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PARTICIPANT PSEUDONYMS IN QUALITATIVE FAMILY RESEARCH: A SOCIOLOGICAL AND TEMPORAL NOTE

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Abstract

This article explores the pseudonyms that UK-based family sociologists have used to refer to and discuss participants in writing up their studies from the post-war to the present day. It takes a sociological and temporal perspective on the conventions for naming research participants in qualitative studies of family life. Drawing on major monographs reporting on studies of family lives across the period, I show that over time, since the 1950s and '60s, (pseudo)naming practice has reflected a firm trajectory towards an intimate rather than neutral research relationship, with use of personal names able to convey a sense of closeness to the particular participant by researchers to the readers. I argue that temporal disciplinary investigatory zeitgeists underpin pseudonym conventions, and that personal names have become the normalised, unspoken standard.

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PARTICIPANT PSEUDONYMS IN QUALITATIVE FAMILY RESEARCH: A SOCIOLOGICAL AND TEMPORAL NOTE

Introduction

This research note takes a sociological and temporal perspective on how family sociologists have allocated pseudonyms to their qualitative research participants. I have been working on projects involving secondary analysis of archived family-related qualitative data, from the more contemporary such as the Timescapes studies (Davidson et al., 2018) back to classic sociological studies such as Dennis Marsden's 'Mothers Alone' data (Edwards and Caballero, 2011; Edwards and Gillies, 2013). Looking across the different forms employed, I began to wonder how and why the original researchers allocated pseudonyms to the people they wrote about, and in some earlier studies why not. I thought about my own work. My first book was published in 1993 and I allocated personal names to my mother-student participants and tried to make these similar to the participants' actual given names – Elizabeth for Victoria for example. Reflecting back, I think that I was trying to convey a sense of intimacy by the use of personal names, to display my research knowledge of the women as people and as data, and to bring my participants closer to the reader as they read. Over a decade later, undertaking research on/with children, I and my colleagues asked them choose their own pseudonyms. We were explicit in wanting our research participants to feel that the names that we would use to write about what they had to say were connected to them and that they had an input into our research.

I also started to realise that I did not do any of this pseudonymic practice – choose first names, give the choice to participants – in a vacuum. My understanding of my research practices and issues I was pursuing and how to understand them was shaped within the particular sub-discipline that I was working in: family sociology, and the particular period of time in which I carried them out.

This article explores the pseudonyms that UK-based family sociologists have used to refer to and discuss participants in writing up their studies from the post-war to the present day. I am seeking to make a contribution that takes a sociological and temporal perspective on the conventions for naming research participants in qualitative studies of family life. The data that I use for my arguments are major monographs reporting on studies of family lives across the period, with the goal of analysing what appears to be a trivial research practice but which I argue allows an insight into the temporal disciplinary investigatory zeitgeists underpinning pseudonym conventions. Before examining this evidence, I begin with a review of debates in the literature about the use and allocation of pseudonyms, followed by a brief overview of the intellectual thrusts of British family studies and positioning of the social researchers who conduct them.

