New York Yankees and Hollywood Anglos: The persistence of Anglo-conformity in the American motion picture industry

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ABSTRACT. Ideal types have received less attention than membership criteria in the ethnicity and nationalism literature. This article uses crowdsourced genealogical data and onomastics software to show that British Isles surnames and ancestry remain over-represented among American actors, especially in roles connected with the national narrative. Conformity to the WASP ideal type persists despite the fact American actors are disproportionately born in Los Angeles, New York, and other large cities, where British ancestry is rare. Jewish actors are over-represented, yet many have Anglo surnames. Compared to athletes and politicians, actors are significantly more likely to have Anglo surnames, especially those in genres depicting the nation. After declining among cohorts of stars born between the 1800s and 1961, the share of British Isles surnames has stabilised and remains in the majority. We argue that despite rising diversity, this reflects the continuing importance of the Anglo-Protestant ethnic imago for American national identity.

KEYWORDS: America, Anglo-Saxon, ethnosymbolism, immigration/migration

The mobilisation of an exclusive American identity by Donald Trump raises the question of who counts as a 'true' American (Bonikowski and DiMaggio 2016; Schildkraut 2007). Being white and Christian are considered markers of this exclusive Americanism. This is in accord with the literature in nationalism on dominant ethnies and myth-symbol complexes (Smith 1991), with their emphasis on group-defining symbolic 'border guards' such as religion or language (Armstrong 1982). The literature on the 'ethnic-civic' question in national identity is narrowly focused on questions of membership. Yet within this circle of membership, there may be an even more exclusive ethnic *ideal type* (Weber 1949), which members look to as the embodiment of the national. For instance, while the boundary conditions for membership in the American nation are open to any ethnic group, and the white ethnic majority includes anyone with a white phenotype and Judeo-Christian

religion, the nation's ideal type may remain the narrower White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP).

Scholarship on ethnic relations tends to focus on ethnic boundaries (i.e. Barth 1969) and the question of whether minorities tend to assimilate (Brubaker 2001) or maintain group boundaries due to a preference for endogamy (Wimmer 2008) or structural barriers to integration (Alba and Nee 2003). By contrast, there is very little work on ethnic ideal types or imagos (Schrag 1973), that is, the symbolic features such as race, dress, religion, surname and accent which a group recognises as characteristic of its particularity and towards which newcomers are encouraged to assimilate. This has received some treatment in Anthony Smith's discussion of ethnic myth-symbol complexes surviving large-scale demographic change through absorption, as with Greek assimilation of Slavic migrations in the sixth to tenth centuries AD (Smith 1986: 96–98). There is a small amount of work on surname anglicisation (Biavaschi et al. 2017; Fermaglich 2015). Yet there has been little sustained attention to the question of ethnic archetypes and their influence on both assimilation and the symbolic content of national identity. One aim of this paper is to introduce a new research agenda, the ethnic archetypes of nations, into nationalism studies.

In the American case, the ethnic majority White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) group has numerically declined (Kaufmann 2004), but writers from C. Wright Mills (1956) to Milton Gordon (1964) to Richard Brookhiser (1991) suggested that this group continued to serve as the 'all-American' type, pushing those with WASP features to the fore in roles which represent the nation such as president, captain of industry or film star. The WASP type was also considered important as an ideal towards which immigrants could assimilate as part of a process of Anglo-conformity, yet it has generally been assumed that this 'Anglo-conformity' has faded since Gordon wrote his classic work. Consequently, work on Anglo-conformity has largely been abandoned despite attention to cognate topics, notably unhyphenated Americanism, 'American' ethnicity or the Protestant, English-speaking direction of American assimilation (Huntington 2004; Lieberson 1985).

This paper seeks to remedy these lacunae in contemporary scholarship. In this paper, we use a unique dataset of American celebrities' ethnic backgrounds, in conjunction with surname origins software, to ask whether Anglo-Protestant features continue to remain over-represented among American actors, especially those who act in historical or high-cultural dramas, and whether surname anglicisation is more prevalent among actors than athletes, politicians or celebrities occupying backstage roles. This provides an empirical test of the assumption that Anglo-conformity to a WASP ideal is no longer a salient feature of American life.

Who are the 'true' Americans?

What is the American ethnic ideal type against which foreignness is defined and to which newcomers might be expected to conform? Anglo-conformity, initially the assimilation of white 'ethnics' into unhyphenated Anglo-Americans, was a central theme of Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* (1964). For Gordon, America was neither Horace Kallen's pluralistic 'federation for international colonies' (1924) nor the two-way cosmopolitan melting pot of Israel Zangwill (1909) but following Will Herberg (1955), a 'transmuting pot' guided by an Anglo-Protestant ideal. Despite a brief moment for white ethnic revival (i.e. Glazer and Moynihan 1963), the predominant trajectory for white ethnics appears to have been one of intermarriage and assimilation (Alba 1990, 2014). This produced a rise in unhyphenated white or American identity (Lieberson 1985) or a relatively playful, situational approach to European origins (Waters 1990) in which the 'white' pan-ethnic category became more socially consequential than ethnicity. With respect to non-European groups, discussion has evolved towards thinking about a process of segmented assimilation in which different groups assimilate along some dimensions – spatial, educational, economic – but not others (Alba and Nee 2003). Much attention has focused on inclusion and boundaries rather than the mytho-symbolic cores discussed by, among others, Anthony Smith (1986). While the boundaries of the American majority have expanded to include former outsider groups, and may continue to shift (i.e. Alba 2005), it is less clear that the symbolic reference points at the centre of 'authentic' Americanism have changed. We bring attention to the lineaments of the nation's ethnic archetype, a subject which has fallen into abeyance.

Alongside work on ethnicity, scholars have paid attention to whether there is an ethnic or 'ascriptive' aspect to the nominally universalist American national identity (Glazer 1998; Huntington 2004; Kaufmann 2004; Smith 1997). In racial terms, Implicit Association Tests (IATs) in psychology find that white and Asian-American subjects identify white faces as American more quickly when paired with American symbols such as the flag then they do Asian faces paired with the same symbols (Cheryan and Monin 2005; Devos and Banaji 2005). When symbols of American nationhood are presented to subjects alongside Christian and non-Christian iconography, subjects (including non-Christians) take longer to identify the American symbols as American when paired with non-Christian images (Jacobs and Theiss-Morse 2013). Meanwhile, republican voters and conservative Americans are more likely than liberals to openly identify being white or Christian as criteria for being a 'true American' (Schildkraut 2007).

Along similar lines, a 1982 survey found that the English were the top-ranked group in terms of perceived contribution to the country, followed by the Irish, Jews and Germans, with newer non-European groups ranked lower (Simon and Abdel-Moneim 2010). In a convenience sample across three surveys on Amazon Mechanical Turk between 19 March and 1 April 2017, we

asked 467 Americans, 'All surnames are equally American, but if someone from another country asked you what a characteristic American surname was, which of the following would you choose?' Answers were (rotated): Browning, Graziano, Hernandez, Schultz and Wong. Eighty-one per cent of those who gave a response chose Browning, the Anglo surname, including eighty-six per cent of Clinton voters, seventy-eight per cent of Trump voters, eighty-six per cent of African-Americans, eighty-five per cent of Hispanics and eighty per cent of whites. In a similar question about religion, seventy-two per cent of 525 respondents – including seventy per cent of Catholics – chose Protestant rather than Catholic or Jewish as the characteristic American religion. Whether adopting the English language and Protestant-style congregational religious organisation, or switching to Protestantism itself, aspects of Gordon's 'transmuting pot' appear to persist (Huntington 2004; Sherkat 2001).

Naturally, the ethno-racial composition of America is evolving, with a majority of babies now Hispanic, African-American or Asian. It may be that lighter-skinned Hispanics and Asians are entering a new 'beige' white majority through intermarriage (Gans 1994: 588–89; Alba 1990: 312; Lind 2012). Over time, the boundaries of the American ethnic core may grow increasingly fuzzy (Alba 2005). Who is 'in' or 'out' of the majority is a boundary question which, understandably, has received a great deal of attention (i.e. Roediger 1991). Yet boundary conditions are distinct from our focus on ideal types. We argue that the WASP American ideal type to which others conform – what Schrag (1973) refers to as the American 'imago' – remains a lodestar for national identity.

This was noted in early analyses of Anglo-conformity. 'Our nationality was definitely fixed in all its essentials by the men of Washington's day', argued future president Theodore Roosevelt in 1889 (Gordon 1964:121–22). As Will Herberg observed, 'our cultural assimilation has taken place not in a "melting pot," but rather in a "transmuting pot" in which all ingredients have become transformed and assimilated to an idealized "Anglo-Saxon" model' (Herberg 1955: 34). Peter Schrag placed a strong emphasis on the motion picture industry in the early and mid-twentieth century, which, though run mainly by Jews and 'saturated with ethnic performers', celebrated the 'only acceptable real American around', the Anglo-Protestant. For actors, surname anglicisation was central to the process of representing the nation, of being 'all-American':

Louis B. Mayer took second-generation-Polish calendar models and turned them into WASPs …. The ethnics changed their names-Doris Kappelhoff became Doris Day, Bernie Schwartz turned into Tony Curtis, Margarita Carmen Cansino became Rita Hayworth and Dino Crocetti became Dean Martin …. Those ethnic types who remained sufficiently original for identification were almost invariably second-class citizens: the blundering Irish sidekick, the Filipino valet, the Jewish comic …. The genuine American was John Wayne, Gary Cooper, Clark Gable and Gregory Peck, a mythic man who transcended particular films or plots or situations. (Schrag 1973: 37)

Schrag argued that this had begun to change in the 1960s, hence the title of his book, *The Decline of the WASP* (1973). Herbert Gans added that Hollywood directors upgraded ethnic characters to equal roles alongside WASP performers by the 1960s (Gans 1979: 5–6, 9, 11). Lester Friedman (1991) adds that openly ethnic characters became much more prominent in film from the 1960s onward. Fifty years after Schrag, however, it is time to ask whether the change truly altered the portrayal of the symbolic core of American identity.

