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Little is known about the prevalence and determinants of women's name choice at marriage. This article analyzes nationally representative survey data on two generations—a sample of 929 married persons and a sample of 180 of their married adult offspring. Only 1.4% of the women in the main sample and 4.6% of their offspring made a nonconventional last name choice. About a fourth retained their birth surname as their middle name. Major determinants of naming choices were (a) region, (b) gender role traditionalism and wife's career orientation, and (c) educational attainment. The marital naming choice of the mother had a strong effect on her daughter's naming but no effect on the name used by her son's spouse.

Social explanations for patterns and trends in marital naming have received only sporadic attention from both social scientists and the mass media, although researchers have recognized the need to further study the issue (Duggan, Cota, & Dion, 1993). In the United States, the normative expectation is that women will take their husband's last name when they marry. How much this tradition has changed over time is uncertain, given that there has been little research that has empirically examined the extent to which marital naming patterns depart from this traditional norm. One recent study found that "10% of married women in the U.S. use something other than their husband's last name" (Brightman, 1994, p. 9). Five percent of the women in the study hyphenated their last name with that of their spouse, 2% used their maiden name exclusively, and 3% used some other alternative, such as their birth surname as a middle name. Women most likely to use a nonconventional last name had higher levels of education, were younger, and were either in the low-income or high-income category (Brightman, 1994). Although these findings give some indication of the frequency of nonconventional naming choices in the U.S., the study failed to empirically examine, in any detail, what factors account for nontraditional marital naming choices.

The extent to which naming patterns depart from the traditional pattern can have important social consequences. Language, and the meanings and symbols attached to it, tell us a lot about social relationships (McDowell & Pringle, 1992). The practice of a married woman "taking her husband's name" arises from a time when the patriarchal nature of marriage was dominant in American society. This practice symbolically reinforced the view that the woman's identity was subsumed

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under her status as a wife (Weitzman, 1981). If the United States is moving away from this pattern of naming, then other issues are raised, such as how a family is labeled and identified by others (e.g., as "the Jones"), which last name is given to offspring, and the extent to which use of different last names by the two spouses affects identification with the marriage. Further examination of these issues first requires some empirical evidence about the extent to which such practices are changing and about factors that influence marital name choices. Our research study focuses on the national prevalence of marital naming practices in two generations, the social determinants of naming choices, and the intergenerational transmission of marital naming practices. Little empirical information is available about any of these issues.

Premarital preferences indicated by college students suggest that in about 9 out of 10 marriages, women plan to take the last name of their husband (Scheuble & Johnson, 1993). Little is known about the prevalence of the woman taking the last name of her spouse but keeping her birth surname as her middle name. Although personal observations suggest that this is a relatively common choice, Brightman's (1994) findings from a national sample suggest that only 3% choose this practice.

What factors predict whether or not a woman will make a nonconventional marital name choice? We examine the following characteristics of married persons that may affect name choice: age, age at first marriage, education, premarital cohabitation, age when dating began, religiosity, income, gender role traditionalism, wife's career orientation, parents' naming practices, community size, and region.

We expect that younger women will be more likely than older women to select a nonconventional last name upon marriage, given that older women are more likely to have married during a time when traditional role expectations were more pervasive. Younger women are more likely to have experienced changing marital role expectations that have been brought about by increased educational levels, lower fertility, higher divorce rates, and changes in gender role attitudes.

Because of the observed relationship between educational attainment and egalitarian views of women's roles (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988; Losh-Hesselbart, 1987; Thorton, Alwin, & Camburn, 1983), we expect that nonconventional naming practices should increase with years of schooling. On the basis of the study by Brightman (1994), we also expect those respondents with higher family incomes to be more likely to select nonconventional last name choices than those respondents with lower incomes. Career identity for women may also affect name choice. Women with professional careers may desire to maintain a continuity of name identity in their profession (for example, publishing under the same name), which may decrease the odds that they drop their birth name at marriage.

