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MAKING A NAME

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ABSTRACT

Ever since Lucy Stone decided to retain her surname at marriage in 1855, women in America have tried to do the same. But their numbers were extremely low until the 1970s. The increased age at first marriage, rising numbers with professional degrees and Ph.D.'s, the diffusion of "the Pill," state legal decisions, and the acceptance of the appellation "Ms.," among other factors, spurred surname retention among married women in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This paper tracks the fraction of college graduate women who kept their surnames upon marriage and after childbirth and explores some of the correlates of surname retention. We use two decades of data from *The New York Times* and twenty years of information on the Harvard class of 1980.

A time series on surname retention at marriage for college graduate women, gleaned from wedding announcements in *The New York Times*, shows a large increase from 1980 to 1984, a leveling off to 1998, and a possible subsequent increase. About 35 percent kept their surname at marriage in 2001, but fewer than 10 percent did in 1980. Among the women in the Harvard class of 1980, about 52 percent kept their surname at some time after marriage and only a small fraction of this group changed their surname after having children. The observable characteristics of importance in surname retention are those revealing that the bride had already "made a name" for herself.

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The name a woman assumes upon marriage is a social indicator.[1] Although it is still customary in the United States for a woman to take the surname of her husband, the name a woman assumes upon marriage is now a choice. Retaining a name upon marriage may indicate that the woman has already "made a name" for herself or that she is asserting her own identity or possibly something else.[2]

Throughout history women have deviated from the custom of taking their husband's name, but they were a select group of socially and professionally prominent individuals.[3] Until the mid- to late-1970s almost all women assumed their husband's surname upon marriage and this was true even for the more highly educated and eminent, save perhaps some in the arts.[4]

Ordinary observation suggests that in the past several decades more college graduate women have retained their surnames upon marriage. The possible reasons for the change are many and include the increase in professional degrees among women, a later age at first marriage, a better chance to have a career including a greater ability to time births, the increase in divorce, and the legacy of the feminist revival of the late 1960s.

But the basic facts concerning the social indicator of women's surnames have eluded investigation because none of the usual data sets used by social scientists contains last names for married couples. Thus change over time and levels at various dates have been the subjects of speculation. The factors that have prompted some to change and others to retain their surnames have been no more than educated guesses.

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[1] In many cultures, for example Korean, it is customary for women to retain their family name upon marriage. But most of the societies in which women retain their surnames are not socially liberal and the custom does not have the same significance as it does in Anglo-American usage. See, e.g., Augustine-Adams (1997).

[2] See Akerlof and Kranton (2000) on identity.

[3] See Stannard (1977).

[4] Many prominent women who married before the 1970s maintained their maiden names as their middle names. Two important examples are Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sandra Day O'Connor.

To explore the social indicator of name change, we have collected two data sets that have information on surname changes at marriage and after. One comes from wedding announcements in *The New York Times* and the other consists of the alumni records of the Harvard Class of 1980. Both data sets are rich sources of information on the topic, but both apply to a special subset of individuals — those who are college graduates.

Legal and Social Barriers to Retaining One's Name

Custom, not legal obligation, is largely responsible for the preponderance of women who change their surnames on marriage. Under the Common Law a married woman is not compelled to take her husband's surname. The laws of various states, nonetheless, have in the past deprived women of rights, such as retaining their driver's license and voter registration, if they did not assume the surname of their husband.[5] These legal restrictions were generally overturned or ignored by the mid-1970s.[6]

The earliest known example of a U.S. woman who retained her surname upon marriage is Lucy Stone, the tireless anti-slavery and female suffrage crusader who married in 1855. In the 1920s, a generation after her death in 1893, prominent feminists formed the Lucy Stone League to help married women preserve the identity of their own surnames. Like many women who did not assume their husband's name, Lucy Stone bore the appellation Miss, which was otherwise reserved for unmarried women.

[5] The U.S. Supreme Court in 1972 affirmed a lower court decision in Alabama that required a wife to assume her husband's surname or be deprived of a driver's license (*Forbush v. Wallace* 405 U.S. 970, 92 S.Ct. 1197). In *Dunn v. Palermo* a compulsory registration law was contested that required a woman to register under the surname of her husband or have her name removed from the voter registration list. In 1975 the Supreme Court of Tennessee struck down the registration requirement, citing the state constitution's adoption of Common Law under which, with few exceptions, an individual is allowed to choose any name.

[6] See, e.g., Augustine-Adams (1997).

The appellation "Ms." solved the obvious social problem of what to call a married woman who retained her surname. Although the use of Ms. dates from 1952, it did not gain much notice until the appearance of *Ms. Magazine* in 1972.[7] But although usage spread rapidly, there was resistance. Even *The New York Times* did not use Ms. as an appellation, unless in a direct quotation, until 1986.[8] By the mid-1970s, although social and legal barriers remained, the usage of Ms. and various enabling legal decisions had paved the way for women to retain their surnames upon marriage.

Social and Economic Change

Several economic and social changes in the 1970s fueled the desire of women to retain their names upon marriage. One is the rise in the age at first marriage. Another is the increase in advanced degrees among college graduate women and their greater expectation that they would "make a name" for themselves in a career. Yet another is the diffusion of "the Pill" among young, unmarried women. Because virtually all the individuals in our data sets concerning surname change are college graduates, we restrict our discussion here to that population.

The age at first marriage among college graduate women increased substantially with cohorts born after 1950, although it had been virtually constant for more than twenty years prior (see Figure 1). The cohorts born from the 1930s to 1950 married within a year or two after college graduation. In the 1950 cohort, for example, more than 50 percent married before their twenty-third birthday. But for those born in 1957, just 30 percent married before age 23 and less

[7] For the history of the use of "Ms." see the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
[8] "Beginning today, *The New York Times* will use "Ms." as an honorific in its news and editorial columns. Until now, "Ms." had not been used because of the belief that it had not passed sufficiently into the language to be accepted as common usage. The *Times* now believes that "Ms." has become a part of the language and is changing its policy. The *Times* will continue to use "Miss" or "Mrs." when it knows the marital status of a woman in the news, unless she prefers "Ms." "Ms." will also be used when a woman's marital status is not known." (*The New York Times*, June 20, 1986, Section B, p. 1).

than half the cohort had married by the time they were 25 years old. That is, between the cohorts born from 1950 to 1957 the median age at first marriage among college graduate women increased by two years. The trend has continued and the median age at first marriage for the 1965 birth cohort was about 26.5 years. That is, the median college graduate woman born in 1950 married in 1973, but the median college graduate woman born in 1957 married in 1982.

