

SOME IMMIGRATION METHODS AND RESULTS IN DEVIATES

BY CLAIRETTE P. ARMSTRONG, PH.D.

Psychologist, Domestic Relations Court, New York City

Although immigration was limited quantitatively in 1929 and the depression has caused a greater proportion of emigration for the nonce, no forward step has been taken towards a better *qualitative* selection of aliens arriving even today in the United States. This has portentous socio-psychological results. The quota law allows yearly 153,714 immigrants, though but 35,576 entered in 1932, and the number is unlimited from Canada, Mexico, South and Central America. The law, excluding the extreme intellectual deviate, that is the feebleminded, makes no provision against admitting those who, although not actually feebleminded, may be mentally retarded according to prevailing standards of social, vocational and educational adaptability, that is, the less pronounced deviates. Even mentally defective applicants for American visas are often admitted on too elastic a diagnosis. Seemingly generous and broad-minded, this policy in reality frequently defeats the very aim of the law by admitting persons who fulfill the definition of mental deficiency according to the British Royal Commission on Care and Control of the Feebleminded, being incapable “(a) of competing on equal terms with their normal fellows; or (b) of managing themselves and their affairs with ordinary prudence.” This likewise may apply to many immigrants of borderline intelligence and even to the very dull normal, when attempting to adjust themselves to the complications of life in the United States.

Norms for batteries of psychological tests tapping various abilities, both verbal and non-verbal in character, have been computed on Polish applicants for visas abroad, selected by a clerk because they were “not suspected of being mentally defective”¹ though admittedly not representative of the average of their population, namely a sampling largely of older, unschooled, illiterate women,

¹ J. D. Reichard. The intelligence of the prospective immigrant, *Pub. Health Bull.*, No. 206, U. S. Treasury Dept., Public Health Service, Washington, D. C., 1933.

chosen because they "always offer the greatest difficulty in determining the degree of mental capacity." Such standardization is obviously too low for an American average and therefore an unreliable medium to assist in diagnosing mental deficiency.

Aside from the technical question of the feebleminded, Dr. Kolb² summarizes the deleterious results of admitting to this country the intellectually retarded, in an account of testing 3000 immigrants in Europe. "The concept mental deficiency is not broad enough to exclude all persons who for social and eugenic reasons it would be desirable to exclude," and "a general lowering of intelligence together with a certain amount of delinquency, crime and institutional support is inevitable where many persons of such low mentality are introduced into the population."

Such a harvest is reaped by institutions in New York City, of which a sampling specializing in various types of child-deviates is shown in the following table.

PARENTAL NATIVITIES NEW YORK CITY DEVIATES (PERCENTAGES)

Country	Delinquents Children's Court	Disciplinary Schools		Commitment D P W ("families")		Mental Defectives	
		Parental	Truant	Asked	Granted	P.S. Un- graded Classes	Randall's Island
		1930	March 1933	1930		1921	1930
U.S.A. (White) ..	18.9	18.6	14				
(Negro) ..	11.7	20.6	25	38	36.4	25	22
Italy	27.8	33.7	27	19	19.5	34	24
Poland	—	6.0	7	3	3.3	—	3
Russia	20.3	1.7	10	9	9.0	18	14
Ireland	3.3	5.0	3	3	2.4	5	6
Germany	1.6	.7	3	1	1.4	6	1
Other	16.4	13.7	11	27	28.0	12	29
	100.0	100.0	100	100	100.0	100	99.
Number	8179	300	756	6228	2430	4771	631

Parental nativity of delinquents in 1930 in the Children's Court in New York City was 69 per cent foreign, 19 per cent American white and 12 per cent colored. Mental retardation is the rule among the approximately 8,000 delinquent children arraigned

² L. Kolb. The intelligence of immigrants as measured by tests, *Proc. & Addr. Amer. Asso. Stud. Feeble-Mind.*, 1932, 37, 395-407.

yearly,³ which number is augmented to about 12,000 when the neglected are included.

