

CONFIGURATIONS OF CRAFT: ALTERNATIVE MODELS FOR ORGANIZING WORK

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The concept of craft has long lived in the margins of organizational research and has typically been equated with a primitive form of manufacturing. Craft, however, seems to have had a resurgence, and is now increasingly associated with alternative approaches to work and organization in contemporary society. Yet, despite growing research on the phenomenon, insights have remained fragmented due to a lack of common theoretical infrastructure. In an effort to synthesize the disparate threads of research on craft, we conducted an interpretive review of the concept's use in management and organizational literature over the past century. Based on this we propose a reconceptualization of craft as a timeless approach to work that prioritizes human engagement over machine control. We identify the distinct work skills and attitudes that are typically associated with craft, and illustrate how these appear across two conventional configurations (traditional and industrialized craft) and three contemporaneous configurations (technical, pure, and creative craft) that are visible in the literature. Finally, we suggest how our framework could be used as a general theory for understanding alternative approaches to work against the backdrop of growing affordances of machine technology, and sketch future research avenues for exploring specific craft-related tensions and evolutionary processes.

The last few decades have witnessed an extraordinary resurgence of interest in craft. Consider the U.S. beer industry: once dominated by a handful of multinational mass-producers, it is now the hotbed of a global movement in craft brewing (Garavaglia & Swinnen, 2018). As a result, between 2008 and 2016, the number of breweries in the United States grew exponentially by a factor of six, while the number of workers employed in the industry tripled

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(Thompson, 2018). Incredibly, this growth has occurred in a context where the overall consumption of beer is declining. With average beer prices also growing by almost 50%, it appears that beer drinkers are now consuming less while paying more for a superior product (Thompson, 2018).

A close look reveals that the beer brewing industry is not an exception. In fact, research has documented craft approaches to manufacturing in the making of bespoke vehicles (Irwin, Lahneman, & Parmigiani, 2018; Kotha, 1995), musical instruments (Cattani, Dunbar, & Shapira, 2017), watches (Oertel & Thommes, 2018; Raffaelli, 2019), kitchen utensils (Rindova, Dalpiaz, & Ravasi, 2011), and fashion (Djelic & Ainamo, 1999; Khaire, 2014; Korica & Bazin, 2019). Scholars have also used this notion to

describe developments in nonmanufacturing sectors, such as urban services like barbering, bartending, and butchering (Ocejo, 2017), or organic supermarket work (Endrissat, Islam, & Noppeney, 2015), car restoration (Bozkurt & Cohen, 2019), agriculture (Weber, Heinze, & DeSoucey, 2008), money management (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007), police work (Bittner, 1967), software programming (Adler, 2015; Barley, 1996; McBreen, 2002), and even academic research (Baer & Shaw, 2017; Daft, 1983; Whitley, 1995). Indeed, even highly abstract domains such as thought or creativity have been illuminated by pointing to their craft aspects (Carruthers, 1998; Cronin & Loewenstein, 2018). Yet, although examples abound that point to craft being ubiquitous in and around organizations, we seem to lack a dedicated theory that helps us understand what distinguishes craft approaches to work. This—we argue—hampers our capacity to grasp these recent developments and, more generally, to explain the renewed relevance of craft in contemporary society.

Dominant theoretical perspectives in management and organization have long prioritized attention to modes of production and organization that optimize efficiency and consistency, through market mechanisms in combination with scientific or bureaucratic management (Coase, 1937; Taylor, 1947; Weber, 1978; Williamson, 1985)—the most recent manifestation of this tendency being the belief that artificial intelligence can be used to improve markets and impose algorithmic forms of control (cf. Kellogg, Valentine, & Christin, 2020; Schwab, 2017). This perspective also tends to imply a linear evolution toward increasingly efficient and rationalized modes (Davis, 2016; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2015; Weber, 1978). It is underpinned by the assumption that we live in a world of creative destruction where technological progress naturally drives the emergence of novel approaches to work and organization that are built on the ashes of the old (Schumpeter, 1942). Viewed from this perspective, craft is often described as a primitive or “traditionalistic” approach made largely extinct by industrialization (Adler, 2012; Bodrožić & Adler, 2018; McKelvey, 1978).

Yet, in contrast with this assumption, the concept of craft has been picked up again recently to describe alternative approaches to work and organization, and its use has been growing rapidly. This trend cannot easily be reconciled with the conventional view and suggests the need for a fresh perspective on the concept. This recognition encouraged us to revisit assumptions about craft in the literature, and to forward a novel theoretical understanding to better

understand why and how advanced societies may be characterized by the revaluation and reinvention of craft approaches to work (cf. Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Ocejo, 2017; Suddaby, Ganzin, & Minkus, 2017).

To this end, we reviewed how the concept of craft has appeared in management and sociology research over the last century. Based on our reading of 453 relevant papers, found through a wide-ranging search, we inductively define craft as a humanist approach to work that prioritizes human engagement over machine control. In the literature, craft has typically been associated with distinct *skills*—mastery of technique, all-roundedness (that is, a holistic understanding of how different aspects of making interrelate), and embodied expertise (e.g., Becker, 1978; Sennett, 2008)—and *attitudes*—devotion to one’s work, a concern with communal interests, and an explorative mindset (e.g., Croidieu & Kim, 2018; Ranganathan, 2018)—that distinguish it from other approaches that subordinate workers to intelligent machines and standardized procedures, in the pursuit of efficiency and consistency.

Our review also reveals how manifestations of craft vary across time and space. It points to two sets of ideal-typical configurations of craft that appear in the literature and that illustrate the different ways in which craft, as a humanist approach to work, manifests in organizations and organizational fields. Two of these configurations, traditional versus industrialized craft, reflect the conventional understanding of craft in the organizational literature. The second set, technical versus pure versus creative craft, points to an alternative, contemporaneous perspective that is increasingly visible in the literature, and associates craft with the pursuit of technical excellence, anti-industrial purity, or creative stimulation, respectively. Together, these configurations show how craft can be used to illuminate the human pole of the fundamental tension between human and machine in contemporary work organization, and the different ways in which this tension can be resolved.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we briefly review how craft has appeared in classic organizational theory, before pointing to observations that call for a fresh perspective. We then briefly describe our review method before presenting our first set of insights, showing how craft has appeared as a humanist approach to work in the literature. Subsequently, we make use of classic coordination mechanisms to support the development of a typology of configurations of craft that capture different ways in which craft can be embedded in organizations and organizational fields. Finally, we discuss how our framework

advances a theory for understanding human-engaged work, and highlight specific implications for research on craft-related organizational tensions and evolutionary processes.

CRAFT AND THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Based on our initial reading of the literature, we started with a working definition of craft as entailing a distinct approach to work and its organization. As such, we first examined how craft appeared in classic organizational theories of forms of organizing and associated coordination mechanisms (Coase, 1937; Ouchi, 1980; Williamson, 1985). Relating our emerging conceptualization of craft with these established notions also gives us the opportunity to illustrate how our perspective could be combined with central tenets of organizational theory to advance our understanding of work and its organization in contemporary society.

A core question in organization theory is how to structure work activities and coordinate collective action toward a common goal (Ouchi, 1980; Williamson, 1991). Building on the classic writings of Coase (1937) and Williamson (1985, 1991), organizational theorists have described three fundamentally distinct sets of coordination mechanisms. The most basic distinction separated market-based from hierarchy-based coordination (Williamson, 1985). While market-based coordination relies on mechanisms of competition and price, hierarchy-based coordination involves formal control and authority. Subsequent elaborations have pointed to community-based coordination as an alternative form that involves normative alignment and trust (Adler, 2001; McEvily, Perrone, & Zaheer, 2003; Ouchi, 1980). These different coordination mechanisms may be mixed in various ways, resulting in different organizational forms that inherently impact the nature of work (Bradach & Eccles, 1989).

These classic concepts in organization theory have been employed to examine the empirical evolution of organizational forms and the nature of work. In this impactful line of research, craft has often been mentioned briefly to refer to traditionalistic organizational forms and preindustrial approaches to work. Classic organizational theories describe how traditional craft firms were replaced by industrial, mass-production firms that built on Taylorist principles of work division and associated managerial control (Bodrožić & Adler, 2018; Burris, 1989; Marsh & Mannari, 1980). Over time, these firms built up extensive bureaucratic hierarchies and control structures, developing into the well-known corporations of the twentieth century. As advanced economies morphed from

manufacturing- to knowledge-intensive economies, theoretical attention was drawn to novel community forms of organizing—such as the modern professions or the open-source movement—that facilitated knowledge-sharing in and across firms (Adler, 2001; McEvily et al., 2003; Powell & Snellman, 2004). While initially some scholars predicted a firm shift toward trust modes of coordinating (Adler, 2001), more recent accounts have argued that the vanishing of the twentieth-century corporation has gone hand-in-hand with the birth of the platform economy, where market forces prevail supported by algorithmic control (Davis, 2016; Kellogg et al., 2020).

Though it appears that classic organizational theory does not account for the observed prevalence of craft approaches to work by keeping craft implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, outside of the diverse configurations of contemporary organizations (Bodrožić & Adler, 2018; Hull & Collins, 1987; McKelvey, 1978), there are some notable exceptions. For example, in some cases, craft has been used to describe a narrow set of contemporary organizations that rely on community-based coordination (Adler, 2001; Powell, 1990). More significantly, craft has also appeared in post-Fordist theories of manufacturing (Piore & Sabel, 1984; see also Deming, 1986) where it has been seen as a more fundamental feature of work and organization.

A brief glance beyond mainstream organizational theory, therefore, suggests that craft may be more usefully approached as a fundamental and enduring feature of organizational life—based on the recognition that humans are always, to some extent, engaged with processes of making, and that craft “is a part of all work life” (Fine, 1992: 1270). Indeed, the recent resurgence of craft appears to suggest an increasing rather than decreasing relevance of the concept for organizational theory. More than a century ago, Veblen (1914) used the broader term “workmanship” to describe a fundamental instinct of the human species, and used this term interchangeably with craftsmanship (for a nuanced discussion of these concepts, see also Pye, 1995).¹ In a recent influential book, Sennett (2008: 9) similarly defined craft as a basic human impulse to do “a job well for its own sake.”

Fox Miller (2017: 2) argued that “craft has always existed as the counterweight to industrialized mass production,” and pointed to “three waves of craft

¹ The language around the concept of craft has traditionally been gendered, prioritizing attention to the “men” that exercised masculine crafts. As such, we opt to use the label “craftsperson” instead of “craftsman” where possible.

revival,” suggesting that the value and saliency of craft evolved in tandem with industrial and technological progress. After the traditional craft guilds of Medieval Europe were replaced by protoforms of the profit-maximizing formal organization (Kieser, 1989), Fox Miller observed, craft enjoyed a first revival during the Romantic era. This was most clearly seen in the English Arts and Crafts movement, which rejected the mechanical work that was increasingly commonplace as a result of the Industrial Revolution, and cherished, instead, human engagement with the material world and the natural imperfections of human handwork (Morris, 1892; Ruskin, 1849). The second wave of craft revival originated in the 1960s and 1970s with anti-capitalist movements that saw craft as a central part of the political and individualist pursuit of purpose, pleasure, and dignity in work (Hodson, 2001; Luckman, 2012).

Technological advances, according to Fox Miller (2017), seem to have enabled the third wave of craft revival where a resurgence of small-scale craft manufacturing follows from growing awareness of the limitations of mass production (Piore & Sabel, 1984), including the environmental and social costs of globalized industrial production (Fox Miller, 2017; Luckman, 2015). It now also appears that the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) is triggering a new “industrial divide” (cf. Piore & Sabel, 1984) where craft approaches to work and organization can be seen as the alternative to algorithmically controlled platform organizations. In contrast to relying on a craft approach, these organizations rely on centralization and robotization of work such that vocations, careers, and jobs are ultimately reduced to “gigs” and workers follow efficiency-maximizing directives from AI (cf. Barley, Bechky, & Milliken, 2017; Davis, 2016; Kellogg et al., 2020).