At the same time that the age at first marriage rose, the fraction of college graduate women continuing their education in professional and Ph.D. programs began to soar. Figure 2 gives the ratios of female first-year law or medical students to female BA's in that year. Compared with the levels in 1970, those a decade later were 7 times greater for the law and more than 3.5 times greater for medicine. Among Ph.D.'s granted (excluding those in education), the increase from 1970 to 1990 was about 1.7 times (not shown in Figure 2). For Ph.D. programs, the increase has continued beyond the early 1980s, whereas in law and medicine the ratio of female first-year students to female BA's has remained at about the level achieved in 1980.

The Pill — the female oral contraceptive — began to diffuse among young single women in the late 1960s and early 1970s, even though it had rapidly diffused among *married* women within a few years after its federal approval in 1960. The reason for the later diffusion of the Pill among young unmarried women concerns a set of restrictive laws and social norms, both of which changed in the late 1960s (Goldin and Katz 2000). Armed with the Pill, young women could enter advanced degree programs with less fear that a pregnancy would cut short their studies and they could marry later in life with fewer social penalties. More generally, they could plan an independent existence from an early stage of their lives. By an independent existence we mean a life that is not primarily defined by marriage and motherhood.

For all of these reasons — an increase in the age at first marriage, the rise of women in

professional degree programs, the diffusion of the Pill among young women, and the acceptance of the appellation Ms. — one would expect college graduate women to have retained their surnames to a far greater extent beginning sometime between the late 1970s and the early 1980s.[9]

Time Series Evidence from The New York Times

As we noted previously, there is no readily available information on surname retention among married women. To understand trends during the past several decades among college graduate women we have coded marriage announcements in *The New York Times* from 1980 — the year the newspaper began to provide information on the surname the bride would assume after marriage — to today.[10]

The New York Times wedding announcements typically provide information on the bride's and the groom's undergraduate colleges as well as their advanced degrees and schools, their occupations, parents' occupation(s), place of marriage, and who officiated at the ceremony. Age was almost always given after 1989 but not before. Announcements in the *Times* mainly concern couples whose families reside in the greater New York City region or who are sufficiently prominent or newsworthy in some other manner.

In writing an announcement the editor uses information provided by the couple (e.g., regarding education, occupation, ceremony). Additional material is gathered by a *Times* "fact

[9] The reason that the increase should occur in the late 1970s to early 1980s is because the age at first marriage rose rapidly between the 1950 to 1957 birth cohorts. If an age at first marriage of about 25 years old sparks a sense of "independence" among women and if a movement to retain one's surname requires that the median graduate be in that category, then the movement would begin in 1982 = 1957 + 25. See Davis and Robinson (1988) on how women versus men defined their identities within marriage across the 1970s and 1980s.

[10] The data come from the "society page" of the Sunday, Style Section of *The New York Times*. Eight weekends per year, spaced uniformly over the year, were sampled, yielding a data set of about 270 to 300 marriages per year and almost 6,000 for the 21-year period.

checker."[11] To write an accurate announcement, the "fact checker" asks the couple if the bride will retain her maiden name socially or professionally, or if the bride will change her name to that of her future husband, or if the bride will hyphenate her name (and whether the groom will do so as well).[12] If a couple states that the bride will retain her surname, the announcement might contain a line: "The bride will be known as Ms. X" or "will be known professionally as Ms. X," or "will be keeping her name." If the bride states, instead, that she will be taking the name of the groom, the announcement might fluidly embed this information with something like: "Mrs. Y will graduate this June with a degree in physical therapy." Many couples have not thought about the future name of the bride or do not care to share it with the wider public. If that is the case, then neither Mrs. Y nor Ms. X appears in the announcement. The writer would, instead, use oblique references to "the bride" and "the bridegroom."

The graph in Figure 3 is a time series of the fraction of brides who stated they would retain their surnames (or who did not provide information to the fact checker). We give data for 1980 to 2001, all the years for which announcements give the name the bride will assume. The "keepers" are defined here as those who stated they will retain their surnames socially or professionally. All others are "changers," and include those listed as changing their surname ("Mrs. Y"), those who are hyphenating ("Mrs. X-Y"), and those who did not provide the fact checker with name-change information.[13]

The fraction retaining their surnames increased from less than 10 percent in 1980, when

[11] We thank Robert Woletz, editor, Society News, *The New York Times*, for providing information on how the *Times* obtains information to write wedding announcements.
[12] Hyphenations are uncommon and there are very few cases of a bridegroom changing his surname.
[13] Some couples who did not give information to the fact checker could have been "keepers," but it is unlikely that many were. We have matched just a few of these couples to the Harvard class of 1980 class books, and we find that those who did not state anything in the *Times* were "changers." Furthermore, the fraction who are not listed as providing information in the early 1980s was very high (see Appendix Table A1) and these were virtually all changers.

the *Times* began reporting surname information, to about 20 percent in 1984/85. A plateau of around 20 percent was then maintained for about 15 years. The fraction increased again after 1998 and the latest data show that almost 35 percent of brides will retain their surnames. (For details on the time series see Appendix Table A1.)

The increase after 1998 coincides with a slight change in the question asked by the *Times* fact checkers. Three years ago, we have been told, the *Times* fact checkers asked if the bride would be keeping her surname "professionally" or "socially," rather than just at all. Although one might think that the change in the question led to the increase after 1998, there are is reason to believe that there would have been an increase anyhow.

Many women who retained their surnames professionally might have listed themselves as "keepers," even in the absence of the clarifying question. In the 1980s, for example, a substantial fraction of brides were listed in the *Times* as keeping their names for professional reasons, although very few did from 1990 to 1998 (see Table A1). As can be seen in Figure 3 (also Table A1) the increase from 1998 to 2001 did not occur immediately, as would be the case if the only reason for the increase were the change in the question. Finally, even if only those who responded that they were keeping their surnames socially were included (col. 1, Table A1), there would still have been a substantial increase in the fraction of "keepers" after 1998.

