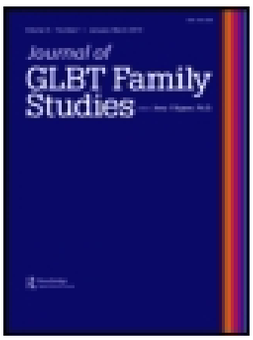

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What Shall We Call Ourselves? Last Names Among Lesbian, Gay, and Heterosexual Couples and Their Adopted Children

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ABSTRACT

Choices of last names for both adults and children are important family decisions that are often made upon marriage or upon the birth of a child. The gendered nature of such choices among heterosexual populations is well known, but they have not been widely studied among lesbian or gay populations. We studied selection of last names among 106 adoptive families—27 headed by lesbian couples, 29 headed by gay couples, and 50 headed by heterosexual couples—all of whom had adopted children at birth or in the first weeks of life. Whether in selection of last names for adults or for children, we found that heterosexual adoptive couples were more likely than lesbian and gay adoptive couples to follow patronymic conventions. Thus, heterosexual parents and their children were most likely to have identical last names. For lesbian and gay couples, in contrast, the most common scenario was for both adults to retain last names given to them at birth and hyphenate them to create last names for their children. Parents in lesbian and gay couples offered more detailed explanations of their choices than did those in heterosexual couples. Explanations offered by heterosexual parents were most likely to refer to tradition, but those given by same-sex parents were more likely to mention egalitarian or practical considerations. Overall, we found that same-sex and other-sex couples took very different approaches to the problem of naming themselves and their children.

KEYWORDS

Adoptive families; lesbian and gay parents; family names; surnames; adopted children

Introduction

Choices of last names for both adults and children are important family decisions that are often made upon marriage or upon the birth of a child. In the United States, both in marriage and in the naming of children, the power to bestow last names has traditionally been accorded to men. Thus, a woman who marries has been expected to take her husband's last name. In the United States today, the great majority of women change their last names when they marry (e.g., Gooding &

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Kreider, 2010). Children born to a marriage are also expected to bear their father's last name. Patronymic conventions of naming like these are strong enough that they are often taken for granted and considered to require no justification, but they clearly represent a continuing influence of patriarchal traditions (Cott, 2000).

As same-sex couples increasingly marry and become parents, they too must choose names for themselves and for their children. How is a lesbian or gay couple to select last names? Will they also give precedence to one or the other member of the couple, and name all members of the family after that person? Will they use one person's last name but retain the other's last name as a middle name? Or will they take some other approach? These questions are especially interesting in adoptive families, in which parents and children are not genetically related to one another. Working with a sample of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples and their adopted children, we studied these questions. In what follows, we review research on adults' last names and the research on children's last names. We then describe our hypotheses and provide an overview of the present study.

Last names of adults in same-sex and other-sex relationships

Throughout the history of the United States, women have been expected to take their husbands' last names upon marriage. In the 19th century, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other early feminists objected to this as a patriarchal practice that had a negative impact on women (Cott, 2000). After her marriage to Henry Stanton in 1840, Stanton decided to retain her maiden name (i.e., Cady) as a middle name, and is believed to have been the first American woman to do so. In 1855, the suffragist Lucy Stone became the first American woman to keep her last name after her marriage to Henry Blackwell, and women who followed her in this regard became known as "Lucy Stoners" (Boxer & Gritsenko, 2005; Titus, 2012). The Lucy Stone League was founded in 1921 with the motto, "A wife should no more take her husband's name than he should (take) hers" (Stannard, 1977). The renowned feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman also wrote about the degree to which patronymic practices were demeaning to women (Gilman, 1904, 1911). It was not, however, until 1975 that it was legal throughout the United States for women to keep their last names after marriage (Stannard, 1977).

Even though it is no longer required by law, most heterosexual women in the United States today choose to take their husbands' last names upon marriage. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2004 American Community Survey, Gooding and Kreider (2010) found that 94% of native-born married women had assumed their husbands' last names. Younger women and those who had completed more years of education were less likely than others to make conventional choices about last names, but even among younger and highly educated women, the majority took their husbands' last names upon marriage. Similar findings have

been reported by other investigators (e.g., Hoffnung, 2006; Twenge, 1997). Others have reported that large majorities of unmarried college women also plan to change their names upon marriage (Keels & Powers, 2013).