Debates over using and allocating pseudonyms

Discussion of pseudonyms in the methodological and ethical literature largely takes place as part of a wider debate about anonymity and confidentiality in qualitative social research, covering not just the naming of participants but also identifying features more generally such as geographical locations, occupations, organisations and institutions, religious background. This work notes that anonymity as a means of preserving confidentiality and protecting research participants from harm has become the prevailing orthodoxy, established as a core principle of research ethics. It is a default position in professional codes, often expected by institutional ethics review committees, with confirmation of the use of pseudonyms required by some peer review journals, as well as implicit in data protection legislation – what Liz Tilley and Kate Woodthorpe refer to as the 'normalisation' of anonymity (2011: 198). It is likely to be this normalisation that led Allison Hurst to state 'Obviously I changed the names of respondents …' (2008: 345) in her discussion of anonymity, integrity and appropriate pseudonyms. The literature on anonymity and naming, though, is characterised by debating the assumptions behind such normalisation and institutionalised lack of reflexivity about the practice of disguise. Charges of paternalism and disempowerment, dislocation of data from location in time and place, and encouragement of carelessness towards protecting participants on the part of researchers (e.g. Grinyer, 2002; Moore, 2012; Scheper-Hughes, 2000; Tilley and Woodthorpe, 2011), especially from those pursuing ethnographic and emancipatory research, are countered by assertions of the importance of anonymity in terms of turning words into data (ontology) and examples into theoretical categories (analysis), and enabling impartial or critical research interpretation (independence) (Vainio, 2012). Steering a nuanced course, Benjamin Saunders and colleagues (2015) argue the need for a contextually contingent approach that carefully balances protecting participant anonymity with maintaining data integrity, as does Katja Guenther (2009).

Within this broader literature, a small body of work specifically addresses pseudonyms as disguising personal identities of individual research participants, noting the lack of available discussion by social researchers about how they allocate pseudonyms and seeking to rectify this (e.g. Allen and Wiles, 2014; Brear, 2017; Hurst, 2008). Such pieces typically focus on describing the research process of a study involving a population of often marginalised and/or vulnerable participants, and the researchers' relationship to them, with the intention of providing transparency and stimulating scholarly discussion. For example, parents of young adults with cancer (Grinyer, 2002), bereaved participants (Scath, 2016), children (Pinter and Zandian, 2015), childless older people (Allen and Wiles, 2016), working class university students (Hurst, 2008), racialised populations (Brear, 2017) and family members people in vegetative and minimally conscious states (Saunders et al., 2015). There are discussions of identifying pseudonyms that roughly match the length and complexity of participants' actual names, and dilemmas about matching for ethnicity. For example, researchers may want to demonstrate ethnic diversity in their study through pseudonym but what if a minority ethnic participant has a majority ethnicity as their given name (e.g. Lahman et al., 2015)?

The issue of power in naming or not naming is a recurrent theme within such deliberations. As Hurst puts it: 'I am concerned about the power of the researcher to rename his or her respondents. Personal names do matter.' (2008: 345). The social and cultural significance of pseudonym selection is often remarked upon, running the risk of perpetuating stereotypes and inferring connotative baggage that may or may not be appropriate, whether chosen by researcher or participants (e.g. Brear, 2017; Clark, 2006; Lahman et al., 2015). Regarding allocation of pseudonyms, Ruth Allen and Janine Wiles (2016) show the psychological importance for their older participants of choosing a pseudonym for themselves that had meaning to them, Bonnie Scarth (2016) highlights the psychological problematic of using pseudonyms instead of 'real' names for her bereaved participants, and Anne Grinyer (2002) points to the distress her parent participants felt about use of pseudonyms. Drawing on their experiences of research with minority ethnic groups, Maria Lahman and colleagues (2015) argue that the use of pseudonyms for social science research participants tends towards a White, Western and male construction of standards that paternalise participants and take away their autonomy. They pose researchers' stripping of participants' names to a number or acronym as especially dehumanising (see also Allen and Wiles, 2014). Niamh Moore (2012) challenges use of pseudonyms arguing that for much of history, rather than protection, anonymity has been about erasing the marginalised, especially women, and Michelle Brear (2017) makes similar points about recognising the knowledge that indigenous participants contribute to research given the history of their exploitation. In some contrast, Annukka Vainio (2012) is concerned that tipping power relations too far towards allowing participants to choose their own pseudonyms or have their own names used cuts across the necessary separation between researcher and participant that enables research interpretation at a more abstract level and the goal of high quality knowledge production.