We recognize that there are potential biases in these data, in particular coming from selection into the group who announce their wedding. We will later provide evidence suggesting that the *Times* data understate the fraction of keepers even for those who graduate from a particular institution. Couples who choose to submit information to the *Times* may be more traditional or be from more established families, even conditional on undergraduate institution.

More important regarding our use of these data is the possibility of bias in the trend. *The*

New York Times society section features a select group of marriages by family income, background, education, and residence. If the group chosen changes over time, possibly through a deliberate attempt by the *Times* to be more inclusive, then the time trend could be influenced. The *Times* staff, however, claims that there have been no changes in their procedures regarding inclusion.[14] Thus, the second upturn after 1998 appears to reflect a real change in the fraction of "keepers" among the population from which the *Times* announcements draw.

We have also explored the possibility that the observables changed after 1998 in ways that could have led to an increase in the fraction of "keepers." We compared a large sample of wedding announcements in 2001 with those for the entire year 1991. We found that most observables are the same with two exceptions. The age at first marriage increased by about one year and the fraction who attended an Ivy League undergraduate university increased by a few percentage points. The few changes in observables can explain but a very tiny fraction of the increase after 1998 in the fraction keeping their names.[15]

Evidence of Longitudinal Change from the Harvard Alumni Surveys

Data for the Harvard class of 1980 were collected from the Harvard alumni office, which keeps five-year reunion books. The class of 1980 was chosen because its marriage history spans the years of *The New York Times* data and it has a long enough history to allow us to observe whether lifecycle transitions, such as having children, affect the decision to retain one's name.

[14] Robert Woletz, editor of the *Times* society section, informed Claudia Goldin that inclusion reflects the "newsworthiness" of the wedding. He stated that in the past 18 months the fact checkers have directly asked women if they are retaining their surname professionally or socially, rather than just retaining their surname at all. The increase in "keepers" precedes this change. In addition, there were previous periods when the fact checkers appear to have asked the question directly (e.g., the late 1980s) and the time series was unaffected then. Women who are "keepers" for social or professional reasons appear to have responded that they will keep their surname even if they were not asked directly for what purpose.

[15] Our conclusion comes from using the regression framework to be presented below.

Not all graduates respond to alumni surveys and some who respond in one year may not respond in another. Across the entire two decades 487 women of the 603 who graduated responded to at least one of the five-year surveys. Of those who responded, 390 reported to have ever-married and, of this total group, 52.3 percent did not change their last name to that of their husband's in the alumni survey nearest to their marriage year (see Table 1).[16] Those who married closest to college graduation had the lowest rate of surname retention: 38.3 percent of those marrying before 1985 did not change their surnames. But for all subsequent survey years, the fraction keeping their names was about 57 percent. The figure is considerably higher than that in *The New York Times* data but the *Times* data have fewer women with advanced degrees and a more diverse group of undergraduate colleges. We will make more precise comparisons between these two data sets when we discuss the correlates of name retention.

The Harvard sample allows us to see the effects of lifecycle transitions after marriage, whereas *The New York Times* data reveal name changing only at the moment of marriage. The vast majority of women in the Harvard class of 1980 who retained their surname upon marriage continued to do so, even after childbearing. Of those who did not change their surname upon marriage, about 10 percent changed subsequently (see Table 1, part B). But within this group, 12 percent of those with children later changed their surname and 5 percent did among those who did not list any children. Therefore, women with children have a higher tendency to take their husband's surname even if they did not do so at marriage. But the fraction that changed their surname after marriage is low, even among those with children.[17]

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[16] The marriage rate among the group is higher than these data would imply, (390/487) = 80 percent, because some women responded in 1985 but not after, and most who married did so after 1985. By using the data from the last alumni survey, we compute that the marriage rate to 2000 is about 85 percent, which makes it comparable with other populations of highly educated women.

[17] The Harvard data should probably be interpreted as giving the name that is used professionally or socially. Goldin knows a few members of the class personally and, for those, the name given is that used

Correlates of Name Retention

The New York Times *Cross Section Data Set, 1991*

What distinguished the women who retained their names from those who changed theirs? The most obvious possible reasons concern "making a name" for oneself. Women with advanced degrees, occupations in the arts and literature, and longer careers before marriage would appear to be more likely to retain their names. More traditional individuals, perhaps as indicated by a religious ceremony, would be less likely to retain their surnames. Family expectations and peer effects might matter as well. We will see that all of these reasons come into play. We emphasize that we are looking at the *correlates* of name change and that we are not necessarily finding causal relationships. We have tried to express the results using language that conveys this intent.

To explore the correlates of name retention, information was collected from *all* marriage announcements in *The New York Times* in 1991. As previously noted, the typical announcement contains education, occupation, age, and family background information for both bride and groom, and the religious nature of the ceremony. Across all weekends in 1991 there were 1,958 marriage announcements of which 91 percent give the bride's age.

Couples in these announcements form a distinctive stratum in society. Almost all graduated from college and 48 percent of these colleges, for both brides and grooms, were in the top 25 universities, top 25 liberal arts colleges, Ivy League institutions, or "seven sisters"

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for both. But one prominent individual in the class — Caroline Kennedy — is listed under her "professional" name (Kennedy), although she is known socially as Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg. Although some actual "changers" in the class might have been too lazy to change their name in the first reunion book, our data set contains the entries from four class books.

schools.[18] Among brides, 42 percent had a post-baccalaureate degree or were pursuing one and among grooms the figure is 49 percent. The median age of the bride, for a first marriage, was 28 years and the mean was 28.3 years. First marriages were 96.5 percent of the total for brides and 91 percent for grooms. That is, brides entering second marriages were less apt to publicize their marriage. Religious ceremonies were performed for 92 percent of the weddings. One-third of the religious ceremonies were Jewish and one-fifth were Catholic, a high figure for both but not surprising given the location of *The New York Times*.

We have estimated a linear probability regression where the dependent variable is whether the bride changed her surname.[19] Three groups of variables have been included — those pertaining to the ceremony, the bride, and the groom. We have estimated the regression using the full sample of announcements that included age (cols. 1 and 2) and a subset that excludes announcements for which the couple did not state anything definitive about the bride's future surname (col. 3). In the full sample regression, we offer one variant that includes only the bride's observables (col. 1) and another that adds variables pertaining to the groom and the ceremony. But because the results are similar across the three columns, we discuss only those from the full sample with all variables (col. 2). In the discussion it should be kept in mind that 81 percent of brides changed their name (or did not list information about the name).