In studies of naming, not all women offered reasons for their choices. In fact, those who followed conventional naming practices were less likely than those who chose nonconventional strategies to offer extended discussion of reasons for their choices (Kline, Stafford, & Miklosovic, 1996). Those who explained changes in their last names were likely to make reference to tradition (e.g., it is expected; this is what happens when a couple marries), concepts of marriage and family (e.g., having the same last name represents that, in marriage, two people become one), and taking on a new identity (e.g., a new name represents the idea of beginning a new life together). Women who did not change their last names upon marriage generally explained their decisions with reference to continuity of personal identity (e.g., desire to maintain a sense of self), professional identity (e.g., desire to keep an already-established professional reputation), or other emotional considerations (e.g., feelings of attachment to own last name).

Interestingly, in one study of married women who did and who did not change their last names, marital satisfaction did not differ as a function of the choice (Kline et al., 1996). While marital satisfaction may not be affected by choice of names, however, the social consequences of naming may be substantial. For example, women who do not change their names upon marriage have been seen as less kind or nurturant than women who take their husbands' names (Etaugh, Bridges, Cummings-Hill, & Cohen, 1999). Men who change their last names upon marriage may be seen as "feminine," or as not being "real men" (Emens, 2007). The social consequences of unconventional choices about naming can thus be negative.

Much less is known about choices of last names among people in same-sex relationships. Though sparse, available data suggest that those in same-sex relationships may make decisions that do not conform to patronymic customs. Suter and Oswald (2003) studied 16 lesbian women who were currently involved in same-sex relationships and reported that, while four changed their last names in some way, 12 did not change last names. Similarly, Clarke, Burns, and Burgoyne (2008) studied 13 lesbian women and 17 gay men in committed same-sex relationships, and found that eight had not yet reached a decision on this issue, but most (nine women and 11 men) had decided not to change their last names. Among those who considered name changing, hyphenated last names were the most popular alternative; in this option, a couple whose last names had been Smith and Jones would both take Smith-Jones or Jones-Smith as a last name (Clarke et al., 2008). Thus, although other options were sometimes considered, the most common choice among same-sex couples was for both members of the couple to retain the last names they had been given at birth. As might be expected, various justifications were offered by those who did or did not change their names (Clarke et al., 2008; Suter & Oswald, 2003). Interestingly, the likelihood of lesbians' having changed last names was not associated with whether or not they had undertaken a

commitment ceremony. Overall, individuals in lesbian and gay couples seem to be less likely than those in heterosexual marriages to change one partner's last name.

Last names of children

It is a well-established tradition in the United States for children of married heterosexual parents to be given the last names of their fathers (Johnson & Scheuble, 2002; Nugent, 2010). This deeply ingrained practice of giving the father's last name to a child is thought to represent the biological linkage between father and child; it bestows legitimacy on the child and represents the father's obligation to support the child. When heterosexual couples are not married at the birth of a child, naming conventions are less clear, and particularly in recent years, many children have been given the mother's last name. Among married heterosexual parents, however, the custom of giving the father's last name to the child has rarely been challenged, even when mothers have nonconventional last names (Liss & Erchull, 2013; Nugent, 2010).

When children are adopted, biological linkages among adoptive family members often do not exist. Even in the absence of a biological link, however, the power of patronymic conventions is revealed by the fact that children adopted by heterosexual couples are usually given the father's last name (Suter, 2012). Despite the lack of biological linkages, or perhaps because of them, decisions to share a single last name may reflect desire to be seen by others as a normal or typical family. The fact that all family members share a last name is sometimes described as representing them as a single unit; the fact that they are almost always using the last name of the father rather than that of the mother is rarely discussed.

Little is known about how lesbian and gay parents select last names for their children, but existing data point to the importance of biological linkages. Some studies have found that, among lesbian couples having children via donor insemination, children were most likely to be given the last name of the birth mother, to whom they are genetically linked (Almack, 2005; Gartrell et al., 1999; Patterson, 1998). Some children were given the birth mother's last name, with the other mother's last name as a middle name. Still other children were given last names created by hyphenating the last names of both parents. For example, in Gartrell and colleagues' (1999) study of 70 lesbian couples who had children via donor insemination, 40 (57%) of the children were given the biological mother's last name, and the other 30 (43%) were given hyphenated last names. There is, however, little or no information about how gay or adoptive couples name their children.