Schrag's shift in the depiction of stock characters occurred against the backdrop of an undeniable rise in the material prosperity of non-WASPs. C. Wright Mills could write in 1956 that: 'the model of the upper social classes is still "pure" by race, ethnic group, by national extraction. In each city, they tend to be Protestant; moreover Protestants of class-church denominations, Episcopalian mainly, or Unitarian, or Presbyterian' (Mills 1956: 60). After the election of the first Catholic president John F. Kennedy in 1960, however, the make-up of leading CEOs and politicians was transformed (Kaufmann 2004). This reflected the steady educational and occupational ascent of white ethnics, reaching parity with WASPs by the 1980s (Alba 1990, Alba 2014). The proportion of Anglo-Saxon surnames in cabinet (Caplow et al. 1994: 564) or in academic bodies such as the American Sociological Association (Wright 2004) declined substantially after 1960. Where E. Digby Baltzell could still speak of the Protestant Establishment in 1964, Robert Christopher (1989) later catalogued the 'breathtaking' pace of the 'de-WASPing' of the educational, media, financial and political elite.

The political elite experienced an especially marked decline in WASP presence. An indicator of the extent of this process was the retirement of Justice John Paul Stevens, the only Protestant on the Supreme Court, in 2010. Yet one may ask whether this extended to representing the nation. Kennedy is the only president to lack WASP (Dutch, British or Irish Protestant) ancestry. Even Obama is no exception. Hence, Richard Brookhiser's quip, during the era of George H.W. Bush, that the president is the last 'WASPs-only' job in America because the president is held to incarnate the national type (Brookhiser 1991). Still, one could argue that the quest for minority representation played some part in Kennedy and Obama's success.

Demographic change and Christopher's de-WASPing process demonstrate that Anglo-Saxon elite boundaries have been breached, but can we say the same for the Anglo-Saxon archetype? Zelinsky's discussion of American 'eidolons' refrains from remarking upon the WASP cast of eidolons such as Uncle Sam or Davy Crockett (Zelinsky 1988, ch. 2). Yet it is far from clear that white ethnics have had an impact on eidolons commensurate with their revolutionary effect on the composition of the elite. Rather, it could be argued that America's fascination with the WASP – as the reference point for authentic Americanism – continues. In Philip Roth's acclaimed *American Pastoral* (1997), Swede Levov, the Jewish lead character, knows he has made it as a true American when he moves to exurban, Anglo-Saxon, Old Rimrock, New Jersey. His new social world includes Bill Orcutt, a local architect with Yankee

roots active in historic preservation who extols the virtues of Old Rimrock's Revolutionary heritage. Another barometer of America's WASP infatuation is the success of the television series *Mad Men*, celebrating Sterling Cooper, a 'white shoe' New York advertising agency peopled by the very Protestant elite Baltzell and Mills decried half a century ago.

Historic surname anglicisation

Anglicisation of surnames is a key indicator of Anglo-conformity yet has received virtually no systematic treatment in the sociological literature – especially among quantitative social scientists. The two studies of surname change which we could find both show a low rate: .4 per cent for immigrants to Sweden in the 1990s and .7 per cent for immigrants in New York over a five-year period prior to 1930 (Arai and Thoursie 2009; Biavaschi et al. 2017). Fermaglich (2015) uses name change petition records for New York City during 1917–42 to show that Jewish surnames were represented in sixty-five per cent of petitions despite Jews forming only twenty-five to twenty-eight per cent of the city's population in the 1920s and 1930s. By contrast, Italians, who formed fourteen to sixteen per cent of the population, accounted for just eleven per cent of petitions. Fermaglich argues that Jews' over-representation in white-collar occupations such as business or stenography, where success was achieved on the basis of resumés or reputations rather than personal contacts, compelled them to anglicise at higher rates than other ethnic groups (Fermaglich 2015: 38–40). She adds that prior to World War I, there is little evidence of large-scale involuntary name changing by naturalisation officials at Ellis Island, nor for voluntary anglicisation (Fermaglich 2015: 35–37). An earlier study of the 1,107 surname-change petitions in Los Angeles in 1947 found that Jews, six per cent of the LA population, accounted for forty-six per cent of petitions, though this represented just .02 per cent of the city's Jewish population of that year. Over eighty per cent of petitioners were American-born and many lived outside ethnic enclaves (Broom et al. 1955). What is lacking, however, is a quantification of the extent of anglicisation within the contemporary non-British Isles descended US population. In addition to interrogating surname anglicisation among celebrities to assess shifts in the American ideal type, a second aim of this research is to document the extent of historic surname change among non-Anglo ethnic groups.

There is a considerable body of work on the sociology of Hollywood and the lack of minority representation both on and off screen (Erigha 2015; Hunt and Ramon 2015; Bielby and Bielby 2002). Our work adds to this literature, but focuses more on the relative representation of ethnic categories *among* white Americans in the motion picture industry than between whites and others. The association between Anglo-Saxon surnames and the American ethnic imago, and the role of actors in representing the national type, lead us to the following hypotheses:

H1 Those of British descent will be over-represented among American actors.

H2 British ancestry will remain over-represented among actors in recent cohorts.

H3 The surname anglicisation process continues to be important for newer cohorts of American actors.

H4 British and Irish (Anglo) surnames will be over-represented among actors.

H5 Anglo surnames will be remain over-represented among actors in recent cohorts.

H6 A larger proportion of actors than politicians or athletes in recent cohorts have Anglo surnames.

H7 The over-representation of British ancestry and surnames today will be highest among lead actors in American historical films and Academy Award (Oscar) nominees, as these actors are more often selected to represent the nation.

Data and methods

The website Ethnicelebs.com crowdsources information on the genealogy of celebrities past and present, including actors, singers, politicians, writers, producers and athletes. We created a web crawler to extract the website content into a structured dataset as its owner did not have the data in readable format.[1] This work thereby forms part of a growing body of sociological research using crowdsourced data (Shank 2016). Ethnicelebs invites its users to 'submit a celebrity' but asks the user to provide genealogical sources. Thus, while a small majority of celebrities on the site are actors, it includes many musicians, athletes, politicians and writers. In the words of the site's editor, 'users of the website correct information by submitting comments with genealogical evidence. The editor will then check the evidence and make corrections to the information'.[2] By way of example, the actor Brad Pitt is listed as

'Birth Name: William Bradley Pitt; Place of Birth: Shawnee, Oklahoma, U.S.; Date of Birth: December 18, 1963   Brad Pitt is an American actor and producer … …   Ethnicity: English (mostly), along with small amounts of German, Scottish, Welsh, Scots-Irish/Northern Irish, and Irish, remote Dutch and French"   During an interview on Inside the Actors Studio (2012), Brad stated that his ancestry is: "… probably … Irish-Scots, Germans who settled in the area … Native American Indian … I know we have some Seminole, and some Cherokee Indian, in us." '

Though Pitt suggests he may have Native Indian ancestry and neglects to mention his English roots, the site's curators counter that: 'No Cherokee or Seminole Native American ancestors have been documented in publicly available family trees of Brad Pitt. While he did not mention English ancestry, English comprises much or most of Brad's lineage.' Consequently, we would record Pitt's primary ethnicity as English.

The site thus uses etic (other-defined) categorisation rather than emic (self-defined) identification to determine ethnicity (Eriksen 1993). This paper thus measures ethnicity on the basis of other-defined ethnic categories rather than subjective belief, reducing the incidence of 'exotic' origins (Waters 1990) while increasing the prevalence of English, whose 'hidden' or 'minus one' quality (Doane 1997) prompted Brookhiser (1991) to term it 'base paint'. Thus, in Pitt's case, his primary ancestry will be recorded as English. Though reported and genealogically established ancestry bear a close correspondence, it is clear the two may diverge. As the debate on ethnic fractionalisation makes clear (Wimmer et al. 2009), operationalising ethnicity is a contested enterprise. Yet our use of both ancestry and surname origins permits us to triangulate two sources of evidence to test hypotheses, adding a robustness check to any singular definition of ethnicity.

Secondly, the high degree of admixture among white Americans documented by Alba (1990) and Lieberson and Waters (1988) led us to devise a four-part schema for celebrities' origins. The first category is the 'main' or 'dominant' origin. There are three further fields for people's second, third and fourth ancestries. The site lists a celebrity's ethnic background in order of primacy, often with the prefix 'primarily' or 'mostly'. Our algorithm records the first mentioned ancestry as first and subsequent options as second through fourth. Where an individual is of just one background, all four fields are populated with the same ancestry category. Where there is no dominant ancestry, we set the first group mentioned as dominant. The mix of ancestries across the four fields is almost identical. For instance, English ancestry is dominant for twenty-three per cent of American celebrities and, likewise, listed as the fourth

Table 1. *Predominant ethnic background of American screen actors born after 1900, N = 2,281*

	N	American celebrities	US adjusted reported ancestry (2010)	Over- or under-representation
British	575	25.2%	15.9%	+58.6%
Northern or Western European	368	16.1%	25.4%	−36.5%
Jewish	354	15.5%	1.4%	+1,008.6%
Southern or Eastern European	341	15.0%	12.7%	+17.7%
African-American	224	9.8%	12.2%	−19.5%
Irish	200	8.8%	8.3%	+5.7%
Hispanic	126	5.5%	16.3%	−66.1%
Asian	58	2.5%	4.7%	−46.0%
Other	28	1.2%	2.1%	−41.4%
Native American	7	.3%	.9%	−65.6%
Total	2,281	100.0%	100.0%	–

Source: Ethnicelebs.com; Fischer 1989: 871–72.

reported ancestry for twenty-three per cent of American celebrities. The share of American celebrities reporting more than one ancestry increases from sixteen per cent in the pre-1924 generation to thirty-one per cent in the post-1980 generation. Even so, the fact that sixty-eight per cent of non-Hispanic white actors born after 1945 are recorded as being of single ancestry suggests the site overstates mono-ethnicity. The categorisation of celebrities' principal ethnicity in our data is mutually exclusive so totals add up to 100 per cent. Summary statistics are provided in Appendix 1.