A religious ceremony is associated with a higher probability of changing one's surname. Relative to the base group (civil ceremony), a Catholic ceremony is associated with an 8.2 percentage point increase in the probability of name changing and the effect is 7.6 for a Jewish

[18] The rankings of schools from the most recent *U.S. News and World Report* are used. The "seven sister" schools include Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Sarah Lawrence, Smith, Wellesley, and Vassar, although most are no longer single-sex and one (Radcliffe) merged with Harvard University in 1972. Schools are in only one category. Thus Harvard is in the "Ivy League" category, rather than "top 25 universities." Post-baccalaureate degrees primarily include M.A., Ph.D., J.D., M.D., and M.B.A..
[19] The main results are unaffected by the use of a "logit" regression.

ceremony. Mixed religious ceremonies, as well as those for non-Western religions, were about equal to the base, civil ceremony group.

Brides in their twenties had a higher probability of name changing — about 15 percentage points relative to brides older than about thirty. A bride with a professional degree, (J.D. or M.D. or D.D.S., etc.), or a Ph.D., had a decreased probability of changing her name of about 14 percentage points. An M.A. degree was associated with a 9 percentage point decrease. Interestingly, M.B.A. degrees are about equal to the base group of no advanced degree. Brides with occupations in the arts or literature had a 17 percentage point decrease. Each of the effects just mentioned is consistent with a desire to keep one's surname, once one has "made a name."

Graduation from an Ivy League school or a top-25 liberal arts college is associated with an 11 to 12 percentage point decrease and that from a "seven sisters" college is associated with an 8 percentage point decrease. Graduation from any of the other top universities has no effect relative to the base group, which includes all other institutions of higher education.

Conditional on the bride's characteristics, few of the groom's observable characteristics (e.g., university, advanced degrees) are associated with the bride's name retention and we have included only those that were statistically important. Grooms from less traditional backgrounds (e.g., fathers who are academics, professionals) and whose occupations generally involve less traditional communities (e.g., Ph.D., artist, writer) marry women who have a lower probability of changing their surname. Conversely, grooms from more traditional and wealthier backgrounds (e.g., fathers who are executives, grooms given a patrimonial suffix) have higher probabilities of marrying women who will take their surname.

We mentioned that the fraction keeping their names in the Harvard class of 1980 data set

is far higher than for all listings in the *Times* wedding announcements (52 versus 20 percent).[20] Sixty Harvard graduates (although not necessarily those from the class of 1980) announced their weddings in the 1991 *Times* and their rate of name retention was 30 percent. Because the observables of these graduates are reasonably similar to those in the Harvard class of 1980, the difference provides our best estimate of the disparity due self-selection into the society page of the *Times*, at least for those who graduated from Harvard.

We can also use the observables in the Harvard 1980 class and the coefficients from the *Times* 1991 regression to predict the Harvard fraction of "keepers." The predicted value, given our best estimate of the means of the independent variables for the Harvard class of 1980, is 40 percent.[21] The Harvard class of 1980 contains a far larger fraction, than does the *Times* sample, of women who received professional degrees, doctorates, and masters, and, of course, a far larger fraction who graduated from an Ivy League college.[22]

Harvard Class of 1980 Data Set

We have also investigated the correlates of retaining one's surname using the Harvard class of 1980 data. The dependent variable in this case is whether the woman ever changed her name, either in the reunion or class book just after her marriage or in any future class books. In the sample given in Table 3, col. (1), about 50 percent changed their name at some time after marriage. This sample includes only women who gave the date of their marriage. We have also estimated the relationship for the larger sample that excludes the year of marriage (col. 3) and for

[20] Because there is no trend in "changers" from 1984 to 1998 in the *Times* data, the comparison between the two data sets is reasonable. Furthermore, the average woman in the Harvard class of 1980 married 7 years after graduation. Thus their mean year of marriage is 1987, just four years prior to the *Times* data.
[21] We calculate the predicted value using the Table 2, col. 2 coefficients and the Harvard means for advanced degrees and occupation. Information does not exist on the ceremony or on the groom's father for the Harvard data. We have assumed a Protestant ceremony, which has about the mean effect.
[22] We have used the accumulated advanced degrees for the 1980 Harvard class. But we do not believe that there is a meaningful overstatement of advanced degrees for the 1980 Harvard class relative to the *Times* sample because we have also coded degrees in progress in the *Times* sample.

the smaller sample but without the marriage year variable for comparison purposes (col. 2).[23]

The correlates included are the presence of an advanced degree, whether the husband has a Ph.D., the presence of children, years from graduation to the first child, years from graduation to marriage, and whether the woman ever listed herself as a "homemaker" or in the "arts."

As in the *Times* data, the most important correlates concern the woman's characteristics: having an advanced degree and the time to marriage and to a first child. A Ph.D. or an M.D. is associated with a reduction of about 25 percentage points in the probability of changing one's name. Each year of marriage delay is related to a 1 percentage point decline and each year of delay in having children is related to a 1.3 percentage point decline, when both enter the model.

The husband's observable characteristics are not very important with the exception that women who marry men with Ph.D.s tend to retain their names, finding that are similar to those from the *Times* data. It should be noted that there is no sizable interaction effect of bride-Ph.D. and groom-Ph.D.; the effects, rather, are independent. Women with Ph.D.s value the surnames under which they have published or are known, similar to writers and artists. But a groom with a Ph.D. may live in a place that is more accepting of a wife with a surname different from his.

Using the coefficients from col. (1), the predicted probability a woman from the Harvard class of 1980 would change her name after marriage if she did not have an advanced degree, married soon after college and had children a few years later was 0.846. At the other extreme, the predicted probability she would change her name after marriage if she had a Ph.D., married a Ph.D. ten years after graduation, and had no children was 0.069.[24] These are, obviously, large differences and the quantitatively most important components are those concerning whether the

[23] The women who did not give their date of marriage form a discernibly different group. They have a far lower fraction with children and have a lower fraction with advanced degrees.
[24] The actual figures are 0.79 for women with no advanced degree, married within 5 years of her B.A., and with children, and 0.059 for women with a Ph.D. and married to a husband with a Ph.D.

woman has "made a name" for herself before marriage.

