

By: Gracie Rennecker

Methods

The Feminism and Last Naming Practices Project is designed to explore alternative naming practices other than the “traditional” patrilineal practice, when women take their male partner’s name. We sought some insight on the types of naming practices in use by people today and by people from past generations. This project began during the fourth block (December 2012) course Women, Men, and Others (AN/FG239) taught by Dr. Sarah Hautzinger at the Colorado College in Colorado Springs, CO. The idea of the community-based learning project was presented by Dr. Hautzinger during the first few days of the 18-day course and the project was continuously modified through the entirety of the block by the class as a whole.

The class was split into five teams: the contacts team, the data team, the text team, the website team, and the project managing team. Each team consisted of 4-5 students from the class. Each team had specific duties such as managing the interviews, working with the qualitative data obtained, and making the web page. The original plan was for each person in the class to find 3 contacts of people with feminist-motivated, last-naming-practice stories. We ended up with over 100 contacts, not all of whom we have not been able to interview to date. We contacted the people of interest and they elected whether or not they would like to participate in the interview. There were a few contacts referred to us by people outside of the class as well. We received Institutional Review Board approval for our project and permission to obtain verbal consent.

We used a purposive sampling method for this project. We were attempting to explore the diversity of our sample rather than to create a statistically representative sample. Each person in the class did between 3 and 5 interviews. After consent was given, the interview proceeded with a semi-structured list of questions. The interviewer was allowed to ask questions and create new questions based on the direction of the conversation. Most of the interviews were digitally recorded; however we did have a few interviews in email format. For some the people that were not able to be interviewed, the student in the class that knew their story wrote a short paragraph to use along with the recorded and emailed stories. We ended the interviewing process with 54 interviews of women, men, parents, “children” (adult children), married, divorced, and so on, nearly from the United States who all had last name stories that related to feministic motivations.

After the interviews were finished, each person in the class transcribed between 3 and 5 of the interviews on the program NVivo8, which is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software. We used this software because it allowed us to work with our rich, text-based and audio-interview information. We were able to classify, sort, and arrange our interviews into salient themes. We created 27 themes which included themes such as Loyalty, Divorce, Regrets, Role Models, Hyphenated Unions/Children, Created Names, and Family Names.

Topical essays were written by students in the class based on the previously discussed themes. We feel confident that the people we interviewed, although not a statistically representative sample, provided fruitful personal narratives that speak to the aspirations of this project.

Some possible further research might include furthering the interview process to those not interviewed on the contact list as well as to other people found through networking. Also,

statistical data could be rendered from the qualitative data. Further analysis on the naming practices in use today could also be a possible direction.