

Economist's study finds that immigration doesn't threaten US-born students' chances at college

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High school students born in the United States need not view their immigrant classmates as a threat to getting a good standardized test score and, ultimately, into a good college, according to a Kansas State University economist.

Florence Neymotin, an assistant professor of economics, evaluated students' Scholastic Aptitude Test scores over seven years, taking into account the immigrant makeup of the students' communities. She concluded that the native students' scores weren't negatively affected by immigration and that their chances of applying to a top college or university weren't diminished.

"With immigration, I think people do get concerned and wonder whether their non-immigrant children are going to get a good education if they are in public schools with many immigrants, and whether the parents of these non-immigrant children should, therefore, move their children to schools with fewer immigrants," Neymotin said. "These results can quell anti-immigrant sentiment to some extent, but I don't think this is the complete picture of immigration by any means."

In October 2009, the research appeared in the *Economics Education Review* and was featured in the editor's choice section of the journal *Science*.

Neymotin said previous research has looked at how low-skilled immigrants affect low-skilled natives, for instance in terms of wages and employment. But she and other researchers are interested in how immigration is affecting high-skilled natives, such as in [higher education](#). Neymotin wanted to see whether immigrants in schools were actually harming U.S.-born [high school students](#), particularly in terms of test scores.

"From what I was seeing in people transitioning from high school to college, the answer is no," she said.

Neymotin looked at SAT scores of public school students in California and Texas between 1994 and 2001. She matched the scores with characteristics about the students' schools and communities and concluded that native students' SAT scores weren't harmed by immigration.

Neymotin looked at California and Texas because they are high immigration states active in legislation affecting both immigration and schools. Moreover, the makeup of Hispanic and Asian immigrants was different in the two states, allowing her to see if results were consistent.

Since this study, Neymotin also has examined entrepreneurship and volunteerism among [immigrants](#).

Provided by Kansas State University

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