Research demonstrates that people with strong religious beliefs tend to be more traditional than less religious people in lifestyle choices and beliefs, including gender role attitudes and marriage and family choices (Grasmick, Patterson Wilcox, & Bird, 1990; Jensen & Jensen, 1993). Thus, we expect that the higher degree of religiosity, the lower the odds of selecting a nontraditional marital name.

Cohabiting with her spouse before marriage should increase a woman's odds of selecting a nonconventional marital name. Premarital cohabitors tend to have more liberal values and norms toward the institution of marriage (Booth & Johnson, 1988). It is also possible that having had a relationship history of living together with different last names might influence naming following marriage.

Because people of color, particularly Latinos, have variation in marital naming as part of their cultural background, we expect to find a race and ethnicity effect in marital naming. In some Latin American countries, husbands and wives keep both their father's and mother's last names as their last name (Cherlin, 1978; Collier, Skidmore, & Blakemore, 1992) or opt to use their birth name on a day-to-day basis (Lobo, 1982). It is not known to what extent these practices are continued by Latinos in the United States. Much less is known about the expected pattern among African Americans, so we cannot hypothesize the direction of the effect for this group.

Because of socialization influences and continuity of family traditions, we expect the odds of a woman choosing a nonconventional name to be greater if her mother also chose a nonconventional name. Because daughters are more likely than sons to model their mother's behavior, we would expect to find this generational effect to be stronger for daughters.

Women who married at a later age may be less likely to have changed their name than those who married earlier because they had more time to establish an adult identity with their birth name. Region of the country may affect marital naming because of possible subcultural variations in naming

expectations and patterns, and differences in willingness to innovate. Residents of large urban areas may also be more willing to adopt nontraditional naming choices than those in smaller communities.

Research Procedures

The Sample

Respondents in the two samples used in this study were interviewed over the telephone in 1992. The first sample, referred to as the *main sample* in this article, consists of 929 currently married adults who were first interviewed in 1980 as part of a long-term panel study of marital quality over the life course. The 1980 respondents were a representative national sample of 2,033 married persons, ages 19 through 55, living with their spouse. In 1992, 58% of the original sample was successfully reinterviewed (Booth, Amato, Johnson, & Edwards, 1993).

The second sample, which we refer to as the *offspring sample*, consists of offspring of the persons in the main sample. To be included in the sample, offspring had to be 19 years of age or older in 1992 and living in their parents' household in 1980. The respondents in the main sample were asked to provide the name and telephone number of their child. In cases where there was more than one eligible child, a random procedure was used to select the child to be interviewed. Interviews were obtained with 471 offspring for a completion of 82%. The sample used here consists of 180 of these offspring who were ever married. In both samples, either the husband or wife was interviewed, not both.

The original sample was found to be representative (Booth et al., 1993) of married persons in the United States. Because the 1992 interviews were based on persons still married 12 years later, they represent a more stable and older segment of the adult population than would be true of a sample representative of ever-married persons in 1992. The only characteristic on which the two samples do not overlap is marriage date. Because of the way the samples were selected, all persons in the main sample married, at least once, before 1980 and all in the offspring sample married for the first time after 1980.

Measuring Marital Naming

Respondents were asked about the last (and middle) name used by the wife following marriage. They were asked: "When you got married, did (you/your wife) change (your/her) last name to (your husband's/yours)?" If wives did not change their last name, respondents were asked whether the wife had kept her maiden name, used a hyphenated name, or used another alternative. If the wife did take the husband's last name, the respondent was asked if the wife used her maiden name as her middle name. Two variables were created from these items. The first is *last name choice*. If the wife changed her last name to that of her husband, it was coded 0. All other last name choices (kept birth name, hyphenated name, or other choice) were coded 1. The second measure, *marital naming choice*, contrasts the wife taking her husband's name and dropping her birth name completely (coded 0) with other less conventional choices (coded 1), such as keeping her birth name as a middle or last name, hyphenating, or other nonconventional choices. The only difference between these two measures is that women with a birth surname as a middle name were coded 0 for last name choice and 1 for marital naming choice.

