

# Hawaii Data: Women's Marital Surname Change by Bride's Age and Jurisdiction of Residence

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Retaining or hyphenating one's premarital surname among brides marrying in Hawaii in 2006 was significantly correlated with average income of women and the average income of men in the bride's state of residence. Only the average women's income in the bride's state of residence, however, was a marginally significant predictor, where both that of men and women were used as regression predictors of retention or hyphenation. Older brides were more likely to hyphenate or retain their premarital surnames upon marriage in Hawaii in 2006. Raw data concerning 28,680 marriages celebrated in 2006 in the state of Hawaii were provided by Brian Horiuchi, of the Hawaii State Department of Health.

**KEYWORDS** America, family roles, marriage, socioeconomic status, union formation

Unlike any jurisdiction in Canada or any other state in the USA, the state of Hawaii requires a bride to specify on marriage registration documents whether she will take her husband's surname, retain her premarital surname, or hyphenate the two. In 1978, about 10 percent of brides marrying in Hawaii indicated they would retain their premarital surnames or hyphenate (Cherlin, 1978). Hawaii also requires brides to record their date of birth and current place of residence, and because it is now popular to marry at holiday resort destinations such as Hawaii, these marriage records include many in which the newlyweds reside elsewhere, affording a unique research opportunity. These data enable one to test hypotheses about brides' surname choice in relation to age and economic variables associated with women and men in their residential locales.

In a US telephone survey of 929 married people and 180 of their married adult children, purportedly a representative sample of married individuals in the nation, the prevalence of women taking their husbands' surnames varied regionally: women in the North Central region were most likely to retain their surnames, followed by

women in the South, then the Northeast, and finally the West (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995; note that the (primarily Southern) tradition of women retaining their birth surnames as middle names counted as birth surname retention in this study). Therefore, the likelihood that a woman marrying in Hawaii will take her husband's surname should be partly determined by her state of residence.

Given that a change of surname might decrease a professional woman's identifiability (see generally Goldin & Shim, 2004), it is plausible that surname intentions would vary systematically with the bride's income and professional status. US states vary with respect to economic equality of men and women (State Personal Income 2006, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) 1% sample, US Bureau of Economic Analysis 2008; University of Minnesota, IPUMS.org) and this may be correlated with the intentions of brides marrying in Hawaii. Of course, those mainland residents who marry in Hawaii are likely to be relatively affluent, but average income levels in one's home state might still predict attitudes insofar as attitudes reflect local culture. American women (or their families) traditionally pay for most of the expenses associated with marrying (Lenderman, *c.* 2000). If brides from differentially affluent states differ in their attitudes, this may reflect the wealth of the brides' natal families.

Hawaii marriage registration data are available in aggregate form, so any correlations with economic indicators are limited to state-level analyses. I here examine the association between retaining or hyphenating surnames and the average personal income of women and men from those states from which more than 400 brides married in Hawaii in 2006. My hypothesis is that the proportion of women retaining their surname upon marriage will be positively correlated with state-level estimates of women's income, and that this correlation will exceed that for men's income. If surname retention is better predicted by women's income than men's, one might surmise that visiting brides are economically and professionally independent from their husbands-to-be, where these brides opt to keep or hyphenate their birth surnames.

The data are also available according to age categories, permitting a test of the hypothesis that women marrying at older ages will be more likely to retain their premarital surnames. Previous studies of surname change or retention at marriage have found such a pattern (Goldin & Shim, 2004; Hoffnung, 2006; Johnson & Scheuble, 1995; Noack & Wiik, 2008; and see Scheuble & Johnson, 1993; 2005), for which there may be several reasons. Women who marry at later ages are relatively more likely to be well-educated professionals, for whom name change would have financial and professional costs (see generally Goldin & Shim, 2004), and an older bride is also relatively likely to have been married previously and to have children from a former union. If a woman already has children, she may be reluctant to take a surname that is different from theirs, especially if they are dependants. On the other hand, if the former husband is not supporting their dependant children there could be benefits to taking a new husband's surname. The likelihood that stepfathers invest in a woman's children has been shown to increase as a function of his valuing of his relationship with the children's mother (Anderson, Kaplan & Lancaster, 1999; Anderson et al., 1999). Stepfathers do sometimes adopt their wives' children, and this would seem to be much more likely if the mother takes the husband's surname. In the case of older brides, they are more likely to have independent adult children and

so taking the new husband's surname may not have the same appeal. Unfortunately, the data are not simultaneously disaggregated by state and age of bride, nor are data available on whether the bride was married previously or has dependent children. (The bride's profession, marital status immediately preceding marriage, and number of children are *not* recorded in Hawaii upon marriage registration.)

