

Henry Herbert Goddard (1866–1957)

Henry Herbert Goddard was a psychologist who conducted research on intelligence and mental deficiency at the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Boys and Girls in Vineland, New Jersey during the early twentieth century. In 1908, Goddard brought French psychologist Alfred Binet and physician Theodore Simon's intelligence test to the US and used it to investigate intellectual disability in children at the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Boys and Girls. Goddard also wrote a book in 1912 called *The Kallikaks: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*, claiming that traits like mental deficiency were heritable traits. His observations and research led Goddard to advocate for sterilization and segregation of the intellectually disabled, which were ideas that reflected the emerging eugenics movement in the US, during the early nineteenth century. Although by the end of his life, psychologists largely dismissed Goddard's work, schools and the US military used Goddard's version of Binet and Simon's intelligence test to identify mental deficiency.

Goddard was born on 14 August 1866 in Vassalboro, Maine. His mother, Sarah Winslow Goddard, and his father, Henry Clay Goddard, were Quakers, a denomination of Christianity. Goddard attended Haverford College in Haverford, Pennsylvania, where he received a bachelor's degree in 1887. Following his graduation, Goddard taught Latin, history, and botany at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, California, where he also served as the one of the first coaches for the school's football team. After one year in Los Angeles, Goddard returned to Haverford College and earned a master's degree in mathematics in 1889. During that same year, he began teaching at the Damascus Academy in Damascus, Ohio, where he met his wife Emma Florence Robbins, who Goddard also married in 1889. He then became a teacher at Oak Grove Seminary in Vassalboro in 1891 and later became principal of that school until 1896.

Goddard later started to study psychology through contact with psychologist Granville Stanley Hall. Goddard moved to Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he studied with Hall and became involved in the child-study movement. Hall founded the child-study movement, which studied children to help develop laws concerning the education of children. Goddard earned his doctorate degree in psychology in 1899. During that same year, Goddard joined the psychology faculty at the State Normal School in West Chester, Pennsylvania. In 1901, Goddard and Hall attended a child-study movement meeting in Newark, New Jersey, where they met Edward Ransome Johnstone. At that time, Johnstone was the principal and head of the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Children at Vineland, hereafter the Training School at Vineland. Goddard and Hall continued to exchange ideas with Johnstone and formed a group to study mental deficiencies, called the Feeble-minded Club. Johnstone later hired Goddard to work as the director of research at a new research laboratory at the Training School at Vineland, and in September 1906, Goddard began his research into mental deficiency.

In his research, Goddard attempted to study the intelligence of children, but according to historian Ludy T. Benjamin Jr., he did not know how to conduct that type of research. To learn from other researchers, in 1908, Goddard traveled throughout Europe, where he became familiar with and obtained copies of a French psychologist Alfred Binet and physician Theodore Simon's intelligence test. The purpose of the test was to assign children a mental age based on their abilities to complete several tasks, like copy patterns and identify objects. Binet and Simon defined mental age in terms of the actual age of a child with average intelligence. In other words, if a child tested below the score of an average child of their age, then Binet and Simon considered those children to be mentally deficient.

Goddard later translated the intelligence test from French to English and wrote an article about the

test, called "The Grading of Backward Children: The De Sanctis Tests, and the Binet and Simon Tests of Intellectual Capacity" in 1908. Goddard began to use it with the residents at the Training School at Vineland and became an advocate of the intelligence test, administering it to several teachers to use on their students. According to Benjamin, Goddard eagerly promoted the intelligence test, which spread rapidly throughout the US and became a popular tool to measure intelligence.

Beginning in the early 1900s, Goddard used his observations at the Training School at Vineland and Binet and Simon's intelligence test to develop his ideas about mental deficiency and heredity. At a 1909 meeting, Goddard presented an early paper on the heredity of feeble-mindedness to the American Breeders Association, which was an organization that was interested in human heredity and published articles on the inheritance of mental traits. During that time, Goddard also developed the notion that a small percentage of children who did not progress in school, or what Goddard referred to as backward children, would not respond to treatment or educational instruction. Previously, educators considered those children to be unable to achieve a level of intellect that they considered normal for that age. Educators believed that, with the proper educational approach, such deficiencies could be remedied. However, Goddard noted that he thought the children to be mentally deficient and referred to his studies as proof that those deficiencies were permanent. Up until that time, schools did not consider those children to be feeble-minded, rather they called those children backward, dim, or slow.

During that same time, Goddard expanded Binet and Simon's original categories of what they considered to be mental deficiency and added the term moron to those categories. Binet and Simon's original categories included idiot, or mental age of two years or younger, and imbecile, or mental age of three to seven years. According to historian Wendy Kline, Goddard thought that Binet and Simon's original categories should expand to include children between the ages of eight and twelve years. Thus, for that age range, Goddard proposed the term moron, which he derived from the Greek word for foolish, or moronia. According to Kline, Goddard defined that group to be the most dangerous to society, as they were unable to mature past early adolescence.

Goddard discussed his research and ideas on intelligence in his book, called *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*, hereafter *The Kallikak Family*, which he published in 1912. In that book, Goddard followed the ancestry of a young girl named Emma Wolverton, who attended the Training School at Vineland, starting in 1897. Goddard found that Emma, whom Goddard referred to by the fictitious name Deborah Kallikak, descended from a Revolutionary War soldier, whom Goddard referred to as Martin Kallikak. Goddard found that the soldier had a romantic relationship with a female tavern worker, who, in his book, Goddard refers to as feeble-minded. Goddard traced the family through six generations and discovered a line of descendants from the Wolverton family, which included a total of 143 family members, who Goddard deemed associated with poverty and criminal and adulterous behaviors like alcoholism and prostitution.

