to take on a woman's last name there are very few reason why (he did not like his family for one reason or another or she has more money or stature).

In addition to money being a motivator, she mentioned issues with the man's family as well, which the supports the recurrent themes throughout this category.

This chapter included a description of both the quantitative and qualitative findings from the study. Although the quantitative findings were not as insightful as hoped, the qualitative responses helped describe a more accurate understanding of participants' perceptions of nontraditional males. The dichotomy evident in the qualitative categories suggests that in general, participants did not have a solid consensus on the topic. The implications of the results will now be discussed in further detail.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The results of this analysis revealed several surprising findings that often contradicted popularly held beliefs as well as existent research. Indeed, the inconsistency of answers suggests that the issue of nontraditional men taking their wives' last names is a contemporary topic on which people feel unclear. The results of this study further extant research on gender roles as well as the intersection of tradition and culture. Moreover, the findings lend insight into how group social norms reinforce gender roles and how those roles function to perpetuate ideological hegemony. The primary implications of this study include the dichotomy of opinions found in all demographics, the varying levels of tolerance for nontraditional men from both an in-group and out-group perspective, and the perpetuation of a patronymic belief system within current day society.

#### Dichotomous Opinions

Few of the demographics had an impact on categorization of the participants' opinions. Women were more likely than men to rank general male behaviors as hostile sexism instead of benevolent sexism, but otherwise gender had little effect on how participants felt about the actual nontraditional naming practice. Age had no significant bearing on participants opinions either. A number of older participants held progressive views on the topic and numerous younger participants confessed to being more

traditional. Relationship status and whether or not the participant was a parent did not significantly impact the participants' viewpoints either. While some of the analyses indicated that ethnicity or religion was a significant predictor of attributions of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny, the cell sizes were too small to be considered meaningful and thus have not been included in the overall analysis. These conclusions were surprising in light of the literature concerning individual's opinions on hyphenation and nontraditional name changes for women. Previous research suggested that women tend to be more accepting of a man who hyphenates his name than men are (Forbes et al., 2002) and that age has a significant impact on acceptance of nontraditional naming practices, with younger women exhibiting more tolerance than older women (Suter, 2004). Potentially, individuals may feel that a man who changes his last name entirely to his wife's may be more radical than women who keep their surnames or men and women who hyphenate. The lack of precedence for men who change their last names may contribute to the inconsistency of this study's findings compared to previous research. Presently, a man who takes his wife's last name is so uncommon that clearly defined social scripts for reacting to these men do not exist. Without a set societal norm to consider, the participants responded unevenly. Some participants relied upon scripts for reacting to hyphenation or women's nontraditional name changes to guide their responses about nontraditional men. Other respondents noted that they had never been confronted with such a suggestion and did not know how to respond. Still other respondents reacted negatively towards nontraditional men, perhaps relying upon scripts associated with stereotypes of feminine men.

In fact, the disparity in opinions toward nontraditional men that emerged in the qualitative portion of the study revealed an interesting dichotomy between participants who feel positively or indifferent toward nontraditional men and participants who feel negatively toward nontraditional men. The open-ended answers were divided almost precisely in half with each group of positive answers having a correlating group of negative answers. With the participants divided so evenly, the weak conclusions of the survey measures are not surprising. Only minor significant patterns appeared from the survey measures. First, participants' levels of benevolence towards men in general affect the way they attribute masculinity to nontraditional males. It appears that a higher level of benevolent sexism towards men increases attributions of masculinity of nontraditional males. Benevolent sexist attitudes, according to Glick and Fiske (1996), justify male dominance because it appeals to the notion that men depend on women's nurturing demeanors and thus men should protect women. One possible explanation for why participants with high levels of benevolent sexism would perceive nontraditional men as more masculine can be seen in the *Strong individual* and *Devoted husband* categories of the qualitative results. In these categories, individuals described nontraditional men as having a stronger character than traditional men and sacrificing their last names as a valiant gesture of love for their wives. Participants may have attempted to make sense of why a man would change his last name by justifying the male as so secure in his masculinity that he can give up his last name.