## Method

### *Data description*

Data on surname choices of women marrying in Hawaii in 2006 were made available to me by Brian Horiuchi, Hawaii State Department of Health (personal communication of January 17 2008). The numbers of brides selecting each of the three options were provided according to age categories (Table 1), and residential jurisdictions (Table 2), as long as more than 400 women from that jurisdiction were married in Hawaii in 2006. The latter criterion included twelve states of the US, plus Canada and Japan.

Personal income data from 2006 for the twelve states (State Personal Income 2006, IPUMS 1% sample, US Bureau of Economic Analysis 2008; University of Minnesota, IPUMS.org) were used to compute state-level average annual incomes of females and males over seventeen years of age. (Individual incomes equal to or in excess of US \$1,000,000 are top-coded in these data as US \$999,998.)

### *Statistical analysis*

For purposes of analysis, the numbers of brides who either kept their premarital surnames or hyphenated were summed, and compared with the number who took the husband's surname.  $\chi^2$  tests were used to compare these practices between residents of the state of Hawaii and those who traveled there to marry, as well as between other groups. A  $\chi^2$  test for linear trend was used to assess whether the percentage of brides retaining or hyphenating their surname increased significantly with brides' age category (StatsDirect software, [http://www.statsdirect.com/help/chi\\_square\\_tests/2k.htm](http://www.statsdirect.com/help/chi_square_tests/2k.htm)).

TABLE 1  
PERCENTAGE OF BRIDES CHANGING, HYPHENATING, OR KEEPING LAST NAME AT MARRIAGE IN HAWAII IN 2006, ACCORDING TO THE BRIDE'S AGE (BRIDE'S AGE MISSING FOR ONE OF THE  $N = 28,680$  RECORDS)

Age	Changed	Hyphenated	Kept	Total
Under 20	671 (86.25%)	30 (3.86%)	77 (9.90%)	778
20–24	3968 (89.55%)	145 (3.27%)	318 (7.18%)	4431
25–29	6639 (86.62%)	325 (4.24%)	700 (9.13%)	7664
30–34	4582 (82.34%)	281 (5.05%)	702 (12.61%)	5565
35–39	3065 (80.70%)	242 (6.37%)	491 (12.93%)	3798
40–44	1898 (79.71%)	172 (7.22%)	311 (13.06%)	2381
45+	3055 (75.21%)	261 (6.42%)	746 (18.36%)	4062
TOTAL	23878 (83.26%)	1456 (5.08%)	3345 (11.66%)	28679

TABLE 2  
 PERCENTAGE OF BRIDES CHANGING, HYPHENATING, OR KEEPING LAST NAME AT MARRIAGE IN  
 HAWAII IN 2006 ACCORDING TO THE STATE OR COUNTRY OF BRIDE'S RESIDENCE

State or Country	Changed	Hyphenated	Kept	Total
Hawaii- Island of Hawaii	814 (82.30%)	89 (9.00%)	86 (8.70%)	989
Hawaii- Honolulu	5113 (81.44%)	339 (5.40%)	826 (13.16%)	6278
Hawaii- Kauai	293 (88.79%)	19 (5.76%)	18 (5.45%)	330
Hawaii- Maui	787 (80.64%)	65 (6.66%)	124 (12.70%)	976
California	4044 (81.63%)	295 (5.95%)	615 (12.41%)	4954
Washington	1034 (85.17%)	51 (4.20%)	129 (10.63%)	1214
Texas	973 (89.27%)	49 (4.50%)	68 (6.24%)	1090
Arizona	667 (87.19%)	36 (4.70%)	62 (8.10%)	765
Illinois	525 (83.86%)	30 (4.79%)	71 (11.34%)	626
Oregon	502 (85.37%)	28 (4.76%)	58 (9.86%)	588
Colorado	422 (85.08%)	27 (5.44%)	47 (9.48%)	496
Florida	407 (83.23%)	25 (5.11%)	57 (11.66%)	489
Ohio	420 (89.74%)	18 (3.85%)	30 (6.41%)	468
New York	302 (72.08%)	22 (5.25%)	95 (22.67%)	419
Minnesota	363 (88.54%)	12 (2.93%)	35 (8.54%)	410
Canada	721 (74.79%)	49 (5.08%)	194 (20.12%)	964
Japan	388 (90.02%)	6 (1.39%)	37 (8.58%)	431
Rest of States/Countries	6104 (84.86%)	296 (4.12%)	793 (11.02%)	7193
TOTAL	23879 (83.26%)	1456 (5.08%)	3345 (11.66%)	28680

Data from the twelve residential states with more than 400 brides marrying in Hawaii in 2006 were used to correlate the percent retaining or hyphenating their surname with the average personal income of women and of men from those states. A linear regression analysis (ordinary least squares) was performed to test whether the percentage of brides from these twelve states who retained or hyphenated their surname was better predicted by the average state-level personal income of women or men (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17).

