A Comparison Of Irish Surnames In The United States With Those Of Eire

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This paper compares contemporary frequency distributions of Irish Surnames in Eire (2001) and the United States (US) (1997), about one hundred years after bulk of Irish emigration to the US, in order to measure changes, if any, in form and frequency of these surnames.

The Eire Data (ED) source is taken from the Eire 2002 Electoral Roll, where the graph of population against surnames is shown to be typical. The US Data (USD) source is Hanks' Dictionary of American Family Names (DAFN). Results of a first comparison of these two sources prompted removal from the USD of all Irish surnames that also have UK roots, including 33 of the 100 most frequent surnames in the Eire data. A second comparison shows that many US surnames of Irish origin are not present in Eire: these are variants of common Irish surnames, and were then merged with the etymological Irish form. The remaining 67 of the most frequent 100 surnames from ED were then compared with USD. All except one are of roughly comparable frequency order albeit with some changes to their spelling form. It is concluded that the US Irish surnames clearly reflect their heritage although some are have never been found in Eire.

This study was conducted to see if the current surnames of Eire and of USA are related by frequency and to demonstrate the changes in spelling that occurred, principally in USA.

What is an Irish surname? An Irish surname can be defined for the purpose here as a surname that originated in Eire but which may have undergone a change in format, including spelling, in the US. In this study I have used Hanks and MacLysaght as my principal guides as to what is an Irish surname.

The 2002 Eire Census shows that over a quarter of a million nationals from all continents reside in Eire; it is becoming, if not already, a pluralistic society: see Table 1. We could expect that many of, but not all, the Irish nationals to have Irish surnames, and conversely, that there may be other

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nationals resident in Eire, say from the European Union or USA, with Irish surnames. Parenthetically, the breakdown of the nationality of the residents is extremely useful for names scholars as it allows expectations to be set when considering the list of surnames.

Table 1. Eire: Population by Nationality

NATIONALITY	POPULATION	PRINCIPALLY
Irish	3,584,975	NA
European Union	133,436	UK
Rest of Europe	23,105	Romania
Africa	20,981	Nigeria
Asia	21,779	China
America	15,383	USA
Australasia	3,706	Australia
Not Stated	48,412	NA
None	847	NA

The Eire Data (ED)

The Eire source is the Electoral Roll for Eire as collected by the authorities in Eire in 2001, and consolidated by Experian UK. The surnames from the Electoral Roll were made available to me in 2004, by Experian, through the good offices of Professor Richard Webber, of University College London (UCL), whom I wish to thank for his continuing support. The ED represents almost three million people with 55,298 different surname types, where each type represents a different spelling.

The 2002 Census in Eire as recorded by the Eire Central Statistics Office (www.cso.ie) gives the population of Eire as 3,917,203 of which 1,946,164 were males and 1,971,039 were females. This ratio of males to females of 1 male to 1.01 females is low compared with the US. What is more unusual is that females only outnumber males in two of the eight age groups: 25-44 and 65 and over.

Using the Census data we can estimate the likely size of the Electoral Roll and compare the estimate with the size of the Electoral Roll data from Experian. The Electoral Roll would include data on those of 17 years and over, the putative voters. Eire, as a member of the EU enfranchises those of 18 years and older. Since the Electoral Roll is created prior to an election the collection range is 17 years and above.

From the data available this would be a total of about 3 million people. It is not possible to be more accurate since the first two age groups are 0-14 (827,428), and 15-19 (313,188) and straddle the age of 17. However, this estimate compares well with the 2,917,186 records in the Electoral Roll, albeit that such rolls usually have duplicate records. Table 2 lists the top 100 surnames from the ED by frequency, or count.