Focusing only on American screen actors born after 1900 yields a sample of 2,228 individuals, of whom eighty-nine per cent are US-born (for details, see Appendix 1). Their ethnic composition, based on their predominant ethnic category, is given in Table 1. The proportions are compared with estimated shares for the US population. Since the 'American' and unhyphenated 'white' ancestry responses came into widespread use after the 1970 census, we use ancestry data from the 1970 census and adjust based on the most recent (2010) census racial categories to arrive at an approximation of the ancestral composition of the US population (Fischer 1989: 871–72)

A number of patterns are apparent. First, the data confirm Schrag's observations regarding the considerable over-representation of Jewish actors – which harks back to the origins of the industry (Kendall 2009). This is also an artefact of Jews' concentration in New York and Los Angeles, where the film industry is centred. Second, there is an over-representation of British ancestry and an under-representation of northwestern Europeans (mainly German and Scandinavian), as predicted by H1. Finally, there is a paucity of Hispanics and Asians, two groups which have grown in the wake of post-1965 immigration reforms. The under-representation of Latinos compared to the more established African-Americans reflects other work on the ethnic composition of Hollywood actors, though the gap narrows in recent years (Hunt et al. 2015: 19–20, 42).

American ancestry data on the census are based on self-reporting while celebrity data are derived from genealogical research. The perceived 'background' quality of English ancestry among old-stock Protestant Americans may lead them to over-report their German or Scandinavian admixture while neglecting English, as we saw in the case of Brad Pitt. We know that Anglo-Americans and northwestern Europeans are heavily intermarried and even report different ancestries when questioned at different time points (Waters 1990). This could provide part of the explanation for the lower prevalence of English (as compared to German or Scandinavian) among ancestries reported to census takers. However, against this, Southern and Eastern European ancestry is more prevalent among celebrities than in the census. If hidden British background is being unearthed by Ethnicelebs genealogists, and if whites tend to foreground Southern/Eastern European origins on the census due to its distinctiveness (Waters 1990), we would also expect to also see Southern and Eastern European ancestry under-represented in the celebrity data. This is not the case, suggesting British-origin actors are indeed over-represented.

The claim of WASP over-representation (H1) gains added plausibility when we compare the British-origin share of actors (twenty-five per cent) with that for famous athletes (ten per cent). Some forty per cent of famous athletes are African-American compared to under ten per cent for actors, but even comparing white actors and athletes, the British share is twice as large among actors. While the British ancestry component in the American population could be higher than the census-derived 15.9 per cent, it is unlikely to be as high as the 25.2 per cent recorded for actors in the Ethnicelebs data. For now, this ancestry analysis offers qualified evidence in support of Anglo-conformity hypothesis H1, which predicts that those of British background will constitute a disproportionate share of American actors.

Politicians are more heavily Anglo-Saxon than actors, with thirty-three per cent of famous US politicians born after 1900 being of British descent. Politicians are public figures; thus, a disproportionate British-American presence is in keeping with the Anglo-conformity thesis: their selectors deem it appropriate that they embody a representative national type. Just as baseball scouts in Michael Lewis' novel *Moneyball* are biased towards a square-jawed, athletic 'look', delegates may be swayed by a candidate's conformity to an Anglo-American archetype. However, Christopher's 'de-WASPing' process, as documented for presidential cabinets by Caplow et al. (1994), should have reduced Anglo preponderance among politicians in more recent generations. This is precisely what we find in the data. The proportion of American politicians of British background in Ethnicelebs declines from forty per cent among those born during 1901–60 (N = 97) to just sixteen per cent among those born after Kennedy's election in 1960 (N = 43). Note that there are no politicians under the age of 36 in the Ethnicelebs data, hence no figures for the post-1980 cohort.

Compared to politicians, trends for actors show greater Anglo-conformist resilience, as predicted by H2. Figure 1 examines the primary ethnic origins of American actors across birth cohorts. In the pre-1924 cohort (N = 124), thirty-five per cent of American actors are primarily of British ancestry. This declines to twenty-one per cent in the 1961–80 cohort (N = 955) but rebounds to twenty-six per cent for the post-1980 cohort (N = 655). Large sample size helps guard against the possibility that this is a statistical anomaly, as will be shown in models later in the paper.

Stripping away the increased Asian and Hispanic presence after 1961 reveals that the British share has remained relatively constant – and over-represented – among white celebrities over time. This suggests a divergence between politics – where elected officials are initially chosen to represent a constituency rather than the nation and may be subject to parties' egalitarian desire for ethnic representativeness – and film, where leads are more often selected to represent a national archetype while producers face fewer egalitarian pressures. As we shall see, actors in post-1961 cohorts are about ten points more likely to have British ancestry than politicians of the same vintage.
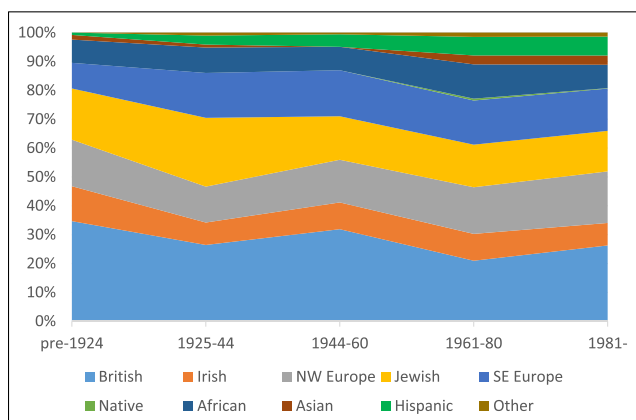
Figure 1. Ethnic origin of American actors, by birth cohort. Source: Ethnicelebs.com. Note: N = 219 African-Americans, 54 Asians, 572 British, 125 Hispanics, 200 Irish, 350 Jewish, 363 NW Europeans, 335 SE Europeans, 7 Native, 27 Other. Seventy per cent of sample born after 1961. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Geographic location of celebrities

The British component among American celebrities comes into sharper focus when we consider that the motion picture industry is centred in Los Angeles and New York. Websites which advise on acting careers urge actors to move to these cities in order to find work and tap into professional networks.[3] Those from these cities, or whose parents live in them, are likely to have informational, social and cost advantages over others. As a result, eighteen per cent of American actors born after 1900 were born in New York City and ten per cent in Los Angeles. Using a wider definition of these metropolitan areas yields twenty per cent born in metropolitan New York (NY-NJ-CT) and thirteen per cent in greater LA. The two cities represent nearly thirty per cent of all actors and their metro areas account for a third. Figure 2 shows the extent to which cities are over- or under-represented, using 2010 census data, among American screen actors born after 1980.

Among American actors born prior to 1945, thirty per cent were born in the greater New York area and six per cent in metro Los Angeles. For the post-1980 cohort, fifteen per cent were born in the New York area and twenty per cent in metro LA: it has a 460 per cent over-representation among celebrities born after 1980. It is also noteworthy that few stars appear to be born in suburban New York and LA, though we cannot be certain since the suburban-born may be counted as city-born. Chicago holds its own, but few actors hail from San Francisco and Philadelphia, with numbers extremely small for most mid-size cities. Despite a marked shift to the South and West in birthplaces over the twentieth century, no cities outside LA, New York and Chicago produce more than a handful of stars.
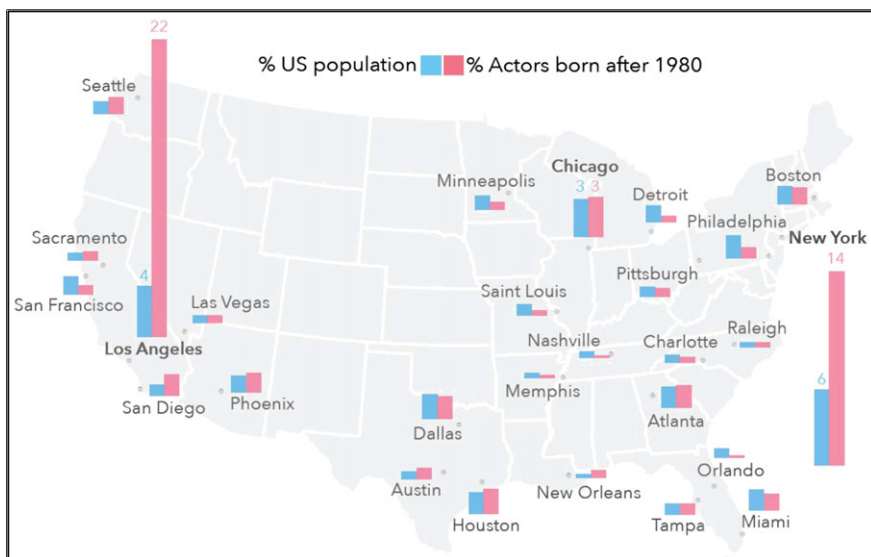
Source: 2010 US Census; Ethnicelebs.com. N=565. Excludes 192 actors with no recorded birthplace.

