Blog posting # 1

Title satisfying good-title requirements (i.e., informative *and* eye catching) 100

All statements and positions are clear and to-the-point 95

Not all statements are grammatically AND scientifically accurate 85

Average earned = 93.33 (of 100)

Baby names and gendering

The notion that gendering begins with a baby's name is an interesting one. Most of the "new" babies I know of -- my nephew and a few friends' children -- have unconventional names. Their names are not necessarily gender-based but reflect their parents' hobbies and interests.

For example, my friend Marlo (a woman named for her grandmothers -- MARgaret + LOis) asked me if naming her son Garnett would be "too girlie." She and her husband Greg wanted to name their child something to honor their alma mater, the University of South Carolina, whose school colors are garnet and black. They adapted the color term garnet, and I suggested using two Ts to make it seem more like a name and less like a gemstone. Most of the gemstone names I know of are for women (e.g., Ruby, Opal), so in this case, altering the spelling of the name made it look more masculine.

My sister chose an unusual name for her son, my nephew Adric. She and her husband are huge science fiction fans, and my brother-in-law is obsessed with the BBC series "Doctor Who. He convinced my sister Kelly to name their child after one of the Doctor's companions. Finally, my friend Martha-Lynn and her husband named their first child, a daughter, Eva Daisy in honor of Martha-Lynn's grandmother. Their second child, a son, is named Silas, since her husband Jason has a Ph.D. in American literatue and wrote his dissertation on Herman Melville's work "Silas Marner."

> **Comment [LMK1]:** Oops!

> **Comment [LMK2]:** Not George Eliot, rather?

In these three examples, the names are not all specifically gender-obvious. Garnett *could* be a girl rather than a boy. Adric is a little more masculine sounding, primarily because it is similar to Eric, which is typically used as a male name. The most gender-based names are Eva and Silas. Despite the names being identifiable as male or female, I do not think these families chose their children's names based on the idea that the baby's name would somehow set forth a specific concept of that child's gender. Adric loves cleaning and playing with his kitchen set, activities that are stereotypically female, but his parents are not worried that this two-year-old will grow up confused about his gender identity. Likewise, Eva is an outgoing four-year-old who likes to stomp around in tomboy fashion, but her parents are not expecting her to grow up transgendered.

I don't think a child's name *per se* is as important a factor in gendering as that child's upbringing and freedom to explore his or her own personality. Children, regardless of name, should be given the opportunity to explore and experience life from any perspective they choose. Yes, parents should guide their children according to their culture's typical gender definitions, but I think parents should also be willing to let their children discover their gender identities for themselves.

> **Comment [LMK3]:** Not in "unconventionalized" names like the two you mention, for sure; however, names tend to be a lot more of a gendering issue in the case of "conventional" names like *Adam*, *Eva*, and/or *Silas*.