Independent and Control Variables

Most of the variables were measured in the same way in both samples. For the main sample, we used responses to the 1980 survey. Educational attainment was measured by the number of years of schooling completed. Age and age at marriage were measured in years. The respondent indicated the total family income of the last year by selecting one of 12 income categories. Religiosity was assessed by asking the respondent how often they attended religious services in the last 6 months. Responses range from weekly (1) to never (4). The measures of cohabitation was whether or not the respondent reported having lived with their present spouse before they were married. Gender role traditionalism was a summated scale of responses to seven items (see Booth & Amato, 1994, for the wording of items) that tapped the extent to which the respondent held traditional or egalitarian views on the roles of men and women in work and family. The higher the score, the more traditional the gender role attitudes. The alpha reliability was .72 in the main sample and .65 in the offspring sample. The wife's career orientation was tapped by the response to an item asking for reasons why the wife worked. Responses to working "because (I/she) wanted a career" were ranked from very important (4) to not important at all (1). The small proportion of

women who had never worked for pay in the marriage were coded 0 on this item. Career orientation was available only in the main sample. Region of residence was classified into the U.S. Census regions of Northeast, North Central, South, and West. Community size was measured by whether or not the respondent lived in a standard metropolitan area (SMA). Variables used only in the analysis of the offspring sample were the age when the offspring first began dating, and the type of marital name used by the offspring's mother. The variables used define the wife's characteristics, except in the case of gender role traditionalism, religiosity, and marital name used by the offspring's mother. In these cases, they refer to the respondent, who could be either the wife or husband..

Analysis Method

Means and correlations were used to examine the prevalence of marital naming choices in the samples and the correlates of naming choice. In the multivariate analysis of determinants of marital naming, the presence of binary dependent variables coupled with the need to simultaneously control for a number of independent and control variables led us to select logistic regression as the primary analysis method.

FINDINGS

Our first research objective was to ascertain from a national sample of married persons the prevalence of nonconventional naming choices in two generations of the U.S. married population. Results from both samples confirm that the practice of the wife changing her last name to that of her husband is the choice in nearly all marriages. In the main sample, only 1.4% reported using a nonconventional last name. The proportion selecting a nonconventional last name was significantly greater ($p < .01$) in the offspring sample, in which 4.7% selected a nonconventional last name.

If the woman did not take her husband's last name, the respondent was asked about the last name that was used. Among the offspring, an equal number of women either kept their birth names or hyphenated. In the main sample, hyphenating was less common, with "other" the most common among the nonconventional choices. The nature of the "other" response is unclear, because the interviewers did not seek further information on this answer. Examination of the respondents selecting "other" found that several may have been women who retained the last name they had in a previous marriage, perhaps to keep their last name the same as the last name of their children.

Another naming strategy was for the woman to retain her birth surname as her middle name. In both the main and offspring samples, this was the choice among approximately one-quarter of the respondents (24% in the main, 25% in the offspring sample). The difference between samples was not statistically significant ($p > .05$).

Next, we identify respondent characteristics that are associated with nonconventional naming choices. We first explore the correlates of naming, then move into a multivariate model. Descriptive information on all variables and the correlations of marital naming with the independent variables are presented in Table 1. Correlations with marital naming choice (any nonconventional last or middle name) are shown for both the main and offspring samples. Because only eight women in the offspring sample used a nonconventional last name, unstable estimates are likely, so we report only the correlations with last name choice for the main sample.

In both samples, marital name choice was significantly correlated with a number of respondent characteristics. In the main sample, the strongest correlate was found for region. The south had a much higher rate of nonconventional marital naming (51%) than did any other region (West = 21%, Northeast = 17%, and North Central = 11%). Other significant correlates included age at marriage, years of schooling, wife's career orientation, gender role traditionalism, and SMA residence. All were in the expected direction, except SMA residence. Women who married later in life, were better educated, more career oriented, and held more liberal gender role values were more likely to go by a nonconventional marital name. While the effect was small, women in smaller communities were more likely than those in metropolitan areas to use a nonconventional marital name.

