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THE BRIDE IS KEEPING HER NAME: A 35-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF TRENDS AND CORRELATES

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We used data obtained from wedding announcements in the New York Times newspaper from 1971 through 2005 (N = 2,400) to test 9 hypotheses related to brides' decisions to change or retain their maiden names upon marriage. As predicted, a trend was found in brides keeping their surname, and correlates included the bride's occupation, education, age, and the type of ceremony (religious versus nonsectarian). Partial support was found for the following correlates: officiants representing different religions, brides with one or both parents deceased, and brides whose parents had divorced or separated. There was mixed support for the hypothesis that a photograph of the bride alone would signal a lower incidence of name keeping. Results indicated that 14 out of the 30 hypothesized directional planned comparisons were statistically significant after Bonferroni adjustment.

Keywords: marriage, maiden name, occupation, education, age, religious affiliation.

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Although the practice of a bride keeping her maiden name upon marriage is often associated with the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the first American woman to legally keep her maiden name upon marriage was abolitionist Lucy Stone who married Harry Blackwell in 1855 (Barrientos, 2006). Today the society that bears her name (the Lucy Stone League) continues to advocate that women keep their birth name upon marriage "because a person's name is fundamental to his/her existence" (Lucy Stone League, 2006). This advice notwithstanding, the adoption of a husband's surname remains the most common naming option exercised by brides in the United States of America (Scheuble & Johnson, 2005). The practice is not adhered to universally, though. In many Spanish-speaking cultures, a common naming convention is to have two last names, the father's surname followed by the mother's paternal surname (Hunter & Kueppers, 2004).

Multiple naming options for American women have emerged over the past few decades. Women are not only keeping their maiden names upon marriage, but many choose to do one of the following: hyphenate their name using both their maiden and husband's surname as a last name, use their birth surname as their middle name, create a new name by combining – without hyphenation – both spouses' surnames, or even have their husband take their name.

Initial empirical interest in the marital surnames selected by women emerged as a subject of inquiry in the mid-1980s. Two types of empirical studies were conducted: studies utilizing student convenience samples investigating intended choice of name upon marriage, and the reasoning behind this possible future choice (Etaugh, Bridges, Cummings-Hill, & Cohen, 1999; Intons-Peterson & Crawdord, 1985; Scheuble & Johnson, 1993; Twenge, 1997) and studies of actual name change behavior of married women and factors associated with this decision (Foss & Edson, 1989; Kline, Stafford, & Miklosovic, 1996; Scheuble & Johnson, 2005). Both types of studies found similar explanatory themes: self-identity, relationship issues, societal expectations, and practical considerations relating to convenience. In general, women who kept their name after marriage tended to be older, have a higher level of education, and a higher individual income level than brides who chose to take their husband's name upon marriage (Kline et al., 1996).

Foss and Edson (1989) conducted the first study investigating the actual name choice decisions of married women, and found that among women who kept their name, issues of personal identity were paramount. Women who considered their relationships with their husband and children to be their central focus were more likely to change their names. A recent study (Scheuble & Johnson, 2005) looked exclusively at the situational use of last names, typically involving the bride keeping her name for professional purposes. Drawing on a sample of married female faculty members, it was found that 12% of respondents reported

the situational use of their last name, with about half adopting legally hyphenated names.

In an attempt to more systematically identify the proportion of women who keep their maiden name, Goldin and Shim (2004) examined *New York Times* wedding announcements, Harvard alumnae records, and Massachusetts birth records. They found that the trend of brides keeping their surname increased from the start of their study in 1975 to the mid-1980s, plateauing in the late 1990s. Although Goldin and Shim's study examined actual (as distinct from intended) name change behavior, they did not consider the social-emotional context of a bride's marital situation – that is, whether the bride's parents were separated or divorced, or whether one or more parents were deceased. Nor did they examine whether, in a religious ceremony, the wedding officiants were of the same or different religions, or whether a photograph was published showing the bride alone or with the groom. Finally, their study (which appeared in an economics journal) neither advanced hypotheses nor reported psychometric data, such as interrater reliability estimates. Essentially, the present study was aimed at going beyond descriptive data to examine the social and psychological variables that may be associated with a bride's decision about keeping her name.

