

**GENDER, THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY AND THE SURNAME QUESTION:
THE MEANING OF NAMING CHOICES IN MARRIAGE**

WRITE FOR FIVE MINUTES IN RESPONSE TO THESE QUESTIONS: Use bullet points.

“A wife should no more take her husband’s name than he should hers. My name is my identity and must not be lost.” – Lucy Stone

Respond to the above quote. Do you agree or disagree with Lucy Stone? Are you unclear, confused or conflicted in your position? How important is the question of marital name change for women? Remember that the question focuses on cultural norms, not legal requirements. In the U.S. and many other countries, it is legal for a woman to retain her birth name upon marriage, although many women marrying now (approx. 70-80% in the U.S.) take their husband’s surname as a cultural practice. In some Asian countries, such as China, Korea and Vietnam, married women retain their birth names; in Japan, married couples are required to have a common surname (of either spouse).

Questions to consider:

1. Today, in 2023, if a woman marrying a man is committed to gender equality in marriage and society, would you expect that she would retain her birth name?
What’s typically at stake for her in changing her last name to her husband’s, keeping her birth name, hyphenating names, or creating a new surname for the couple?
2. If a man marrying a woman believes in gender equality, would you expect that he would opt for alternative naming practices, such as each partner keeping their names, taking his wife’s last name as his own, hyphenating his name with his spouse’s or creating a new surname for the couple? What’s at stake for him?
3. In a same-sex marriage or a marriage with at least one nonbinary spouse, what are your thoughts about the naming question? Does the question look different? Are there often power differentials when a couple decides to adopt the name of one spouse over the other?

4. How have your experience(s) growing up in your family, living in or travelling to other cultures/countries influenced your thoughts on the marital naming question? What unique perspectives do you bring to this question?

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