The correlates for the offspring were similar, but some differences emerged. The correlations with region (expressed in the offspring sample as South versus all other regions because of the smaller sample size) and gender role traditionalism were consistent in both samples, but other correlations were not. Among the offspring, older respondents were significantly more likely to report a nonconventional marital name for the wife,

TABLE 1. MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, RANGES, AND CORRELATIONS WITH MARITAL NAMING FOR VARIABLES IN THE MAIN AND OFFSPRING SAMPLES

Variable	Mean	*SD*	Range	Correlation with Marital Name Choice	Correlation with Last Name Choice
Main sample (n = 929)					
Last name choice[a]	.014	.118	0, 1		
Marital name choice[a]	.252	.434	0, 1		
Age of respondent	35.899	9.024	19–55	.05	.01
Age at marriage	22.527	4.758	14–50	.09***	.13***
Years of schooling	13.904	2.488	3–25	.11**	–.02
Times married	1.121	.381	1–3	.04	.08*
Cohabited (yes = 1)	.123	.328	0, 1	.03	.12**
Church attendance	2.282	1.193	1–4	–.01	.06*
Family income	8.507	2.381	1–12	.04	.09**
Gender role traditionalism	16.556	3.189	7–27	–.06*	–.08*
Wife's work as career	2.074	1.234	0–4	.12**	.06*
SMA residence (SMA = 1)	.592	.492	0, 1	–.06*	.01
Region of country				.37**	.07
North Central	.315				
Northeast	.210				
South	.277				
West	.198				
Race/ethnicity				.08	.15**
Anglo	.926				
Hispanic	.026				
African American	.036				
Other	.013				
Offspring sample (n = 180)					
Last name choice	.047	.212	0, 1		
Marital name choice	.294	.457	0, 1		
Age of respondent	27.822	4.393	19–38	.12†	
Years of schooling	14.194	2.114	8–22	.00	
Age began dating	15.478	1.522	11–22	–.17*	
Age at 1st marriage	21.989	2.980	16–32	.03	
Church attendance	2.328	1.204	1–4	.02	
Family income	4.483	2.155	1–10	–.03	
Gender role traditionalism	15.239	2.679	8–25	–.11†	
Region (South = 1)	.311	.464	0, 1	.17*	
Gender (female = 1)	.522	.501	0, 1	.11†	
Cohabited (yes = 1)	.328	.471	0, 1	.04	
Mother's naming[a]	.222	.417	0, 1	.27**	

Note: Correlation with region and race/ethnicity in the main sample are eta coefficients.
[a]Nonconventional choice = 1.
†$p \leq .10$. *$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$

but age at first marriage was not significant. Two variables not available in the main sample were significant: mother's name choice and age dating began. If the mother of the respondent (as determined from the main sample) had a nonconventional last name, the offspring was also more likely to choose one. Offspring who began dating at a later age were less likely to adopt a nontraditional last name. Perhaps early daters had less parental control or came from less traditional households.

Several of the variables that we expected to be related to marital naming failed to reach significance in either sample. These include number of times married, premarital cohabitation, family income, and religiosity measured by church attendance. Another measure of religiosity—the importance of religion in the respondent's life, ranging from very important (4) to not important at all (1)—was substituted in the analyses and found to have an even smaller (and nonsignificant) association with naming.

