

Ethnic and National Characteristics of the U.S. Elite

BY NATHANIEL WEYL

This paper presents preliminary findings concerning the national-linguistic and class origins of the intellectual and operational leadership of the United States as revealed by its surnames.

Method. Common surnames were chosen which were representative of (and which constitute a substantial proportion of) the national linguistic, class or regional populations to be studied. For example, the Jewish sample consists of 35 common surnames borne by 1,282,000 of the estimated 4,100,000 American Jews registered on U.S. Social Security rolls in 1957. The size of the sample used in each instance depends on such factors as surname distribution and the presence or absence of common "uncontaminated" surnames.*

After batches of representative common surnames have been chosen, the next step is to compute the proportion which the bearers of these names constitute to total entries in a variety of leadership rosters and in Social Security rolls. The ratio of the first fraction to the second, multiplied by 100, constitutes a performance coefficient for the group. Thus, a performance coefficient of 293 for Dutch names and of 25 for Italian names in the chief roster of American physical scientists means that, in this area, the performance of people of Dutch stock is about three times the national average, that of people of Italian origin one-quarter of it.

The advantages of the method includes speed and ease of calculation, minimization of subjective judgments, manipulation of aggregates large enough to make the problem of error due to random sampling insignificant and a standard operating procedure which can readily be repeated and checked by other investigators.

The method also has limitations. It assumes that the bearers of

* For the purposes of this study, names are "contaminated" when they represent two or more groups within the same category. Thus, MILLER is both German and English; IRVING is both Scottish and Jewish; LEE is English and Chinese. In the United States population, BROWN is contaminated because it is 31% Negro. Since Social Security codes its names in terms of the first six letters only, names such as MARTIN are contaminated and must be excluded since they include MARTINI and MARTINEZ.

high-frequency surnames within any group are comparable in respect to leadership potential with the bearers of low-frequency surnames. There is some reason to doubt this. In some instances, the rarer surnames originally represented higher class, status or educational origin than the others.¹ Also it is possible that the more successful (and hence, as a rule, the genetically more favoured) groups tended to select less common surname spellings. Thus CLARKES and COOKES are more heavily represented than CLARKS and COOKS in American science.

Moreover, the performance coefficients are slightly distorted by the presence of name-changers. Name-changing is generally into the majority (English) group and is quantitatively important as far as English performance is concerned only in the case of the Negro. By judicious selection of English surnames, we have largely eliminated the Negro component and substantially reduced other name-changing elements. In considering the effect of name-changing on the performance coefficients of the minority groups from which the changes occurred, it is well to remember that the name-changers generally shift simultaneously from the leadership rosters and Social Security rolls. Thus, the main remaining issue is whether changers and non-changers are similar in respect to leadership potential and leadership achievement. Where the minority has low prestige, the changers will generally advance more readily. The name-changers are perhaps weaker in ego structure, but also more bent on success within the macrocosm of U.S. society as against the microcosm of the society of the minority group from which they derive. Thus the presence of name-changers tends to understate the achievement of these minority groups.

The performance coefficients describe the participation in U.S. leadership of the various groups of immigrants and their descendants. This determination would be of great importance in the formulation of a rational immigration policy based on American national interests rather than on political considerations. However, the performance coefficients do not necessarily characterize the nations from which the immigration derived. In general, the English, Scots, Welsh, Scandinavian, German, Dutch and Jewish elements in the U.S. population are probably either representative or positively selective. The French group, however, is weighted down by the presence of French-Canadians; the low Italian performance reflects characteristics of the Sicilian and Calabrian peasantry rather than of the Italian people as a whole; the Spanish-

¹Generally speaking, the aristocracy in most countries derive their surnames from their estates, and consequently these surnames are much less common than those of the other classes, derived from patronymics, or trades, or nicknames, such as Robinson, Baker and White.—EDITOR.

speaking group is overwhelmingly Puerto Rican and Mexican and is, to a great extent, racially mixed.