Focusing on the behavior of American brides over a 35-year period (from 1971 to 2005), nine hypotheses were tested. Based on numerous anecdotal accounts and two prior empirical studies (Boxer & Gritsenko, 2005; Goldin & Shim, 2004) we posited the following:

Hypothesis 1a: From 1971 to 1995, there will be a trend towards brides increasingly keeping their name upon marriage.

Hypothesis 1b: There will be a plateauing effect found in the proportion of brides keeping their name in the period of time from the early 1990s to the early 2000s.

In broad terms, a woman's name is associated with the social construction of her identity – indeed, the primary reason women give for keeping their name upon marriage is to avoid losing their identity, albeit symbolically, as an individual (Foss & Edson, 1989; Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Kline et al., 1996). Further, with increased opportunities in the workplace, many women have established successful careers prior to walking down the aisle. Many have "broken the glass ceiling," rising to high levels in organizations and a significant number of women have "made a name for themselves" as professionals or in the arts and entertainment fields. In the case of women who are business owners, senior level executives, professionals (e.g., physicians, attorneys), and those with careers in the arts and entertainment fields, their names are distinctly associated with the work they have produced, almost akin to a "brand" (Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Scheuble & Johnson, 2005). Changing one's name upon marriage, therefore, creates the risk that a person's history of prior accomplishments will

no longer be associated with the focal individual. A woman may, therefore, be apprehensive about (re-)establishing her professional reputation under a new name, and possibly foregoing the fame and reputation that had been achieved prior to marriage. We anticipated that women whose occupations involve their names being associated with their professional role would be apprehensive about changing their name upon marriage. Consequently, we advanced:

Hypothesis 2: Brides in higher level positions, with professional occupations, and those in the arts and entertainment fields will be more likely to keep their maiden surname upon marriage as compared to those in other occupational categories.

Graduation rates for women are now higher than those for men (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2003), a phenomenon reflective of expanding educational opportunities for women over the past 25 years. Concurrent with increasing education, women have frequently become prominent in their chosen fields, and established professional reputations prior to marriage. Accordingly, we posited:

Hypothesis 3: Brides with a higher level of education (that is, a graduate degree) will be more likely to keep their maiden surname upon marriage.

Coinciding with increased educational opportunities and attainment, women have been marrying at older ages than was typical in the past (Coontz, 2005). In 1970, the average age of a woman marrying for the first time was 20.9 years, while in 2003 it was 25.3 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). By marrying at a later age, women have had more opportunity to create professional reputations that they would likely to seek to protect. Consistent with this phenomenon, Scheuble and Johnson (1993) reported that women planning to marry later in life were less inclined to adopt their future husband's surname. Thus, the incidence of name changing should be lower among older brides. More formally stated:

Hypothesis 4: Brides who marry at an older age will be more likely than younger brides to keep their surname upon marriage.

Evidence suggests that individuals with strong religious beliefs tend to be more traditional in their lifestyle choices, gender role attitudes, and marriage and family patterns (Grasmick, Wilcox, & Bird, 1990; Jensen & Jensen, 1993). Marriage ceremonies in America may be religious or nonsectarian events. If a religious ceremony is conducted, in addition to governmental requirements, the couple must comply with the rules of the religious entity that sanctifies the wedding, including certifications and fees. As such, couples who hold religious wedding ceremonies may do so owing to strong religious convictions; consequently, they may be more likely to follow the traditional customs associated with their religion. Therefore, we advanced:

Hypothesis 5: Brides participating in a religious wedding ceremony will be less likely to keep their name upon marriage than brides participating in a secular wedding ceremony.

To our knowledge, no prior research has examined the name choices of brides when a religious ceremony is held with dual religions represented. We reasoned that brides would be more likely to keep their name if the two officiants were of different religions, compared to both being of the same faith, because the former situation may signal greater independence on the part of the bride to be. Thus, we posited:

Hypothesis 6: Brides participating in a religious wedding ceremony with two or more officiants of different religious faiths will be more likely to keep their surname as compared to brides marrying with two or more officiants of the same faith.

We also examined the possible effects on a bride's name choice resulting from one or both of her parents being deceased. In cases where a bride has lost a parent prior to marriage she might feel a greater loss of connectedness to her birth family upon adopting a new name than would be the case for a bride who has not lost a parent. Research has shown that the strength of the affective bond between adult children and their parents is related to emotional functioning (Leondari & Kiosseoglou, 2000), and this bond extends for a considerable length of time beyond a parent's passing (Shmotkin, 1999). In an effort to maintain this bond psychologically, since it cannot be done physically, the bride may preserve a connection with her family through maintaining her maiden name. In cases where the bride had lost a parent (or both parents) prior to her marriage, we anticipated that the bride might seek to preserve her birth-family identity by keeping her maiden name. Thus, we proposed:

Hypothesis 7: Brides with one or both parents deceased will be more likely to keep their surname upon marriage compared to brides with no deceased parents.

