

# THE JEWISH ROLE IN THE AMERICAN ELITE

BY NATHANIEL WEYL

This article deals with the quantitative rôle of Jewry in American leadership as revealed by surname-frequency analysis.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish rôle is much larger than that indicated in prior articles. The reason for the increase is that I am now using a smaller and more selective roster of Jewish family names, eliminating those heavily mixed with non-Jewish elements.<sup>2</sup>

Finding purely Jewish names is difficult. When the Jews of Europe took surnames in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they usually appropriated those current in the countries where they lived, but assigned esoteric meanings to them. A Gentile might be called BRILL because he made or wore spectacles; if a Jew chose the name it was because he claimed descent (*Ben*) from Rabbi Judah Lowe (hence BRJL). BAUM and BLOCH are similar rabbinical anagrams. KAUFMANN may mean, not merchant, but "Jacob born in the month of Ab" and BERNSTEIN may either refer to amber or to descent from the fifth son of Jacob. Since there are no vowels in Hebrew script, the latter can be inserted arbitrarily when Hebrew words are rendered in modern European languages. For example, a large proportion of the GORDON's in the United States are not Scots but Jews; in this instance, the name indicates that the bearer came from the town of GRoDNo (formerly in Eastern Poland, now in Byelorussia).<sup>3</sup>

A pure sample of Jewish names could have been obtained by confining one's self to those of Hebrew or Yiddish origin such as COHEN, KATZ, LEVIN, LEVINE, LEVY and

<sup>1</sup> The method used is explained in my "Ethnic and National Characteristics of the U.S. Elite," *THE MANKIND QUARTERLY*, Vol. I, No. 4, April 1961, pp.242-7.

<sup>2</sup> The retained names (using the Social Security six-letter coding system) are: ABRAHAM, BERMAN, BERNSTEIN, COHEN, EPSTEIN, FRIEDMann, GOLDBERG, GOLDSTEIN, GREENBERG, ISAACS, KAPLAN, KATZ, LEVIN, LEVINE, LEVY, MARCUS, ROSEN, ROSENBERG, ROSENTHAL, RUBIN, SHAPIRO, SILVER, SOLOMON, STERN, WEINBERG, and WEINSTEIN.

<sup>3</sup> Article on "Names" in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1905, and in the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York City, 1942. Of less value is Konrad Krause, *Die jüdische Namenwelt*, Essener Verlag, Anstalt, 1943.

SHAPIRO. However, this would yield a distorted sample of Jewry, since the Western Jews (those of non-Slavic and non-Balkan provenance) have tended to avoid such names.

Accordingly, I have compared the frequency of occurrence of putatively Jewish names in the Berlin City Directory for 1930 (a pre-Nazi year) with their corresponding frequencies in the West Berlin Directory for 1957. Those names which virtually disappear can be considered to be Jewish; those which show substantially unimpaired or even increased frequencies obviously are not.

If we consider the performance coefficient for the name SMITH to be equal to 100, the average performance coefficients of the 26 Jewish names, with a total representation of 550,726 individuals on U.S. Social Security rolls, are:

<i>Rosters of Leadership*</i>	<i>Average Jewish Performance Coefficient</i>
Psychiatrists	1123
Phi Beta Kappa, 1923-1961	668
Statisticians	663
Medical Specialists	586
Dentists	552
Physicians	500
Mathematicians	479
Social Scientists	410
Biological Scientists	342
College Students	317
American Newspaper Guild members	295
Physical Scientists	265
Artists	228
Business Executives	207
Scholars	196
<i>Who's Who of American Women</i>	174
<i>Who's Who in America, 1955-1957</i>	129
Foreign Service Officers	127
Engineers	111
Army Officers	63
ARITHMETIC MEAN	372
MEDIAN	306

\* American Psychiatric Association, *List of Fellows and Members, 1961-62*; Phi Beta Kappa Society membership, compilation kindly made by the Society for the writer; American Statistical Association, *Directory of Statisticians 1961*; *Directory of Medical Specialists Holding Certification by American Specialty Boards*, 10th edition, 1961; American Dental Association, *American Dental Directory 1962*; American Medical Association, *American Medical Directory 1960-61*; *Combined Membership List of American Mathematics Societies, 1961*; *American Men of Science, 1955-56*

edition: Vol. I (Physical Sciences), Vol. II (Biological Sciences) and Vol. III (Social and Behavioral Sciences); 1962 student enrolment in 15 U.S. colleges and universities (University of Alabama, University of California, University of Cincinnati, Cornell, Dartmouth, George Washington University, Harvard, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, University of Michigan, Ohio State, Pennsylvania State, Princeton, University of Texas, Vassar and Yale); membership of American Newspaper Guild, kindly made available by the trade union; *Mallet's Index of Artists: Supplement*, Peter Smith, New York, 1948 (about 15,000 to 20,000 names, mostly, but not entirely, contemporary); *Poor's Register of Directors and Executives, U.S. and Canada*, 1959; *Directory of American Scholars*, 3rd edition, 1957; *The Biographical Register of the Department of State* (1959); *Who's Who in Engineering* (1959) and *U.S. Army Register* (January 1960)—officers on the active list.