Similarly, a comparison of the scenarios of a traditional and nontraditional couple revealed that men who take their wives' last names are perceived as more committed to

their marriage and exhibit more nurturing characteristics than traditional males. The qualitative responses in the *Devoted husband* category strongly supported this finding. Supportive responses indicated that people may perceive a man who would risk societal rejection as much more sensitive to his wife's needs than a traditional male. Additionally, the *Devoted husband* category lent credibility to the notion that nontraditional men are more progressive than past generations and as a result, take more of an interest in their children's lives. Thus, egalitarianism in men equates to taking on more feminine attributes, including being nurturing. Moreover, the finding that men who do not change their names when they marry are perceived as more traditional than men who do change their names, which was supported by a number of categories, was somewhat obvious. *Tradition should remain/society will not accept it* most strongly supported the finding.

The finding that men's perception of their own masculinity did not influence their feelings about nontraditional men was also explicated by the qualitative answers. As noted earlier, no specific demographic predicted opinions about nontraditional males who change their last names at marriage. Although certainly men with strong traditional beliefs did voice negative opinions, male participants in general had such a variation of perceptions of their own masculinity compared to nontraditional men's masculinity that no strong conclusion could be reached. This inconclusiveness suggests many men are becoming more tolerant of nontraditional behaviors and possibly enacting many of them personally. However, a more in-depth study, such as interviews or focus groups, which would analyze men's personal beliefs about their own masculinity in comparison to

beliefs about nontraditional men would be advantageous in explaining the divisiveness among this gender group.

### Gender Role Conflict

Many of the men's answers in the four negative categories suggested that some males are experiencing gender role conflict and are seeking ways to reduce the conflict as Mahalik et al. (1998) reported. Mahalik et al. stated that when confronted with a nontraditional male, males experiencing gender role conflict will either overcompensate with hyper-masculine behaviors or seek to reduce the feeling of conflict by reframing the situation. A number of responses revealed a hyper-masculine reaction to the nontraditional male scenario. For instance, the male who stated he would react by acting aggressively towards the nontraditional male and view him as extremely weak and feminine displayed a hyper-masculine attitude. One could assume that this participant felt a sense of alarm when confronted with the idea of a male who does not enact masculine behaviors and responded by attempting to assert his dominance and remove the possibility of being viewed as feminine himself by condoning such behavior. Notably, women too can experience gender role conflict when confronted by a nontraditional male. Women who hold especially traditional beliefs may feel disconcerted by a man who oversteps his gender role boundaries into the female gender role. In this case, a female might criticize the male's actions by contrasting him to a stereotypical male. The responses that indicated a man who would change his last name is weaker than the average man exemplified this point.

The other option for men and women experiencing gender role conflict is to reduce the level of conflict. Ihilevich and Gleser (1993) stated four other ways of reducing gender role conflict, two of which are prevalent throughout the categories. The first, denying the significance of the threat, is evident in the category *Decision should be made by the couple*. In this category, participants withheld judgment of the nontraditional male in a very ambivalent and often overly unconcerned manner. By noting that the male's/couple's decision had no effect on the participant whatsoever, the participant effectively denied that nontraditional name changing plays a significant role in defining a male's character or changing his gender role. Similarly, several participants reduced potential gender role conflict by trivializing the threat of shifting gender roles. Participants' responses in *Strong individual* and *Devoted husband* reframed the nontraditional male's act as a positive action. For the first category, most individuals claimed the name change did not affect the male's masculinity or in-group categorization because in going against tradition, he was enacting archetypical male characteristics such as bravery and courage. In the second category, the participants trivialized the shift in gender role by claiming the male must be making the sacrifice for the benefit of his wife. Here again, benevolent sexism could possibly have played a role in guiding the respondents' answers.