In sum, a closer look suggests that craft is an enduring theme in the broader organizational literature, which reaches beyond the preindustrial world and traditional modes of working and may be infused or reinfused in modern work organizations. Our review of the literature helped us better articulate what distinguishes craft as a relevant approach to work, by (a) defining distinct *skills* and *attitudes* that differentiate craft from other approaches; (b) identifying and contrasting various manifestations of craft, based on how it has been embedded in organizations and organizational fields across time and space; and (c) highlighting fundamental tensions that arise in the organization of work based on the interaction between humans and machines in and around organizations. Together these elements provide a theoretical infrastructure that

acknowledges the concept as a timeless feature of organizational life, and integrates prior work in a novel way, with a view of promoting and supporting the intensification of research on craft across different areas of management studies.

REVIEW METHOD

Since our concept of interest appeared across a wide variety of research, crossing disciplines and levels of analysis, and it frequently lacked explicit definition, we took an interpretivist approach, involving the use of inductive techniques to uncover common themes in a body of qualitative work (Noblit & Hare, 1988; Suddaby, Bitektine, & Haack, 2017). This enabled us to work toward a synthesis of dispersed insights by developing (a) an umbrella definition of craft that is based on both explicit and implicit understandings of the concept found in the literature, and (b) a configurational typology that covers the diverse manifestations of the concept in organizational settings examined in previous research.

We cast our nets wide and searched 17 premier outlets of organization and management research.² We systematically applied keyword searching for “craft,” while also searching for articles that mentioned related terms of “artisan,” “handwork,” “guild,” “maker,” “master,” “skill,” “technique,” and “workmanship,” which are strongly associated with craft in popular definitions. Our sample included 453 studies that interacted with craft in a relevant fashion. Figure 1 and Table 1 show how the included studies were distributed over time and outlets. They show not only that scholarly attention to craft stretches over a long period of time and a variety of outlets but also that there has been a sharp increase in attention to the topic in recent decades. Although our main concern was with understanding how the concept of craft has been used across the premier peer-reviewed organization and management outlets, we sharpened our interpretive lenses by reading broadly on the subject. To this end, we also engaged with books and other articles on craft that were cited by studies in our sample.

² Our journal list consisted of: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *European Sociological Review*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Management Science*, *Organization Science*, *Organization Studies*, *Socio-Economic Review*, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, and *Strategic Management Journal*

FIGURE 1
Yearly Number of Articles Published in Premier Journals in Management and Organization Theory Featuring Craft (1900–2019)

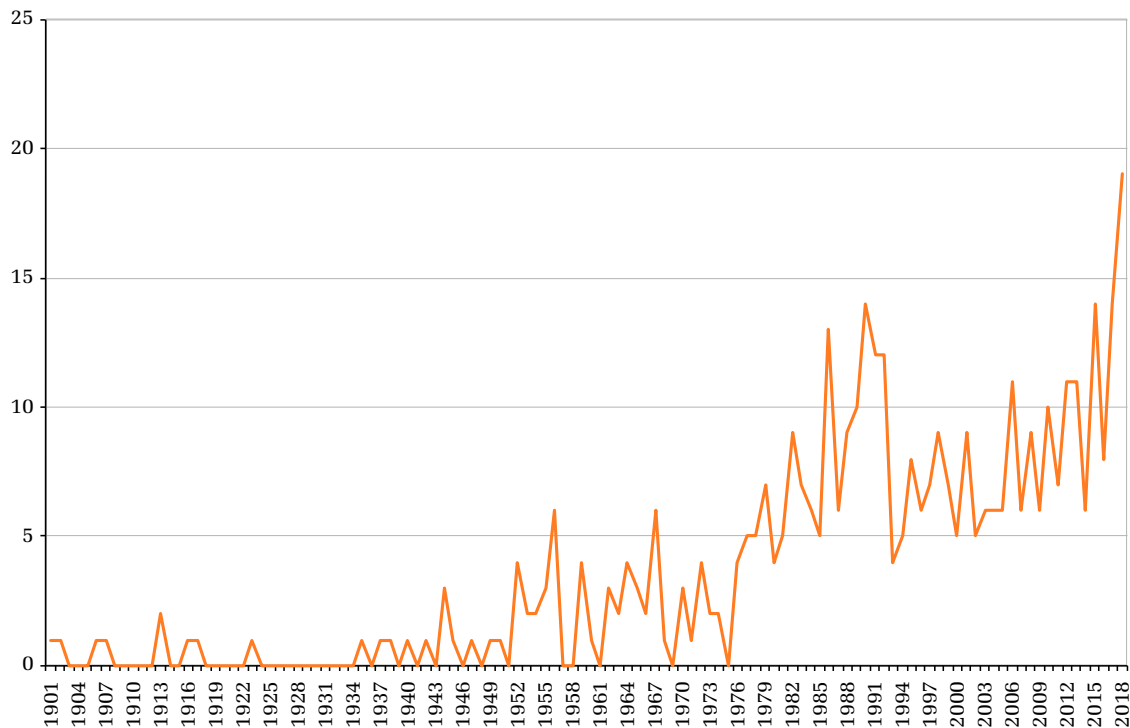


TABLE 1
Number of Published Articles in which Craft has
Featured per Premier Organization and Management
Outlet (1900–2020)

Outlet	No. of Articles
<i>American Journal of Sociology</i>	84
<i>Organization Studies</i>	75
<i>American Sociological Review</i>	74
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	31
<i>Journal of Management Studies</i>	28
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	27
<i>Organization Science</i>	27
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	25
<i>Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice</i>	15
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	13
<i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>	10
<i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>	9
<i>Management Science</i>	9
<i>European Sociological Review</i>	8
<i>Journal of Management</i>	8
<i>Socio-Economic Review</i>	8
<i>Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal</i>	2
TOTAL	453

THE DEFINING FEATURES OF CRAFT

Our review shows that craft is commonly associated with a humanist approach to work that embraces human engagement in making.³ When work is approached as craft—as we will describe in this section—it involves reliance on distinctly human *skills* (entailing mastery, all-roundedness, and embodied expertise) and *attitudes* (entailing dedication,

³ Please note that we are explicitly using the label of “humanism” to describe an approach to work that involves human freedom and progress, similar to Moore (2005), who equated craftsmanship with “humanizing business,” and Sandberg (1995), who described craft-based job enrichment as “human-centered production.” Whether an embrace of craft approaches to work results in human freedom and progress at the level of society is a related, but more complicated, question. We use the term “making” in a broad sense to refer to both the manufacturing of products and the performance of services. Our terminology is thus deliberately flexible, to indicate that craft is a fundamental approach that can be applied to any form of work.

communality, and exploration) that distinguish it from mechanical work resulting from the prioritization of machine control (see Table 2). Craft thus contrasts with approaches to work that effectively disengage humans from making through extensive use of automation and algorithmification, so that critical aspects of the process are performed by machines and remaining areas of human involvement are in the form of programmable and marketable tasks or “gigs” (Barley et al., 2017; Davis, 2016; Kellogg et al., 2020). The endgame of extreme mechanical approaches to work appears to entail as little human engagement with making as possible. In contradistinction, craft attaches importance to aspects, such as “human touch” and individual judgment, that cannot be replicated by machines or that are lost with purely mechanical approaches to work (cf. Raisch & Krakowski, 2020: 16).

Embracing human touch and engagement in making implies granting individuals—as “makers”—autonomy and control over all facets of a work process, from design to execution (Fullan, 1970; Halaby & Weakliem, 1989; Hodson, 2010). Craft prioritizes a “workmanship of risk” where the quality of the work

“depends on the judgment, dexterity and care” of the maker (Pye, 1995: 20) over a “workmanship of certainty, in which the quality of the result is predetermined and beyond the control” of the maker (Pye, 1995: 9). Organizations that embrace a craft approach to the manufacturing of products or the delivery of services tend to have comparatively more flexible work processes. They also tend to depend more on the individual worker than on the machine-mediated and faceless “collective worker” (Adler, 2007; Ingvaldsen, 2015)—understood as an interdependent system of indistinct workers performing highly specialized tasks (Marx, 1977)—or on the profit-maximizing manager (Smith & Miner, 1983; Thornton, 2002), who may render individual workers expendable.

Craft also reflects a particular concern with intrinsic work values over extrinsic market outcomes (e.g., Wilensky, 1964), as is evident in Sennett’s (2008) oft-cited definition of craft as an impulse to do a job well “for its own sake.” Relatedly, craft is commonly associated with a primary concern for aesthetic forms of quality (Becker, 1978; Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007; Fine, 1992; Rindova et al., 2011) rather than for mechanical qualities of efficiency and consistency

TABLE 2
Craft Work versus Mechanical Work

	Craft Work	Mechanical Work
Approach to making	Human engagement with the material aspects of making is extensive, direct and real-time as the work process is relatively unstructured and underdetermined; individual judgments are key in the search for aesthetic quality.	Human engagement is significantly mediated or replaced by mechanization or algorithmic control as the work process is highly structured and overdetermined; standardization is key in the search for efficiency and consistency.
Skills	<p>Mastery Reliance on polished, refined, and difficult-to-obtain technical skills.</p> <p>All-roundedness Reliance on possession of a range of techniques within a defined trade to achieve holistic understanding of the making process.</p> <p>Embodied expertise Valued skills are based on bodily and aesthetic ways of knowing that are inherently tacit.</p>	<p>Commodity Reliance on widely available, relatively undifferentiated, and easy-to-obtain technical skills.</p> <p>Specificity Reliance on narrow, task-specialized skills to support extreme division of labor.</p>
Attitudes	<p>Dedication Profound and personal commitment to one’s work; efforts are independent of expected economic rewards.</p> <p>Communality Assumption of interdependent interests; occupational identity and felt connection to other workers in the trade is salient to personal identity and fosters social interactions.</p> <p>Exploration Openness to experimentation, improvisation and real-time variation, supported by experiential learning.</p>	<p>Abstract expertise Valued skills are based on formal and intellectual ways of knowing that are inherently codifiable.</p> <p>Detachment Dispassionate and utilitarian involvement with one’s work; efforts are commensurate to expected economic rewards.</p> <p>Individuality Assumption of independent interests; absence of occupational identity and lack of felt connection to other workers in the trade leads to fragmentation of identity and social isolation.</p> <p>Planning Pursuit of structure and uncertainty reduction through careful programming of activities, supported by evidence-based learning.</p>

across the work we reviewed. This applies to examples of early manufacturing, as in Collons's (1971) description of an ancient Chinese rice bowl that showed traces of meticulous application of human attention to delicate production tasks. It is also observable in cases of contemporary manufacturing, as in the case of recreational vehicle industry (Irwin et al., 2018), where craft producers prioritize "people" and "quality" over "costs" and "market."

Finally, craft appears just as frequently outside of manufacturing contexts. For example, Thornton (2002) described how higher education publishing was traditionally a "craft industry" where craft principles gradually made way for practices associated with a "market logic." Similarly, a substantial body of work has found examples of craft in academia, and associated the concept with a concern for individual engagement with process and quality in the production of research that depends on supportive institutional conditions (Baer & Shaw, 2017; Daft, 1983; Rindova, 2008; Van Maanen, 2011). Elsewhere, scholars have reported a revival of craft in urban service jobs, such as supermarket work (Endrissat et al., 2015) and barbering (Ocejo, 2017). Another powerful example of the relevance of craft to contemporary forms of work is the rising concern with "software craftsmanship" among software developers (Martin, 2009; McBreen, 2002) that promises to free human makers from the increasing rationalization and standardization that has been prevalent across the sector (cf. Adler, 2015).