Summary and hypotheses

Patronymic conventions of naming have a strong influence in the United States today, such that the great majority of women take their husbands' names upon marriage and almost all married couples give the father's last name to their

children. Less is known about naming among lesbian and gay couples, but in studies to date, members of same-sex couples have often been found to keep the last names that they were given at birth, and to give children the last names of their biological parents. In the present study, we investigate naming in a sample of 106 lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parenting couples and their children, who were adopted in early infancy (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Farr & Patterson, 2013). Members of each participating couple provided their own full names, as well as those of their adopted children, and described how they had selected children's names.

We expected differences in naming among the family types we studied. On the one hand, we expected heterosexual couples to follow patronymic conventions, such that wives would have the same last names as their husbands, and children would be given their fathers' last names. On the other hand, we expected lesbian and gay couples to use alternative approaches to naming, such that members of each couple might have different last names. As there were no biological linkages among family members in this sample of adoptive families, last names could not be assigned on the basis of biological links. Thus, it was not clear how same-sex couples would choose last names for their children. Moreover, we had no predictions about how parental gender would be associated with naming practices among same-sex couples.

With regard to explanations for choices among names, we also expected some differences among family types. Because patriarchal approaches to naming are so deeply ingrained, we expected that many heterosexual couples might have taken it for granted that they would follow these conventions. Thus, we expected members of heterosexual couples either to offer justifications focusing on customary practices and traditional views of family life, or to provide little justification at all. On the other hand, we expected members of same-sex couples to have devoted considerable thought to naming, to give lengthy explanations, and to emphasize reasons that focused on equality among family members and/or on personal or practical concerns in deciding upon last names for their children.

Method

Participants

Participants were drawn from a larger longitudinal study of adoptive families (e.g., Farr et al., 2010). At the first time point (Wave 1), adoptive families were recruited through five cooperating adoption agencies in the United States. Two-parent families with an adopted child between one and five years of age (in a jurisdiction where joint or second-parent adoptions were legally recognized for same-sex couples at the time of testing) were considered eligible to participate. The sample consisted of 106 families ($n = 29$ lesbian, 27 gay, and 50 heterosexual couples), with a total of 212 parents and 106 children. Parents ranged in age from 30 to 60 years ($M = 41.7$, $SD = 5.5$), and children ranged in age from 13 to 72 months ($M =$

36.1, $SD = 15.7$) at the time of assessment. Consistent with expectations for adoptive families, the parents were mostly White, well educated, and earned above-average incomes. Most couples reported being in long-term relationships, but information was not collected on whether or not couples were legally married or considered themselves to be married at Wave 1. Families lived in 11 states and in the District of Columbia, with the largest number living in Maryland and Washington, DC. The majority of adoptive families had only one child. All parents reported being the legal parents of their adopted children. Data for Wave 1 were collected between 2007 and 2009.

Parents were asked to report individually on their personal sexual identities. As expected, 156 of 170 parents (92%) reported individual sexual identities that were in concert with labels applied to couples. Nine participants (5%) described themselves as bisexual (two women in "heterosexual" couples, and seven women in "lesbian" couples). Data on this issue were missing for five participants (3% of the overall sample). No male participants reported a bisexual identity, and there were no couples in which both members of the couple identified as bisexual. For simplicity, then, we refer to "lesbian," "gay," and "heterosexual" couples, even though a small number of bisexual individuals were included as participants in the study.

Children in the sample had been adopted at birth or during the first few weeks of life in domestic adoptions, and had not experienced any prior placements. At Wave 1, children were 41% White, 32% Black, 23% multiethnic or biracial, and 4% from other racial groups. There were equal numbers of boys and girls. According to parents' reports, about a third of families regularly visited with their child's birth parents, and all families sent photographs and letters to their child's birth parents once or twice each year. There were no significant differences among family types in the extent to which children were in contact with birth parents. Further details about the demographic characteristics of the sample can be found in (Farr et al., 2010).

Approximately five years after Wave 1, in 2013 and 2014, a second phase of data collection (Wave 2) was conducted. At Wave 2, 170 parents from 89 of the original 106 couples (45 lesbian mothers from 24 families, 51 gay fathers from 26 families, and 74 heterosexual parents from 39 families) provided interview responses to the question about how their children's names were selected.

