

# **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 overrepresented 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 overrepresented, 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 stabilized 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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge the cooperation of the owner of the Ethniclebs.com site, who prefers to remain anonymous, and thank Paul Longley of University College London for his assistance with profiling surnames.

The mobilization of an exclusive American identity by Donald Trump raises the question of who counts as a 'true' American (Schildkraut 2007; Bonikowski and DiMaggio 2016). 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 toward 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 6th to 10th centuries A.D. (Smith 1986: 96-98). There is a small amount of work on surname anglicisation (Fermaglich 2015; Biavaschi 2017). 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 toward 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 (Lieberson 1985; Huntington 2004).

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 overrepresented 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 toward 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 (Smith 1997; Glazer 1998; Kaufmann 2004; Huntington 2004). 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 than 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 & 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 March 19 and April 1, 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. 81 percent of those who gave a response chose Browning, the Anglo surname, including 86 percent of Clinton voters, 78 percent of Trump voters, 86 percent of African-Americans, 85 percent of Hispanics and 80 percent of whites. In a similar question about religion, 72 percent of 525 respondents – including 70 percent of Catholics – chose Protestant rather than Catholic or Jewish as the characteristic American religion. Whether adopting the English language and Protestant-style congregational religious organization, 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 anglicization 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 (Schrage 1973: 37).

Schrage 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 Schrage, however, it is time to ask whether the change truly altered the portrayal of the symbolic core of American identity.

Schrage'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 makeup 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 1985, 2014). The proportion of Anglo-Saxon surnames in cabinet (Caplow 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 Anglicization

Anglicization 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: 0.4 percent for immigrants to Sweden in the 1990s and 0.7 percent for immigrants in New York over a 5-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 65 percent of petitions despite Jews forming only 25-28 percent of the city's population in the 1920s and 30s. By contrast, Italians, who formed 14-16 percent of the population, accounted for just 11 percent of petitions. Fermaglich argues that Jews' overrepresentation 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 anglicize 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 naturalization officials at Ellis Island, nor for voluntary anglicization (Fermaglich 2015: 35-37). An earlier study of the 1107 surname change petitions in Los Angeles in 1947 found that Jews, 6 percent of the LA population, accounted for 46 percent of petitions, though this represented just .02 percent of the city's Jewish population of that year. Over 80 percent 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 anglicization within the contemporary non-British Isles descended US population. In addition to interrogating surname anglicization 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 et. al. 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:

H<sup>1</sup> Those of British descent will be overrepresented among American actors

H<sup>2</sup> British ancestry will remain overrepresented among actors in recent cohorts

H<sup>3</sup> The surname anglicization process continues to be important for newer cohorts of American actors

H<sup>4</sup> British and Irish (Anglo) surnames will be overrepresented among actors

H<sup>5</sup> Anglo surnames will be remain overrepresented among actors in recent cohorts

H<sup>6</sup> A larger proportion of actors than politicians or athletes in recent cohorts have Anglo surnames

H<sup>7</sup> The overrepresentation 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.’<sup>2</sup> 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.” ‘

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<sup>1</sup> The tool was created with Python, relying on the Scrappy library (<https://scrappy.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.

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence with site editor, January 21, 2017.

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) categorization 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 fractionalization 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 Lieberman 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 23 percent of American celebrities and, likewise, listed as the fourth reported ancestry for 23 percent of American celebrities. The share of American celebrities reporting more than one ancestry increases from 16 percent in the pre-1924 generation to 31 percent in the post-1980 generation. Even so, the fact that 68 percent of non-Hispanic white actors born after 1945 are recorded as being of single ancestry suggests the site overstates mono-ethnicity. The categorization of celebrities' principal ethnicity in our data is mutually exclusive so totals add up to 100 percent. Summary statistics are provided in Appendix I.

Focusing only on American screen actors born after 1900 yields a sample of 2,228 individuals, of whom 89 percent 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: 871-2)

[Table 1 here]

A number of patterns are apparent. First, the data confirm Schrag's observations regarding the considerable overrepresentation of Jewish actors – which harks back to the origins of the industry (Kendall 2007). This is also an artefact of Jews' concentration in New York and Los Angeles, where the film industry is centred. Second, there is an overrepresentation of British ancestry and an underrepresentation of northwestern Europeans (mainly German and Scandinavian), as predicted by H<sup>1</sup>. Finally, there is a paucity of Hispanics and Asians, two groups which have grown in the wake of post-1965 immigration reforms. The

underrepresentation 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 is based on self-reporting while celebrity data is 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 underrepresented in the celebrity data. This is not the case, suggesting British-origin actors are indeed overrepresented.

The claim of WASP overrepresentation ( $H^1$ ) gains added plausibility when we compare the British-origin share of actors (25 percent) with that for famous athletes (10 percent). Some 40 percent of famous athletes are African-American compared to under 10 percent 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 percent, it is unlikely to be as high as the 25.2 percent recorded for actors in the Ethnicelebs data. For now, this ancestry analysis offers qualified

evidence in support of anglo-conformity hypothesis  $H^1$ , which predicts that those of British background will constitute a disproportionate share of American actors.

Politicians are more heavily Anglo-Saxon than actors, with 33 percent 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 toward a square-jawed, athletic 'look', delegates may be swayed by a candidate's conformity to an Anglo-American archetype. However, Christopher's 'de-WASPIing' process, as documented for presidential cabinets by Caplow (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 40 percent among those born during 1901-1960 (N=97) to just 16 percent 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  $H^2$ . Figure 1 examines the primary ethnic origins of American actors across birth cohorts. In the pre-1924 cohort (N=124), 35 percent of American actors are primarily of British ancestry. This declines to 21 percent in the 1961-80 cohort (N=955) but rebounds to 26 percent 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.

[Figure 1 here]

Stripping away the increased Asian and Hispanic presence after 1961 reveals that the British share has remained relatively constant – and overrepresented - 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.

### 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.<sup>3</sup> Those from these cities, or whose parents live in them, are likely to have informational, social and cost advantages over others. As a result, 18 percent of American actors born after 1900 were born in New York City and 10 percent in Los Angeles. Using a wider definition of these metropolitan areas yields 20 percent born in metropolitan New York (NY-NJ-CT) and 13 percent in greater LA. The two cities represent nearly 30 percent 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.

