

What's In a Name? Marital Name Choice Revisited

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Abstract In two studies we assessed the percentage of brides who chose nontraditional marital names and characteristics that were related to name choice. In Study 1 we analyzed wedding announcements from *The New York Times*, 1982–2002. In Study 2 we surveyed the name choices, reasons for them, and associated characteristics of a sample of 126 college-educated women who have been part of a longitudinal study since 1993. A substantial minority of brides (29%) chose nontraditional names in Study 1, whereas 46% did in Study 2; the difference reflects the higher proportion of Women of Color and the higher educational level of women in Study 2. Other characteristics associated with nontraditional naming were: older age at marriage, more feminist attitudes, higher career commitment, and less value of the role of mother.

Keywords Attitudes · Career commitment · College-educated women · Feminism · Marital names · Motherhood

Women's marital name choice has been of continuing interest to researchers because the choice makes a statement about values and identity. Name choice was an integral part of the fight for women's rights during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Kupper, 1990). Having won the right to choose, second wave feminists have considered keeping one's birth name to be an indicator of feminist values (Dralle, Asson, & Mackiewicz, 1981; Forbes, Adams-Curtis, White, & Hamm, 2002; Stannard, 1977). In a recent study of values Suter (2004) found that her community sample of Catholic women shared that perspective. The sample viewed nontraditional marital naming as feminist

and feminism as anti-family and anti-home. In studies of stereotypes of women, Atkinson (1987) and Murray (1997) found that women who kept their birth names were perceived as more feminist and less likely to make good wives than those who took their husband's name. As women's work place participation has increased and diversified into nontraditional occupations, women's identities have increasingly been defined by their roles outside the family. Because names are related to identity, researchers have asked whether more women are keeping their birth names (Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Scheuble & Johnson, 1993; Scheuble, Klingemann, & Johnson, 2000) and what characteristics women who do keep their birth names have in common (Foss & Edson, 1989; Stafford & Kline, 1996).

Researchers have used a variety of definitions of traditional and nontraditional naming. Keeping one's birth name is always considered nontraditional. Most researchers include hyphenating birth and husband's name in that category as well, although Goldin and Shim (2004) did not. Some also include keeping one's birth name as a middle name (for example, Scheuble & Johnson, 1993; Twenge, 1997), whereas others do not. This disagreement reflects the disparate meanings that keeping one's birth name as a middle name may hold for different women. Southern women have frequently kept their birth name as middle name, because it is a southern tradition to show the lineage of both parental families (Johnson & Scheuble, 1995), whereas Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Hilary Rodham Clinton were making feminist statements when they would not relinquish their birth names and kept them as middle names (Gornick, 2005).

In a survey of currently married women, only 10% were found to have nontraditional names, including birth name, hyphenated name, or birth name as middle name

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(Brightman, 1994). Younger wives were more likely than older ones, more educated wives were more likely than less educated ones, and those from higher income households were more likely than those from lower income ones to use nontraditional names. The polling sample included women of all ages, many of whom married before 1975 when it became legal in all states for a woman to keep her birth name. Such a sample cannot indicate what contemporary brides choose to do 30 years later.

Studies with college samples have shown higher percentages of women planning to use nontraditional naming when they marry. Scheuble and Johnson (1993) found that 18% of undergraduate women planned to make nontraditional choices, and 82% planned to take their husband's name. Women planning to marry at later ages and expecting nontraditional work roles were more likely to prefer nontraditional naming. Twenge (1997) surveyed traditional age undergraduate women and found that 40% planned to adopt a nontraditional name, including keeping birth name, hyphenating, or using both names, and 60% planned to take their husband's name. In comparison to Scheuble and Johnson's sample, Twenge's sample included more women who were immigrants and Women of Color, which may account for the higher percentage who preferred nontraditional naming. Although taking one's husband's name is traditional in the United States, other cultures have different naming practices. For example, Latin American children are given both parents' names. In addition, ethnic surnames may hold special meaning for those who would have to relinquish them in marriage for a non- or other-ethnic name. Twenge found that women born in countries other than the United States and Women of Color were more likely than White American-born women to choose nontraditional naming. Twenge also found that women who wanted nontraditional names scored higher in feminist attitudes and personal agency than those who wanted traditional marital names. The women in these undergraduate samples were overwhelming single (98%); their expressed preferences do not necessarily reflect what they would actually do when they marry.

