When you hear immigration discussed in politics today, the narrative tends to focus on the idea that immigrants strain US resources, including education. Many have the perception that immigrant students slow down the academic progress of their peers, but Florencia Silveira, a PhD student at the University of Albany, found compelling data that says otherwise. Silveira completed her undergraduate and master’s degrees at BYU, and as part of her master’s project, she studied the academic performances of immigrant and native-born students in connection to immigration levels in the classroom.

Mikaela Dufur and Jonathan Jarvis, BYU sociology professors and mentors for the project, discovered data with Silveira that disproved the current immigration narrative. To the team’s surprise, they found that classrooms with higher concentrations of immigrant students had better academic performances for both immigrants and native-born students. The study consisted of more than 260,000 students across 10,000 academic institutions in the United States.

The BYU research team analyzed the mathematical performance of native-born, first-generation immigrant, and second-generation immigrant students. They discovered that immigrants perform about 10 to 20 points below native-born students in communities with small immigrant populations, which does support common beliefs. However, as the percentage of immigrant students increased, there was a decrease in the performance gap between all three groups of students. As the group wrote in a paper they published about the study, “In countries with 15 percent or more immigrants, native-born students and immigrants are within 10 points of each other, in countries with 25 percent foreign-born, all three groups perform within 5 points of each other.” The narrowing of the gap resulted from an increase in achievement for all groups.

The team analyzed data from 15-year-old students across 41 high-income countries that included students’ immigrant status and corresponding academic mathematical achievement. Based on the data, they found that first-generation immigrants’ mathematical achievement increased by roughly 21 points for every 10 percent increase in foreign-born population in the classroom. They also found that a 1 percent increase in foreign-born population is associated with a 1.2-point increase in mathematics achievement for students in that country. The findings indicated that students, both immigrant and nonimmigrant alike, benefit academically in populations with a higher percentage of immigrants.

An immigrant herself, Silveira’s project was inspired by the current political shift towards anti-immigration sentiment. She observed that people who hold anti-immigration perspectives argue that immigrants come to the U.S. and take resources from native-born people. Jarvis reflected on the positive results of high immigration concentrations in the classroom. He stated, “Immigrants are often highly motivated and come with high aspirations to succeed. They come [to the United States] for their children’s education, and that tends to lead to prosocial and good behaviors.”

Jarvis also expressed his hope to connect this data to people that make decisions rather than exclude them. “I think the results of this study will help citizens develop more empathy for immigrants and their situations and encourage more willingness to work with people rather than exclude them,” Jarvis described the study as “timely” and said the data was interesting since it was taken from so many countries.

The study of sociology focuses on understanding people of different race, ethnicity, gender, and social class, but it also examines how structures and institutions influence people. Jarvis believes the results of the study will help citizens develop more empathy for immigrants and their situations and encourage more willingness to work with people rather than exclude them.” Jarvis described the study as “timely” and said the data was interesting since it was taken from so many countries.

Dufur expressed the importance of treating everyone as people. “It is so interesting to me the degree to which we have to be reminded that other groups who are not like us are still people,” she concluded.

The BYU research team met weekly over the course of a year, and Dufur described her experience working alongside BYU team members Silveira and Jarvis as “amazing.” The two sociology professors have known Silveira since she began her undergraduate degree at BYU. Dufur enjoyed seeing her grow and develop as she used complex data and complex methods to introduce fresh ideas into the world of sociology.

Jarvis, Dufur, and Silveira are continuing their research in connection to the study. They are currently writing a paper that looks at language disadvantage in educational performance across five English-speaking countries. Jarvis expressed his excitement at the chance to continue to look at these social issues over time as new data is released.

This BYU research team found evidence challenging the popular narrative circulated in politics today and discovered that immigrants positively affect educational systems. Could this be true in other areas such as crime, job markets, and health services? Only time and more research will tell.
Financing the 2016 Election
David B. Magleby, Editor (Political Science)

In 1970, the priest Nicolas Vernier was accused of neglect of church services, inappropriate behavior in the confessional, financial improprieties, and affairs with the village schoolmistresses. In a contentious church court case, parishioners described all of their priest’s wrongdoing, and in turn, he detailed many of theirs. Ultimately, Vernier finished his career as a cathedral canon in another diocese.

