



Article

What Is in a Name? Exploring Perceptions of Surname Change in Hiring Evaluations in Academia

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Abstract: The motherhood penalty reflects inequalities in the workplace based on caregiver status. A number of factors have been identified as potential triggers of motherhood penalty effects, such as becoming pregnant or taking maternity leave. However, little is known as to whether these effects could also be triggered by more subtle cues that may signal potential changes in caregiver status. The current study investigated the impact of surname change visible on publication lists in academics' Google Scholar profiles on evaluations of competence, commitment, work–family balance, hiring, and promotion likelihood. Contrary to the predictions in our preregistration, the findings showed that women who have changed their surname received more favourable evaluations compared to those who did not. In addition, female participants favoured female academics who have changed their surname compared to those who did not and this was mediated by higher perceived competence and commitment scores. These findings were interpreted through the lens of social role theory and the role prioritisation model, suggesting that behaviours that are consistent with gendered expectations are evaluated more favourably.

Keywords: surname change; motherhood; gender; academia



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1. Introduction and Background

Despite the significant progress toward gender equality that has been made in academic contexts, challenges for women in professional advancement persist. In academia, women's representation at senior levels remains significantly lower than that of men, such that they are underrepresented in senior positions and overrepresented in junior positions (e.g., Gardiner et al. 2007; Morley 2012; Parker et al. 2018). Although the proportion of academic staff who are women in UK higher education institutions increased from 40% in 2003/2004 to 45.7% in 2016/2017, a steady decrease in the proportion of female academic staff was noted as the seniority of contract levels increased (Advance HE 2018). Among professorial staff, 75.4% of professors across academic fields in the UK were men and the proportion of male professors remained greater than that of female professors regardless of whether they were on part- or full-time contracts (Advance HE 2018). A number of barriers contribute to the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership and could point to underlying gender biases which hinder the advancement and promotion of women in academia (e.g., Girod et al. 2016; Howe-Walsh and Turnbull 2016; Trussell 2015).

The motherhood penalty refers to the bias and discrimination that mothers face in career contexts (Correll et al. 2007; Williams and Segal 2003) and reflects inequalities based on hiring likelihood, salary, and career progression opportunities (e.g., Williams and Westfall 2006; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004; Kelly and Grant 2012). Mothers are less likely to be recommended for hire and promotion (e.g., Correll et al. 2007; Cuddy et al. 2004), and tend to receive lower salaries than women who are not mothers or men with similar qualifications (Kelly and Grant 2012; Anderson et al. 2003; Crittenden 2001). This

effect is facilitated by evaluators' reported beliefs that mothers are less competent and less committed to professional development (Heilman and Okimoto 2008; Correll et al. 2007; Cuddy et al. 2004) and is particularly observed among heterosexual women who are mothers (Schneebaum 2013). Among queer women, a motherhood penalty has not been observed (Waite and Denier 2015), and a motherhood advantage in terms of wage has been discovered, such that queer women who are mothers receive increased wages compared to heterosexual women who are mothers (Schneebaum 2013; Baumle 2009). These findings suggest that caregiving responsibilities affect heterosexual women's career progression more than queer women.

Motherhood penalty effects can be triggered by different factors that signal changes in family status, such as becoming pregnant, requesting maternity leave, or otherwise indicating that one is going to become a parent (e.g., Whittington 2011), and can result in differential evaluations (Morgenroth and Heilman 2017). The impact of motherhood penalty effects triggered by parental leave on career outcomes has been widely documented. Employees who took parental leave were found to have a reduced likelihood for promotion, lower ratings of job commitment, and lower perceived performance ratings, regardless of actual performance, compared to nonleave takers (Judiesch and Lyness 1999; Allen and Russell 1999; Wayne and Cordeiro 2003). Having children and indicating that one will have children can trigger stereotypes that impact how individuals are perceived and influence their career outcomes, and this is especially the case for female employees who seem to be judged more harshly in their attempts to balance career and family commitments (e.g., Heilman and Okimoto 2008; Hebl et al. 2007).

However, more subtle cues also could signal a change in family status and trigger bias. Changing one's surname after marriage could be viewed as a factor signalling changes in one's family status (Etaugh et al. 1999). For women, surname change could create potential associations with more traditional views of marriage and gender roles, including an increased devotion to family and an increased likelihood to adopt a caregiver role (Chayinska et al. 2021; Robnett et al. 2018; Etaugh et al. 1999). This could lead to assumptions about a change in a woman's life goals and assumptions that she has a high commitment to family and would place less emphasis on her career. Women who change their surname may therefore be stereotyped in a similar way as mothers are in the workplace and are faced with bias caused by the false expectations that they would be less committed to work and more to a family due to traditional views of marriage and gender roles (Correll et al. 2007; Etaugh et al. 1999).

If marital surname change is indeed associated with biased evaluations, this bias would be especially impactful for the career development of female academics who provide (historic) publication lists to prospective employers when they apply for a job. Therefore, consistent with the predictions of the gender role expectations, the availability of surname change information in the job candidate publication list could trigger assumptions about a woman's marital and parental status. Using the theoretical frameworks of social role theory and role prioritisation model, the current research investigated the association between women's marital surname change and competence, commitment, hiring, and promotion likelihood evaluations. Bias against women who change their surname is a currently under-researched, but nevertheless important, topic that could add to our understanding of the factors underlying the motherhood penalty in academic contexts.

2. Role Shift Assumptions Triggered by Surname Change

Motherhood and academic careers are often seen as underlined by conflicting goals due to the tension caused by the gendered expectation of women to fit the roles of both the "ideal mother" and the "ideal worker" (Cuddy et al. 2004). There is a clash between the demands of these two roles, as the ideal worker schema involves being highly committed to one's job and the ideal mother schema requires complete devotion to one's children (Stefanova and Latu 2022; Cuddy et al. 2004; Etaugh and Nekolny 1990). The requirement for academic mothers to fit into both of these schemas could cause significant tension and

could impact how employers and evaluators perceive mothers in a career development context, such that it could make them judge mothers more harshly and give them fewer opportunities to advance (Heilman and Okimoto 2008).