Procedure

All eligible adoptive families were initially contacted at Wave 1 with a letter or e-mail from the director of their cooperating adoption agency ($n = 5$) that described the study and invited participation. Cooperating agencies all met three criteria: (a) they offered options for domestic, private infant adoptions, (b) they accepted applications from both same-sex and heterosexual couples, and (c) they had placed infants with both same-sex and heterosexual couples. For more information about recruitment procedures, see Farr and colleagues (2010). For families who adopted

through the primary cooperating agency, telephone calls from the researcher followed the letters or e-mails. Telephone calls to other potential participants were not possible due to restrictions related to confidentiality.

After families agreed to participate, a researcher scheduled a two-hour home visit. During this visit, both parents in all families completed the demographic information form, provided information about their names, and completed other assessments not included in the present study. Each parent was asked to give their own first and last name, as well as the first and last names of their child.

About five years later, at Wave 2, parents were recontacted and invited to participate in the study a second time. Families who agreed were visited again in their homes, and parents were separately interviewed by trained graduate students by phone, in person, or via Google chat. Audio-recorded interviews (phone and in-person) were transcribed by trained research assistants. In the context of these interviews, parents were asked to explain the selection of their child's last name. The actual question posed to the participants was, "Could you describe in a few words how you decided on your child's name (first, last, and middle)?" Parents were not asked to explain how they had decided to keep or change their own last names. Data for Wave 2 were collected between 2013 and 2014.

The study (Waves 1 and 2) was approved by the Institutional Review Boards of the relevant universities. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the researcher obtained written consent from all participating parents. Following participation, a researcher debriefed families about the general and specific aims of the study. Participants' questions were answered, and each family was thanked for their participation. There was no financial compensation for participation.

Coding of data

For purposes of coding, each parent was labeled either "Parent A" or "Parent B." Among heterosexual couples, the mother was labeled as Parent A and the father was labeled as Parent B. Among same-sex couples, the first parent who had contact with the researchers was labeled "Parent A" and the other parent was labeled "Parent B." The labels were arbitrary and no judgments about the relative roles of parents were intended; these labels were used simply to facilitate coding of the data.

Of the 170 parents who provided interview responses related to naming their child, only 105 parents offered explanations specifically about children's last names (i.e., the remaining 65 provided explanations about choosing the child's first and/or middle name, but did not discuss choice of last names). These 105 parents represented 66 families, specifically 37 lesbian mothers in 21 families, 38 gay fathers in 23 families, and 30 heterosexual parents in 22 families. Each parent's explanation of decisions about their children's last names was tape recorded and transcribed for analysis. Each explanation was coded once for number of words and a second time for presence of specific themes, including the presence of multiple themes.

Deductive thematic analysis was used to identify and analyze emerging themes from parents' interview responses about last names (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Several common themes emerged from the complete data set, which—through a winnowing process—were identified, differentiated, or combined until consensus was achieved (Wolcott, 1990). In the first stage of data analysis, the authors and two trained research assistants (coders) immersed themselves in the data by reading parents' interview transcriptions (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then, the authors and coders began the unitizing process, which refers to the establishment of an exhaustive and comprehensive list of themes that emerge during the data immersion phase, and ensures that all coders are coding the same unit of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Three themes were identified in parents' interview responses about choosing children's last names: Egalitarianism, Family Tradition and Unity, and Identity and Personal/Practical Significance. Egalitarianism (e.g., the idea that both parents should be recognized in naming the child) was coded when a parent made any mention of a hyphenated name. This theme also included responses that involved mention of the child's *middle* name if it directly related to parents' *last names*, since these types of decisions reflect the inclusion and representation of both parents' last names in their child's full name. Family Tradition and Unity (e.g., the idea that all family members share the same last name as a way to emphasize family unity and tradition) included any straightforward statements from parents about the children's last name being the same as their own (without connecting it to their own family of origin), reflecting the idea that it is traditional for children to have the same last name as their parents. This theme also included any discussion of last names that directly related to the nuclear family that parents had created with their partner and children (e.g., all having the same name, having the same name as other children in the family). Personal/Practical Significance was coded if parents mentioned the idea of keeping a name to maintain personal or professional identities or for other reasons that were of personal significance. This theme also included keeping a name for any practical purposes, such as obtaining health insurance. The idea of personal significance could also reflect concern with a family of origin's traditions (e.g., wanting to keep a mother's maiden name). This theme did not include decisions about the child's last name that were made on the basis of the child's identity; rather, the focus was on reference to parents' identities.