Craft Skills

Our review shows how a craft approach to making values mastery of technique, all-roundedness, and embodied expertise, as opposed to a mechanical approach that treats individual skills as commodities for highly specific, narrowly defined tasks, designed based on formal and abstract expertise.

"Mastery of technique" refers to the exceptional competency of individuals in the making process. This is clearly exemplified by the makers of Cremonese string instruments described by Cattani, Dunbar, and Shapira (2013). The likes of Stradivari and del Gesù, who made high-quality violins 300 years ago, had such a high degree of mastery over particular techniques that it has been difficult to reproduce the quality of their work ever since. The importance of mastery is also apparent in *haute cuisine*, where young chefs need years of dedicated practice to develop the refined techniques required to become a master chef (Louisgrand & Islam, 2020; Slavich &

Castellucci, 2016), or in the Indian apparel industry where there was reliance on "exclusive handwork and craftsmanship" for the weaving, dyeing, printing, and embroidery of garments (Khaire, 2014). Raffaelli (2019) also talked about the "level of mastery required to produce a mechanical watch," and Kotha (1995: 31) documented the important role of mastery in his study of a Japanese bicycle manufacturer that relied on "highly skilled craftsmen [to] translate unique customer specifications into finished products using prior experience and expertise" and to pay attention to "the finest details" in the production process.

Work practices that emphasize mastery of technique contrast with those that merely rely on basic skills that are treated as a commodity, as is typically the case with mass production or rationalized service work (e.g., Endrissat et al., 2015; Wrigley, 1982). In these instances, workers are no longer master makers but have become "deskilled" (Braverman, 1974; Form, 1987; Roy, 1984) or are, at best, interchangeable "semi-skilled operators" (Anderson & Tushman, 1990; Ezzamel, Willmott, & Worthington, 2001).

Craft, past research has pointed out, also requires *all-roundedness* so that workers can have full control over an entire making process. All-roundedness thus implies a mastery of multiple interdependent techniques of making and a holistic understanding of how particular aspects of making interrelate. Becker (1978: 865) illustrated this dimension clearly when he argued that work that is organized as a craft usually requires not only "many years ... to master the physical skills and mental disciplines of a first-class practitioner" but also "mastering a wide variety of techniques [so as to] not only do things better than most others but also do more things."

This all-roundedness would allow a craftsperson exceptional control over the "craft's materials", which enables him or her to pursue a wide variety of making purposes (Becker, 1978: 865). It gives the individual craft worker an exceptional ability to engage in problem-solving (Halaby & Weakliem, 1989), which is an asset not only for making but also for repair work (Bozkurt & Cohen, 2019; Strodtbeck & Sussman, 1956). Similarly, Wallace and Kalleberg (1982: 309) observed how craftworkers in the declining craft printing industry had a uniquely "integrated understanding of the relationships among different printing functions" that became a rare skill when the industry began to increasingly rely on routinization, specialization, and automation after the Second World War.

This dimension of craft skill is also apparent in Sorge's (1991: 167) comparative study of

manufacturing systems in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, where he described how British manufacturing became increasingly specialized due to the separation of technical and engineering professions from the “craft base,” which led to “diluted skills in direct production.” This “vertical and lateral professional segmentation” had not taken place to the same degree in Germany, which had maintained more artisanal and craft features where a “larger craft worker force [with] continuity of skills and knowledge from workers to technicians and engineers [was] more prevalent” (Sorge, 1991: 174). In other words, production work remained more all-round and complex in Germany, where technical expertise was holistically integrated in, rather than separated from, traditional craft roles. Across the literature, craft work has indeed frequently been associated with higher degrees of job complexity (Avolio, Waldman, & McDaniel, 1990; Carter & Keon, 1989; Form, 1987; Holman & Rafferty, 2018). All-roundedness in skill thus contrasts with work practices that rely on fragmentation or “splintering” of skills for the purpose of task specialization and a narrow division of labor (Carter & Keon, 1989; Grimes, Klein, & Shull, 1972; Wallace & Kalleberg, 1982). The latter has typically been seen as another aspect of “deskilling” (Form, 1987).

Another important dimension of craft skill is the reliance on “embodied expertise,” which requires a balanced interaction between the senses and the mind in knowledge development. Sennett (2008), for example, metaphorically described this as the interplay between the “hand and head” in craft approaches to making, and referred to a “material consciousness” that is unique to craftwork. Craft thus requires not only manual skill but also a practical and material form of knowledge that is, at least partially, embedded in context and tacit in nature (cf. McIver, Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, & Ramachandran, 2013; Perrow, 1967). Bell and Vachhani (2020) vividly depicted this embodied dimension in their study of potters, shoemakers, and bicycle manufacturers, as they drew on Bennett (2010) and Gibson (2016) to argue that craft relies on “sensory engagements with matter” (696) and thus has “embodied knowledge as the basis for practically and skillfully transforming lively and inconsistent materials into useful objects” (682).

Based on a comparative ethnographic study of nine technicians’ occupations, Barley (1996) similarly described the important role of “contextual knowledge.” The technicians he studied “valued experience over formal training” where experience “did not simply mean years of practice [but] a situated, rather than

a principled knowledge of materials, technologies, and techniques” (Barley, 1996: 425). A particularly important form of contextual knowledge is what Barley (1996) described as “semiotic knowledge.” This involved the technician’s ability to “recognize and interpret minute differences in sensation,” such as when “automotive technicians used both sight and smell to detect unusual patterns of scoring and decomposition of lubricating fluid that denote excessive wear of parts” (Barley, 1996: 425).

The embodied nature of craft expertise is also apparent in studies that have focused less directly on the material aspects of craft but have still used the term to refer to a practical form of expertise that relies on “best practice” (Whitley, 1995), “empirical lore” (Stinchcombe, 1959) or “gut-level feel” (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989) with an “eye to production” (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997: 665; also see Reeve, 1992) that contrasts with “formal,” “abstract,” “static,” “intellectual,” or purely “scientific” knowledge (Cook & Brown, 1999; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997; Wrigley, 1982).

Craft Attitudes

Finally, craft also involves attitudes to work that follow from a unique ethos (Becker, 1978) that values **dedication, communality, and exploration** at work. On a theoretical continuum, this could be contrasted with the emphasis on detachment, individuality, and planning that characterizes other forms of work organization, as we illustrate below.

“Dedication” appeared in many of our reviewed papers as a central feature of craft work. When describing medieval craft guilds, for instance, Kieser (1989: 540) underscored that individual craftsmen could only participate by “investing all their resources, by bringing their personalities in toto into the guild” and accepting that “there was nothing like a private sphere outside the guild.” This also meant that these craftsmen had to be committed not only to technical work practices but also to following “a strict religious life” (Kieser, 1989: 550), and adhere to trade-specific standards for clothing, ways of speaking, and even music (557). Dedication of a less religious sort was also apparent in the **personal sacrifices that were required of members of the families that owned multigenerational craft firms in Japan (Sasaki, Ravasi, & Micelotta, 2019) and among the handicraft artisans of Channapatna studied by Ranganathan (2018: 646) who made “sacrifices for the sake of their work, particularly when it came to personal health.”** When Ranganathan (2018: 646) noticed that artisans

were not wearing protective eyewear, one of the artisans explained: “when I work on the lathe, if I put on the shades [eyeglasses], I am unable to see the wood as carefully as I want to. So no one wears them.” The importance of dedication in craft work is such that it has often been described as a “labor of love” (Croidieu & Kim, 2018; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015; Massa, Helms, Voronov, & Wang, 2017). Again, Ranganathan (2018: 647) provided a vivid illustration when she noted how artisans in Channapatna “treated the products they made like their own babies, part of their embodied selves, bestowing these products with love and showering them with attention.”

This attitude contrasts sharply with the detachment that appears to characterize opposing approaches to work where workers are constantly driven to maximize the “exchange value” of their efforts (Adler, 2007; Fitzmaurice et al., 2020), and more inclined to routinely change work roles, organizations, and geographies, motivated by external success criteria (cf. Anteby, 2008; Dobrev & Kim, 2019; Fitzmaurice et al., 2020). Whereas dedicated makers engage in work for its own sake (Sennett, 2008) and craft forms of entrepreneurship have been described as resting on commitment “to long-standing practices and workmanship, not fixated on making money” (Stinchfield, Nelson, & Wood, 2013: 899), “detached” workers or entrepreneurs are more flexible in their commitments, driven primarily by career goals or monetary outcomes (Bracker, Keats, & Pearson, 1988; Scott Morton & Podolny, 2002; Stinchfield et al., 2013). The attachment to their work could be described as rather “utilitarian,” whereas craft workers display a deeper, “moral attachment” that may be reinforced through “symbols, myths and rituals,” as found in the case of the medieval guilds described by Kieser (1989: 558).

A second important attitude that typically appears as part of a craft ethos is “communality.” Craft work tends to occur with a clear regard for some form of shared occupational identity and purpose with others engaging in the same craft or trade (Anteby, 2008; Fine, 1992). A good example of this is work under the medieval guild, as described by Kieser (1989) and others, which was approached as a *gemeinschaft* activity where good work meant valuing strong interpersonal ties within particular locales (Adler, 2015). Similarly, Sasaki et al. (2019) described how workers in age-old Japanese craft firms were not just dedicated to the technical aspects of their work but also had a sense of duty toward the family, the local community, and their ancestors.

Communality is also found in contemporaneous examples of craft work, such as among amateur radio

makers, craft brewers, or other nascent maker entrepreneurs who form clubs or “maker spaces” through which they learn from each other (Browder, Aldrich, & Bradley, 2019; Croidieu & Kim, 2018; Kroezen & Heugens, 2019), resulting in patterns of “coopetition” that persist once activities transcend the amateur workshop into full-blown business (Mathias, Huyghe, Frid, & Galloway, 2018). Craft work thus appears to naturally involve the construction of “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that maintain occupational identities, facilitate apprentice learning, and enable distinct forms of coordination.⁴

The above is in contrast with mechanical work that is guided by individuality and characterized by self-interest, competition, and more transactional interactions (cf. Weaver, 2006; Williamson, 1991). Fitzmaurice et al. (2020: 94), for example, spoke of the “social intimacy” that workers in the sharing economy feel is “corroded” under conventional, more mechanical, market relations and labor conditions. As a result of this, general experiences in relation to making are seen as more “alienated and impersonal” (Fitzmaurice et al., 2020: 94).

Finally, based on our review, we find that when work is approached as a craft, it typically requires a mindset that embraces “exploration.” Sennett (2008: 273), for example, noted how the craftsperson likes to tinker or play around with something akin to how “children learn in play’s dialogue with physical materials.” Rather than seeking structure and a reduction of uncertainty, the craftsperson experiments and seeks complexity or ambiguity to advance their skills (Sennett, 2008). This exploration mindset is apparent among the “amateurs” that transformed radio making (Croidieu & Kim, 2018) and beer brewing (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019). They gradually developed their making skills outside of formal organizational structures and through experiential learning (also see Menger, 1999; Quinn & Bunderson, 2016) while aiming to derive intrinsic stimulation from exploratory activities. In the case of the radio makers, these “playful actions ... initially frustrated professional scientists” but ultimately caused an impactful

⁴ There is rich literature on communities of practice, and seminal examples have come from typical craft workers, such as tailors, butchers, and midwives (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The subsequent extension of the concept to other contexts is another indication that elements of craft are more ubiquitous than is often recognized. However, whether an instance of community of practice involves a craft approach to work depends on the degree to which other features that we describe here are present.

transformation in radio technology from “point-to-point” to “point-to-many” transmission (Croidieu & Kim, 2018: 7). Similarly, an exploration mindset is notable among chefs engaging in molecular gastronomy, who are constantly improving and extending their repertoire of cooking techniques (Slavich, Svejnova, Opazo, & Patriotta, 2020); at the Italian manufacturer of household products Alessi, where craft was deliberately reinfused in the organization to explore new forms of manufacturing (Rindova et al., 2011); and among nineteenth-century violin makers who had to engage in exploration in attempts to rediscover the tacit knowledge needed to replicate the valued Cremonese instruments from the early eighteenth century (Cattani et al., 2013).