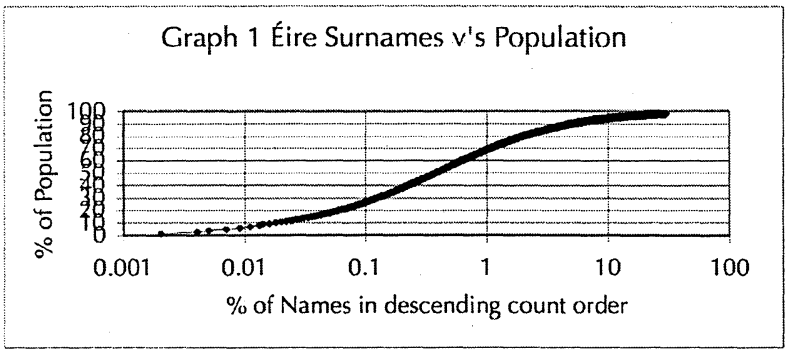
Table 2. The Top 100 Surnames in the Eire Electoral Roll 2001

RANK	SURNAME	COUNT
1	Murphy	49585
2	Kelly	38736
3	Byrne	31405
4	Walsh	31316
5	O'Brien	30917
6	Ryan	30892
7	O'Connor	27514
8	O'Sullivan	24671
9	Doyle	20745
10	McCarthy	18744
11	O'Neill	18056
12	Lynch	16451
13	Dunne	14273
14	Murray	13809
15	Brennan	13714
16	Burke	13371
17	Daly	13169
18	Smith	13112
19	Nolan	12628
20	O'Reilly	12371
21	Kennedy	12179
22	Farrell	11698
23	Fitzgerald	11469
24	Carroll	11364
25	Gallagher	11224
26	Power	11193
27	Flynn	11027

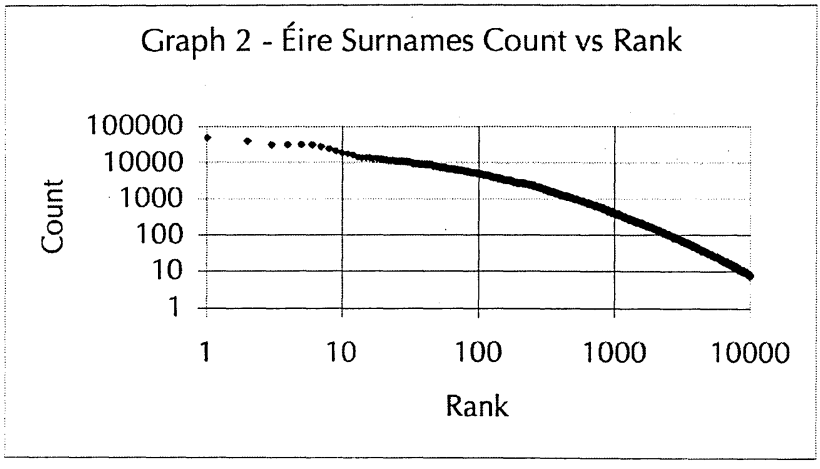
28	O'Connell	10974
29	Collins	10878
30	Quinn	10846
31	Kavanagh	10618
32	Connolly	10321
33	Healy	9618
34	Doherty	9490
35	Reilly	9474
36	McGrath	9346
37	Whelan	9204
38	Clarke	9198
39	Duffy	9112
40	O'Shea	9064
41	O'Donnell	9057
42	Brady	9046
43	O'Leary	9043
44	Keane	9032
45	Kenny	9007
46	Moran	8523
47	Moore	8507
48	Fitzpatrick	8357
49	Barry	8335
50	Hayes	8134
51	Foley	8000
52	Maher	7887
53	Casey	7867
54	Martin	7748
55	Roche	7680
56	McMahon	7676
57	Buckley	7516
58	O'Keeffe	7321
59	Ward	7090
60	McDonnell	6926
61	O'Mahony	6887
62	Hogan	6877
63	Browne	6855
64	Hughes	6809
65	Griffin	6800
66	O'Callaghan	6728
67	McCormack	6657
68	Cullen	6596
69	White	6574
70	Sweeney	6541
71	O'Donovan	6487
72	Delaney	6391
73	Butler	6346
74	Maguire	6319
75	Hickey	6296
76	McLoughlin	6295
77	Egan	6230
78	Sheehan	6226
79	Cronin	6163

80	McNamara	6128
81	O'Donoghue	6055
82	Cunningham	5956
83	Lyons	5915
84	McDonagh	5821
85	Keogh	5821
86	Higgins	5694
87	Sullivan	5646
88	McKenna	5520
89	Barrett	5504
90	Curran	5480
91	Smyth	5474
92	Cahill	5450
93	O'Rourke	5438
94	Moloney	5355
95	Crowley	5352
96	Flanagan	5286
97	Mooney	5278
98	Sheridan	5271
99	Molloy	5211
100	Corcoran	5181