The performance of Jews, as measured by these rosters,<sup>4</sup> places them in the pre-eminent position of leadership among all national-linguistic groups in the United States. Moreover, this generally superior performance was not due to the presence of a few exceptional names, but was common to the group. The lowest ranking of the 26 Jewish surnames, COHEN, was above SMITH in 16 rosters and below SMITH in only four. The average performance for COHEN in all 20 rosters was 302. The highest ranking Jewish name, LEVIN, surpassed SMITH in 19 of the 20 rosters, had an average performance coefficient of 535 and scored over 1,000 in two rosters.

The table sheds light on the primary areas of Jewish achievement. Since at least the early Middle Ages, medicine has attracted the Jewish mind more than any other discipline (with the possible exceptions of theology and philosophy). It is noteworthy that the Jewish performance coefficient in the élite group of certified medical specialists is 17% higher than in the medical profession as a whole. Jewish intelligence is most effectively represented in the sciences and scholarship and more particularly in their speculative branches (psychiatry, 1,123; Phi Beta Kappa, 668; statistics, 663; mathematics, 479, and social sciences, 410) rather than in the more definitely operational and experimental fields (biology, 342; physical sciences, 265, and engineering, 111).<sup>5</sup> This is exactly what one would expect in view of the fact that the rabbinical process of eugenic selection concentrated on a bookish sort of intelligence, which combined memory and abstract

<sup>4</sup>The Jewish performance average would have been lower if the rosters chosen had been more representative of practical accomplishment (politics, business, the military and sports) and less representative of abstract thought, scholarship and medicine.

<sup>5</sup>The inclusion of the physical sciences in this category may be challenged. However, the average physicist listed in *American Men of Science* is primarily a laboratory worker rather than a theorist. In a selective roster of living theoretical physicists, the Jewish performance coefficient would be considerably higher than 265.

reasoning. The traditional Jewish concept of the scholar and thinker is a man who passively reads and reflects, rather than one who actively transforms the environment or subjects it to crucial experiments.

The Jewish performance coefficient is about double that of SMITH in art, scholarship and business leadership. The coefficient for plastic artists would have been higher if a more contemporary reference volume could have been found, one which excluded dead artists. Nor was a suitable reference volume for music available. The Jewish representation among engineers is about average (as might have been expected on the basis of the traditional rabbinical concept of scholarship) and Jewish representation among Army officers is definitely below average. If we rank these leadership areas on an active-passive scale, it would appear that Jewish ability is most marked in the more passive areas.

### **Jewry and the Colleges**

A survey of a representative sample of American college graduates in 1946-47 revealed that about 2% of the graduates over 50 years of age were Jews.<sup>6</sup> These graduates were of World War I or prior vintage. At the time (say 1904) Jews constituted slightly less than 2% of the American population. In 1904, the great flood of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe was at its peak. The majority of American Jews were recent immigrants from Russia, who spoke broken English, worked in New York sweat shops and were too poor to go to college. The Jewish college graduates in this period were primarily second-generation Americans from Western Europe.

Of the college graduates under 30 in 1946-47 (probably centering around 1940), 69% were Protestants, 25% Catholics and 6% Jews. The comparative breakdown of the U.S. population was 78% Protestant, 19% Catholic and 3% Jewish. Accordingly, if the general college rate for the country is considered as 100, the rate for Jews was 200, for Catholics 132 and for Protestants only 88. Protestant under-representation among the college bred is partly due to the presence of Negroes and Southern rural poor whites.

Fifteen U.S. colleges and universities have furnished me with their 1962 student directories. These show that 10.3% of the total student bodies are Jewish. However, this sample consists primarily of the best colleges and universities in the country. It includes no Catholic or junior colleges and only a few of the second-rate institutions. When all American institutions of higher

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Havemann and Patricia Salter West, *They Went to College*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1952.

education are considered, the Jewish percentage will probably be about what it was in 1940—6% of the total. At present, some 4 million, or 47%, of the 8.5 million Americans of college age are in institutions of higher education. If 6% of this college population is Jewish and Jews constitute 3% of the American population, it follows that about 94% of Jews in the right age group are attending college.

