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Deindustrialization, Class, and Adolescents: Changing Gender Attitudes in Middletown

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have become increasingly interested in the role that economic change plays in the processes of self and collective identification. Previous studies show that the process of deindustrialization in the United States had specific consequences for individuals with a "working class" labor force identity, particularly in regard to increased financial stability. Using the High School Surveys from Middletown III and IV, collected from local high school students in Muncie, Indiana in 1977, 1989, and 1999, we examine how local adolescents' expectations regarding school and gender were affected by deindustrialization. In this study, we put forth the following hypotheses: 1) the educational aspirations of adolescents will increase over time, 2) attitudes about gender roles will become less traditional over time, and 3) students will show a greater recognition of the utility of college education over time. Finding support for all hypotheses indicates that adolescent attitudes about education and gender are significantly affected by deindustrialization in the hypothesized direction.

KEYWORDS

Adolescents, Gender, Education, Deindustrialization

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