However, there are other factors that may trigger assumptions of caregiver status aside from actual motherhood, which could also influence how female employees are perceived in career contexts. As caregiver status is a characteristic that is less visible, a person's marital and caregiver status could be inferred from other factors such as leave-taking behaviour and surname change, the latter of which is visible on job application materials (e.g., Whittington 2011; Williams and Segal 2003). Surname change could potentially impact how women are viewed in career and family contexts due to prescriptive gender stereotypes linked with traditional gender roles, which attribute the role of caregiver to women and the role of breadwinner to men (e.g., Stefanova and Latu 2022; Eagly 1987; Fiske et al. 1987; Rudman and Glick 2001).

Women who change their surname after marriage are perceived differently compared to those who do not (Robnett et al. 2018; Etaugh et al. 1999). Women who change their surname are generally viewed as being more committed to family (Etaugh et al. 1999; Scheuble et al. 2012) and more relationship oriented, while women who keep their maiden names or hyphenate their names tend to be viewed as more agentic (Etaugh et al. 1999). These assumptions could give rise to stereotypes, as surname change is associated with a change in family status and could therefore be perceived as signalling a shift in the roles and priorities in a woman's life, in that she is placing more emphasis on family and potentially motherhood, and less on a career.

In addition, an association has been found between higher conformity to patriarchal norms, support for gendered systems, and endorsement of marital surname change among women (e.g., Chayinska et al. 2021; Scheuble et al. 2012; Stoiko and Strough 2017). Greater support for patriarchal norms may also be associated with an increased likelihood for a woman to adopt a more traditional role within the family, which would involve performing most of the household and caregiving duties at home (e.g., Endendijk et al. 2018). The adoption of the role of primary caregiver and homemaker could give rise to beliefs that a woman is placing family first, which could be viewed as a violation of the ideal worker schema and could therefore trigger assumptions that she will be less committed to career advancement and would struggle more with achieving work–family balance.

Female caregivers are particularly at risk of experiencing bias in the workplace due to gender stereotypes that put them in restrictive roles; their caregiver status may lead them to experience biases in addition to those associated with gender (Stefanova and Latu 2022; Correll et al. 2007). Parent bias could be triggered in cases when women highlight changes in their family status (Luhr 2020; Williams and Segal 2003). For example, changing one's surname following marriage could evoke associations with potential family-building and child-rearing plans (Robnett et al. 2018; Etaugh et al. 1999). Signalling one's parental status in the workplace could give rise to discriminatory behaviours due to the widespread stereotypical assumptions that mothers would struggle to keep up with the demands of their academic career and would prioritise their caregiving duties at the expense of their career duties (Stefanova and Latu 2022; Scheuble et al. 2012; Williams and Segal 2003; Etaugh et al. 1999).

Although only a few studies on the topic of surname change in academia have been conducted in the past, the current study based its predictions on relevant research and theoretical frameworks. Previous work has indicated that the review and evaluation of CVs are influenced by identity signals in names and surnames that reveal potential membership in groups across gender (e.g., Steinpreis et al. 1999), ethnicity (e.g., Derous et al. 2017), and other salient characteristics. Discrimination against women has been documented in academic science hiring practices (e.g., Moss-Racusin et al. 2012; Ellemers et al. 2004) and it has been suggested that this hiring discrimination is related to women's choices and responses to external pressures and barriers, such as following their spouse's career

moves, limiting job searches geographically, attempting to improve work–family balance, and raising children (Ceci and Williams 2011).

Changes in one’s family status could impact how individuals are perceived both in the workplace and in their private lives (e.g., Heilman and Okimoto 2008; Hebl et al. 2007). Surname change is associated with changes in family status and could potentially create assumptions that family-related issues may become salient for a female academic. This could, in turn, trigger assumptions regarding shifts in perceived work–family commitment priorities (Deutsch and Saxon 1998). The choice to change one’s surname could therefore give rise to bias due to the perceived incongruity between the work roles that professional women are expected to adopt and the traditional prescriptive role of caregiver which may obstruct their progress (Kricheli-Katz 2012; Williams and Segal 2003).

The literature on gender discrimination in academia is contradictory, with some research showing that bias is no longer a significant factor contributing to women’s underrepresentation in science due to changes in the academic career landscape and the success of gender equality initiatives (Ceci et al. 2014). The current work, therefore, aims to shed further light on the issue of gender discrimination in academia, particularly in regard to hiring recommendations and evaluations of competence based on very limited information visible in online profiles.

3. Theoretical Development

In the current research, we based our predictions on two relevant theoretical frameworks, namely social role theory and the role prioritisation model. Social role theory proposes that gender stereotypes develop from the gendered divisions of labour in society. Men’s greater participation in high-powered professional roles and the greater expectation for women to adopt caregiver roles have created a division of labour and given rise to stereotypes, reflected in stronger associations of men with power and agency, and of women with nurturance (Eagly and Karau 2002; Eagly and Wood 1999).

Applying the social role theory framework to surname change, female academics who change their surname would be perceived as more family oriented and would trigger stronger associations with caregiver roles. Academia as a field of work is primarily based on a male-gendered career trajectory and is traditionally associated with higher-power and higher-status professional roles which could be perceived as being at odds with the role of a caregiver (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull 2016; Williams and Bornstein 2008). This incongruity could produce a clash with the expected work roles and the stereotype of the “ideal worker” and could result in lower evaluations of competence and commitment to the job (Cuddy et al. 2004; Rudman and Mescher 2013). Assessing the extent to which there is bias caused by surname change in academic contexts could contribute to our understanding of specific and less visible challenges that female academics face which could obstruct their career advancement.

The role prioritisation model could also provide insight into the hidden barriers that female faculty experience (Haines and Stroessner 2019). This theoretical framework proposes that the traditional gendered divisions of labour can produce expectations about the extent to which men and women should prioritise certain roles. For example, women are expected to prioritise family more compared to work and adopt the role of the communal caregiver, which emphasises traits such as empathy, nurturance, and concern about others. In contrast, men are expected to prioritise work and adopt the role of the agentic breadwinner, which involves characteristics such as competitiveness, dominance, and independence (Heilman and Okimoto 2008). According to the role prioritisation model, the extent to which an individual complies with traditional sex roles would determine how they are evaluated in work and family contexts. Women and men who behave in ways that are inconsistent with the gendered prescriptions of the roles that members of their sex are expected to prioritise would likely be judged more harshly due to a perceived “neglect” of their primary gendered duties (Haines and Stroessner 2019).