The exploration mindset that characterizes a craft approach to work contrasts with the planning mindset that characterizes a mechanical approach to work (cf. Fayol, 1949; Mintzberg, 1994). Here, planning leads to a form of working that is controlled, highly structured, and predictable to enhance efficiency and consistency. This is what David Pye (1995: 9) called “workmanship of certainty.” The discipline of strategic management is a good illustration of an area where this contrast has been explicitly discussed. Mintzberg (1994) and Weick (1987), for example, have vividly argued that strategy is in practice often not the outcome of “a rational process of planning” as influential theory would suggest, but instead based on “whatever emerges from a process of creative, often ‘playful’, acting” (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997: 656). This again suggests that craft approaches tend to be more ubiquitous than is often acknowledged.

A CONFIGURATIONAL TYPOLOGY OF CRAFT

So far, we have built on commonalities in how prior literature has treated the subject, in order to define craft as a unique approach to work that relies on distinct skills and attitudes. However, past literature has also highlighted important variations in how this concept is used, which have pointed to distinct ways in which craft manifests in organizations and organizational fields. In this section, we analyze these varied manifestations through the lens of the framework developed in the previous section (i.e., craft skills and attitudes vs. mechanical skills and attitudes), and discuss their differential reliance on the coordination mechanisms that classic organization theory associates with fundamental forms of organization (Bradach & Eccles, 1989; McEvily et al., 2003; Williamson, 1991). The result is a configurational theory

of craft that highlights the inherent tension between human and machine that characterizes the organization of work, as well as the different ways in which it can be resolved. As this tension changes across time and space, and as actors attempt to strike a balance between machines and humans at work, craft appears to acquire different substantive manifestations and symbolic meanings.

Based on our review, we distinguish between two sets of configurations, summarized in Tables 3 and 4 and illustrated in their ideal-typical forms by Figures 2 to 6. We describe them in broadly chronological order as they appear in the literature, moving first across the conventional configurations of traditional and industrialized craft (Table 3) and then to the various manifestations of contemporaneous craft (Table 4). Our conceptualization of traditional and industrialized craft covers the perspective that has been dominant in the literature, where craft has been depicted as a primitive approach to making that became marginalized with industrialization as it was replaced by more efficient ways of working and modes of organizing that were deemed to have greater utility to organizations and society. Our conceptualization of technical, pure, and creative craft covers an alternative perspective that has been increasingly visible in the literature where craft appears as a more timeless alternative to mechanical work. These configurations involve a more explicit concern for aesthetic forms of quality that relate to the pursuit of technical excellence, anti-industrial purity, and creative stimulation.

Traditional Craft

The form of craft that has been most common in the literature is what we term here as “traditional craft” (see Figure 2 and Table 3). It is visible in the pre-industrial forms of work organization that have been replaced or are persisting only in the margins, with the prototypical example being found in the guild systems of Medieval Europe that Kieser (1989) described as the “predecessor institutions” of formal organizations. This “traditional craft form of work organization” also featured as prehistory in Bodrožić and Adler’s (2018) historical account of technological revolutions and associated management models and concepts. According to this account, with the advent of steam and then electrical power, the “traditionalistic” craft paradigm was replaced by the “professionally managed firm” involving the “rationalized management of a geographically dispersed enterprise,” and then with the “factory” and its associated principles of scientific

TABLE 3
Traditional and Industrialized Craftwork Configurations

	Traditional Craft	Industrialized Craft
Meaning of craft	A preindustrial approach to making	A human skill that can be captured and controlled
Human vs. machine	Primitive form of making, based on direct human engagement and relying on manual skills and relatively simple tools; predating reliance on machines for making purposes.	Pockets of human engagement in a system that otherwise relies extensively on machines to increase efficiency; limited to fringe activities that cannot be mechanized or automated.
Skills (mastery, all-roundedness, embodied expertise)	Superior dexterity, mastery of broad range of techniques, and embodied expertise are essential to the making process and define social position. At least some degree of formalization to ensure functional quality and facilitate skill transfer.	Decomposition of craft skills in the service of industrialized production; mastery circumscribed to specialized techniques that cannot be replicated by a machine.
Attitudes (dedication, communalism, exploration)	Expectation of profound devotion to one's trade and respect for communal norms, ethos, and common interests; social identity defined by trade; adherence to conventions typically more important than experimental variation for the refinement of skills and techniques.	Subordination of craftwork to industrialized, mechanized production processes dilutes dedication and restricts opportunities for variation; possible vestigial pride in the possession of rare skills that distinguish craftspeople from deskilled, despecialized workers, and commitment to their maintenance.
Configuration of coordination mechanisms	Coordination achieved through a combination of hierarchy and community, regulating the transfer and the practice of skills through master-apprenticeship systems or <i>gemeinschaft</i> communities attached to place and family.	Coordination achieved within a broader context characterized by rationalization of work processes, market-based incentives, and bureaucratic control.
Market	Low—market-buffering institutions (e.g., guilds) protect the integrity and economic value of craft skills by regulating competition and exchanges.	High—incentive system based on labor market conditions and individual performance metrics.
Hierarchy	High—strict, personal and normative hierarchies shape vertical (master-apprentice) and horizontal (among peers, e.g., guilds) relationships among craftspeople.	High—bureaucratic (formal and rational) control system that subjects the execution of tasks to hierarchical oversight.
Community	High—exchanges framed by interpersonal bonds (master-apprentice, guilds, households) characterized by web of loyalties and obligations that underpin mutual trust.	Low—limited opportunities for trust-based interactions; lack of collective action structures.
Examples	Medieval guilds of Europe (Kieser, 1989), domestic production systems of prewar Japan (Sasaki et al., 2019) or preindustrial U.S. (Ruef, 2020), visual art academies of Italy (Wijnberg & Gemser, 2000), U.S. construction (Stinchcombe, 1959), deep sea fishery (Hodson, 1996), structural engineering (Bailey & Barley, 2011)	U.S. printing (Wallace & Kalleberg, 1982), U.S. iron and steel (Conell & Voss, 1990), British and French manufacturing (Maurice, Sorge, & Warner, 1980; Sorge, 1991; Wrigley, 1982), railway industry of Britain (Streeck, Seglow, & Wallace, 1981), French aeronautic plant (Anteby, 2008), U.S. apparel industry (Doeringer & Crean, 2006)

management. Similarly, Burris (1989) equated craft with a “pre-capitalist” control structure that relied on distinct characteristics compared to modern “technocratic control.”

In traditional craft, the purpose of human engagement with the making of a product or the delivery of a service is simply a prerequisite for performance; there is no mechanical alternative. The reliance on machines is thus low due to the state of technological development or the inherent nature of the work. As a result, work is largely manual and may be particularly hard, physically demanding or dangerous out of necessity. This was the case, for example, for the

traditional weavers of Norwich (Bearman & Deane, 1992: 37–38). The coordination of traditional craft typically involves some form of master-apprenticeship system where, in order to enter the trade, one has to engage in an enduring and exclusive one-to-one training relationship with an established crafts-person. This would involve a career ladder that takes many years to complete, where an “apprentice” has to first qualify for some form of intermediate status (such as “journeyman”) before being eligible for the honorable rank of “master” (Aminzade & Hodson, 1982; Baer & Shaw, 2017; Kieser, 1989). Traditional crafts are also characterized by a concern with

TABLE 4
Technical, Pure, and Creative Craftwork Configurations

	Technical Craft	Pure Craft	Creative Craft
Meaning of craft	Technical excellence in making	Anti-industrial purity in making	Creative stimulation through making
Human vs. machine	Mechanization used as a tool to augment human senses, skills, and capacity while humans remain continuously engaged in design, and refinement of aspects of making to achieve a technical form of perfection.	Human touch is consecrated and technology is rejected to achieve a socially constructed form of purity that is anti-industrial in nature.	Human engagement is prioritized to liberate human creativity and ingenuity for intrinsic stimulation and fulfillment; mechanization is used where it can facilitate unique creative expressions.
Skills (mastery, all-roundedness, embodied expertise)	Mastery defined by intimate knowledge of flexible, advanced mechanized tools, and awareness of the potentialities they offer, that is balanced with the commoditization, specification, and codification of skills through the use of formal qualifications, manuals, and technical specialization.	Idealized emphasis on purely human skills that require extreme mastery, all-roundedness and embodied expertise. Often manifested as the tacit and tactile ability to apply historic manual making techniques that are embodied in heritage artifacts.	Mastery defined by aesthetic prowess (not necessarily confined to visual); possible trade-off between acquiring a broad skill base and refining a unique style.
Attitudes (dedication, communality, exploration)	Dedication to a trade and context is balanced by pursuit of career advancement through mobility based on formal qualifications; communality within narrow technical expert groups but tension and competition with other experts; reliance on direct and vicarious experiential learning within a formally prescribed domain.	Driven by a passionate commitment to preserve, construct, or revive a romanticized form of purity in making; identification with anti-industrial movements or cross-temporal collectives of craftspeople; high degree of exploration needed to (re)construct pure making skills, often through rediscovery and reimagination of forgotten techniques from the past.	Driven and powered (also) by intellectual curiosity and stimulation; playful exploration and experimentation to develop distinctive style; identification and intense interaction with community of creatives.
Configuration of coordination mechanisms	Coordination achieved through semiformal technical communities, characterized by status hierarchies based on expertise.	Coordination occurs through norms, interpretations, and collective imaginaries within anti-industrial communities that claim custodianship of pure techniques.	Coordination through “friendly” markets and supportive, informal, nonhierarchical creative communities (hobby clubs, online forums, creative huddles, maker spaces)
Market	Moderate—focus on niches, flexibility, and customization lowers market pressures for efficiency and places market value on superior skills.	Low—considerations for demand and competition are secondary to the aim of protecting pure skills and associated meanings.	Moderate—individual identification with aesthetic valuation of outcome may lead to friendly competitive structures (“beauty contests”); opportunities to monetize one’s craft may induce market-based, competitive behavior among the most skilled.
Hierarchy	Moderate—task coordination through participative management and semiautonomous work groups.	Moderate—authoritative positions in the community may be claimed by (and conferred on) those that are most versed in pure skills, especially when those build on a constructed sense of heritage.	Low—largely practiced individually; if execution requires support activities (e.g., fine dining), tasks may be organized hierarchically, based on skills and creative vision; informal hierarchies in creative communities based on advice and feedback-giving.

