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# Immigration Restriction Then, Immigration Restriction Now; The Politics of IQ

Alexandra L. Kummerow

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Immigration Restriction Then, Immigration Restriction Now; The Politics of IQ

Alexandra L. Kummerow

Rochester Institute of Technology

Department of School Psychology

College of Liberal Arts

This is a thesis for partial fulfillment of requirements for a Masters of Science advanced certificate in school psychology.

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Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Scott Merydith, PhD, Associate Professor, Thesis Advisor

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Erin Merydith, PhD, Adjunct Professor, Second Reader

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## Abstract

*Background:* Immigration laws in the United States have had a strong impact on the development and utilization of intelligence testing since the early 1800's. Basic restriction laws were initially put into place to uphold the biological fitness of our country by excluding persons with physical, mental and intellectual disabilities. As the United States drew more immigrants into its country, physicians and doctors began to develop intelligence tests to examine new immigrants from all over the world. It was at Ellis Island where an extraordinary amount of scientific research took place and intelligence tests became the standard for determining mental abilities. Ellis Island physicians utilized many different performance tests, and administered them to the thousands upon thousands of immigrants hoping to live in the United States. The Objective of this study was to determine whether or not Ellis Island physicians were correctly measuring what they thought to be intelligence. *Sampling and Methods:* The research sample consisted of 39 male and female students in third and fourth grade. Subjects were given recreated Ellis Island puzzle tasks, the Knox Cube test as well as current measures of Intelligence from the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition- Integrated. *Results:* There was no correlation between recreated Ellis Island tasks and current measures of intelligence. *Conclusion:* Ellis Island Physicians may not have been measuring aspects of intelligence as they thought, however they greatly contributed to the research and development of cognitive testing.

## **Chapter I**

### **Current Immigration Controversy**

“We need to think about immigration policy along the lines of an ‘Einstein Principle.’ In this perspective, national leaders would elevate brains, talent and special skills to a higher plane in order to attract more individuals with the potential to enhance American innovation and competitiveness. The goal is to boost the national economy, and bring individuals to America with the potential to make significant contributions. This would increase the odds for prosperity down the road.” (West, 2011, pp. 443)

The United States has an extensive history of immigration restriction laws. Beginning in the late 1800’s immigrants from all over the globe came to America looking for a better life and greater opportunities. The United States is somewhat of an “exclusive club” that everyone wants to join, but the club must limit its membership to a certain number, and type of person. Although immigration restriction has drastically changed over the past two centuries, it has always limited the type of person who enters, and the type of person who is deported. This review of the literature will shine a light on the methods by which this country has controlled immigration and deportations for over a century. Furthermore, it will explain how early intelligence tests were used at Ellis Island as a way in which to determine “feble-mindedness” of immigrants and more so as a tool for exclusion out of America.

In June of 2012, President Obama and the Secretary of United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced an amnesty supporting certain young individuals who were illegally brought to the United States as children, through no fault of their own. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012) These people who do not present a risk to national

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security or public safety are eligible for relief from the removal from the country. Currently, the United States has approximately eleven to twelve million undocumented immigrants living within its borders. Primarily, the undocumented immigrants residing within the United States are Hispanic. Furthermore the federal government only has the capacity to deport approximately 400,000 people per year. According to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) the United States deported 396,906 illegal immigrants in 2011 (Smith, 2012; Vargas, 2012).

The president has provided amnesty to young children because deportation must be prioritized. In determining who needs to be deported, criminals, smugglers, and wrongdoers must be put ahead of students, children and constructive members of society. Many right wing conservatives criticize president Obama for his amnesty, because they claim that this decision violates his oath to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the United States (Fernanda 2012; Smith, 2012). On the other hand, the amnesty is logical: identify individuals who pose the greatest risk to society and get rid of the individuals who are the biggest burden on our country. The United States will always be seen as the land of opportunity, and therefore will always be required to enforce immigration restriction in order to maintain a reasonable and manageable population.

Under this major policy change, illegal immigrants who were brought to the United States as children through the age of 30 will be allowed to remain in the country. As argument holds, thirty years old is not exactly a "child." These illegal immigrants will likely receive work authorization and compete with unemployed American citizens (Smith, 2012). Obama's amnesty is also hurting American taxpayers and may encourage further illegal immigration. Illegal immigrants cost taxpayers billions of dollars each year when healthcare and education costs are analyzed (Fickenscher, 2006). Fraud and illegal immigration will further increase taxes on

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Americans. (Fernanda, 2012; Department of Homeland Security, 2012; Smith, 2012). It is estimated that over 1 million illegal immigrants will benefit from this amnesty. Another downfall of this amnesty is that individuals can falsely claim that they arrived here as children. The government is unable to check on the validity of each claim because of the lack of documentation. Furthermore, this amnesty could motivate illegal immigrants to smuggle their children into the United States in hopes that they will benefit from this amnesty in the future.