A finalized coding template was created for scoring parents' interview responses. Each coder maintained an individual Excel document with this coding template to organize all instances of themes identified; all 105 parent interviews with responses involving children's last names were coded. Each transcript was coded by two coders for presence/absence of each theme; in cases where there was disagreement, a third coder broke the tie. If no explanation was offered about the selection of children's last names, that explanation was coded as containing no themes. The coding template was evaluated and modified as needed after each round of individual coding and group discussion. Throughout the coding process, an "Other" category was included for additional themes or other notes.

High reliability was achieved for the coded themes (alpha coefficients were .92 for Egalitarianism, .92 for Family Tradition and Unity, and .86 for Personal/Practical Significance). While some preliminary differences emerged in the number of words offered by parents in response to the naming question as a function of interview (150 words on average by phone vs. 70 words on average by Google chat), $t(4.48) = p < .001$, parents in same-sex couples were no more likely to do the interview by phone or by Google chat than were parents in other-sex couples. Furthermore, there were no differences in number of words as a function of parent gender.

Results

We present the results in three main sections. First, we present findings from Wave 1 about the last names of adults, followed by results from Wave 1 relevant to last names of children, and finally by explanations offered by parents for these choices at Wave 2.

Last names of adults

As expected, heterosexual couples adhered more to patronymic conventions in naming than did lesbian or gay couples. Results from Wave 1 data showed that 41 of 50 heterosexual couples (82%) reported that both husband and wife shared the same last name. Seven husbands and wives reported that they had different last names (14%), and two (4%) reported that at least one of them had hyphenated his or her last name. In contrast, only four of 56 same-sex couples (7%) reported that both members of the couple shared the same last name. Fifty-one members of same-sex couples (91%) had different last names, and only one (2%) had a hyphenated last name (see Table 1 for additional detail). No substantial differences between lesbian and gay couples were observed (see Table 1), so these two groups were combined for analysis. The difference between those who had the same last names, on the one hand, or who had different or hyphenated last names, on the other, as a function of couple type, was highly significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 106) = 60.59$, $p < .001$, Phi = 0.76. In summary, most women in heterosexual couples had apparently changed their last names, but most members of same-sex couples had not changed their last names.

Table 1. Frequencies of adults' last names as a function of couple type at wave 1.

Adult last names, Wave 1	Lesbian couples (%) ($n = 27$)	Gay couples (%) ($n = 29$)	Heterosexual couples (%) ($n = 50$)
Both parents have same last name	3 (11%)	1 (3%)	41 (82%)
One or both parents has/have hyphenated last name(s)	1 (4%)	0	2 (4%)
Parents have different last names	23 (85%)	28 (97%)	7 (14%)

$\chi^2(1, N = 106) = 60.59$, $p < .001$.

Last names of children

Heterosexual couples also adhered more closely than did same-sex couples to patronymic conventions of naming children. Results from Wave 1 (shown in Table 2) reveal that 42 of 50 (84%) of children with heterosexual parents had the same last name as both parents; six more children whose parents did not share last names had been given their fathers' last names (12%). Altogether, 96% of children had been given their fathers' last names. In contrast, the most common strategy among same-sex couples was to give the child a hyphenated last name (29 of 56 children, or 52%), followed by giving the child Parent A's last name (22 of 56, or 39%), and giving the child other names (three of 56, or 5%). Again, no substantial differences between lesbian and gay couples were observed (see Table 2), so these two groups were combined for analysis. The chi-square comparing the children's names of same- and other-sex couples was highly significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 106) = 66.46$, $p < .001$, Phi = 0.79. In summary, most children of heterosexual couples had been given their fathers' last names, but most children of same-sex couples had been given hyphenated last names that had been created from the last names of the two parents.

Explanations for selection of children's names

As expected, at Wave 2, parents from same-sex couples gave longer explanations than did other-sex couples about how and why they had selected children's last names. On average, same-sex couples' explanations were 146 words long ($SD = 107$), whereas those of heterosexual couples were only 114 words long ($SD = 95$), and this difference was significant, $t(168) = 2.01$, $p = .046$. Lesbian and gay couples did not differ in the length of their explanations (lesbian couples: $M = 145$, $SD = 95$; gay couples: $M = 146$, $SD = 118$).