The role prioritisation model could provide further insight into professional evaluations based on marital surname change choices. Conceptually, women who change their surname would be perceived as prioritizing their family, which would be at odds with their academic work role. Academia is a professional field that is demanding, high-powered, and predominantly male dominated, which could create a tense climate for women to advance in, considering widespread stereotypical gendered expectations that women should prioritise caregiver roles. Marital surname change could imply that a female academic is putting family before work, which could lead to negative evaluations regarding her professional competence and commitment to the job. These gendered expectations could thus create barriers for female faculty to advance in academia due to biased evaluations of their performance in career development contexts.

4. Current Study

The current research investigated the potential bias against female academics who have changed their surname by recruiting academics and assessing their evaluations of academic Google Scholar profiles. The major aim of the current study was to assess whether surname change, which is visible on publication lists, impacts evaluations of competence, commitment, work–family balance, hiring, and promotion likelihood.

Additionally, this research aimed to assess whether hiring and promotion likelihood is mediated by competence and commitment, and moderated by participant gender, such that the more competent and committed to the job an academic is perceived to be, the greater chance there is for them to be hired. The current study also assessed whether evaluations of individuals who change their surname differ for male vs. female participants.

Despite women in many countries having the option to retain their maiden names after marriage, adherence to traditional gender-role norms regarding marital surname change is still widespread (Robnett et al. 2018; Gooding and Kreider 2010; MacEacheron 2016). The current heterosexual norm in English-speaking Western countries is for a woman and her children to adopt the surname of her husband after marriage (Stoiko and Strough 2017; Robnett and Leaper 2013; Scheuble et al. 2012). The UK, USA, and Ireland share this widespread surname change norm, such that the majority of women in these countries express a preference to adopt their husband's surname (Robnett et al. 2018; Gooding and Kreider 2010; Scheuble et al. 2012; Berrington et al. 2015; Pilcher 2017). The current study recruited participants who work at academic institutions in the UK, USA, and Ireland and aimed to explore attitudes towards academics who change their surname in the context of career evaluations within these particular social and cultural settings.

The current study built upon previous work that investigated the likelihood of an academic with a traditionally male or female name being hired by academics who reviewed their CV (Steinpreis et al. 1999). However, instead of using CVs, our research implemented screenshots of Google Scholar profiles which show the academic's name and publication list. Google Scholar profiles were chosen instead of CVs for the experimental manipulation in the current work because Google Scholar pages contain less information and could therefore make it easier to ensure that it is the name that triggers the effects detected and not any additional distractor items. This may also add some ecological validity to the current research, as evaluators may, nowadays, form an initial impression of a candidate based on an online search of their research profile.

Our research additionally distinguished between full surname change and surname hyphenation for female academics and aimed to investigate the impact of surname change as an indication of women's marital status and potential motherhood in the context of academic hiring and promotion. Cultural expectations around prescribed gender roles can lead women and men to adapt to the social roles expected of them and can set a tendency for them to make certain personal choices (e.g., Haines and Stroessner 2019). Female academics may therefore be evaluated differently based on their personal and social choices about surname use and this can impact their career advancement. This research is important because it has the potential to provide valuable insights into subtle cues related

to surname changes that trigger motherhood penalty effects. In this study, we recruited a sample of academics, many of whom have had experience in being on hiring committees, and this could provide important insights into whether subtle cues such as surname change in online profiles and application materials could influence an academic's likelihood to recommend the job candidate for hire. Surname change is visible in one's publication list, which is provided to employers when an academic applies for a job. Therefore, consistent with traditional gender role expectations, the availability of this information in the job candidate files could trigger assumptions about a woman's marital and parental status. This could in turn lead to lower evaluations of competence and commitment to the job, as well as a reduced likelihood for the candidate who changed their surname to be hired, similar to the hiring evaluations of mothers (e.g., Heilman and Okimoto 2008; Cuddy et al. 2004; Etaugh et al. 1999). Competence and commitment to the job are variables that have been consistently linked with hiring recommendations, such that perceived competence and commitment have been found to mediate one's likelihood to be hired (e.g., Correll et al. 2007). The current research could have important practical implications for academic hiring evaluation practices, in highlighting potential contexts where bias could arise. In summary, we tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. *Differences will be observed in hiring and promotion evaluations in academic contexts depending on surname and gender, such that female academics with a hyphenated surname and those with a changed surname will be evaluated less positively in terms of hiring and promotion compared to a female academic with an unchanged surname and compared to a male academic.*

Hypothesis 2. *Differences will be observed in perceived professional commitment and motivation, competence and expertise ratings depending on surname and gender, such that female academics who change or hyphenate their surname will be perceived as less committed, motivated, and competent compared to a female academic with an unchanged surname and compared to a male academic.*

Hypothesis 3. *Perceptions of prospective parenthood and perceived likelihood to successfully balance between work and parenting commitments would vary depending on condition, such that female academics with a hyphenated or changed surname would be perceived as more likely to be parents and less likely to successfully balance work and parenting compared to a female academic with an unchanged surname and a male academic.*

Hypothesis 4. *Commitment and competence will mediate the relationship between surname change and hiring and promotion scores, such that surname change will lead to lower hiring and promotion likelihood scores, which will be mediated by reduced competence and commitment scores.*

5. Methods

5.1. Participants

This project was preregistered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) on 17 July 2019 (https://osf.io/bg4jt/?view_only=40315f71429c4414a97e406defbd2cf7; accessed on 27 November 2022). Power analysis showed that we would need $n = 39$ participants per group for a large effect, which suggested that roughly $n = 200$ participants had to be recruited. However, as we also planned on completing exploratory analyses, we decided to increase the target sample size to 60 per condition ($n = 240$ in total). We recruited participants via email and on social media (e.g., Twitter and Facebook groups) from August to November 2019. Academics from a number of countries completed our survey, with the majority residing in the UK or Ireland ($n = 252$), followed by the US ($n = 62$), with an overall total of 346. Participants worked in a range of disciplines, however, the majority worked in STEM ($n = 237$). The average work experience of our participant sample in academia was $M = 16.14$ years, $SD = 10.8$. Most participants had a permanent/tenured post in academia ($n = 232$). Our sample consisted of 137 women and 189 men; 15 participants did not indicate their gender. Out of 346 participants, 189 indicated that they are parents, 136 reported that

they are nonparents and 20 did not indicate their parental status. All participants were above 18 years of age, ranging from 22–76 years ($M = 43.85$ years; $SD = 10.84$). The attention check was passed by 244 participants, and only their data was analysed. Of the participants who passed the attention check, 140 were men and 99 were women. Regarding parental status, 134 of the participants who passed the attention check were parents, 103 were nonparents and 9 did not indicate their parental status.

