

Social and Cognitive Factors in Women's Marital Name Choice

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This study examines the last name choices married women make when they marry, focusing on the reasons they gave for selecting the marital name they use and differences between women making different naming choices. These are explored in a sample of 595 married women that was disproportionately stratified to yield a large percentage (46%) with nontraditional last names. Women who kept their birth surnames at the time of marriage and those who hyphenated their last names with their husband's had similar background factors, including higher rates of cohabitation, marrying at a later age, higher levels of education and viewing their names as more important for their self-concept than did women who changed their surnames to that of their husbands' or used their birth name as a middle name. The reasons women gave for their name choice varied substantially by the name chosen. Women taking their husband's last name either by itself or with their birth surname as a middle name reported reasons related to tradition and social expectations, while women keeping their birth surnames or hyphenating focused on continuity in their professional careers and desire to maintain their identity. We found that women who gave more traditional reasons were more likely to have been born outside the U.S., have cohabited before marriage, and were younger in age than women who did not give traditional reasons. Women providing reasons related to social expectations, controlling for name choice, were more likely to be younger in age than their counterparts.

Names 55:3 (September 2007): 229-251

ISSN:0027-7738

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Issues surrounding the surname women take when they marry have received sporadic attention from social science researchers. Since the marital name a woman chooses to adopt is a free choice virtually everywhere in the United States, every woman who marries needs to make this choice. It is important to understand why some women choose to take their husband's name and drop their birth surname completely, while others do not change their name at all or choose to include his name along with her birth surname. Researchers have studied a number of issues related to women's marital names, including social and background factors explaining marital name choice (Johnson and Scheuble 1995), attitudes toward and perceptions of marital name choices (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, White and Hamm 2002; Etaugh, Bridges, Cummings-Hill and Cohen 1999; Scheuble and Johnson 1998; McKinney 1991; Trost 1991), and the relationship of naming to self and the institution of marriage (Foss and Edson 1989). Little is known, however, about the reasons offered by women to explain the name they chose to use. Using a probability sample of married women, the present study expands the body of knowledge on marital naming by examining the reasons women gave for their last name choice and the social characteristics of women making different name choices.

The study of motivations for women's last name choice has been hampered by the small fraction (1.5 - 5% in national probability samples) of women that have made unconventional marital name choices, such as retaining their birth name as a last name, hyphenating, or selecting another name that results in a last name that is different than their spouse's (Johnson and Scheuble 1995). Even large national samples of 1,000 or more married women would contain only 15 to 50 women making a non-traditional last name choice. This seriously limits analysis options. The present study examines married women's motivations for last name choice

in a sample that overcomes this problem. We use a disproportionately stratified probability sample of married women yielding a large percentage (46%) with nontraditional last names. As a result, we are able to explore more fully the reasons women report for marital name choice and how women who made different choices differ on social background and marital characteristics.

Motivations for last name choice at the time of marriage are affected by both structural and social psychological factors. First and foremost is the societal expectation that, at the time of marriage, women will change their last name to that of their spouses. This expectation is strongly integrated into marriage norms and has its roots in the traditional roles of women. This norm reinforces the expectation that a woman's identity as an individual is subsumed under her status as a wife (Suarez 1997; Weitzman 1981). Social psychological and cognitive factors surrounding name choice relate to a woman's interpretation of the importance of her last name for her self concept and in the functioning of her relationships. A name symbolically provides a sense of self for a person and at the same time provides links to one's spouse, children, and relatives (Linsey 1994). In an early examination of the effects of naming, Sherif and Cantril (1947) suggest that personality characteristics may differ greatly among women who keep their birth names, change their last name to that of their husband's, or hyphenate. To our knowledge, this proposed relationship has not been empirically tested.

In the United States, societal expectations about what last name women should take at the time of marriage have remained surprisingly consistent over time. Women are generally expected to change their last name to that of their husband's -- although they do not legally have to do so (Stannard 1984). Several attitude studies have shown strong support for this norm (Scheuble and Johnson 1993; Scheuble and Johnson 1998). Although the United States is not unique

in this regard, there are many countries in which the wife's name is not a choice and the naming conventions for married women and their children are dictated by law (e.g., Arichi 1999; Walker 1996; Haskey 1991; Glendon 1989; Kuo 1973).