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<sup>3</sup> Breman, Phil, 'New York vs. Los Angeles - Which Offers the Most Opportunity?,' *The Balance*, August 9, 2017



Among American actors born prior to 1945, 30 percent were born in the greater New York area and 6 percent in metro Los Angeles. For the post-1980 cohort, 15 percent were born in the New York area and 20 percent in metro LA: it has a 460 percent overrepresentation 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.

[Figure 2 here]

#### Modelling Actor Characteristics: ethnicity and place

We do not claim the site is fully exhaustive or perfectly representative, though the data dovetails 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. 61 percent 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 5 percent are athletes, though this rises to 14 percent 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, stage and screen actors, dancers and models (83 percent of the post-1980 sample) with athletes, writers and those in backstage roles. Since 38 percent of athletes (42 percent among those born after 1980) are African-American and 91 percent 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 (74 percent) and the ‘backstage’ category by athletes (72 percent), 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 show business performer. This comports with  $H^2$ , 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.

[Table 2 here]

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 overrepresented 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 percent of the total (JCA 2012). Meanwhile 25 percent 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 percent while Jewish actors make up 24 percent of actors from this metropolis. Jews are thus overrepresented at a rate of between +86 percent to +120 percent 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 percent of New York's population. Meanwhile, those

of British background accounted for 9.4 percent of New York-born celebrities, an overrepresentation of +256 percent. If we include those reporting ‘American’ as their ancestry in the ACS – which greatly overestimates British share - this deflates WASP overrepresentation to +130 percent. Including Long Island and Westchester County, the British share rises to 3.2 percent while the British component of celebrities increases to 10.5 percent, an overrepresentation of +228 percent. Including those reporting ‘American’ as British reduces this to around +100 percent. Note, however, that the average number of reported ancestries per ACS respondent is about 1.25, so this means the metropolitan New York overrepresentation of WASPs, even if we include ‘Americans’ as British, is at least 125 percent.

However, it is estimated that there are 120,000 British expatriates living in New York.<sup>4</sup> 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 overrepresentation for New York British-Americans rises to around +330 percent. Though some British expatriates will have American children, only one of the 22 New York WASP actors in our dataset had parents born in the British Isles. Thus the +330 percent figure may be a more accurate estimate of the extent of ‘Yankee’ overrepresentation 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 percent, than the 9.4 percent share for the post-1945 cohort (N=256).

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

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<sup>4</sup> McCarthy, Anne, ‘Being British in the Big Apple,’ *The Telegraph*, 9 June 2015

(City) to +1,088 percent (metro) overrepresentation 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 Ethniclebs 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 McDonnell, Wayne Knight, Xander Berkeley and Zelda Williams.

Almost all have British surnames but 13 of the 22 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 percent<sup>5</sup> compared to 10.9 percent in metropolitan New York. 4.7 percent of Los Angeles County residents report British ancestry, as enumerated in the 2015 ACS, compared to 2.6 percent in the five boroughs of New York. This rises to 7.5 percent if we include 'American' responses as British. Among actors born after 1945, Jews comprise 31 percent and British Americans 21 percent. Jews thus have a +546 percent rate of overrepresentation compared to +347 percent 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 percent of Angelenos report British ancestry in the 2015 ACS, compared to 3.2 percent in the greater New York metropolitan area. Among actors born in the greater Los Angeles area after 1945, 25 percent are of British ancestry and 25 percent of Jewish background. This suggests similar levels of ethnic overrepresentation (+310 percent for LA WASPs, +421 percent for LA Jews).

Jewish actors born in Los Angeles County make up 2.3 percent of our sample, while LA Jews make up just .17 of a percent of the nation's population. Their overrepresentation is thus +1253 percent. LA WASPs make up 1.6 percent of actors born after 1945 and just .14

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<sup>5</sup> 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

percent of the nation, yielding an overrepresentation of +1,042 percent. As in New York, these disproportionately prominent groups are heavily intermarried. Of the 54 LA-born Jewish-American actors born after World War II, 39 percent 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 overrepresentation 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 percent of American actors born after 1980, down slightly from 13.6 percent 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



overrepresented, as are Jews and WASPs. However, locality is the more important influence. This has changed over time: where 60 percent of British-American actors in the pre-1924 cohort were born in the Northeast and Midwest, this declines to just 22 percent among those born after 1980. Among Jews, the share born in the Northeast and Midwest declines from 86 percent in the 1925-44 cohort to 51 percent 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.

### Anglicization 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.<sup>6</sup> Before assessing the results, however, it is worth estimating the extent of historical anglicization. To do so, we examine male celebrities only, restricting to those who are of single ancestry and have not anglicized their names since birth. We include all individuals in the data, not merely actors. Inspection of the data shows that those

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

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 anglicized. This aligns with extant work noting the high degree of mixing among those of older European ancestries (Waters 1990; Reeves-Kennedy 1944). We therefore focus on Jewish and Southern/Eastern Europeans. What the data show is that historic surname anglicization has, pace Fermaglich (2015), been most pronounced among Jews. Our surname classifier suggests 34 percent 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 (43 percent) 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 32 and 35 percent. 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 anglicized surnames falls to 25 percent among Jews, our best estimate. We also find that just 3 percent of Southern/Eastern Europeans and 5 percent of Latin Americans/Iberians were born with anglicized 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 anglicized birth surname is thus about 8 times higher for Jews than Southern/Eastern Europeans. This is in line with, albeit slightly higher, than Fermaglich's finding that 65 percent of all surname-change petitions in New York City in the 1917-41 period were from Jews and just 11 percent from Italians.