In addition to asking respondents about their marital name choices, Twenge (1997) asked them to "Please explain in a few sentences why you made that decision." Women who chose traditional naming most often mentioned tradition (41%), identity (21%), bonding/union in marriage (20%), and no reason (12%). Women who chose nontraditional naming most often mentioned identity (44%), professional reasons (21%), bonding/union in marriage (18%), and like/dislike of names (15%). Identity and bonding/union in marriage clearly were interpreted differently by the two different groups.

Johnson and Scheuble (1995) interviewed a national sample of married women and men about the wife's marital

surname. In addition, they interviewed a sample of the respondents' married offspring. They found that only 1% of the older generation (married at least 12 years) had a wife with a nontraditional name, including birth name, hyphenated name, and both names. Southern wives were more likely to have nontraditional marital names than were wives from other regions of the country. Other significant characteristics associated with nontraditional naming were: marrying at an older age, having a higher educational level, having greater career orientation, and holding more liberal gender role attitudes. Nontraditional names were used by 5% of the wives in the younger generation. Characteristics associated with nontraditional naming among the offspring were: coming from the southern region of the country, holding more liberal gender role attitudes, being older at marriage, and having a mother who made a nontraditional marital name choice.

These two types of samples studied do not answer the question of what name choices contemporary brides are making, either because they include women who married generations ago or because they consist of women who have not yet married and faced the naming decision.

Scheuble et al. (2000) analyzed name choices in wedding announcements that appeared in *The New York Times* from 1966 to 1996. They defined nontraditional as keeping birth name or hyphenating, and concluded that brides were more likely to choose nontraditional names in the 1980s and 1990s than in they were in the 1960s and 1970s. Two methodological concerns render their analysis problematic, however. First, in most states keeping one's birth name was not legal until 1975, so women were not free to choose. Second, *The New York Times* did begin routinely to ask about and print name choice until the mid 1980s. In 1982, for example, I found that only 29% of the announcements included name choice (see Table 1). Scheuble et al. assumed that every unspecified name reflects the traditional choice of husband's name, but that is not necessarily the case. Even today, women occasionally withhold specifying their nontraditional name choice because they do not want to offend members of the family.

Goldin and Shim (2004) examined marital naming choices in a content analysis of *The New York Times* wedding announcements, Massachusetts birth records, and Harvard College 5-year books. From these sources, they estimated that the percentage of college women who kept their names (socially and/or professionally) rose from about 2 to 4% around 1975 (when it became legal in all states) to almost 20% in 2001. They distinguished between "keeper" and all others, grouping those who assumed their husband's name, those who hyphenated both last names, those who chose to include both without a hyphen (e.g., Hilary Rodham Clinton), and those for whom no choice was printed. This differs from the categories of traditional and

Table 1 The New York Times wedding announcements with marital name choice for selected years.

Year	Number of announcements	Number of announcements with name choice	Percentage of announcement with name choice
1982	557	161	28.9
1987	609	346	56.8
1992	711	681	95.8
1997	814	551	67.7
2002	652	534	81.9

nontraditional name choice used in the other published studies, which considered hyphenating, and sometimes using both names, as nontraditional. In their analysis of wedding announcements, they assumed that no choice mentioned meant traditional naming, which is likely to have underrepresented nontraditional naming, as pointed out above.