Summary

We have explored, using two sources of data, the fraction of women who retained their surname upon marriage and how this social indicator has changed during the past several decades. Both data sets include a special group of women — those who graduated from college.

The marriage announcements from *The New York Times* society page indicate an increase in the fraction retaining their surnames from 1980 to 1984 and again after 1998. For the population of couples who are included in the *Times* society section, the current fraction of brides who retain their surname is around 35 percent. Among the Harvard class of 1980, the fraction retaining their surname is greater — around 50 percent.

In a cross-section analysis of the correlates of surname change we find that the most quantitatively important factors involve whether the woman has already "made a name" for herself. Women with advanced degrees have a much greater probability of retaining their surnames, as do those who marry some years after graduation and have children much later, if at all. Other factors of importance are whether the husband's occupation (e.g., academic position) and family (e.g., as indicated by no patrimonial suffix; groom's father in less traditional occupation) are supportive of the less traditional surnames of the couple.

In sum, the shift among college graduate women to keeping their surnames after marriage began sometime from the late 1970s to early 1980s. It was spurred by an increase in the age at first marriage, the rapid increase in advanced degrees among women, and the acceptance of the appellation "Ms." Women began to "make a name" for themselves and more often insisted upon retaining their name at marriage.

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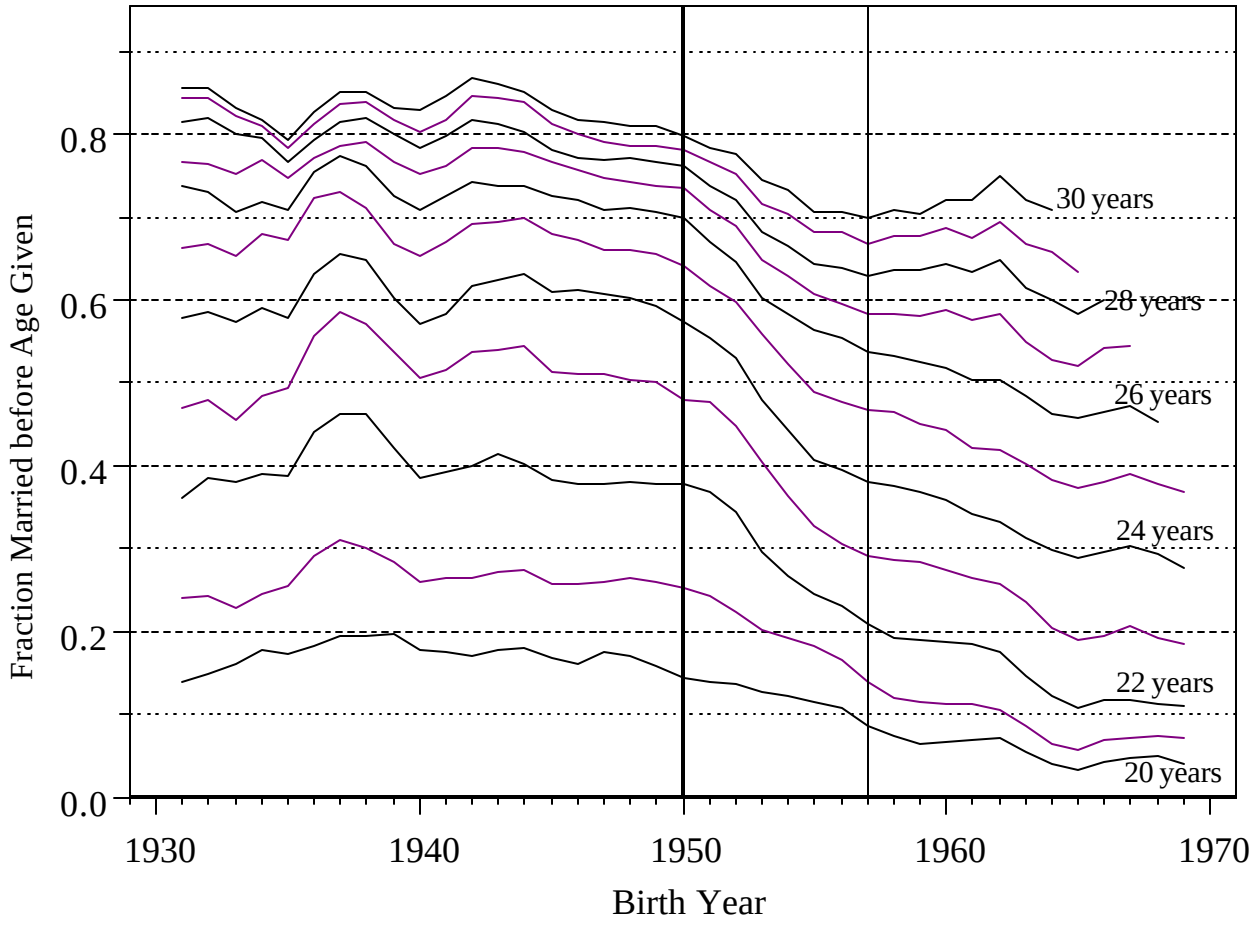
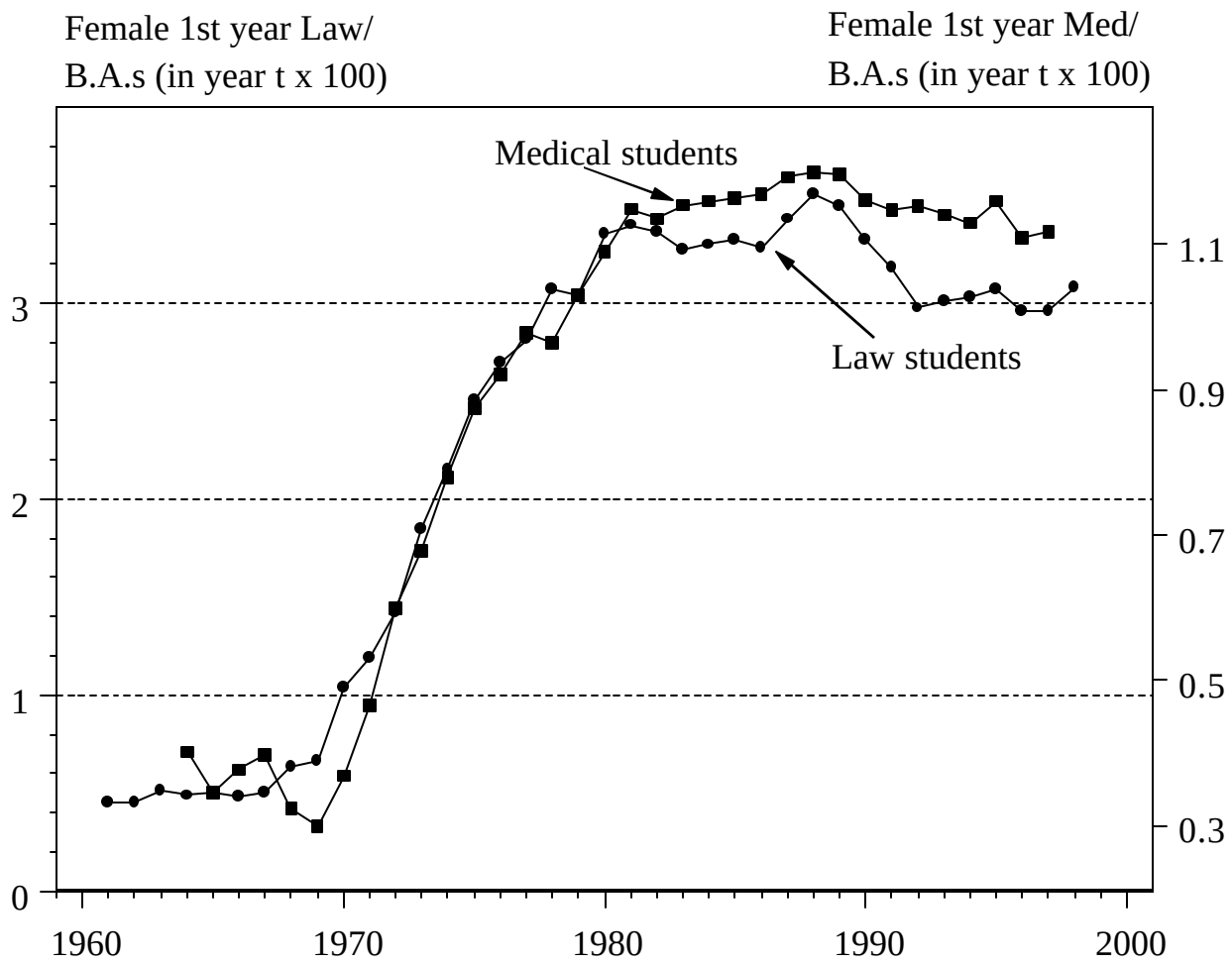
Figure 1
Fraction of College Graduate Women Married before Various Ages