### Group Norms

Much research on social identity and group norms has indicated that a set standard of behaviors exist within each group and that deviating from those socially

acceptable norms may have dire consequences for the atypical group member (Burris, Branscombe, & Klar, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Moreover, men tend to enforce more stereotypic roles within their own group in order to avoid being perceived as feminine, both individually and collectively. Adherence to masculine behaviors is more restrictive for men than women in terms of gender groups, making it more difficult for men to deviate from their norms (O'Neil & Egan, 1992; O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1996). Certainly, evidence of the in-group (males) and out-group (females) rebuking nontraditional males' naming choices exists within this study. However, this study also revealed a number of in-group and out-group members that supported nontraditional males' naming decisions. With regard to the vast amount of literature supporting socially reinforced adherence to group norms, the apparent dichotomy of responses, especially the in-group participants' responses, is surprising. However, the in-group supportive responses are not necessarily in opposition to the tenets of social identity theory. Both the in-group's and out-group's split decisions concerning the nontraditional male's role within his gender group can be understood within the framework of social identity theory.

#### In-group/Out-group Acceptance of Nontraditional Males

According to Cameron and Lalonde (2001), men's gender-related identities are not always strongly related to their social identification. Rather, men's behaviors tend to reflect the norms of the in-group, especially in the presence of other males. The anonymity of the data collection process may have contributed to some of the male participants' more open and honest responses. Perhaps these same males would have

answered differently in the presence of other males. Future research on this topic should investigate the potential difference in males' responses alone and with a group of other males. However, with regard to the current study, the males who responded favorably towards nontraditional males may have responded favorably as a means of protecting and upholding the in-group norms. In fact, social identity theory (SIT) could be helpful in understanding why some men rejected nontraditional men while others supported their choices. Because men are inherently a part of their gender group, the boundaries for escaping the group are not as permeable as with other groups. When a nontraditional man who subverts the in-group norms materializes within the in-group, the other males must adopt a strategy to process this new change in their group. Thus, the men who responded favorably to men who change their last names upon marriage could have employed a social creative strategy (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to redefine the characteristics of a nontraditional male. The *Strong individual* answers from males support the idea that men will align the nontraditional male's behaviors with those of traditional males. Hence, they described the nontraditional male as being brave and courageous, or embodying typical masculine traits. By providing adjectives that are consistent with the in-group's norms, the male participants redefined the nontraditional male to fit within the group.

SIT can also be helpful in understanding why some women accept men who deviate from their in group while others reject these nontraditional men. Mummendy and Wenzel (1999) stated, "A common goal may promote the establishment of shared values that may become the basis for a shared consensus on mutual inferiorities and superiorities" (p. 160). If a member of an in-group shares similar goals and values with



the out-group, then the out-group will view the in-group member more favorably. Some women are inclined to embrace males who embody androgynous traits and view the nontraditional name change as means of progress towards equality, as demonstrated in the *Making a statement* category. Thus, the women perceived nontraditional men as working to eliminate gender inequality and most likely viewed them as allies. This alignment of goals allowed the nontraditional men to achieve a level of acceptance among the female out-group.

#### In-group/Out-group Rejection of Nontraditional Males

SIT most clearly explains why some men reacted so harshly the idea of a nontraditional male. According to SIT, individuals within a dominant in-group will want to perpetuate the in-group norms in order to maintain the status quo. When members of the in-group enact behaviors typical of an out-group (such as reversing the tradition of a female taking her husband's last name), the collective social identity of the other group members is threatened. The group members who dislike the subversion of a nontraditional male will attempt to distance themselves from such a man. The *Weak individual* category best depicts how men will respond to nontraditional males they perceive as threatening the identity of the in-group. By demoting the nontraditional males through name-calling or describing them as weaker or like a woman, the in-group can maintain their superiority in the hierarchy. While the nontraditional male remains part of the gender group, the group members exclude him from the "top-tier" of the social hierarchy within the group (Beynon, 2002). In doing so, the men at the top can discredit

the masculinity of a nontraditional man and continue to uphold their own hegemonic ideals.