Goddard formulated the name Kallikak, which he derived from the Greek words for good, which is kallos, and bad, which is kakos. Kakos represented the Wolverton line of descendants, while kallos represented the other line. Because, as Goddard states, the kallos side of Emma's family did not demonstrate characteristics of feeble-mindedness but the kakos side did, Goddard concluded that the characteristics of the kakos side of the Kallikaks, as well as mental deficiency, were heritable traits. As he wrote in *The Kallikak Family*, Goddard believed that he had shown heredity, rather than social factors, to be the cause of poverty, as well as criminal and adulterous behaviors.

Goddard's advocacy of those methods to restrict the reproduction of those that he thought to be feeble-minded reflected the rising eugenics movement of the early twentieth century in the US. The eugenics movement championed the idea that only people with what eugenicists declared to be the most desirable traits should reproduce. Because of that idea, eugenicists argued that the restriction of reproduction of those who they considered to carry inferior traits would improve the human population. In *The Kallikak Family*, Goddard wrote that society should restrict marriage, sterilize, or prevent reproduction, and segregate those people that they deemed feeble-minded, which aligned with eugenicists' arguments. However, according to *The Kallikak Family*, Goddard thought that sterilization may be too controversial and unlikely to be fully effective. Instead, he recommended that people ought to segregate the feeble-minded into institutions, with separate institutions for men and women, where they could be kept from society. That would, according to Goddard, prevent

those people from reproducing and engaging in the criminal and adulterous behaviors, reducing the prevalence of feebleminded people.

In 1912, Goddard, along with two assistants, traveled to Ellis Island in New York City, New York, to recognize feebleminded individuals using Binet and Simon's intelligence test and determine the mental abilities of immigrants. One assistant selected immigrants who she identified as feebleminded and sent them to a second assistant for further tests. Goddard claimed that the results demonstrated that nearly eighty percent of Jewish, Hungarian, Italian, and Russian immigrants were, according to the intelligence test, feebleminded.

In 1917, psychologist Robert Yerkes contacted Goddard to assist with the development of mental intelligence tests for US Army recruits for World War I. The testing team administered those intelligence tests to nearly two million US Army recruits in two forms, one form being for literate recruits and another form, including pictures, being for recruits who could not read English well. The testing team found that forty-five percent tested were feebleminded, having a mental age under thirteen years. In a series of *The New Republic* articles, journalist Walter Lippmann challenged those results, noting that the tests were an inaccurate measure of intelligence. Further, supporters of the eugenics movement and others used the data in the debate about immigration and proposals to sterilize and segregate those they thought to be feeble-minded.

In 1918, Goddard left the Training School at Vineland but continued to study the psychology of children. After leaving Vineland, Goddard became director of the Ohio Bureau of Juvenile Research in Columbus, Ohio. Then in 1922, Goddard took a position as a professor at the Department of Abnormal and Clinical Psychology at the Ohio State University in Columbus. He remained in that position until his retirement in 1938, teaching and writing articles on juvenile delinquency, the teaching of gifted children, and even an article on multiple personality disorder, which Goddard published in 1926 in *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* and called "A Case of Dual Personality." Multiple personality disorder is the presence of two or more different personalities in one person.

For the remainder of his lifetime, Goddard did not return to research of the feebleminded, and his previous work in the field began to suffer from increased criticism during the 1920s. In addition to Lippmann's series of articles in *The New Republic*, the work of biologist Thomas Hunt Morgan demonstrated that the inheritance of even simple traits, like eye color and blood type, was complex. Morgan stated that those simple traits were measurable, yet traits like intelligence are variable between people and not likely a heritable trait. Further, in his 1926 book *The Inheritance of Mental Disease*, psychiatrist Abraham Myerson criticized Goddard's work, stating that Goddard's assistants were not adequately trained and questioning the accuracy of Goddard's findings and interpretations of the intelligence tests. Despite that opposition, the eugenics movement in the US continued to cite Goddard's work. Joseph Spence DeJarnette, then director of Western State Hospital in Staunton, Virginia, even cited *The Kallikak Family* in his testament to the Amherst County Courthouse in Amherst, Virginia, which eventually resulted in the 1927 US Supreme Court case *Buck v Bell*. The court held that a Virginia law, allowing the forced sterilization of feebleminded women, was constitutional.

By the end of the 1920s, Goddard began to question some of his own work, according to his biographer, historian Leila Zenderland. Zenderland wrote that the results of the Binet intelligence tests among the US Army showed that some people, who tested with a mental age less than twelve years old are morons, but in actuality, many of those people did not have mental deficiency. Goddard also reconsidered his ideas about the dangerousness of the feebleminded, noting that they seemed to be able to function in society and were not the menace that he once claimed. Also, Goddard suggested that those with mental deficiencies should be trained to do jobs suited to their abilities and allowed to reproduce.

Toward the end of his life Goddard worked on an autobiography, which he titled *As Luck Would Have It*, but never finished or published it. In 1942, he wrote a defense of *The Kallikak Family* and received some support from his colleagues. Despite that, Goddard remained unpopular in the scientific community. For example, in 1940, psychologist Knight Dunlap expressed that *The Kallikak Family* did not have any scientific merit, stating that other psychologists had not claimed

The Kallikak Family to have merit.

Goddard died in Santa Barbara, California on 16 June 1957.

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