On the other hand, Obama's amnesty is rightly justified because he has the power to prioritize deportations of serious criminals and smugglers ahead of students, children, families and others with deep roots in the United States and who have clean criminal records (Smith, 2012).

Obama's immigration amnesty was driven out of the protection of basic human rights when parts of Arizona's "show me your papers" law was deemed unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court. Arizona's "show me your papers" law gave local police officers rather than federal agents the ability to ask for any individual's documentation papers. They were given the opportunity and ability to do this while enforcing other common laws. This enabled frequent questioning of immigration status of those suspected to be in the country without documents (Fernanda, 2012). Some argue that it is a law of "racial profiling," and is the strictest law in the entire country (Billeaud & Berry, 2012). The federal court ruled that "Arizona could not mandate federal immigration priorities because, 'A principal feature of the removal system is the broad discretion exercised by immigration officials ... Federal officials, as an initial matter, must decide whether it makes sense to pursue removal at all. Discretion in the enforcement of immigration law embraces immediate human concerns. Unauthorized workers trying to support their families, for example, likely pose less danger than alien smugglers or aliens who commit a

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serious crime.” (Smith, 2012, pp. 54-55) According to the law and powers given to him through congress, the president has power to make choices when it comes to whom to let stay in the United States.

Arizona’s law is still currently in effect, as only aspects of its provisions were deemed unconstitutional; however, the state does not get first priority in deportations. The law now only makes it a misdemeanor if a person is not carrying their papers. Again, the individuals whom this law would affect are primarily Hispanics residing within the United States. Many civil rights groups have called for a ban on this provision because they believe that actions such as traffic stops and detentions would inevitably grow longer as a result of police officers verifying a persons legal status in the country (Fernanda, 2012). Law enforcement would essentially be enforcing basic traffic laws while also being able to question residents of Arizona. Again this leads to the matter of racial profiling. Are local law enforcement personnel basing their judgments on race? Is this law justifiable?

Currently, the United States has the power to deport illegal immigrants, especially those who cause trouble within society. There have been many previous restrictions and laws in deliberating which individuals could stay and which individuals could go. This review of the literature provides an outline of some of the most prominent immigration laws put in to place in the United States starting around 1900.

### **Immigration Restriction Then: 1882-1965**

The first legislation of the United States to even mention immigration was proposed in 1882. Main concerns were brought up over the “mental make up of the immigrant.” Prior to then the federal government had little involvement in immigration policies, as it was all handled at the state level (Boody, 1926). Even after a federal law was established in 1882, not much was done



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for nearly a decade. Total responsibility was taken up gradually as the federal government slowly added to their “exclusion list.” As of 1882, only “Lunatics (insane)” people and “Idiots” were excluded from the country. In 1903 the federal government added “Epileptics.” By 1907 the government of the United States began to exclude mentally defective persons including: imbeciles, feebleminded and mentally or physically defective persons. The law defined mentally or physically defective as: “such defect as may affect the ability to earn a living. (Boody, 1926)”

The Immigration Act of 1917 was also known as the Literacy Act, and was the first major discriminatory act in the United States past the vague exclusion lists previously stated. It passed with an overwhelming majority in government during the Wilson Administration. This act prohibited “undesirables” from entering the country. Undesirables were defined as: homosexuals, idiots, feeble-minded persons, criminals, epileptics, insane persons, alcoholics, professional beggars, all mentally or physically defective persons, polygamists, prostitutes and anarchists. Furthermore it banned most immigrants over the age of sixteen who were illiterate (Immigration Regulation Act of 1917, 64<sup>th</sup> United States Congress). During this time a test of reading was also determined to be a screening measure, where those who could not read upon entering the country were likely turned away. Literacy tests were given to any Non-Anglo type person as they entered the United States, regardless of their native languages. Prior to the Literacy Act, the number of illiterate aliens admitted to the country was astounding. For instance in 1910, over one million people were allowed to enter the United States, and over 250,000 were deemed illiterate. A year after this law was passed, only 3,772 people were allowed to enter the United States who couldn't read, out of a total 110,618 admitted. By 1919, only 2,827 illiterate people were allowed to enter out of a total 141,132 attempting to immigrate (Boody, 1926). This law drastically cut down on the number of illiterate persons who entered the country.

