Stereotypes vs. Statistics in Immigration
Lesson 1

Grades 7 - 12
Objective To identify stereotypes regarding immigrants and contrast them with data from the Pew Research Center
Materials Check Your Assumptions quiz (one per student, or one per pair)
Check Your Assumptions answer key
Pew Research Center mini-lessons
Discussion questions at the end of this lesson plan
Optional: Pencil/Paper or 1:1 device for written student response

Background

Immigration into the United States is incredibly complex and highly politicized. The combination of press, statements by public figures and social media can create an echo chamber, which reinforces specific views about the immigration process and immigrants themselves. In this lesson, students identify stereotypes perpetuated in our society, as well as their own assumptions and understandings. Next, they use data from the Pew Research Center to contrast these views with actual data on immigration patterns and immigrant identities. Students will examine both legal and undocumented immigration as well as current policies that affect both types of immigration.

Lesson Procedure

1.) Naming our assumptions

Ask students to think about common assumptions and stereotypes about immigrants. (If needed, define “stereotype” for class).

Distribute pieces of paper for students to write down assumptions and stereotypes they have heard or perhaps that they have. These can include questions. Do not place names on the papers, but fold them and walk with a basket to receive student papers. (This anonymity will allow for a wider variety of student comments).

Using your discretion, name and list some of the student submissions

2.) Checking our assumptions

Individually or in pairs, have students take the 20 question “Check Your Assumptions” quiz. You can assign all 20 questions to everyone, or assign 5-7 questions per group.
3.) **Research: Meeting Stereotypes with Statistics**

Explain to students that they will work in small groups to determine the actual answers to the quiz. Distribute the mini-lessons on immigration. Consider passing out one mini-lesson to a group of 4-5 students, so they can work in teams.

The mini-lessons are essentially short articles on different aspects of immigration. All the questions on the “Check Your Assumptions” quiz come directly from the texts of the mini-lessons.

These mini-lessons were created as part of an online program by the Pew Research Center, a national, non-partisan research organization with highly authoritative data.

As students find questions they can answer, they prepare to share with the larger class their findings.

4.) **Assemble Data**

As a class, work through the quiz with groups providing a contextualized answer for each of the questions they were able to answer.

5.) **Analysis**

Facilitate a discussion using the prompts below:
- Which of your findings surprised you? How so?
- What is one new thing you learned about legal immigrants?
- What is one new thing you learned about undocumented immigrants?
- How does the data compare to stereotypes when it comes to:
  - Legal vs. unauthorized immigration
  - English language acquisition
  - Path to citizenship
  - Contribution to the workforce
  - Countries of origin
  - States where immigrants reside
  - The complexity of immigration
- How does what we see and hear in the media and from political leaders compare to actual data?
- What impact can skewed or untruthful rhetoric about immigrants have on our communities?
- What impact, if any, might there be if more accurate information about immigration was more widespread?
- How do stereotypes about ethnicity and race impact popular views of immigration?

**EXTENSION**

Use the above questions as the basis for individual written student responses.
Ruby Bridges on school steps with U.S. Marshals

Image Source: U.S Department of Justice