Who Is Truth: Reframing Our Questions for a Richer Faith
Edwin E. Gaunt (Psychology)

Nearby, 2,000 years ago, Christ’s followers asked, “How can we know the way?” Christ’s reply was simple and profound: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). What happens when we think of truth as a living person instead of a set of abstract ideas? This book is for Latter-day Saints who wish to reexamine their beliefs and strengthen their faith in the Restoration of the gospel.

The Earth Will Appear as the Garden of Eden: Essays on Mormon Environmental History
Matthew C. Godfrey (Religious Education)

Although scholars have increasingly investigated the impact of religion on nature, studies of the interactions between Mormons and the natural environment are few. This volume applies the perspectives of environmental history to Mormonism, providing a scholarly introduction to Mormon environmental history.

Strengths in Diverse Families of Faith: Exploring Religious Differences
David C. Dollahite and Loren D. Marks, Editors (School of Family Life)

This book explores how religious families draw on their spiritual beliefs, religious practices, and faith communities to strengthen their relationships. Using in-depth interviews from eight religious groups—Asian American Christian, black Christian, Catholic, and Orthodox Christian, evangelical Christian, Jewish, Latter-day Saint, mainland Protestant, and Muslim—this book uses the interviewees’ own words to show how their religion influences their relationships.

The First Political Order: How Sex Shapes Governance and National Security Worldwide
Donna Lee Bowen (Political Science, Emeritus)

How does the relationship between men and women shape the wider political order? The First Political Order is a groundbreaking demonstration that the systematic subordination of women underlies all other institutions with wide-ranging implications for global security and development, even functioning almost as a curse upon nations. The First Political Order explains what the international community can do now to promote more equitable relations between men and women.

The Oxford Handbook of Parenting and Moral Development
Laura M. Padilla-Walker and Mariquita de Rosas, Editors (Educational Psychology)

This book provides a collection of essays on the role of parents in moral development. The contributors take a comprehensive yet nuanced approach to consider the links between parenting and different aspects of moral development. This volume lays out the next set of fundamental theoretical and empirical issues that will significantly advance the field. It is a must-read for scholars, practitioners, educators, students, and policy-makers interested in parenting and moral development.

American Indian and Mormon History from a Decolonizing Perspective
Gordon Linda Kim, Editor (History)

With illuminating chapters written by discerning scholars, this collection explores the historical and cultural complexities of American Indian and Mormon history from a decolonizing perspective. Essays cover the historical construction of the “Lamanite” settler colonialism and the Book of Mormon, and connections between Seneca leader Handsome Lake and Joseph Smith.

Mormon America
Brian Q. Cannon, Editor (History)

The South has been the focus of the Reconstruction era, but reconstruction followed the Civil War as a distinctly Southern experience. In the post-Civil War West, American Indians also experienced a reconstruction through reservation to reservations and assimilation to Christianity, and Latter-day Saint—Mormons—worried that government actions would force the end of polygamy and dispossess the Church.

Mormon America
Adam R. Brown (History)

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Scandal in the Parish: Priests and Parishioners Behaving Badly in Eighteenth-Century France
Karen E. Carter (History)

In In 1770, the priest Nicolas Vernier was accused of neglect of church services, inappropriate behavior in the confessional, financial improprieties, and affairs with the village schoolmistresses. In a contentious church court case, parishioners described all of their priest’s wrongdoing, and in turn, he detailed many of theirs. Ultimately, Vernier finished his career as a cathedral canon in another diocese.

Utah Politics and Government: Mormon America Among a Unique Electorate
Adam R. Brown (Political Science)

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Utah Politics and Government
Brenden W. Rensink, Editor (History)

Politics and Government offers an accessible analysis of Utah’s political cultures, starting with the state’s unique pioneer heritage, its development into a secular American state, and its explosive modern growth. This book covers the state constitution and its place in the federal system, ongoing public–land disputes, and major political institutions.

Beginnings of Argentina
Mark Christensen (History)

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