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In 1920 The Emergency Quota Act was put into place and reduced the number of immigrants entering the United States from over 800,000 individuals to approximately 300,000 individuals by enforcing the use of quotas. The quota was set at 3% of the number of residents from that same country already living in the United States (Emergency Quota Act, 1921 United States Government). This act greatly reduced the number of non- northern European immigrants and led to further legal revisions of the quota system. Furthermore it greatly reduced the number of persons entering the country who were physically or mentally disabled (Boody, 1926).

The Immigration Act of 1924 was put into place and more strictly limited the number of immigrants that moved to the United States to 2% of the population already living in the country for the next three years. Therefore, further restrictions of Southern and Eastern Europeans were implemented. Immigrants from Western Europe fell roughly 19% while immigration from Italy fell 90%. Total number of immigrants at this time went from 300,000 to approximately 150,000 people. The percentage formula was to be set in place for three years, and after that amount of time would reduce immigration to a mere 150,000 people total (Immigration Act, 1924).

Preferences were given to people who had relatives living in the states and could document a “sponsor.” This ensured that non-English speaking people coming to the United States would have a place to go, as well a support system to make sure they learned the national language and found jobs. Preferences were implemented for unmarried children, parents and spouses of United States residents as well as immigrants who were 21 years old and had specific skills. The 1924 act also implemented the use of visas issued by the national immigration department and mandated that no alien should be permitted to enter the country without one. Mainly, this act controlled “undesirable” immigration by establishing a quota system and banning specific origins such as Japan, China, France, Korea, India, Burma and Indochina. People from these

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countries were not eligible for naturalization and the act forbade further immigration of any persons ineligible to be naturalized. Favored countries included Germany, Britain and Ireland, as they had the highest quotas. Quotas were also determined for each specific class of physical or mental defect (Boody, 1926). There were 9 classes of restricted people, which included: insane, criminal, feebleminded, dependent, epileptic, deaf, blind, deformed or those with Tuberculosis (Boody, 1926 pg. 36). Quotas from the 1924 act remained in place with few alterations until the Immigration Nationality Act of 1965 was implemented.

In 1940 an Alien Registration Act required the fingerprinting and registration of any and all aliens in order to prohibit certain insubordinate activities. “Any alien with the intent to interfere with, impair or influence the loyalty, morale, or discipline of the military or naval forces of the United States risked deportation” (Alien Registration Act, 1940). This Act sought to ban and punish any rebellious or non-patriotic behaviors, especially those within the military forces.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 put an end to the quotas enacted in 1924. Quotas were replaced with a new preference system that mainly focused on the skill level of immigrants and their relationships to people previously living the country. A limit on visas was set to 170,000 per year and further more did not include immediate relatives of U.S. citizens (Immigration and Nationality Act, 1965). At this time both legal and illegal immigration began to grow.

By the 1990’s one-third of America’s population growth was attributed to illegal immigration, as opposed to one-tenth before the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was implemented. According to the 2000 census, roughly 11.1% of Americans were foreign born (U.S. Census Department).

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### **Immigration Restriction Now: 1965-2012**

In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) vastly changed immigration laws in the United States. This act required employers to verify their employees' immigration status, and declared it illegal to hire or recruit immigrants known to be unauthorized. It also granted amnesty to various illegal immigrants working seasonally in agricultural jobs, and granted amnesty to illegal immigrants who came to the United States before January 1<sup>st</sup> of 1982 and were continuously residing within the United States. This equaled close to three million immigrants, mainly Hispanic individuals, who were granted amnesty (Immigration Reform and Control Act, 1986).

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 placed strict limitations and consequences on illegal immigrants currently residing within the country. It stated that immigrants unlawfully living in the United States for 180 to 365 days must stay out of the United States for three years, unless they obtained a pardon. If they had illegally resided within the United States for a year or more, they were to remain outside of the country for ten years unless they were granted a pardon or obtained a waiver. If any illegal alien that was previously "kicked out" of the country returned without pardon, they were forbidden a waiver. This act placed strict penalties on illegal immigration in the hopes of keeping it to a minimum (Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, 1996).