Graph 1 shows the plot of cumulative population against number of surname types for ED. This curve is typical for surname distributions in USA 1997 (Tucker 2001; Hanks 2003), Canada 1997 (Tucker 2002), UK 1881 (Tucker 2005), and UK 1997 (Tucker 2004); it differs only in degree. For example consider the 1% of the surname types level. At this level the UK 1881 graph reaches almost 75% population level, and the1997 graph reaches 80%; the US 1997 graph reaches almost 73%, whereas the ED graph reaches this level at 69% showing a society where the most popular surnames are not as dominant as in the UK, or even as in the US. However, in Canada the level is only a little over 63% of the population for 1% of the surname types.



Graph 2 shows the count for individual surnames plotted against rank. This curve is, and should be, monotonically descending since that is the way the data are ordered, but that with logarithmic scales for both *count* and *rank*, as it has, the curve for a purely power law relationship would be a straight line of the form K*x**p where K is the count of the Number One ranked surname, and p is negative. This expression should be read as: y equals K multiplied by x raised to the power p.



Clearly the plot is not a straight line. It is not a simple power-law relationship, although approximate power law relationships hold for various rank sectors as shown in the table below. It is more complicated than a simple power law as

others have demonstrated for other applications and it has been the subject of much discussion and approximation has can be seen by any web search of Zipf's Law. Eg http://en.wikipedia.org.

The Coefficients for the three Power Law sectors of ED

Rank	K	p
1-9	49264	-0.33
10-249	84835	-0.63
250-10,000	20782673	-1.59

The graph should be, according to Zipf's Law, a straight line - a pure power law relationship; clearly it is not. The curve drops away continuously to become convex as seen from above. However, identical curves have been shown for the US surnames (Tucker 2001), contemporary UK surnames (Tucker 2004a), UK surnames from the 1881 Census, contemporary Canadian and Australian surnames, (DKT Paper at ANS Jan 05). Zipf's Law may be a useful approximation but the ED is typical of surname data.

Interestingly, many of the low count surnames are not real surnames but typographical errors of surnames that appear earlier in rank. For example *Smiyh*, with a count of 1, and rank of 33,009, is an adjacent letter substitution typographical error for *Smith* which has count of 13,112 and rank of 18. If the typographical error had not been made, *Smith* would have had a count 13,113 and the same rank, in this case. However, there would have been no entry for *Smiyh*. The impact of removing the typographical error would be to:

1. Reduce the apparent number of types, and thus the length of the x axis.
2. Increase the count of non-typographical error types
3. In some cases to increase the rank of some types

All three effects make the true curve more convex than shown. It would be, because of the logarithmic scales, more noticeable at the low counts and high scoring ranks: the real curve would drop off more sharply at the end. Thus typographical errors tend to mask, somewhat, the non-power law relationship between surnames and their counts. This argument applies to all surnames sets gathered in a similar fashion.

I have proven that the UK Electoral Roll, a similar file of 47 million surnames of over 781 thousand types, has a typographical error rate in excess of 2% in types. I estimate that the actual rate is in excess of 5% (Tucker 2004b). Some egregious errors in ED are: *O['connor, O;neill, Kenn\, 0'keeffe, and Hoarty%,* all of which could have been caught by simple hygiene tests.

The US Data (USD)

The US source is the 2003 edition of DAFN, a reference work which, in addition to giving etymologies and occasional family histories, includes frequency counts in the source data for comparative purposes. DAFN has over 70,000 surnames, about 4% of US surname types, and which represents the top 85% of the population.

Since Hanks has included counts in DAFN as well as etymologies it is a source of contemporary data for particular surname sources. For example the extraction of Irish surnames is no different in principal than the extraction of Scandinavian surnames. From DAFN I extracted all 5,060 surnames that have an Irish root. The top 100 putative Irish surnames with their frequencies are listed in Table 3. The count for the USD is almost 18 million. Care should be taken with this number, as the DAFN source is the telephone directories; a rough guide would be about 2.5 people per telephone line, so the population covered by USD would be about 45 million people.