5.2. Design and Manipulation

The experiment had a between-subjects design, such that participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. They saw an identical screenshot of a fictitious Google Scholar profile of an academic (see Supplementary Materials), except for the name of the academic. In condition 1, a female forename was paired with a surname that became hyphenated halfway through the publication list (e.g., 'Jeanette Vertesi' became 'Jeanette Vertesi-Reynolds'). In condition 2, a female forename was paired with a surname that changed completely halfway through the publication list (e.g., 'Jeanette Vertesi' became 'Jeanette Reynolds'). In condition 3, a female forename was paired with a surname that remained the same throughout the publication list (e.g., 'Jeanette Vertesi'), and in condition 4, a male forename was paired with a surname that was the same throughout the publication list (e.g., 'James Vertesi'). All profiles included the same supporting information: current academic post at a fictitious university ('Assistant professor of Psychology, Baudley University'), keywords ('social psychology' and 'developmental psychology'), and the first page of their publication list which consisted of 7 articles published between 2015 and 2019.

5.3. Procedure

Participants anonymously completed the study on Qualtrics. To avoid demand characteristics or social desirability, participants were informed that the study was about academics' perceptions of hiring and promotion likelihood based on online research profiles. Participants were encouraged to base their decisions on their first impressions of the candidate's profile. After viewing the Google Scholar profile, participants completed a questionnaire, in which they indicated whether they would choose to hire the candidate for an academic position, as well as whether they believe this candidate would be likely to receive a promotion in the future. Additionally, their perceptions of the candidate's competence, perceived commitment to their career, and ability to balance family and career commitments were recorded. Finally, participants completed the attention check and provided demographic information.

5.4. Measures

5.4.1. Hiring and Promotion

Adapted from previous research (e.g., [Heilman and Okimoto 2008](#); [Correll et al. 2007](#); [Cuddy et al. 2004](#)), this scale consisted of 3 statements (e.g., 'I would recommend hiring this person if I were on a hiring committee.', 'The candidate should be considered further for an academic position.', 'The candidate should be eliminated from consideration for hire.' (reverse-coded)) that assessed the candidate's suitability for hire for an academic position and one statement about their likelihood to be promoted in the future (e.g., 'If hired, the candidate is likely to be promoted in future.'). Responses were given on a 5-point scale, where 1 was 'Strongly disagree' and 5 was 'Strongly agree' ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.79$, $\alpha = 0.84$).

5.4.2. Competence

Participants responded to 9 statements on the 5-point scale that enquired into the candidate's perceived competence and expertise (e.g., 'Based on their Google Scholar profile, to what extent do you think this candidate is . . . '), where 1 was 'Strongly disagree' and 5 was 'Strongly agree' ([Correll et al. 2007](#); [Cuddy et al. 2004](#)). The list of adjectives that the participants were asked to assess the candidate on consisted of the following:

competent, productive, efficient, skilled, capable, ambitious, hard-working, reliable, and eminent ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.63$, $\alpha = 0.92$).

5.4.3. Professional Commitment

The measure consisted of 4 statements (e.g., 'The candidate will be committed to their academic career.', 'The candidate will be willing to make sacrifices for their academic career', 'The candidate will make their academic work top priority', and 'The candidate will be highly driven to move ahead in their academic career') that assessed the candidate's perceived commitment to career and their motivation to advance in their job (Correll et al. 2007; Fuegen et al. 2004). Responses were given on a 5-point scale, where 1 was 'Strongly disagree' and 5 was 'Strongly agree' ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.61$, $\alpha = 0.86$).

5.4.4. Work–Family Balance

Participants responded to 3 questions on a 5-point scale where 1 was 'Strongly disagree' and 5 was 'Strongly agree' that assessed the candidate's perceived ability to balance career and family commitments (e.g., 'If the candidate is a parent, what is the likelihood that . . . they will successfully balance work and family commitments?/the candidate would put family before work?/the candidate would progress at the same pace in their career after they have had children as before?') ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.42$, $\alpha = 0.77$).

5.4.5. Demographics

The demographics questionnaire consisted of 10 questions about participants' gender, age, country of origin, country of residence, ethnicity, parental status, current academic post, job title, academic field of work, and how many years they have worked in academia.

5.4.6. Attention Check

Prior to seeing the profile, participants were asked to indicate the number of single- and first-authored papers of the candidate, in order to direct their attention to the candidate's surname and whether it changes across the publication list. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to recall the gender of the candidate, as well as to indicate whether the candidate had the same surname throughout the publication list, whether they had fully changed their surname halfway through the list or if they had added a second surname and hyphenated it halfway through the list. Participants who did not correctly recall the gender or the surname ($n = 105$) and participants who did not complete all questions of the study ($n = 8$) were excluded from analyses from an initial participant sample of $n = 353$, leaving the data of $n = 240$ participants to be analysed in the current study.

6. Results

6.1. Preliminary Analyses

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with oblique rotation, which allows potential factors to be correlated, was conducted to assess the overall factor structure of scales (i.e., competence and expertise, professional commitment, hiring and promotion likelihood and work–family balance). Factor analysis was suitable based on several criteria. First, each of the items correlated at least 0.3 with at least one other item, suggesting reasonable factorability. Second, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.91, which was above the recommended value of 0.6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(190) = 2648.1$, $p < 0.001$). Third, the communalities were all above 0.3 (see Table 1), which confirmed further that each item shared a common variance with other items.

Table 1. Factor loadings and communalities based on a factor analysis with oblique rotation.