The REAL ID Act of 2005 modified U.S. federal law pertaining to the security, authentication, and issuance procedures for identification cards, mainly state driver's licenses. The law defines "official purposes" of presenting a valid identification card as well as requirements for obtaining a federally official identification card. First, the act established new standards for all Department of Motor Vehicles for issuing Drivers license and non-driver

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identification cards. Limits were changed for many temporary workers, nurses and Australian citizens, allowing them to bypass certain visa restrictions. Furthermore, laws were tightened regarding the deportation of any illegal immigrants that exhibits terrorist activity (REAL ID Act, 2005).

The concept of quotas and limiting certain nationalities from moving to the United States has been repealed; however, the federal government still places a cap on non-agricultural workers. The non-agricultural temporary worker program allows United States employers to hire immigrants to fill temporary non-agricultural jobs. There is a numerical limit, or “cap,” on the total number of aliens who may be issued a visa or allocated residential status each year. (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012). The cap set by congress is 66,000 people per year with 33,000 people allowed employment the first half of the year, and 33,000 people allowed employment the second half of the fiscal year (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012).

## **Implications of Immigration to the United States**

### **Economic Costs and Benefits**

Immigration restrictions and immigration laws in the United States are often controversial. Many claim that illegal and non-illegal immigrants take up jobs that American citizens should hold, while our school systems educate their children and our health care system provides certain benefits to them. Critics fear that foreigners take jobs that would otherwise go to Americans without high school diplomas. In fact, a recent study by West (2013) reported that American citizens without a high school diploma have seen yearly wages drop 1.1 percent due to immigration (West, 2011). This is especially concerning during a time of recession. Native residents are at a disadvantage because illegal immigrants are willing to work longer hours and

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for fewer wages. On the other hand, foreign immigration may be seen as essential to population and cultural growth for our country. The same study found that immigrants constituted for wage gains within the companies they worked for, drastically boosting production and increasing profit (West, 2011). Immigrants are not only essential to businesses; they are an important part of American culture. They move into cities and help the economy by working in sometimes-undesirable jobs and spending their money within the United States. A significant tax base would be lost as well as a demand for housing and skilled people if it were more difficult for immigrants to come to this country (Fickenscher, 2006; West, 2011). Many businesses such as food service, construction, health care, housekeeping, and agriculture rely on the international labor pool.

There is a belief that immigrants do not pay taxes, however, this is a false notion in many cases (Fickenscher, 2006). Immigrants pay taxes on income, merchandise, food and housing. A recent study indicated that young immigrants are very likely to be taxed on these items. Young to middle aged immigrants are more likely to become homeowners and henceforth pay taxes. On the contrary, older immigrants who are past their prime working years may require government health benefits and pension benefits (West, 2011). According to this same study, many legal and illegal immigrants are not allowed to participate in various government assistance programs. They are not allowed to participate in Medicaid, food stamps, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and some state's children's health insurance programs. Furthermore, illegal immigrants are not able to receive any forms of welfare, public health care, or retirement benefits (West, 2011). These immigrants may contribute to society for decades and never reap substantial benefits from the country or government other than supporting themselves and their families.

### **Social Costs and Benefits**

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Social costs and benefits of immigration are difficult to measure, whereas economic and intellectual contributions are more measurable. A recent study attempted to gauge the magnitude of social contribution, finding that many native-born Americans and immigrants put a high value on foreign food, art, culture and athletics. Americans enjoy and benefit from a multicultural society and multicultural environments. Diverse areas with creative residents also tend to be more pleasant, positive and productive (West, 2011). Many famous artists, actors and athletes come from other countries and it would be hard to imagine the sport of baseball and the production of movies happening without any foreign born individuals.

According to a study “immigrants have become a significant driving force in the creation of new business and intellectual property in the United States, and their contributions have increased over the past decade” (Wadhwa, 2006,). Immigrants start new businesses, patent novel ideas and create jobs. The government has recently implemented the O-1 Visa or what is known as the “genius” visa. The government authorizes visas for those individuals having “extraordinary abilities in the arts, science, education, business and sports.” In 2008 alone, over 9,000 genius visas were granted (Herbst, 2009). The idea behind this program is to focus on talented people and encourage them to come to the United States. This gets back to the “Einstein principle” mentioned earlier in this paper. Visas such as the “genius visa” will help enhance the education level of our country. America strives to accept people who will contribute to society, rather than individuals who will become a burden on society.

Another visa that is authorized is called the EB-5 visa, where it offers temporary visas to foreigners who invest at least half a million dollars in distressed areas of our country. If their financial investment leads to the creation of 10 or more jobs, their temporary visa automatically becomes a permanent green card. In 2008, nearly 1,000 immigrants received their green cards

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this way (Lerer, 2009).

