

Are They Taking Our Jobs? Misconceptions about Illegal Immigrants

In spite of our long history as a nation of immigrants, many Americans confuse the myth and the reality of illegal immigration in this country. Many Americans view illegal immigrants as a drain on our social welfare and health systems, a threat to the safety of our communities, and a disruption in the flow of U.S. jobs. These perspectives on immigrants and immigration stem from miscommunication floating around the community, and misinformation perpetuated by anti-immigration proponents. In order to dispel these misconceptions, grassroots and mass media must circulate reputable research and legitimate statistical data which tells the truth about illegal immigrants and reminds citizens of the important role immigrants—both legal and illegal—play in our nation’s history and current culture.

In order to discuss the truths about immigration, it’s necessary to first examine the popular misconceptions. One of the largest myths surrounding illegal immigration is that most immigrants are here illegally. According to *Teaching Tolerance*, two thirds of non-citizens enter into this country through legal means (“5 Myths About Immigration”). A bulk of those individuals here “illegally” have expired work or student visas. Even immigrants who have legal green cards have trouble naturalizing. This is due to strict U.S. immigration laws which make it extremely difficult to obtain citizenship once those initial visas have expired.

Commented [AHall1]: Title seems to blend in with first paragraph, maybe make it bold? Also, is there supposed to be a page number on the first page? Not sure what prof will want.

Commented [AHall2]: Seems redundant. You start the sentence by saying that our nation is one of immigrants, you mention Americans specifically, so why bring up “in this country”?

Commented [AHall3]: Consider using “should” instead.

Commented [AHall4]: This sentence seems lengthy and confusing – I had to read it a couple of times to get the full meaning.

Another serious claim which frames immigration arguments is that many foreign-born individuals move to this country to access the benefits of our welfare system. While this sounds like a legitimate concern, it has one distinct flaw. Those without legal status cannot claim benefits from U.S. social programs. The screening processes are very thorough, checking backgrounds and social security numbers before any benefits are available. Even naturalized citizens must wait five years before they are eligible for benefits, according to the SNAP program (“Non-Citizen Eligibility”). This process is similar for most government assistance programs, primarily depend~~ing~~ upon ~~the individual state’s requirements~~ the potential recipient’s state’s requirements.

Far from the debauched malcontents which immigration opponents paint undocumented migrants to be, most of the individuals who enter this country through illicit means do so to find work or rejoin their families. Instead of taking jobs from American workers, illegales illegals often do the manual labor and unpleasant low-skill low-wage jobs most native workers find undesirable. In fact, the United States job market depends on the combined labor of undocumented laborers, native workers and legal migrants working in concert (“5 Myths About Immigration”). Without this supply of workers (who, yes, do pay taxes), the American economy would struggle to keep up with the growing costs of supplying Medicare and Social Security to an aging Baby Boomer populace.

One key to solving problems like these is to look at the root of misconceptions about immigration. In their article “The Social Perspective and Professional Communication,” Thralls and Blyler discuss the ways communication is affected by a sense of community or

Commented [AHall5]: Perhaps mention also that they may be seeking refuge from war-torn areas, etc.

Commented [AHall6]: Misspelling

Commented [AHall7]: Odd word choice. Consider rephrasing: “together.”

Commented [AHall8]: Awkward wording. Perhaps instead: “actually” in the place of “yes.”

belonging. Their exploration of communication theories directly impacts the issue of immigration in this country. When an individual or group does not belong to a particular already existing particular group, the group often has a way of seeing their input, and even their existence as lesser or invalid. To this end, groups often create inclusive or implicit rules, social codes or jargon in order to maintain their exclusivity. When the problems of immigration are viewed against this concept, distinctive parallels become apparent.

Immigrants, especially those who are viewed as gaining improper access to this country, are not viewed as part of the in-group “current citizens,” despite the possibility that many of these legal residents have family members whose were of foreign-born origin somewhere down the line. As members of the in-group, Americans view themselves in a specific light. For the most part, all Americans speak a common language; that of American English. All U.S. citizens also have a common set of laws which they abide by as citizens, even though each set of rules may differ slightly (or even vastly) from city to city, state to state, and region to region. Still, these laws typically fall under the general umbrella of the U.S. Constitution.

