

Immigration: Abilities Expected of the Immigrant Community and Their Transition to a New Life

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Purpose

To understand public perception of immigrants, immigration, and what is expected of immigrants transitioning to life in a new country through an ableism lens.

Introduction

Transitioning/adapting to new circumstance's in one's life is not an easy task. This is particularly true for immigrants trying to adjust to a new country: a whole new culture, language, judicial and educational system, etc.

Some preliminary questions come to mind: what is it exactly that makes this transition so difficult, apart from things just being "different"?

Moreover, what abilities are expected of immigrants and why are certain abilities favoured over others? Does this change over time, and in what ways?

Using the NYT as a public media outlet with which to examine perceptions surrounding immigrants, this research attempts to identify and understand how immigrants are perceived, specifically through an ableism lens.

Given the results shown, we were able to conclude that trends in historical and current events/practices are indicators of the abilities expected of immigrants, according to public perceptions.

Table 1)

Total n=318	1851-1870 N=18	1871-1890 N=23	1891-1910 N=47	1911-1920 N=14	1921-1930 N=45	1931-1950 N=30	1951-1970 N=28	1971-1990 N=34	1991-2000 N=25	2001-2011 N=54
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Table 3)

Ability Code	Total number of hits	Date Ranges- # of Hits (percentage)								
		1851-1871	1871-1890	1891-1910	1911-1930	1931-1950	1951-1970	1971-1990	1991-2011	
Assimilation	103	1	7	4	36	8	8	15	24	
Adaptation	20	2	3	1	8	2	2	1	1	
Language	123	2	4	26	8	3	8	10	62	
Communication	55	2	1	8	9	1	8	5	21	
Transitioning	11	1	1	0	4	0	1	1	3	
Adjustment	24	1	1	0	8	2	4	1	7	
Contribute to Community	50	1	3	5	9	2	11	2	17	
Integrate	15	0	1	0	1	2	2	0	9	
Responsibility	64	0	3	7	17	6	6	3	22	
Progress	50	0	0	1	23	9	6	3	8	
Competence	76	0	4	18	1	4	19	7	30	
Theme										
Culture-Shock	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Multiculturalism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Public Resentment of Immigrants	19	0	3	2	8	2	0	0	4	
Discrimination	171	6	8	12	37	9	38	30	31	
Difficulty Adjusting to New Life										
Public Resentment by Immigrants	7	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	1	
Xenophobia	20	0	2	0	8	1	4	0	5	
Fear of Loss of Identity	14	0	0	0	6	1	0	1	6	
Anti-Immigration	46	2	1	0	4	3	1	4	31	
Unequal Employment Opportunity	33	0	2	1	6	1	2	7	13	
Stereotype	17	0	2	2	4	0	2	1	6	
Illness	37	1	0	1	4	1	3	1	1	
Unfitness	24	0	2	10	15	1	1	0	0	
Crime	111	0	2	4	23	5	3	10	64	
Patriotism	29	1	0	2	12	2	3	1	8	
Human Rights	37	5	0	0	21	3	3	0	5	
Equality	31	2	0	1	14	1	8	0	5	
Education	213	3	3	25	28	13	22	28	91	
Racism	86	5	7	7	16	5	26	4	16	
Social Support Network	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	
Regulation	170	2	5	0	37	16	60	26	24	
Domination	8	1	0	0	5	1	0	0	1	
Liberty	29	2	0	1	5	5	7	5	3	
Condescension	7	0	2	1	1	0	1	0	2	
Restriction	238	1	8	8	58	24	59	25	55	
Progress	44	0	0	1	17	9	6	3	8	
Quality of Immigrants	93	1	12	7	27	15	16	8	7	
Aiding Transition	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	
Exclusion	99	0	5	35	26	12	13	2	6	
Fitness	36	0	2	21	11	1	1	0	0	

Table 2)