With immigration levels raising and falling, the United States has seen its share of both possibilities and problems. In theory, the restriction and limitation of persons from another country makes sense and must occur in order to control the population. In America, immigrants have the opportunity to earn a living and support their family, while there are concerns about the economic impact of legal and illegal immigration. As a result of changes in immigration over time, and the overwhelming number of both legal and illegal immigrants entering the United States, the country is expected to have less than 50 percent non-Hispanic whites in the total population by the year 2042 (Vargas, 2012). Current visa programs more so set out to target quality individuals, rather than control the people who dream of living in America. Immigration has posed the question of discrimination and racial profiling since the early 1900's. Since then, countless individuals have dreamed of a better life in America, but how does the country pick and choose whom to let in? What type of framework is needed to ensure immigrants deserve to be in America? History has continuously proven that the United States has narrow criteria for immigration policies. Starting in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, visual screenings and performance tests were used to determine whether or not an individual could remain in the United States after entering through Ellis Island. Policies of immigration in the United States have changed over time; however, they always remain strict, selective and prejudiced.

### **Ellis Island**

When immigrants entered Ellis Island they saw the bright New York City skyline, the beaming Statue of liberty and an image of hope and prosperity. Although as fate would have it many travelers dreaming of a better life would be turned around at the door and deported back to their native country if they did not appear competent, smart and able.



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Ellis Island functioned as an immigration depot where individuals were primarily screened before entrance. Screening was performed in order to weed out those who appeared to be “feeble-minded,” “idiots,” “illiterates,” “cripples” and “diseased” (Senner, 1897; Howard, 2000). Many different types of inspection were done; there were extensive examinations as well as the “line inspection.” In the line inspection phase of entering Ellis Island, immigrants were inspected standing, walking and holding their luggage. If the physician chose to speak to the immigrant, they would be brutally judged on how they responded. If the immigrant displayed any sort of suspicious activity, they would be marked for an intensive evaluation (Boody, 1926, p. 58.) After the line inspection, yet another doctor who looked more closely at their physical appearance and their eyes then examined each immigrant.

To the individuals coming through Ellis Island, inspection and judgment seemed endless. After multiple screenings, undesirables’ or those deemed to be a potential burden on society were sent away. As immigration became stricter over time, immigrants were screened for physical and mental health, social history, financial history and intellect. It was assumed that those who were not smart or intellectually capable would likely become a problem to society. Language and literacy were both extremely important to physicians screening the incoming immigrants (Boody, 1926). In many cases, each individual would be tested up to five times each. This was time consuming and exhausting for both the physicians and immigrants going through each exam. Passengers traveling on first and second class over to America, were briefly screened on the ship, and were granted easy access onto land, while passengers traveling in 3<sup>rd</sup> class were subjected to multiple screening and torturous days of judgment in the Ellis Island Great Hall (Richardson, 2011).

Examinations were heavily weighted by verbal and reading abilities. In time, it became

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apparent to physicians that some individuals who did not pass the tests, didn't fail because something was wrong, but because there was a general lack of understanding. These people appeared to be feebleminded because they simply could not comprehend English. Therefore performance tasks became developed and used at Ellis Island. Different non-verbal tasks were given to immigrants to assess their abilities to perform tasks that did not require language. In many cases, especially with children, non-verbal tasks or performance tasks were the ticket to being granted access to the United States (Boody, 1926). Non-verbal tasks were an important addition to the examinations at Ellis Island, they did not require an interpreter, and were generally understandable to people of all ages and ethnicities.

When immigrants entered Ellis Island, conditions were poor. Not only were they being constantly judged and examined, they were likely tired, stressed, confused and hungry. They were in no position to be physically tested, although examination was inevitable. Physical conditions were relatively easy to diagnose, but it was much more difficult to detect mental instability. At the time of these early screenings, there were no standardized tests available to physicians at Ellis Island that determined mental health and intellect. Diagnosis was initially subjective, and eventually became more systematic. From 1910-1916 Ellis Island became a laboratory for intelligence and mental testing. Screenings of this multitude were justified because the American government had the duty to protect the biological fitness of the nation as well as assure that alien individuals would not become a burden on society (Richardson, 2011).