Correlates of last name choice (whether or not the wife uses something other than her husband's last name as her last name) in the main sample depart to some extent from those found for the measure of any nonconventional marital name

choice, which taps the use of a birth surname as a middle name. The findings were consistent for age at marriage, gender role traditionalism, and wife's work as career. However, neither years of schooling, SMA residence, nor region were significant for last name choice. Several measures that were not significantly correlated with the marital naming measure were significant for last name choice. These included number of times married, premarital cohabitation with the spouse, church attendance, and family income. All were in the anticipated direction, with age at marriage and cohabitation showing the strongest relationship. Because many of the respondent characteristics are correlated, a better understanding of the determinants of naming practices can be gained from a multivariate analysis. Our regression models analyze only marital name choice, not last name choice. We do not report models for last name choice because the highly skewed distribution of last name choice in the main sample and the small number of persons choosing a nonconventional last name in the offspring sample made the multivariate results unstable and subject to large influences of a small number of cases. (Logistic regression results for the main sample with last name choice as the dependent variable are available from the authors).

While many of the variables used in the logistic regression models are the same for both samples, there are some differences. The smaller size of the offspring sample made it necessary for us to exclude race/ethnicity. We also classified region as South (1) versus the rest of the country (0) for the same reason. Variables included only in the analyses of the main sample were the number of times the respondent has been married (multiple marriages were rare in the offspring sample) and whether or not they lived in a SMA (place of residence was not coded for the offspring). Regression models for the offspring sample included two variables not in the main sample: the age the offspring began dating (not asked in the main sample) and whether the respondent's mother used a nonconventional marital name. To retain as many cases as possible in the models, dummy variables for missing cases on premarital cohabitation (11% missing) and mother's marital naming choice (14% missing) were included as independent variables.

Logistic regression analyses of marital naming choice for the main sample are reported in Table

TABLE 2. LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS FOR MAIN SAMPLE WITH MARITAL NAMING CHOICE AS THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE

	Regression Coefficients			
	Model 1		Model 2	
Independent Variables	*B*	Exp(*B*)	*B*	Exp(*B*)
Age of respondent	0.008	1.008	0.012	1.012
Age at marriage	0.047*	1.049	0.049*	1.050
Years of schooling	0.109**	1.115	0.071*	1.073
Cohabited (1 = yes)	0.057	1.058	–0.015	0.985
Church attendance	0.003	1.003	–0.030	0.971
Times married	–0.123	0.884	–0.151	0.860
Region				
South (comparison group)		1.000		1.000
West	–1.458**	0.233	–1.414**	0.243
North Central	–2.149**	0.117	–2.186**	0.112
Northeast	–1.605**	0.201	–1.615**	0.199
Live in SMA (1 = yes)	–0.289	0.749	–0.309	0.734
Race/ethnicity				
Anglo (comparison group)		1.000		1.000
Hispanic	0.319	1.376	0.343	1.409
African American	0.087	1.091	0.003	1.003
Other	0.813	2.255	0.805	2.237
Gender role traditionalism			–0.046	0.955
Wife's work as career			0.144*	1.154
Family income			–0.001	0.999
Constant	–2.593		–1.630	
Model chi-square	147.22** (*df* = 13)		155.29** (*df* = 16)	

Note: Nonconventional choice = 1. $n = 929$.
*$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$.

2. We report two models. The first includes only social background variables, and the second adds measures that might intervene between the background variables and name choice. In Model 1, educational attainment, age at marriage, and region had significant effects. All of these also had significant bivariate correlations, but this analysis shows that each has an effect independent of the other variables in the model. SMA residence, which had a significant correlation, was no longer significant in the regression. Model 2 added gender role traditionalism, wife's career orientation, and income, of which only career orientation was significant. The only background variable showing a decrease in effect with the addition of these three variables was years of schooling. Part of the effect of education on naming was due to the impact of schooling on gender role attitudes and career orientation. The education effect was reduced from a 12% increase in the odds of selecting a nonconventional marital name for each additional year of schooling to a 7% increase. When wife's career orientation is dropped from Model 2, the gender role traditionalism measure becomes significant ($p < .05$), reflecting that these two measures are moderately correlated ($r = .30$). The effects of region ($p < .01$) and age at marriage were virtually unchanged from Model 1 to Model 2.