The present research consisted of two studies designed to find out more about naming choices and reasons for them, as well as to examine some of the characteristics of women who make the different choices. The first was a content analysis of wedding announcements published in *The New York Times*. I defined nontraditional naming as keeping one's birth name socially and/or professionally or hyphenating. This study was designed to measure what percentage of brides have made nontraditional choices, whether the percent has changed from 1982 to 2002, and whether age and educational levels of brides and grooms were related to traditional or nontraditional naming. The second study was a survey of a sample of women 10 years out of college, who since 1993 have been part of a longitudinal study of career and family choices (Hoffnung, 2004). As part of the 2003 annual questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they were married, and, if they were, what name they used and why they chose to use it. As a great deal of background information has been gathered from this sample over the years, Study 2 was designed to explore further the characteristics associated with traditional and nontraditional marital name choices.

Because couples who announce their weddings in *The New York Times* are likely to be at least college educated, I predicted that the percentage who chose nontraditional marital names would be between the 18 and 40% found in the college samples (Scheuble & Johnson, 1993; Twenge, 1997). In keeping with Twenge (1997), because the sample in the second study has a high proportion of Women of Color, I predicted that a higher percentage would have chosen nontraditional marital names than in Study 1. Because women's occupational participation has increased, I predicted that nontraditional naming would increase over the decades. Based upon earlier studies, I predicted that women who chose nontraditional names would be older at marriage, marry older grooms, be more educated, and

marry more educated grooms than women choosing traditional names. I predicted that traditional name choosers would have background indicators that were more traditional, such as religious affiliation, lower educational level of their mothers, more traditional attitude scores, and lower status college attendance than nontraditional name users. Based upon the results of the Twenge (1997) study, I expected that reasons for nontraditional name choice would include identity, professional reasons, and convenience. Reasons for traditional naming would include tradition and simplicity for the family.

Study 1

Method

Materials

The wedding announcement published in the first and third issue of *The New York Times* each month in 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, and 2002 were coded for the presence or absence of marital name choice. Two independent raters (I and a research assistant) examined each announcement and had 100% agreement. Table 1 presents the number of announcements and the percentage that indicate name choice for each year. Because 1982 had only 29% with name choice, it was excluded from the analyses. Research Randomizer (2004) was used to select five announcements from each issue of the remaining years. If there were not enough in any one issue, the announcements in the first and third issue were pooled, and ten were randomly selected from that pool. This procedure yielded ten announcements from each month, or 120 per year, for a total sample 480 announcements.

Coding categories

The data from each announcement were coded for six variables as follows: 1—year published; 2—age of bride; 3—education level of bride (less than college, bachelors degree, post-college certificate program, master's degree, doctorate (i.e., Ph.D., J.D., and M.D.); 4—age of groom;

5—educational level of groom (same categories as above); and 6—name choice (used husband's name, used birth surname, used birth professionally/husband's socially, birth name as middle name, hyphenated, and other). Two raters independently coded each announcement and they had a 97% agreement. Differences were resolved through discussion. Following the example of Scheuble et al. (2000), the name choice was also coded as nontraditional for keeping birth name (professionally or always) and hyphenating, and as traditional for all other choices.

Results

Overall 71% of the brides chose to use their husband's name, whereas 29% chose to keep their birth name or to hyphenate. Table 2 presents the number of brides who chose traditional and nontraditional naming by year from 1987 to 2002. Chi-square analysis shows no significant difference by year. To assess the impact of naming definitions, I reran the analysis using Goldin and Shim's (2004) alternative naming definitions and found 26.5% were "keepers," either socially or professionally or both, and 73.5% were traditional others. Chi-square analysis shows no significant difference by year.

Ages were present for 325 (68%) of the brides and 326 (68%) of the grooms. No ages were included in the announcements during 1987, and ages were occasionally missing from the other years. Brides who made nontraditional name choices were significantly older ($M=33.74$, $SD=6.89$) than those who made the traditional name choice ($M=29.83$, $SD=5.54$), $t(323)=-5.24$, $p=0.0001$ (two-tailed), $d=-3.91$. Grooms of brides who made nontraditional name choices were significantly older ($M=36.66$, $SD=10.03$) than grooms of brides who made the traditional name choice ($M=32.13$, $SD=6.70$), $t(32)=-4.66$, $p=0.0001$ (two-tailed), $d=-4.51$.