More important to Americans than their laws are the norms and mores ascribed by social, cultural, and religious means. Even though immigrants entering this country may possess many of these values and may come from very similar backgrounds, economically, politically, and religiously, those targeted as undesirable by U.S. citizens are not regarded for their similarities, but for their differences. Members of the American in-group are more likely to single out the lack of shared language and subtle differences in values and norms, despite the fact that many of these the variations may be slight. This need for

Commented [AHall9]: Consider cutting as is creates confusion with the other use of “group”, or reword in such a way that makes it easier to understand which group is which.

Commented [AHall10]: Reference comment 9

categorization, while very human in its nature, is also responsible in part for the prejudices held against illegal immigrants, and immigrants in general. These prejudices cause Americans to disregard the rags-to-riches migratory stories of their culture and, as a result, dehumanize and even demonize illegal immigrants.

Commented [AHall11]: Nothing wrong here, just wanted to point out that what you're saying in this paper is totally correct and I'm glad to see someone else thinking it. ;)

Another way to look at the issue of immigration is to step even further back and explore the way that borders shape our reality. In fact, maps have distinct ways of drawing social, political, and economic lines around individuals, groups, and entire countries. In their article "Ideologie and the Map," Barton and Barton discuss how maps are often drawn with political agendas behind them, whether purposeful or subconscious in nature. Drawing from their argument, maps also have the potential to shape the way we view other countries. For example, as denizens of the northern hemisphere, Americans and Europeans, amongst others, tend to view their hemisphere as up (superior) and the southern hemisphere, including countries in or bisected by it, as down (inferior). Whether or not people realize it, their world view can be shaped by hegemonical devices as seemingly innocuous as maps.

Commented [AHall12]: Or "in which"

Similarly, borders have a strong influence on determining like and unlike. Although less than two hundred miles to the border from Austin, Texas, most U.S. citizens would find it difficult to imagine life in a Mexican city. Although the physical terrain is almost identical and both cultural terrains blend an assortment of affluent, middle class, and impoverished, one thick black line of demarcation on Google maps may well place it on the other side of the globe. And while Austin may not be the best demarcation of cultural differences due to

Commented [AHall13]: Use of "although" as starting word in two sentences in a row. Consider using a different word.

its large immigrant and nationalized Mexican populace, there are many, even among local [Hispanic culture](#), who would find the border as challenging to cross as the Rio Grande.

The question then remains, how do we cross this border; how do we combat the misconceptions about illegal immigrants? One important step is to broadcast the realities surrounding immigration. Although many websites exist on both sides of the issue, the problem really is in the polarity. Americans are too inclined to agree with one side or the other, and, as a result, [they](#) only view documents which validate their [personal](#) perspective. This polarity also makes them suspicious of any other documents which challenge their views. Because of this, the dissemination of the truths behind the falsehoods must be from relatively neutral sources. Public information should be displayed by trustworthy news sources and on impartial informational websites. Additionally, pamphlets and public service announcements should broadcast sound bites related to the [truth true](#) nature of immigration.

Only after we combat the fears and falsehoods which surround immigration can this country begin to move forward on border issues. Once the truth is out there, viewed incontrovertibly through trustworthy sources, ~~will~~ this nation [will be able to](#) focus on the real problem [facing immigration, fair wages and labor laws which protect even undocumented workers on the job.](#)

Commented [AHall14]: Misspelling.

Commented [AHall15]: This is awkward. Are you trying to say that we will be able to focus on the problem facing immigration, fair wages and labor laws? Or are you trying to say that the real problem facing immigration IS fair wages and labor laws? Consider rewording to reduce confusion.

Commented [AHall16]: Final comment: All in all I think you have a very strong paper here, much more fluid than mine, I think. ;) There are only a few minor things to edit/review such as spelling errors and a little bit of rephrasing here and there. Hopefully you find my comments helpful. Nice job!

Works Cited

Johnson-Eilola, Johndan, and Stuart A. Selber. *Central Works In Technical Communication / Edited By Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Stuart A. Selber*. n.p.: New York : Oxford University Press, 2004., 2004. *ST EDWARDS UNIV's Catalog*. Web. 24 Sept. 2013.

Meissner, Doris. "5 Myths about Immigration." *Washington Post Opinion*. The Washington Post, 10 May 2010. Web. 23 Sept. 2013.
<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/30/AR2010043001106.html>>.

Non-Citizen Eligibility. U.S.D.A. Food and Nutrition Service, n.d. Web. 23 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/mobile/eligibility/non-citizen-eligibility.html>>.