A number of researchers have examined structural and social psychological issues in marital naming. Foss and Edson (1989), in a convenience sample of friends, acquaintances and others, found women changing their last name to their husband's emphasized the importance of the relationship and societal expectations over other more individual factors. Women who hyphenated their last name valued the relationship and self equally. Women who kept their birth names valued the importance of self and individual identity over cultural and relationship issues. Intons-Peterson and Crawford (1985) examined meanings of last names taken at the time of marriage in a sample of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff at one university (n=209). Overall, both men and women identified with their last names to a large extent. Both men and women reported they believed that women did not identify as much with their last names as men. This emphasis on identification with a last name reflects both cultural expectations and individual interests and motivations.

Blakemore, Lawton and Vartanian (2005) in a study focusing on 396 never married respondents, found that women who had a higher drive to marry were more likely to plan to use the title "Mrs." and to want to change their surname to that of their husband's than were their counterparts. These women were more likely than others in the study to expect that their position as wife would be their master status. There are likely to be a number of reasons why women would make the last name choices they do at the time of marriage. Only one research study, however, has examined motivations for naming choice. In a sample of women recruited by advertising in selected publications, Kupper (1990) analyzed motivations for marital naming only for

women making unconventional last name choices at the time of marriage. The sample consisted predominantly of women retaining their birth names, who were well educated, employed outside the home and between the ages of 26-35. The findings indicated that women chose to keep their birth names as a protection of their identity. For these women, social-psychological factors were a stronger motivation than cultural expectations that a woman will take her husband's last name. Although the findings from the research are of value, the sample does not permit an analysis of differences between women making conventional and nonconventional choices at the time of marriage.

Societal changes in women's roles and the increased awareness among women of different marital naming practices lead us to expect that the last name the woman uses after she marries is increasingly a conscious choice rather than a predetermined outcome of pervasive societal norms. From previous empirical studies we know little about the reasons women give for why they change their last name to that of their husband's or how they are different from women choosing a nonconventional last name. Based on our understanding of the normative climate in this country, we would expect that women changing their last name to that of their husband's at the time of marriage would be more likely to report reasons that reflect traditional and normative expectations. Among women making non-conventional last name choices, we would expect women's reported motivations to reflect the importance of personal identity and non-marital roles (e.g., occupational roles) (Foss and Edson 1989; Kupper 1990). We also expect that background factors such as age, previous marital and cohabitation experience, and education will influence motivations for last name choice, as these factors have been found to predict nonconventional women's marital name choice at the time of marriage (Scheuble, Klingemann and Johnson 2000; Johnson and Scheuble 1995).

Research Procedures

Sample

The data used in this study consists of responses to a mail survey by 600 married women who were selected from the faculty and staff directories of three campuses of a university system in a Midwestern state. This source was used because the directories listed the full names of the spouses of married employees, allowing us to oversample those with different last names. Surveys were sent to all women in the directory (either employees or their spouses) who had different last names than their husbands and to a random sample of one-eighth of the women with the same last name as their husbands. We mailed questionnaires to 785 households, with two follow up mailings to those who had not yet responded. The response rate was 82 percent--excluding women who were no longer married or were deceased and letters sent to bad addresses.

Dependent Variables

Respondents were given a list of seventeen possible reasons for the last name they chose at the time they were married and were asked to select from the list the reasons that applied to their marital naming choice. One of the choices allowed them to indicate reasons other than those listed and if they selected it they were asked to write in the other reason. Examples of reasons listed include: it was the traditional thing to do, keeping my maiden name never occurred to me, I was established in my profession, I was older when I got married, my husband wanted me to make the last name choice I made, and I knew other women who kept their birth name (see Table 2 for the complete list). The difficulty of anticipating all possible reasons is a common problem with using closed-ended questions in exploratory research. Although respondents selected an average of 2.5 of the reasons listed, 23% of them also wrote in an "other" reason for their marital name choice. We were able to assign 65% of these other

