

HISTORICAL COMPARABILITY OF ETHNIC DESIGNATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

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INTRODUCTION

Historical comparability of ancestry¹ data within and between United States censuses has been complicated by problems not inherent in other types of data. Variables such as occupation and marital status have their own definitional problems but respondents are guided by societal standards and by previous census and survey experience. Individual perceptions of what these variables mean and the proper way to respond have not changed considerably over time. Collection of ancestry data is more difficult because of the lack of clear-cut definitions, changing terminologies, poor reliability, and lack of knowledge of the degree of affiliation with a group or groups. Although indirect measures such as own birthplace, parental birthplace, and mother tongue help estimate ethnicity because they are less susceptible to changes in reporting between censuses, a direct question on ancestry might give more useful information if criteria for inclusion in particular groups could be established with reliability. Ancestry would refer to the group, lineage, descent, or country in which a person or person's parents or ancestors was born, regardless of the number of generations removed from their country of origin; the ancestry would reflect identification, but not the degree of attachment or association the persons had with the particular ethnic group(s).

Until 1980, U.S. censuses asked three types of questions to describe the cultural or geographic origins of the population. First, data about race have been obtained in all decennial censuses. Second, a question about birthplace has been included in the decennial censuses since 1850, allowing determination of immigrants' countries of origin. Eleven decennial censuses, beginning in 1870 and ending a century later, asked respondents about not only their own birthplace, but also about parental birthplaces. Third, censuses have included a question about mother tongue, the ability to speak English, or the use of languages other than English; questions of this type were first asked in 1890 but tabulations concerning foreign mother tongue date from 1910.

Historical comparability of racial and national origin groups from these data can be used to give an indirect measure of the changes in ancestry of the population. Because the number of second-generation immigrants declined in recent decades, the questions about place of birth of parents and mother tongue were dropped from the 1980 census; therefore, the foreign-stock population cannot be determined. Another more direct measure of ancestry was now needed.

A question on self-identified ancestry was included in the 1980 census; respondents reported ancestry directly. Since the questions on parental birthplace and mother tongue had been eliminated, however, historical comparability was made more difficult. To determine how the results from questions used in the previous censuses compare with those used in the 1980 census, both direct and indirect responses to ancestry were

needed from the same set of respondents. Fortunately, this has been done. The initial Bureau of the Census report on self-identified ancestry was obtained from data collected in November 1979 in a special supplement to the monthly Current Population Survey (CPS)².

The ancestry supplement was designed to provide users with a basic set of data on ethnicity, which would serve as a bridge between the 1970 and 1980 censuses. Items in the survey included ancestry, country of birth of the individual and parents, citizenship, year of immigration, mother tongue, current language spoken in the home, and ability to speak English. Questions on ability to read and write any language, which were not included in either census, were also asked in this November 1979 CPS supplement.

This paper explores the issue of historical comparability by describing the ancestry information obtained in that survey, and how it can be used to look at generational changes within a census and changes between censuses. Since the ancestry question is an innovation and may be the most appropriate question to identify a large segment of the population, it will be considered in detail. Responses to the ancestry question will be compared to responses to similar questions in previous decennial censuses. In latter sections of this paper, data from the November 1979 CPS will be analyzed with a view toward determining historical comparability between censuses using the ancestry question.

CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION

Trends in Nativity. Until the 1980 census, questions about race, language, and birthplace were asked to describe the geographic origins or ethnicity of the population. A very brief review of long-term trends in population composition is useful to determine whether responses to the ancestry question agree with data gathered in previous censuses. The 1870 census was the first census to distinguish first- from second-generation immigrants. Procedures for data collection and tabulation changed over the years; for example, most compilations of the native population born of either foreign (both parents foreign born) or mixed (one parent foreign born) parentage between 1870 and 1950 pertain to the White population only. This does not seriously affect trends since there were relatively few Black or Asian immigrants during this period. Censuses have also differed in their procedures for including or tabulating the non-White population which is not Black.

When the question about place of birth was first asked in 1850, about 10 percent of the population were born abroad. There was a high volume of immigration to the U.S. following the Civil War, causing the proportion foreign born to increase. Between 1890 and World War I, the proportion of foreign born exceeded 15 percent; this was the peak in the proportion foreign born in the population. The drop in immigration brought about by restrictive migration laws

reduced the proportion of foreign born to less than 5 percent by 1970.