Figure 2. Birthplace of post-1980 cohort of American-born actors. Source: 2010 US Census; Ethnicelebs.com. N = 565. Excludes 192 actors with no recorded birthplace. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Modelling actor characteristics: ethnicity and place

We do not claim the site is fully exhaustive or perfectly representative, though the data dovetail with surveys of racial representation in Hollywood (Hunt et al. 2015), which offers confidence about the data's ethnic representativeness. In addition, we model predictors of actors compared to other professions in the dataset, which does not depend upon a representative sample: to gauge the relative effect of ethnicity and place of birth in shaping the pool of actors, we use a logistic regression on the probability of a celebrity being an actor as opposed to a politician, athlete, writer or producer. Sixty per cent of Americans in our dataset are screen actors, and many others are celebrities in public roles such as stage actors, models and politicians. Just over five per cent are athletes, though this rises to fourteen per cent among celebrities born after 1980. Sports stars are more likely to have been selected, and to have succeeded, purely on the basis of ability rather than their utility in incarnating the national image. A binary model designed to predict the probability of an individual being an actor rather than an athlete should therefore help identify whether British ancestry is associated with being an actor.

Table 2 presents four models. The first three compare actors with athletes in the data for three similar-sized cohorts: those born prior to 1966, during 1966–80 and after 1980. The final model compares performers – musicians,

Table 2. *Model predicting actors as compared to athletes (US-born only)*

	Born pre-1966 (actors vs. athletes)	Born 1966–1980 (actors vs. athletes)	Born after 1980 (actors vs. athletes)	Born after 1980 (stage/screen vs. rest)
Year born	−.005 (.010)	−.045 (.041)	.025 (.023)	.027 (.023)
Ref: Southeast				
Northeast	.783 (.535)	−.023 (.520)	.021 (.898)	.898 (1.371)
Midwest	.776 (.526)	.644 (.668)	−.189 (.400)	.896 (1.370)
Northwest	.299 (.861)	.000 (.000)	−.149 (.645)	.698 (1.369)
Southwest	.612 (.653)	−.389 (.539)	−.488 (.363)	.747 (1.462)
Female	3.647*** (1.022)	2.782*** (.614)	2.683*** (.372)	2.705*** (.375)
British ancestry	.982‡ (.522)	.991‡ (.587)	1.100** (.420)	1.159** (.422)
Jewish ancestry	1.282‡ (.774)	1.306‡ (.789)	.878 (.564)	.813 (.566)
Black	−1.233** (.441)	−1.196** (.417)	−2.154*** (.333)	−2.223*** (.338)
Irish ancestry	.908 (.776)	.426 (.789)	−.365 (.486)	−.397 (.487)
Born New York	1.078 (.706)	.415 (.607)	2.833** (1.084)	2.457** (1.106)
Born Los Angeles	−.148 (.838)	.552 (.848)	2.144** (.791)	1.881** (.808)
Born large metro area	−.007 (.415)	−.223 (.409)	.546‡ (.306)	.547‡ (.307)
Constant	11.041 (19.622)	9.105 (81.224)	−47.949 (46.012)	−53.349 (46.211)
Pseudo R^2	.248	.213	.336	.341
N	796	628	833	833

$^{\ddagger}p < .1.$
$^{*}p < .05.$
$^{**}p < .01.$
$^{***}p < .001.$

stage and screen actors, dancers and models (eighty-three per cent of the post-1980 sample) with athletes, writers and those in backstage roles. Since thirty-eight per cent of athletes (forty-two per cent among those born after 1980) are African-American and ninety-one per cent are male, we see strong negative correlations for these variables across the four models. Actors and performers are far less likely to be black and male than athletes. What is noteworthy, however, are the coefficients for ethnicity and birthplace. First of all, being born in New York and Los Angeles is significantly associated with being an actor rather than an athlete among those born after 1980. Second, and most important, is that celebrities with Jewish and British (excludes Irish) ancestry are significantly more likely than those of other ethnic backgrounds to be actors, even as the strength of this association fluctuates across cohorts.

For pre-1980 cohorts, both Jews and WASPs are significantly more likely (at the $p < .1$ level) to be actors than athletes. Among post-1980 cohorts, Jewish is no longer significant while the coefficient for British background strengthens and is now significant at the $p < .01$ level. The predicted probability of a celebrity in the post-1980 cohort (model 3) being an actor rises from .86 for non-WASPs to .94 for those of British ancestry. Coefficients for both New York and Los Angeles birthplace also strengthen for the post-1980 cohort whereas for those born before 1981, actors are no more likely than athletes to have been born in the two cities. The predicted probability of a celebrity being an actor in model 3 rises from .86 for the non-New York born to .98 for celebrities born in the Big Apple. The probabilities for Los Angeles are .86 and .97 respectively.

The final model adds musicians, stage actors, models and dancers to screen actors and asks what characteristics differentiate this 'on screen' category of performer from athletes and 'backstage' writers, producers and businesspeople. Note that the performer category is dominated by screen actors (seventy-four per cent) and the 'backstage' category by athletes (seventy-two per cent), thus similar parameters to the previous three columns tend to drive this model. Many writers and producers, like actors, are from New York and Los Angeles, which reduces the power of these variables in model 4. They are also somewhat older than performers; hence, year born is now significant. Importantly, the coefficient for British ancestry remains significant. Table 2 demonstrates that both birthplace (LA/NYC) and WASP background have become increasingly important predictors of whether a celebrity is a showbusiness performer. This comports with H2, suggesting Schrag and Gans were premature in writing the epitaph of the WASP as American icon. This reinforces our wider argument that performers who seek to represent the national imago are disproportionately of Anglo-Saxon background.

Might income or class explain the findings? Could it be that WASPs or Jews are simply better off than other groups? The problem with this argument is that while Jews earn considerably more than the average white American, those of British background do not (Lieberson and Waters 1988: 137–142). Yet it is WASPs rather than Jews who are significantly over-represented on screen among post-1980 cohorts. In addition, the model controls for residence in large cities, which is associated with higher income. Finally, a specification which uses mean 2010 income in a celebrity's county of birth as an income proxy shows that income does not predict a higher likelihood of a celebrity being an actor rather than sports figure (results available upon request). Future researchers may wish to code for actors' educational qualifications or parental backgrounds.

New York WASPs and LA Jews

To get a better feel for what might be driving our results, we take a closer look at two rare groups with unusually high representation in film, New York WASPs and Los Angeles Jews.

New York WASPs

New York is an established centre of America's Jewish community. In 2010, there were approximately 1.1 million Jews in the New York metropolitan area out of a population of 8.2 million, 13.4 per cent of the total (JCA 2012). Meanwhile, twenty-five per cent of New York-born US actors are of Jewish ancestry. Within the wider New York-New Jersey metropolitan area, the Jewish share is 10.9 per cent while Jewish actors make up twenty-four per cent of actors from this metropolis. Jews are thus over-represented at a rate of between +86 per cent to +120 per cent among New York-born celebrities. Yet it is the disproportionate share of WASPs among New York-born actors that is more noteworthy.

According to the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS), there were 225,969 people reporting English, British, Scottish, Scotch-Irish and Welsh ancestry in the five boroughs of the city, representing 2.6 per cent of New York's population. Meanwhile, those of British background accounted for 9.4 per cent of New York-born celebrities, an over-representation of +256 per cent. If we include those reporting 'American' as their ancestry in the ACS – which greatly overestimates British share – this deflates WASP over-representation to +130 per cent. Including Long Island and Westchester County, the British share rises to 3.2 per cent while the British component of celebrities increases to 10.5 per cent, an over-representation of +228 per cent. Including those reporting 'American' as British reduces this to around +100 per cent. Note, however, that the average number of reported ancestries per ACS respondent is about 1.25, so this means the metropolitan New York over-representation of WASPs, even if we include 'Americans' as British, is at least 125 per cent.

However, it is estimated that there are 120 000 British expatriates living in New York.[4] If we subtract this number from the figures, this leaves approximately 120 000 British-Americans in the city (or 280 000 in the metro area), in which case the over-representation for New York British-Americans rises to around +330 per cent. Though some British expatriates will have American children, only one of the twenty-two New York WASP actors in our dataset had parents born in the British Isles. Thus, the +330 per cent figure may be a more accurate estimate of the extent of 'Yankee' over-representation among New Yorkers. It may be that the city was somewhat more British in the past, though the share of British-Americans among actors born before 1945 (N = 73) is only slightly higher, at 12.3 per cent, than the 9.4 per cent share for the post-1945 cohort (N = 256).

New York City-born American actors of British descent comprised 1.4 per cent of the actors in our sample (1.8 per cent if we include all metro New York WASP actors). Yet British-American New Yorkers make up just .036 of a per cent of the American population (.12 if we include the wider metro area). This means there is a staggering +3,788 per cent (City) to +1,088 per cent (metro) over-representation of WASP New Yorkers in the American motion picture

industry. Anglo-Saxon New Yorkers have captured the literary imagination, from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* to *Mad Men*. So it is worth focusing more closely on this group. The list of British-American New York screen and television personalities born after 1945 on Ethnicelebs is as follows: Anderson Cooper, Chris Elliott, Crispin Glover, Diane Lane, Emmy Rossum, Julia Garner, Kyra Sedgwick, Laura Linney, Lena Dunham, Lucas Hedges, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Martha Plimpton, Melanie Griffith, Mizuo Peck, Olivia Thirlby, Olivia Wilde, Rosanna Arquette, Steven Strait, Thomas McDonell, Wayne Knight, Xander Berkeley and Zelda Williams.

Almost all have British surnames, but thirteen of the twenty-two on this list are at least part non-British in ancestry. Rossum, Garner, Sedgwick, Dunham, Gyllenhaal, Thirlby, Arquette and McDonnell are half-Jewish, and most identify as such. Many of the others have parents with a show-business background, including Cooper, Elliott, Glover, Lane, Hedges, Plimpton, Griffith and Williams. Berkeley and Linney are the only British-American screen celebrities who are neither of mixed ancestry nor have parents in show business. Even here, Linney's father was a playwright.