reasons to four inductively determined categories--Bureaucratic, Feminist, Identity, and Never Considered. Assigned to the Bureaucratic category were answers such as "It was too much of a hassle to change all professional diplomas, licenses, and documents to another name" and "legal reasons & credit cards." The Feminist category included responses such as "Men don't change their names, why should women?" and "Changing name tradition shows transfer of ownership from father to husband. My husband doesn't own me." Examples of responses included in the Identity category were: "Didn't want to lose my identity due to marriage"; "My name is my identity and my tie to my own family"; and "I didn't need to keep my maiden name to continue to be an individual." Finally, the Never Considered category grouped answers that indicated the woman had never considered changing their last name to that of their husband.

We also attempted to reduce the sixteen listed reasons into a more parsimonious set of factors. Exploratory factor analysis was used to empirically cluster common themes among the listed reasons for their name choice. A four-factor solution appeared to adequately fit the data, and we labeled these factors traditionalism with seven items, social expectations with four, stability issues and name preferences with two items each. Because 88% of the responses given fell into the items loading on the traditionalism and social expectations factors, we restricted our focus to these two dimensions and created a summary measure for each for further analysis. The items included in the Traditionalism and Social Expectations measures are indicated in Table 2 by the letters T and S. Items with a "+" sign by the T are the two items associated with high traditionalism, while a "-" sign indicates those associated with low traditionalism. A summated scale created from the seven Traditionalism items with the five negative items reverse coded had an alpha reliability of .75. All items on the Social Expectations

dimension loaded in the same direction, and a summated scale based on these four items had an alpha reliability of .64.

Independent and Control Variables

Because we expected that the marital name choice made by the woman would have a strong relationship with the reasons for the choice, a measure of actual name choice was central to the study. A six category variable was created to measure the respondent's marital name choice. Respondents were asked to indicate the middle and last name choice they made at the time of their marriage. The six choices were (1) changing their last name to that of their husband and dropping their birth surname; (2) keeping their birth name as a last name; (3) hyphenating their last name with that of their husband; (4) changing their last name to that of their husband and keeping their birth name as a middle name; (5) keeping the last name of their previous husband; and (6) another name choice category. Table 1 presents the number and percentage of respondents falling into each of these naming categories. Because the study design involved heavily oversampling women in the directories whose husband's last name differed from theirs, the percentage distribution is not indicative of the actual distribution of naming choices of the population of employees of these campuses. If we weigh the data to adjust for under sampling of only 1 out of every 8 women who reported the same last name as their husband, then we estimate that 90% of the women in the population took their husband's last name. This is consistent with previous estimates of marital naming conventions in the United States (Johnson and Scheuble 1995; Brightman 1994). The seven women who indicated other naming choices included four who combined their current and previous husband's names as their last or middle names, one woman who reported that both she and her husband took a new name, and one who reported always using her birth name professionally and her

husband's last name in other situations. One woman did not specify the other naming choice.

Other variables included in the study to explore their relationship to naming choice and motivations for this choice were age when the woman first dated, whether or not she cohabited with her husband before their marriage, age when she married her current husband, the size of the community in which she resided at age 16 (in 6 categories from 1 = rural to 6 = large metropolitan area), the region of the country in which she lived at age 16 (in 5 categories), and the educational attainment of the respondent and her husband (in 7 categories ranging from 1 = less than high school to 7 = Ph.D. or more education). We did not include current region of residence because at the time they completed the survey all respondents lived in the North Central region. A final variable we included because of its importance in previous studies was the woman's report of how important her last name was to her self-concept. (Responses ranged from not important at all [1] to very important [5].)

Findings

We expected that the women who make nonconventional marital name choices would differ in their background and marital characteristics from those taking their husband's name and are likely to report quite different reasons for the choice. We began by examining these differences. Table 1 presents a summary of characteristics we found to be significantly ($p < .01$) related to marital name choice. We first examined characteristics related to the marriage. Large differences between the naming groups were found in the percent of the women who had cohabited with their current spouse before the marriage. The lowest percent (22%) was found for women who took their husband's name and the highest (69%) for those who kept their birth name. As would be expected, those women keeping a previous husband's name were most likely to report being previously married (100%). Most of the women in the "other name

choice" category told us on the survey that they included a previous husband's name in their last name (either as middle or

Table 1. Selected demographic and marital characteristics of respondents by last name taken at marriage.