#### Contemporary Surname Anglicization

We now return to contemporary anglicization, focusing only on screen actors. By comparing the geographic origin of birth and current surnames, we derive a measure of anglicization within the lifetime of an American actor.<sup>7</sup> Results show that, including women, a change of surname – whether in an Anglo or counter-Anglo direction - occurs for 20 percent of US actors (N=372 out of 1863). 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 anglicization, as predicted by H<sup>4</sup>. The Onomap surname profiler identified 366 instances in which actor’s current surnames differed from their birth surnames, of which 76 could not be ethnically classified. Where there was a change in surname, 80 percent were in the direction of anglicization. Surnames can change through marriage, though even here, actresses with recognized ‘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 88 percent of 52 classifiable changes among actors born with non-Anglo surnames before 1946 were in the direction of anglicization. This compares to 76 percent of 33 cases for the post-1980 generation. In addition, the number of individuals who changed from an Anglo to non-Anglo surname increased from 2 out of 38 (5 percent) in the pre-1946 cohort to 5 of 22 (23 percent) in the post-1980 cohort. At first glance, the data seem to tell a story of straight-line decline in surname change: from 48 percent of non-Anglo actors born before 1924 to 33 percent born 1925-44 to 19 percent

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<sup>7</sup> 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 anglicized surnames, i.e. Hershey or Marbles. 9 of 335 names identified as anglicized were originally unclassified.

among Baby Boomers to 17 percent for the 1961-80 cohort and 14 percent 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 offers some evidence for a decline of anglo-conformity, against H<sup>3</sup>. 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 H<sup>3</sup> predicts.

The surname profiler identified 19 instances of anglicization 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 16 instances. Zooming in on the sample of post-1980 cohort actors who have anglicized their surnames in table 3, we see that most support anglo-conformity thesis H<sup>3</sup> - 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.

[Table 3 here]

Among the 6 actors born after 1980 who de-anglicized their surnames (table 4), three are African-American. Thus it may be that part of the trend toward greater de-anglicization 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-Anglicizing their surnames, providing partial evidence for Waters' ethnic exoticism thesis.

[Table 4 here]

### 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 H<sup>4</sup>. Among Jewish actors born before 1950, 64 percent have Anglo surnames, as do 40 percent 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, 41 percent of 102 Jewish actors and 23 percent of 104 Southern/Eastern European ones had Anglo surnames. Yet these figures are above our (unadjusted) classifier estimate that 34 percent of Jews and 3 percent of Southern/Eastern Europeans in the country bear anglicized surnames. This offers qualified support for hypothesis H<sup>5</sup> 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 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 percent compared to 30.7 percent for post-1980 actors so the data is 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 here]

This finding is reinforced by results in figure 4 which reveal a sharp drop in surname anglicization since birth - among actors who are not of British, Irish or African-American ancestry - between the pre-1924 and Boomer generations: from 43 to 22 to 10 percent. The trend in subsequent cohorts is more stable, with the 1961-80 generation anglicizing surnames at a rate of 8.1 percent since birth, and the post-1980 generation at 5.7 percent. As discussed, we cannot rule out the possibility that the 5.7 percent figure may rise through women marrying Anglos and from selection bias among formerly unknown actors bearing anglicized names entering the dataset after age 35. Nevertheless, these trends suggest a moderating effect, again offering modest support for H<sup>3</sup> and H<sup>5</sup>.

There is, additionally, a gender dimension, whereby women are somewhat more likely to anglicize than men: consider that 9.8 percent of women born without Anglo surnames in the 1961-80 generation have British surnames while just 6 percent of their male counterparts do. Figure 4 shows that if we just consider men, there is less decline in anglicization between the 1961-80 and post-1980 generations. This small gap may close if, within the post-1980

generation, more than 5.3 percent of male actors emerging in the future as adult celebrities have anglicized 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 anglicization has ceased among post-1961 cohorts.

[Figure 4 here]

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 specification 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 actor 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 stabilizes.

[Figure 5 here]

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  $H^3$  and  $H^5$ : anglo-conformity persists, but has declined 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 increasingly overrepresented

among actors as compared to athletes and off-screen celebrities, the incidence of anglicized surnames among non-WASPs 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  $H^2$  but not  $H^5$ .

As a robustness check, Appendix 3 models the probability of a celebrity of any kind (ie. 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 anglicization has declined across cohorts, contrary to  $H^3$ . Even so, actors continue to have a greater likelihood than other celebrities of having an Anglo name, and this appears to have stabilized 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 10 points further among politicians than actors since the 1925-44 cohort, as predicted by  $H^6$ .

[Figure 6 here]



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’<sup>8</sup> actors appears to be stabilizing at a level above 50 percent. Anglo surname overrepresentation is virtually identical when omitting African-Americans; when focusing only on whites, the Anglo surname share rises to 60 percent in post-1961 cohorts.

[Figure 7 here]

### 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, H<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 70-80 percent between pre-1924 and post-1980 cohorts despite the wider social dynamics of elite de-WASPing and rising Hispanic and

<sup>8</sup> As defined by a natural break based on the length of their Wikipedia entries and total number of biographical hyperlinks. N=844 ‘top’ actors.

<sup>9</sup> Sourced from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:American\\_historical\\_films](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.

Asian numbers. When African-Americans are added to our sample, the Anglo share remains similar. This offers important evidence for  $H^7$ , that national-representative starring roles are disproportionately allocated to those with Anglo surnames.

[Figure 8 here]

A very similar pattern can be seen among Oscar nominees in figure 9, of which 239 matched with our actor data (68 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  $H^7$ : the Anglo surname share in the most recent cohort of Oscar nominees and historical film leads is around 20 points higher than the general pool of American actors in the Ethnicelebs dataset, which in turn is 10 points greater than among politicians or athletes from the same cohort.

[Figure 9 here]

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.<sup>10</sup>

## 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' anglicizing 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

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<sup>10</sup> Full specification in Appendix 5. Interactions not significant due to sample size though coefficients in hypothesized direction.