Table 3 The Top 100 Surnames in DAFN with Irish Roots

RANK	SURNAME	COUNT	RANK	SURNAME	COUNT
1	Brown	447208	51	Tucker	56636
2	Anderson	285232	52	Ryan	56499
3	Wilson	269682	53	Shaw	56401
4	Moore	239230	54	Owens	56055
5	Martin	238747	55	Freeman	55281
6	White	217049	56	Crawford	55113
7	Jackson	184136	57	Palmer	54798
8	Lee	180338	58	Hunt	54737
9	Lewis	166842	59	Henry	53692
10	Hall	166370	60	Black	53244
11	Young	160864	61	Woods	52881
12	Wright	148099	62	Mills	52726
13	Scott	137971	63	Kelley	52553
14	Green	131873	64	Warren	52256
15	Mitchell	122922	65	Dunn	51549
16	Carter	116042	66	Hunter	51238
17	Murphy	115601	67	Peters	51189
18	Morris	110158	68	Hart	50153
19	Cook	109743	69	Pierce	49516
20	Collins	107617	70	Carroll	49397
21	Morgan	97713	71	O'Brien	49025
22	Kelly	94726	72	Holmes	48841
23	Cox	94703	73	Hanson	47293
24	Ward	92242	74	Lane	47026
25	Sullivan	86937	75	Burke	47014
26	Myers	84848	76	Cunningham	46903
27	Hughes	84186	77	Armstrong	46612
28	Howard	84046	78	Duncan	46466
29	Long	83277	79	Berry	46082
30	Russell	79186	80	Cohen	46018
31	Fisher	78653	81	Knight	45435
32	Powell	74080	82	Bradley	45011
33	Butler	70457	83	Hawkins	44465
34	Barnes	70136	84	Greene	44408
35	Henderson	69047	85	Riley	44266
36	Hamilton	68294	86	Lynch	44057
37	Patterson	67787	87	Matthews	43160
38	Cole	66813	88	Walsh	43045
39	Murray	66484	89	Carr	41809
40	Wallace	66195	90	Harper	41293
41	Meyer	65510	91	Williamson	40959
42	Hayes	64858	92	Montgomery	39082
43	Kennedy	64834	93	Dean	39048
44	Griffin	64218	94	Keller	38840
45	Coleman	63715	95	Day	38582
46	Alexander	63462	96	May	38472
47	Burns	60369	97	Harvey	38284
48	Ford	59533	98	Holland	36823
49	Fox	58103	99	Little	35412
50	Gordon	57047	100	McCoy	34738

The First Comparison of ED with USD

Simply mapping ED onto USD gave some very peculiar results as shown in Table 4. The most frequent ED surname, *Murphy* is the 17th entry in USD. An Irish origin would not readily spring to mind for the top 16 surnames in USD: *Brown, Anderson, Wilson,* et al. *Brown,* the most frequent name in the USD with an Irish root, is not particularly frequent in Eire at rank 219 in ED. The mismatch arises because *Brown,* in the US, also has other origins. Etymologically, according to DAFN, it has English, Scottish, and Irish roots, but that "it has absorbed numerous surnames from other languages with the same meaning". All the top 16 USD surnames have roots in addition to Irish, sometimes the non-Irish roots are more common. *Murphy* is the most frequent USD surname that has an exclusively Irish origin.

Table 4. The First Comparison of ED with the first 25 of USD

ED RANK	SURNAME	USD RANK
219	Brown	1
365	Anderson	2
223	Wilson	3
47	Moore	4
54	Martin	5
69	White	6
338	Jackson	7
137	Lee	8
551	Lewis	9
361	Hall	10
300	Young	11
400	Wright	12
328	Scott	13
503	Green	14
220	Mitchell	15
450	Carter	16
1	Murphy	17
186	Morris	18
2403	Cook	19
29	Collins	20
217	Morgan	21
2	Kelly	22
301	Cox	23
59	Ward	24
87	Sullivan	25

To make the comparison more meaningful, all surnames with Irish roots but with one or more UK roots: English, Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish, were excluded from the USD. Northern Irish were able to be excluded as DAFN differentiates between Irish and Northern Irish roots. The USD data set was thus reduced to 2,826 surnames of putatively Irish origin, with a count of almost four million. USA.