	N	Percent in Naming Categories	Cohabited before marriage	Previously Married	Age at Current Marriage	Community Size where raised	Age	Wife's Educational Attainment	Husband's Educational Attainment	Last Name Very Important for Self Concept
Last Name Taken at Marriage										
Husband's Last Name Kept	253	43%	22%	14%	25.0	3.6	44.6	4.5	5.3	20%
Hyphenated name	192	32%	69%	30%	30.6	4.2	41.1	6.1	6.1	53%
Prev. Husband's last name	57	10%	42%	33%	30.2	4.4	39.6	5.5	5.4	37%
Other	69	12%	24%	13%	26.8	3.7	43.8	5.6	6.1	19%
	17	3%	65%	100%	42.3	4.4	48.3	6.0	5.6	12%
	7	1%	29%	86%	41.9	4.0	48.4	5.4	6.1	29%
Total	595	100%	41%	24%	28.2	3.9	43.0	5.3	5.7	32%

Notes: Naming choice is significantly related ($p < .01$) in an ANOVA to all variables in the table

hyphenated). This group also had a high percent previously married (86%). Women taking their husband's name and keeping their birth name as a middle name had the lowest percentages with previous marriages (14 and 13% respectively), with hyphenators and women keeping their birth name about twice as likely as these groups to have been in a previous marriage.

We expected that those who had previously married would be most likely to have formed their current marriage at a later age. This was supported in the data as the last two groups both married around age 42. Paralleling what we found for cohabitation and being previously married, the ages at marriage for women who took their husband's surname or kept their birth name as a middle name were similar and were the lowest of the six naming groups (25.0 and 26.8 years respectively). Women who kept their birth name or hyphenated, on the average, married four to five years later than those taking their husband's surname.

Looking next at the demographic background variables we found large differences between some of the naming groups. Women keeping their birth names and hyphenating had the youngest average age, while women who took their previous husband's name had the oldest average age. We expected that the higher age of the group of women keeping a previous husband's name reflects that they had been in a previous marriage and likely had stayed long enough to have children with whom they want to continue a name link. When we looked at the size of the community they lived in when they were 16 years old, the main finding was that those taking their husband's name and keeping their birth name as a middle name come from the smallest communities. The data showing the relationship of wife's and husband's educational attainment to naming found the highest average educational level among the women keeping their birth names and the lowest among those taking their husband's surname. While hyphenators were similar to women keeping their birth

names for many of the demographic and marital characteristics, this was not true for educational attainment as the hyphenating women and their husbands' average educational attainment were somewhat lower. It should be remembered that this is a sample of employees and their spouses in a state university system so the average educational attainment is quite high with the modal category for both husbands and wives being those with a master's degree.

Finally, we compared the naming groups on the women's perception of the importance of their name choice to their self-concept. Large differences were found with over half (53%) of the women keeping their birth name and around one-third (37%) of the hyphenators saying their last name was very important for their self-concept. Those keeping a previous husband's last name were least likely to have stated that this was very important (12%), while those taking the husband's name and those keeping their birth name as a middle name had similar and relatively low importance ratings (20 and 19% respectively).

Overall, comparison of the characteristics of the six naming groups finds substantial differences in background and marital characteristics with three pairs accounting for most of the differences. Those dropping their birth name and taking their husband's last name were quite similar on many of the characteristics to women retaining their birth name as a middle name. A second group was formed by those keeping their birth name as a last name and hyphenators who were similar on several background and marital characteristics. Finally, a third group composed of the 24 women who reported keeping the name of a previous husband or selecting another naming choice were also similar on many of the characteristics. We next examined the differences in these groups in the reasons the women gave for making their marital name choice.