Thus, it seems that WASP New Yorkers' prominence has a great deal to do with two dynamics. First, the transmission of the craft within families in which the parents migrated from more Anglo parts of the country. Actors move to New York to pursue a career, and their children later draw on parental networks and expertise to launch their own careers. Second, the presence of partial British ancestry within New York's upper-middle class – often involving native New York Jews and more transient WASPs from elsewhere. Kyra Sedgwick's father, for instance, a venture capitalist of old Yankee stock, married her Jewish mother, a speech therapist. Thomas McDonnell's WASP father edited *Sports Illustrated* while his Jewish mother was a writer. Whether stemming from acting or professional families, most Anglo-Saxon New Yorkers have peripatetic parents who trace their WASP roots to other parts of the continent, much like *Bonfire of the Vanities'* Sherman McCoy's Kentucky lineage or the southern origins of his mistress Maria Ruskin. For example, Wayne Knight's father was born in Ontario, Canada, and Diane Lane's in Georgia.

LA Jews

Los Angeles is a less Jewish, more British-American metropolitan area than New York. The share of Jewish ancestry is approximately 4.8 per cent[5] compared to 10.9 per cent in metropolitan New York. 4.7 per cent of Los Angeles County residents report British ancestry, as enumerated in the 2015 ACS, compared to 2.6 per cent in the five boroughs of New York. This rises to 7.5 per cent if we include 'American' responses as British. Among actors born after 1945, Jews comprise thirty-one per cent and British-Americans twenty-one per cent. Jews thus have a +546 per cent rate of over-representation compared

to +347 per cent for WASPs born in the city. Within the greater LA metropolitan area (Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties), 6.1 per cent of Angelenos report British ancestry in the 2015 ACS, compared to 3.2 per cent in the greater New York metropolitan area. Among actors born in the greater Los Angeles area after 1945, twenty-five per cent are of British ancestry and twenty-five per cent of Jewish background. This suggests similar levels of ethnic over-representation (+310 per cent for LA WASPs, +421 per cent for LA Jews).

Jewish actors born in Los Angeles County make up 2.3 per cent of our sample, while LA Jews make up just .17 of a per cent of the nation's population. Their over-representation is thus +1,253 per cent. LA WASPs make up 1.6 per cent of actors born after 1945 and just .14 per cent of the nation, yielding an over-representation of +1,042 per cent. As in New York, these disproportionately prominent groups are heavily intermarried. Of the fifty-four LA-born Jewish-American actors born after World War II, thirty-nine per cent are of mixed ancestry – of which around half, such as Chris Pine, who starred in a number of *Star Trek* films, or Jamie Lee Curtis – have at least some British background. Recall that our algorithm codes an individual based on the first ethnic group listed, thus someone of mixed Jewish-WASP background is sometimes allotted to the Jewish and sometimes to the British category. We could see no systematic pattern to this and prefer to stick with the computer-generated data rather than bias the codings with ad hoc decisions.

As with New York WASPs, many LA Jews have parents who also worked in the industry. Chris Pine's father starred in the ChIPS television series, and Jamie Lee Curtis' parents were actors Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh. The above patterns again suggest that the over-representation of those born in New York and Los Angeles, and of Jews, WASPs and those of mixed Jewish-WASP ancestry, is partly an emergent property arising from smaller-scale familial, social and professional networks centred in these cities. Indeed, these networks appear to bear only an oblique relationship to the established Jewish and WASP communities in these cities. Together, LA and New York-born WASPs and Jews form 11.1 per cent of American actors born after 1980, down slightly from 13.6 per cent among those born before 1965. None of the interactions between birthplace and ethnicity was significant in the models in Table 2 so were dropped from the analysis. All of which indicates that birthplace and ethnicity are exerting independent effects on the likelihood of becoming an actor.

The foregoing may have given the impression that Jewish and British-Americans dominate the Hollywood and New York motion picture scenes, but this is not the case, as the two groups still comprise a minority of actors. In effect, there are two influences on the star selection system: ethnicity and locality. Los Angeles and New York-born actors are over-represented, as are Jews and WASPs. However, locality is the more important influence. This has changed over time: where sixty per cent of British-American actors in the pre-1924 cohort were born in the Northeast and Midwest, this declines to just twenty-two per cent among those born after 1980. Among Jews, the share born

in the Northeast and Midwest declines from eighty-six per cent in the 1925–44 cohort to fifty-one per cent in the post-1980 cohort. There is more representation from the Southeast and West, in line with national shifts from rustbelt to sunbelt. Nevertheless, through it all, Los Angeles and New York-born individuals have maintained their combined share of over a third of actors.

Anglicisation of surnames

Inveighing against the restrictive 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, designed to continue the 1924 'National Origins' Immigration Act, President Truman accused the architects of the 1924 Act of ethnic discrimination: 'The idea behind this discriminatory policy was, to put it baldly, that Americans with English or Irish names were better people and better citizens than Americans with Italian or Polish names' (Truman 1952 in Ziegler 1953: 97–99). Did American actors feel compelled to conform to these norms? The evidence would suggest so.

Ethnicelebs provides a birth name as well as the actor's current name; thus, we are able to determine whether a celebrity changed their surname or took an Anglo partner's name in marriage. Surnames are classified by the Onomap surname profiler developed by Paul Longley and Richard Webber.[6] Before assessing the results, however, it is worth estimating the extent of historical anglicisation. To do so, we examine male celebrities only, restricting to those who are of single ancestry and have not anglicised their names since birth. We include all individuals in the data, not merely actors. Inspection of the data shows that those of German or Scandinavian background are too heavily mixed with those of British and Irish ancestry to distinguish – with confidence – the share that were historically anglicised. This aligns with extant work noting the high degree of mixing among those of older European ancestries (Kennedy and Reeves 1944; Waters 1990). We therefore focus on Jewish and Southern/Eastern Europeans. What the data show is that historic surname anglicisation has, pace Fermaglich (2015), been most pronounced among Jews. Our surname classifier suggests thirty-four per cent of the 163 male, single-ancestry Jews in the dataset who have *not* changed their names carry Anglo surnames. The share was somewhat higher for the pre-1924 generation (forty-three per cent) suggesting possible selection effects whereby Jews with Anglo surnames were more likely to attempt to enter, or be accepted into, the industry.

However, in post-1924 cohorts, this figure has hovered between thirty-two and thirty-five per cent. An inspection of these surnames found a few false positives (i.e. Snider) and some which are both Jewish and Anglo (i.e. Gordon). With these removed, the share of anglicised surnames falls to twenty-five per cent among Jews, our best estimate. We also find that just three per cent of Southern/Eastern Europeans and five per cent of Latin Americans/Iberians were born with anglicised surnames – though sample sizes are quite small. This is especially true for Hispanics, where only two instances of actors born with

Anglo surnames (Steve Perry, Cris Judd) could be identified. The propensity to have an anglicised birth surname is thus about eight times higher for Jews than Southern/Eastern Europeans. This is in line with, albeit slightly higher, than Fermaglich's finding that sixty-five per cent of all surname-change petitions in New York City in the 1917–41 period were from Jews and just eleven per cent from Italians.

Contemporary surname anglicisation

We now return to contemporary anglicisation, focusing only on screen actors. By comparing the geographic origin of birth and current surnames, we derive a measure of anglicisation within the lifetime of an American actor.[7] Results show that, including women, a change of surname – whether in an Anglo or counter-Anglo direction – occurs for twenty per cent of US actors (N = 372 out of 1,863). It is readily apparent that the direction of surname change – net of ethnically unclassifiable stage names such as 'Sting' or 'Armie Hammer' – is almost always in the direction of anglicisation, as predicted by H4. The Onomap surname profiler identified 366 instances in which actor's current surnames differed from their birth surnames, of which seventy-six could not be ethnically classified. Where there was a change in surname, eighty per cent were in the direction of anglicisation. Surnames can change through marriage, though even here, actresses with recognised 'brands' may not wish to do so. Thus, Anglo-conformity may still play a role in whether an actress decides to change her surname to her husband's.

Our sample size for name change by cohort among actors is small, but comparing birth surnames with current surnames among pre-1946 and post-1980 cohorts shows that the proportion of changes that are in an Anglo direction has declined somewhat between the pre-1945 and post-1980 cohorts. Data show that eighty-eight per cent of fifty-two classifiable changes among actors born with non-Anglo surnames before 1946 were in the direction of anglicisation. This compares to seventy-six per cent of thirty-three cases for the post-1980 generation. In addition, the number of individuals who changed from an Anglo to non-Anglo surname increased from two out of thirty-eight (five per cent) in the pre-1946 cohort to five of twenty-two (twenty-three per cent) in the post-1980 cohort. At first glance, the data seem to tell a story of straight-line decline in surname change: from forty-eight per cent of non-Anglo actors born before 1924 to thirty-three per cent born 1925–44 to nineteen per cent among Baby Boomers to seventeen per cent for the 1961–80 cohort and fourteen per cent for those born after 1981. However, this must be adjusted for age, as the risk of name change rises somewhat across the life course, not least due to a rising likelihood of marriage, which may result in an actress changing her surname. It may also rise if there is a selection bias at work whereby actors who make it after age 35 have disproportionately Anglo names. Nevertheless, the data offer some evidence for a decline of

Anglo-conformity, against H3. Yet, contrary to Waters' (1990) ethnic options perspective which would predict a penchant for choosing non-Anglo surnames, the predominant direction of change in the most recent cohort remains overwhelmingly Anglo-conformist, as H3 predicts.

The surname profiler identified nineteen instances of anglicisation in the post-1980 birth cohort, though two (Larson, Monet) are more common among those of, respectively, Swedish and French ancestry. Marriage only accounts for one of the cases, resulting in sixteen instances. Zooming in on the sample of post-1980 cohort actors who have anglicised their surnames in Table 3, we see that most support Anglo-conformity thesis H3 – though in two instances actors also adopted surnames of famous ancestors (Diana Ross, Errol Flynn). In some cases, actors cite 'difficult to pronounce' surnames such as Desaulniers. Others, such as Chloe Bennet (née Wang), claimed to be 'having trouble booking gigs with [my] last name'. These accounts point to the enduring power of Anglo-conformity in Hollywood.