Studies have found that children of divorced parents are concerned about the success of their own future marriage, being fearful about perpetuating a cycle of divorce (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990; Muench & Landrum, 1993). With a general apprehension toward marriage, the daughters of divorced parents who eventually decide to marry may choose to keep their maiden name in an effort to "hedge their bets" – not risking their full identity upon marriage. Therefore, we advanced:

Hypothesis 8: Brides whose parents are divorced or separated will be more likely to keep their maiden surname as compared to brides with both parents who are still married and/or living together.

Traditionally, wedding announcements have included a photograph of the bride alone. However, beginning in the early 1990s, it became commonplace for wedding announcements to include a photograph of both the bride and groom. Nonetheless, wedding announcements with a photograph of the bride alone might be seen as more firmly rooted in tradition. Therefore we advanced:

Hypothesis 9: Brides whose wedding announcement photograph is of them alone

will be more likely to take their husband's name upon marriage than brides whose wedding photograph shows both the bride and groom.

In total, we posited 30 directional planned comparisons: two pertinent to trend data (no directional prediction being made for the 1990s versus the 2000s), and 28 predictions that entail differences in name choices. Age- and photograph-related hypotheses could be tested for only two decades (early 1990s and early 2000s) instead of four.

METHOD

Sample and Procedures

Weekly *New York Times* wedding announcements were examined for the first three odd-numbered years of each decade (the span being from 1971 through 2005). The first 50 heterosexual wedding announcements per quarter were selected starting with the first Sunday occurring in the second month of each quarter (February, May, August, and November). The second month of the quarter was selected to capture the more popular wedding seasons of May/June and August/September and to avoid the month of January, which traditionally has fewer weddings. This design yielded 200 wedding announcements per year, 600 per decade, and a total *N* of 2,400 cases.

Each of the first four authors was assigned a decade for which he/she was responsible for collecting and coding data using established scoring protocols. To assess interrater reliability, a sample of 50 announcements was coded independently by the first and third authors. Reliabilities were .90 or higher (with most at .96 or higher) for all measured variables except bride's education (.88), bride's occupation (.89) and groom's occupation (.87).

Measures: Dependent Variable

Bride's chosen name Seven categories of name choice were identified, namely the bride is: explicitly keeping her name, keeping her name for professional purposes only, hyphenating her name, using her maiden surname as her middle name, adopting some other name (including creating a new surname), explicitly adopting her husband's name, or – finally – there is no explicit mention of the bride's decision. To simplify the reporting and analysis of results, four categories have been used: (1) the bride is explicitly keeping her name (BK); (2) the bride is keeping her name in a modified form (MK) other than her original maiden name – that is, maiden name as middle name, hyphenated name, or is keeping her name solely for professional purposes, or is adopting a different, novel name; (3) the decision about the bride's name is not mentioned (NM); and (4) and the bride is explicitly adopting her husband's name (AH). The second category was created as a composite in light of the relatively small number of brides using their

maiden name as their middle name, using a hyphenated last name, or adopting another name.

Measures: Independent Variables

Occupation Initially 16 occupational categories were identified for coding purposes, accompanied by a detailed scoring protocol. For example, if a prior occupation was mentioned, but not a current one, we coded this as no occupation mentioned. The 16 categories were subsequently consolidated into six categories for calculating interrater reliabilities, and into two categories for statistical analyses. The two categories were: (1) lower level and mid-level positions, students, occupation not reported, and retired; (2) high-level positions (e.g., CEO), professionals (including attorneys, physicians, Certified Public Accountants), and arts and entertainment. This categorization protocol reflects our assumption that brides who do not report an occupation are less likely to hold high-level positions than those who report their occupation.

Bride's education The highest level of education completed was coded into seven categories ranging from *no education reported* (coded as 1) to *doctoral degree* (coded as 7). Similar data were obtained for the groom, but were not examined in the present research.

Bride's age The age of the bride was recorded whenever it was reported in the corresponding wedding announcement. As noted above, age information was not regularly included in *New York Times* wedding announcements prior to the early 1990s. Age data were also obtained for the groom, but were not examined in the present research.