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

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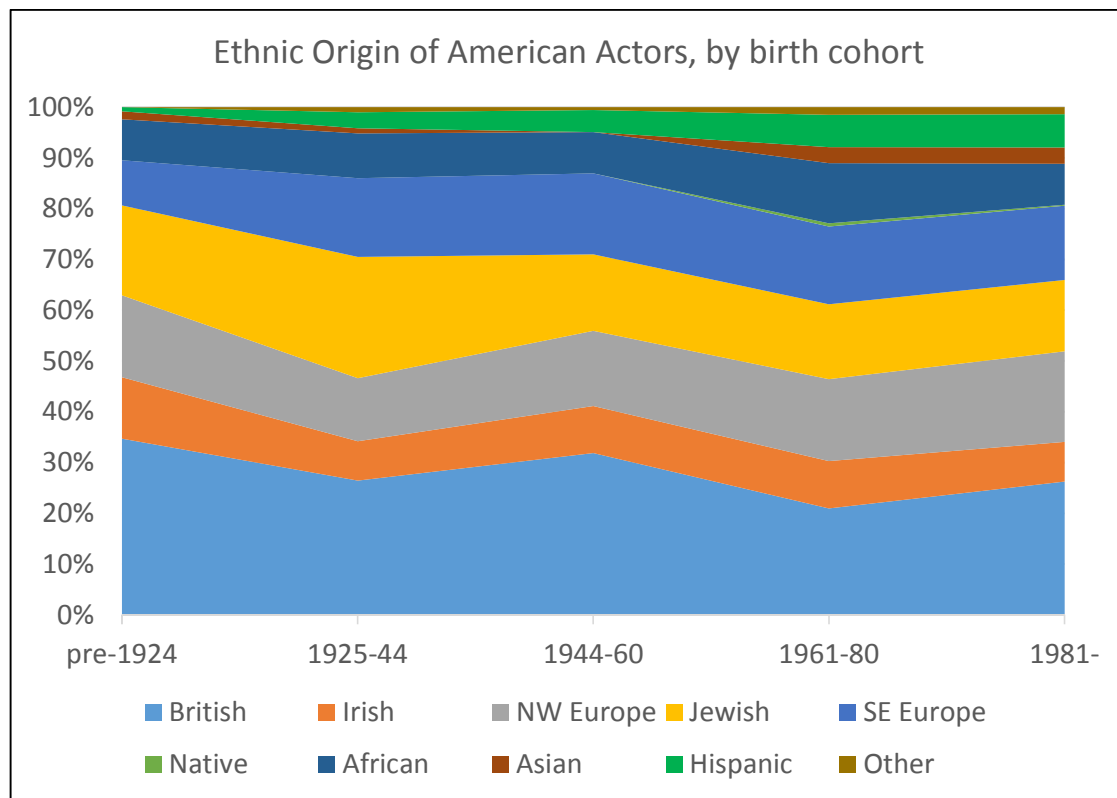
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Figure 1

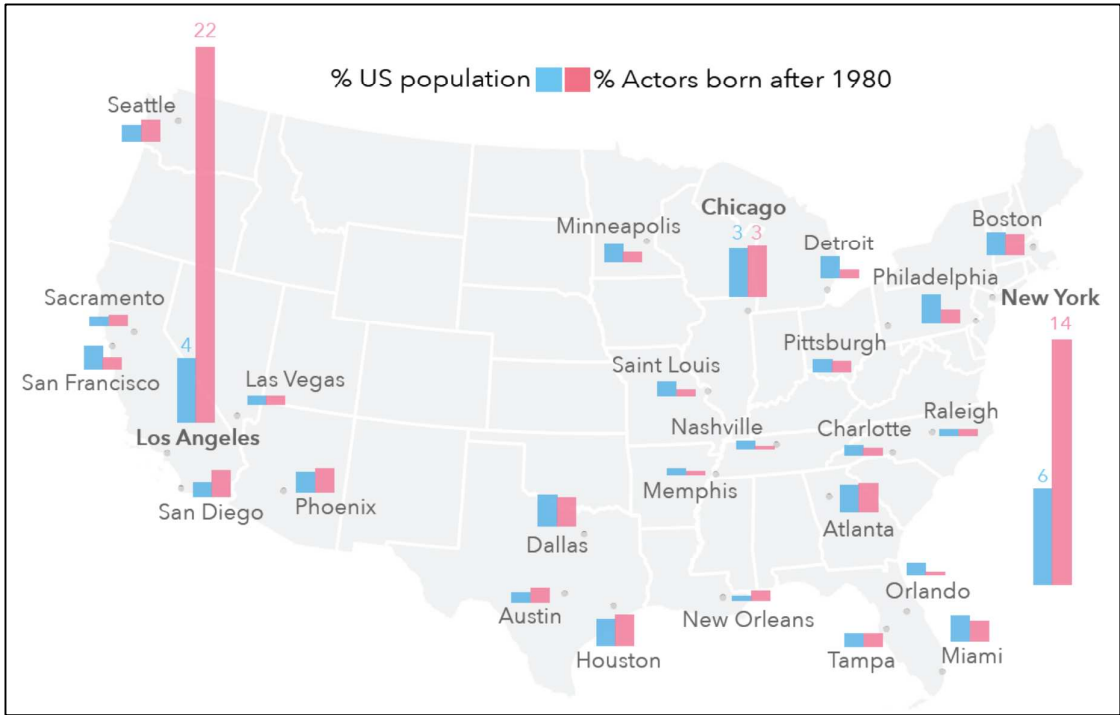


Source: Ethniclebs.com. Note: N=219 African-Americans, 54 Asians, 572 British, 125

Hispanics, 200 Irish, 350 Jewish, 363 NW Europeans, 335 SE Europeans, 7 Native, 27 Other.

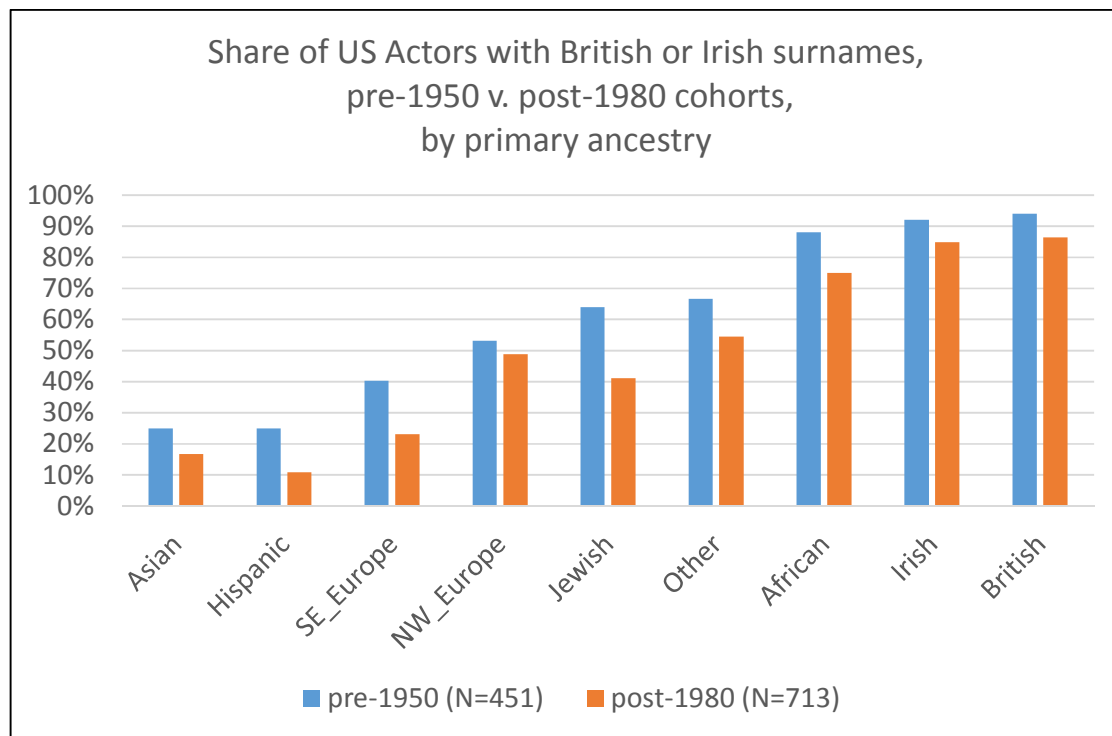
70 percent of sample born after 1961.