Among the six actors born after 1980 who de-anglicised their surnames (Table 4), three are African-American. Thus, it may be that part of the trend towards greater de-anglicisation is accounted for by a rising share of African-Americans in recent cohorts, who may be more likely to make such a move. In two other cases, Hayley Kiyoko (née Hayley Kiyoko Alcroft) and Camille Belle (née Camille Belle Routh), we see clear evidence of part-Anglo actresses de-anglicising their surnames, providing partial evidence for Waters' ethnic exoticism thesis.

Ethnicity and surname

Another means of gauging change in Anglo-conformity across generations is to crosstabulate actors' ancestry with their surname origins. This reveals that a considerable proportion of American actors who are not of British, Irish or African-American ancestry have Anglo surnames, in line with H4. Among Jewish actors born before 1950, sixty-four per cent have Anglo surnames, as do forty per cent of American actors of Southern and Eastern European background. However, Figure 3 demonstrates that across all groups of actors, the proportion of non-Anglos with Anglo surnames is lower in the cohort born after 1980 than in the generations born prior to 1950. For the post-1980 generation, forty-one per cent of 102 Jewish actors and twenty-three per cent of 104 Southern/Eastern European ones had Anglo surnames. Yet these figures are above our (unadjusted) classifier estimate that thirty-four per cent of Jews and three per cent of Southern/Eastern Europeans in the country bear anglicised surnames. This offers qualified support for hypothesis H5 that Anglo-conformity of surname, while lower, continues to persist.

The decline in the share of British, Irish and African-Americans with an Anglo surname is partly due to increased mixed ancestry among these groups – our algorithm assigns the first ancestry listed as the principal one. This tool

Table 3. *Actors born after 1980 who anglicised surnames*

Current name	Birth name	Ancestry	Reason for change
Amber Rose	Amber Levonchuck	Part-Croatian	Stage name
Brie Larson	Brie Desaulniers	Part-Metis	Chose "Larson" from Swedish great-grandmother's maiden name, as surname was "too difficult to pronounce"
Brooke Hogan	Brooke Bollea	Part-Italian	Marriage to Hulk Hogan
Carlos Pratts	Carlos Chalabi	Part-Iraqi	Stepfather's surname
Chloe Bennet	Chloe Wang	Part-Chinese	"Changed her name to 'Chloe Bennet', after having trouble booking gigs with her last name"
Chloe Bridges	Chlose Suazo	Part-Honduran	Part English. Chose surname of maternal grandparent
Daniella Monet	Daniella Monet Zuvic	Part-Croatian	Dropped birth last name
Daveigh Chase	Daveigh Schwallier	Part-German	Chose mother's surname
Dove Cameron	Chloe Hosterman	Part-Austrian	Stage name. Has some Scottish background
Elle King	Tanner Elle Schneider	Part-Jewish	Took mother's surname
Evan Ross	Evan Naess	Part-Norwegian	Took African-American mother Diana Ross' surname
Halston Sage	Halston Schrage	Jewish	Stage name
Jake T. Austin	Jake Szymanski	Part-Polish	Stage name
Kate McKinnon	Kathryn McKinnon Berthold	German-Scottish	Chose mother's surname
Martin Starr	Martin James Pflieger Schienle	German	Stage name

(Continues)

Table 3. *(Continued)*

Current name	Birth name	Ancestry	Reason for change
Sasha Grey	Marina Ann Hantzis	Part-Greek	Stage name Maternal grandfather
Sean Flynn	Sean Rio Amir	Part-Jewish	Errol Flynn
Shane Dawson	Shane Lee Yaw	Dutch-English-Swedish-Welsh	Stage name
Skylar Astin	Skylar Astin Lipstein	Jewish	Stage name

Source: Ethnicelebs.com; surnames classified by Onomap.

Table 4. *Actors born after 1980 who de-anglicised surnames*

Current name	Birth name	Ancestry	Reason for change
Childish Gambino	Donald Glover	African-American	Stage name
Israel Broussard	Israel Adams	Part-English	Cajun stepfather
Draya Michele	Andraya Michele Howard	African-American/ Italian	Stage name
Hayley Kiyoko	Hayley Kiyoko Alcroft	Japanese-Scottish	Stage name
Sasheer Zamata	Sasheer Zamata Moore	African-American	Stage name
Camilla Belle	Camilla Belle Routh	English-Brazilian	Stage name

Source: Ethnicelebs.com; surnames classified by Onomap.

does record second, third and fourth ancestries but focuses on major ancestries and thereby undercounts the extent of mixing. This said, the proportion of pre-1924 actors listed as having mixed ancestry is just 13.8 per cent compared to 30.7 per cent for post-1980 actors so the data are picking up increased blending over time. There is also a larger potential share of non-Anglo marriage partners for actresses in more recent cohorts, which pulls all post-1980 bars in Figure 3, including for those of British ancestry, downward, away from Anglo surnames. Notwithstanding this, the general pattern – especially among Jews, Hispanics and Southern/Eastern European origin actors – suggests there has been a decline in Anglo-conformity among actors during the twentieth century.
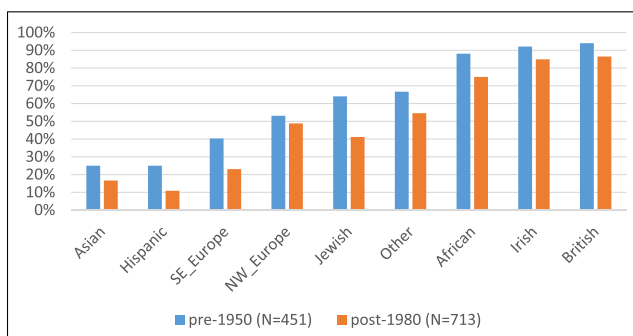
Figure 3. Share of US actors with British or Irish surnames, pre-1950 vs. post-1980 cohorts, by primary ancestry. Source: Ethnicelebs.com; surnames classified by Onomap. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

This finding is reinforced by results in Figure 4 which reveal a sharp drop in surname anglicisation since birth – among actors who are not of British, Irish or African-American ancestry – between the pre-1924 and Boomer generations: from forty-three to twenty-two to ten per cent. The trend in subsequent cohorts is more stable, with the 1961–80 generation anglicising surnames at a rate of 8.1 per cent since birth and the post-1980 generation at 5.7 per cent. As discussed, we cannot rule out the possibility that the 5.7 per cent figure may rise through women marrying Anglos and from selection bias among formerly unknown actors bearing anglicised names entering the dataset after age 35. Nevertheless, these trends suggest a moderating effect, again offering modest support for H3 and H5.

There is, additionally, a gender dimension, whereby women are somewhat more likely to anglicise than men: consider that 9.8 per cent of women born without Anglo surnames in the 1961–80 generation have British surnames while just six per cent of their male counterparts do. Figure 4 shows that if
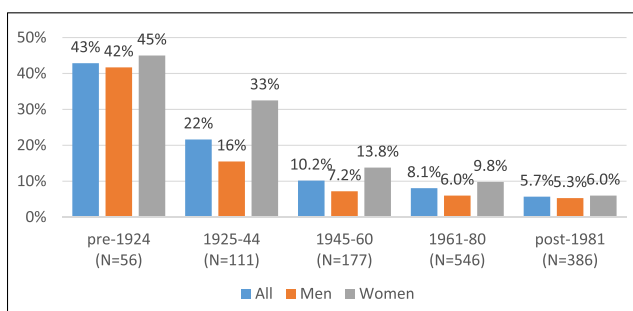

Figure 4. Share of non-Anglo, non-African-American actors anglicizing surnames since birth, by cohort and gender. Source: Ethnicelebs.com; surnames classified by Onomap. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

we just consider men, there is less decline in anglicisation between the 1961–80 and post-1980 generations. This small gap may close if, within the post-1980 generation, more than 5.3 per cent of male actors emerging in the future as adult celebrities have anglicised their names. Unfortunately, our data do not permit us to undertake an age-period-cohort (APC) analysis to determine whether the long-term trend in surname anglicisation has ceased among post-1961 cohorts.

In order to account for confounding, we specify a logistic regression model of the likelihood of an actor having a British or Irish surname. The full speci-fication appears in Appendix 2. This shows that the incidence of British or Irish surnames declines across cohorts due to the changing ethnic composition of American actors between the pre-1924 and post-1960 cohorts. Yet a decline in Anglo-conformity is also evident. Thus, the predicted probability of an ac-tor of Jewish ancestry having a British surname, with gender, region and New York/LA birthplace held at their means, falls from over .9 in the pre-1924 cohort to around .4 in post-1961 cohorts, as shown in Figure 5. For Southern/Eastern Europeans, the corresponding decline is from .4 to around .2. Thereafter, the trend stabilises.

Again, we cannot rule out that some of the flattening in recent cohorts may have to do with an increasingly intermarried white population. Here again we find qualified support for H3 and H5: Anglo-conformity persists, but has de-clined from its early twentieth century peak.