The Second Comparison of ED with USD

Strictly speaking, the comparison is USD with ED, where the 2,826 records of the USD are mapped onto the ED. There is more overlap than previously; seven of the top ten in the ED appear in the top 10 of the USD, as can be seen in Table 5 which lists the top 25 Irish Surnames by ED rank for which there is an entry in USD.

Table 5. The Second Comparison: USD compared to ED

ED RANK	SURNAME	USD RANK
1	Murphy	1
2	Kelly	2
3	Byrne	55
4	Walsh	7
5	O'Brien	6
6	Ryan	4
7	O'Connor	10
8	O'Sullivan	173
9	Doyle	14
10	McCarthy	9
11	O'Neill	25
13	Dunne	218
15	Brennan	24
17	Daly	48
19	Nolan	30
20	O'Reilly	163
22	Farrell	21
23	Fitzgerald	13
24	Carroll	5
25	Gallagher	15
27	Flynn	17
28	O'Connell	38
30	Quinn	12
31	Kavanagh	345
32	Connolly	56

Some high ED Ranks are missing from the list in Table 5, such as: 12 *Lynch*, 14 *Murray*, 16 *Burke*, 18 *Smith*, 21 *Kennedy*, 26 *Power*, & 29 *Collins*,. This is because these surnames were eliminated from USD as part of the Irish only selection explained above. Not only are there surnames in ED missing from USD, there are surnames in USD that do not appear in ED. Over a third of the surnames in USD, (1,018 of 2,826) do not appear amongst the 55,286 types in ED. If these names are indeed of Irish origin, they have either become extinct in Eire, or they have changed their form, become variants, from the spelling used in Eire.

The Variants

The 1,018 USD types not found in ED were investigated further; they were over-whelmingly, 837, variants of more common Irish surnames, or in some cases an Anglicization of a Gaelic form. The top 25 variants are listed in Table 6 together with the surname that they are a variant of; for example: *Daugherty, 12,706* is Rank 50 in USD but does not appear in ED. According to DAFN, it is a variant of *Doherty*, a surname that appears prominently in ED.

Table 6 The Top 25 Variants in USD not in ED

RANK	VARIANT	COUNT	VARIANT OF
50	Daugherty	12706	Doherty
65	Ferrell	11277	Farrell
68	Dailey	11185	Daly
76	Talley	9801	Tulley
78	Whalen	9553	Whelan
91	Conklin	8733	Coughlin
115	Cavanaugh	6930	Kavanagh
124	Goins	6594	Going
144	Mahan	5611	Mohan
154	McClendon	4956	McClinton
156	Roark	4887	O'Rourke
174	Gann	4513	McGann
191	Boyles	4191	Boyle
196	Ragan	4102	Regan
209	Doan	3711	Doane
211	Nolen	3672	Nolan
219	Shay	3572	Shea
224	McGrew	3400	Mulgrew

254	Harbin	2868	Herbert
259	Donley	2785	Donnelly
275	Haynie	2573	Heaney
279	Runyan	2529	Runyon
280	Hughey	2506	Huey
281	Gaddy	2498	Geddie
282	McGehee	2494	McGahey

In 161 cases the surname was seen to have more than an Irish root, other than a UK root. An example of the later would be *Meyer, 65,510* which has German, Dutch, Jewish, and Danish roots in addition to Irish roots. These 161 surnames with roots in addition to Irish were deleted from USD as they distort the comparison of USD with ED. For the remaining 20 surnames there was no etymological explanation; these surnames generally had low counts, and were also deleted.

The counts for surnames in USD that were variants (eg *Flaharty, 224* a variant of *Flaherty*) were added to the count of the *Variant of* surname, and USD ordered on the amended counts. USD now comprises 1,833 records, down from the start of over 5,000. The count for USD is now just over 3.6 million: less than a 10% reduction from the previous level. Table 7 shows examples of the USD variants not found in ED, but where the *variant of* is in ED, for *Donahue, Donegan, Donnelly,* and *Donovan.*