We next examine the determinants of naming choice in the offspring sample. The logistic regression models for this analysis are found in Table 3. Three models were used to explore the effects. The first included most of the variables examined in the main sample plus two variables not used in the main sample: age dating began and age at marriage. The second model added a generational effect—the respondent's mother's marital naming choice—and the third model tested if the effect of mother's name choice was stronger for daughters than for sons. Three variables were significant in the first model: age, age the respondent began dating, and residence in the South. The effect of age was opposite the direction we had hypothesized, in that the odds of nonconventional naming increased with age; however, this effect was only marginally significant ($p < .10$). Of the four variables in this model with significant zero-order correlations, only gender role traditionalism was not significant in the multivariate model. Further analysis, not reported here, found that the covariation of gender role traditionalism with education was responsible for reducing this effect to nonsignificance.

The effect of residence in the South was similar to the effect in the main sample, although the difference in the odds of taking a nonconventional marital name was not as large (about 3 times greater among offspring compared with 4 times greater in the main sample). We expect, on the basis of conversations with persons living in the

TABLE 3. LOGISTIC REGRESSION FOR THE OFFSPRING SAMPLE WITH MARITAL NAMING CHOICE AS THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Independent Variables	*B*	Exp(*B*)	*B*	Exp(*B*)	*B*	Exp(*B*)
Age	0.088*	1.092	0.071	1.074	0.080	1.083
Years of schooling	–0.066	0.936	–0.056	0.945	–0.099	0.906
Age began dating	–0.280**	0.756	–0.269**	0.764	–0.303**	0.739
Age at first marriage	0.089	1.093	0.106	1.112	0.112	1.118
Church attendance	0.023	1.024	0.068	1.071	0.037	1.037
Family income	–0.053	0.948	–0.062	0.940	–0.087	0.916
Gender role traditionalism	–0.075	0.927	–0.037	0.964	–0.053	0.949
Region (South = 1)	1.086***	2.963	0.692	1.998	0.689	1.992
Gender (female = 1)	0.594	1.812	0.663	1.941	0.179	1.196
Cohabited before marriage	0.290	1.336	0.207	1.229	0.159	1.173
Cohabited[a]	0.229	1.257	0.252	1.286	0.194	1.214
Mother's name choice			1.185***	3.271	0.276	1.318
Mother's name choice[a]			0.334	1.396	0.445	1.561
Gender × mother's name choice					1.703**	5.493
Gender × mother's name choice[a]					–0.216	0.806
Constant	0.429		–0.663		0.834	
Model chi-square	21.15* ($df = 11$)		28.19** ($df = 13$)		32.51** ($df = 15$)	

Note: Nonconventional middle or last name choice = 1. $n = 180$.
[a]Missing = 1.
*$p \leq .10$. **$p \leq .05$. ***$p \leq .01$.

South, that the explanation for this effect is subcultural. Informants reported that it is common for women in the South to retain their birth surname as their middle name. However, they do not usually use both names in everyday life (as does Hillary Rodam Clinton). This practice is said to have a long history in Southern society.

If this is a tradition carried from one generation to another, then we would expect the effect of living in the South to decrease when controlling for the respondent's mother's marital naming. The results are reported in Model 2 of Table 3. Mother's naming had a significant effect in this model. Respondents whose mothers had nonconventional marital names were over 3 times more likely to have one themselves. The effect of the Southern region was reduced by about one-third and was no longer significant, supporting the view of a subcultural tradition carried from one generation to another.

Finally, we tested whether a married woman's naming is a tradition carried down primarily from mother to daughter or is generalized to the marriages of sons as well. The interaction between the gender of the respondent and mother's naming was added to the equation in Model 3. The interaction effect was statistically significant and the additive effect of mother's naming decreased to nonsignificance. Daughters whose mothers had nonconventional marital names were 5½ more times likely to use a nonconventional name themselves. Among sons, their mother's naming choice had no significant effect on the name taken by the woman the son married.