Howard Knox was one of the first physicians at Ellis Island to formulate ways in which to determine "feeblemindedness" (Richardson, 2011). He developed tests that consisted of puzzles or form boards with cutout shapes on them, and a set of cubes, which the examiner would tap, in a random order that had to be imitated by the immigrant being tested. This aspect

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of testing hoped to assess intellectual ability, without using extensive language and difficult English vocabulary. Mental testing was a work in progress, and Ellis Island attracted many physicians and psychologists from around the world who wanted to test their methods of identifying “morons.” Another person to contribute to the development of mental testing was Henry Goddard. Goddard believed he could identify morons among immigrants passing through Ellis Island through his using of the Binet/ Simon measuring scale. Through his examination, Goddard found a drastically large majority of people to be morons by his definition. There was clearly something wrong with the tests and not the people it was administered to, as the majority of people entering Ellis Island were deemed to be morons (Richardson, 2011; Richardson, 2003). In hindsight, a clear and simple explanation for this drastic finding was that immigrants could not speak the language used during testing; therefore results yielded large numbers of failure.

The concept of performance or non-verbal testing has been modified over time, however early performance tests developed by Knox and other physicians gave the world of mental testing a kick start. It was at no place other than Ellis Island where testing could be done to this great magnitude at such a minimum expense. Ellis Island provided a large and diverse group of individuals who were technically exploited and given no choice but to accept mental testing in this experimental environment.

Throughout history, classes of people have been discriminated against, whether it is due to skin color, region of origin, physical capabilities, intellectual capabilities, mental health, unacceptable behaviors within society (e.g., theft and prostitution) or financial status. Restrictions on immigration have changed over time yet remain to be discriminatory. The United States has the power and ability to accept the smartest and most talented people due to the simple fact that a large population of people will always want to live here. Immigration Laws will

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therefore continue to accept and reject certain individuals.

### **Current Research**

This study set out to determine whether or not the mental and psychological tests used at Ellis Island have any correlation to current and widely used intellectual tests today. When Ellis Island Physicians tested immigrants for feeble-mindedness, what were they actually measuring? This study also sought out to explore concurrent validity and standards of the tests developed by Ellis Island physicians. Tests came about in many ways. Mainly, it became apparent that verbal tasks did not tap into the intellect of people who could not speak the language. Physicians discovered that it was not always a matter of low intellect, but simply a lack of understanding directions. Therefore, performance measures were developed. Tests that required minimal language and that did not focus strictly on American culture and society. When Howard Knox began to develop tests, the only data they had to compare to was that of French or American schoolchildren. They did not have norms set in place for the people that would be testing (Richardson, 2011). Tests such as The Seguin form Board, The Knox cube imitation test and construction puzzles were developed. Scores were based on how quickly an immigrant could put these puzzles together.

The Ellis Island performance tasks clearly lacked standards of validity, therefore the current research asked the question: What were they really measuring? Do these performance tasks relate to recent measures of known cognitive abilities such as memory, attention, executive functioning and comprehension? Do the Ellis Island tests correspond to cognitive testing now? More specifically, this study looked at a comparison between four re-created Ellis Island tasks and a current measure of cognitive ability.

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The Elithorn Maze was used in the current research as a current measure of processing, planning, visual/motor ability, executive functioning and impulsivity (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition – Integrated, WISC-IV integrated). More specifically this study sought to investigate the relationship between puzzle tests developed at Ellis Island with the current measures of processing, attention and executive functioning taken from the WISC-IV integrated. The purpose of this study was to see how the Ellis Island tests correlate with executive functioning, attention and planning ability. It was hypothesized that Ellis Island physicians were not measuring what they believed they were testing for, and that the recreated puzzles used at Ellis Island have no correlation with executive functioning measures used today.

**Chapter II****Method****Participants**

Third and fourth grade students (22 third graders, 11 male and 11 female and 17 fourth graders, 12 male and 5 female) were used in this study. See table 1. Participants were recruited through two third and fourth grade teachers from two upstate New York school districts, who agreed to allow the research to be conducted in their classrooms. Third and fourth grade teachers' were contacted by the research team, to solicit their students' participation in the study. The researcher previously knew the teachers. This researcher communicated via e-mail to the principals and obtained consent to conduct research in the classroom. Parental consent was obtained from all of the students in both classrooms.

Table 1.

*Descriptive Statistics for Sample Size (N=39)*  
(gender by grade)

		<b>Grade</b>		<b>Total</b>
		3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>Gender</b>	Boy	11	12	23
	Girl	11	5	16
<b>Total</b>		22	17	39

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## **Materials and Procedure**

### **Materials**

Study materials were taken from various intelligence tests, the Knox cube test and replicas of puzzles used at Ellis Island. The current measure of executive functioning used was the Elithorn Maze, standardized for ages 8 to 16, which comes from the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children- Integrated, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (WISC-IV Integrated). The Ellis Island puzzles used in this study were the Knox Cube test; along with 3 replicas of Ellis Island puzzle tasks, created by this researcher.