Additionally, men who rejected the nontraditional male's decision to change his name not only distanced themselves from the man, but attempted to reinstate women's roles as part of the out-group as well by attacking the wife of a nontraditional male, such as in the *Submissive husband/dominant wife* category. These participants often insinuated that the female in the situation was enacting too many masculine behaviors such as being dominant, assertive, or power-hungry. These responses in particular supported the assertions of Forbes et al. (2002) and Scheuble and Johnson (1993) that men who take their wives' last names are seen as less dominant than their wives. By construing the woman as aggressive and undesirable for most men, the superior in-group is attempting to "punish" the female for stepping outside her in-group norms and thus is able to reinforce typical sex roles. This reaction is interesting because it supports Maltby and Day's (2001) assertion that members of an in-group may look down on their own members for threatening the collective social identity, but will look even more unfavorably at out-group members whom they perceive as threatening their social status.

Women too participated in reinforcing stereotypical sex roles of both the nontraditional man and his wife. According to SIT, women who perceive the social hierarchy to be stable and the boundaries of groups to be impermeable may reject nontraditional men more harshly than women who see the hierarchy as changing and the boundaries overlapping. Swim et al. (1995) suggested that many women deny the existence of a social hierarchy that values men over women because women cannot leave

their gender in-group and thus do not want to view it as inferior. If no difference in status exists to these women, then the nontraditional male's behaviors may seem unnecessary, as demonstrated most clearly in the *Questioning motives* category. The adjectives used most often in that category depicted the nontraditional male as an anomaly, one whose behavior is erratic and even pointless. Moreover, women may reject a nontraditional man because the idea is so novel to them that they do not know how to react and rely upon traditional sex roles to help them justify their discomfort.

Interestingly, only one individual out of the entire group of respondents indicated that a male who takes his wife's last name might be a homosexual. According to Kimmel (1994), men assert their masculinity and protect the masculine standard by denouncing men who enact feminine behaviors as homosexuals. While many men and women promoted hegemonic masculine standards, relegation of these men to the rank of a homosexual male was not supported. Perhaps some participants viewed the act of a man taking his wife's last name questionable with regard to masculinity, but not as much of a threat to masculine social structure as homosexuals are perceived to be.

#### Limitations of Conclusions Regarding Group Norms

At this point, it should be noted that the explanations offered for why some males and females accepted nontraditional males and their decisions to change their last names and others rejected them are speculative in nature. The method used to collect data did not allow for further clarification of answers and thus the analysis is limited to educated conjecture. While the conclusions drawn in this study are supported by the qualitative

answers, additional clarification is necessary to proceed in drawing firmer conclusions about the potentially shifting norms in society. Future research then should utilize focus groups to establish a better understanding of why a dichotomous norm has surfaced within gender groups. Particularly, understanding why some men accept a deviant in-group member's behaviors would require extensive probing questions and a better understanding of those men's orientation to masculinity. The potential shift in group consensus on norms would require a more exploratory methodology to identify the factors at play within and between groups. With these limitations in mind, the following section comprises the discussion of patronymy and ideological hegemony as reflected in the current study's results.

### Patronymy and Ideological Hegemony

The existence of patronymy throughout the results suggests its influence in society remains strong. The answers in categories *Weak individual*, *Submissive husband/dominant wife*, and *Tradition should remain/society will not accept it*, all provided compelling evidence that many men and women are highly intolerant of men who deviate from their social roles. Patronymy functions on the notion that men naturally have more power, and therefore, their last names should be considered more valuable than a woman's last name. When a nontraditional man takes his wife's last name, he is perceived as deferring to her and considering her name as more valuable than his. In doing so, he is asserting that a woman's name can be as equally valuable as a man's last name. Establishing a woman's name as equal to a man's creates an awareness of men's

increasingly tenuous position within the gender hierarchy and challenges the tenets of patronymy. In turn, men (and women) must react immediately by attempting to discredit the nontraditional man or couple to maintain the status quo. In the categories *Weak individual* and *Submissive husband/Dominant wife*, participants attempted to shame the nontraditional man or couple by name-calling and attacking his and his wife's character. These participants facilitated and supported ideological hegemonic beliefs that a "real" man dominates his wife and that a man who would pass power to his wife, even through the subtle means of name changing, cannot meet the societal standards of a "real" man and thus is a disgrace to men and should be deemed less valuable to society. The harshness of the responses for both of these categories revealed how hegemonic ideals are so ingrained in some individual's minds that a departure from standard masculinity is unconscionable. Moreover, many respondents obscured gender inequality by directly asserting that following tradition was equal. For instance, one respondent implied that if the wife takes the husband's name, they are equal, support, understand and love one another, and that her taking his name is simply a compromise. However, for him to take her name is unacceptable because it would be placing the woman above the man. This position assumes that surnames create a marital power structure when the male's last name is discarded, but no such power structure exists when the female's last name is dropped. This response by far provided the most insight into the insidiousness of patronymy within society.

