

Interviewee: Malcolm Perkins-Smith (Has a hyphenated last name. He identified his mother's decision as Feminist choice.)

Interviewer: Kelson Brighton

[Explain project, consent] Yes, I agree to willing participation. *Okay, so what is your full name?* Malcolm Samuel Perkins-Smith. *And the Perkins-Smith is hyphenated, correct?* Yes. *So what would you say your last name story is?* From what I understand, that both my parents liked their last names and wanted to keep them and they just did it. There is no real story more than that from what I've been told. *Do you know if your mother ever considered taking your father's name?* Yeah, I mean I know it was a conversation, but I've asked that question before and that's kind of what the answer's been. *Do you know what your mother's relationship to feminism is?* Certainly related in terms of, I mean, a very strong relationship. Just through her work and her schooling experience, she was one of the first women in her field so it definitely has a pretty strong feminist vibe. *What's her field?* She works as an urban planner, so she and one of her colleagues were some of the first women to work in it. So she did that instead of going to law school, went into planning and design.

*Did you having a hyphenated name have effects on you during your childhood?* Only on tests, writing it in for tests, that was about it. It wasn't really different, I guess. I knew it was, but it creates more conversation than anything. *And what do you think you will do in the future if you get married in terms of your last name?* Yeah, I've wondered that myself. I don't know. If the hyphenated name is cool in society, can I go with the double hyphen if I want to? That's a pretty interesting question, because you want to think that at some point everyone wanted to keep their names. I don't know. I would be open to anything. *Do you think that maybe you would just choose one of the names?* No, I don't think I'd ever just choose one name. I would use both or none. *Some people end up creating their own last names when they have children, do you think you would ever consider an option like that?* I would consider it, but I wouldn't at this point not too heavily. That seems a little weird. *So you would say you're unsure about what you would do with your hyphenated name?* Unsure. I probably wouldn't make a new name.

*Is there any particular history to you name that holds significance in terms of family or ethnicity or aesthetic?* Um...Yeah I think they're both just like very western European early American names, and like both my family have strong roots going back. Both those names are around a lot of places. I know that the Perkins side was part of the mayflower in some way, and that's how that name came across. And then the Smith side I'm not so sure about, but definitely pretty classic American name. *Do you know if your mom had any role models, or both your parents in choosing the hyphenated name?* I don't think so. What is a role model in creating a name? *I guess if somebody they knew had done the same thing maybe that could have influenced them.* Um...I know they had friends...like we have family friends around the same age as my parents that had hyphenated names, so I couldn't tell you who got married first or anything like that, but I mean I'm sure they knew someone, you know? They're around a lot of people like that, pretty liberal people that are willing to do that.

*What do you think that your parents hoped for in choosing a hyphenated name and do you think that it was successful?* I don't know. I think they just maybe wanted to get rid of a normal name--a common name--and make it a little more uncommon, which is kind of what they were trying to do with both of our first names. You know, Smith and Perkins, like I said before are pretty

generic names. But anything with a hyphen is all of a sudden the other side of the spectrum. *And have there been any unforeseen consequences to having a hyphenated last name?* No, not that I can think of.

*Have there ever been times when people have called you different names, names that were not your full name?* Yeah. I've been called both my last names. Some people refer to me by just Smith, some people by just Perkins. It really depends on people's relationship with me and what side of the family they might have close relation to. My high school soccer coach who worked really closely with my dad would call me Malcolm Smith. And people I know on the east coast who are closer with my mom's side of the family call me Malcolm Perkins. *And you know how your name is Malcolm Smith on Facebook?* Yeah. *Is that for any particular reason?* Yeah, just because I didn't want it to be my real last name. *Your real, full last name?* Yeah. And because Smith is more generic. *Because you didn't want to be easily identified on Facebook?* Yeah. *Has your family gotten interesting reactions from having a hyphenated last name?* Not since I've been around. It seems to be pretty common these days. I think that my age is a little bit on the later end of the hyphenating name thing, so it's been around just long enough that it's not that odd. I didn't feel like it was that odd growing up, and people around me didn't seem to think it was that odd. And I think I can see it most in a concrete way in tests. Because up to third grade there was no way to insert a hyphen into a test. But then by the time I got to fourth and fifth grade and definitely by the time I got to middle school there was always a hyphen option. Once that happened it was kind of a normal thing.

*How effective do you think that your parents choice in including both of their last names was in terms of feminism and not erasing your mom's identity? So having her maiden name be one of your last names...* Yeah, I think that's definitely a part of it, and I think it kind of goes back to her upbringing. She was the only girl out of four siblings, so three other boys, and I think that that's a way she showed her strength, through keeping that. And it just keeps her on a level with her brothers, in terms of her strength in her relationship. *Because they all passed down their name?* Yeah, I think a lot of it has to do with that. *How meaningfully do you think that a woman keeping her father's name, her maiden name, how effectively do you think that that speaks to feminist goals. What are the feminist goals? I guess for the sake of this project just not having your identity be erased in taking your husband's name? So do you think that's effective?* I mean, obviously it keeps your name around. It's way more effective than not keeping your name. *I mean, the thing that some people have trouble with is the fact that it just might not necessarily be the most powerful thing because it's your father's name, you know?* I've had a hyphenated name my whole life and I've never thought about it as a feminist thing until now. It's just kind of been a family thing. It was never about my mom or anything, it was just a family thing.

*So you never considered it to be a feminist action?* No. And I don't think my mom would say that it was either. I think there are definitely some things that play into it, but I don't think it was ever an overt decision to be feminist. *What do you think that the generation of children should do as they marry and have children, because it's our generation that has hyphenated names?* To keep it reasonable. There's a time and a place, there are some names that it works with and some names it doesn't. It's tough, I think if you have the right intentions in the end whatever decision you make is going to be a good one as long as you've thought about it. I mean don't throw a hyphen in there just because. *It's also interesting because if you have a hyphenated name and you marry somebody with a hyphenated name and they want to keep their name too, do you all of a sudden have two hyphenated names?* People always forget about the middle name too. *Do you*

*feel like your middle name is lost because you have two last names? Yeah, I think my middle name is lost because I never use it, I don't really like it. I feel like that's what everybody's middle name is like, Ok, I think that's it. Any last words? No. Okay, thank you. {End}*