## Results

Overall, 16.7 percent of women marrying in Hawaii in 2006 opted for either surname retention (11.7%) or hyphenation (5.1%). The percentage of brides who kept or hyphenated their surnames (Table 1 and Figure 1) was greater the older the bride ( $\chi^2$  total = 20.67,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < .0001$ ;  $\chi^2$  for linear trend = 19.99,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). The percentage increased with each age category, except that brides less than 20 years of age had a greater rate of retention or hyphenation than did either brides aged 20–24 or 25–29 years of age.

There was substantial variation in naming practices according to residential jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> 18.3 percent of 8573 brides from Hawaii (who had their marriages

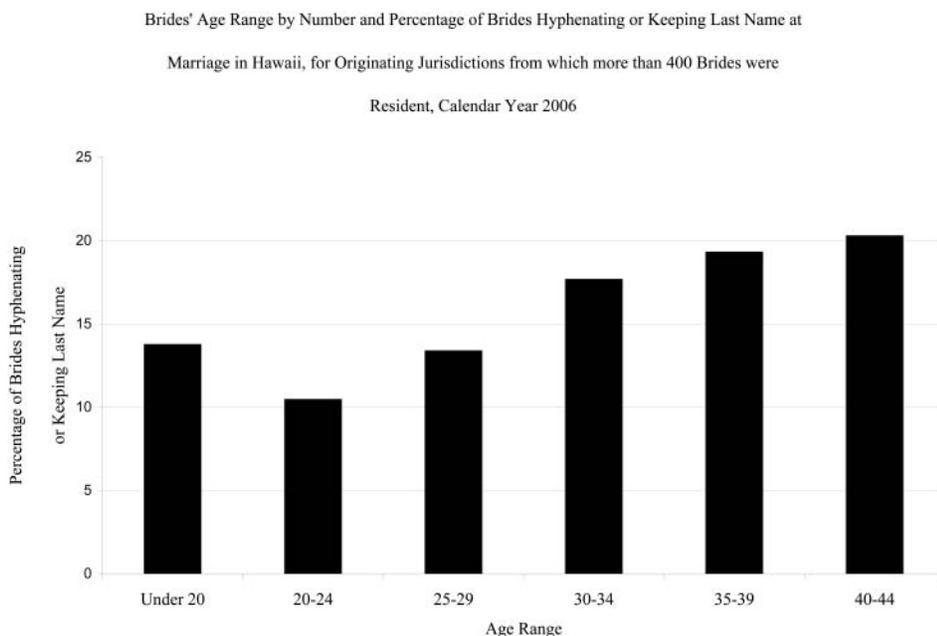


FIGURE 1 Brides' age range by number and percentage of brides hyphenating or keeping last name at marriage in Hawaii, for originating jurisdiction from which more than 400 brides were resident, calendar year 2006.

performed within their “home state”) kept or hyphenated their surnames, whereas 16.1 percent of 11,519 brides from the mainland states (Table 2) chose one of these options: this was a significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 15.6$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

Within the US, the number of brides who intended to retain or hyphenate their surname varied by state, from a low of 10.2 percent for women from Ohio to a high of 27.9 percent for those from New York (Table 3). This variation was not in accord with the regional variations reported by Johnson & Scheubel (1995), but it was significantly correlated with the state-level average personal income for women ( $r = .72$ ,  $N = 12$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and for men ( $r = .59$ ,  $N = 12$ ,  $p < .05$ ) for the same year (Figure 2). Moreover, a regression analysis using both income predictors reveals that the state-level average income of women was a marginally significant predictor of percentage of brides retaining or hyphenating their surname (regression  $F_{(2,9)} = 5.09$ ,  $p = .033$ ; standardized  $\beta = .847$ ,  $t = 1.88$ ,  $p = .09$ ), but men's income was not significant (standardized  $\beta = -.14$ ,  $t = -.31$ ,  $p > .10$ ). The difference between men's and women's average incomes was not significantly associated with surname choice ( $r = .16$ ,  $N = 12$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

## Conclusions

The marriage data from Hawaii provide information about the numbers of brides who retained or hyphenated surnames rather than taking the new husband's surname.