	Competence	Work-Family Balance	Commitment	Hiring
Competent	0.88	−0.04	0.04	0.02
Productive	0.58	−0.08	0.06	0.35
Efficient	0.73	−0.11	−0.04	−0.16
Skilled	0.92	−0.05	0.05	−0.01
Capable	0.87	0.03	0.11	−0.04
Ambitious	0.59	0.01	−0.14	−0.14
Hard-working	0.71	−0.02	−0.16	−0.06
Reliable	0.76	0.16	−0.15	0.21
Should be considered furtherfor an academic position.	−0.00	0.03	−0.08	− 0.83
Should be eliminated from consideration for hire.	0.09	0.06	−0.03	0.87
I would recommend hiring this person if I were on a hiring committee.	0.14	−0.02	−0.13	− 0.68
If hired, the candidate is likely to be promoted in future.	0.12	0.14	−0.05	− 0.69
The candidate will be committed to their academic career.	0.17	0.20	− 0.51	−0.25
The candidate will be willing to make sacrifices for their academic career.	0.04	0.05	− 0.80	−0.00
The candidate will make academic work their top priority.	0.06	−0.08	− 0.81	−0.11
The candidate will be highly driven to move ahead in their academic career.	0.08	0.05	− 0.68	−0.24
Eminent	0.20	0.03	−0.10	− 0.50
Successfully balance work and family commitments	0.03	0.75	−0.24	0.05
Put family before work	0.04	0.62	0.39	−0.06
Progress at the same pace in their career after having children	−0.07	0.77	−0.06	−0.03

Note: significant results are in bold.

Consistent with expectations, eigenvalues indicated that the four factors were >1 , which explained 44%, 8.27%, 7.72% and 6% of the variance respectively. The four-factor solution showed that the questionnaires were distinct and that the items within each questionnaire correlate strongly with each other. All items had primary loadings over 0.5, while two items had a cross loading above 0.3 (productive, put family before work), these items had strong primary loadings of 0.58 and 0.62, respectively. The proposed factor labels suited the extracted factors e.g., competence (8 items), commitment (4 items), work-family balance (3 items) and hiring (5 items), and were therefore retained. The only item that loaded more strongly onto a different factor than was expected was eminence, which loaded onto hiring by 0.5 compared to 0.2 onto competence which was where it was expected to yield the strongest correlations. Regardless, eminence was kept in the original scale due to the conceptual predictions. In sum, four distinct factors corresponded to the four questionnaires used in this study and these factors were moderately internally consistent.

6.2. Primary Analyses

Hypothesis 1. To assess whether surname change impacts hiring decisions, we conducted a one-way ANCOVA to determine whether there are significant differences between female hyphenated surname, female changed surname, female same surname, and male same surname on the hiring score, controlling for participant gender. The findings showed no significant differences between conditions, $F(3, 229) = 2.13, p = 0.10$ (see Figure 1, panel A).

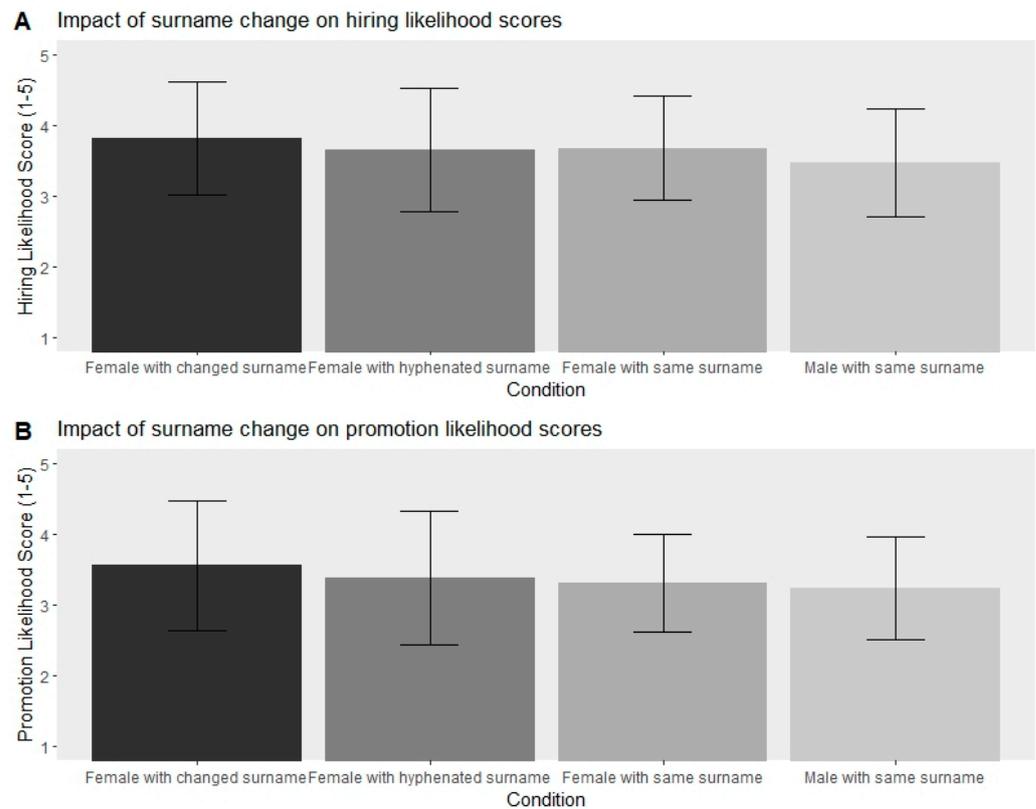


Figure 1. Surname change did not significantly predict hiring (panel A) or promotion likelihood (panel B) scores.

We also aimed to assess whether surname change impacted the perceived likelihood of promotion. To investigate this, we conducted another one-way ANCOVA to determine whether there were significant differences between female hyphenated surname, female changed surname, female same surname, and male same surname on the promotion likelihood score, controlling for participant gender. Similar to the outcome for hiring, the findings for promotion likelihood showed no significant differences between conditions, $F(3, 227) = 2.03, p = 0.10$ (see Figure 1, panel B).