There were also differences among couple types in the issues mentioned in their explanations of children's last names. See Table 3 for an overview of results and examples of explanations for each theme, drawn from parents' interview responses. Parents in same-sex couples emphasized egalitarian issues (e.g., that both parents should be recognized in the child's names) more often

Table 2. Frequencies of children's last names as a function of couple type.

Children's last names, Wave 1	Lesbian couples (%) ($n = 27$)	Gay couples (%) ($n = 29$)	Heterosexual couples (%) ($n = 50$)
All family members share same last name	3 (11%)	1 (3%)	42 (84%)
Child has Parent A's last name*	7 (26%)	11 (38%)	0
Child has Parent B's last name[a]	1 (4%)	3 (10%)	6 (12%)
Child has hyphenated last name	16 (59%)	13 (45%)	1 (2%)
Child has other last name	0	1 (3%)	1 (2%)

Note. [a]Of the seven lesbian-mother families in which the child had Parent A's last name, four also had been given Parent B's last name as a middle name. Of 11 gay-father families in which the child had Parent A's last name, five had also been given Parent B's last name as a middle name.
$\chi^2(1, N = 106) = 66.46$, $p < .001$.

Table 3. Interview themes about children's last names coded from wave 2 interviews with same-sex and heterosexual adoptive parents.

Theme	Parents reporting from same-sex couples, $n = 75$	Parents reporting from heterosexual couples, $n = 30$	Example excerpts from interviews
Egalitarianism	77%	17%	"We wanted her to have both our last names so we hyphenated them." (lesbian mother) "It was important to us that he have both of our names within his name." (gay father) "Then we decided on the [hyphenated last name]. It's sort of a standard practice these days." (heterosexual father)
Identity and personal/practical significance	37%	3%	"[Partner] has a much stronger connection to her family's last name so we just decided we wanted to have her family's last name." (lesbian mother) "Because of where I worked and my insurance company, we kind of felt it was better to give him my last name" (gay father) "And [last name] was the name from [partner]'s side of the family that wasn't getting preserved because none of the women in the family were keeping it and there weren't any men who were keeping it, so we liked the idea of giving him that name that was also [partner]'s grandmother's name." (heterosexual mother)
Family tradition and unity	27%	77%	"I changed my name… so that we'd all have the same last name… since [partner] was going to be the moneymaker in the family, it was her name we chose."(lesbian mother) "The only thing we felt strongly about was that both our children have the same last name." (gay father) "She obviously has our last name." (heterosexual father) "Well, it's more traditional to use the father's name." (heterosexual mother)
Multiple themes (two or more of the above)	36%	13%	

than did parents in heterosexual couples, $\chi^2(1, N = 105) = 32.86$, $p < .001$. Parents in same-sex couples also were more likely to mention issues of practical or personal significance than were those in heterosexual couples, $\chi^2(1, N = 105) = 5.93$, $p = .016$. In contrast, heterosexual parents more often emphasized family unity and tradition (e.g., all family members sharing the same last name as a way to emphasize family unity and tradition) than did parents in same-sex couples, $\chi^2(1, N = 105) = 22.15$, $p < .001$. Lastly, as expected, parents in same-sex couples were more likely to mention multiple themes (two or more of the above themes) than were parents in heterosexual couples, $\chi^2(1, N = 105) = 5.29$, $p = .021$.

Discussion

By choosing last names, families decide how to represent themselves. Historically, such choices have been heavily gendered, and the power to assign last names to women and children has generally been accorded to men (Cott, 2000). This has resulted in patronymic conventions such as women taking their husbands' last names upon marriage, and children being given their fathers' last names. To what degree are patronymic conventions followed by different kinds of families in the United States today? Consistent with previous findings, we found that heterosexual couples commonly followed patronymic conventions, such that both parents and their children were likely to have the same last names (Gooding & Kreider, 2010). Also consistent with previous results, heterosexual parents generally explained these choices by referring to tradition (Clarke et al., 2008). Lesbian and gay couples, in contrast, took very different approaches to naming themselves and their children. Members of lesbian and gay couples were most likely to have retained last names given to them at birth and to have given hyphenated last names to their children. Lesbian and gay parents most often explained their choices as designed to promote representation and inclusion of both parents and/or by concern about practical matters such as legal concerns. Thus, when compared with those of heterosexual parents, lesbian and gay parents' decisions about last names were governed less by patronymic traditions and more by egalitarian or practical concerns.