Fertility rates of the native population turned down in the late 1950s and, in the next decade, new laws permitted a greater volume of migration. As a result, the foreign-born population grew at a faster rate than the native-born population during the 1970s, the first time this occurred since the years preceding World War I. The proportion foreign born increased to about 6 percent in the November 1979 CPS.

The proportion of the population who are second-generation immigrants, that is, natives born of foreign or mixed parentage, lags several decades behind the proportion foreign born. The proportion who were second-generation immigrants increased in the late nineteenth century reaching a peak of about 21 percent in 1920. Since that time, the proportion has fallen continuously. The 1979 survey found that about 11 percent of the population were born in the United States but had one or both parents born abroad. If the foreign-born population continues to grow more rapidly than the native, the long-term decline in second-generation migrants may be reversed (depending upon the fertility rates of the native and foreign-born populations).

Estimates of the native population of native parentage (third and subsequent generations) are available since 1870 when just under three-fourths of those enumerated were in this category. As a result of the high volume of immigration, the proportion native of native parents declined for four decades, falling to less than two-thirds of the population. For half a century thereafter (1920 to 1970), this proportion increased because of declining immigration, reaching 84 percent in 1970.

Concepts of race and ancestry differ but some of their categories overlap. The racial composition has changed substantially. At the time of the American Revolution, Blacks made up about one-fifth of the population of the colonies. Most of the subsequent foreign immigrants were White, consequently reducing the proportion Black. By 1940, the proportional representation of Blacks was only half what it was at the time of the War of Independence. Since then, rates of natural increase have been higher for Blacks than for Whites and the proportion Black has grown to 12 percent.

Because of changes in census procedures, it is extremely difficult to confidently describe trends in the growth of the Asian population or the American Indian population. Apparently the representation of these "other races" held just about constant at about 3 to 5 per thousand for most of the era between the Civil War and World War II. Since that time, the statistics suggest that the American Indian and Asian populations have grown more rapidly than either the White or Black populations. In 1979, there were about 20 persons of "other races" per thousand.

Trends in the Origin of the Foreign-Born Population. Responses to the ancestry question can be compared to statistics from the national origin questions which were asked in previous censuses. The decennial censuses and immigration statistics show change in the countries of origin of United States immigrants.

The migration streams are indicated in the data about the foreign-born population shown in Table 1. For selected dates throughout the last century, we have recorded the total foreign-born population and the 10 most commonly reported places of birth. For all dates, Germany, Canada, and the United Kingdom have been frequently reported. Other nations appeared or disappeared from the list as the international flows changed. The Scandinavian countries, France, and Switzerland fell from the top ranks and were replaced by Italy, Russia, and Eastern European nations. The changes of recent years are evident in the data for the interval from 1960 to 1979. Ireland, Austria, and Hungary disappeared and were replaced by Cuba, the Philippines, and China. Mexico, which has been a source of migrants throughout this nation's history, has become more frequently reported as a birthplace for the foreign born. By 1979, the number born in Mexico was more than twice the number born in Germany (the second largest contributor of foreign born).

Table 1.--Foreign-Born Population in the United States and Largest Foreign-Born Groups: 1880 to 1979

(Numbers in thousands)

1880			1910 ^a		
Country	Number	Percent	Country	Number	Percent
Total population	50155	100.0	Total population	91972	100.0
Total Foreign Born	6680	13.3	Total Foreign Born	13346	14.5
1. Germany	1967	3.9	1. Germany ^b	2501	2.7
2. Ireland	1855	3.7	2. Russia ^c	1603	1.7
3. England ^d	917	1.8	3. Ireland	1352	1.5
4. Canada ^b	716	1.4	4. Italy	1343	1.5
5. Sweden	194	.4	5. United Kingdom	1219	1.3
6. Norway	182	.4	6. Canada	1201	1.3
7. France	107	.2	7. Austria ^d	1175	1.3
8. China	105	.2	8. Sweden	665	.7
9. Switzerland	89	.2	9. Hungary	496	.5
10. Bohemia	85	.2	10. Norway	404	.4