Hypothesis 2. To assess the impact that name change has on competence, we conducted a one-way ANCOVA across conditions for the competence scores, controlling for participant gender. The findings showed a significant effect of participant gender, $F(1, 230) = 6.49, p = 0.01$. To follow up, independent samples t -tests were conducted to explore this effect and showed significant differences between the competence scores of male participants ($M = 3.36, SD = 0.64$) and female participants ($M = 3.58, SD = 0.59$), $t(235) = 2.7, p = 0.01$, Cohen's $d = 0.36$, where women gave significantly higher competence scores on average than men. Additionally, the findings showed a significant effect of condition, $F(3, 230) = 4.44, p = 0.01$ (see Figure 2, panel A). To follow up, we conducted planned contrast analyses to compare the competence scores in the different conditions. Contrary to the predictions, the female job candidate who changed her name ($M = 3.7, SD = 0.69$) received significantly higher competence scores compared to the female job candidate who had the same name throughout the publication list ($M = 3.47, SD = 0.57$), $t(235) = 2.05, p = 0.04$, Cohen's $d = 0.36$, as well as compared to the female job candidate who hyphenated their name ($M = 3.37, SD = 0.68$), $t(235) = 2.53, p = 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.48$, and the male job candidate ($M = 3.29, SD = 0.57$), $t(235) = 3.65, p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.65$.

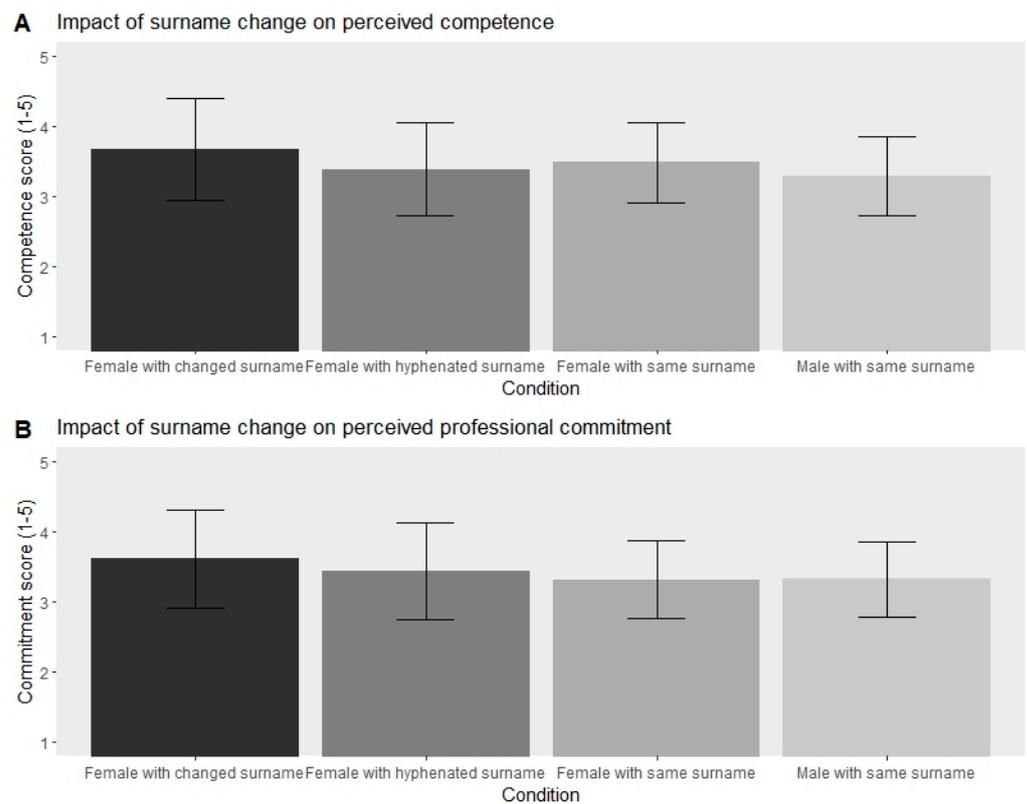


Figure 2. Female job candidates who changed their surname received higher competence (panel A) and commitment scores (panel B) compared to other groups.

Another one-way ANCOVA was conducted across conditions for professional commitment scores, controlling for participant gender. The findings showed a significant effect of condition, $F(3, 225) = 3.21, p = 0.02$ (see Figure 2, panel B). To follow up, we conducted planned contrast analyses to compare the professional commitment scores in the different conditions. Similar to the findings for competence and contrary to the predictions, the female job candidate who changed her name ($M = 3.63, SD = 0.70$) received significantly higher commitment scores compared to the female job candidate who had the same name throughout the publication list ($M = 3.32, SD = 0.57$), $t(230) = 2.73, p = 0.01$, Cohen's $d = 0.49$, as well as compared to the male job candidate ($M = 3.33, SD = 0.54$), $t(230) = 2.64, p = 0.01$, Cohen's $d = 0.48$.

Hypothesis 3. To assess whether surname change impacts perceived work–family balance, we conducted a one-way ANCOVA across conditions for work–family balance, controlling for participant gender and parental status. The findings showed no significant differences between conditions, $F(3, 215) = 0.51, p = 0.68$, however, a significant effect of participant parental status was found, $F(1, 215) = 5.31, p = 0.02$. To follow up, independent samples t -tests were conducted to explore this effect and showed significant differences between the work–family balance scores of participants who are parents ($M = 3.19, SD = 0.47$) and those who are nonparents ($M = 3.07, SD = 0.36$), $t(221) = 2.23, p = 0.03$, Cohen's $d = 0.29$, where parents gave significantly higher work–family balance scores on average than nonparents (see Figure 3).