The evidence from models 3 and 4 in Table 2 contrasts with that presented in Figure 5. While the ancestry evidence from Table 2 suggests WASPs are in-creasingly over-represented among actors as compared to athletes and off-screen celebrities, the incidence of anglicised surnames among non-WASPs
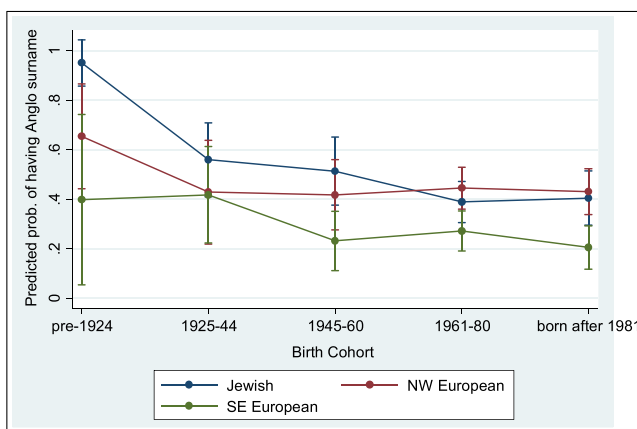

Figure 5. Probability of Anglo surname, actors, by ethnic group and cohort.
Source: Ethnicelebs.com; surnames classified by Onomap. Full model specification in Appendix 2. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

has declined across cohorts. In effect, while Anglo-conformity over an actor's lifetime is down, selection for British-Americans has, if anything, increased. Hollywood appears to be substituting real Anglos for imitation ones, confirming H2 but not H5.

As a robustness check, Appendix 3 models the probability of a celebrity of any kind (i.e. actor, writer, athlete) having an Anglo surname. The main effect of being an actor is to increase the likelihood of bearing an Anglo surname. However, the negative and significant coefficients on the actor-cohort interactions show that there has been a decline in Anglo-conformity, with the change concentrated among actors. This echoes the fact that surname anglicisation has declined across cohorts, contrary to H3. Even so, actors continue to have a greater likelihood than other celebrities of having an Anglo name, and this appears to have stabilised in recent cohorts as Appendix 4 shows. The net effect is a smaller but enduring Anglo-conformity among actors, which we suggest arises because they perform a more national-representational role than athletes or backstage celebrities.

Another indicator of the resilience of the Anglo presence can be identified by comparing the aggregate Anglo surname trend among actors and politicians. Figure 6 shows that Christopher's de-WASPing process has advanced in both professions across successive cohorts, but has proceeded ten points further among politicians than actors since the 1925–44 cohort, as predicted by H6.

This translates into the gently flattening trajectory shown in Figure 7 whereby the share of US-born actors with Anglo surnames among all actors and 'top'[8] actors appears to be stabilising at a level above fifty per cent. Anglo surname over-representation is virtually identical when omitting African-
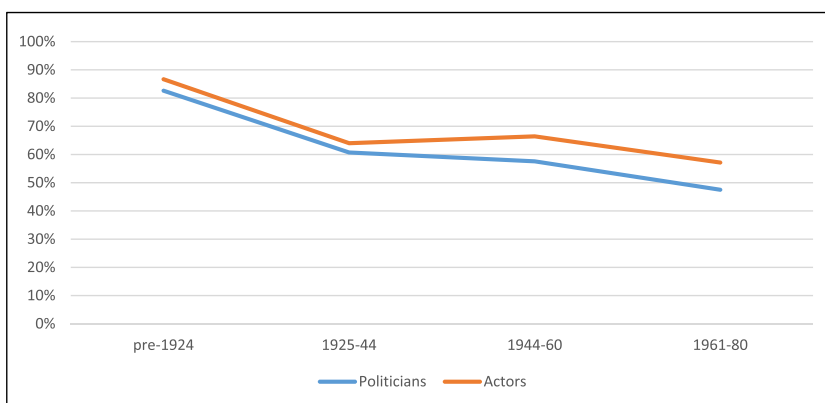

Figure 6. Share of American actors and politicians with Anglo surnames, by cohort. Source: Ethnicelebs.com; surnames classified by Onomap. N = 85 politicians: 11 (pre-1924), 15 (1925–44), 32 (1945–60), 27 (1961–80); and 1,427 actors. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
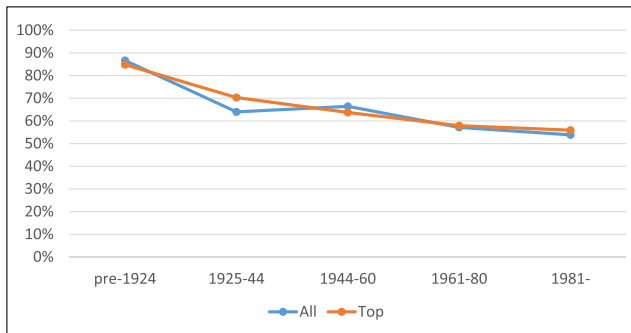
Figure 7. Share of US-born actors with British or Irish surnames, by birth cohort. Source: Ethnicelebs.com; Wikipedia; surnames classified by Onomap. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Americans; when focusing only on whites, the Anglo surname share rises to sixty per cent in post-1961 cohorts.

Highbrow actors

We have tested for Anglo-conformity among actors in general, but we also hypothesise that the premium on representing an all-American archetype is higher in some genres than in others. In particular, H7 predicts that actors in American historical films are more likely to be hired for their approximation to the type represented by Roosevelt's 'men of Washington's day'. The list of lead actors in American historical films comes from the Wikipedia entry for 'American historical films', from which 195 actors were matched with our Ethnicelebs data.[9] The list is not restricted to American actors since foreign actors such as Daniel Day Lewis in *Lincoln* often win lead roles in American historical epics. Figure 9 shows that the share of non-African-American historic film leads bearing Truman's 'British or Irish names' has remained relatively constant at seventy to eighty per cent between pre-1924 and post-1980 cohorts despite the wider social dynamics of elite de-WASPing and rising Hispanic and Asian numbers. When African-Americans are added to our sample, the Anglo share remains similar. This offers important evidence for H7 that national-representative starring roles are disproportionately allocated to those with Anglo surnames (Figure 8).

A very similar pattern can be seen among Oscar nominees in Figure 9, of which 239 matched with our actor data (sixty-eight were also historic film leads). The Academy Awards reflect the views of critics and feature 'serious' films which are more likely to narrate the national story. Again, Anglo surnames dominate. This furnishes further evidence for H7: the Anglo surname
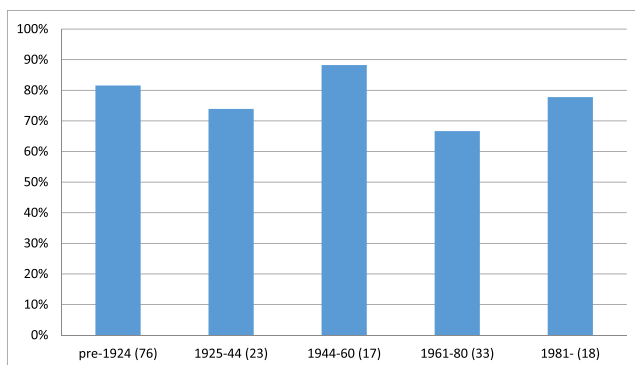
Figure 8. Share of Anglo surnames among non-African-American lead actors in US history films, by birth cohort (N in brackets). Sources: Ethnicelebs.com; Wikipedia; surnames classified by Onomap. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

share in the most recent cohort of Oscar nominees and historical film leads is around twenty points higher than the general pool of American actors in the Ethnicelebs dataset, which in turn is ten points greater than among politicians or athletes from the same cohort.

Modelling the predicted probability of an actor bearing an Anglo surname, Figure 10 shows that while Anglo-conformity has declined across cohorts for actors, this is not the case for historic film leads and Oscar nominees, where the Millennial generation is as Anglo as the pre-1924 ones. Indeed, with other variables held at their means – which capture declining Anglo-conformity among actors – the predicted probability of an Oscar nominee or historic film lead born after 1980 bearing an Anglo surname is an astounding .9.[10]
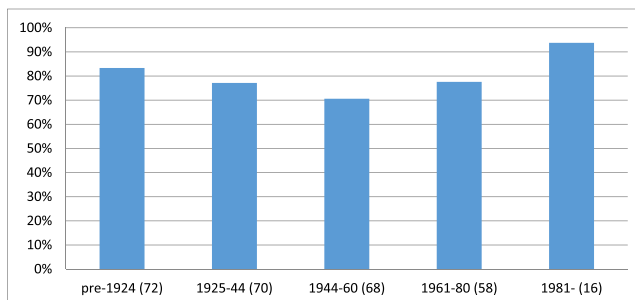

Figure 9. Share of Anglo surnames among non-African-American Oscar nominees, by birth cohort (N in brackets). Source: Ethnicelebs.com; Wikipedia; surnames classified by Onomap. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
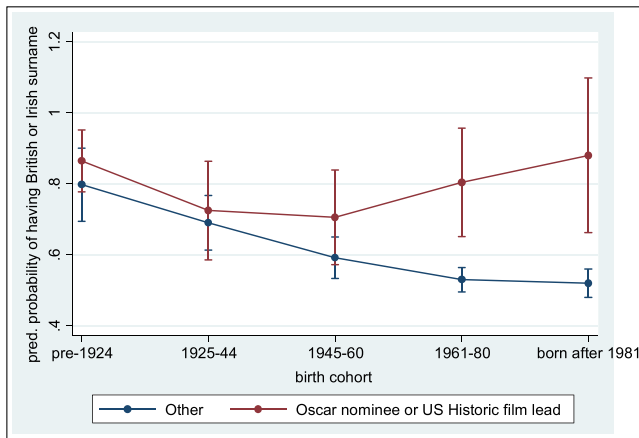
Figure 10. Probability of non-African-American actor having Anglo surname, High-brow vs. Other. Note: for US actors only. Source: Ethnicelebs.com; Wikipedia; surnames classified by Onomap. Full model specification in Appendix 5. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Discussion

Our examination of the ethnicity of American actors confirms, to a greater or lesser extent, all of our hypotheses regarding Anglo-conformity. American screen actors have historically been disproportionately British in ancestry and most have had British or Irish surnames. The incidence of both British ancestry and Anglo surnames has declined as the American population has grown more diverse and Anglo-conformity has declined. Yet the share of non-African-American actors with Anglo surnames appears to have reached a new equilibrium in the most recent cohorts of actors at ten points above that recorded for politicians or athletes of the same generation. This suggests Anglo-conformity has not declined as far among actors as it has in other sections of American society. While the rate of non-Anglo actors' anglicising their surnames has dropped considerably across cohorts, the practice still occurs far more frequently than its converse.