Since a vast expansion of the American college population can be expected during the next decade and since the Jews have already reached saturation levels in this area whereas other groups have not, it follows that the Jewish percentage of the college bred must decline. To the extent that higher education is a main pre-requisite for membership in the American intellectual, political and business élites, the Jewish position in the leadership of the United States may decline from its present very high level.

The Phi Beta Kappa Society, with a total membership, living and dead, of about 180,000 persons, is the outstanding academic honor society in the United States. For technical reasons, I have expressed the Jewish performance coefficients in Phi Beta Kappa membership as percentages of the corresponding English performance coefficients. We find that, during the earliest period, 1776-1922, the Jewish performance coefficient was 86; during 1776-1961 inclusive it was 375; for the period 1923-1961, which covers most living Phi Beta Kappa members, the P.C. was 491. During 1962, the Jewish performance coefficient declined to 439. In short, there are proportionately about five times as many American Jews as Americans of English stock among the Phi Beta Kappa members of the past 40 years and there are over four times as many among the current members.

### **Rank Order of Jewish Names**

I have worked out composite scores for each of the 26 Jewish names in all 20 rosters of leadership. The procedure was to score each position of rank order by its reciprocal and to add these reciprocals. Thus, a first place scored 1.00, a second .50, a third .33, etc. The results are shown in the table below.

The table shows a consistent concentration of leadership in a few names. LEVIN, EPSTEIN and STERN account for 14 firsts and 10 seconds among 20 rosters. The first ten names account for all 20 firsts, 16 seconds and 15 thirds. The reasons for this concentration are not easy to fathom. LEVIN (like LEVINE and LEVY) merely indicates descent from the tribe of Levi and the hereditary function of serving as assistant to the priest.<sup>7</sup> If

<sup>7</sup> The status of the Levites in ancient Palestine is by no means clear. In *Exodus*, they are persons who perform menial service and "Levites shall not approach the holy thing," but in *Deuteronomy*, Levites and priests seem to be synonymous.

we take a weighted average of the three forms of this name, the composite performance co-efficient is only 3.597. EPSTEIN is "one of the oldest Jewish families in the Slavie countries."<sup>8</sup> The

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Composite Score in 20 Rosters</i>
1	LEVIN	8.954
2	EPSTEIn	8.060
3	STERN	6.030
4	SHAPIRo	4.735
5	KAPLAN	3.912
6	FRIEDMan	3.903
7	RUBIN	3.880
8	ROSENThal	3.632
9	WEINStein	3.276
10	WEINBERg	3.202
11	BERNSTein	2.702
12	ROSEN	2.653
13	BERMAN	2.331
14	KATZ	2.243
15	MARCUS	2.156
16	LEVY	2.025
17	LEVINE	1.678
18	ROSENBERg	1.658
19	ISAACS	1.510
20	GOLDBERg	1.402
21	GREENBERg	1.287
22	ABRAHAM	1.281
23	SILVER	1.176
24	GOLDStein	1.171
25	SOLOMON	1.139
26	COHEN	1.060
ARITHMETIC MEAN		2.964

fact that this surname is known from at least the fifteenth century on (whereas the great majority of Jewish names were adopted three to four hundred years later) indicates extraordinarily high status, that is to say, an outstanding position in scholarship and the rabbinate. STERN is a German Jewish name of Rhenish international bankers, comparable to the ROTHSCCHILD's, but operating on a smaller scale.<sup>9</sup> The fourth ranking name,

<sup>8</sup> "Epstein" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization*, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Cincinnati, 1940, pp. 268 and 353. According to Roth (*op. cit.*, p. 213) Abraham Stern (1769-1842) "made the first calculating machine."

SHAPIRO, is a family of "Hasidic *tzaddikim* and printers" from Volhynia in eastern Poland.<sup>10</sup> The Hasidic movement was one of religious mysticism, which was the strongest in the Slavic areas of Jewry. The *tzaddik* (Hebrew for "righteous man") was regarded by the Hasidim as the intermediary between God and man. Originally, the office of *tzaddik* would be handed down by the Hasidic rabbi to his chosen pupil, but in time it became hereditary.