1940 ^e			1960		
Country	Number	Percent	Country	Number	Percent
Total population	132165	100.0	Total population	179326	100.0
Total Foreign Born	11594	8.8	Total Foreign Born	9738	5.4
1. Italy	1624	1.2	1. Italy	1257	.7
2. Germany	1238	.9	2. Germany	990	.6
3. Canada	1065	.8	3. Canada	953	.5
4. United Kingdom	1042	.8	4. United Kingdom	832	.5
5. Russia	1041	.8	5. Poland	748	.4
6. Poland	993	.8	6. Russia	691	.4
7. Ireland	572	.4	7. Mexico	576	.3
8. Austria	480	.4	8. Ireland	339	.2
9. Sweden	445	.3	9. Austria	305	.2
10. Mexico	377	.3	10. Hungary	245	.1

1970			1979		
Country	Number	Percent	Country	Number	Percent
Total population	203194	100.0	Total population	216613	100.0
Total Foreign Born	9619	4.7	Total Foreign Born	11730	5.4
1. Italy	1009	.5	1. Mexico	2092	1.0
2. Germany	833	.4	2. Germany	954	.4
3. Canada	812	.4	3. Italy	836	.4
4. Mexico	760	.4	4. Canada	828	.4
5. United Kingdom	686	.3	5. United Kingdom	673	.3
6. Poland	548	.3	6. Cuba	599	.3
7. Russia	463	.2	7. Philippines	474	.2
8. Cuba	439	.2	8. Poland	401	.2
9. Ireland	251	.1	9. Russia	326	.2
10. Austria	214	.1	10. China	309	.1

^a Includes Scotland and Wales. ^b Includes Newfoundland. ^c Data for specific groups in 1910 and 1940 refer to the White population only. ^d Poland was not accepted as a country of origin in 1910. Persons reporting Poland were assigned to Germany, Russia or Austria.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census reports for 1880, 1910, 1940, 1960, 1970; Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 116.

Trends in Mother Tongue and Current Language. Responses to the ancestry question may reflect not only national origin, but also a person's mother tongue or current language. The 1890 census was the first to include a language question, but it only sought to determine how many

people were unable to speak English. In 1900, if a person could not speak English the language spoken was recorded but the data were not tabulated. Censuses in 1910 and 1940 asked about the mother tongue of the foreign-stock population; that is, people who were born abroad and those native persons of foreign or mixed parentage; tabulations were published for only the White population. The 1930 and 1960 censuses, asked the mother tongue question only of foreign-born persons, but the 1970 census and the November 1979 CPS asked all respondents if a language other than English was spoken at home when the person was a child.

Table 2 presents information about mother tongue. The changes over time in the list of the 10 most common non-English languages are surprisingly small. At all dates, German, Italian, Polish, Yiddish, and French have been the leading mother tongues. Several Eastern European languages--Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, and Slovak--disappeared from the list, but Swedish and Norwegian are still commonly reported mother tongues even though large scale immigration from those nations ceased in the 1920s. The changes in the recent period are indicated by the rise of Spanish and the appearance of Chinese as the eighth most common mother tongue in 1979.

Table 2.--Persons With Mother Tongues Other Than English: 1910 to 1979

(Numbers in thousands)					
1910 ^{a/}		1940 ^{b/}		1960 ^{b/}	
Mother tongue	Number	Mother tongue	Number	Mother tongue	Number
1. German	8817	German	4950	German	1279
2. Italian	2151	Italian	3767	Italian	1226
3. Polish	1708	Polish	2416	Spanish	767
4. Yiddish	1677	Spanish	1816	Polish	582
5. Swedish	1446	Yiddish	1751	Yiddish	504
6. French	1357	French	1412	French	330
7. Norwegian	1010	Swedish	831	Russian	277
8. Bohemian	539	Norwegian	658	Hungarian	213
9. Spanish	448	Russian	585	Swedish	212
10. Danish	446	Czech	520	Greek	173

1970		1979	
Mother tongue	Number	Mother tongue	Number
1. Spanish	7824	Spanish	9422
2. German	6093	German	5206
3. Italian	4144	Italian	4201
4. French	2598	French	2498
5. Polish	2438	Polish	2472
6. Yiddish	1594	Yiddish	1200
7. Swedish	626	Norwegian	595
8. Norwegian	613	Chinese	579
9. Slovak	510	Swedish	550
10. Greek	459	Greek	536

^a Data refer to the mother tongue of the foreign-stock White population only.
^b Data refer to the foreign-born population only.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census reports for 1910, 1940, 1960, 1970; Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 116.

The 23 languages reported as a mother tongue by more than 250,000 persons in either the 1970 census or 1979 CPS are listed in Table 3. The languages currently spoken at home by more than

100,000 persons in 1979 (in addition to the languages listed in Table 3) are listed in Table 4.