TABLE 4
(Continued)

	Technical Craft	Pure Craft	Creative Craft
Community	Moderate—professional forms of collaborative, partly interorganizational community protect and refine craft skills.	High—craft skills are acquired and deployed within anti-industrial social movements or attached to long-standing and partly reinvented traditions, typically maintained by geographically concentrated communities.	Moderate—craftsperson’s capacity for individual expression is augmented by participation in informal communities though advice, feedback, inspiration, and knowledge-sharing.
Examples	“Flexible specialization” in German and Japanese manufacturing (Kotha, 1995; Maurice et al., 1980; Sorge, 1991), Swiss watchmaking (Raffaelli, 2019), autonomous work groups at Pilkingtons, Rank Xerox and Ford UK (McKinlay & Starkey, 1988), blue-collar workers with machine programming responsibilities in U.S. manufacturing (Kelley, 1990; Vallas, 2006)	Organic food production (Weber et al., 2008), Franconian beer brewing (Cruz, Beck, & Wezel, 2018), Italian grappa making (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016), Italian Barolo/Barbaresco winemaking (Negro, Hannan, & Rao, 2011), Japanese <i>shinise</i> (Sasaki et al., 2019), Hand-decorated pottery (Bell & Vachhani, 2020)	Amateur radio broadcasting (Croideu & Kim, 2018), handicraft artisans on etsy.com (Kuhn & Galloway, 2015), French cuisine (Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003), professional cooks in United States (Fine, 1992), craft brewing (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Mathias et al., 2018), newspaper journalism (Quinn & Bunderson, 2016)

functional quality and thus external standards of performance (Becker, 1978). This means that mastery, all-roundedness, and embodied expertise are balanced with at least some degree of commoditization, specification, and codification of skills to ensure consistency in output quality and skill transfer. The medieval guilds are probably the clearest example of this balance, and this is why Kieser (1989) referred to them as the “predecessor institutions” of the formal organizations that ultimately shifted this balance much further in the direction of mechanical

work skills and attitudes enabled by technological and scientific advances.

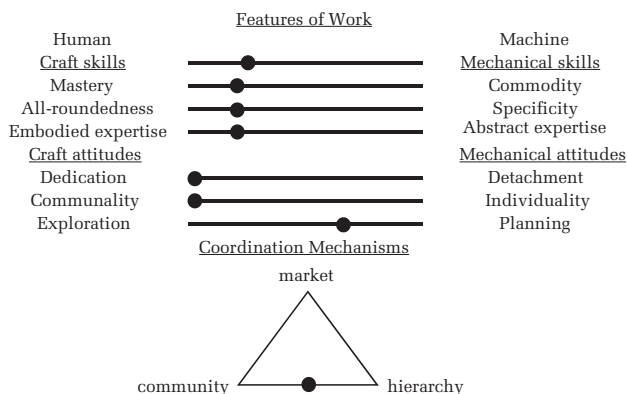
The traditional craft configuration is associated with a unique mix of organizing mechanisms that relies on limited market-, but extensive hierarchy- and community-based coordination. First, there is limited reliance on market mechanisms as there are powerful market-buffering institutions. Kieser (1989: 546), for instance, described the guilds that typically structured traditional craft as

occupational monopolies... that protected their members from the threats to their existence engendered by markets... [as they] relieved the pressures of selection... , created security by standardizing expectations about the behavior of others, and thus allowed the monopolists to make forecasts on a longer-term basis.

In the absence of reliance on markets for “capital goods, labor, and property rights... only the end products of the guilds were traded in [extremely regulated] markets” (Kieser, 1989: 546; see also Bearman & Deane, 1992; Carroll, Preisendoerfer, Swaminathan, & Wiedenmayer, 1993).

In the absence of powerful collective regulatory bodies such as guilds or academies, Ruef (2020) also observed how traditional craft production in the United States was also largely free from market forces. Focusing specifically on labor, he described how traditional craft involved “unfree” forms of

FIGURE 2
The Traditional Craft Work Configuration



work that persisted until the mid-nineteenth century when firms increasingly began to operate according to a “factory system” that relied on “wage labor,” and, thus, increasingly on the market for coordinating work. This was not unique to the United States, but also appears to have been characteristic of Europe before the emergence of the guilds (Wallis, 1902), or Southeast Asia before industrialization (Koo, 1990). The modern heir of these traditional market-buffering institutions around craftwork is perhaps the “craft union” (Hannan & Freeman, 1987), which follows an “occupational logic” by seeking “work control, often monopolizing the supply of labor ... [and] enforcing craft standards as gate-keeping mechanisms” (Yu, 2013: 109). Though unions emerged in response to industrialization, and in many cases indicated the loss of craft rather than its persistence, in exceptional circumstances they gained enough power to resist technocratic control and maintain traditional craft forms of organizing, as was the case with American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions in the beginning of the twentieth century (Baron, Jennings, & Dobbin, 1988).

Second, traditional craft relies on strict, personal, and normative hierarchies. The craftsperson of lower rank is subjected to the will of higher-ranked “masters” and has no alternative but to patiently follow the hierarchical structure of the social ladder if they want to progress (Clignet, 1979; Handman, 1938; Kieser, 1989). Relationships to hierarchy are highly personal, not mediated by any form of bureaucracy (e.g., Burack, 1966; Stinchcombe, 1959), and involve extensive cultural prescriptions for achieving and maintaining social status. For example, in Japan, craft was traditionally organized according to rigid hierarchical relationships within a large household where the master acted as the head of the family and apprentices were considered part of the extended family (Takashina & Oonogi, 2006). Beyond consideration of craft skill levels, traditional craft hierarchies depended significantly on normative principles for determining social standing. For example, “honorableness” was a powerful norm among the medieval guilds (Kieser, 1989), giving those higher up in the hierarchy explicit power to judge whether someone lower in the hierarchy was adhering to the traditional craft ethos. This meant that there was a constant threat of being expelled from the guild if one was found to have acted in a “dishonorable” manner (Kieser, 1989: 551).

Third, these hierarchical structures are socially embedded in inescapable networks of dense ties

without separation of the public and private sphere that are characteristic of the *gemeinschaft* form of community (Adler, 2015; Adler, Kwon, & Heckscher, 2008; Tönnies, 1957). Medieval guilds performed this function to the extreme (Kieser, 1989), though this communal dimension also characterizes other, nonguild examples of traditional craft where the family, the feudal lord, or the geographic community serves a similar role (Ruef, 2020; Sasaki et al., 2019; Wallis, 1902). In traditional forms of craft, these community structures are so powerful that they function as near-total institutions that one cannot voluntarily enter or exit (Kieser, 1989; Ruef, 2020). This produces a strong sense of collective identity and a related, imposed responsibility for the protection of collective interest that is typically described as being “traditionalistic” in nature.

Compared to the contemporary configurations of craft discussed below, this mix of coordination mechanisms tends to prioritize dedication and communality over exploration, as workers have limited agency at work and appear more likely to see their work as a predefined duty to the community than as an “open space of play” (Sennett, 2008: 269). While some degree of exploration is needed to acquire refined craft skills through experiential learning, strong social conventions also breed a planning mindset to ensure conformity that limits experimentation. The medieval guilds of Europe, again, provide a powerful illustration as guilds typically had constitutions that included words like: “no man should think of or invent something new or use it, but everyone should follow his neighbour in brotherly love” (Braun, 1968: 257).

As powerful as this mode of organizing once was, traditional craft has disappeared from a large part of society. As the guilds, and similar social structures, declined due to a combination of political, economic, and technological circumstances, production gradually shifted toward more “efficient” organizational forms that relied on modern principles of “line and staff” and “scientific management” (Bodrožić & Adler, 2018; Robinson & Briggs, 1991). However, our review points to particular cases where the traditional craft form of organizing can still be observed. Stinchcombe (1959: 170), for example, contrasted the organization of the U.S. construction industry in the 1950s with the dominant principles of “modern bureaucracy” and “mass production,” and found a continued reliance on a “craft base” and “craft principles” instead of reliance on centralized planning systems populated by clerks and professionals where “both the product and the work process are planned in advance by persons

not on the work crew.” Hodson (1996, 2010) pointed to firefighting, police work, deep-sea fishing, and factory maintenance as other fields where traditional craft elements—such as reliance on master–apprenticeship training—have persisted. Bailey and Barley (2011) also noted the continued reliance on the master–apprenticeship approach in structural engineering relative to hardware engineering, and Maurice et al. (1980) pointed to Germany as a place where, in general, apprenticeship systems continued to be “most strongly cultivated.” We also see the persistence of traditional craft structures involving normative hierarchies embedded in *gemeinschaft* communities of place, such as in the case of Champagne grape growing (Ody-Brasier & Vermeulen, 2014), or mechanical engineering (Lazerson, 1988) and knitwear manufacturing (Lazerson, 1995) in Northern Italy. In such relatively rare cases of traditional craft persistence, authors have tended to point to exceptional conditions where it has proven to be the most efficient system (Lazerson, 1988; Stinchcombe, 1959). However, our review also shows how, even where traditional crafts became industrialized, craft continued to play an important role in organizational life.

Industrialized Craft

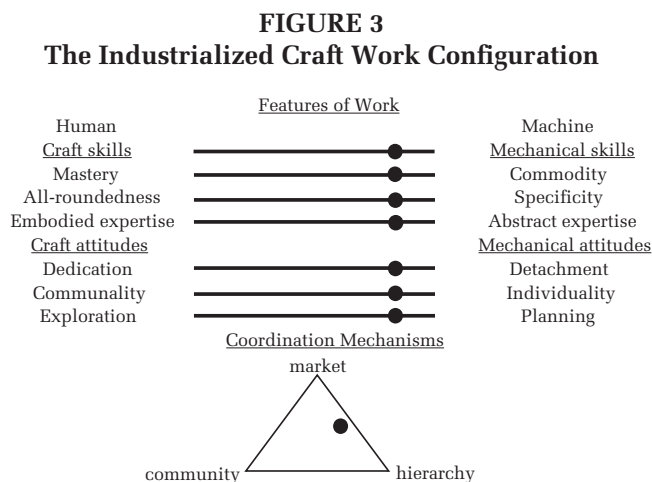
We find that a substantial portion of the literature that has touched upon craft has dealt with instances in which human engagement has been replaced by machine control and craft work has made way for mechanical work (see Figure 3 and Table 3). In these cases, the introduction of machine technology and associated bureaucratic personnel practices in accordance with the principles of scientific management, in essence, captured particular crafts and took away the

craft worker’s control over their work in the process (Baron et al., 1988; Blauner, 1964; Edwards, 1979).

Wallace and Kalleberg (1982), for example, detailed how craft was gradually captured after the World Wars in the U.S. printing industry. This sector used to be considered the epitome of the persistence of traditional craft production in industrial society as “shop floor autonomy,” and a high level of all-roundedness in skills was maintained. This changed dramatically after the “imposition of capitalist rationalization” and “automation” (Wallace & Kalleberg, 1982: 309–310). As a result of continued specialization craft became increasingly “splintered,” with workers being increasingly forced onto narrow, specialized tracks that allowed them “less time developing an integrated understanding of the relationships among different printing functions” (Wallace & Kalleberg, 1982: 309). Wallace and Kalleberg (1982: 322) argued that this is a case of classic “deskilling” (Braverman, 1974), where the “consequence ... of new technology was the gradual diminution of judgment and craftsmanship required of the individual worker and the transfer of control of the labor process to management.” Similar descriptions of craft decline due to industrialization can be found in other areas, such as in the French aeronautic plant studied by Anteby (2008), in the U.S. iron and steel industry (Conell & Voss, 1990), or across sectors in the United Kingdom more generally in comparison to Germany (Maurice et al., 1980; Sorge, 1991; Wrigley, 1982).

In the case of industrialized craft, the mechanical capabilities of machines are prioritized and the purpose of human engagement with making is reduced to only those aspects where robotic machines still lack capabilities. In many instances, this comprises highly specified roles for which limited skill is required. The conventional twentieth century epitome of this is the assembly-line worker (Blauner, 1964; Guest, 1954; Hodson, 1996), and the twenty-first century equivalent may be the gig worker controlled by digital platforms and algorithms (cf. Ravenelle, 2019; Scholz, 2017). Here, workers see their autonomy and job complexity reduced and it may appear that they will be replaced as soon as there is a sufficiently capable and permissible robot. The “making” of the product or service has been detached from the “meaning,” including the design and management (Dorner, 1997), as there is a shift toward valuing “mental work” over “manual work” (Barley & Orr, 1997; Sennett, 2008; Wrigley, 1982).