Type of ceremony The religious affiliation, if any, of each officiant performing the wedding ceremony was coded. If a mayor, public official, or individual not affiliated with a religious organization performed the ceremony, this was coded as a civil/nonsectarian ceremony. Religious categories were: Catholic, Christian but not Catholic, Jewish, and Other. If two officiants were mentioned, the affiliation of each was noted.

Parental marital and life status Parental marital and life status were coded into six categories: no information provided, parents married, parents separated/divorced, mother a widow, father a widower, both parents deceased. Where one parent was mentioned but there was no mention of a second parent it was assumed that the individual's parents were separated/divorced.

Photograph The wedding announcement photograph variable had three values: no photograph, bride alone, and bride and groom. Photographs of both bride and groom were very rare in the 1970s and 1980s, appearing in less than 1% of announcements. In contrast, by the decade of the 2000s, more than 50% of announcements had a photograph of both bride and groom.

RESULTS

Data were collected across all four categories of name keeping (see Table 1). For brevity and simplicity, we present decade-by-decade statistical results focusing on the bride is keeping her name (BK condition) comparisons. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, the percentages of brides explicitly keeping their own name rose from 1% in the 1970s to 9% in the 1980s ($z = 5.93$, $p < .001$ – all significance levels are Bonferroni corrected. The trend continued, rising to 23% in the 1990s ($z = 5.04$, $p < .001$), and leveling off in the 2000s at 18% ($z = -1.43$, *ns*). A one-way ANOVA combining both types of name keeping (BK and MK) across decades was significant at $F(3, 2395) = 69.7$. (The ANOVAs reported below likewise combine both types of name keeping in the dependent variable.)

As posited in Hypothesis 2, brides in three occupation categories combined – those with high-level jobs (e.g., CEO), those with professional occupations (e.g., physician), and those in the arts or entertainment fields kept their surname more frequently than did brides in all other occupation categories combined: 14% vs. 5% in the 1980s ($z = 3.54$, $p < .01$); 34% vs. 12% in the 1990s ($z = 6.59$, $p < .001$); and 25% vs. 10% in the 2000s ($z = 6.17$, $p < .001$), respectively. Although not separated out in the table, brides in the arts and entertainment field were particularly likely to keep their names, the proportions being 41% in the 1990s and 32% in the 2000s. A one-way ANOVA calculated across all four occupation categories for all decades combined was found to be significant: $F(3, 2394) = 78.4$, $p < .001$. The conjoint effects of occupation level and being in the entertainment industry were not examined; consequently the aforementioned proportions of 41% and 32% might understate the frequency of name-keeping among brides in high-level arts and entertainment positions.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that a bride with a graduate degree would be more likely to keep her name than a bride without a graduate degree. Significant differences were found in the 1980s (19% vs. 5%; $z = 4.55$, $p < .001$), the 1990s (32% vs. 15%; $z = 5.02$, $p < .001$), and the 2000s (22% vs. 14%; $z = 2.57$, $p < .05$). A one-way ANOVA was used to examine the three educational categories – less than a bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree – across all decades. The effects of education were significant: $F(2, 2396) = 74.81$, $p < .001$.

As predicted in Hypothesis 4, older brides were more likely to keep their surname as compared to younger brides – 33% vs. 13% in the 1990s, $z = 6.08$, $p < .001$; and 25% vs. 11% in the 2000s, $Z = 5.26$, $p < .001$. As noted above, we were able to test Hypothesis 4 in the two most recent decades only.

It was posited that brides who were married in a nonreligious/civil ceremony would be more likely to keep their name than brides married in a religious ceremony (Hypothesis 5). Although differences were in the predicted direction, the only significant decade-specific difference was in the 2000s (34% vs. 16%;