Table 7 The Variants of Donahue, Donegan, Donnelly & Donovan in USD

SURNAME	COUNT	VARIANT OF
Donoho	847	Donahue
Donahoo	602	Donahue
Donohoo	292	Donahue
Donaho	238	Donahue
Donahey	228	Donahue
Dunahoo	196	Donahue
Donehoo	160	Donahue
Danehy	157	Donahue
Donohew	109	Donahue
Dunagan	1284	Donegan
Dunnigan	833	Donegan
Dunnagan	269	Donegan
Dunegan	208	Donegan

Dunagin	117	Donegan
Donley	2785	Donnelly
Dannelley	155	Donnelly
Dannelly	143	Donnelly
Donnelley	137	Donnelly
Dunavant	449	Donovan
Dunnavant	388	Donovan
Dunivan	324	Donovan
Dunavan	180	Donovan
Dunevant	147	Donovan
Donivan	126	Donovan
Dunavin	115	Donovan

The Final Comparison

Table 8 lists the top 100 surnames in ED compared to USD. 36 of these are not present (*NP*) as discussed earlier; the first five of these are: 12 *Lynch,* 14 *Murray,* 16 *Burke,* 18 *Smith,* and 21 *Kennedy.*

Table 8 The Final Comparison: USD against ED

ED RANK	SURNAME	USD RANK	SIGNIFICANT
1	Murphy	1	F
2	Kelly	2	F
3	Byrne	63	T
4	Walsh	7	F
5	O'Brien	5	F
6	Ryan	4	F
7	O'Connor	11	F
8	O'Sullivan	175	T
9	Doyle	13	F
10	McCarthy	9	F
11	O'Neill	29	F
12	*Lynch*	NP	
13	Dunne	215	T
14	*Murray*	NP	
15	Brennan	26	F
16	*Burke*	NP	
17	Daly	20	F
18	*Smith*	NP	
19	Nolan	22	F
20	O'Reilly	163	T
21	*Kennedy*	NP	
22	Farrell	10	F
23	Fitzgerald	15	F
24	Carroll	6	F
25	Gallagher	16	F

26	*Power*	NP	
27	Flynn	18	F
28	O'Connell	45	F
29	*Collins*	NP	
30	Quinn	14	F
31	Kavanagh	65	F
32	Connolly	62	F
33	Healy	89	F
34	Doherty	21	F
35	Reilly	36	F
36	McGrath	38	F
37	Whelan	50	F
38	*Clarke*	NP	
39	*Duffy*	NP	
40	O'Shea	196	F
41	O'Donnell	33	F
42	Brady	17	F
43	O'Leary	84	F
44	*Keane*	NP	
45	*Kenny*	NP	
46	*Moran*	NP	
47	*Moore*	NP	
48	Fitzpatrick	46	F
49	*Barry*	NP	
50	*Hayes*	NP	
51	*Foley*	NP	
52	Maher	83	F
53	Casey	19	F
54	*Martin*	NP	
55	Roche	120	F
56	McMahon	37	F
57	*Buckley*	NP	
58	O'Keeffe	606	T
59	*Ward*	NP	
60	McDonnell	115	F
61	O'Mahony	1233	T
62	Hogan	24	F
63	*Browne*	NP	
64	*Hughes*	NP	
65	*Griffin*	NP	
66	O'Callaghan	428	T
67	*McCormack*	NP	
68	*Cullen*	NP	
69	*White*	NP	
70	Sweeney	25	F
71	O'Donovan	850	T
72	*Delaney*	NP	
73	*Butler*	NP	
74	Maguire	119	F
75	*Hickey*	NP	

76	McLoughlin	335	F
77	Egan	76	F
78	Sheehan	70	F
79	Cronin	99	F
80	McNamara	72	F
81	O'Donoghue	658	T
82	*Cunningham*	NP	
84	McDonagh	643	T
85	Keogh	412	F
86	*Higgins*	NP	
87	Sullivan	3	T
88	*McKenna*	NP	
89	*Barrett*	NP	
90	Curran	79	F
91	*Smyth*	NP	
92	Cahill	95	F
93	O'Rourke	56	F
94	Moloney	472	T
95	*Crawley*	NP	
96	Flanagan	64	F
97	Mooney	59	F
98	Sheridan	92	F
99	Molloy	239	F
100	Corcoran	107	F

Where there is a match between ED and USD, the ED population represents 51% of the Eire population. This sample is more than enough to make valid comparisons.