Figure 2. Birthplace of post-1980 cohort of American-born Actors



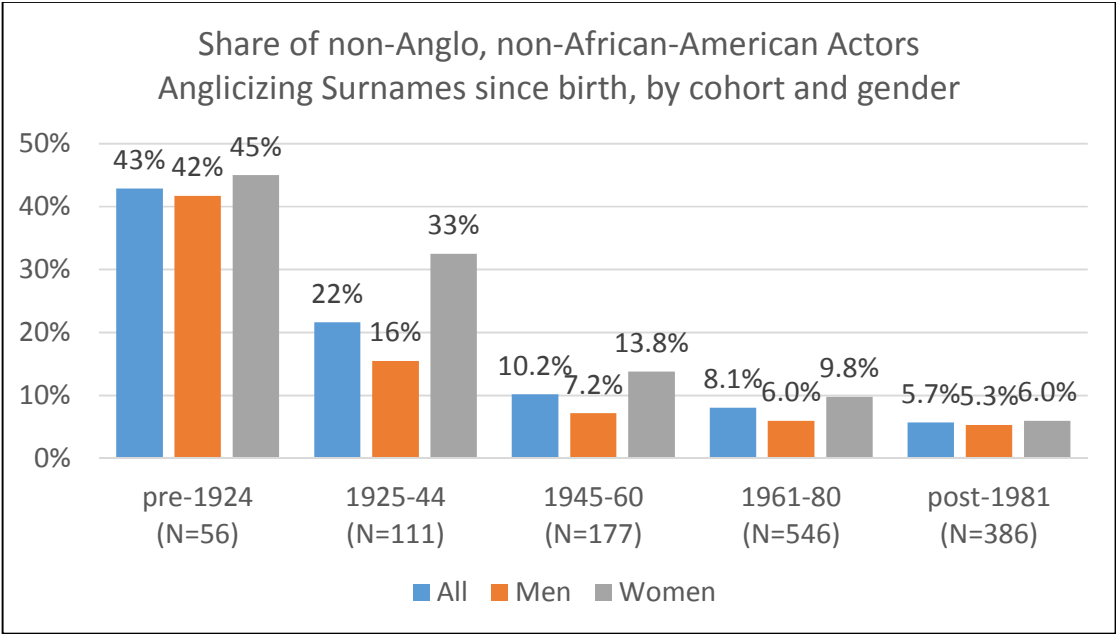
Source: 2010 US Census; Ethnicelebs.com. N=565. Excludes 192 actors with no recorded birthplace.

Figure 3.



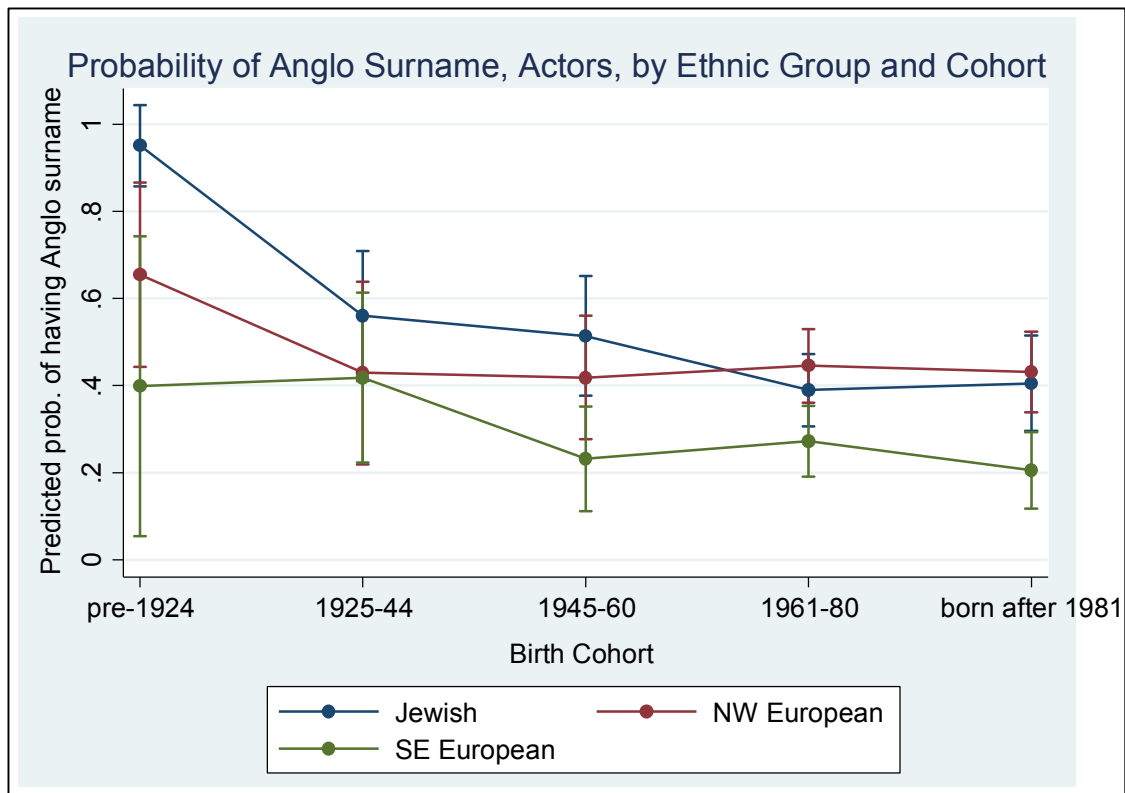
Source: Ethnicelebs.com; Surnames classified by Onomap.