The concern with moving beyond the allocation of pseudonyms as a self-evident and mundane technical procedure for maintaining anonymity and thus confidentiality and privacy, has led to a questioning of rules about blanket anonymisation and a call for situated and processual approaches. In this vein, researchers writing on the topic may put forward recommendations for researcher practice. Lahman and colleagues (2015) urge researchers to reflect on their (pseudo)naming processes through asking themselves a series of questions including the implications of their own culture and implications for the culture/s they study, while Allen and Wiles (2014) similarly develop a set of issues for researchers to consider in engaging with participants about the use of pseudonyms, and through their demonstration of the contextually contingent nature of decisions around anonymisation and pseudonyms Saunders and colleagues (2015) encourage careful and nuanced reflection on these matters.

Here however, I am less concerned with the use of pseudonyms or not as a contested issue within qualitative social research. Rather, I seek to uncover another facet of transparency and reflexivity about the use of pseudonyms and naming practices: the researchers' location within a discipline and sub-discipline that seeks to understand and conceptualise society and facets of it, and shifts in this over time, as providing a tacit background framework for the conventions of pseudonyms and researchers' decisions about them. To my knowledge there is little sustained attention to this as an issue. Rose Wiles and colleagues (2008) posit a societal culture of increasing individualisation leads people to want to have their story told, recognisably assigned to them rather than anonymised through pseudonyms. They identify the tensions posed for researchers in simultaneous trends towards greater ethical regulation and thus researcher paternalism, and greater consumer involvement and autonomy on the part of research participants, implying a temporal shift. Notable is Margaret Thomas' (2010) charting of the different conventions for naming subjects of linguistic case studies often involving children, and how these practices have changed over time, from the late 18th century through to the second half of the 20th century. She details how names were rarely used prior to the twentieth century (e.g. 'the child') through to largely impersonal practices in the early twentieth century (e.g. 'E.L.') and then the common use of particularisation through assigning personal names by the 1960s. Thomas regards the labelling of the subject of a case study as bearing on a complex relationship between the researcher, their readership and the person who is the subject of the case study that has shifted over time, shaped by the culture and temporal specific assumptions about, for example, adult-child relations and children's individuality, and the scientific responsibilities of the researcher.

Thomas does not address intellectual developments in the discipline of linguistics within which researchers were working as an issue, though it is perhaps implicit in her identification of the researcher's relationship with their readership if we take that readership to be the disciplinary field. In what follows I trace this issue in the field that I am most familiar with: family studies, taking a sociological perspective on shifts in the conventions of naming research participants in qualitative studies over the past six decades.

The temporal disciplinary investigatory zeitgeist

Sociological understandings of family life in Britain from the post-war period on have revolved around the theme of social change. While these understandings are multiple and coexisting over time, there are some dominant drivers in UK family sociology temporally – notably a gradual shift from institution and function perspectives towards detraditionalisation and individualisation (Gillies, 2003). Angela

Davis (2009) argues that family and marriage were of prime importance and a principal theme for sociological investigation in the decades following World War II, with studies conducted at the time being products of the immediate post-war zeitgeist and its optimistic vision of the future. In this vein, Janet Finch and colleagues (Finch and Mansfield, 1991; Finch and Summerfield, 1999) provide critical explorations of the relationship between sociological conceptualisation of family life and society, arguing that the notion of 'companionate marriage' emerged as an ideal amid post-war processes of social and economic re-construction and a concern to consolidate and stabilise family life. An emphasis was placed on sharing and greater equality between the sexes, and the advent of a new, more home-centred family life. Sociological family and community studies of the 1950s and '60s commonly drew on and reproduced this companionate ideology when theorising about family, discerning the beginnings of a shift away from a delineated gendered division of labour and instrumental roles towards more symmetrical role divisions and a more expressive relationship.