The category *Tradition should remain/society will not accept it* also provided an argument for perpetuation of patronymy in society and demonstrated a present resistance

toward changing traditions and achieving equity between men and women. These responses were more subtle in propagating ideological hegemony as they did not directly disgrace the nontraditional male but rather shifted to the societal standards as a reason for not tolerating this behavior. Few of the respondents said they disliked the male or thought less of him but instead insinuated that going against the tradition would be “more hassle than it is worth” and did not consider the act a worthwhile endeavor. By simply dismissing the idea of nontraditional name changes, the respondents alleviated themselves of the responsibility of dealing directly with uncomfortable subject matter.

The pervasiveness of hegemony is also highly apparent in responses that cited genealogy and child rearing as justification for maintaining tradition. According to these respondents, genealogical record keeping would become far too confusing and the children would not be able to understand why the father’s name did not prevail as the family name (despite the fact that other cultures have successfully relied upon matrilineality or a combination of both parents’ names). The subtle resistance exhibited in these responses highlighted many of the underpinnings of ideological hegemony, particularly the notion that the way things are suits everyone’s best interests and that the current system is easier.

Acosta-Alzuru (2003) noted that the cultural and social rules for gender behaviors and power structures are in constant change, depending upon the values of the current time period. While patronymy is still obviously prevalent in society, a potential change may be occurring within the ideological hegemonic structure of our culture. The responses found in this study do not overwhelmingly support a reinforcement of

hegemonic ideals nor do they suggest an outright departure from them. Rather, the dichotomy of responses suggests that the previously dominant stronghold of patronymy in this culture is possibly weakening or individuals are becoming more tolerant of androgynous and nontraditional men. Future research is necessary to clarify how individuals feel about men who defy social norms in order to verify that a shift is occurring. The last few decades have shown an increased acceptance of women's nontraditional behaviors and only future research on this topic can verify if we may now be on the threshold of a new era of tolerance in favor of nontraditional men as well.

#### Limitations and Future Research

The current study comprises one of the first studies on the topic of nontraditional naming choices for men and thus has contributed to a scant body of literature. While this study yielded highly interesting results, several limitations exist which, if addressed, could enhance the understanding of nontraditional men and society's attitudes towards them. Primarily, increasing the scope of demographic information could greatly impact future results. For instance, the sampling method intended reach a broad and diverse population and succeeded in terms of age, but did not attract an ethnically diverse group of respondents. Some research has indicated that ethnicity may influence individuals' tolerance for nontraditional acts with regard to gender roles (Kane & Kyyrö, 2001; Panayotova & Brayfield, 1997; Perry & Birnbaum, 1993), suggesting that ethnicity may play a role in acceptance or intolerance of nontraditional name changes as well. However, due to the small amount of minority respondents, no generalizations about ethnicity could

be made. Similarly, information regarding education level could have major implications for predicting a demographics' acceptance or intolerance of nontraditional name changes as well. Although the snowball sampling method may insinuate that an educationally diverse population participated, specifically analyzing education levels to tolerance levels could provide support to previous research. Finally, gathering information about income levels too could have an effect on predictions about demographic groups and similarity of opinions towards nontraditional men. Some research has implied that individuals from lower social classes have less affinity and tolerance for breaking tradition (Cassidy & Warren, 1996; Pyke, 1996). Future research garnering information on education and income levels could make assertions about the relationship between those two factors and their influence on nontraditional naming acceptance.