Table 2 presents detailed information on the reasons given for name choice by the women in each of six marital naming groups. The listed reasons have been ordered by the percent of the women in the sample selecting the reason. Three of the reasons were most frequently selected by the women who took their husband's last name (dropping their birth name) and the women who took their husband's last name but kept their birth name as their middle name. "It was the traditional thing to do" was the choice of the majority of both these groups (78 and 61% respectively), with a substantial percent also agreeing that "keeping their birth name had never occurred to them" and that "they wanted everyone in the family to have the same last name." In contrast, the reasons endorsed by women keeping their birth name and those hyphenating were quite different from those women changing their surname to that of their husband. Approximately one-half selected "being established in their profession" and "liking their birth names" as reasons for their name choice. Both these groups were more likely than any of the other groups to say that "wanting to keep their family name going" was a reason for their naming choice. Among women keeping their birth surnames, 22% indicated that "knowing others who kept their birth names" was a reason for their choice. "Being established in her profession" and having a desire to keep the same name as their children from a previous marriage were the main motivations for keeping a previous husband's name in some form.

Among the other reasons written in by the respondents, most were given by women keeping their birth surname. These were mostly related to identity and reporting they never considered other choices. Most respondents who reported hyphenating and indicating "other" reasons for keeping their birth surname as their middle name could not be classified into the four inductive categories we developed. The reasons they gave for incorporating their birth surname in their name varied from "I wanted both names" to "showing

respect for traditions but also maintaining my autonomy" and "to give my parent's respect for their accomplishments." One woman said she promised her dying father that she would keep the family name and did so by hyphenating. Surprisingly, there were fewer "Feminist" responses than might have been expected among the women keeping their birth names in some way, although the most feminist responses were found in this naming group.

The reasons women gave for their name choice were found to vary greatly by the specific name they chose, and, consistent with our earlier finding, three naming groups with similar patterns emerged in the data. Taking the husband's name and keeping her birth surname as her middle name were clearly viewed as traditional choices by many of the women. Among the four less conventional naming choice groups, a large proportion of the women reported that the need for professional name continuity was an important reason for their name choice. Women not changing their name and those hyphenating were the two groups most likely to report that liking their birth name was a factor as was a desire to keep the family name going.

We have now found that the name choice women made was related both to a number of background and family variables and to the reasons they gave for the marital name choice. A further question is whether these background differences had any effect on the types of reasons given above and beyond the specific naming choices made. To test this, we conducted logistic regression analyses with a measure summarizing the traditional reasons as one dependent variable and a summary of the social expectation reasons as the other. These outcome variables were dichotomized for the analyses. For the traditionalism scale, those giving 3 or more high traditional responses were coded 1, and all others 0. For the Social Expectations scale, those selecting one or more of

Table 2. Reasons Given for Marital Name Choice by Respondent's Last Name Choice at the Time of the Marriage. Percent of respondents in each name choice category selecting the reason.

Reasons given for last name choice	Name Choice at Time of Marriage									
	Took Husband's Last Name	Kept Birth Name	Hypenated Name	Birth Name as Middle	Previous Husband's last name	Other Name Choice	Total			
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%			
It was the traditional thing to do. (+T)	76	4	4	61	12	0	42			
I was established in my profession. (-T)	5	60	46	19	88	57	31			
I liked my birth name. (-T)	2	64	56	14	0	14	29			
Keeping my birth name never occurred to me. (+T)	43	0	0	26	6	14	22			
Planned to have children and wanted everyone to have the same last name. (S)	31	0	7	36	0	29	18			
I was older when I got married. (-T)	2	30	23	9	24	43	15			
I wanted to keep my family name going. (-T)	1	28	40	9	0	14	14			
My husband wanted me to make this last name choice. (S)	15	11	7	17	6	14	13			
I liked my husband's last name.	23	0	2	14	0	0	12			
My family expected me to make this choice. (S)	17	1	2	14	0	0	10			
I knew other women who kept their birth names. (-T)	1	22	7	3	0	0	9			
My friends expected me to make this name choice. (S)	8	5	2	0	0	0	5			
I was concerned that I might get a divorce.	1	6	7	6	12	14	4			
Wanted to have same last name as child from Previous Marriage.	0	1	12	0	41	57	3			
I did not like my husband's last name.	0	6	5	1	6	0	3			
I didn't like my maiden name.	6	0	0	3	0	0	3			
Other reasons. (inductively classified)										
Bureaucratic Reasons	2	3	4	3	6	0	3			
Feminist Reasons	0	8	0	1	0	14	3			
Reasons Related to Identity	0	12	7	1	0	0	5			
Never considered other name choices	0	13	0	0	0	0	4			
Other Reasons not classified	5	6	18	16	0	0	8			
Number of Cases	253	192	57	69	17	7	595			