By the 1980s, an intellectual preoccupation with negotiation of norms in family relationships had emerged, following a strong feminist critique of the obfuscation of gender inequalities in the immediate post-war studies (Davis, 2009; Gillies, 2003). Sociological family research became concerned with interpersonal relations between married couples, marking a move away from a previous preoccupation with the functions and structures of family (Finch and Morgan, 1991) along with a sociological desire to take a closer, more critical look at family and household dynamics (Gillies, 2003). Family lives and relationships seemed to be in flux, with the growing diversity of family structures and forms that characterised British society seeming to signal an ebbing away of norms to govern family relationships and responsibilities. By the 1990s, analyses which emphasised the complex, contingent lived reality of family to its members demonstrated how relationships are constructed and maintained through routine communication and dialogue.

The investigation of negotiation and managing family life under changing circumstances shifted into a concern with the quality of relationships as both a response to and feature of social change, shaped by one of the most influential and debated disciplinary 'grand' theses: individualisation. The process of individualisation that has, according to its theorists, been gradually taking hold since the 1960s, is said to have transformed family and intimate relationships. Family life has been freed from standard formations and prescriptive obligations, become subject to choice and democratised, characterised by values of autonomy, equality, mutual response and communication – or at least a desire for these values. Even if notions of detraditionalisation and democratisation have been challenged as the reality of family lives, individualisation has formed an intellectual zeitgeist for sociological researchers in British family studies (see review in Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2011: 118-122).

Taking a brief overview of the dominant thrust of sociological preoccupations and conceptualisations of family life the temporal disciplinary investigatory zeitgeist, from the post-war period through to the early 21st century, can be characterised as a reframing from a focus on structure and roles, to uncovering negotiation of responsibilities, towards understanding intimate quality and democratised relationships. Alongside these shifts in conceptualising family life, there have also been changes in the understandings of the role of the researcher in investigating these. In her review of family studies, Davis (2009) notes that in the immediate post-war period academic sociologists aimed to detach themselves from 'philanthropic' investigations and undertake objective analyses of family life. Addressing sociology more generally, and the social research endeavour within it, Mike Savage (2011) makes similar arguments as part of his broader exploration of how the history of method and research process, and historical and cultural change throw significant light on each other. Savage argues that the 1950s saw the rise of a new kind of intellectual based on technocratic expertise and rational expertise, replacing 'gentlemanly' social science with a neutral and objective specialist sociology and sociological researcher. This detached view of the positioning of the researcher in relation to the subjects of their research was subject to feminist challenge from the 1970s questioning notions of neutrality and objectivity, as an element of a more general critique of the principles of science as a male-defined framework (Gillies, 2003). The positioning of the researcher in the research, their intellectual history and preoccupations, and in qualitative studies especially their relationships to the participants in their studies, became transparent, issues to be reflected on explicitly by the researcher. By the early 2000s, the 'rights' of research participants to make informed decisions about whether or not to participate in academic studies and be treated according to ethical protocols were established, and further, in some investigative approaches, to become co-researchers alongside academics, shaping the research topics, aims, processes and outcomes (Edwards and Brannelly, 2017). The qualitative study of family lives thus could be said to be democratised in the same way that theorisation posited transformation of family and intimate relationships towards democracy.

These motifs of the shifts over time in dominant conceptualisations of and preoccupations with family life in family sociology, and the positioning of the social researcher investigating them, can be traced in the use of pseudonyms for research participants in major family studies texts in the post-war period.

Method of researching pseudonyms in family sociology

In order to investigate any shifts over time in conventions in the pseudonyms that UK family sociologists have allocated to their qualitative research participants, and links to the temporal disciplinary investigatory zeitgeist I outlined above, I identified three periods of time between the mid 20th and early 21st centuries and selected six monographs in the British family studies field for each period (see Table 1). In her historical overview of the names, epithets and pseudonyms employed in linguistic case studies, Thomas (2010) says that she used a 'representative' sample of linguistic case study work across the period of time with which she was concerned. She lists examples of 'some of the texts' she examined (p.14), 15 of them, but does not say more than this about her methods. Given my arguments, it is important that I am explicit about my process here.