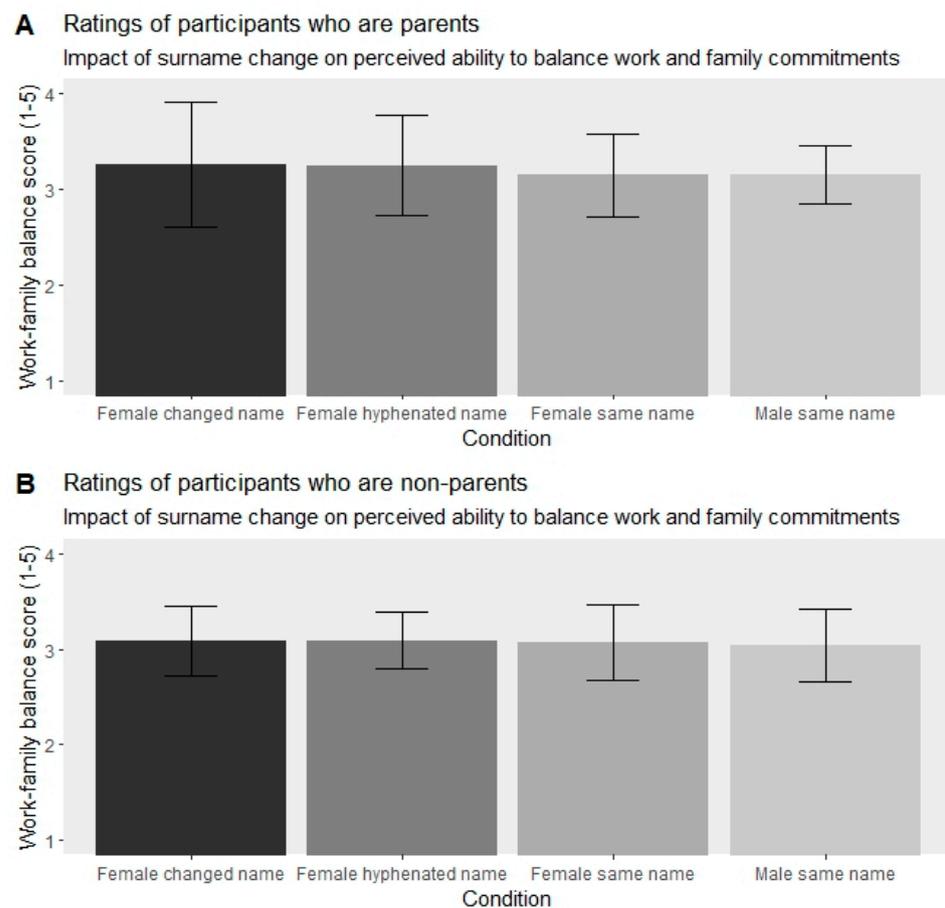


Figure 3. Work–family balance scores varied depending on participant parental status. Participants who are parents gave higher work–family balance scores on average than participants who were nonparents.

Hypothesis 4. First, moderated mediation was conducted using Process MACRO to examine whether commitment and competence mediated the effect of surname change on hiring scores and whether this was moderated by participant gender. For the purposes of this analysis, we combined the hiring scores of the female with a changed surname and the female with hyphenated surname conditions, as well as the female with the same surname and the male with the same surname conditions, resulting in two conditions: surname change vs. no surname change. Collapsing across participant gender, there was no significant direct effect of condition (i.e., surname change) on hiring ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = 0.79$) or on competence and commitment ($b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.19$ and $b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.21$, respectively). Competence and commitment were found to significantly impact hiring scores ($b = 0.59$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < 0.001$ and $b = 0.39$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < 0.001$, respectively). However, these mediational effects were moderated by participant gender. That is, a significant conditional indirect effect of surname change on hiring mediated by competence was found ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI [0.0028, 0.3354] for female participants and $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [−0.0558, 0.2195] for male participants), as well as an indirect effect of surname change on hiring mediated by commitment ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [0.0344, 0.3097] for female participants and $b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [−0.0323, 0.1388] for male participants) was found for participants who were women but not for men. Compared to male participants, women gave higher hiring scores to female candidates who have changed their surname (i.e., changed and hyphenated) compared to candidates who did not change their surname (i.e., both women and men) and this was mediated by higher competence and commitment scores.

A second moderated mediation analysis was performed with the aim to assess whether commitment and competence mediated the effect of surname change on perceived promotion

likelihood and whether this was moderated by participant gender. Similar to hiring, the findings did not show a significant direct effect of surname change on promotion likelihood ($b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.66$) or on competence and commitment ($b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.15$ and $b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.19$, respectively), however, competence and commitment significantly predicted promotion likelihood scores ($b = 0.57$, $SE = 0.09$, $p < 0.001$ and $b = 0.35$, $SE = 0.09$, $p < 0.001$, respectively). A significant conditional indirect effect of surname change on promotion likelihood mediated by competence ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI [0.0034, 0.3277] for female participants and $b = 0.09$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [−0.0501, 0.2238] for male participants) and commitment ($b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.0330, 0.2863] for female participants and $b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [−0.0267, 0.1288] for male participants) was found for female participants, but not male participants. This moderated mediation suggests that women indicated that female candidates who changed their surname would be more likely to be promoted in the future compared to candidates who did not change their name, and this was mediated by higher competence and commitment scores.

7. Discussion

The primary aim of the current work was to investigate potential bias against women who change their surname based on evaluations of academics' Google Scholar profiles that contained publication lists and made surname change information visible. It aimed to assess whether identity signals in names and surnames impact evaluations of female academics' competence, commitment, work–family balance, hiring, and promotion likelihood. Importantly, the current study explored implications for personal and social choices about surname use in publishing and career advancement.

Previous research (Robnett et al. 2018; Etaugh et al. 1999; Steinpreis et al. 1999) suggested that marital surname change, which is visible in female academics' publication lists, can trigger bias; however, our findings suggest that female academics who changed their surname received higher competence and commitment scores compared to the academics with no surname change. This finding suggests that surname change is not a source of bias but can, in fact, trigger more positive evaluations.

The role prioritisation model could offer insight into this surprising finding (Haines and Stroessner 2019). The role prioritisation model suggests that the way in which an individual is evaluated is based upon the degree to which they are perceived as prioritising their gender-congruent duties and responsibilities. It implies that there are expectations for women to devote more time to family and to prioritise caregiving-oriented roles. Therefore, through the lens of this framework, surname change could be seen as a favourable decision for female academics which shows that they prioritise caregiving and therefore behave in ways that are consistent with the gendered expectations of women as homemakers and caregivers. This finding can also be interpreted through the lens of social role theory, such that individuals who behave in ways which are consistent with cultural gender-specific expectations are generally likely to be evaluated more favourably (Eagly and Karau 2002). Our findings also suggest that prescriptive gender stereotypes impact how academics are perceived in career development contexts. Individuals in nontraditional roles who make life choices that do not fit within the boundaries of these gendered expectations tend to be evaluated more unfavourably (Eagly and Karau 2002).