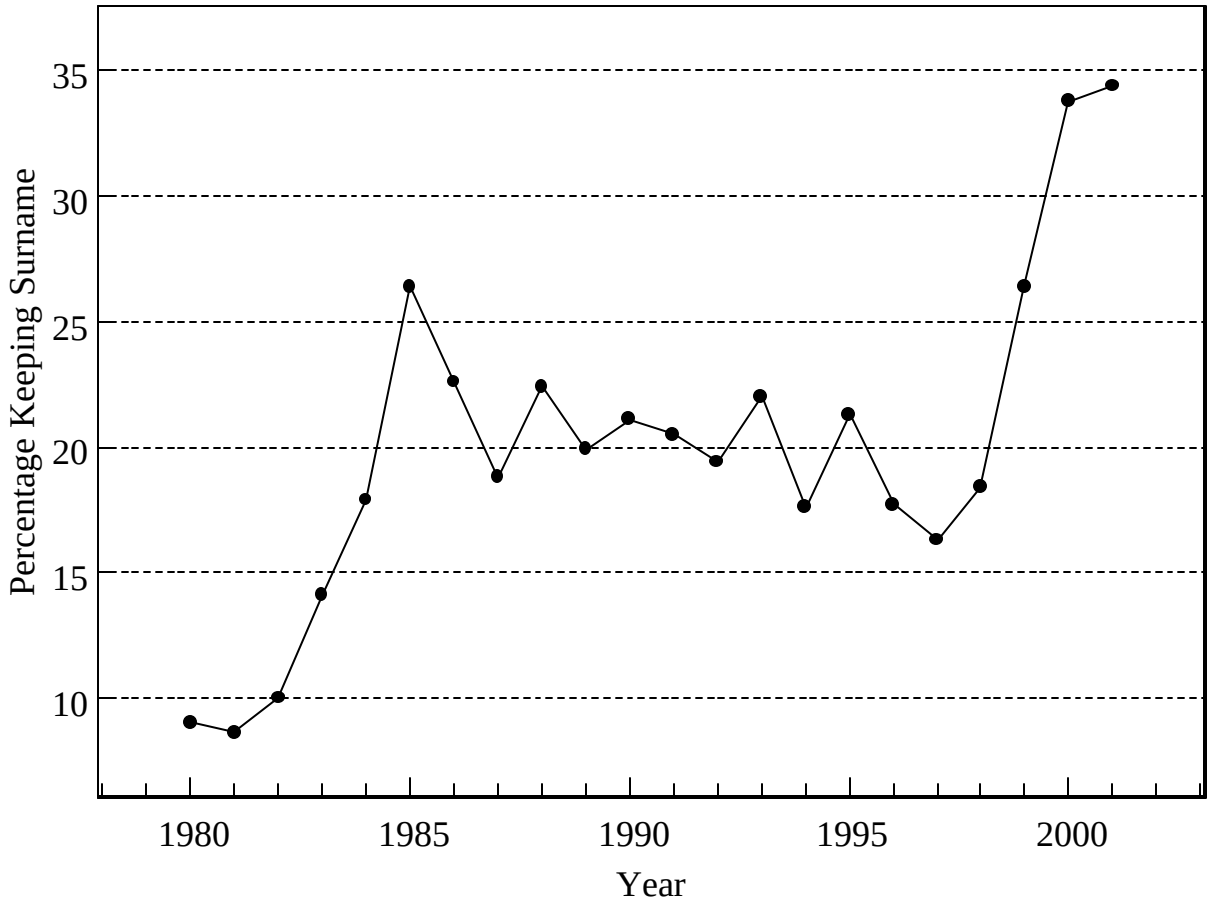
Source: Current Population Survey, Fertility and Marital History Supplement, 1990 and 1995. See Goldin and Katz (2000).
Notes: A three-year centered moving average is shown.