For the earlier point in time I selected classic texts published over the course of the 1950s and '60s. This is the sociological confident moment of companionate ideology and of the neutral, objective social researcher studying families. The six monographs are considered classics in British family studies, and all are referred to in Davis' (2009) discussion of family studies published in the immediate post-war period: John Mogey (1956); Michael Young and Peter Willmott (1957); Elizabeth Bott (1957); Pearl Jephcott and colleagues (1962); Colin Rosser and Chris Harris (1965); and Colin Bell (1968). Two of these studies are linked, in that Rosser and Harris' Swansea study set out to parallel Young and Willmott's investigation of East London intergenerational family and community life.

Moving on to the later point in time, I identified the 2010s as a period when ideas about democratisation for both family life and social researchers' practice are established, if not uncontested. Selecting classic monographs is not a possible as a guide for this period, so I looked to cover six publications that I thought may have that potential, are typical of the field, and address issues of choice and intimacy in various ways: Harry Goulbourne and colleagues (2010); Graham Allan and colleagues (2011); Rachel Thomson and colleagues (2011); Brian Heaphy and colleagues (2013); Sally Brown (2016); and Tina Miller (2017). Of these, Heaphy and colleagues state that they took inspiration from one of the monographs selected for the midway period (2013: 10) by Mansfield and Collard (1988).

The mid-way point in time between the 1950/60s and 2010s was identified as just that – the 1980s and '90s. It is also a moment of British family sociology's concern with the everyday negotiation and management of diverse family life, responsibilities and relationships, when social researchers were conducting their studies in the wake of challenges to notions of an objective neutral stance, and reflexivity about researcher--participant relations was embedding as research practice. The six monographs selected for this period relate to the dominant intellectual family studies focus and are close to classics – each of them well-cited markers in the UK family studies literature: Jacqueline Burgoyne and David Clarke (1984); Nickie Charles and Marion Kerr (1988); Penny Mansfield and Jean Collard (1988); Julia Brannen and Peter Moss (1991); Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason (1993) and Bren Neale and Carol Smart (1996).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Pseudonym conventions over time

Table 1 provides a list of the 18 monographs that I selected by: author/s, publication dates and titles, their topic and methods, and their naming conventions, for the three time periods. Looking across the types of naming conventions used in the monographs as a whole, there are six main forms:

- Categories of individual/s, e.g. 'the husband said', 'the women described', 'a 22-year old clerical officer'
- Honorific plus initial of family name, family name, or personal and family name, e.g. Miss H., Mrs Pelham, Mr Griffith Hughes
- Family collective name, e.g. 'the Newbolts'
- Personal and family name, e.g. 'Sarah Yates'
- Personal name only, e.g. 'Royston'

The monographs from the 1950s and '60s all, bar Rosser and Harris, used the impersonal categories of individuals and all used honorific plus formats of naming their research participants. Family collective and personal and family name also appear. Only one study, by Mogey, uses personal names in certain circumstances, discussed further below. Conveyed in the selected monographs from this period then, there is a strong sense of an objective researcher who is in some sort of formal and neutral relationship to their research participants.

Naming conventions also indicate the preoccupation with structure and roles in family relationships and marriage that characterised sociological family research of the period, with a consequent gendered aspect to this. Not only are there the honorific Mr, Mrs and Miss, there are accompanying status and gender conventions in this vein. Young and Willmott's study of everyday urban working class community and intergenerational family life in East London uses honorific and family name for married research participants but personal and family name for the unmarried. Bell's analysis of intergenerational social and geographical mobility experiences of middle class families uses the range of naming formats bar personal name on its own, but within this there are firm gendered divisions. Men are identified by age and occupation in the categorical form and by personal and family name, but women by 'wife of (man's age and occupation)' and by honorific and family name. Mogey's study of family and neighbourhood daily living and behaviour in two contrasting areas of Oxford largely refers to impersonal categories of individual ('the housing estate housewife', 'one youth said') but in describing the pubs people frequented and the men's snooker club he uses personal names for the men but honorific and family name for the women. Here are sociological researchers, all male, propping up post-war stabilisation of the marital status and family gender order in these uses of naming conventions.