TABLE 1

PERCENTAGES OF BRIDES WHO CHANGED AND KEPT THEIR NAMES BY DECADES

	Early 1970s				Early 1980s				Early 1990s				Early 2000s			
	BK	MK	NM	AH	BK	MK	NM	AH	BK	MK	NM	AH	BK	MK	NM	AH
H1: Differences Across Decades																
Overall	1	0	49	50	**9**[a***]	8	59	25	**23**[b***]	6	20	51	18	10	27	45
H2: Bride's Occupation																
Low/Middle/NR	1	0	49	50	5	4	65	25	12	6	18	64	10	6	26	58
High/Prof./Arts	*2*	2	52	44	**14****	13	50	24	**34*****	7	21	38	**25*****	13	28	34
H3: Bride's Education																
No Graduate Degree	1	0	50	50	5	6	65	25	15	7	14	63	14	8	30	48
Graduate Degree	*4*	0	46	49	**19*****	13	43	24	**32*****	4	26	38	**22***	11	25	42
H4: Bride's Age																
Less than Median	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	13	7	15	65	11	8	28	53
More than Median	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	**33*****	6	19	42	**25*****	12	25	38
H5: Type of Ceremony																
Religious	1	0	49	50	8	8	57	26	22	6	18	54	16	8	49	26
Secular/NR	3	0	49	47	10	4	73	14	31	9	31	29	**34*****	16	29	33
H6: Two Officiants																
Same Religion	1	1	35	62	3	6	69	22	7	0	7	86	14	10	24	52
Different Religions	8	0	38	54	12	3	50	35	**37***	3	13	47	20	9	25	42
H7: Bride's Parents (Living or Deceased)																
Both Living or NR	1	0	48	50	9	8	58	25	20	6	20	54	17	10	27	47
One/Both Deceased	0	0	53	47	8	6	63	22	37*	7	16	40	23	10	32	37

Table 1 continued

	Early 1970s				Early 1980s				Early 1990s				Early 2000s			
	BK	MK	NM	AH	BK	MK	NM	AH	BK	MK	NM	AH	BK	MK	NM	AH
H8: Bride's Parents (Marital Status)																
Married	2	0	48	50	8	8	58	27	6	18	20	56	16	11	35	48
Separated/Divorced	0	0	42	58	13	10	58	19	9	**29**	19	44	20	8	23	49
H9: Photograph																
No Photograph	1	0	62	36	17	7	64	21	24	6	22	48	17	8	28	47
Bride Only	2	0	5	93	7	10	21	53	8	3	6	83	33	3	10	55
Bride & Groom	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**29****	10	18	43	17	12	29	42

Notes: BK = Bride is keeping her name; MK = Bride keeping her maiden name in a modified form, such as using her middle name, hyphenating her name, or keeping her name for professional purposes; AH = Adopting husband's name; NM = Name not mentioned; High/Prof./Arts & Ent. = High-level position (e.g., CEO), Professional position (e.g., physician), or a position in Arts or Entertainment; Religious= Catholic, Christian but not Catholic, or Jewish; NR = Not reported. NA = Not applicable. Statistical comparisons are performed only for bride keeping her name categories; [a] = 1980s vs. 1970s; [b] = 1990s vs. 1980s; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (significance levels for all comparisons are Bonferroni corrected). Significant differences after Bonferroni correction are shown in bold; significant differences prior to Bonferroni correction are shown in italics.

$Z = 4.02$, $p < .001$). However, examining data across all decades combined, greater name changing was found among brides who had a religious ceremony: $F(1, 2395) = 15.5$, $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 6 posited that when there were two officiants at the marriage ceremony who followed different religions, brides would be more likely to keep their name than if the two officiants were of the same faith (Hypothesis 6). Unfortunately, due to the small number of cases with two officiants ($n = 157$ with different religions and $n = 134$ with the same religion), only one decade yielded a significant difference – in the 1990s, 37% vs. 7%; $z = 2.66$, $p < .05$. Across all four decades, the 19% of brides who kept their name when married by officiants of different religions was significantly greater than the 4% who kept their names when married by two officiants of the same religion ($z = 5.14$, $p < .001$).

We hypothesized that brides would be more likely to keep their maiden surname if one parent was – or both parents were – deceased, compared to when both parents were alive, or with a status unreported (Hypothesis 7). Support for this premise was found only in one decade, during the 1990s, with frequencies of 37% vs. 20% ($z = 2.99$, $p < .05$). No support for Hypothesis 7 was found in any decade using ANOVA.

We hypothesized that brides would be more likely to retain their surname if their parents were separated and divorced. In the 1980s, the proportion of brides keeping their name was 8% when parents were married and 13% where parents were divorced or separated, a difference which – while not significant – was in the predicted direction. During the 1990s a significant difference emerged with respect to the modified name keeping (MK) category, the respective proportions being 18% and 29%; however, significance was found only before Bonferroni adjustment ($z = 2.18$, $p > .05$). Examining data in the 1990s for both categories of bride name keeping, the results were slightly stronger ($z = 2.57$, $p > .05$), but again were not significant with Bonferroni adjustment. During the 2000s, the pattern of name keeping was again in the predicted direction, but the difference was not significant even before adjustment.

