

Does culture really matter in sports participation?

The impact of socio-cultural factors on sports behaviour in Switzerland

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The physical activity of the Swiss population differs considerably depending on the linguistic region. German speakers are more often physically active than people living in the French or Italian-speaking part of Switzerland (Stamm & Lamprecht, 2011). This study analyses how socio-cultural factors correlate with sports participation for adolescents and young adults.

In order to analyse this research question, Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1984) has been adapted and used as theoretical background. This sport-related concept of habitus considers cultural determined values, the attribution of meaning and patterns of action such as the understanding of sports, the importance of sports, body, health or leisure. On this basis, the sport-related habitus and the practical relevance of sports participation has been empirically reconstructed for adolescents and young adults at the age of 15 to 25 years through a qualitative study including guideline-based interviews with German (n=6) and French (n=4) speaking adolescents and young adults, as well as a quantitative survey in a German (n=106) and a French (n=99) speaking commune of Switzerland.

Initial findings reveal that young German speakers associate sports with self-discipline ($\chi^2(1, N=205) = 8.223, p < .005, V = .200$) and fitness ($\chi^2(1, N=205) = 21.989, p < .005, V = .328$) whereas young French speakers are more likely to relate health ($\chi^2(1, N=205) = 9.455, p < .005, V = .215$), effort and perspiration ($\chi^2(1, N=205) = 18.835, p < .005, V = .303$) to sports. Similarly, the understanding of body and health as well as the attitude towards leisure differs between the German and French speaking parts of Switzerland. This study illustrates that the concept of sports habitus is culturally shaped and therefore may be fruitful in further analyses.

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Stamm, H. & Lamprecht, M. (2008). Swiss sports participation in an international perspective. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 8 (1+2), 15-29.