One surprising thing about the table is that COHEN is at the bottom of the list. The name indicates descent from the priestly caste of Aaronites of ancient Palestine. The *Kohanim* kept apart from other members of the congregation since they "were given a preferred status in being called up to the Torah, performed the ceremony of the first born" and were barred by religious law from marrying converts to Judaism. To establish their status in the community, they added the word *Hakohen* (Hebrew for "the priest") to their title and, when family names were taken, they assumed the name of COHEN (or such variations and derivations as KOHN, KAHN, HAHN, COHN, COON, CONE, COFFEN, KAHAN and KAGAN).<sup>11</sup>

The functions of the *Kohanim* disappeared with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the abolition of animal sacrifice in Jewish ritual and the election of rabbis by their congregations, processes which were largely completed by the early Middle Ages. Since COHEN's were ritualistically prohibited from approaching a dead body, they could not be physicians and were unwanted as rabbis of small congregations.

Thus, the retrograde position of the COHEN's does not contradict my hypothesis that, through the rabbinate, Jewish society functioned over tens of centuries for eugenic selection in terms of intelligence. The COHEN's were not only not the rabbis, but they had a disability for the rabbinate which other Jews lacked. The *Kohanim* in short are an hereditary group which has been destitute of ecclesiastical function for almost two thousand years.

This explains the failure of the COHEN's to excel, but it does not explain their bottom position. Here, I suggest that the chief causal factor is name-changing. The name COHEN is pre-eminently Jewish and hence, in most areas, pre-eminently disadvantageous. The name-changers always consist of that element which is most ambitious or most successful in the non-Jewish macro-society: hence their defection causes a more than proportionate loss of élite elements.

<sup>10</sup> Cecil Roth (Editor) *Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, Doubleday, New York, 1959; articles on "Shapiro" and "Tzaddik."

<sup>11</sup> "Cohen" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*

Joseph Jacobs found that when the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity under Nehemiah, the *Kohanim* comprised 8% of the total. In two lists of martyrs killed at Nurnberg in 1298 and 1349, the proportion was about the same. Among 200 inscriptions in the Venetian Jewish cemetery, 6.5% were *Kohanim*. Jacobs found the ratio to be 3% among 4,720 English Jews and 2.3% among 4,600 Continental Jews.<sup>12</sup> In our sample, there are 65,874 COHEN's on Social Security rolls as against 5,370,000 Jews in the United States. Allowing for the fact that one out of every three Americans is not registered with Social Security, COHEN's are only 1.85% of American Jewry. Thus, if Jacobs' Continental or English figures for *Kohanim* apply, the indications are that from 20% to 33% of the COHEN's in the United States changed their names.

### Western versus Eastern Jews

There is a definite social and supposedly intellectual hierarchy among Jews. The *Sephardim* occupy the first rank, followed by German and other West European *Ashkenazim*, then followed, at a considerable distance, by East European Jewry, which also consists of *Ashkenazim*. Within East European Jewry, those from Lithuania and particularly those from Galicia are looked down upon by their co-religionists. These gradations, or prejudices, have softened following the Nazi holocaust, but continue to exist.

It seemed worthwhile to test these assumptions of superiority. Unfortunately, there are too few Iberian Jews in the population of the United States to make it possible to analyze the elite rôle of the *Sephardim* by name-frequency methods. The same difficulty prevented separate analysis of Jews from Lithuania and Galicia. I found myself limited to a comparison of Jewish names of West European and East European origin.

The method used was to count the frequency of each of 25 Jewish names in the 1881 New York City Directory and to divide that figure by the frequency of the name on the 1957 Social Security (BOASI) roll.<sup>13</sup> The great emigration of East European Jewry began in 1881; hence the New York Directory for that year consists almost exclusively of West European, and primarily of German, Jews. On the other hand, the BOASI roster reflects the present Jewish population of the U.S. which is two-thirds to three-quarters of East European (chiefly Russian) origin. Consequently, the quotients for each name serve as indexes of the extent of East European provenance and these can be compared with composite performance coefficients. The results are shown in the following table:

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Jacobs, *Studies in Jewish Statistics*, D. Nutt, London, 1896, p. xxvi.

<sup>13</sup> Due to a clerical error, the name SILVER was omitted.