The findings of this study also showed that compared to male participants, female participants gave higher hiring and promotion likelihood scores to female academics who have changed their surname compared to academics who did not change their surname (i.e., both women and men) and this was mediated by higher competence and commitment scores. These findings could also be explained through the lens of the role prioritisation model framework, such that marital surname change could be interpreted as a commitment to gender-congruent roles and responsibilities (Haines and Stroessner 2019). This role-congruent behaviour may be especially rewarded by other members of the in group, in this case other female academics.

However, another potential interpretation of these findings may also suggest that participants did not actually associate surname change with traditional gender roles and, in turn, with prospective motherhood and increased likelihood to prioritise family. Participants' favourable evaluations of female academics who have changed their surname may have been driven by assumptions that external pressures such as the social environment or cultural norms may have impacted the surname change decision, rather than a personal endorsement of traditional gender roles. Paired with the fact that the prospective job candidate had achieved a respectable academic career despite external pressures, as evidenced by her academic profile and publication record, evaluators might have perceived this as evidence of her competence and may have thus evaluated her more favourably. This interpretation of the findings is consistent with the predictions of the shifting standards paradigm, such that evaluations may be influenced by the subjective assumptions and prior experiences of the evaluators (Manis et al. 1991). Previous research has shown that academics who are perceived to be in junior posts within the academic hierarchy are more at risk of being judged more harshly and discriminated against in career contexts (King 2008). The fictitious job candidates in the current study may have been perceived as more experienced and competent based on their publication record and this may have positively impacted their evaluations by the participants.

The findings also showed no significant direct effects of surname change on evaluations of work–family balance, hiring, and promotion likelihood. It did not show gender bias reflected in higher evaluations for the male academic compared to the female academics or discrimination based on assumptions of family status reflected in higher evaluations of academics who did not change their surnames compared to academics who did. This finding was surprising and could potentially indicate that the Google Scholar profile format implemented in the current study may not have triggered strong associations between surname change and changes in family status and prospective motherhood.

The use of Google Scholar profiles in the current work could be seen as a limitation, as it may have limited our ability to assess competence and commitment. There was an open-answer section at the end of the study that asked participants to put any comments about the study that they have, and some participants commented that they would never use a Google Scholar profile to assess the competence or professional commitment of an academic and that it is not standard practice to look at Google Scholar profiles when making hiring decisions. It is possible that the use of Google Scholar profiles, used widely informally, may have hindered the realism of the hiring evaluation scenario. Future research could attempt to replicate this study by implementing CVs to explore the impact of surname change on evaluations, even though CVs may potentially contain more distractor information than Google Scholar profiles. If this additional information is carefully matched between conditions, it could potentially inform about whether the Google Scholar profile format interfered with the results or whether there is indeed no bias against women who have changed their surnames in academic contexts. If the lack of bias and the more positive evaluations for women who have changed their surname are replicated, this would provide further support for the notion that women who comply with the cultural expectations for marital surname change tend to receive favourable evaluations.

Another limitation of the current work is that some of our participants came from different countries, despite the majority of them residing in the UK, USA, and Ireland. We acknowledge that surname change customs and attitudes may differ based on nationality, as well as social and cultural background. Despite the participants in the current study being employed in academic institutions in the UK, USA, and Ireland, the fact that some of them had different countries of origin may have impacted the way they viewed surname change choices and interpreted their meaning of them. As discussed above, the prevalent social norm in the UK, USA, and Ireland is for a woman to change her surname after marriage (e.g., Robnett et al. 2018; Gooding and Kreider 2010; Scheuble et al. 2012). However, the degree to which participants endorse this surname change custom may vary based on their cultural and social background. Given the experimental design of our study, we

expect these cultural differences to be randomly assigned across conditions and not impact the results in a systematic way. However, future research could focus on investigating gendered norms about surname change cross culturally and could explore the impact of one's country of origin relative to the country of residence in terms of their endorsement of specific surname change attitudes.

Socioeconomic status and level of education are other important factors that should be considered when interpreting the findings of the current work. Differences in surname change choices and attitudes based on level of education have been previously identified, such that women with higher levels of education are more likely to choose to keep their maiden name after marriage (Scheuble and Johnson 2016). We did not collect this demographic information from our participants, however, as our participant sample consisted of academics. This suggests that most, if not all, of our participants had very similar levels of education. Socioeconomic status, on the other hand, is a variable which has not been widely studied in regard to surname change norms and choices, despite being an important factor in understanding one's social background and attitudes. Future research could address this gap by exploring the impact of socioeconomic status on surname change choices and customs.

Future research could also implement job application materials such as CVs and cover letters which contain more information that signals marital and parental status. Manipulating not only surname change in publication lists, but also marital and parental status or leave, in job application materials, and measuring evaluations of competence, commitment and hiring likelihood could build upon the findings of the current work and provide further insight into the different factors that interact with and impact surname change evaluations. Investigating factors that signal one's personal identity and social choices in addition to surname change could help measure the strength of associations between surname use and prospective motherhood, as well as their impact on career advancement.

In addition, in the context of exploring gender bias in career evaluations, future research could focus on investigating surname change choices among queer couples and attitudes towards queer individuals who change their marital surname. It has been suggested that surname change norms and preferences may differ among queer couples and may vary significantly based on demographic characteristics such as age (Underwood and Robnett 2021; Suter and Oswald 2003). Attitudes towards queer individuals who have changed their marital surname would be particularly interesting to investigate when taking into account the previously reported inversion in gender stereotypes for queer individuals. Whereas heterosexual women are stereotypically associated with communion and men with agency, the opposite trend has been observed for queer individuals, such that queer men are associated with communion and queer women with agency (Klysing et al. 2021). This gender stereotype inversion may lead to different sex role expectations for queer women and men in career and family contexts and could potentially impact evaluations of surname change choices differently.

Taken together, these findings show effects contrary to the predictions that surname change would indicate changes in family status and trigger bias. In fact, surname change in academic publications was indirectly associated with more favourable hiring and promotion evaluations by other female academics, mediated by higher commitment and competence. This finding could suggest that female academics who change their surname are rewarded for complying with prescriptive gender stereotypes and for fitting into the expected caregiver role.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/socsci12020095/s1>, Google Scholar Profiles.

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