Moreover, the measures used to ascertain opinions about nontraditional males were adapted from similar studies about hyphenation of names or traditional sex roles. In light of the results from this study, which revealed dichotomous opinions about nontraditional males, measures specific to nontraditional males should be created and utilized to better capture true opinions. As noted previously, focus groups and in-depth interviews would allow researchers to ask probing questions to attain more clarification than an open-ended survey question. While the method utilized in this study allowed me to reach a large number of participants, it simultaneously limited the depth of information that could be attained. Additionally, a measure that assesses participants' political affiliations too could be helpful in understanding the viewpoint from which the participant is responding. Determining the degree of conservatism or liberalism of a



respondent has implications for understanding why they might be more or less accepting of an act that defies tradition (Larsen & Long, 1988).

Finally, this study could have significantly benefited from hearing the opinions and viewpoints of men who have taken their wives' last names. Presently, the sample of men who have taken a nontraditional naming route is small and difficult to reach. This study is limited to what other people surmise about a nontraditional man's characteristics and speculate on his reasoning for changing his name. As such, this study was not able to give voice to those men who may be experiencing a backlash as a result of their decision to take their wives' last names. Interviewing those nontraditional men could validate or repeal the theories about the men's personal characteristics, rather than relying upon what individuals assume them to be. A future study should attempt to interview men who have taken their wives' last names and hear their reasoning for why they defied tradition and what type of backlash they have experienced.

Moreover, this subject matter lends itself to a more critical approach. By viewing this topic through a critical lens, researchers could better understand the perspective of men who take their wives' last names and how they make sense of their own actions as well as the criticism they receive as a result of those actions. When an asymmetrical power relationship exists in any capacity, the group with the least authority and control will not have its worldview represented or acknowledged as much as the group with higher status. Typically, critical theories such as standpoint theories or muted group theory (Kramarae, 1981) have applied to historically devalued and oppressed groups such as women, children, the elderly, non-white ethnic minorities, the disabled, homosexuals,

and those in a lower socioeconomic class (Meares, 2003). However, critical theories can be applied to any group from which a dominant group attempts to take away power.

Nontraditional males who do not support customary norms are oppressed by individuals with traditional beliefs systems who trivialize nontraditional viewpoints and suppress group dissenters. As such, muted group theory or standpoint theory would provide an excellent framework for studying men who take their wives' last names. Communication research could greatly benefit from conducting future research that incorporates theories which empower and give voice to nontraditional men.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Although female's surname changing, keeping, or hyphenating has declined in the past decade, a small increase in the number of males who change their surnames has surfaced recently (Binks, 2004; Friess, 2007). The goal of this study then was to understand how men and women interpret a male who breaks tradition by assuming his wife's last name at marriage within the context of the contemporary societal structure. Within this study, I have reviewed a history of name changing and a current understanding of social structures that perpetuate traditions. I also summarized the minimal research about nontraditional males within our current culture and the associated backlash. I framed this study using Gramsci's (1971) concept of ideological hegemony and Turner and Tajfel's (1979) social identity theory. In order to answer the questions that arose from the literature, I proposed to examine men and women's attitudes using a mixed method approach. Following that proposal, data were gathered via an online survey containing multiple scales and one open-ended question. The analysis of the data revealed that the attitudes in this country are presently less hegemonic than I originally assumed they would be. In fact, a dichotomy of attitudes surfaced, revealing a highly controversial and split consensus of acceptable behaviors for men. These final concluding thoughts summarize the main points and findings of this study.

This study originated from a highly publicized California lawsuit involving a male who sued the state for gender discrimination when he attempted to take his wife's

last name at marriage (Kasindorf, 2007). The ensuing hype and occasional burst of outrage (Uglybiker, 2007) prompted me to investigate why the simple act of taking a woman's last name would cause such an upset. Most research concerning name changing has overwhelmingly represented the interests of women: women's feelings and beliefs about taking their husbands' names, women's decisions to keep or hyphenate their last names, or women's understanding of the symbolism inherent within name changing (Foss & Edson, 1989; Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Johnson & Scheuble, 1995; Lebell, 1988). Obviously most research would investigate women's name changing because the tradition of marital surname changing has almost always been delegated to females (Scheuble & Johnson, 1993). This tradition reinforces the patriarchal structure and in general, has encountered little resistance from women and virtually no resistance from men, until recently.