Adherence to tradition in the choice of last names was clear among heterosexual couples in this sample. Parents in this sample were, on average, well educated and relatively affluent. In other words, they were among the most likely groups to make nonconventional naming choices (Gooding & Kreider, 2010; Hoffnung, 2006). Even so, fully 41 of 50 husband/wife pairs (82%) reported that they shared the same last name. Only a small minority (14%) reported different last names, and an even smaller minority reported having hyphenated the last names of one or both members of the couple (2%). Thus, choices of last names among heterosexual married couples in this sample were strongly in accord with patronymic traditions.

Choices of last names among lesbian and gay couples were apparently less governed by gendered rules. Among same-sex couples, 51 of 56 (91%) reported that the two members of the couple had different last names; only four couples (8%) shared the same last name, and even fewer (4%) reported that one or the other parent had hyphenated his or her name. Apparently, most lesbian and gay parents kept the last names they had been given at birth. These choices did not seem to be governed by gendered expectations.

The reliance of heterosexual parents on patronymic traditions in naming their children was particularly noteworthy because these parents had no biological linkages with their adoptive children. The bestowal of a father's last name upon a child has often been seen as an acknowledgment of paternity—i.e., an acknowledgment of genetic linkages between father and child (Nugent, 2010). Given that there were no genetic linkages among family members in these adoptive families, the parents

might have felt less strongly obligated to follow patronymic conventions. Even so, 48 of 50 families headed by heterosexual couples (96%) reported that children had been given their fathers' last names. It is possible that, in the absence of biological linkages among family members, use of a single last name was simply a way to encourage others to see them as a family unit. Overall, however, the fact that they most often chose the father's last name serves to underline the continuing strength of patriarchal conventions.

The selection of last names for children by lesbian and gay couples presented a very different picture. A majority of children with same-sex parents (52%) had been given last names that had been constructed by hyphenating the last names of the two parents. A smaller group (22 of 56 or 39%) had been given the last name of one or the other parent, but of this group, nine had also been given the other parent's last name as a middle name. Thus, in all, 38 of 56 families headed by same-sex parents (68%) had somehow used the last names of both parents when naming their children. These are the first data to be reported on gay couples' naming practices, and also the first findings to be reported on naming practices among lesbian and gay adoptive parents. In choosing names for their children, we found that lesbian and gay parents were less likely than heterosexual parents to prioritize one parent's name over the other, and more likely to find ways to use names from both sides of the family.

The ways in which parents explained (or took for granted) their selection of children's last names also varied as a function of parental sexual orientation. As expected, heterosexual parents were less likely than lesbian or gay parents to provide explanations at all. Lesbian and gay couples spoke at greater length in explaining their children's names, and some lesbian and gay couples described extended discussions at home about names. Heterosexual couples more often seemed to regard their choices as self-evident. As one heterosexual father said, the child's last name "is of course my last name." Similarly, a heterosexual mother reported, "His last name is our last name—my husband's last name." Along the same lines, a heterosexual mother from another family said that the child's last name "is the last name of course of my husband." In short, the selection of last names for children appeared to be more problematic for lesbian and gay parents than for heterosexual parents. So deeply were heterosexual couples influenced by patronymic conventions that reasons for their choices sometimes appeared self-evident to them.

When parents did give explanations for how they selected their children's last names, the nature of these explanations varied as a function of parental sexual orientation. As expected, heterosexual parents were more likely to see their choices as governed by traditional practices (Liss & Erchull, 2013; Nugent, 2010). As one heterosexual mother whose child bore her husband's last name said, "Well, it's more traditional to use the father's name." Lesbian and gay parents, on the other hand, emphasized egalitarian values such as inclusion of names from both sides of the family. As one lesbian mother said, "In the end we thought her having both of our names was important." They also emphasized practical matters. "I needed to adopt

him first for insurance purposes, and so it was just a little bit easier for him to have my last name," said one gay father. Another gay father said, "We wanted to make sure that he had a connection to both of us legally for school and stuff like that." Thus, lesbian and gay parents seem to have considered the process of naming their children in different terms than did heterosexual parents.

