As more women earn higher education degrees every year, it is clear gender roles are becoming more egalitarian within Western society. More common than ever before, women are earning more degrees than men and are taking on different roles than what was once expected of them. With this new freedom, women have shifted from playing a supportive role within society to branching out and creating their own established identity. Not only are women maintaining a separate identity in the professional world, but they are also maintaining a separate identity in their marriages. Correlating with the increased number of women in the professional world, there has been a popular trend of women sustaining their birth surname. Although women who sustain their surname are creating a separate identity for themselves, they are likely to be perceived as violating a traditional gender-role norm. In order to further investigate these perceptions, the current study examined perceptions of women who keep their surname after marriage. Specifically, I focused on the attitudes that are ascribed to women who retain their own surname after marriage.

Abstract
As more women earn higher education degrees every year, it is clear gender roles are becoming more egalitarian within Western society. More common than ever before, women are earning more degrees than men and are taking on different roles than what was once expected of them. With this new freedom, women have shifted from playing a supportive role within society to branching out and creating their own established identity. Not only are women maintaining a separate identity in the professional world, but they are also maintaining a separate identity in their marriages. Correlating with the increased number of women in the professional world, there has been a popular trend of women sustaining their birth surname. Although women who sustain their surname are creating a separate identity for themselves, they are likely to be perceived as violating a traditional gender-role norm. In order to further investigate these perceptions, the current study examined perceptions of women who keep their surname after marriage. Specifically, I focused on the attitudes that are ascribed to women who retain their own surname after marriage.

Present Study
The current study sought to shed light on how undergraduates perceived women who kept their surname after marriage. A mixed methods approach was used to assess our hypothesis and further explore the reasoning with a research question.

Hypothesis 1, which was tested with quantitative data, is as follows:

H1: Younger students with less relationship experience will be more likely to have negative perceptions of women with nontraditional surnames.

We then used qualitative data to assess the following research question:

RQ1: Are participants more likely to ascribe agentic characteristics rather than communal characteristics to a woman with a nontraditional surname?

Historical Background
Women were once legally obligated to change their surnames, generating a traditional marriage ritual in Western society (Hoffnung, 2006). Due to the inequality social context that women once encountered, women gained certain advantages when they took their husband’s name. Ex. The assets and property a woman inherited from her family would automatically become ownership of her husband, allowing her to have access to her property and possessions (Bozen & Gillette, 2005).

In 1975 women were able to sustain their birth surname in every form, however the practice was still seen as a social norm violation in Western society (Twenge, 1997). As a result, a woman with a nontraditional surname is likely to be classified as being relatively high in independence, high status, and high power (Rudman et al., 2012). As a result of distinctly segregated gender roles, the public is more likely to categorize a person as associated with interpersonal interaction, low social status, and low power (Rubin et al., 2012).

Previous Research
Women who sustain their birth surname after marriage are more likely to have a separate identity from their spouses’ and maintain their separate identity in their profession (Twenge, 1997).

Reason Why Women Change Their Surname
Age: A significant factor involved in traditional marriage rituals, because marriage was seen as a big step into adulthood (Gilmore, 1990; Schlegel & Barry, 1991).

Socially, women were seen for their transition into adulthood because of their new role in society (Gilmore, 1990; Schlegel & Barry, 1991).

The social acceptance that followed a woman who changed her surname generated a common marriage ritual. This identified the nature as being traditional (Gilmore, 1990; Schlegel & Barry, 1991).

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Method
Participants consisted of 283 undergraduates at UC Santa Cruz (76% women). They ranged in age from 17-24 years old (M = 19).

Phase of Education
Freshmen: 46%; Sophomores: 20%; Juniors: 16%; Seniors: 18%

Cultural Background
White/European American: 42%; Latino/Hispanic: 29%; Asian American: 4%; African American: 1%; Other/Multiple: 24%

Relationship Status
Single: 63%; Dating 1-12 months: 21%; Dating for more than 1 year: 16%

RESULTS (Quantitative)
H1: SPSS analysis was used compare means of age and relationship status with personality attributes, by using two t-tests. Also, two correlations were used in order to determine the relationship of relationship status and age with different characteristics.

Results
- Two-tailed t-test were carried out in order to distinguish if participants’ age and relationship experience were associated with the agentic coding category. Therefore we compared the mean-level differences in age and relationship experience with the agentic coding category.

- Next, we examined whether there was a correlation between age and the woman being perceived as agentic, and also if relationship experience had a correlation with the woman being perceived as agentic.

- The quantitative analyses were inconsistent on our hypotheses and re-sampled results illustrated that age and relationship experience were not necessarily associated with the woman being perceived as agentic.

Future Directions
Consistent with prior research (Radman et al., 2012; Enaugh et al., 1999), the current study illustrated participants were more likely to categorize a woman who retained her surname to play a masculine role within a marriage.

One limitation of the current study is the age range of the participants. It would be interesting to compare responses from an older age group in order to relate the negative stigma of nontraditional surnames to a generation gap.

Lastly, the present study examined participant’s reactions to a woman in a heterosexual relationship. It would be ideal to examine marriage rituals in same-sex relationships in order to understand which traditions are more likely to be viewed as social violations.