Figure 2
First-Year Female Law and Medical Students
as a Percentage of Female B.A.s Graduating in that Year



Sources: Goldin and Katz (2000).

Figure 3
Percentage Keeping Their Surname:
Marriage Announcements in *The New York Times* 1980 to 2001



Source: *The New York Times* time series data set, 1980 to 2001. See Appendix and col. (3) Appendix Table A1.

Notes: Women are coded as "keeping" if they stated that they were retaining their surname socially or professionally. All others are coded as "changers," and this group includes those who stated they were taking their husband's surname, those who stated they were hyphenating their name, and those who apparently gave no information on the bride's future name.

Table 1
Name Changing Through the Lifecycle: Harvard Class of 1980

A. Respondents Who Did Not Change Surname at Marriage

Marriage Interval	*Percentage Not Changing in Interval*	*Number Married in Interval*	*Number Not Changing in Interval*
Before 1985, after 1980	38.3	107	41
Before 1990, after 1985	58.2	153	89
Before 1995, after 1990	57.1	91	52
Before 2000, after 1995	56.4	39	22
All years, 1980 to 2000	52.3	390	204

B. Surname Change after Marriage and after Childbirth

Marriage Interval	(1) *Number Not Changing after Marriage*	(2) *Percent Changing Later, among (1)*	(3) *Number with Children, among (1)*	(4) *Percent Changing Later, among (3)*
1980 to 1995	182	10.4	142	12.0

Source: Harvard Class of 1980 data set. See Appendix.
Notes:
Part A: The survey closest to the time of marriage was used for the surname information. The number of observations is the "flow" of individuals into the "ever-married" state.
Part B: The marriage interval does not include the last survey so that those who retained their name at marriage could have time to alter that decision.

Table 2
Correlates of Changing One's Surname at Marriage: *The New York Times*, 1991

	(1)		(2)		(3)		*Means*	
Variable	*Coeff.*	*S.e.*	*Coeff.*	*S.e.*	*Coeff.*	*S.e.*	(1) & (2)	(3)
Dependent variable: Bride Changed Surname at Marriage							0.810	0.766
Ceremony								
Catholic			0.0816	0.0376	0.0999	0.0438	0.190	0.190
Jewish			0.0776	0.0354	0.0743	0.0415	0.306	0.285
Protestant			0.0478	0.0343	0.0580	0.0398	0.361	0.380
Other religion or mixed			0.0234	0.0462	0.0202	0.0540	0.0643	0.0634
Bride								
Ages 20 to 24	0.166	0.0572	0.133	0.0571	0.115	0.0637	0.114	0.109
Ages 25 to 29	0.173	0.0523	0.149	0.0522	0.139	0.0573	0.559	0.563
Ages 30 to 34	0.0432	0.0541	0.0321	0.0536	-0.00595	0.0592	0.229	0.225
Ages 35 to 39	-0.0202	0.0611	-0.0303	0.0605	-0.0855	0.0675	0.0671	0.0676
Ivy League college	-0.128	0.0241	-0.108	0.0242	-0.137	0.0285	0.203	0.197
Top 25 university	-0.00371	0.0301	0.00565	0.0298	-0.00237	0.0356	0.105	0.0997
"Seven sisters" college	-0.0830	0.0313	-0.0779	0.0310	-0.0810	0.0357	0.0981	0.101
Top 25 liberal arts college	-0.137	0.0335	-0.118	0.0336	-0.128	0.0388	0.0795	0.0822
Law degree	-0.147	0.0271	-0.148	0.0270	-0.178	0.0317	0.139	0.137
Medical, dental degree	-0.138	0.0442	-0.138	0.0441	-0.316	0.0601	0.0446	0.0314
Ph.D.	-0.198	0.0496	-0.146	0.0505	-0.154	0.0582	0.0344	0.0355
Master's degree	-0.114	0.0237	-0.0883	0.0238	-0.101	0.0279	0.174	0.174
M.B.A.	-0.0230	0.0321	-0.0226	0.0318	-0.0121	0.0359	0.0948	0.102
Bride occupation in arts	-0.185	0.0267	-0.168	0.0273	-0.207	0.317	0.136	0.136
Groom								
Ph.D. degree			-0.185	0.0414	-0.236	0.498	0.0513	0.0488
Groom occupation in arts			-0.0689	0.0305	-0.0764	0.0350	0.0987	0.101
Father is an executive			0.0417	0.0225	0.0573	0.0256	0.240	0.255
Father is an academic			-0.0611	0.0328	-0.0768	0.0388	0.0823	0.0808
Father is in a profession			-0.0421	0.0200	-0.0321	0.0232	0.381	0.401
Uses patrimonial suffix			0.0889	0.0318	0.101	0.0363	0.0852	0.0899

Constant	0.812	0.0521	0.779	0.0589	0.766	0.0651		
R^2	0.122		0.148		0.200			
Root mean squared error	0.369		0.364		0.382			
Number of observations	1,773		1,773		1,435		1,773	1,435

Source: *The New York Times* cross section data set, 1991. See Appendix.

Notes: The bride is coded as changing her surname upon marriage if she is listed as Mrs., or with a hyphenated surname, or if there is no information given. Linear probability (OLS) regressions. Omitted ceremony is "civil." Colleges are categorized using the most recent *U.S. News and World Report* rankings and the categories are unique, i.e., the "top 25 universities" category omits the Ivy League institutions. The "seven sister" school category includes Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Sarah Lawrence, Smith, Wellesley, and Vassar, although most are no longer single-sex and one (Radcliffe) merged with Harvard University in 1972. Professional and graduate degrees are not mutually exclusive; that is, a woman could have both an M.A. and a Ph.D. or an M.D. and a Ph.D. "Uses patrimonial suffix" is a dummy variable equal to one if the groom was listed as a Jr., Sr., or with any Roman numerals following his name. "S.e." is standard error. Cols. (1) and (2) are the entire sample of marriage announcements that included age. Col. (3) is the sample of marriage announcements with age but excluding those for which the couple did not tell the fact checker the surname the bride would assume.