Figure 4.



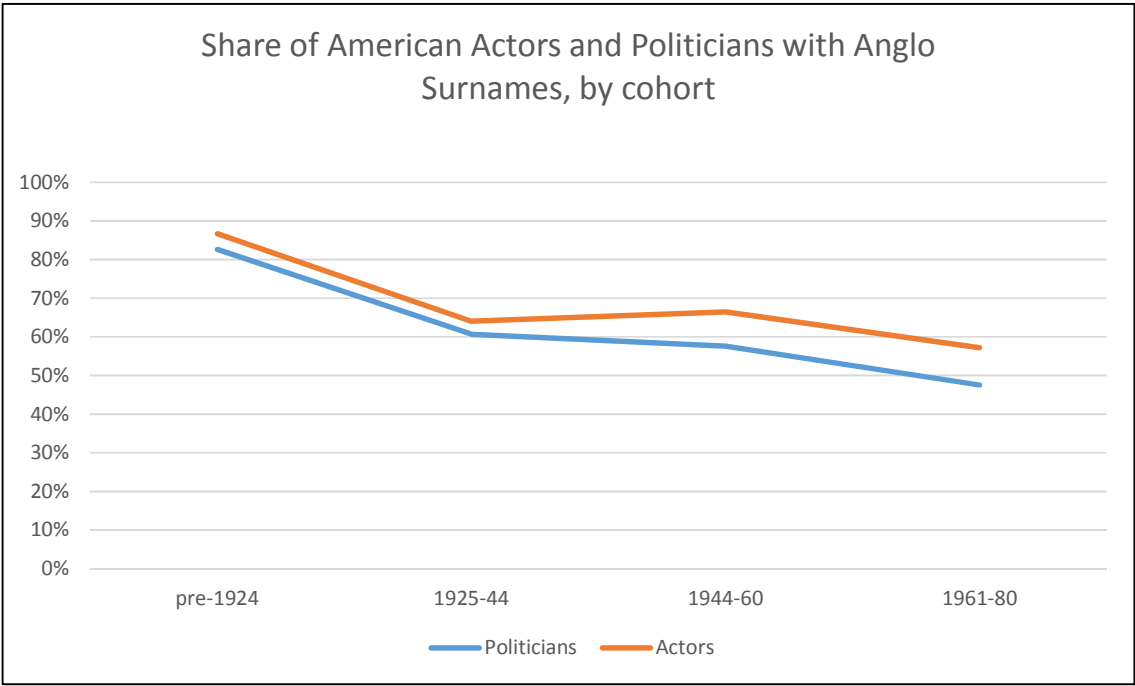
Source: Ethniclebs.com; Surnames classified by Onomap.

Figure 5.



Source: Ethniclebs.com; Surnames classified by Onomap. Full model specification in Appendix 2.

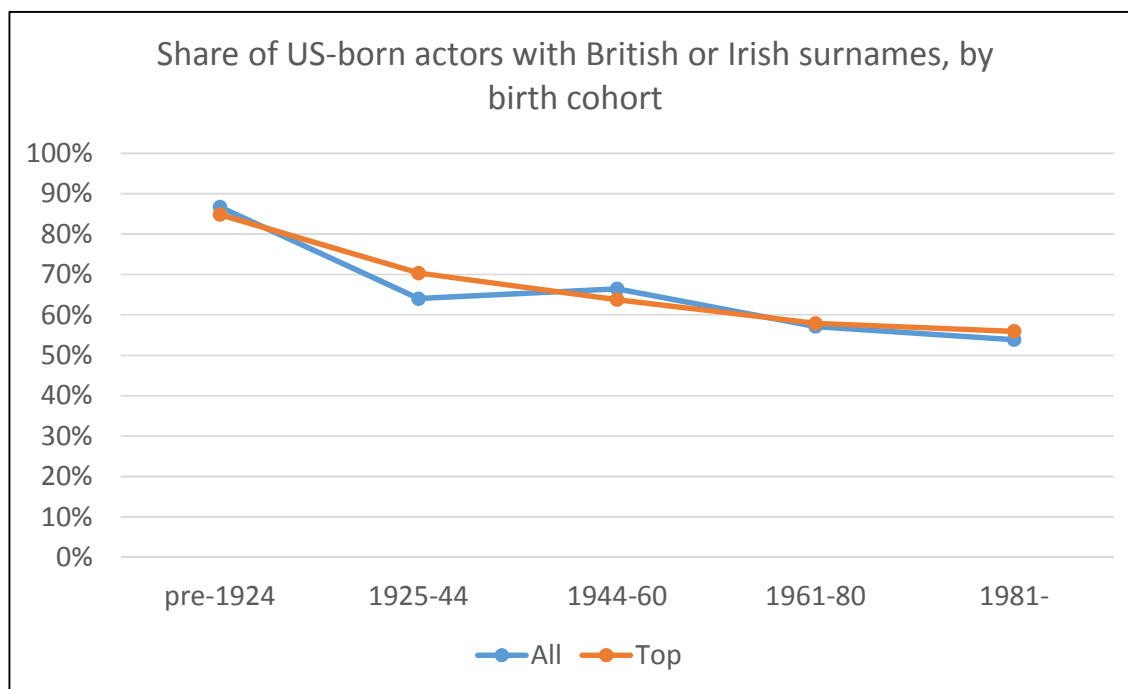
Figure 6.



Source: Ethniclebs.com; Surnames classified by Onomap. N=85 politicians: 11 (pre-1924), 15 (1925-44), 32 (1945-60), 27 (1961-80); and 1,427 actors.