However, authors have also noted trends toward a potential skill “upgrading” under these conditions (Adler, 2007; Anderson & Tushman, 1990; Barley,



1996; Form, 1987). Barley (1996) argued that with the increased reliance on machines, we also witnessed the birth of a new occupational type: the technician. In the case of industrialized crafts, there is still a need for skilled technicians that operate and service robotic machines. These technician occupations may rely on capabilities that involve craft skills that depend on mastery, all-roundedness, and embodied knowledge, as well as on attitudes that correspond with a craft ethos, yet they are often seen as “foreigners in the work site” (Barley, 1996: 422). Barley (1996: 422), for instance, described the work of technicians that “built, repaired and monitored complex technical systems” such as computer technicians, programmers, network administrators, and factory technicians. In the case of industrialized craft, however, these technicians are not directly involved in making processes and thus have limited engagement with end products or services and the material world in which these are ultimately made, consumed, and used. Instead, the technicians are detached from making processes or have marginal support roles in the organization, as is the case in the British manufacturing system described by Sorge (1991).

Increased reliance on efficient marketplaces combined with hierarchical and bureaucratic forms of coordination has generally led to a reduced reliance on craft skills and attitudes in the making process and thus shifted power away from makers (cf. Adler, 2007; Burawoy, 1982; Edwards, 1979). When a craft gets captured in this way for efficiency purposes, skills become rationalized through processes of commoditization, specialization, and codification (Adler, 2012; Griffin, Wallace, & Rubin, 1986; Weber, 1978). Similarly, there is institutional pressure for work-related attitudes to shift toward detachment, individuality, and planning that support the rationalization and “atomization” of the work process (Adler, 2012; Burawoy, 1984; Griffin et al., 1986).

The industrialized form of craft can frequently be found in the “generalist” organizations described in studies on the evolution of organizational populations (Sikavica & Pozner, 2013; Swaminathan, 1998; Verhaal, Hoskins, & Lundmark, 2017). For example, the industrial revolution led to the dominance of the mass-production beer brewery, which relied on the production of highly standardized products with the widest possible appeal (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000). In this process of industrial transformation where scientific and technological advancements allowed the capture of traditional craft aspects of beer brewing, the role of brewmaster, which used to be at

the center of the organization, evolved to that of brewing technician. The brewing technician now operated the machines but was removed from the material brewing process and had limited power over what products were actually produced (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019).⁵ The literature on craft unions similarly described how, with industrialized craft, the shift toward efficient marketplaces and bureaucratic organization meant increasing competition among workers that ultimately led to reduced control and autonomy at work and engagement with making across the entire craft base (Conell & Voss, 1990; Streeck et al., 1981; Wrigley, 1982).

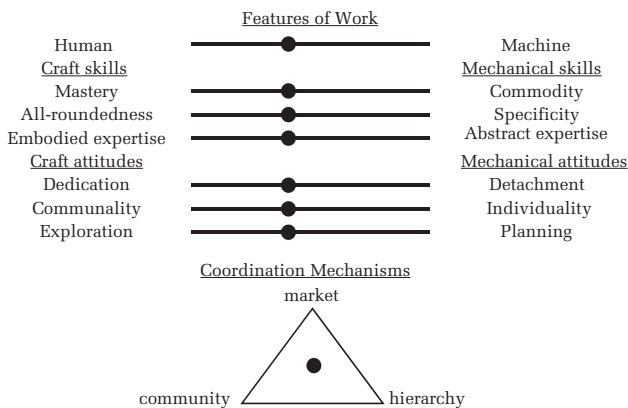
The role of craft unions in the industrialized form of craft also points to detachment of craft from community as an additional factor that contributes to a dilution of craft skill and attitudes. The craft unions described in the literature, in most cases, struggle to preserve craft through formal communities in the face of the declining influence of the *gemeinschaft* structures of traditional craft organization and the growing influence of bureaucratic control. Though occupational communities may still be maintained in places (Anteby, 2008; Barley, 1996), they are frequently in tension with the need for control under rationalized bureaucratic organization. Anteby (2008) observed how the diminished population of remaining craft workers in a French aeronautic plant that had increasingly robotized craft production was given informal leeway from management to produce “homers” (the formally prohibited making of factory artifacts with company tools for personal use) to ensure their continued cooperation in the industrialized system. This is also an example of how remnants of craft may persist in the margins of, or completely outside, the organization of making in cases of industrialized craft.

Technical Craft

While a significant part of the literature has depicted instances where mechanical skills and attitudes associated with scientific management, bureaucracy, and automation appear inherently oppositional to craft, a substantial body of work has

⁵ Note that this raises an important issue in relation to the deskilling–skill-upgrading debate. One could argue that the role of brewmaster was upgraded as this now requires more advanced, formalized training and skill levels. However, the codification of craft skills and the detachment from the material brewing process could also be interpreted as an instance of deskilling.

FIGURE 4
The Technical Craft Work Configuration



observed instances in which these appear more compatible. Here, human and machine forces are not at odds but are balanced. While there is increased reliance on machines, makers continue to be autonomously involved in making and maintain control over machines during the process. In such technical craft, machines are used as tools to “augment” human senses, skills, and their “capacity for productive expression” (Piore & Sabel, 1984: 19). Compared to other configurations of craft, this configuration depends on a prioritization of the value of technical excellence above all else, which may require substantial reliance on mechanization (see Figure 4 and Table 4).

On the surface, there may be a resemblance with what we have described in the case of industrialized craft. However, while we find technicians in both forms, in the technical craft form technicians are directly engaged with and in control of making through more extensive reliance on craft skill and attitudes. For example, Piore and Sabel (1984: 17) notably described the unique “post-Fordist” production regimes found in industrialized Germany, Northern Italy, and Japan as “flexible specialization” enabled by “vestiges of the craft tradition” in those countries. This regime lies at the “interface of product standardization and customization” (McKinlay & Starkey, 1988), such that there is semi-rationalization of work processes where rudimentary and peripheral aspects may be automated or otherwise efficiently outsourced in order to set makers free to focus on parts of the production process where quality is believed to be most dependent on mastery in the application of refined skill

and human touch (e.g., Kotha, 1995; see also Best, 1990; Cusumano, 1991).

This configuration of craft is also visible in the literature on total quality management (Deming, 1986). Here, craft skills and attitudes are cherished or reinvented in industrial organization to facilitate the pursuit of excellence in making through an attitude of continuous improvement across all facets of the making process (Hackman & Wageman, 1995). This technical form of craft can be observed in Raffaelli’s (2019) study of mechanical watchmakers in Switzerland, in Kotha’s (1995) study of a Japanese bicycle manufacturer as highlighted above, and in many others, such as Darr and Talmud’s (2003) study of a small U.S. microelectronics company and Kelley’s (1990) study of the introduction of programmable machines across U.S. manufacturing sectors.

Across the board, this configuration relies on a fundamental balance between human and machine forces; this is depicted in Figure 4, which provides a visual illustration of how both craft and mechanical skills and attitudes are present in this ideal-typical configuration. In organizations configured according to technical, rather than industrialized, craft, roles are less specified or are splintered, and come with more responsibility and thus all-roundedness (Grimes et al., 1972; McKinlay & Starkey, 1988; Perrow, 1967). Managers are supposed to get their hands dirty (Deming, 1986) and “programmable automation tasks” are assigned to makers on the shop floor rather than housed in “white collar” design, engineering, or management functions (Kelley, 1990; Vallas, 2006), as technology is used for the “upgrading” of skill rather than deskilling (cf. Adler, 2007; Perrow, 1983; Sorge, 1991).

The balance in skills and attitudes under technical craft appears to be associated with an equivalent equilibrium between market, hierarchy, and community coordination mechanisms (see Figure 4). Compared to industrialized craft, there is less reliance on market and hierarchy but more reliance on the community in coordinating work. Technical craft is typically associated with a niche or specialist strategy. Firms adopting this mode of organizing tend to be less affected by direct competition compared to generalist firms (cf. Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Irwin et al., 2018; Sorge, 1991). A concern for niche demand is typically associated with a “strategy of permanent innovation” reliant on technical craft skills, potentially supported by “an industrial community that restricts competition to those favoring innovation,” such as originally observed in Northern Italy and Germany (Piore & Sabel, 1984: 17; see also Doeringer & Crean, 2006; Sorge,

1991). The attitude of these firms toward upstream and downstream market relationships also tends to be more “collaborative” (Irwin et al., 2018). For example, in their study of the U.S. recreational vehicle industry, Irwin et al. (2018: 282) distinguished “crafters” from “assemblers” and argued that the former interpret their “industry identity as a mandate to emphasize personal, long-term relationships” in contrast to the “transactional” and “competitive” relationships emphasized by the more industrial “assembler” firms (Irwin et al., 2018: 285–286).

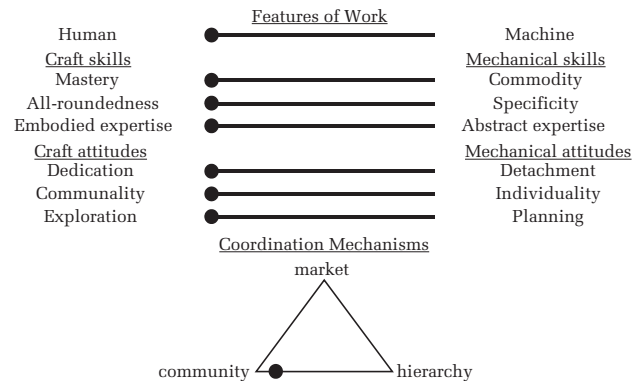
In the case of technical craft, a reduced reliance on hierarchy and bureaucracy for the coordination of tasks typically goes hand in hand with models of “participative management” and “semi-autonomous work groups” that function best when they are not just “management-initiated” but instead build on a true craft mandate (Hodson, 1996, 2010). Here, elements of bureaucracy, which are still necessary when dealing with complex technology and organization, are inherently supportive and “enabling,” rather than “coercive” (Adler & Borys, 1996). This alternative organizational design is especially visible in the organizational restructuring efforts of large mass-producers, which had previously been configured as industrialized craft, that aim to infuse craft elements into their production processes (McKinlay & Starkey, 1988).

In the case of technical craft, makers are embedded in a professional form of community that enables continued technical learning. This form of community is in sharp contrast with the more rigid, loyalty-based, *gemeinschaft* communities of traditional crafts. Instead, entry to the craft typically requires formal education combined with some form of apprenticeship or extensive on-the-job training (Adler et al., 2008; Barley, 1996; Vallas, 2006), and relies on “interdependent” rather than “dependent” or “independent self-construals” (Adler et al., 2008). This means that makers experience a tension between identification with the organization and with their occupational community of practice (Anteby, 2008; Barley, 1996), which in the case of technical craft is a productive tension that the organization of work capitalizes on. Beyond setting skill levels for entry, these communities provide sources for continued sharing of technical knowledge and expertise across organizational boundaries (Barley, 1996).

