CHANGE IN RACE AND ETHNIC STRATIFICATION: THE ROLES OF PERIOD, COHORT, IMMIGRANT GENERATION, SOCIOECONOMIC ORIGINS, AND GENDER IN SHAPING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT


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Education has been the primary means of advancement for immigrants and native-born Americans throughout the 20th century. Despite the overall expansion of the educational system in the United States, not all immigrant groups and even native-born minority groups have achieved comparable levels of educational attainment as the majority population. For some groups, such as Hispanic immigrants, native-born Hispanics, Blacks and Native Americans, the attainment gap has persisted throughout the century. Much of the research beginning in the 1990s focused on the second generation, the children of immigrants, and their assimilation to American society through avenues such as educational attainment. To date, no literature has focused on the third generation, the grandchildren of immigrants, which faces different barriers to American assimilation than their second generation counterparts whose parents were immigrants, or first-generation immigrants who arrived from countries of origins with differing levels of educational attainment and opportunities. This dissertation research focuses specifically on how the third generation experiences American assimilation through educational attainment. I use a nationally representative data set, the General Social Surveys, from 1977-2010, with birth cohorts represented from 1880-1985 to assess the conditional probabilities of high school graduation, college entry and college completion for over 45,000 respondents, 16 different “religio-ethnic” groups and four immigrant generations. My results indicate that gaps in educational attainment increase at higher levels of education by generation, socioeconomic status, gender, and religious/ethnic groups and reveal the challenges immigrants and their children and grandchildren face through the process of acculturation to American society.

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Status of Research: Completed/published
Research Type: Graduate Dissertations
Related Fields: Race and Ethnicity  
Gender  
Education  
Social Stratification/Inequality