Whether or not the conventions of naming in these monographs are all pseudonyms where they move beyond categories of individuals is not clear, however. There is no methods discussion in them that indicates either way. Mogey's use of personal names for men in the pub and snooker club scenarios – identifiable venues since the actual neighbourhoods are named, give a sense of being shortened versions of the men's given names which they use for each other rather than pseudonyms: Arr, Wal, Pat. Rosser and Harris' research on intergenerational family and communal life in Swansea mainly uses honorific and name (Mr Maddocks, Mrs Mary Matthews) but begins with a long and in-depth case study of Mr Griffith Hughes, providing extensive detail about his life and relationships that would make him identifiable. In contrast though, as well as categories of individuals ('one wife'), Young and Willmott use what appear to be honorific and family name pseudonyms drawn from a pool of academic contemporaries, such as Mrs Banks (the sociologist and feminist Olive Banks), Mr and Mrs Banton (the sociologist Michael Banton), Mrs Glass (the sociologist Ruth Glass), Mrs Firth (the anthropologist Raymond Firth), Mr Jeffreys (the sociologist Margot Jeffreys), and the Tawney family (the economist R.H. Tawney). The coincidence is too much to be one.

Monographs selected from the 1980s and '90s period do not bear signs that they may be using actual names rather than pseudonyms, quite the opposite. Mansfield and Collard's case discussion of Pauline Slater in the book of their study of early first time married life starts off referring to Pauline but after a while she becomes Sheila (1988: 219-20) suggesting that names have been changed. More explicitly, Finch and Mason's work on the negotiation of responsibilities and kinship obligations over time states in Appendix A: 'All interviewees are referred to by pseudonyms throughout this book. Interviewees were invited to choose their own pseudonym, and most of them did so' (1993: 187). Here then, we have a demonstration of feminist and other calls for transparency about research processes and an indication of the coming together of a disciplinary and investigative zeitgeist: concern with interpersonal dynamics of family life and the more democratic negotiation of the research process with research participants with respect to pseudonyms at least.

Indeed, the six selected monographs that represent this period may also be viewed as shaped pseudonymically by the flux of family life that was being investigated intellectually[i] and the emerging democratisation of social research practice. There is no strong convention across the examples as there was with the categorical and honorific of the 1950s and '60s. Still in evidence is the impersonal category of individuals as the main practice as well as formal honorific and family name pseudonyms, tending towards the first part of this mid-way time period in the selected monographs. But personal and family name, and personal name are equally prevalent, inclining towards the latter end of the time point. Published in the middle of this period, Mansfield and Collard's work seems to sum up the flux in pseudonym conventions, variously using categories of individual ('the newly weds', 'the husbands'), honorific and family name (Mrs Dawson, Mr and Mrs Brothers), personal name and family name (as in Pauline Slater), and personal name (Sheila). Although marital status honorifics retain a presence, gendered distinctions in which forms of pseudonyms are used have disappeared from these publications at least – interestingly largely authored by women sociologists.

The 2010s monographs present a consistent participant naming profile that is sharply distinct from previous periods. All the monographs use the particularistic form of personal names as their main or only convention. Not all the books mention whether these names are pseudonyms or actual given names, but in the context of the normalisation of anonymity in institutional ethical review requirements in the UK I assume they are all likely to be pseudonyms – a practice that is accepted and unremarkable. As Harry Goulbourne and colleagues state in their work exploring transnational family experiences of maintaining close links: 'and of course we observed the ethical convention of anonymising the names of our respondents' (2010: 40). It is not clear though, here or in other monograph examples of this period, who chose the pseudonyms: researchers or participants. I speculate that even if participants were to be asked to select their pseudonym or even wanted their actual given name used, this would be in the convention of personal names.