In addition, the vast majority of Oscar nominees and lead actors in American historical films have Anglo surnames, which holds even when omitting African-Americans. This is far in excess of actors in general or the wider population and is especially notable given that nearly a third of Millennial actors were born in highly diverse metropolitan New York and Los Angeles. All of which suggests the WASP archetype has not faded, as Peter Schrag intimated in 1973, but persists as a reference point for those seeking to portray the authentic American. Our work emphasises the importance of looking beyond ethnic boundaries and questions of membership to the symbolic question of ethnic ideal types. Do ethnic archetypes and their allure change over time,

and can we measure the extent to which immigrants and their descendants conform to the ethnic majority ideal type which symbolises the nation? The limited literature on assimilation, as well as work on the ethnic and civic basis of national identity, needs to begin asking these questions as western nations grow more diverse through immigration.

While the boundaries of the white majority have opened to Catholics and Jews, today's American icons reflect the same ethnic imago which Theodore Roosevelt remarked upon over a century ago.

Notes

1 The tool was created with Python, relying on the Scrapy library (https://scrapy.org). We have obtained permission to use the data for analysis from the site's owner, but not to release the dataset, as this is a valuable proprietary asset that has been compiled over time.

2 Correspondence with site editor, January 21, 2017.

3 Breman, Phil, 'New York vs. Los Angeles – Which Offers the Most Opportunity?,' *The Balance*, August 9, 2017.

4 McCarthy, Anne, 'Being British in the Big Apple,' The Telegraph, 9 June 2015.

5 Jewish Virtual Library, 'Vital Statistics: Largest Jewish Populated Metropolitan Areas, United States,' http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/USjewsgraph.html, accessed Sept. 20, 2017.

6 See Onomap.org. We are grateful to Paul Longley for permitting us to use the software.

7 We have also attempted to classify whether some of the surnames that could not be machine classified were Anglo-'sounding' and have included these as anglicised surnames, i.e. Hershey or Marbles. Nine of 335 names identified as anglicised were originally unclassified.

8 As defined by a natural break based on the length of their Wikipedia entries and total number of biographical hyperlinks. N = 844 'top' actors.

9 Sourced from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:American_historical_films. Inspection of the remaining 293 leads shows a very similar proportion of Anglo surnames as those matched to Ethnicelebs.

10 Full specification in Appendix 5. Interactions not significant due to sample size though coefficients in hypothesised direction.

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Appendix 1

Table A1. *Summary statistics*

	N	Mean	Min	Max
Actor	7,277	.48	0	1
American	7,277	.52	0	1
Lead in American historical film (actors)	3,523	.04	0	1
Oscar nominee (actors)	3,523	.03	0	1
Historical film lead or Oscar nominee (American actors)	2,304	.08	0	1
Born in New York (American actors with birthplace)	1,823	.18	0	1
Born in metropolitan New York	1,823	.20	0	1
Born in Los Angeles (American actors with birthplace)	1,823	.10	0	1
Born in metropolitan Los Angeles	1,823	.13	0	1
Born in metro area (American actors with birthplace)	1,823	.56	0	1
British Isles surname (all American celebrities)	3,752	.58	0	1
British Isles surname (American actors)	2,304	.60	0	1
Jewish ancestry (American actors)	2,304	.15	0	1
British ancestry (American actors)	2,304	.25	0	1

Table A2. *Ethnicity of all celebrities in Ethnicelebs*

Ethnicity	N	Per cent	Cum. Per.
British	1,688	26.03	26.03
NW Europe	1,082	16.68	42.71
SE Europe	961	14.82	57.53
Jewish	731	11.27	68.8
African	629	9.7	78.5
Hispanic	452	6.97	85.47
Irish	446	6.88	92.35
Asian	345	5.32	97.67
Other	129	1.99	99.66
Native	22	.34	100
Total	6,485	100	–

Table A3. *Professions in Ethnicelebs*

Profession	N	Per cent	Cum. Per.
On Screen	3,523	56.31	56.31
On Stage	863	13.79	70.1
Sports	523	8.36	78.46
Producer/Backstage	450	7.19	85.65
Politician	358	5.72	91.37
Model/Dancer	206	3.29	94.66
Writer/Journalist	91	1.45	96.11
Business	50	.8	96.90
Other	192	3.1	100.0
Total	6,256	100	–

Table A4. *Birth cohorts of American actors in Ethnicelebs*

Birth year	N	Per cent
Pre-1924	124	5.47
1925–44	194	8.56
1945–60	347	15.31
1961–80	940	41.46
After 1981	662	29.2
Total	2,267	100

**Appendix 2. Model predicting likelihood of non-British or
Irish/non-African-American actor having Anglo surname**

Ref: pre-1924 cohort	
1925–44 cohort	−2.560* (1.074)
1945–60 cohort	−2.934** (1.068)
1961–80 cohort	−3.442** (1.046)
Born after 1981	−3.376** (1.058)
Ref: Jewish	
NW European	−2.364* (1.136)
SE European	−3.425** (1.268)
Ref: pre-1924 × Jewish	
1925–44 × NW_European	1.814 (1.254)
1925–44 × SE European	2.828* (1.365)
1945–60 × NW European	1.959 (1.207)
1945–60 × SE European	2.144 (1.345)
1961–80 × NW European	2.577* (1.162)
1961–80 × SE European	2.870* (1.297)
Born after 1981 × NW European	2.453* (1.176)
Born after 1981 × SE European	2.430‡ (1.319)
Ref: Southeast	
Northeast	−.037 (.262)
Midwest	−.172 (.273)
Northwest	−.185 (.427)
Southwest	.161 (1.445)
Female	.165 (.142)
Born New York	−.041 (.270)
Born Los Angeles	−.203 (.228)
Born large metro area	−.007 (.415)
Constant	2.979** (1.049)
Pseudo R^2	.057
N	927

‡$p < .1$.

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

***$p < .001$.

Appendix 3. Model predicting likelihood of non-British/Irish/African-American celebrity having Anglo surname

Ref: pre-1924 cohort	
1925–44 cohort	−.117 (.590)
1945–60 cohort	−.197 (.557)
1961–80 cohort	−1.38 (.535)
Born after 1980	−4.83 (.559)
Hispanic	−6.48 (.415)
Jewish	.951*** (.264)
NW European	1.05*** (2.61)
SE European	−4.19 (.365)
Actor	1.04* (.445)
1925–44 × Actor (ref: pre-1924 non-actor)	−.290 (.544)
1945–60 × Actor	−.945‡ (.507)
1961–80 × Actor	−.914‡ (.473)
Born after 1981 × Actor	−.894‡ (.493)
Female	.328** (.107)
Born New York	−.203 (.182)
Born Los Angeles	−.007 (.199)
Constant	−.923 (.614)
Pseudo R^2	.074
N	1,932

‡$p < .1$.

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

***$p < .001$.

Appendix 4

Probability of Non-Anglo Celebrity having Anglo Surname, by Cohort and Profession
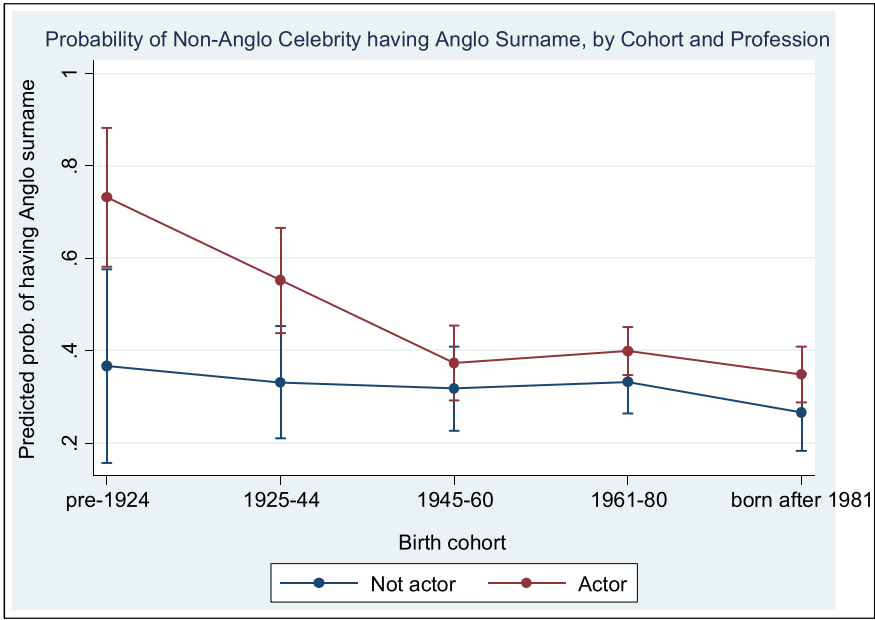
Source: Ethnicelebs.com; Wikipedia; surnames classified by Onomap.

Appendix 5. Model predicting likelihood of non-African-American actor having Anglo surname

Ref: pre-1924 cohort	
1925–44 cohort	−.573 (.374)
1945–60 cohort	−1.001** (.350)
1961–80 cohort	−1.260*** (.336)
Born after 1981	−1.299*** (.399)
Historical film lead or Oscar nominee (HOSC)	.483 (.502)
1925–44 × HOSC (ref: pre-1924 x other actor)	−.316 (.643)
1945–60 × HOSC	.024 (.613)
1961–80 × HOSC	.818 (.712)
Born after 1981 × HOSC	1.444 (1.177)
Female	.084 (.092)
Born New York	−.484*** (.131)
Born Los Angeles	−.040 (.163)
Constant	1.410*** (.332)
Pseudo R^2	.030
N	2,038

‡$p < .1$.

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

***$p < .001$.