During the year ending March, 1933,⁴ the Parental School housed 300 chronic truants of whom 18.6 per cent were second generation American white, 20.6 per cent negro, and 60.8 per cent of foreign parentage. The three disciplinary schools attended by 756 less serious truants had only 14 per cent second generation American white, 25 per cent colored and 61 per cent with foreign parents. The average I.Q., just over 80 for these truant schools, shows the prevalent intellectual retardation.⁵

Nativity of families of "normal, dependent children, without relatives to care for them" (exclusive of feebleminded, delinquents, improperly guarded, physically handicapped), before the Department of Public Welfare in 1930, is also given.⁶ The 6,228 "families" (comprising 13,449 children) proposed for commitment to institutions and the 2,430 accepted for commitment, were largely foreign-born, 61 per cent and 64 per cent respectively. No color distinction is made in the American parentage groups, but with 780 colored children in the 883 American "families" accepted, the preponderance of negroes can be deduced. In 1929 there were 16,710 "normal" children as DPW charges upon the city and in 1930 the nationality factor assumed more serious portent with 18,116. The average institutional or dependent child has always been found well below the average public school child in intelligence, as illustrated by R. C. White's⁷ study of 451 children in care of the New York Charity Organization Society.

In 1921 the Department of Ungraded Classes of the Public Schools reported 4,771 children diagnosed as morons and imbeciles of all degrees, 75 per cent of whom had foreign-born parents.⁸ Nativity is probably the same today for the 10,000 mental defectives undergoing manual training, though no figures are available.

Committed to the Children's Hospital, Randall's Island in 1930, were 631 mental defectives of whom 22 per cent had Ameri-

³ C. P. Armstrong. Juvenile delinquency as related to immigration, *School and Soc.*, 1933, 38, 61-64.

⁴ Data by courtesy of the Division of Reference, Research and Statistics, Board of Education.

⁵ Data by courtesy of the School Principals.

⁶ Annual Report, Department of Public Welfare, 1930.

⁷ R. C. White. The intelligence of children in dependent families, *Soc. Forces*, 1928, 7, 61-68.

⁸ Data obtained from the Dept. of Ungraded Classes.

can-born parents (colored and white undifferentiated) and 78 per cent had foreign-born parents.⁹ Investigating resemblance between parents and children, V. Moorrees¹⁰ collaborating with Dr. Louise Poull studied the immediate heredity of primary aments and found that in a sampling of mentally defective children committed to Randall's Island, 73 per cent had one or both parents whose I.Q. likewise was below 70. This illustrates the probability of resemblance between parents and children.

The foregoing figures demonstrate the results of immigration accruing from the intellectually low grade who contribute so large a quota of deviates, mental defectives, and the intellectually retarded, who may become delinquents and public charges and who require special training and supervision. The approximately 43,000 children who are today public problems as enumerated, would be greatly augmented were the feebleminded committed outside the city, delinquents in corrective institutions and dependent children under the care of various philanthropic societies, the majority likewise having foreign parents, included. Were such a computation conducted for other cities, the number of low-intellectual deviates under 16 years of age requiring special provision would certainly give pause.

To conclude: Since methods of measurement employed to diagnose the feebleminded immigrant do not always discriminate those mentally defective; since the outstanding proportion of mentally defective and intellectually sub-normal children, public charges in New York City, have foreign-born parents who probably resemble their children intellectually; it is obvious that an unscientific method, not only in failure to deport defectives, but also of selecting immigrants, prevails, with too wide latitude in accepting the intellectually inferior. This results in a catabolic process of national development. The population lag is already more than traffic can bear. Therefore, an eugenic experiment of admitting only intellectually normal literates would be not only an anabolic evolutionary process replacing the present dysgenic system, but also more humane, and socially and economically expedient.

⁹ Data obtained from Dr. Caroline Martin, Medical Registrar, Bellevue Hospital.

¹⁰ V. Moorrees. The immediate heredity of primary aments committed to a public institution, *J. Appl. Psychol.*, 1924, 8, 89-127.