The personal and family name form retains a minor presence: Graham Allan and colleagues use it in their study of how members of step-families construct their family lives in the titles of their case studies but not the main text, and Rachel Thomson and colleagues' work on becoming a mother in contemporary times uses it when referring to grandmothers in their intergenerational case studies.[ii] But such multi-generational family connections are not always signalled in this way; Brown's study of families with more than one generation of teenage mothers links research participants in the same family but uses personal names alone. While there is diversity in the personal names represented in these contemporary texts, especially given transnational migration (e.g. Colin, Harry, Sylvia, Rachel being given/pseudo names gleaned from the 1950/60s monographs compared with Pia, Keisha, Amina, Diego, Radinka as pseudonyms from the 2010s), there is less variety in the range of types than there was even in the 1950s and '60s.

Personal names are clearly the current governing convention, accepted as the form that pseudonyms should take. In the disciplinary zeitgeist of freedom from standard family formations and obligations, and assertions (if not realities) of democratised relationships in both families and researcher-participant practice, the investigative choice about how to represent research participants by naming convention appears narrow.

Conclusions

Naming practices in writing up social research may seem mundane, but they offer insight into and are shaped by disciplinary and research practices, as I have argued here. Others may have chosen different or more monographs than those on which I have based my discussion. In a sense the perennial and contested question for qualitative researchers as to 'how many interviews is enough?' applies here. In taking a sample of key classic, well-cited and typical monographs as my evidence, I believe that I have been able to demonstrate that a sociological and temporal perspective can reveal a shifting pattern in the conventions that UK family sociologists have used to allocate pseudonyms to their qualitative research participants – that family researchers are influenced by the disciplinary investigatory zeitgeist in which they conduct their studies. Over time, since the 1950s and '60s, this influenced naming practice has reflected a firm trajectory towards an intimate rather than neutral research relationship, with use of personal names able to convey a sense of closeness to the particular participant by researchers to the readers. It is difficult to know whether this desire to generate a feeling of, previously, objective distance from and, currently, intimate knowledge of research participants was and is effective for readers; I can only say that the contemporary practice works for me both as an author and as a reader.

As Wiles and colleagues conclude (2009), contemporary social researchers face tensions between the increasing normalisation of anonymity in institutional ethics regulatory requirements and a push for greater involvement in research decisions about their identification for participants. While there may be conflicting pulls over the use of pseudonyms or not, there appears to be few such tugs in the current convention for naming participants. Despite the focus on situated decisions and recommendations for contingent and nuanced approaches to anonymity and pseudonyms advocated by some, personal names have become the normalised, unspoken standard. In fact, in undertaking this exploration of the pseudonym types that UK-based family sociologists have used to refer to and discuss participants in writing up their studies from the post-war to the present day, I ended with a conclusion that I was not expecting. It seems that despite the embedding of reflexivity as part of research practice, the current disciplinary and investigatory zeitgeist for family researchers is not encouraging of reflection on the forms of pseudonyms allocated to participants. Since sociology, including family sociology is a discipline that seeks to capture and understand the nature of society, the social investigatory zeitgeist will have wider purchase beyond the specific sub-discipline. This may be one reason why those writing about pseudonyms outside of family studies in the methods literature consistently note a lack of discussion by qualitative social researchers generally about how they allocate pseudonyms; the unspoken social investigatory zeitgeist shapes them.

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[i] It may be that this was part of a flux that was occurring more widely at the time in terms of social conventions about how to address people. For example, a piece of research into whether or not general practitioners should call patients by their 'first' name was published in the *British Medical Journal* (McKinstry 1990). Both the fact that it was thought a topic that needed to be addressed and worthy of publication, and the finding that older patients were more likely to dislike being addressed by their personal name while younger patients were more likely to prefer it, indicates a broader shift in social attitudes at the time.