Ability Code	Date Ranges (# of Hits(# of Docs))	1921-1930 n=14	1991-2000 n=25	2001-2011 n=54
Assimilation	14(9)	22(15)	18(12)	6(11)
Adaptation	2(2)	6(5)	0(0)	1(1)
Language	1(1)	7(5)	4(2)	58(26)
Communication	1(1)	8(5)	8(3)	13(8)
Transitioning	1(1)	3(3)	2(2)	1(1)
Adjustment	1(1)	7(3)	2(2)	5(4)
Contribute to Community	4(3)	5(3)	3(2)	14(4)
Integrate	0(0)	1(1)	3(3)	6(5)
Responsibility	1(1)	16(11)	4(3)	14(8)
Progress	1(1)	22(14)	5(3)	3(3)
Competence	0(0)	1(1)	9(6)	21(7)
Theme				
Culture-Shock	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Multiculturalism	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Public Resentment of Immigrants	7(6)	1(1)	2(1)	2(2)
Discrimination	19(12)	18(12)	7(5)	24(9)
Difficulty Adjusting to New Life	1(1)	3(3)	0(0)	1(1)
Public Resentment by Immigrants	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)
Xenophobia	8(7)	0(0)	2(2)	3(2)
Fear of Loss of Identity	5(5)	1(1)	0(0)	6(1)
Fear	5(5)	15(5)	12(7)	19(10)
Anti-Immigration	4(4)	0(0)	5(2)	8(6)
Unequal Employment Opportunity	2(2)	6(6)	2(2)	7(5)
Stereotype	4(4)	0(0)	3(2)	3(3)
Illness	4(1)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)
Unfitness	5(5)	10(7)	0(0)	0(0)
Crime	4(4)	19(5)	10(7)	54(14)
Patriotism	6(5)	6(6)	6(2)	2(2)
Human Rights	15(5)	6(5)	0(0)	5(4)

Methods

Research Questions

- What are historical and present perceptions of immigrants and immigration?
- What abilities and themes are mentioned in a public media outlet with respect to immigrants/immigration in North America?
- How do the abilities and themes mentioned relate to each other and come together to demonstrate what is expected of immigrants when they arrive in a new country?

Methods & Design

Content Analysis (Summative, Frequency), Thematic Analysis

•Public Media Outlet (New York Times)

- Historical Review (1851-2011)

- Articles divided into 20-year time increments with the exception of two time increments, which were split into 10-year increments to better showcase the trends of these abilities.

•Began with a pre-determined list of ability codes→ built upon, themes added as articles were read and tagged.

•318 relevant articles from ProQuest New York Times and Late Edition East Coast New York Times databases for different years see (table 1).

Assumptions & Frameworks

The framework used to examine this topic was ableism. The assumptions made in conducting this research were two: that the NYT contains relevant information to conduct the literature review. The articles found using selected search strategy provide sufficient data to support arguments.

Results/Discussion

The results of this research are summarized in the tables and figure to the left. Those abilities highlighted generally experienced a peak at two particular time increments: 1911-1931 and 1991-2011. For this reason, those 20-year time increments were split into 10-year time increments and summarized in a separate table, to better illustrate the trends regarding which abilities seemed most significant at a given point in time. Looking at the 10 year interval data suggest that the time from 2001-2011 led to a peak of negative coverage of immigration last seen between 1911-1931.

Further, Table 2 and 3 and Figure 1 illustrate a selection of the abilities expected of immigrants and where they peaked, historically. Ex) discrimination/racism from 1911-1931 and 1991-2011, and how this theme relates to an immigrant's ability to assimilate, speak the language, communicate and perform tasks competently. This, in turn, relates to the immigrant's perceived level of education, and thus to a point of exclusion of these immigrants based on the notion that their education is "sub-par" in comparison to that of a country's natives. Therefore, their "desirability" for admittance to the country as a contributing member of society/community is compromised. This was the case from 1911-1931, during the "fitness screenings" of Ellis Island, for example, which were designed to determine the "quality" of immigrants being admitted into the United States. It remains pertinent from 1991-2011 and to some extent even more from 2001-2011 and in current events where we see that on a daily basis, immigrants of Hispanic descent are turned away from immigrating into the United States.