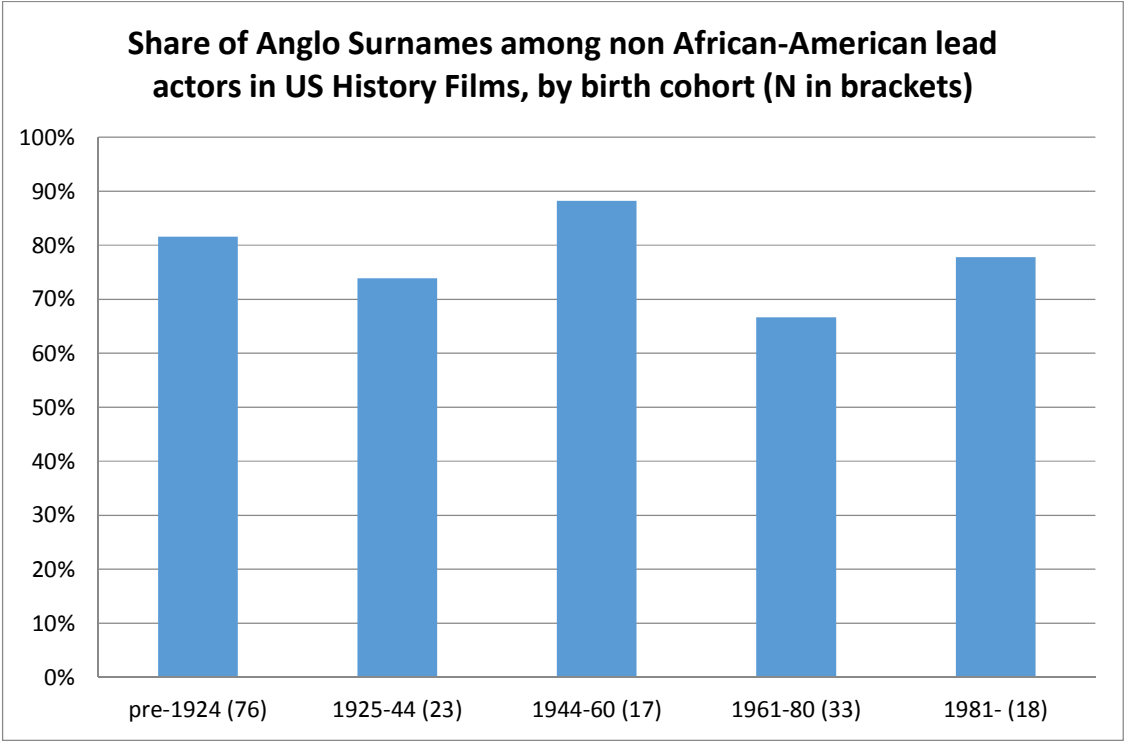


Figure 7.



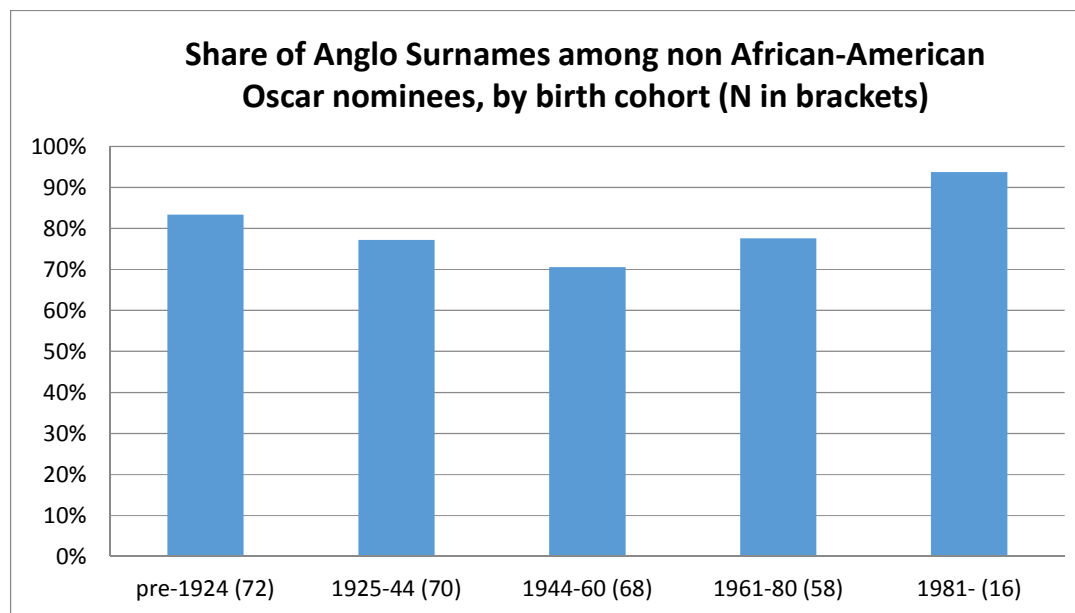
Source: Ethniclebs.com; Wikipedia; Surnames classified by Onomap.

Figure 8.