Educational levels were present for 475 (99%) of the brides and 465 (97%) of the grooms. A Mann Whitney U test shows that brides who chose nontraditional names had achieved a higher level of education than those who chose the traditional name, $U(N=475)=17708.00$, $p=0.0001$. This was also true for their grooms, $U(N=465)=19124.50$, $p=0.016$.

Study 2

Method

Participants

In 1992–1993, 25 White women and 25 Women of Color were selected by a stratified random process from the senior class list at each of five New England colleges and universities (Hoffnung, 2004). (In one school, there were not 25 Women of Color in the senior class, so additional White women were selected.) The women were telephoned and invited to participate. The first 20 in each category to be reached and scheduled for interviews served as participants; this yielded 40 women from each college: 118 non-Hispanic White women and 82 Women of Color (25 African Americans, 19 Latinas, 37 Asian Americans, and one Native American). Each spring, an annual survey has been mailed to the 200 interviewees. As part of the 2003 annual survey, respondents were asked about marital status; marital name choice; and why they made that name choice. Responses were received from 171 (85.5%) of the original sample. Of those who responded, 116 (68%) were married, and 12 (7%) were engaged. Two of these did not answer the marital name choice question; the 126 women who did answer it are the participants in the present study.

Measures

Marital name choice Respondents were asked to check a response to the following: "If you are married (or about to be) what surname do you use (or plan to use)? took my spouse's name; kept my own name for all purposes; use my name professionally and my spouse's name socially; hyphenated my name to have both last names; use own name as middle name; some other choice (please specify)." They were also asked, "Why did you choose this option?" "Kept own name for all purposes," "use my name professionally, spouse's socially," and "hyphenated my name" were coded as nontraditional, whereas "took spouses name" and "use own name as middle name" were coded traditional.

Table 2 Marital name choice by year of marriage.

Year married	Traditional name choice		Nontraditional name choice	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
1987	69.2	83	30.8	37
1992	76.7	92	23.3	28
1997	72.5	87	27.5	33
2002	65.8	79	34.2	41
Total	71.0	341	29.0	139

Life Role Salience Scales (LRSS) Participants completed six scales from the LRSS (Amatea, Cross, Clark, & Bobby, 1986), which measures the reward value or personal importance and the intended level of commitment to various life roles. The survey included the Occupational Role Value (ORV, e.g., “It is important to me to feel successful in my work/career.”), Occupational Role Commitment (ORC, e.g., “I expect to devote whatever time and energy it takes to move up in my job/career field”), Parental Role Value (PRV e.g., “If I chose not to have children, I would regret it”), Parental Role Commitment (PRC, e.g., “I expect to be involved in the day-to-day details of rearing children of my own”), Marital Role Value (MRV, e.g., “My life would seem empty if I never married”), and Marital Role Commitment (MRC, e.g., “I expect to put a lot of time and effort into building and maintaining a marital relationship”). Each item is rated on a five-point scale that ranges from 1=*disagree* to 5=*agree*. In each scale one or two items are reversed scored. Lower scores reflect disagreement and higher scores agreement with the attitudinal dimension. Each scale score may range from 5 to 25.

Race/ethnicity The colleges and universities coded the students according to five racial/ethnic categories: White; African American; Hispanic; Asian American; American Indian. Because there were too few participants in each of the four later categories to make statistical comparisons, the data were recoded to White or Women of Color. The same coding process was applied to spouses’ race/ethnicity.

Background variables During the 1993 interview, participants were asked many questions about their family of origin, their religious background, and about their educational, occupational, marital, and parenting plans (Hoffnung, 2004).

The colleges the women attended were grouped according to their selectivity and prestige. Of the five colleges, three were ranked as Tier 1 highly selective and prestigious national institutions (National), and two were regional or lower tier institutions (Regional) (*U.S. News.com*, 2002). The Regional institutions are grouped together because, although very good colleges, they are less prestigious and

draw students within their region rather than from across the nation (Hoffnung, 2004).

Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) The 25-item version of the AWS (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973) was administered immediately after the initial interview (in 1993) to assess gender role attitudes. Each item was accompanied by a four-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 0=*agree strongly* to 3=*disagree strongly*. Approximately one-half of the items present an egalitarian point of view (e.g., “It is insulting for women to have the ‘obey’ clause remain in the marriage service”), and the remainder present a traditional point of view (e.g., “Sons in the family should be given more encouragement to go to college than daughters”). The egalitarian items were reverse-scored. The item scores, which range from 0 to 3, were summed to obtain a total score for each respondent. The possible range of scores is 0–75. The lower the score, the more traditional the attitudes; the higher the score, the more profeminist the attitudes. Spence and Hahn (1997) reported Cronbach alphas in the mid-80s or higher and satisfactory test–retest reliability.

Age variables Age at marriage and age at birth of first child were calculated in years.

Occupational status Respondents were asked their “primary occupation this year.” Answers were coded for occupational status based on the Hollingshead’s Index of Social Position (Hollingshead, 1957/1965; see Hoffnung, 2004, for more information). If the respondent was temporarily on maternity leave or out of work, the occupational status from her most recent job was used.

Results

Name choices

Overall 54% of the married participants used traditional marital names, whereas 46% used one of the nontraditional name choices. As Table 3 shows, the most frequent

Table 3 Marital name choices of survey respondents.

Name	Percent	Number
Kept own name for all purposes	28.6	36
Use own name professionally, spouse’s socially	11.9	15
Hyphenated own and spouse’s name	4.0	5
Took spouse’s name	37.3	47
Use own name as middle name	16.7	21
Other	1.6	2
Total		126

Table 4 Reasons for marital name choice.

Reason	Marital name choice			
	Traditional (husband's name)		Nontraditional (other options)	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Tradition	12.3	8		0
Identity				
Loss/no loss	12.3	8	54.4	31
Bonding/family union	44.6	29	0.4	2
Practical matters				
Confusion/simplicity	13.8	9	8.8	5
Like/dislike of name	1.5	1	7.0	4
Professional reasons	4.6	3	24.6	14
Love/respect	1.5	1		0
Apathy/no reason	9.2	6	1.8	1

nontraditional name choice was keeping one's birth name for all purposes (28.6%).

Table 4 presents the reasons that the women gave for the name choice that they made. More than one-half of the nontraditional name choosers did so because of identity. Some wrote comments that reflect personal/family identity concerns. "Keeping my own name has always been important to me. I've never seriously considered taking my partner's name." "Maintaining my own name is an important symbol to me of maintaining my own identity and honoring my family." "It was important that I be Dr. in my maiden name, since I am the first and only physician in the family." Others wrote about racial/ethnic identity. "I kept my last name because in Korean culture women keep their last name. Also, it was a way of ethnically identifying me to the external world." "Because I identify my last name with my Cuban heritage." "I didn't want to lose my former identity. I'm Greek, and my name is obviously a Greek name." Still others wrote about feminist values. "It seemed silly to drop my own name for his. Marriage is a partnership, not a change in alliances." "Mainly I kept it because I could.

It was a simple way to avoid participating in a part of marriage that made me feel like a piece of property." "My mother had often described how strange she felt about not having achieved certain goals in her own name."

In contrast, 45% of traditional name choosers did so because of family unity. Women who made this choice wrote comments that reflect this concern. "I wanted our family to be one." "Wanted our whole family to have the same name." "I felt it symbolized our unity and the making of our own family." "I wished to be associated with my new family and to have the same surname as my child."

On average the women were 27.23 (SD=3.15) years old when they married. Those who made nontraditional name choices ($M=28.27$, $SD=2.77$) were significantly older than those who made the traditional name choice ($M=26.40$, $SD=3.11$) when they married, $t(115)=-3.39$, $p=0.001$ (two-tailed), $d=-1.87$. In contrast, the husbands of women with nontraditional names did not differ in age from those whose wives had traditional names.