Notes: Columns can sum to greater than 100% percent as respondents could choose multiple reasons. Items with a T were included in the Traditionalism scale and those with an S in the Social Expectations Scale.

the four reasons were coded 1 with all others coded 0. The sample we analyzed included only four of the six naming choices. The small number of cases (24) of women keeping their former husband's last name and reporting "other" naming choices led to statistical estimation problems so these respondents were excluded from the analysis. In addition to these naming choice categories, we included 10 background and marital variables in the models. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 3. We report odds ratios, which can be interpreted as the proportional increase or decrease in odds of giving a high traditional or high social expectations response compared to a low response. An odds ratio of 1.0 implies no effect. An odds ratio of 0.5 would imply that the odds of giving the high response are reduced by one-half by a change in this variable; while an odds ratio of 2.0 means that the odds are doubled.

The name choice was strongly and significantly related to both the Traditionalism and Social Expectations outcomes. The odds ratios for the naming choice variables in the table indicate the relative odds of being high on the scale compared to the reference group of women who took their husband's name. Both those keeping their birth surnames and hyphenators were much less likely to give a traditional reason--the odds were substantially lower than the odds for those taking their husband's name. After including this strong effect of name choice in the equation, which holds constant the influence of naming on the outcome, several of the other independent variables retain significant effects when traditionalism was the outcome variable. Women living outside of the U.S. as children were over 7 times more likely to give a traditional reason than those raised in the North Central (where all respondents now reside). Surprisingly, those cohabiting before marriage were nearly twice as likely (1.93) to give traditional reasons for naming after adjusting for the effects of the other variables. Apparently, after adjusting for the fact that cohabiting women were more likely to make non-

Table 3. Logistic regression analyses of the effects of name choice and background variables on the odds of giving a traditional or social expectations reason for name choice.

Independent Variables	Traditional Reasons Odds Ratio	Reasons Related to Social Expectations Odds Ratio
Name Choice at Marriage	**	**
Took Husband's Last Name (reference group)	1.00	1.00
Kept Birth Name	0.01 **	0.21 **
Hyphenated Last Name	0.01 **	0.19 **
Birth Name as Middle Name	0.15 **	1.19
Region of Country	**	
North Central (reference group)	1.00	1.00
North East	1.34	1.50
South	0.51	1.09
West	0.46	0.77
Other (outside of the US)	7.95 **	0.91
Age First Dated	0.88	1.00
Cohabited before Marriage?	1.93 §	0.68
Age at Marriage	0.92 **	0.99
Previously married?	1.41	0.68
Community Size where grew up	1.01	1.06
Respondent's Age	1.02	0.97 **
Wife's educational attainment	0.53 **	1.06
Husband's educational attainment	1.56 **	0.96
Importance of Last Name for Self Concept	0.75 *	1.11

Notes: § p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01.

traditional naming choices reported in Table 1, cohabiting was associated with expression of more traditional motivations. Perhaps among women who cohabited but did not make a non-traditional marital naming choice, taking the husband's name was more cognitively perceived by her as a traditional choice. Increased age at marriage was associated with lower likelihood of giving a traditional reason. The odds of giving traditional reasons declined around 7 percent ($1 - .92 = .07$) for each additional year of age. As the woman's educational attainment increased, her odds of giving traditional reasons declined by nearly 50 percent for each increment in educational attainment. On the other hand, husband's educational attainment was positively related to traditional reasons with more than a 50 percent increase in the odds of a traditional reason with each educational increment.

The woman's perceived importance of her name for her self concept also had a significant impact on the odds of selecting traditional reasons. The greater the importance the woman placed on her name the less likely she was to select a traditional reason for her marital naming decision.