TABLE 3  
 MEAN PERSONAL INCOME (US DOLLARS) IN 2006 FOR MEN AND WOMEN OVER  
 17 YEARS OF AGE, AND PERCENT OF BRIDES RETAINING OR HYPHENATING  
 SURNAME ACCORDING TO THE STATE OF THEIR RESIDENCE

State	Male	Female	Percentage of Brides retaining or hyphenating premarital surname
Ohio	43240.15	23769.62	10.26
Texas	45261.27	23577.08	10.73
Minnesota	46978.80	27263.25	11.46
Arizona	46512.10	26104.33	12.81
Oregon	43347.46	24542.67	14.63
Washington	49593.51	26821.38	14.83
Colorado	51562.58	28510.18	14.92
Illinois	49897.87	26889.25	16.13
Florida	46629.47	26016.10	16.77
Hawaii	47193.70	28469.05	18.27
California	51553.38	29589.89	18.37
New York	50930.86	29565.15	27.92

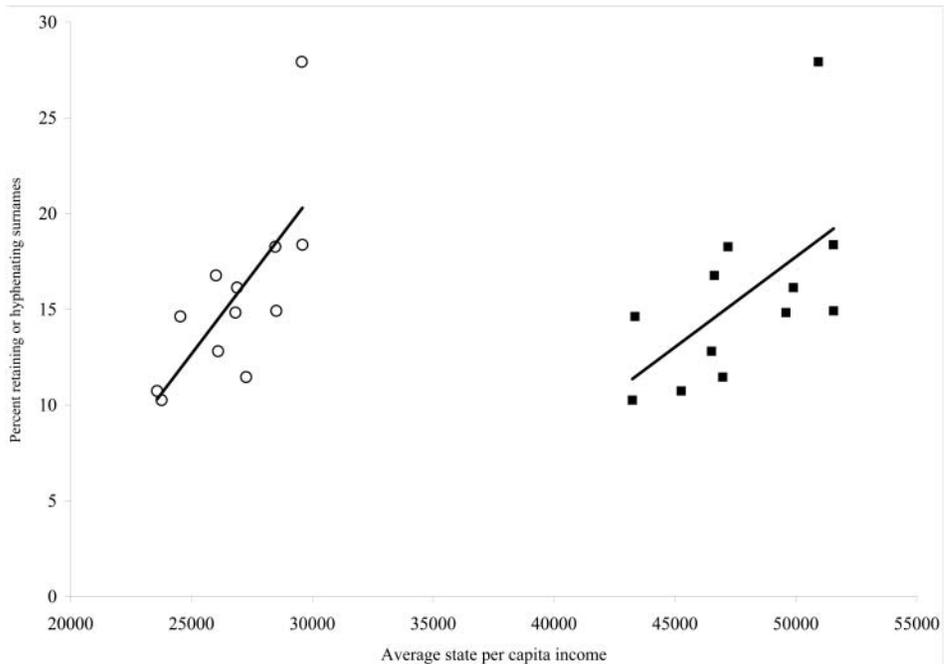


FIGURE 2 Percentage of brides marrying in Hawaii in 2006 who either hyphenated or kept their surnames is significantly correlated with average personal income of women in 2006 in their state of residence ( $r=.72, N=12$  \*) and the corresponding average income for men ( $r=.59, N=12$  \*\*). Average income of women ○ and of men ■.

\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .05$ .

Among those marrying in Hawaii in 1978, approximately 10 percent of brides retained or hyphenated surnames. The present analysis reveals that almost 17 percent of brides marrying in Hawaii in 2006 — some twenty-eight years later — stated that they would retain or hyphenate surnames. Unless there has been a selection bias in who chooses to marry in Hawaii over this time period (such as more of these brides being older), it would appear that the prevalence of retaining one's surname has almost doubled, but it is still a minority practice. The data from Hawaii are unique in that all brides provide information about age, state of residence, and intentions regarding their surnames upon marrying.

There was substantial variation in the percentage of brides retaining or hyphenating their surnames in relation to the state of residence, with Ohio women the least likely and those from New York the most likely. This decision was significantly correlated with state-level average income for women and for men for the same year, but in a regression analysis with both predictors only the state-level average income for women was a marginally significant predictor. Of course, with only twelve states in the analysis, there was limited statistical power. In a recent Norwegian analysis of wives' surnames, those residing in large urban centers were more likely to have retained their own surnames than those residing in rural areas (Noack & Wiik, 2008). The brides marrying in Hawaii but normally residing in other states may have been disproportionately from urban centres such as New York City or Los Angeles. (These are the two largest US cities and also happen to be in the two states with the highest percentages of surname retention or hyphenation, other than Hawaii itself.)

The strongest finding was that older brides were more likely to retain or hyphenate their surnames than were younger brides. There are several obvious candidate explanations for this significant linear trend including the woman's professional and economic status, a prior marriage, and her parental status. Moreover, the groom's prior marital and parental status may also be relevant. Both older brides and their grooms are likely to have commitments to children and other relatives such that signaling, by name change, an intention either to form a new family or to acquire entitlements to husband's and his family's status and resources would not be welcomed.

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## Note

<sup>1</sup> 25.2% of 964 Canadian women marrying in Hawaii kept their premarital name or hyphenated, compared to just 10.0% of the 431 Japanese women who married there.

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## Notes on contributor

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