Name changing represents a highly symbolic deference to one's partner (Boxer & Gritsenko, 2005). The tradition of a female adopting her husband's last name reflects the values and underlying structure of our society (Lebell, 1988). The social structure inherent within our society places men and women as polar opposites, with competing wants and needs (Stephan et al., 2000). Although the gains in women's rights are a positive step forward, they may have lulled our country into a false sense of gender equality (Boxer & Gritsenko, 2005; Goldin & Shim, 2004). While women's rights advocates have made numerous substantial gains in the last century, gender equality is far from being reached. Believing that gender equality has already been achieved obscures

the traditions and social rules that perpetuate an overarching patriarchal structure (Pyke, 1996).

The concept of ideological hegemony can explain how traditions and social rules are continuously reinforced (Gramsci, 1971). Ideological hegemony is a guiding force in almost all cultures and remains prevalent in contemporary American society. Men and women both perpetuate hegemonic beliefs in every day common communication (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Kilianski & Rudman, 1998). The key to ideological hegemony is that a gender hierarchy is propagated in such a way it seems very normal and natural. In a hegemonic society, men are privileged over women in very subtle ways (Suter, 2004). As such, men tend to value other men's judgments of them more highly than those of women (Kimmel, 1994). Social identity theory significantly contributes to an understanding of why men seek the approval of other men. Social identity theory explicates how in-groups and out-groups function to maintain social norms (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Stets & Burke, 2000). Within the male gender group, men utilize communication strategies to reinforce the norms of their group, extricating or demoting men who do not comply to a lower rung of the gender hierarchy (Beynon, 2002).

While ideological hegemony and social identity theory provided an appropriate framework for this study, the main tenets of each were not wholly supported by the survey results. The quantitative portion of the study offered relatively ambiguous or inconclusive findings. Notably, participants with benevolent sexist beliefs about men tended to view nontraditional males as more masculine. Additionally, participants viewed nontraditional men who take their wives' last names as more nurturing and committed to

their marriages than traditional men. The qualitative answers helped in understanding why the quantitative results did not conclusively answer the research questions. Rather than a majority of positive or majority of negative opinions about a nontraditional man, a dichotomy of opinions surfaced concerning what people thought about a man taking his wife's last name. Eight different themes emerged from the qualitative results. The four positive or neutral themes each had a corresponding negative theme. The first grouping of answers, *Strong individual* vs. *Weak individual*, revealed that some men and women viewed nontraditional males as brave and courageous for breaking tradition while others felt he was a weak and feminine man. The second grouping, *Devoted husband* vs. *Submissive husband/Dominant wife*, expanded on the first group by taking their characterizations of the nontraditional male a step further. These participants either regarded the nontraditional male as extremely dedicated to his wife and marriage or as dominated by his wife or a man unable to make his own decisions so his wife must take the "leader" role in this household. In the third grouping, *Decision should be made by the couple* vs. *Tradition should remain/Society will not accept it*, participants avoided judging the nontraditional male personally by claiming that the decision was not theirs to make, nor was it theirs to judge, or that no reason merited breaking the tradition because society as a whole would reject the male for doing so. Finally, the last grouping, *Making a statement* vs. *Questioning motives*, revealed that some individuals believed that the nontraditional male was attempting to make a positive, feminist, anti-hegemonic statement while others expressed suspicion over what would constitute a good reason for breaking tradition.

The results suggest that a change may be occurring within our societal structure. Individuals seem to be expressing more tolerance towards those who defy social norms and break traditions, although more detailed responses from participants would aid in verifying their level of tolerance. Assuming that a trend in nontraditional name changing will continue, more communication research is necessary to understand the implications of this possible shift in society's cultural beliefs, values, and traditions. In order to confirm a transition from the standard hegemonic structure that has pervaded Western culture for centuries, significantly more research must be conducted with traditional and nontraditional men and women. Only after detailed research can we truly understand and incorporate the repercussions of a shifting paradigm in communication.

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