Table 3.--Languages Which Were Mother Tongues Other Than English Reported by More Than 250,000 Persons in 1970 or 1979

Language	Mother tongue		Percent change
	1970	1979 ^{a/}	
Total, mother tongue not English	33175 ^{b/}	34124	3%
Arabic	193	270	40
Chinese	345	579	68
Czechoslovakian	453	511	13
Dutch	351	316	-10
French	2598	2498	4
German	6093	5206	-15
Greek	459	536	17
Hungarian	447	421	-6
Italian	4144	4201	1
Japanese	409	470	15
Korean	54	217	302
Lithuanian	293	215	-27
Norwegian	613	595	-3
Philippine languages	218 ^{b/}	487	123
Polish	2438	2472	1
Portuguese	365	448	23
Russian	335	249	-26
Serbo-Croatian	239	306	28
Slovak	510	359	-30
Spanish	7824	9422	20
Swedish	626	550	-12
Vietnamese	NA	162	NA
Yiddish	1594	1200	-25

^a Data refer to persons aged 5 and over.
^b Tagalog only. ^c Excludes not reported.
 NA Not available.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1970, PC(2)-1A, National Origin and Language, Table 19. Ancestry and Language in the United States: November 1979 and unpublished data.

Changes between 1970 and 1979 in the representation of mother tongues reflect the aging of the population and recent immigration patterns. Some languages, including Lithuanian, Swedish, Russian, and Yiddish, were the mother tongues of a rather elderly population in 1970 causing their representation to decline by 1979. Other mother tongues, among them French, Italian, and Polish, held constant since immigrants speaking these languages replaced those who died. Finally, the number reporting languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Tagalog, or Illocano, rose rapidly because of recent immigration.

Data in Table 4 illustrate the dominant position of Spanish. Just about one-half of the people who currently use a language in their homes other than English speak Spanish; Spanish speakers comprise about 4 percent of the total population. Two other languages--German and Italian--each have more than one million current speakers while there are just about one million who speak French.

The number who spoke a particular language in 1979 can be compared to the number who reported it as mother tongue. These are not necessarily the same people but in almost every case those who currently speak a language other than English also reported it as their mother tongue. The languages of immigrants who came to the United

Table 4.--Languages Which Were Currently Spoken at Home by More Than 100,000 Persons in 1979

(Numbers in thousands)

Language	Current language	
	1979*	As percent of mother tongue
Total, current language not English	17985	53%
Arabic	177	66
Chinese	514	89
Czechoslovakian	116	23
Dutch	97	31
French	987	40
German	1261	24
Greek	365	68
Hungarian	106	25
Italian	1354	32
Japanese	265	56
Korean	191	88
Lithuanian	62	29
Norwegian	77	13
Philippine languages	419	86
Polish	731	30
Portuguese	245	55
Russian	65	26
Serbo-Croatian	119	39
Slovak	82	23
Spanish	8768	93
Swedish	64	12
Vietnamese	157	97
Yiddish	234	20

* Data refer to persons aged 5 and over.

Source: Ancestry and Language in the United States: November 1979 and unpublished data.

States long ago are often reported as mother tongues but seldom as current languages. For instance, those who claim they currently use a Scandinavian language are only about one-eighth as numerous as those who report a Scandinavian mother tongue. The number who currently speak Yiddish is only one-fifth as great as the number who report Yiddish as mother tongue.

For those groups arriving recently, the ratio of current users of a language to those with that language as mother tongue is very much greater. The number who use Chinese or one of the Philippine languages is more than 80 percent as great as the number who reported these mother tongues. For Spanish, the proportion is greater than 90 percent.

ANCESTRY FROM THE NOVEMBER 1979 CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY

The 1980 census is similar to all previous censuses in providing information about the racial composition of the population. It is also similar to all censuses since 1850 in that it enumerated the population born outside the United States. The 1980 census differs from all other censuses since 1870 because it will not provide information about the sons and daughters of the foreign born, but will provide ancestry information.

The ancestry question in the November 1979 CPS supplement was based on self-identification and was open-ended. The question was worded "What is ...'s ancestry?", and had no prelisted categories. Some individuals in the survey reported a single ancestry group; others reported more than one group. All single- and double-ancestry

responses were coded. In addition, 17 triple-origin ancestries expected to be frequently reported were coded, while only the first two reported ancestries were coded for all other responses of three or more ancestries. Since persons who reported multiple ancestries were included in more than one group, the sum of persons reporting the ancestry groups was greater than the total; for example, a person reporting "German-English" was tabulated in both the "German and other group(s)" and "English and other group(s)" categories.