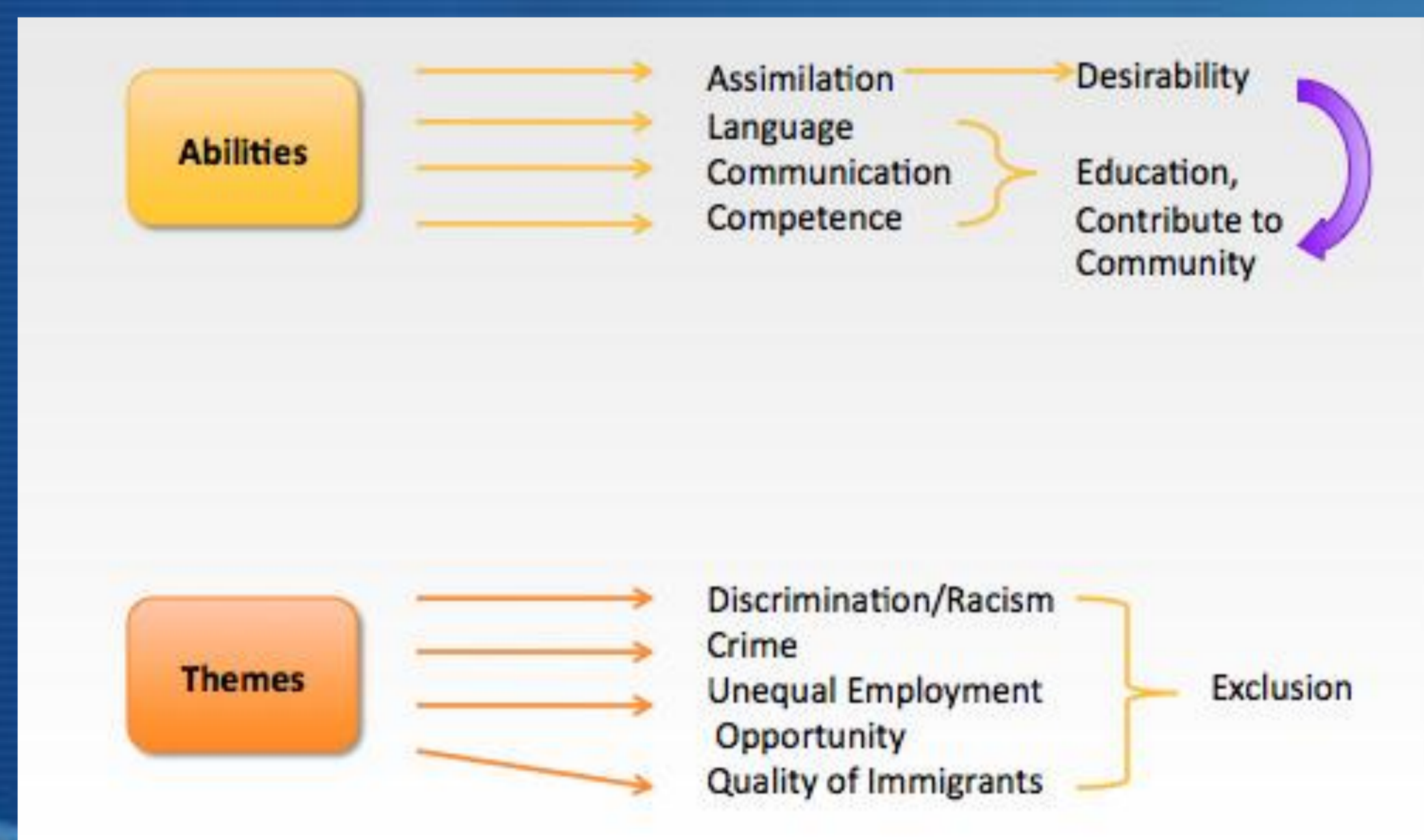
Implications: By referencing past/historical trends, we are better able to predict whether today's realities have a historical precedent as to public perceptions and expectations of immigrants and immigration in North America.

Limitations: While using the NYT gave us the longest historical timeline possible for available resources, this kept the scope of the literature review mostly restricted to the United States

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Table 3)



Conclusion

As was illustrated in the discussion, historical events and practices have an influence on the perceived abilities of immigrants and thus, the abilities that are expected of them if they are to be fully contributing members of society/community in a new country. This was illustrated through the example of discrimination and racism, a theme found in the literature which relates to several of an immigrant's perceived abilities.



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