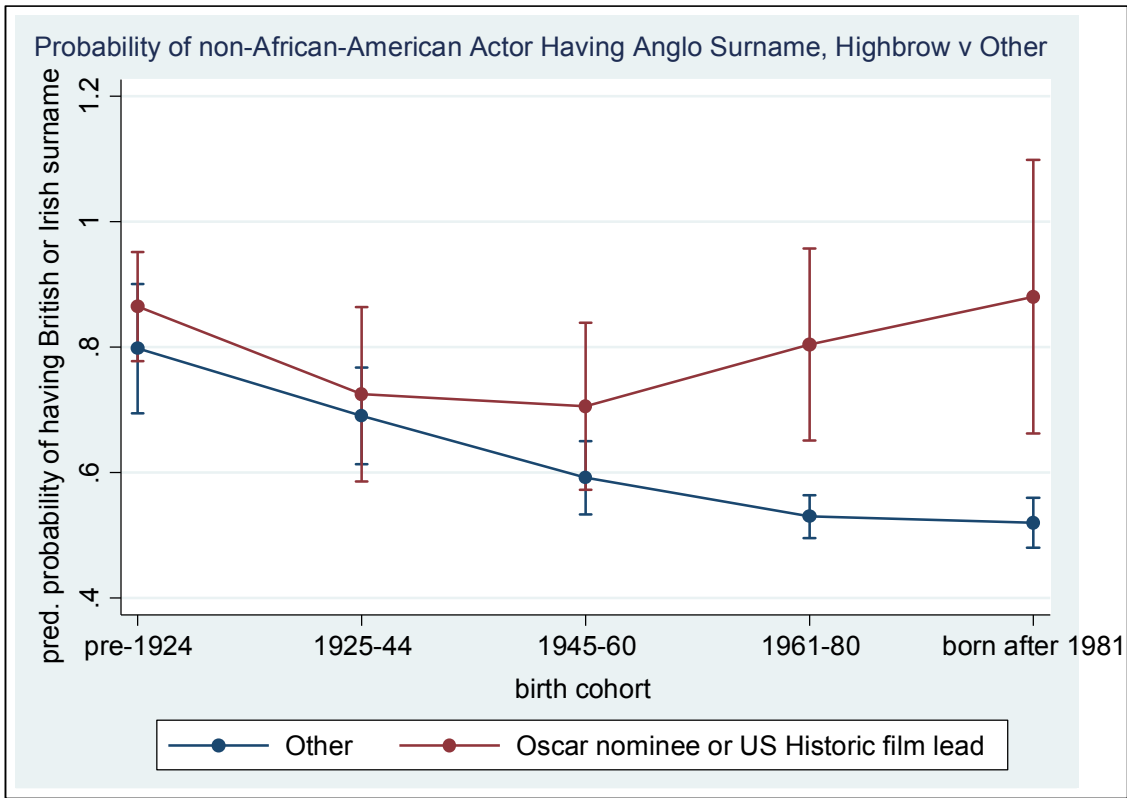
Sources: Ethniclebs.com; Wikipedia; Surnames classified by Onomap.

Figure 9.



Source: Ethniclebs.com; Wikipedia; Surnames classified by Onomap.

Figure 10



Note: for US actors only. Source: Ethnicelebs.com; Wikipedia; Surnames classified by Onomap. Full model specification in Appendix 5.

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
<b>British</b>	575	25.2%	15.9%	+58.6%
<b>Northern or Western European</b>	368	16.1%	25.4%	-36.5%
<b>Jewish</b>	354	15.5%	1.4%	+1008.6%
<b>Southern or Eastern European</b>	341	15.0%	12.7%	+17.7%
<b>African-American</b>	224	9.8%	12.2%	-19.5%
<b>Irish</b>	200	8.8%	8.3%	+5.7%
<b>Hispanic</b>	126	5.5%	16.3%	-66.1%
<b>Asian</b>	58	2.5%	4.7%	-46.0%
<b>Other</b>	28	1.2%	2.1%	-41.4%
<b>Native American</b>	7	0.3%	0.9%	-65.6%
Total	2281	100.0%	100.0%	-

Source: Ethniclebs.com; Fischer 1989: 871-2.

Table 2. Model Predicting Actors as compared to Athletes (US-born only)

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

‡p&lt;.1; \*p&lt;.05; \*\*p&lt;.01; \*\*\*p&lt;.001

Table 3. Actors born after 1980 who Anglicized Surnames

CURRENT NAME	BIRTH NAME	ANCESTRY	REASON FOR CHANGE
<b>AMBER ROSE</b>	Amber Levonchuck	part-Croatian	Stage name
<b>BRIE LARSON</b>	Brie Desaulniers	part-Metis	Chose "Larson" from Swedish great-grandmother's maiden name, as surname was "too difficult to pronounce"
<b>BROOKE HOGAN</b>	Brooke Bollea	part-Italian	Marriage to Hulk Hogan
<b>CARLOS PRATTS</b>	Carlos Chalabi	part-Iraqi	Stepfather's surname
<b>CHLOE BENNET</b>	Chloe Wang	part-Chinese	"Changed her name to 'Chloe Bennet', after having trouble booking gigs with her last name"
<b>CHLOE BRIDGES</b>	Chlose Suazo	part-Honduran	Part English. Chose surname of maternal grandparent.
<b>DANIELLA MONET</b>	Daniella Monet Zuvic	part-Croatian	Dropped birth last name
<b>DAVEIGH CHASE</b>	Daveigh Schwallier	part-German	Chose mother's surname
<b>DOVE CAMERON</b>	Chloe Hosterman	part-Austrian	Stage name. Has some Scottish background
<b>ELLE KING</b>	Tanner Elle Schneider	part-Jewish	Took mother 's surname
<b>EVAN ROSS</b>	Evan Naess	part-Norwegian	Took African-American mother Diana Ross' surname
<b>HALSTON SAGE</b>	Halston Schrage	Jewish	Stage name
<b>JAKE T. AUSTIN</b>	Jake Szymanski	part-Polish	Stage name
<b>KATE MCKINNON</b>	Kathryn McKinnon Berthold	German-Scottish	Chose mother's surname
<b>MARTIN STARR</b>	Martin James Pflieger Schienle	German	Stage name
<b>SASHA GREY</b>	Marina Ann Hantzis	part-Greek	Stage name
<b>SEAN FLYNN</b>	Sean Rio Amir	part-Jewish	Maternal grandfather Errol Flynn
<b>SHANE DAWSON</b>	Shane Lee Yaw	Dutch-English-Swedish-Welsh	Stage name
<b>SKYLAR ASTIN</b>	Skylar Astin Lipstein	Jewish	Stage name

Source: Ethnicelebs.com; Surnames classified by Onomap.

Table 4. Actors born after 1980 who de-Anglicized Surnames

CURRENT NAME	BIRTH NAME	ANCESTRY	REASON FOR CHANGE
<b>CHILDISH GAMBINO</b>	Donald Glover	African-American	Stage name
<b>ISRAEL BROUSSARD</b>	Israel Adams	Part-English	Cajun stepfather
<b>DRAYA MICHELE</b>	Andraya Michele Howard	African-American/Italian	Stage name
<b>HAYLEY KİYOKO</b>	Hayley Kiyoko Alcroft	Japanese-Scottish	Stage name
<b>SASHEER ZAMATA</b>	Sasheer Zamata Moore	African-American	Stage name
<b>CAMILLA BELLE</b>	Camilla Belle Routh	English-Brazilian	Stage name

Source: Ethniclebs.com; Surnames classified by Onomap.