Discussion and Conclusions

Several conclusions about marital naming are warranted. The practice of women taking their husband's surname as their own last name is the predominant naming choice for American married couples. Comparison of the two generations shows some minor erosion of this practice, but it is still the norm in more than 95 out of 100 marriages. These findings are consistent with those of Brightman (1994), who found that 7% of respondents used their birth names as a last name or hyphenated their birth name with their spouse's last name. The percentage of women choosing a nonconventional last name choice is smaller in the main sample than in either the offspring sample or the Brightman (1994) study. This may reflect the older age and more stable marriages of the main sample rather than a change across generations. Because the main sample excludes persons who divorced or permanently separated between 1980 and 1992 (those persons were not asked the naming questions), nonconventional last name choices may be underestimated. Highly educated career-oriented women have been found to have high divorce rates (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1989) and are also more likely, as we have shown here, to make nonconventional last name choices. Because the duration of marriages is shorter in the offspring sample, excluding divorced respondents would bias it less. The lower odds of selecting a nonconventional last name in the main sample compared with the offspring sample may be explained by this bias rather than by a generational effect.

Our expectation that younger women would be more likely than older women to choose nonconventional names was not supported in either sample, and this also raises questions about the presence of a generational trend towards more nonconventional naming. The relationship between age and naming did not change much and remained nonsignificant (or in the unexpected direction) even when other variables correlated with age (education, gender role traditionalism, and cohabitation) were excluded from the regression models. Perhaps marriage cohort, rather than birth cohort, is more likely to affect naming choices. To test for this possibility, we substituted number of years married for age in the equations, and found that it made little difference. Either way of measuring a cohort effect yielded nonsignificant findings. While the main and the offspring samples overlap in age, they do not overlap in marital cohorts. All persons in the main sample were married before 1980 and all in the offspring sample were married after 1980. It is possible that a trend towards more nonconventional naming began in the 1980s, but was not consistent or detectable before that time. Further research with larger representative samples that include ever-married persons is needed to resolve whether such a cohort effect is present.

Our research shows that a common practice is for a woman to retain her birth surname as her middle name. This practice appears to reflect both cultural tradition (in the South) and the impact of more liberal gender role attitudes, career orientation, and higher educational attainment among women. Because the measure we used in the regression analyses combined using the birth name as a middle name and other last name choices in the nonconventional category, it is possible that the effects, other than region, may reflect these

last name choices only. However, other analyses, not reported here, that compared women retaining their birth name as a middle name with all other choices showed results nearly identical to those reported here. Brightman (1994) found that only 3% of women reported using their birth name as a middle name, compared with one-fourth of the respondents in both our samples. This difference may reflect how the questions were asked. Our study explicitly asked for information about the use of birth name as a middle name, while it was not clear what questions were asked in the Brightman study. Perhaps we measured actual naming, whereas the Brightman study may have tapped the use of the middle name as an integral part of the last name—in essence using two last names. Further research is needed on this issue. It may be that keeping a birth surname as a middle name has different determinants than using it in common discourse.

Another conclusion warranted by our findings is that marital name choices are transmitted, to some degree, across generations. Naming practices appear to be carried down from mother to daughter (but not from mother to son), with daughters of mothers who had made nonconventional last name choices more likely to also make such a choice for themselves.

Finally, the strong effect of region on naming was a surprise. Our review of the literature on naming and Southern culture found no previously published studies either commenting on or documenting this apparently widespread practice in Southern states. Perhaps it is so prevalent to people living in the region that it has not been viewed as a particularly Southern cultural tradition. When we asked about this practice, several Southern informants expressed surprise that all U.S. women did not keep their birth surname as a middle name at marriage. Further historical and ethnographic research on the origins of this practice and factors responsible for its persistence is needed.

Because the occurrence of married women keeping their birth name as their last name was rare, we could not explore determinants of this naming choice in much detail. Research on other samples is needed to further identify factors that affect this naming choice. Research in which naming choice is treated as an independent variable is also needed. Such research would tell us more about the consequences of naming choice for the marriage, such as the impact on marital quality, marital commitment, marital satisfaction, marital success, and relationships with relatives, in-laws, and children.

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