It should be noted that these results have emerged from a sample of upper middle-class adoptive parents and their children. This is important because, in patriarchal tradition, one of the functions of giving the father's last name to a child was to establish paternity—i.e., to acknowledge genetic links between father and child (Cott, 2000). Given that the present sample was made up of adoptive families in which no family member was genetically linked to any other family member, establishment of paternity cannot be an explanation for patronymic practices. Moreover, well-educated women have been found to be among the least likely to follow patronymic norms in choosing last names for themselves and their children (Gooding & Kreider, 2010). The fact that many heterosexual couples conform to patriarchal customs in naming themselves and their children, even in this upper middle-class sample of adoptive families, only underlines the power of traditional, gendered naming practices.

It is also worth noting that, among same-sex couples, no gender differences emerged in this study. Prior research on naming has focused on families of lesbian couples and has found that most women continued using the last names that they had been given at birth (e.g.., Suter & Oswald, 2003) and that children born to two mothers were most often given the last name of their biological mother (Almack, 2005; Patterson, 1998). Only one study included gay as well as lesbian couples, and it found that gay men as well as lesbian women in long-term, same-sex relationships were likely to continue using the last names that they had been given at birth (Clarke et al., 2008). In the present study, we found that lesbian and gay participants were equally likely to keep the last names that they were given at birth; they were also equally likely to give hyphenated last names to their children. Lesbian and gay parents also offered similar explanations for their choices. The fact that members of a parenting couple were of the same gender seemed to be more important than which gender they shared.

Our results showed that men in same-sex couples do not enjoy as much privilege as they might experience in the context of heterosexual relationships. Whereas the male ability to bestow last names on children is virtually unquestioned in the context of heterosexual marriages, this is not the case for men in same-sex couples. Naming of children is of course only one way among many in which same-sex couples challenge heteronormative ideas about family life, but it underlines the relational nature of gender.

Some limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the sample is neither large in size nor representative of the population of lesbian, gay, or heterosexual parents. Thus, the extent to which the findings will replicate in other samples remains to be discovered. The sample was drawn from locations

where both members of a same-sex couple could establish legal parenthood, and any influence of this variable on our results cannot be estimated. In addition, the data for this study involve parents' and children's last names and parents' retrospective explanations about how and why the names were selected. It is possible that parental memories may be faulty, that parental views may have shifted over time, or that parental justifications were not accurate. Prospective studies of name selection and of its correlates in family lives would be helpful in clarifying these issues.

An additional issue involves the contrast, in a few cases, between individual identities and couple designations with respect to sexual orientation. We described couples as "lesbian," "gay," or "heterosexual" based upon the gender of the two members of each couple. For the great majority of couples, individual sexual identity and couple designations matched exactly. For a small number of female participants, however, this was not the case. Seven women in "lesbian" couples and two women in "heterosexual" couples identified as bisexual individuals, even though their partners identified as lesbian or heterosexual, respectively. All male participants described individual sexual identities that matched their couple designations. Thus, although individual and couple labels were consistent for most participants, a few participants described individual identities that differed from the couple designations used here.

One additional qualification to our findings concerns the availability of legally recognized marriages to some but not all lesbian and gay couples at the time of our interviews. In patriarchal tradition, a woman takes her husbands' name upon marriage (Keels & Powers, 2013). Since all heterosexual couples in our sample were married, all had encountered this opportunity for women to consider changing their last names. On the other hand, at the time of our interviews, only a handful of the gay and lesbian couples lived in jurisdictions that offered legal recognition for same-sex marriages. Thus, even though same-sex couples may have been together in committed relationships for many years, and even though they may have undertaken religious commitment ceremonies, they had not necessarily had the opportunity to consider a change of last names in the context of a civil marriage. Thus, it is possible that our results underestimate the rates of name change that would be seen among lesbian and gay individuals, had they all been able to enter into legally recognized marriages. Now that legal recognition for same-sex marriages is available throughout the United States, future research will be able to examine this possibility.

In summary, we found that, when naming themselves and their children, heterosexual couples were likely to follow patronymic conventions, but lesbian and gay couples took a very different approach. Finding themselves outside of gendered traditions, members of lesbian and gay couples were likely to keep (and sometimes hyphenate) the last names they themselves had been given at birth and to give hyphenated last names to their children. When they offered explanations for their choices, heterosexual couples emphasized conformity to patronymic conventions,

but lesbian and gay couples emphasized practical realities and inclusion of names from both parents. In short, when faced with the question, "What shall we call ourselves and our children?," lesbian and gay parents were similar to one another but gave very different answers than did heterosexual parents. To what extent such differences in naming are associated with other kinds of differences among families is a question for future research.

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