

Interviewee: Jennifer Gillis (Kept last name and gave child own last name.)

Interviewer: Katy Stetson

[Consent & Info] I agree. *So, why don't we start with your last name story.* Sure, so my last name - I guess when I decided to get married I already had Maryka. When I had Maryka I wasn't married, and I didn't have, I mean this is a lot of personal information obviously which I don't mind sharing with you, and I'm sure Maryka doesn't mind, but, by the time I had her, I wasn't really close with her father so I decided that I wanted her to have my name since I didn't really know exactly what the future was in store. So she kept my name, Maryka Gilli. I'm Jennifer Gillis. And so about four years later I got married, and because Maryka was already Maryka Gillis, I just decided to keep my name, as Jennifer Gillis. So that's pretty much the story of why I kept my name when I got married.

*What effect has it had on Maryka - having a different last name than her step dad? Does it make it difficult for schooling? Does it confuse teachers or anything like that?* Not really. I guess it could have been confusing at some point in time, but it's hard for me to say. She'd probably be a good one to interview too, just to find out from that perspective. But I was born in the time that I live in, and the time that Maryka grew up in. My father is a well-known guy in the town. He's involved in a lot of community service, and has worked and lived in Gloucester his whole life and has a really big family. So I think the Gillis family is relatively well-known in this town, so I think it was a good thing for her. It gave a lot of people a reference point when she would be able to say her last name. I guess maybe people might have been confused, like why is she Gillis, and is her mom married to a Gillis, or is she also a Gillis? I don't really know. That's a good point. I don't think it was very difficult or confusing though.

*Did the fact that Gillis was a well-known name influence your decision to keep it, or was it mostly because Maryka already had the last name?* I definitely feel like I like my name, and I guess I was never under any pressure from my husband to change my name when I got married. He came from Russia and has a very crazy name, so it would have been such a different - a big jump for me to go from Gillis to Kavikov, and he understood I had a daughter. It was never really an issue at all. It probably would have been more difficult if I had other children with my husband. And then maybe it would have been a little more confusing that they were Kavikov and she would be Gillis. But that didn't happen.

*Do people ever call you Mrs. Kavikov, and you have to correct them?* Yes. I don't know that I really correct them. My husband's actually gotten Mr. Gillis before too, so I guess it can go both ways. It's only happened one or two times, and it's been closer friends. Or telemarketers might call and try to say the last name Kavikov - they give it their best shot, but those people you don't really pay attention to anyway. I guess it really hasn't been much of an issue for me.

*Did any women in your family keep their last name when they got married, or are you the only one?* Well my step-mother had a similar situation as I did, where she had her son. She wasn't married when she had her son, and gave him her name as well. Like a mirror image situation. And then when she met my father, 10, 12 years later, she decided to keep her name as well. She liked her name. She also was from Gloucester. Family name, you know, a fairly well-known family around town. She liked that name and just decided to keep it. She would be the closest. It's probably what I mirrored my decision off of, I'd say.

*How successful do you think it is for women to try to be feminist by keeping their father's father's father's last name, instead of taking another man's name? In your situation it sounds like you did it because it was practical for Maryka, but for women who do it for feminist reasons - how effective do you think that is?* I think when it comes down to it, it's when you have children that it matters more than anything else. If you're not planning to have children, I don't really see that it's necessary, you know, to change your name. It's just funny, because I'm at that age as well, when I just have a lot of friends that are divorced, and many of them now are like, "I wish I'd never changed my name!" Because the ones that are closest don't have children, so for them it was just a headache. My friend today was just telling me how - she's been divorced for a year and a half - it was just today that her company finally got her a new email address with her maiden name. It's just been a long process. So I think from that perspective, you know, if you're not having kids, I don't really know. I don't really know the big reason to do it, unless you just like a different name. My husband was just mentioning how we have a friend that took his wife's name.

*Yeah, that's pretty unusual. Do you have a lot of hyphenated names? Oh yeah, I've talked to quite a few hyphenated-names people, and their biggest problem is not knowing what their kids will do when they get married. If they want to combine their last names with their spouse's last name, then it's just this huge long...well, it sounds like you're really happy with your choice - that you have no regrets and it hasn't caused you difficulties but rather made your life easier. Yeah, I don't have any regrets about it. It's never really been a big thing that I've thought about to be honest with you. I just decided, I mean I've been married obviously a long time, and I decided a long time ago. It's just kind of - you know, I guess a lot of people don't know my husband at work - it's this whole separate life that I have, so it's a non-issue there. Sometimes, I guess with Christmas cards, people put "Mr. and Mrs. Kavikov," just so they don't have to write two names. But sometimes they put the "Gillis family," you know, it can go all ways. It's been fine for me.*

*So it's just one of those things where you and your husband roll your eyes at each other, "guess they couldn't remember our last names are different!" Yeah, but you know, if they want to call me Kavikov one day I certainly won't take offense to it. It's not something I felt like I'm going to do on principle; it was more that it was the easiest thing in my life. If I didn't even have Maryka it still would, it's still just the easiest thing because changing your name and going through that process is a lot of work, and to get used to a new name, and have to get everyone around you used to a new name - you might as well just keep it. But I think it's when you have kids that it gets maybe a little trickier. It's never something I've felt like; if someone calls me Mrs. Kavikov I would never probably correct them. Unless it was an important document that we need to get right.*

*Well, it sounds like you've got it all figured out. Good for you. A lot of the people we've interviewed have experienced a lot of problems with different names, like them causing confusion, especially with kids. You know, like going to the airport and having to prove that it's actually their child and things like that. Well, I guess I would never have had that situation because we have the same situation. So that makes it easier, but that's interesting. In this day and age it seems like it's so much more common. Well thank you, so much. I think that's it. Good luck with the project. [Conclusion]*