Table 3
Correlates of Changing One's Surname: Harvard Class of 1980

	(1)		(2)		(3)		*Means for*
Variables	*Coeff.*	*S.e.*	*Coeff.*	*S.e.*	*Coeff.*	*S.e.*	*column (1)*
Dependent variable: Woman changed her surname at marriage or subsequently							0.502
Woman's characteristics							
Advanced degrees							
M.A.	0.0371	0.0702	0.0412	0.0702	0.0142	0.0618	0.253
M.B.A.	-0.160	0.0900	-0.168	0.0899	-0.186	0.0806	0.128
J.D.	-0.117	0.0755	-0.122	0.0755	-0.149	0.0665	0.223
M.D.	-0.234	0.0843	-0.245	0.0840	-0.278	0.0726	0.170
Ph.D.	-0.263	0.0906	-0.273	0.0905	-0.356	0.0817	0.115
Homemaker ever	0.190	0.0935	0.198	0.0935	0.179	0.0854	0.102
Artist/arts ever	-0.115	0.0873	-0.120	0.0874	-0.216	0.0752	0.121
Family characteristics							
Husband has Ph.D.	-0.204	0.0765	-0.207	0.0766	-0.234	0.0720	0.164
Children	0.212	0.117	0.268	0.109	0.0888	0.881	0.820
Years to child/10	-0.127	0.0896	-0.175	0.0823	-0.135	0.0684	8.049
Years to marriage/10	-0.0977	0.0715					6.941
Constant	0.634	0.0970	0.563	0.0822	0.732	0.0560	
R^2	0.158		0.153		0.164		
Mean squared error	0.468		0.469		0.463		
Number of observations	305		305		389		

Source: Harvard class of 1980 data set. See Appendix.
Notes: Only women who were ever married are included in the sample. The samples in cols. (1) and (3) are smaller than that of (2) because marriage year was not reported by everyone who reported having ever been married. Means are given for the sample in col. (1); years variables are not divided by 10. Advanced degrees refer to any and some women report more than one. "Children" is a dummy variable and indicates that at least one child is reported with a birth date, although the child could be a stepchild or an adopted child. "Years" means since graduation, June 1980. "Artist/arts" includes artists, photographers, writers, journalists, actresses, and so on. "Homemaker ever" and "Artist/arts ever" indicates that the woman listed one of these occupational groups during one of the four surveys. "S.e." is standard error.

Appendix Table A1

Keepers and Changers in *The New York Times* Sample: 1980 to 2001

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Keeps Surname			*Changes Surname*				
Year	*Socially*	*Profes-sionally*	*"Keepers" (1)+(2)*	*Hyphen surname*	*Take husband's surname*	*No inform-ation listed*	*"Changers" (4)+(5)+(6)*	*Number of observa-tions*
1980	0.078	0.012	0.090	0.000	0.213	0.697	0.910	244
1981	0.061	0.024	0.086	0.004	0.318	0.592	0.914	245
1982	0.074	0.026	0.100	0.000	0.258	0.642	0.900	229
1983	0.093	0.048	0.141	0.011	0.256	0.593	0.859	270
1984	0.122	0.057	0.179	0.022	0.367	0.432	0.821	229
1985	0.143	0.121	0.264	0.004	0.468	0.264	0.736	231
1986	0.108	0.118	0.226	0.018	0.570	0.186	0.774	279
1987	0.096	0.092	0.188	0.018	0.401	0.393	0.813	272
1988	0.105	0.119	0.224	0.018	0.412	0.347	0.776	277
1989	0.172	0.027	0.199	0.021	0.620	0.160	0.801	332
1990	0.208	0.003	0.211	0.032	0.668	0.090	0.789	379
1991	0.201	0.003	0.205	0.014	0.597	0.184	0.795	293
1992	0.190	0.004	0.194	0.061	0.706	0.039	0.806	279
1993	0.220	0.000	0.220	0.048	0.560	0.173	0.780	336
1994	0.167	0.009	0.176	0.027	0.421	0.376	0.824	330
1995	0.213	0.000	0.213	0.034	0.456	0.297	0.788	320
1996	0.177	0.000	0.177	0.038	0.550	0.235	0.823	260
1997	0.163	0.000	0.163	0.019	0.504	0.314	0.837	258
1998	0.184	0.000	0.184	0.041	0.461	0.314	0.816	245
1999	0.209	0.055	0.264	0.034	0.464	0.238	0.736	235
2000	0.259	0.079	0.339	0.017	0.456	0.188	0.661	239
2001	0.266	0.082	0.348	0.034	0.412	0.206	0.652	233

Source: *The New York Times* Time Series Data Set, 1980 to 2001. See Data Appendix.

Notes: The 2001 figure is for the year up to August 2001.

Data Appendix

Construction of *The New York Times* data sets

The New York Times Time Series Data Set, 1980 to 2001

Information on name retention/change was recorded from marriage (not engagement) announcements for eight weekends uniformly spaced beginning with the first weekend in February and ending in December. That is, every 6th weekend was chosen except for the year 2001 when every 3rd weekend was chosen beginning with January 14. In 1995, marriage announcements appear only in the Sunday edition of the *Times*. An average of 280 announcements were recorded each year.

The New York Times Cross Section Data Set, 1991

Information on all marriage announcements in 1991 was recorded. The variables collected are: announcement date, names and ages of bride and bridegroom, religious or civil nature of the ceremony and the place, occupations and education of bride and bridegroom, and occupations of both sets of parents. There are 1,958 observations and 1,773 contain the age of the bride.

Construction of the Harvard Class of 1980 Data Set

Information from the reunion class books of 1985, 1990, 1995, and 2000 was gathered. The class books are compiled by the Harvard Alumni Association which sends questionnaires to graduates of the class, requesting information on their current name, address, occupation, graduate or professional degrees, spouse or partner name, date of marriage, occupation and education of spouse or partner, and children with their dates of birth. All information given was collected. When an individual did not respond to a questionnaire, information was imputed when such information was clearly factual. For example, if a woman stated in 1995 that she had been married in 1989 but did not respond to the 1990 questionnaire, we filled in that information. There were 603 graduates in the class of 1980. Reasonably good information is available for 487 of them.