A Mann Whitney U test shows that brides who chose nontraditional names had a higher educational level than

Table 5 Comparison of LRSS for traditional and nontraditional marital name choosers.

Scale	Traditional		Nontraditional		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Occupational Role Value (ORV)	16.97	3.627	18.12	3.078	-1.89
Occupational Role Commitment (ORC)	13.91	4.699	15.60	4.292	-2.06*
Parental Role Value (PRV)	22.46	3.873	20.33	4.756	2.72**
Parental Role Commitment (PRC)	22.18	3.885	21.30	4.200	1.21
Marital Role Value (MRV)	19.11	3.973	18.18	.448	1.09
Marital Role Commitment (MRC)	21.98	2.472	21.46	3.012	1.06

* $p<0.05$; two-tailed significance

** $p<0.01$; two-tailed significance

Table 6 Comparison of 1993 expectations about children for traditional and nontraditional marital name choosers.

Measure	Traditional		Nontraditional		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Age first birth wanted	28.20	2.368	29.58	2.368	-2.74*
Number of children wanted	2.36	0.711	2.10	0.872	1.80

* $p < 0.01$; two-tailed significance

those who chose traditional names, $U(N=122)=1398.00$, $p=0.012$. There was no significant difference in the educational levels of their husbands. Occupational status was significantly higher for nontraditional name users than for those with traditional names, $U(N=122)=1387.50$, $p=0.012$.

Race/ethnicity

Women of Color (61%) were significantly more likely than were White women (39%) to use nontraditional marital names, $X^2(1, N=126)=5.46$, $p=0.019$. Reasons they gave often indicated that race/ethnicity mattered in this decision. Sixty-two percent of the Spouses of Color had wives with nontraditional names, as compared to 45% of the White spouses, which was not a statistically significant difference. Significantly more Women of Color than White women had Spouses of Color, $X^2(1, N=133)=24.62$, $p<0.0001$.

Attitudinal measures

As college seniors, the women who later chose nontraditional names ($M=69.57$, $SD=4.57$) had significantly more feminist AWS scores than did the women who later used traditional names ($M=63.69$, $SD=8.39$), $t(124)=-4.76$, $p=0.0001$ (two-tailed), $d=-5.88$. Comparisons between traditional and nontraditional name choosers on LRSS are presented in Table 5. As can be seen, women with traditional marital names scored significantly lower in Occupational Role Commitment (ORC) and significantly higher in Parental Role Value (PRV) than did those with nontraditional names. There were no differences for the other occupational or parental scales or for either of the marital scales. About one-half (49%) of the respondents were mothers. Traditional name choosers ($N=68$) were significantly more likely than were nontraditional name choosers to be mothers ($N=58$), $X^2(1, N=126)=9.32$, $p=0.002$. There were no differences in scores on any of the LRSS subscales when traditional and nontraditional name choosers who were not mothers were compared. Among the mothers, traditional name users ($M=23.85$, $SD=1.60$) scored significantly higher than nontraditional name users ($M=22.45$, $SD=2.67$) on the PRV, $t(57)=2.52$, $p=0.015$ (two-tailed), $d=2.51$. There were no other differences.

Background measures

Traditional name users were significantly more likely to be Catholic in 1993 than nontraditional name users, $X^2(1, N=125)=8.21$, $p=0.004$. They were more likely to have attended a lower status college than the nontraditional name choosers, $X^2(1, N=125)=15.32$, $p=0.0001$. Their mothers were significantly less likely to have a college education than were mothers of nontraditional name users, $X^2(1, N=125)=11.21$, $p=0.001$.

Although in 1993 virtually all of the women said they wanted to have children, as Table 6 shows, the traditional name choosers wanted to have children significantly earlier than the nontraditional name choosers, but the groups did not differ in the number of children they wanted. They did not necessarily value motherhood more, however, for when asked whether they agreed with the statement “I personally could feel completely psychologically fulfilled if I did not have children,” significantly more of the traditional name choosers agreed, $X^2(1, N=123)=5.19$, $p=0.023$.