The logistic regression results with Social Expectations as the outcome were somewhat different, as the only variable other than name choice that was significantly related to this outcome was the respondent's age. As age increased, the odds of providing a reason based on social expectations declined. One interpretation of this finding is that older women did not feel as pressured to make a specific name choice as did younger women. Because of more awareness of gender equity issues, younger women may view the name they choose as more of a conscious decision they are making so they may weight factors such as expectations of family and friends more heavily in their decision.

Discussion and Conclusions

Women who make non-conventional last name choices differ substantially from those making more conventional naming choices in their background and marital

characteristics. Women who kept their birth surnames at the time of marriage were more likely to have cohabited, married at a later age, were younger in age, had been in a previous marriage, lived in larger communities when they were 16 years of age, were well-educated and had well educated spouses compared to those changing their last name to that of their husband. As was expected, women who kept their birth surname were also far more likely than those women who changed their last name to that of their husband to say that their last name was very important to their self-concept. Women who hyphenated their last names had background characteristics that were similar to the women who kept their birth surname at marriage, and women who kept their birth names as a middle name had similar patterns to those women changing their last name to that of their spouse. These findings are consistent with those from previous research which finds that age, age at marriage, community size and education have a significant effect on last name choice (Scheuble, Klingemann and Johnson 2000; Johnson and Scheuble 1995).

We also focused on motivations for last name choice and find that women who change their last name to their spouse and women who use their birth name as a middle name and take on their spouse's last name give similar motivations. Women who kept their birth surname or hyphenated reported a different set of motivations than did their counterparts. These women's motivations focused on identity and community such as being established in their professions, wanting to keep their birth surname going and knowing women who had kept their birth surname as a last name at the time of marriage. In addition to examining individual reasons, we also examined two scales, one combining traditional reasons and the other social expectations about name choice. As expected, women taking their husband's last name as their surname were significantly more likely to give traditional reasons than women using their

birth surname as a last name or hyphenating with their husband's last name. Interestingly, women who lived outside of the U.S. at age 16 were substantially more likely to give traditional reasons for name choice than those living in the country at that age. We do not know in which countries the women were living so it is difficult to have a definitive explanation for this finding. Some countries, such as Japan, require that married couples have the same last name (Yamanoue 1994). In many European countries (e.g., France, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria) the pattern found in the U.S. is followed and over 90% of the women take their husband's surname and give their children the husband's last name (Valetas 1993; 2001). In contrast, in Spain about 77 percent of women keep their birth surname when they marry (Valetas 2001). In our sample, it appears that many of the women who lived outside the U.S. as children were born in countries where it was the norm to change their last name to that of their spouse and have carried these cultural norms with them when they married.

Another common pattern found in many countries is the use of double surnames. In an examination of double surnames and gender equality, Stodder (1996) concluded that the Spanish naming pattern of using double surnames is connected to equal inheritance and a "relatively high female status" (Stodder 1996, 9). The use of double surnames may be an attractive compromise for women in the United States between having to choose between changing their birth name to that of their spouse or keeping their birth surname.

Women's efforts to select their last name and the last names of their children in ways that overcome the patriarchal legacy of the current naming norms will certainly lead to social change resulting in increased equity. Cultural expectations for marital last name choice, normative behavior and the socio-political climate within a society, gender role expectations, and family and individual background characteristics all have the potential to influence both a

women's last name choice at the time of marriage and the motivations for this choice. Women's last name choices at the time of marriage are made within this cultural context, and reasons women give for their choices are affected by the norms, values, and social changes experienced by the society in which they live.

Findings from this study indicate that younger women are less likely to give traditional and normative social expectations for last name choice. Based on these findings, it is reasonable to expect that the last name women take at the time of marriage will increasingly be a conscious and deliberate decision affected by social, marital, and career expectations. Names influence more than just self-identity. Names also affect marriage relationships, friendships, work, and one's personal history in the present and into the future (Alia 1984). The consequences of these changes for women's self-identity, family cohesion and conflict, and children's identity need to be explored in future research studies.

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