

THE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY OF CRAFTSMANSHIP: AN EMPIRICAL TEST IN SPORT AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to test empirically the sociological theory of craftsmanship originally developed C. Wright Mills, Torstein Veblen and Howard Becker and later extended by Harper, Sennett, and Fine. We conduct a quantitative analysis based on a nationally representative sample of 10,783 Icelandic adolescents (50.2% girls). We developed a scale measuring craftsmanship that we use to test several hypotheses regarding the role of craftsmanship in sport and education. Our findings provide a consistent empirical support for the theory of craftsmanship. First, they indicate that elements of the craftsmanship theory that have been identified by prior qualitative research go together as predicted to form a coherent theoretical construct and a measurement scale that is both reliable and valid. The craftsmanship scale therefore offers good opportunities for quantitative research in an area that has been exclusively qualitative. Second, our findings indicate that as predicted the craftsmanship approach makes schoolwork more meaningful and reduces general feelings of meaninglessness. Third, the findings show, as predicted, that the craftsmanship approach influences school performance in a positive way. Fourth, we find that the positive relationship between sport participation and school performance is in part mediated by craftsmanship. Finally, the findings show that the influence of craftsmanship on school performance is in part mediated by meaninglessness. We discuss the implications of the findings in light of sociological theory, culture and the social context of education and sport.

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