<i>Rank</i>	<i>Name</i>	BOASI/NYC <i>Directory 1881</i> ( <i>East/West Ratio</i> )	<i>Composite Index</i> <i>of 20 Rosters</i>
GROUP I: PRIMARILY EAST EUROPEAN			
5	Kaplan	5	3.912
4	Shapir	9	4.735
17	Levine	11	1.678
7	Rubin	13	3.880
12	Rosen	16	2.653
9	Weinst	35	3.276
1	Levin	40	8.954
13	Berman	42	2.331
GROUP II: MIXED			
15	Marcus	45	2.156
21	Greenb	48	1.287
14	Katz	52	2.243
2	Epstei	60	8.060
20	Goldbe	71	1.402
10	Weinbe	93	3.102
6	Friedm	101	3.903
24	Goldst	110	1.171
11	Bernst	113	2.702
GROUP III: PRIMARILY WEST EUROPEAN			
25	Solomo	128	1.139
18	Rosenb	132	1.658
26	Cohen	141	1.060
22	Abraha	193	1.281
19	Isaacs	234	1.510
8	Rosent	254	3.632
3	Stern	258	6.030
16	Levy	438	2.025

The table shows clearly that the primarily Slavic group is superior and that the Jewish position in the American élite, as measured by these rosters, tends to decrease with the extent of West European, and specifically German, provenance. The unweighted average performance coefficient of the 8 Group I (primarily East European) names is 393; that for the 9 Group II (mixed) names is 289, while that for the 8 Group III (primarily West European) names is only 229. Of 20 firsts, the Slavic group took 10, the mixed group 6 and the German group only 4. There is also a suggestion of difference in character structure. The Western Jews excelled primarily in practical activities, the Eastern

Jews in intellectual pursuits. Thus, the four firsts of the Western Jewish group comprise: position in *Who's Who in America*, engineers, *Poor's* executives and directors, and membership in the American Newspaper Guild.

Superior performance by Jews of Eastern origin would be expected *a priori*. The ghetto broke down in Western and Central Europe about three-quarters of a century earlier than in the territory of Imperial Russia. This breakdown disrupted the traditional Jewish pattern of selective reproduction for intellectual ability. Moreover it introduced into Western Jewry mixed marriages on a large scale between Jews and non-Jews. In a study of 25,000 early Jewish settlers in the United States, Malcolm H. Stern found that over 15% of the marriages occurring before 1840 were mixed and that of these barely 8% involved the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse to Judaism.<sup>14</sup> Figures collected by Kautsky showed that there was a steady and rapid increase in the proportion of mixed marriages during the nineteenth century and that, by 1900, one-fifth of all marriages involving a Jewish spouse were mixed in Prussia, one-third in Hamburg and two-fifths in Copenhagen.<sup>15</sup> Jacobs, Lorimer, Osborn and others have reported that these marriages were, on the whole, considerably less fertile than homogeneous marriages.<sup>16</sup> The influence of intermarriage on Jewish performance coefficients, however, can easily be overstressed for several reasons: (a) the marriages often involve non-Jews of exceptional capacity, frequently of the intelligentsia or the aristocracy, and hence serve to produce children more able than the Jewish average (this will be evident to anyone who compares the proportion of Jewish to half-Jewish Nobel scientists); (b) the marriages are so infertile that the breed lines tend to die out; and (c) since the vast majority of these marriages represent a flight from Jewry and Jewishness, a high concentration of name-changers will be found among the spouses and the progeny of these unions.

The fundamental reason for expecting higher intellectual achievement and ability among the Jews of the Russian Pale of Settlement than among those of the more civilized West is that, in the Slavic areas, zealotry and isolation from the real world produced a Jewry with an extraordinarily intense religious life in which the competition of scholars to shine in dialectical battle and the striving by merchants to join their lines with those of rabbis and other men of learning achieved unusual intensity and displayed

<sup>14</sup> Malcolm H. Stern, *Americans of Jewish Descent*, Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1960.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Kautsky, *Are the Jews a Race?*, International Publishers, New York, 1926, pp. 153-6.

<sup>16</sup> Jacobs, *op. cit.*; and Frank Lorimer and Frederick Osborn, *Dynamics of Population*, Macmillan, New York, 1934, p. 314.

amazing durability. Thus, a parataxic backwardness produced a pre-eminent breeding ground of the brain. In the West by contrast, the emancipation of the Jews caused the deterioration of those biological conditions which had endowed them both with outstanding mental ability and strongly eugenic fertility.

### Summary

(1) Judging by 20 rosters of achievement, the Jews are the outstanding element in the American professional and intellectual élite.

(2) Proportionately twice as many Jews as non-Jews go to American colleges and from four to five times as many achieve academic distinction, as measured by Phi Beta Kappa membership.

(3) The outstanding Jewish names include distinguished rabbinical families (such as EPSTEIN) and well known merchant-banking families (such as STERN), but the hereditary Jewish priesthood, as represented by COHEN, appears considerably less gifted than the average for Jewry.

(4) Jews from Eastern Europe surpass those from Western Europe in the leadership rosters and this is particularly the case in those fields which demand intellectual achievement of a high order.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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