### **Procedures**

Two graduate students of a School Psychology program along with 3-4 assistants from an upstate New York University visited the third and fourth grade classrooms on two different days. Two examiners conducted the majority of the activity, while other graduate students provided assistance to participants when needed. The first portion of the study was a group activity, which included four different tasks, one being the Elithorn Maze. The second portion of the study included four different individual tasks, being the Knox Cube Tests and three puzzles.

Students were initially provided with an activity packet, red crayon and red pencil to record their responses in while they received group direction and prompts from the smart board at the front of the classroom. They were asked their grade and gender. Further identifying information was unknown such as their name, nationality, citizenship status, educational background and primary language. The Elithorn maze was the first task in the group portion of this study. Students were directed to complete one sample trial and two practice trials, followed by five task items. Students were given 45 seconds to start at the beginning of the maze and draw through the provided number of dots without going backward, lifting their pencil or making a

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mistake. Each maze became harder to complete, although directions for all mazes were the same. Item one started with 3 dots and number of dots gradually increased on each task, ending in 7 dots.

In the second portion of the study, students were assigned to different stations around the classroom to complete the three puzzles and Knox Cube Test. The order in which students completed each individual task was random. Participants were given 2 minutes to complete each of the wooden puzzles. The Knox Cube test was a memory task where the examiner would tap blocks in a specific order and the student would have to remember and repeat the order in which the blocks were tapped.

For the purpose of this study, only one group activity was examined and analyzed: The Elithorn Maze. However three other group activities were conducted within the same time period but have no relevance to the current research.

### **Scoring**

The maximum number of points a participant could receive on the Elithorn maze was five points; each individual maze earned the students one point. If a student made an error they did not receive credit for that Maze. Each puzzle task was timed in seconds and then assigned to a numerical point system. The more quickly a student completed the puzzle, the more points they received. Those who did not complete the puzzle within two minutes received a zero. Each pattern in the Knox Cube test was worth one point, points ranged from 0 to 26.



**Chapter III****Results**

Shown in table one is Pearson product-moment correlations among the variables. This was used to identify any relationships between each individual test given to our sample ( $N= 39$ ). *No significant correlation was found between the Elithorn maze and Ellis Island puzzle tasks ( $p>.05$ )* This study intended to look at the relationship between Ellis Island performance tasks and a current executive functioning measure. *However, two significant correlations were found between puzzle two and puzzle three for grade level.* A significant correlation coefficient where  $p < .05$  would suggest a relationship between two variables. The six components of the correlation were evaluated through a Pearson's Correlation: Grade (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>), Elithorn Maze (EM), Knox Cube test (K), Puzzle 1 (P1), Puzzle 2 (P2), and Puzzle 3 (P3).

Pearson's Correlation was used to determine how strong and in what direction the relationship between each variable was.

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Table 2 presents the correlation results.

Table 2.

*Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between Ellis Island performance tasks and executive functioning measure*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Grade</b>						
<i>Correlation</i>	--					
<i>Significance</i>						
<b>Elithorn Maze</b>						
<i>Correlation</i>	.21	--				
<i>Significance</i>	.18					
<b>Knox Cube</b>						
<i>Correlation</i>	-.01	.20	--			
<i>Significance</i>	.91	.20				
<b>Puzzle 1</b>						
<i>Correlation</i>	.07	.10	.18	--		
<i>Significance</i>	.63	.51	.25			
<b>Puzzle 2</b>						
<i>Correlation</i>	.43*	.06	.06	.29	--	
<i>Significance</i>	.02	.72	.74	.12		
<b>Puzzle 3</b>						
<i>Correlation</i>	.46*	.25	-.32	.07	.28	--
<i>Significance</i>	.01	.20	.10	.69	.17	

p < .05  
n= 27-39

The findings suggests a significant correlation for grade and puzzle 2 ( $r = .43, p < .05$ ), as well as grade and puzzle 3 ( $r = .46, p < .05$ ). No other significant correlations were found between Ellis Island performance tasks and executive functioning measures.