In comparing ED with USD I have compared ranks as opposed to counts. There are two reasons for this. The first is that the counts for USD are much greater than those for ED. The second reason is that the USD counts came from telephone listings so to get a like-to-like comparison the USD count needs to be increased by a factor of about 2.5 and then the whole thing has to be normalized for direct comparison. Comparison by rank is a straightforward and intuitively obvious alternative. In comparing rankings I use the symbol # to indicate the rank number as in "#3" for "number 3"

Table 7 shows that *Murphy* is the most popular Irish surname in both ED and USD; *Kelly* is the second most popular in both. *Byrne,* #3 in ED, is only #63 in USD. There is an entry "T" in the *Significant* column for *Byrne.* The "T" represents the logical value *True,* meaning that the difference between the ED and USD ranks is significant. It would be nice

if the ranks matched, as with *Murphy* and *Kelly*, but what about *Walsh, Ryan* and *O'Connor*? These three each have ED rankings that differ from the USD rankings but they are in the same ballpark. I have arbitrarily set the *Significant* value to True if:

A. USD rank is five times greater than ED rank, Eg ED rank 8 *O'Sullivan* with USD rank of 175.

Or

B. ED rank is five times greater than USD rank. Eg ED rank 87 *Sullivan* with USD rank of 3

Our example is fortuitous in providing a possible explanation for these entries. Would it be that many with the surname *O'Sullivan* left Eire and became *Sullivan* in the US? I am indebted to Patrick Hanks for pointing out that about the time of the great 19th century migrations from Ireland the Irish Gaelic elements *O'* , meaning 'grandson of/descended from' (MacLyaght), and *Mac, Mc, M'* , meaning 'son of' (MacLyaght) were regularly dropped in Anglicized forms of Gaelic names, only to be reintroduced in Eire later. In this scenario *O'Sullivans* living in Eire, dropped the *O'*, and some emigrate to the US as *Sullivan*. Later the *Sullivans* in Eire reverted to the *O'Sullivan* form. I do not know whether either, both, or neither, explanations are valid in the particular case under consideration; clearly at this period there was turbulence in the use, or non-use, of the *O'* element. It is at least plausible to suggest that the USD *Sullivans* may be compared with the ED *O'Sullivans*.

However, *O'Reilly* has a *significant* tag with ED#20 and USD#163, but *Reilly* does not with ED#35 and USD#38. So *Reilly* has kept its relative position whereas *O'Reilly* has lost ground. This differs in degree from the *O'Sullivan/ Sullivan* case. If we combine the *Reilly* and *O'Reilly* counts we get the equivalent rankings of ED#9, and USD#21, which would not draw a *significant* tag.

Table 8 shows 13 of the 100 surnames to have a *significant* tag, of which seven are of the form *O'Xxxx*. Note that Table 8 which is ordered by ED rank and only shows 100 entries. To make the following observations the complete USD table of 1833 entries, not shown, has been referenced. The five other *O'Xxxx* forms are:

O'Keeffe, ED#58

Keefe (not *Keeffe*) has a *significant* tag and USD#157

Here not only has the *O'* been dropped but the surname has been simplified.

O'Mahony, ED#61

Mahoney (not *Mahony*) has a *significant* tag and USD#32. Here again the *O'* been dropped and the surname simplified.

O'Callaghan, ED#66

Callahan (not *Callaghan*) has a *significant* tag and USD#26. Here again the *O'* been dropped and the surname simplified.

O'Donovan, ED#71

Donovan has a *significant* tag and USD#34. Here the *O'* been dropped.

O'Donoghue, ED#81

Donahue (not *Donoghue*) has a *significant* tag and USD#44. Here again the *O'* been dropped and the surname simplified.

None of the above pairs would rate a *significant* tag in their own right, which suggests that for at least these *O'Xxxx* surnames, the *O'* was dropped, possibly prior, or at the time of migration to the US when often the surname was simplified. This is not to say all *O'Xxxx* surnames followed the same pattern as *O'Brien, O'Connor, O'Neill,* and *O'Connell* demonstrate.

We are thus left in the top 100 ED ranked surnames with *Byrne, Dunne, McDonagh,* and *Moloney* tagged with *significant* differences between ED and USD ranking.