[ii] Although anonymity is normalised through the use of pseudonyms (see earlier in the article), where family cases are linked through use of personal and family name in particular there is the risk of 'exposure of the family to itself' (LaRossa et al., 1981: 310). Even if external confidentiality is maintained, internal confidentiality is a knottier issue.

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Table 1: Time, family research monographs and naming conventions

Time period	*Monograph*	*Topic and methods*	*Naming conventions*

1950s /60s	John Mogey (1956) *Family and Neighbourhood: Two Studies in Oxford*.	Family and neighbourhood daily living. Observation, survey, interviews.	• Categories of individual • Honorific and family name for women • Personal names for men
	Michael Young and Peter Willmott (1957) *Family and Kinship in East London*	Working class intergenerational family life. General survey, observations and interviews.	• Categories of individual • Honorific and family name for married people • Family name collective • Personal and family name for unmarried people
	Elizabeth Bott (1957) *Family and Social Network: Roles, Norms and External Relations in Ordinary Urban Families*	Married couple conjugal roles. Interviews, observation, group discussion.	• Categories of individual • Honorific and family name • Family name collective
	Pearl Jephcott, with Nancy Seear and John Smith (1962) *Married Women Working*	Working class wives employed outside the home. Observation, interviews.	• Categories of individual • Honorific and initial
	Colin Rosser and Chris Harris (1965) *The Family and Social Change*.	Working class intergenerational family life. Survey, observation and interviews in two areas.	• Honorific with personal and family name or with family name
	Colin Bell (1968) *Middle Class Families: Social and Geographical Mobility*.	Middle class family mobility. Survey, observation, documents, interviews.	• Categories of individual • Honorific and initial • Honorific and family name for women • Family name collective • Personal and family name for men
1980s /90s	Jacqueline Burgoyne and David Clarke (1984) *Making A Go Of It: A Study of Stepfamilies in Sheffield*	Step family life/ Interviews.	• Honorific and family name
	Nickie Charles and Marion Kerr (1988) *Women, Food and Families*	Family food practices. Interviews.	• Categories of individual
	Penny Mansfield and Jean Collard (1988) *The Beginning of the Rest of Your Life? A Portrait of Newly-Wed Marriage*	First time married life. Interviews	• Categories of individual • Honorific and family name • Personal name and family name • Personal name
	Julia Brannen and Peter Moss (1991) *Managing Mothers: Dual Earner Households After Maternity Leave*	Mothers in dual earner households. Interviews.	• Categories of individual.

	Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason (1993) *Negotiating Family Responsibilities*	Negotiation of kinship obligations. Survey, interviews	• Personal and family name
	Bren Neale and Carol Smart (1996) *Family Fragments*	Parenting after separation/divorce. Interviews.	• Personal and family name • Personal name
2010s	Harry Goulbourne, Tracey Reynolds, John Solomos, and Elisabetta Zontini (2010) *Transnational Families: Ethnicities, Identities and Social Capital*.	Transnational family connections. Interviews.	• Personal name
	Graham Allan, Graham Crow and Sheila Hawker (2011) *Stepfamilies*	Stepfamily life. Interviews.	• Personal and family name • Personal name
	Rachel Thomson, Mary-Jane Kehily, Lucy Hadfield and Sue Sharpe (2011) *Making Modern Mothers*	Intergenerational becoming a mother. Questionnaire, interviews.	• Personal and family name • Personal name
	Brian Heaphy, Carol Smart and Anna Einarsdottir (2013) *Same-Sex Marriages: New Generations, New Relationships*	Same-sex couple civil partnerships Interviews.	• Personal name
	Sally Brown (2016) *Teenage Pregnancy, Parenting and Intergenerational Relations*	Multi-generational teenage mothers. Interviews	• Personal name
	Tina Miller (2017) *Making Sense of Parenthood: Caring, Gender and Family Lives*	Mothers and fathers over time.. Interviews.	• Personal name