Pure Craft

Technical craft contrasts with what we have labeled as “pure craft” (see Figure 5 and Table 4). In

FIGURE 5
The Pure Craft Work Configuration



this instance, craft is associated with the radical prioritization of human skills and attitudes at the expense of all that is considered mechanical. This typically manifests as a consecration of manual dexterity and human touch in an effort to embrace anti-industrial purity in the process of making (Beverland, 2005; Sikavica & Pozner, 2013; Weber et al., 2008). Naturally, this configuration is also associated with an admiration for select properties of historic work forms and a rejection of modern technology. As such, this configuration resembles the traditional craft configuration but relies on a more idealist adherence to craft skills and attitudes, which now also includes a strong emphasis on exploration to (re)discover, and (re)construct “pure” making techniques in the face of industrialization. Pure craft thus often appears as a reconfiguration of traditional craft where select elements are restored and transformed through the use of history to give meaning to work in relation to mechanical alternatives (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Negro et al., 2011; Weber et al., 2008). As such, this configuration is apparent in movements that strive to “re-enchant” manufacturing or service work in the face of industrialization and rationalization (Endrissat et al., 2015; Suddaby, Ganzin, & Minikus 2017).

Historically, this form of craft can be traced back to movements from the Romantic era (e.g., Morris, 1892; Ruskin, 1849). As industrialization had led to a substantial transformation of work and society in the preceding era, there was an increasing nostalgic longing for more purely human forms of making. Indeed, an extreme example of pure craft is found in John Ruskin’s work (1849), whose “radical... vision was to assert that modern society as a whole should and could return to a preindustrial past” (Sennett, 2008: 108). This “Ruskinism involved an

appreciation of rough-hewn beauty, and more than a tinge of eroticism in hard physical labor” (Sennett, 2008: 109). Today, we can observe the pure craft configuration among “heritage crafts” that aim to revive, protect, and preserve manual skills for making, such as illustrated by the Heritage Crafts Association in the United Kingdom, which produces a yearly “Red List of Endangered Crafts” (Carpenter, 2019). In our sample, this form of craft can also be found among organic farmers (Sikavica & Pozner, 2013; Weber et al., 2008), Franconian beer breweries (Cruz et al., 2018), Italian wine and spirits producers (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016; Negro et al., 2011), Japanese multi-centenary family firms known as *shinise* (Sasaki et al., 2019), as well as in Bell and Vachhani’s (2020) study of makers of bicycles, shoes, and hand-decorated pottery.

Whereas in the case of traditional, industrialized, and technical craft there is (also) a utilitarian component to the purpose of human engagement with making, in the case of pure craft the purpose of human engagement with making primarily reflects the pursuit of distinctive aesthetic qualities. Apart from relying on a romanticized version of the past and manual labor, this form of craft is also typically associated with a particular form of “anti-mass production sentiment” (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Sikavica & Pozner, 2013; Verhaal, Khessina, & Dobrev, 2015) that cherishes smallness and scarcity over “scale,” “material abundance,” and “waste” (Sennett, 2008; Weber et al., 2008). As such, there is an idealistic opposition to machines that are deemed to “disnature” the production process by making it “artificial” or impure (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016; Weber et al., 2008; see also Form, 1987: 30–31).

Industrialization is often associated with the severing of the tie between making and *gemeinschaft* communities such as those based on geographic place (Cruz et al., 2018; DeSoucey, 2010). In contrast, pure craft relies on movements that are typically tied to heritage communities for the coordination of work and associated skills and attitudes (Beck, Swaminathan, Wade, & Wezel, 2019; Khaire & Hall, 2016; Sasaki et al., 2019). Here, makers may present themselves as custodians of cherished community traditions through explorative use of history (Dacin, Dacin, & Kent, 2019). For example, the craft skill and ethos of organic farming were tied to the preservation of “pastoral heritage,” “heritage breeds,” and “heritage foods” by an emerging community of producers of grass-fed meat and dairy products in the United States (Weber et al., 2008). The values upheld and stories told by craftspeople that embrace this

configuration tend to be alluring to outsiders (Massa et al., 2017) and, in the absence of the powerful regulatory systems akin to traditional crafts, there are lower barriers to entry for aspiring makers (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Weber et al., 2008). This is in sharp contrast with technical craft, where craftsmanship requires a high degree of technical proficiency and where external audiences are typically further removed from the process of making.

Pure craft, in principle, is associated with little reliance on market modes of coordination. The aim is to spread the pure craft skills and attitudes to the widest audience as authentically as possible to realize an idealized end. Taken to its extreme, this perspective views the end user of the crafted product no longer as consumer but as a potential partner that can be educated and “evangelized” (Massa et al., 2017) to participate in the protection of heritage or embrace “purer” forms of production and consumption. The same applies to peers in the sector, who are not seen as competitors but as collaborators (Mathias et al., 2018; Weber et al., 2008). However, this is not to say that, in practice, the pure craft cannot have market value, as interesting tensions emerge when producers semiauthentically present themselves as pure craft firms for strategic reasons (Beverland, 2005). We will explore such tensions in the Discussion.

Just like other forms of contemporary craft (technical craft described above and creative craft described below), there is typically limited reliance on hierarchy in the organization of pure craft. However, a moderate but distinct form of hierarchy could be observed in the authority positions that may be claimed by those makers that are especially well-versed in, or able to construct a connection to, a particular heritage upon which the pure craft skills rest. In addition, pure craft configurations may display some degree of hierarchy as the result of the vestiges of traditional craft coordination mechanisms. For example, work that has evolved from a traditional to a pure craft configuration may still be embedded in families that are committed to preserving or reviving their craft heritage (e.g., Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016; Erdogan, Rondi, & De Massis, 2020). Similarly, pure craft may be coordinated through a degree of formal authority as protectors of heritage may be able to maintain regulatory power positions, such as is observable in various forms of “gastronomicalism” (DeSoucey, 2010), including Champagne grape production in France (Ody-Brasier & Vermeulen, 2014).

Finally, as alluded to above, pure craft is associated more strongly with community coordination compared to industrialized and technical craft.

Community has a distinct and more powerful effect on production and performance as making is strongly influenced by constructed idealistic communities that are typically based on a sense of collective heritage (Cruz et al., 2018; DeSoucey, 2010; Sasaki et al., 2019; Weber et al., 2008). However, community boundaries are less rigid than is the case with traditional and technical craft, and they are more permeable as the distinction between maker and consumer becomes blurred. Instead, both are engaged in a process of collective meaning making that is tied to the production and use of a craft product or service. Or, as Bell and Vachhani (2020: 684) stated, this aspect of craft “involves affective atmospheres [that] bring a specific feel to encounters and events as collective phenomena that cannot be reduced to individual bodies.”

Creative Craft

A final contemporary configuration observed in the literature is what we call “creative craft” (see Figure 6 and Table 4). In this case, craft is associated with a pursuit of creativity in making and fueled by social movements that promote individual freedom and expression (Fitzmaurice et al., 2020; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015; Rao et al., 2003). This is distinct from the technical craft configuration that hinges on machine-mediated technical perfection, or the pure craft configuration that hinges on collective attachment to purist craft principles often steeped in nostalgia.

Critical here is the distinctive importance of exploration as an attitude that takes more open and less “serious” forms compared to pure craft, as it is freed from communal expectations typically rooted in an idealized past. Instead, individual intrinsic value is found in the pursuit of personal interest in exploring

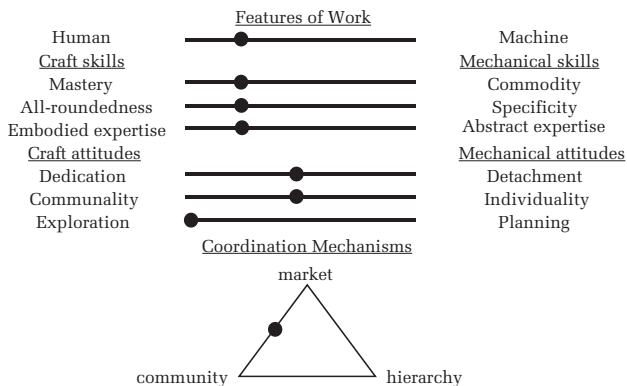
and developing a technique, as well as in the aim of making unique products or services that serve as an expression of individual identity. As such, there is typically some blurring of the domestic and the public spheres, as products and services may be created in and around the home—at an abstract level reminiscent of preindustrial cottage industry and guild systems—and playful individual hobby practices blur into commercial applications (Croidieu & Kim, 2018; Fitzmaurice et al., 2020; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015).

The multifaceted concept of authenticity could be used to further clarify the distinction between creative craft and other forms of craft (Lehman, O’Connor, Kovács, & Newman, 2019). Creative craft is concerned with a form of authenticity based on the consistency between one’s expressions and one’s values, so that work is practiced as a genuine expression of the self. This contrasts with forms of authenticity more typical of traditional or pure craft, where there is a concern with the faithful conformity to collective standards or a purist connection to a constructed heritage. Similarly, there is a greater emphasis on innovation and uniqueness over consistency or constructed continuity in making. Creative craft is visible among chefs (Fine, 1992; Louisgrand & Islam, 2020; Rao et al., 2003; Slavich et al., 2020), the early twentieth-century amateur radio operators studied by Croidieu and Kim (2018), and the community of Etsy.com artisan entrepreneurs depicted in Kuhn and Galloway (2015), and also appears to be a dominant force in the craft brewing movement (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Mathias et al., 2018).

In the case of creative craft, the purpose of human engagement with making is to facilitate individual, creative expression. The attitude toward machines is probably most ambivalent under this form, where machines are supportive tools as long as they contribute to processes of creative discovery and expression. Empirically, creative craft can thus either be reliant on more traditional handicraft techniques, such as in the case of the handicraft artisans who balanced their “craft heritage ... traditional knowledge and designs with individual creative expression” (Ranganathan, 2018) or on modern machine technology, such as in the case of maker spaces where costly cutting-edge technology is shared by a community of independent makers (Browder et al., 2019; Fitzmaurice et al., 2020).

What characterizes these examples, in contrast with other configurations of craft, is a more individualist attitude, so that individual craft workers have “relative freedom ... from outside interference with [their] work” (Becker, 1978: 866; see also Fine,

FIGURE 6
The Creative Craft Work Configuration



1992). Rather than the “apprenticed know-how” that is typical of other configurations of craft, creative craft relies more on individualized “talent and intuitive know-how” for the “creation of ingenious, innovative, exceptional outcomes” (McIver et al., 2013: 606). The coordination of creative craft typically occurs through learning and practicing in supportive, informal creative communities. As such, compared to technical crafts, “initial training is an imperfect filtering device” for distinguishing the skilled from the nonskilled (Menger, 1999: 541).

Informal creative communities can take the form of hobby clubs, such as in the case of amateur radio-making (Croidieu & Kim, 2018) or craft brewing (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Mathias et al., 2018), where makers of varying levels come together to share their creative interests, practice together, and learn from each other through trial and error. These communities sometimes take a machine-mediated or online form so that inspiration, knowledge, and advice flow more freely across geographies (Kuhn & Galloway, 2015). Rather than imposing algorithmic control on gig workers, when configured as a creative craft, platforms may liberate individual makers (Fitzmaurice et al., 2020) through online-mediated communities, allowing independent makers to freely and creatively learn, practice, and express their passion for their trade (cf. Kuhn & Galloway, 2015).

Compared to pure craft, creative craft tends to be more open to market mechanisms of coordination as makers become more directly associated with work outcomes and, as such, more directly concerned with the external aesthetic valuation of their work (Fine, 1992; Khaire, 2014). Though this may not lead to outright competitive behaviors among makers, creative crafts tend to be characterized by contests for beauty and uniqueness (Becker, 1978; Cattani et al., 2013; Mathias et al., 2018). These are structured by formal or informal “selection systems” (Wijnberg & Gemser, 2000), such as awards or rankings for individual makers and products that could be regarded as a form of competition that is relatively “friendly in nature” (Mathias et al., 2018), yet with a significant impact on market outcomes. Illustrative are well-known cases from creative industries, such as the Academy Awards for creators in the Hollywood motion picture and animation industries (Cattani, Ferriani, & Allison, 2014; Gemser, Leenders, & Wijnberg, 2008; Mannucci & Yong, 2018), or the Michelin awards in gastronomy (Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2005; Slavich & Castellucci, 2016). Yet, such “art worlds” may develop in any maker context (Becker, 1978), as is seen in the importance of awards

and ranking in craft spirit distilling (Pedeliento, Andreini, & Dalli, 2020) and beer brewing (Mathias et al., 2018; Verhaal et al., 2015).