Although ancestry was based on self-identification, selection was not completely independent since enumerators were instructed to prod respondents for a specific ancestry if a religion, the category "American," or an unclassifiable response was given. Self-enumeration was used in the 1980 census. The census questionnaire provided a number of examples, including Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Korean, and Afro-American, to aid respondents.

If a person gave an initial response of "American," "United States," or a religious response to the ancestry question in the 1979 CPS, interviewers were instructed to explain that ancestry refers to the specific foreign nationality of the person or his or her ancestors. However, if the respondent still reported "American" or a religion then that response was accepted. About 14 million persons provided a response of "American" or "United States," while fewer than 1 percent specified a religion. In both the 1980 census and the 1979 CPS, persons who called themselves "hyphenated" Americans such as "Swedish-Americans" were tabulated according to the ancestry which was not American. Also, those who specified both an ancestry and a religion were tabulated by the ancestry only.

Table 5 lists the 50 ancestries which were reported as single ancestries by at least 100,000 persons in 1979; the group "Other Spanish" has been excluded. Each of the largest groups--German, Irish, and English--was more than twice as great as the number in each of the 5 other ancestries reported by 10 million or more persons: Scottish, French, Afro-American, American, and Italian.

The ancestry survey reflects the diverse nationality groups which have come to this country throughout its history. Prior to the seventeenth century, most of the residents of this country were American Indians. Persons of German, Irish, and English origins were the first Europeans to arrive in large numbers; the immigration of these groups peaked in the late nineteenth century. From the early seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, many Africans were forcibly moved to the United States. The number of "newer immigrants," including the Italian and Polish, reached an apex in the early part of the twentieth century. The most recent immigrants (during the last two decades) included substantial numbers of both Spanish and Asians.

A large number of people reported Afro-American, American, or American Indian ancestry. These were the fifth, seventh, and ninth most common responses. Since ancestry was reported separately from race, a person indicating a

Table 5.--Ancestry of the U.S. Population: November 1979

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)					
Ancestry	Number reported	Percent of total reported ancestry	Reported single ancestry	Reported multiple ancestry	Proportion single ancestry
German	51,649	26.8	17,160	34,489	33
Irish	43,752	22.7	9,760	33,992	22
English	40,004	20.7	11,501	28,503	29
Scottish	14,205	7.4	1,615	12,590	11
French	14,047	7.3	3,047	11,000	22
Afro-American	13,267	6.9	12,424	844	94
American	13,183	6.8	13,183	-	100
Italian	11,751	6.1	6,110	5,641	52
American Indian	9,900	5.1	2,053	7,847	21
Polish	8,421	4.4	3,498	4,923	42
Dutch	8,121	4.2	1,362	6,759	17
Mexican	6,682	3.5	5,889	793	88
Swedish	4,886	2.5	1,216	3,670	25
Norwegian	4,120	2.1	1,232	2,888	30
Russian	3,466	1.8	1,496	1,970	43
African	2,926	1.5	2,633	292	90
Welsh	2,568	1.3	455	2,113	18
Czechoslovakian	1,695	0.9	794	901	47
Danish	1,672	0.9	438	1,234	26
Hungarian	1,592	0.8	534	1,058	34
Puerto Rican	1,333	0.7	1,107	226	83
Swiss	1,228	0.6	312	916	25
Austrian	1,070	0.6	385	685	36
French-Canadian	1,053	0.5	582	471	55
Greek	990	0.5	567	423	57
Portuguese	946	0.5	493	453	52
Lithuanian	832	0.4	317	515	38
Filipino	764	0.4	525	239	69
Slavic	722	0.4	300	422	42
Chinese	705	0.4	540	165	77
Japanese	680	0.4	529	151	78
Cuban	675	0.3	558	117	83
Finnish	616	0.3	255	361	41
Canadian	609	0.3	228	381	37
Ukrainian	525	0.3	231	294	44
Yugoslavian	468	0.3	283	184	61
Belgian	448	0.3	113	335	25
United States	408	0.2	408	-	100
Scandinavian	340	0.2	110	230	32
Rumanian	335	0.2	132	203	39
Lebanese	322	0.2	179	143	56
Korean	265	0.2	230	35	87
Vietnamese	198	0.1	177	21	89
West Indian	193	0.1	129	64	67
Jamaican	184	0.1	158	26	86
Asian Indian	182	0.1	156	26	86
Anglo-Saxon	140	0.1	77	63	55
Dominican	119	0.1	107	12	90
Iranian	118	0.1	103	15	87
Colombian	117	0.1	101	17	86