National-Linguistic Rank Order. In most intellectual and operational leadership rosters studied, Jews and Dutch are well ahead of all other national-linguistic groups. Within the English-speaking groups, Scots generally lead and Irish almost always lag. On the Continent, leadership is concentrated in North, West and Central Europe. The Mediterranean groups in the United States (the French excepted) provide the nation with negligible intellectual or operational leadership.

The performance superiority of Jews over Protestants and of Protestants over Catholics is marked.² This suggests that Galton was right in asserting that a celibate priesthood can destroy, and a fertile one create and enhance, the genetic potential of a people for intelligence, provided, of course, that the priesthood is selective for intelligence. The Jewish rabbinate has been much more fertile than Jewry as a whole since about the time of Christ; the Protestant clergy more fertile than the mass since the Reformation; the Catholic priesthood seldom more fertile if ever.³

The range in national performance coefficients is greatest in science and scholarship, somewhat less in *Who's Who in America*, engineering and business leadership. It is much less among U.S. Army officers and virtually disappears among Foreign Service and State Department officials. This conforms to a rational presumption that the range of achievement should be greatest in the most mentally exacting fields, less, but still substantial, in highly competitive areas of operational performance, but at a minimum in status-bound bureaucracies where advancement is frequently based on seniority or political influence.

Special Groups. In addition to the national-linguistic groups, we have analysed two special groups. First, there are the bearers of three common clerical names—CLARK, CLARKE and PALMER—representing 386,000 of the 117.3 million persons enrolled with Social Security. The hypothesis to be explored was that this group, being presumptively genetically superior in intelligence at about the time of the Crusades when surnames were assumed in the

²There is, however, involved in this question the ethnic one. The Scots and English tend to be Protestant, the Irish Roman Catholic. Consequently if the Irish and the Southern Italians weight the R.C. statistics, as they probably do, then they will affect the performance of the Roman Catholics as a whole.—EDITOR.

³This sweeping historical generalization is subject to many qualifications as to time and place. In this context, celibacy vs. fertility is not a range of sexual activity, but of the procreation, care and raising to adulthood of progeny.

PERFORMANCE COEFFICIENTS OF DIFFERENT NATIONAL-LINGUISTIC GROUPS
IN THE U.S. POPULATION

CATEGORY	NO. ON SOC. SEC. ¹ (thds)	AMERICAN MEN OF SCIENCE ²			WHO'S WHO ⁵	SCHOLARS ⁴	BUSINESS ⁵	STATE ⁶	ARMY ⁷	ENGINEERS ⁸
		Vol. 1	Vol. 2	Vol. 3						
Jews	1,282	237	272	338	123	164	180	121	80	135
Dutch	73	293	217	90	172	216	165	129	137	234
Lothian Scots	208	172	163	154	128	172	112	105	n.a.	158
Scots	833	126	144	146	126	147	132	115	146	145
English	2,532	116	118	111	107	109	100	n.a.	110	121
Welsh	386	114	87	106	113	136	86	108	n.a.	144
Irish	1,189	80	95	87	104	96	102	127	136	99
Germans	557	152	164	167	86	132	116	71	99	149
Scandinavians	348	140	206	158	84	108	102	108	81	123
French	261	139	95	46	80	83	74	108	75	76
Italians	98	25	20	5	10	76	23	21	56	0
Spanish	746	4	13	12	11	20	2	32	15	13
Negroes ⁹	906	neg	neg	neg	8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

NOTES

¹Persons on the rolls of the Bureau of Old Age & Survivors Insurance, a total of 117,300,000 entries.

²*American Men of Science*, 1955-56 edition. Volume 1, The Physical Sciences, contains 43,518 biographies; Volume 2, The Biological Sciences, contains about 25,000 biographies and 5,000 references; Volume 3, The Social and Behavioral Sciences, probably contains 11,000 biographies. Performance coefficient for SMITH equated to 100.

³*Who's Who in America*, 1955-57, about 49,500 entries. All entries equated to 100.

⁴*Directory of American Scholars*, 3rd edition, 1957, about 22,000 entries. SMITH equals 100.

⁵*Poor's Register of Directors and Executives, U.S. and Canada*, 1959, about 75,000 names. SMITH equals 100.

