

Interviewees: Maria and Mackenzie Mulligan-Buckmiller

Interviewer: Kira Osborn

*What is your last naming story?*

Kenzie (K): Well, our last name is Mulligan-Buckmiller and our mother's name is Mulligan and our father's name was Buckmiller. When they got married our mom decided to keep her maiden name so she's just Molly Mulligan and our father kept his name- wait, that makes no sense. Anyways, they gave, to us, they hyphenated our name to equal parts but in pre-school they cut off Mulligan so it's just Buckmiller.

Mia (M): [interrupts] well for ease of access

K: whatever... [laughter]

M: They didn't want a pre-schooler to have to spell Mulligan.

K: Basically our parent's didn't make the decision.

M: Wow, that was the school's decision? I was in the dark.

K: But now it's our legal name so it appears on everything.

*Have there been complications since then? Do you guys go by your full hyphenated last name?*

K: I do now. I didn't in high school.

M: I do not. It's just, it's a mouthful. "My name is Maria Mulligan-Buckmiller..." So you just say Maria Buckmiller, I think. So I don't do it.

*Are you officially hyphenated still? Are you going to change it?*

M: My legal name is Mulligan-Buckmiller so I just colloquially go by Maria Buckmiller.

*In the future are you planning on changing it?*

K: What do you mean? changing it with marriage?

M: I guess it depends on the name I'm marrying into.

K: It doesn't really matter because naming is a patriarchal process and it's going to die out anyways. Might as well just keep it for my sanity.

*And then when you get married?*

K: I'll just keep it and my kid can have whatever. I mean I think the best case scenario is when you combine your names to one word to make a new name completely because then it doesn't carry all of the stigmatism of a patriarchal society.

M: [interrupts] Well, the new name is confusing. But I think that...

K: [interrupts] No it's not.

M: Well, like 'Terra.'

K: No it's fine because then you don't have any of the history of patriarchy and you still have some form of patriarchy still.

M: Well it's also confusing for other people?

K: So??

*Do you guys have anything else that you want to add?*

M: I think that names aren't that big of a deal. I think that me choosing to go by Mia instead of Maria is not that huge of a deal. And I know that that's not the same thing but I think that if I choose to adopt another last name that it's not going to reflect poorly on me or my independence or dependence on men, at all.

K: I think names are extremely significant because they carry the history of your family.

M: But why would you want.... I mean you don't have to.

K: What do you mean you don't have to?

M: A name is what you hold... Your family can be important to you without the name.

K: Wait what?

M: I don't think adopting a new name has anything to do with feminism. I understand the argument and everything but I don't think changing your name means you're subordinate to men.

K: You're losing your identity in changing your name.

M: [interrupts] I don't think you are. I think you are trying to make your compromise- that's going to affect your life.

K: So basically you've been raised under the name of your father and then he gives you away in marriage to this other guy and you just change your name in marriage for him because...

M: [interrupts] Well, he doesn't give you away in marriage, that's...

K: [interrupts] Yeah, he does, that's the whole ritual.

M: Well, that's a ritual and it's cool and I'm okay with it.

K: You're not going to have your father walk you down the aisle?

M: No, I am but I'm not going to have him say, "I give this child away."

K: That's what he is doing walking you down the aisle.

M: Okay well that's a different topic. I think that my independence is not in a name. I don't need a name to tell me that I'm independent.

K: No, no.

M: So I don't care if I change my name. It honestly depends on the name. If it's a cool name like, "Dr...blank", and it sounds cool then I'm taking it!

K: You are will to lose your identity just so that... [inaudible]

M: [interrupts] I'm not losing my identity!

K: No, you're letting your family history of Mulligan-Buckmiller just drop.

M: No, I'm not.

K: Yeah, you are.

M: No, I'm not.

*So, Kenzie, if you keep your last name and you get married would you decide to either take your husband's last name or just keep your own and let your kids do what they want?*

K: Best case scenario, I would make a new name with my husband so then we would all have the same name.

M: Okay, but then how is that not losing your identity?

K: Because it's a combination of both our names.

M: I think a name is superficial. You don't need a name to tell you where you are from.

M: What if I marry someone that I really love and I want to show them that I'm theirs.

K: Great, you just lost your family history.

M: I don't think that I did. My family history is in me! And it's with my family. My family history is one generation because our Nana changed her name so we already lost that history. So, I'm losing one generation.

K: Yeah, the matriarchal generation.

M: Right, which is already lost but I have that in my DNA. I don't need a name to tell me who...

K: I'm just saying... no one knows your DNA. They know your name.

M: I know my DNA. I'm sorry, I don't give a crap what other people think about me. And if you do that's fine. And if you have other reason... But personally I don't think that that's as important to me as it is to other people.

*What kind of reactions did your parents get when they hypenated last names for just you guys?*

M: There was a huge thing when we were in 3rd grade...

K: We were in speech therapy.

M: We were in speech therapy because we couldn't say our r's. [they demonstrate]

M: And so, we went to speech therapy and in the write up one time the therapist said, "So, the dad and step mom came in..." and my mom was FURIOUS. She was pissed- I mean upset! (joking)

K: My mom gets Mrs. Buckmiller or Molly Buckmiller a lot.

*Does it bother your mom?*

M: I think it does a little bit. I think it's just more of an inconvenience.

K: I think it's just 'cause people assume it and that's frustrating.

M: I think it's just frustrating because...

K: [interrupts] They just assume.

M: [continues] ...there is such an unknown about what you should call people.

K: Well, 'cause names are super important in society and people just assume.

M: Touché. Which is all the more reason to change it.

*Do you think your parents regret the choice?*

K: No. I like having two names.

M: I do as well. I just think that sometimes it's easier to have one name.

K: Who calls you by your last names?

M: Tests, legal documents, teachers in class.

K: Really? They say, "Maria Buckmiller, please answer the question?"

M: I thought we were talking about Mulligan.

K: I don't know.

M: I mean, when I'm a doctor I don't want to be 'Dr. Mulligan-Buckmiller.'

K: That's a cool name.

M: Dr. Buckmiller.

*Why did you pick your dad's name?*

M: The school chopped off the Mulligan. So we've grown up with Buckmiller.

K: Being called 'little buckies'.

M: Honestly, if I had to pick one name, if I was forced to pick a name, I would pick Buckmiller. It just sounds better. I mean Maria Mulligan versus Maria Buckmiller? Maria Buckmiller is just more of who I am. It's like the aura or the color that I associate with. What?

K: I was just saying it's because you've been raised that way.

M: I know, I know, it totally was.

K: It's not because it's your dad's name.

M: No, well a little bit maybe, but I don't think that's it. It was society, or nurture maybe?

K: Yeah.

*Culture? Yeah. That makes sense. [pause, interview concludes.]*