particular ancestry could be of any race. The race question on the 1980 census enumerated about 26.5 million Blacks while the ancestry question in 1979 counted 16.2 million Afro-Americans and Africans. However, the race question on the 1980 Decennial Census counted 1.4 million American Indians while 9.9 million reported this ancestry in 1979, suggesting that many people apparently identify as American Indian by ancestry but not by race. Counts from the 1980 census agreed with counts from the ancestry survey for the Asian racial groups. The 1980 census enumerated 806,000 Chinese, 775,000 Filipinos, 701,000 Japanese, and 335,000 Koreans. The 1979 CPS reported 705,000 Chinese, 764,000 Filipinos, 680,000 Japanese, and 265,000 Koreans.

ASSESSING THE SIZE OF VARIOUS GROUPS

The place of birth and language questions asked in previous censuses sought to provide information about the size of various ethnic

groups. The ancestry question will provide a very different perspective since it will indicate how many people selected a given ancestry. In this sense, it may provide more complete information about the size of a group. It will not, however, unambiguously define the size of any group. Table 6 presents data from the November 1979 survey about the 10 most frequently reported ancestries excluding Afro-American, American, and American Indian.

Table 6.--Alternative Definitions of Ancestry: November 1979

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)							
Ancestry	Total reported	Reported single	Place of birth			Language	
			Individual	Father	Mother	Mother-tongue	Current language
German	51,649	17,160	954	2,469	2,281	5,419 ^b	1,298 ^b
Irish	43,752	9,760	183 ^c	1,150 ^c	1,223 ^c	101 ^d	9 ^d
English	40,004	11,501	623 ^e	1,397 ^e	1,344 ^e	159,743	190,428 ^f
Scottish	14,205	1,615	48	169	155	159,743	190,428
French	14,047	3,047	119	208	241	2,498	987
Italian	11,751	6,110	836	3,711	3,170	4,201	1,354
Polish	8,421	3,498	401	2,012	1,868	2,472	731
Dutch	8,121	1,362	82	289	247	385	109
Mexican	6,682	5,889	2,092	3,688	3,608	9,422	8,768 ^g
Swedish	4,886	1,216	80	579	457	550	64

^a Data refer to the population aged 5 years and over. ^b Language data include approximately 212,000 who reported Pennsylvania Dutch as mother tongue and 37,000 who reported this as current language. ^c Includes Ireland and Northern Ireland. ^d Language data refer to Gaelic. ^e Includes England and Wales. ^f Includes approximately 14 million people who reported a current language other than English but who also reported speaking English well or very well. ^g Spanish language.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ancestry and Language in the United States: November 1979, Series Y-23, Number 116.

First, there is the question of whether to focus upon reported single ancestry or multiple ancestry. For the largest groups, the number giving an ancestry as one of several ancestries was three to four times as great as the number who reported that ancestry individually. For example, there were fewer than 2 million persons claiming single Scottish ancestry, but more than 14 million persons reported Scottish in combination with other ancestries. Mexican was the ninth largest group on the basis of multiple reports, but fifth largest on the basis of single reports.

Second, one of the traditional indicators of ancestry has been the count of the foreign born or the foreign-stock population. If this approach were used, the Mexican group would have been the largest and Italians would have been more numerous than Germans. Some groups, such as Dutch and French, which were large when estimated by the ancestry question, were quite small when estimated by the foreign stock concept.

Third, Table 6 shows that language does not always relate directly to ancestry. The number who reported Gaelic as mother tongue or current language was a small fraction of those who claimed Irish ancestry. Of course, many who were born of Irish foreign stock have had generations of ancestors whose mother tongue was English. Numerous people who have English as both mother tongue and current language were not born in the United Kingdom and did not claim English ancestry. On the other hand, 73 percent of those claiming Mexican ancestry reported Spanish as mother tongue, and 67 percent currently spoke Spanish in their homes. Many other Spanish speakers claimed other ancestries, such as Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Dominican.