**Chapter IV****Discussion**

It was hypothesized that tasks used at Ellis Island to assess immigrants coming to America have no correlation with current measures of executive functioning. Additionally, that Ellis Island Physicians were not testing what they thought they were. Conclusions from this experiment demonstrated that none of the Ellis Island tasks have a significant correlation with The Elithorn Maze task, which measured current aspects of intellect such as: attention, planning, visual-spatial ability and impulsivity. Furthermore, according to the current research, Ellis Island physicians were not testing for “feble-mindedness,” as they had thought. In the early 1900’s there were an extraordinary number of identified people through the use of the performance tests, which is simply unrealistic.

Findings from the current research showed a significant correlation between Puzzles 2 and 3 with age of student. This finding was unintended, and points out that age affects performance on these specific tasks. Children coming through Ellis Island likely performed better on performance tasks such as the puzzles if they were a little bit older and had some more world experience. However, Ellis Island physicians did not take age into account. Variables affecting each individual can differ greatly. For instance, older children may be at an advantage simply because they have had more life experience and therefor were better equipped in comprehending body language, non-verbal prompts and even the English language. Interestingly enough, this provides us with a question for future research. Were older children more frequently allowed through the Gates of Ellis Island when compared to younger children? Did older children have a higher passing rate?

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Immigrants coming to America in the early 1900's did not have an understanding of the American language, making it extremely difficult to understand directions to any puzzle tasks. Children especially did not have an education or a concept of what the world was like in America. The gruesome examinations and psychological testing were extremely stressful and confusing for them. The results of this study shine a light on the comprehensiveness of today's cognitive ability assessments, and how far along the research and profession has come. Today, we take into account many things that Ellis Island Physicians did not such as native language, culture, physical health, prior education, observations, parent reports and teacher reports. Testing at Ellis Island was not comprehensive or fair, which is why there appeared to be such a high number of "moron's," "idiots," and "imbeciles" coming into the Great Hall.

Although this research has found no validity of Ellis Island puzzle tasks, it does recognize the importance of Ellis Island to the profession of Psychology and School Psychology. Ellis Island provided easy access test subjects and an environment to administer a magnitude of tests without consent. The Puzzle tasks and Knox Cube test were the starting blocks for intelligence tests and future cognitive assessments. Ellis Island was essentially where "IQ" testing became known and popular amongst medical professionals.

Limitations to this study were inevitable due to the simple fact that the researchers could not re-create the time, environment or sample that occurred at Ellis Island. Primarily, it is assumed that all of the subjects in the current study spoke English either as a first or second language. This experiment recruited a convenient sample of third and fourth grade students who were not asked about personal information such as cultural or language background, SES, or current learning disabilities. It can be assumed that because were attending English-speaking schools, they were fluent in the English language. Children at Ellis Island were most likely non-

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English speaking. The sample in this study also assumed that each subject had been educated for at least 4 or 5 years. Not only could it be assumed that participants had prior education, but the schools in which they attended are known to be good schools that provide a good education. Children at Ellis Island may have never gone to school or become educated, many did not know how to read or write, let alone understand a foreign language. Lastly, there was no way to recreate the language barrier, hunger, stress, confusion and sickness that Ellis Island immigrants were experiencing as they entered the Great Hall. In the current research, all of the tasks were given in English with prompts and directions that could be easily understood by each participant. Participants were also provided the opportunity to ask questions if they did not understand something during the activity. Similarly to Ellis Island, tests directions were given in English, dissimilarly, the current subjects understood what was happening and were under very little pressure to achieve.

We have now seen that immigration policies have changed since the time of Ellis Island in the early 1900's, however the underlying debate of who to let in and who to deport still presents stark commonalities. America still strives to recruit the best of the best, whether individuals are rich and famous, or brilliantly smart. Immigrants who will contribute to society are wanted and therefore granted a path to citizenship, while immigrants deemed burdensome to society are excluded. A conclusion we can make from the current study is that Ellis Island physicians did not know what they were looking for when they tested thousands of immigrants, therefore may have missed an opportunity to benefit from a more diverse population. Maybe they left out certain individuals who could have contributed to society, but instead they were deported based on their poor assessment. Furthermore, this informs us as to the necessity for current and future immigration standards to be informed and comprehensive. The immigration

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policies in the future should attempt to avoid further discrimination and rejection of potentially high contributors to society. I.e., good people, hard workers, and talented individuals.

Future research should replicate the same study with a larger more heterogeneous sample of various ages in order to generate a better understanding of how age played a role during Ellis Island puzzle tasks. Future research may also wish to include a sample of English Language Learners (ELL) or English as a Second Language students' (ESL students). This would more so capture the language barrier apparent at Ellis Island.

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