⁶*Biographical Register*, 1959, covers 12,000 high and middle echelon officials. Total equated to 100.

⁷*U.S. Army Register*, January 1960. Officers on active list, total 39,300. SMITH equated to 100.

⁸*Who's Who in Engineering*, 1959. Five commonest English names equated to 100.

⁹American Negro coefficients were derived by taking names in which the Negro proportion in the general population is known, calculating the performance of the English elements within this group and estimating the Negro performance from the residuals.

British Isles, may have continued to mate selectively, thus retaining its mental superiority. An affirmative answer presupposed the persistence of sexual selection of this sort over about 25 generations and 750 years, despite the absence of any self-consciousness of different and superior origin among these name bearers during the latter part of the time-span in question.

The findings were that the English Clerical Surname Group is superior. Its performance coefficient was 153 in *Who's Who in America* 1955-57; 186 among physical, 194 among biological and 186 among social and behavioural scientists; 147 in the *Directory of American Scholars*; 234 in *Poor's Register of Directors and Executives* and 175 among U.S. engineers. As we would have anticipated, the superiority of this group was not very marked in the American bureaucracy, which tends to appeal to those who prefer security to rigorous competitive struggle and to reward conformity more than creativity. The coefficients of achievement of the clerical subgroup were 128 among Army officers and 120 among higher-level State Department bureaucrats.

Another group is Special English Occupations. These are the four English occupational surnames (other than the clerical ones) with the highest performance coefficients in *Who's Who in America*. The names are: DRAPER, MINER, COOKE and POTTER.

Here again, superiority is marked and manifest. Their performance coefficients are 244 in *Who's Who in America*; 221 in *American Men of Science*, all three volumes combined; 264 among American scholars; 234 among Poor's business leaders and 237 among American engineers. Surprisingly, they are also significantly superior in the *Biographical Register* of State Department officials where their coefficient is 182.⁴

Thus, in five of the six rosters listed, the Special English Occupations group ranks above all other groups we have considered and, in *American Men of Science*, the SEO group is surpassed only by the Jews.

This consistent superiority is an observed datum which I was unable to explain in terms of original intellectual or occupational status. It occurred to me that a possible reason for this extraordinary performance was that the bearers of these four occupational names in the United States may be preponderantly descended from the original settlers of New England, about whom de Tocqueville wrote: "These men possessed, in proportion to their number, a greater mass of intelligence than is to be found in any European nation of our own time."⁵

⁴The coefficient of this group among U.S. Army officers was not calculated.

⁵*Democracy in America*, 1889 edition, Vol. I, p. 28.

I am indebted to Dr R. Gayre of Gayre for an alternative and probably sounder hypothesis. After observing that the trades, together with the aristocracy and the clerics, formed the leading element in medieval society, he writes:

“I would expect, therefore, to find trade names making high scores, since tradesmen in the Middle Ages were the people who provided the whole impetus of civic life, development and merchant venturing, and out of its profits built cathedrals, and fine parish churches—such as those built out of the wool trade in East Anglia, and which are a marvel to this day. We ought not to confuse the relatively low estimate of tradesmen today with tradesmen of 700 to 500 years ago. In fact they were the equivalent of what are often enough today the business executives and bankers of our time. Wolsey was the son of a Butcher, for instance, and out of these tradesmen came many of the clerics. Therefore, I would, in fact, expect the leading trade names to do well, perhaps as well as the clerical.

“This I would especially expect for the DRAPERS, who were leading merchants and merchant venturers, and MINERS. The miners were not merely mine workers. They were engineers and sappers and master men. In Cornwall, they were so privileged that they were allowed their own Stannery Courts, and could not be tried before the Royal Courts.”

Thus the remarkable performance of the Special English Occupations group reinforces the hypothesis already presented that, within any society, intellectually élite stock tends to maintain its genetic superiority through selective mating.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Nathaniel Weyl. Born in New York City in 1910. Postgraduate of Columbia University and London School of Economics. Author of *The Reconquest of Mexico* (1939), *Treason* (1950) *The Battle Against Disloyalty* (1951), *The Negro in American Civilization* (1960), *Red Star over Cuba* (1960).