General Discussion

Results from both studies are consistent with prior research findings. Nontraditional marital naming was chosen by a substantial percentage (29%) of largely college educated women whose marriages were announced in *The New York Times*, which supports the prediction that it would be within the range of 18% and 40% found in other college samples. The New England colleges sample yielded 46% nontraditional names. This higher percentage supports the prediction that the sample with a higher proportion of Women of Color would have a higher percentage who had chosen nontraditional marital names than in Study 1. If we consider the race/ethnicity of the women, 61% of the Women of Color and 39% of the White women chose nontraditional names. This is consistent with findings about racial/ethnic preferences in marital naming reported by Twenge (1997). Study 2 also has a very highly educated sample, in which every one has earned a bachelor's degree and one-half have earned at least one graduate degree.

The prediction that nontraditional naming would increase from 1987 to 2002 was not supported. There was no

significant change over time in Study 1, regardless of which definition of nontraditional naming was used.

The prediction that wives with nontraditional names would be older when they married than wives with traditional names was supported in both studies, and the prediction that the husbands of wives with nontraditional names would be older than husbands of wives with traditional names were supported in Study 1 but not in Study 2.

As predicted, brides with nontraditional names had higher educational levels than brides with traditional names. This is consistent with prior research findings. Also, as predicted, grooms of brides with nontraditional names had educational levels than those of brides with traditional names in Study 1 but not in Study 2.

For educated women, nontraditional naming has neither become less or more common since the 1980s. What does this indicate about feminist values? Name usage at the end of the 1990s and into this century seems to indicate that feminist values are being maintained at about the same level. At the same time, it is disappointing that we are not making progress. Although many more women now are establishing professional identities outside of the family, they are not necessarily keeping their birth names. This raises the question of whether Third Wave Feminists perceive the meaning of naming the same way as Second Wave Feminists did. Perhaps because they have relatively easy access to graduate and professional school, nontraditional occupations, and high salaries, younger women are no longer concerned about using their name to maintain their identity after marriage. One respondent articulated this in the following way: “Before I was adamant about keeping my name. I was into the whole idea of not becoming the ‘man’s property’ or losing my identity. Then I began to feel like it didn’t really matter, and that my name didn’t determine who I was. When we discussed it, my husband said it would be ‘nice’ if we had the same name but it was up to me. Since it didn’t matter to me, but was something positive for him, I changed it.”

Still, in Study 2 there are several indicators of more feminist values among the women who chose nontraditional names. They have more education and have attended higher status colleges. They married later. They had higher (more feminist) AWS scores when they were seniors. Whereas they scored similarly on four of the LRSS scales, the who chose nontraditional names scored significantly higher on Occupation Role Commitment and lower on Parental Role Value. The higher ORC scores are consistent with Twenge’s (1997) finding that nontraditional name choosers had greater career orientation. Although the women were all interested in becoming mothers in 1993, a smaller percentage of the nontraditional name choosers were mothers in 2003 when they filled out the LRSS. The

PRV score was higher for the traditional name choosers who were mothers, which indicates that they gave greater personal importance to the parental role. Whereas marital naming is typically decided before pregnancy or motherhood, it appears that the more child-oriented women choose traditional naming and early motherhood and value the role of parent more highly than the nontraditional name choosers. There is no indication that parental role commitment is less for nontraditional name choosers, although more of them than the traditional namers were still postponing motherhood.

What’s in a name? Those who choose nontraditional marital names graduate from more prestigious colleges, have more advanced degrees, marry later, and hold more feminist attitudes. They also have greater career commitment. They do not differ from traditional name choosers in marital role value or commitment, in occupational role value, or in parental role commitment, but, as young adults, they are higher in occupational role commitment, value the role of parent less, and delay motherhood longer. Results of Study 2 indicate that those who change their names to promote “bonding/family union” are more immediately directed toward family formation than are those who retain their names in some nontraditional form. Because the sample is, on average, only 32 years old, this may change in the next several years or it may prove to be a continuing difference. I will continue to follow this sample of women to see how their naming, family, and career choices develop.

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