Hypothesis 9 posited that brides with a wedding photograph of themselves alone would be more likely to adopt their husband's name than would be the case when the photograph showed both spouses. Because fewer than one percent of wedding announcements had a photograph of both spouses in the 1970s and 1980s, analyses could be performed only in the later two decades. In the 1990s 29% of the brides whose wedding announcements had a joint photograph opted explicitly to keep their own name compared to 8% of brides with a solo photograph opting to keep their own names – a difference which was found to be significant ($z = 3.44$, $p < .01$). Surprisingly, this pattern did not hold in the decade of the 2000s, where the relevant percentages were 17% and 33%, respectively. This difference was not significant, due to the infrequency of a photograph of the

bride alone appearing in the 2000s (fewer than 7% of all announcements) – z = 2.02, p = .65, Bonferroni adjusted. Evidently, publishing a photograph of both the bride and groom had become "traditional" as of the 2000s.

DISCUSSION

Overall, we found good support for our hypotheses; 15 out of 30 comparisons were statistically significant, 14 after Bonferroni adjustment. It should be noted that these results included comparisons where the sample sizes were quite small on a within-decade basis (e.g., the religious orientation of two officiants). Also, because the base rate of name keeping was so low in the 1970s (1% overall), subgroup differences were statistically hard to detect. The 4% of brides in the 1970s with graduate degrees who kept their name was significantly greater than the 1% without graduate degrees who did, but only before Bonferroni correction. By contrast, while only 9% of brides kept their names in the 1980s, 23% and 18% of brides kept their names in the 1990s and 2000s, respectively. Overall, the proportion of hypotheses supported corresponds directly with these frequencies: zero hypotheses out of six (0%) in the 1970s; two out of six (33%) in the 1980s; six out of eight (75%) in the 1990s and four out of eight (50%) in the 2000s. Thus, the least supportive results were found during the first two decades when name changing was uncommon.

The frequencies we found of brides keeping their maiden name during the 2000s are consistent with those reported in the only other empirical studies of which we are aware. Using *New York Times* data, Goldin and Shim (2004) reported frequencies of brides keeping their names for all purposes (including brides keeping their names only for professional purposes) of 26% in 2000 and 24% in 2001 – the last years for which they collected data. Examining a small sample of married women of varying ages (N = 134), Boxer and Gritsenko (2005) reported a frequency of name keeping of 18%. The present research revealed an average frequency during the period 2001 through 2005 of 18%.

Because our research relied on wedding announcements drawn from the *New York Times*, both range restriction and sampling bias resulted. Compared to America as a whole, *New York Times* readers are on average older (46.5 years versus 35.5), more affluent (mean income of $84,400 versus $42,000), and better educated (75% of readers being college graduates versus 24%; *New York Times*, 2006; U.S. Census, 2000). Likewise, people who succeed in having wedding announcements published in the *New York Times* are more affluent and more highly educated than the average American population, and they also primarily reside in the northeastern part of the country. Consequently, as point estimates, our parameters are not generalizable to America as a whole. However, the primary purpose of the present research was to examine trends and correlates, not to estimate population parameters.

Relatedly, the sample in the present research comprised primarily first marriages. Only 7% of brides and 11% of grooms in our sample had been married previously, which is below the national average of approximately 20% of marriages with at least one party who has previously been married (Cherlin & McCarthy, 1985).

Research using a more heterogeneous sample, including more individuals from lower socioeconomic levels and with greater geographic diversity, would enhance generalizability. Future researchers, besides examining a more heterogeneous sample, might obtain survey data that directly measure religiosity and specific attitudes regarding parental status. Such attitudinal data would provide a clearer picture as to how these variables affect the decision-making process of a bride in choosing her name upon marriage.

Levitt and Dubner (2005) report longitudinal data demonstrating the existence of income- and education-related patterns in the naming of children. In their words: "once a name catches on among high-income, highly-educated parents, it starts working its way down the socioeconomic ladder" (p. 201). Analogously, perhaps trends in the naming decisions of brides as reported in the *New York Times* will start spreading to less elite denizens in the U.S. This conjecture provides another direction for future research.

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