Byrne ED#3

Byrne has two major variants: *Byrn* and *Byrns*. If the count for *Byrne* was supplemented by the count for this pair the USD rank would rise from 63 to 57, but not enough to avoid the significant tag. It appears that *Byrne* while quite popular in USD has not matched the relative popularity it enjoys in Eire. A possible explanation is that comparatively few *Byrnes* migrated to the US; another is that when they got there they changed their name to such as *Burns,* which, like *Byrne,* is an Anglicization of the Gaelic *Ó Broin. Burns* is another of surnames removed from USD because of its multiple roots. However, if the latter explanation is at least partially true then ED *Byrne* may well be rank comparable with USD *Byrne, Byrn, Byrns,* and *Burns* and the *significant* tag not warranted.

Dunne ED#13

Dunn is the major variant of *Dunne* and its USD count is over 14 times that of *Dunne*. Unfortunately, *Dunn* was deleted from USD as it also has English and Scottish roots. However, it is fair to say that were it possible to include only the count for the Irish *Dunn* then the *significant* tag would probably no longer be justified.

McDonagh, ED#84

McDonough USD#87

In DAFN Hanks gives McDonagh as a variant McDonough. However, McDonagh is the more common form in Eire, and McDonough more common in the US. It would seem that, etymologically speaking, McDonough should be regarded as a variant of McDonagh rather than vice versa; Hanks agrees with this interpretation. Equating the ED form with the USD form, *McDonagh* with *MacDonough* would not create a *significant* tag.

Moloney, ED#94

Maloney, USD#58

In DAFN Hanks gives *Moloney* as a variant of *Maloney,* and in USD *Maloney* is dominant: 12,480 to 1,216, but the reverse is true in ED: *Maloney* 1,918, and *Moloney* 5,355. If we combine

the counts of *Maloney* and *Moloney* for both ED and USD we get counts of 7,273 and 13,696 respectively which equate to ED59 and USD53 and thus the *significant* tag is not warranted.

The *Significant* Entries

Extract FromTable 8 The Final Comparison: USD against ED

ED RANK	SURNAME	USD RANK	SIGNIFICANT
3	Byrne	63	T
8	O'Sullivan	175	T
13	Dunne	215	T
20	O'Reilly	163	T
58	O'Keeffe	606	T
66	O'Callaghan	428	T
71	O'Donovan	850	T
81	O'Donoghue	658	T
84	McDonagh	643	T
87	Sullivan	3	T
94	Moloney	472	T

Conclusion

Irish surnames in the US generally follow the popularity of Irish surnames in Eire; some surnames have dropped their O' prefix, others have preserved it, while others have kept both forms. In the US there are many variant forms of common surnames found in Eire but where the variant forms are unknown. The US Irish surnames are thus not only more plentiful in numbers of types, they are more plentiful in the number of tokens for these types. This is not a unique situation as probably the same could be said for UK surnames.

Irish surnames follow the same characteristics as those in Canada, UK, and US. The relationship between count and rank is not a simple power curve which is complicated by typographical errors in the data sets.

A Gaelic Footnote

The ED contains many Gaelic surnames such as: Ban Ui Parthalaim, Be Mhicgearailt, Bn Mhic Eoinin, Bn Nic Fhionngaile, Bn Ui Dhochartaigh, De Bhaldraithe, MacSiordachain, Mac An Bhrithimh, Mac Giolla Bhride, Mag Shamhrain, McMurchaidh, Mi Cheilleachair, Mic An Gheimhridh, Ne Rathaille, Ni Alastairbhaoill, Nic Toirdhbheallaigh, Nic An Tseachlainn, Nic Giolla Fhionnain, No Bhroin, O'H Eachtigheirn, O'Hallmhurain, O'Leanglaoich, O'Mhaoldhomhnaigh, Og O'Maonaigh, Ua Cathassaigh, Ue Chonchubair, Ui'chionnfaolaidh, Ui Bheaglaoich, and Uibh Eachach.

Apparently, it is becoming increasingly fashionable in Eire to render your surname in the Gaelic form. However, I am reliably informed that there are typographical errors in the above surnames. I wouldn't know, but I would not be surprised, and I suspect that there are many others like me. What we need is a depository of correctly spelled surnames (and forenames) – a register - used in our society, just as we have for the other words in our language.

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