When craft takes its creative form, some hierarchical power structures may develop directly from market forces that provide intermediaries with the capability to constrain “the artist’s expressive freedom” (Becker, 1978: 866). Yet, compared to other configurations of craft, what is most striking is the absence of conventional mechanisms of hierarchical coordination. In fact, there is typically reduced reliance on formal organization or bureaucratic control structures as individual makers become entrepreneurs that strive to pursue their creative interests independently (Fitzmaurice et al., 2020; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015; Menger, 1999; Rao et al., 2003). For example, chefs that embraced the “nouvelle cuisine” movement in France resisted the “hierarchy of the ancient régime ... [where] the chef was virtually owned by patrons and nobles ... [and supplanted it with] a more egalitarian order” (Rao et al., 2003: 799).

Though creative craft typically rests on liberal and individualist movements for artistic or creative expression, these are naturally balanced by community coordination mechanisms. In contrast to the more exclusive semiformal communities that structure technical crafts, creative crafts typically rely on more inclusive informal communities to enable egalitarian forms of knowledge sharing (Browder et al., 2019; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015; Quinn & Bunderson, 2016) with often relatively low barriers to entry and engagement (Croidieu & Kim, 2018; Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Menger, 1999) to allow any member of these communities to improve their individual skills for creative expression. For example, the “maker movement ... emphasizes community and inclusiveness” among makers sharing a physical space and creative tools for which willingness to help others is a necessary condition for participation (Browder et al., 2019: 470).

In sum, by taking a configurational approach, we have connected and compared conventional (i.e., traditional and industrialized) and more contemporary (i.e., pure, technical, and creative) perspectives on craft to illustrate the different ways in which craft manifests in and around organizations. These differences, as our tables and figures succinctly show, depend in part on the different ways in which craft skills and attitudes are interpreted, combined, and applied to work. They can be informative for understanding how different organizational actors approach the same work domain through very different lenses and pursue different types of qualities. For example, the idealization of uniquely human skills and

attitudes that rely on the construction of shared heritage that characterizes pure craft contrasts sharply with the emphasis on technical skills to augment human capabilities and more “professional” attitudes that characterize technical craft.

In addition, the different combinations of coordination mechanisms that appear across our configurational typology indicate what kinds of organizational forms are typically associated with each instantiation of craft. They show how craft appears to be strongly associated with community-based coordination, but that the types of communities that form around it can vary substantially, in ways that reflect the influence of other modes of coordination. For example, the role of community-based coordination in the traditional craft configuration is substantially different from the role of community-based coordination in the creative craft configuration. Where the former typically depends on *gemeinschaft* communities as dense geographically bounded networks that support embedded social hierarchies and rigid adherence to standards, the latter depends on much looser, informal networks that facilitate potentially borderless sharing of skills and attitudes.

Together, we believe that these configurations can provide the building blocks for a theoretical framework that can help synthesize the rich, but largely implicit and fragmented, insights on craft and inspire multiple avenues for future research. We discuss this framework and future research directions in the final section.

DISCUSSION

To illustrate how we see our framework contributing to the literature, we first discuss how it provides a general theory for understanding alternative models of work that continue to rely on human engagement in contrast to more mechanical forms of work. We subsequently consider two implications of this theory for future research: (a) how it illuminates specific tensions that relate to the human–machine duality in work organization and (b) how it can help improve our understanding of evolutionary processes in and around organizations.

Toward a Theory for Understanding Human-Engaged Work

Our framework advances a holistic understanding of how making (of products, services, or ultimately even decisions) is approached and organized. Based on our review, we show how the concept of craft can be used to describe and synthesize insights about

humanist models for organizing work—those that continue to rely on distinctively human skills and attitudes for making purposes—that contrast with the mechanical models that have become dominant with the industrial revolutions. Viewed in this way, craft reflects a fundamental and timeless approach to work and brings to the fore an essential tension between human and machine in processes of making.

The different configurations we describe here point to the different ways in which this tension can be resolved by capturing the conditions under which humans are, to varying extents, engaged with making in relation to technological affordances. While the notion of craft appears to bring human and machine in full opposition at first sight, it is important to recognize how they are also mutually enabling. This is most evident in how we conceptualize technical craft, where advanced machine technology and mechanical processes are used to empower makers and augment their capabilities to focus on aspects of their work where human touch can add most value. However, arguably this also applies to pure and creative craft. While these forms tend to appear in direct opposition to mechanical work and machine control, they are also enabled by them, to the extent that mechanized alternatives provide a semiotic contrast that gives contemporary craft configurations their social meaning. Indeed, our review suggests how craft approaches to work often become more recognizable and meaningful after mechanization changes the nature of work in a given domain. For example, pure and creative craft forms of beer brewing only emerged after the significant industrialization of the field (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019).

This observation suggests that resolution of the duality between human and machine is not just an organization-level issue but also a field- and even a societal-level one, as increasing advances in artificial intelligence keep challenging us to reconsider what is uniquely human (cf. Harari, 2014; Hayles, 1999). Even if the boundary between human and machine keeps moving, as machines increasingly gain capabilities that were previously thought to be exclusively human, our review suggests that craft will remain an enduring part of production systems. We see this shifting duality that underlies our definition of craft work as an important area for future research. For instance, we need to ask more fundamental questions about how intelligent machines (in lieu of capable humans) are used in organizations (cf. Murray, Rhymer, & Sirmon, 2020; Raisch & Krakowski, 2020), and the extent to which they constrain or enable human capabilities and with what

consequences. To this end, future research may investigate how the digital technology and artificial intelligence used by contemporary platform organizations hinder or inspire craft approaches to work (e.g., Fitzmaurice et al., 2020; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015; Scholz, 2017); this may also reveal more vividly the social construction of different craft configurations, as experiences of platform work seem to vary dramatically across individuals and contexts (Fitzmaurice et al., 2020; Ravenelle, 2019).

By foregrounding the tension between human and machine, the configurational theory of craft we advance has some resemblance to prior theories of organizing that have described alternatives to rational and mechanical approaches, including “organic” management systems (Burns & Stalker, 1961) or normative forms of control (Barley & Kunda, 1992). However, our theory is distinct in taking the nature of work as a starting point (cf. Barley & Kunda, 2001), and seeing organizations, in the first place, as sites of making. Although established perspectives of adaptive management, organizational systems, environmental selection, or class struggle are clearly relevant for understanding the role of craft in organizations and society, our perspective starts by considering the nature of work in terms of how products and services are made, what meanings are constructed out of that, and how such making is organized in and around organizations.

In this sense, the craft perspective we develop here is distinct in its conceptualization of the uniquely human capabilities that craft work relies on. While there has been extensive work on the tacit nature of capabilities and its relationship with different configurations of coordination mechanisms (e.g., Lam, 2000; Zander & Kogut, 1995), a craft perspective on capabilities calls explicit attention to the role of the body and the interaction with the material world in such tacit forms of knowing (Barley, 1996; Bell & Vachhani, 2020). This recognition is in line with a growing interest in the role of bodily experience in learning and sensemaking more broadly (e.g., Beane, 2019; de Rond, Holeman, & Howard-Grenville, 2019). There is an opportunity to extend this line of work by considering how the role of embodiment and materiality varies across the different forms of craft work, and how it is intertwined with the other dimensions of craft skill identified here (mastery and all-roundedness).

Another key distinguishing feature of a craft perspective is the emphasis it places on distinct forms of meaning that are pursued through work and, relatedly, through the consumption of its outputs. The

perspective we advance here draws attention to the different ways in which human engagement with making is valued in a world that seems increasingly “posthuman” (cf. Hayles, 1999). This resonates with recent microlevel research that has started to explore how individuals derive meaning from work when it is socially constructed as a craft (Fetzer & Pratt, 2020; Pratt, Pradies, & Lepisto, 2013). It also resonates with macrolevel research on the role of craft-based authenticity in processes of social evaluation (e.g., Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Lehman et al., 2019). As such, it appears to us that the theory of craft we advance here can shed new light on ongoing research on these subjects as well.

To advance this perspective more generally, future research could examine craft in what could be regarded as more unexpected contexts. In the past, most research has unsurprisingly studied craft in the theoretically extreme and naturally alluring contexts of artisan manufacturing (e.g., Bell & Vachhani, 2020; Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Ranganathan, 2018). However, our review shows how the concept of craft can also be used to understand how people approach their work in professional settings, such as health care (Beane, 2019; Dornan & Nestel, 2013) or higher education (Baer & Shaw, 2017; Daft, 1983; Rindova, 2008). Indeed, how science is “crafted” has been recognized as an important but underappreciated issue (Lamont, 2009; Latour & Woolgar, 1979). It would be interesting to explore the extent to which the fine-grained, multifaceted representation of craft we forward here can account for the dynamics of work organization in these contexts where we would naturally expect to find a more “mechanical” approach, based on procedural or scientific rationality.

The Human–Machine Duality and Experienced Tensions in Contemporary Organizations

Our review suggests how the fundamental tension between human and machine may manifest in more concrete, experienced tensions in and around contemporary organizations. Contrasts between the various configurations of craft we identified based on our review point to at least three such tensions (the past vs. the future, the imaginary vs. the ordinary, and the aesthetic vs. the utilitarian).

The past versus the future. A craft perspective on work draws attention to how work practices are constructed by grappling with tensions between collectively imagined pasts and futures. Conventionally, craft has been associated with practices that are rooted in the past and a related humanist concern with

the preservation of traditional skills and techniques in the face of industrialization (e.g., Morris, 1892; Ruskin, 1849). Conversely, futuristic images that embrace the promise of artificial intelligence (e.g., Schwab, 2017) can engender a sense of technological determinism among organizational actors that appears to justify the erosion of craft approaches in favor of mechanization. How organizational actors deal with the human–machine duality thus importantly depends on how they experience and resolve the tension between the past and the future and balance concerns for tradition with those for innovation (cf. Blundel & Smith, 2013; Erdogan, et al., 2020; Khaire, 2014).

Our framework not only draws attention to this specific tension but also adds important nuance by moving beyond the stereotypical views of craft as a phenomenon of the past and machine technology as a phenomenon of the future. While the pure craft configuration we describe here is often fueled by nostalgia and an enchanted vision of the past that opposes constructed dystopian images of the future, the technical and creative craft configurations capture substantially different positions related to the past and the future. Here, the practices from the past are not sanctified but are seen as flexible inputs that can be adapted to, blended with, or even augmented by the machine technology of the future for the purposes of technical and creative innovation. Future research could explore this in more detail by using our framework to add nuance to the conventional associations between human and past, on the one side, versus machine and future, on the other side, and considering potentially contrasting instances where mechanical approaches to work are associated with the past, and humanist approaches with imagined futures.

The imaginary versus the ordinary. Beyond the construction of pasts and futures, collective imagination also relates more fundamentally to another specific tension that is notable across the literature we reviewed: the imaginary and the ordinary. This tension could be illuminated by considering how creative and purist forms of craft, on the one hand, contrast with more technical and industrialized forms, on the other hand. While, in practice, much work is relatively ordinary, mundane, and anonymous, craft affords the opportunity to make work more meaningful, as we acknowledged above. In part, this appears to be because of the concept’s capacity to provoke various culturally desirable images (Bell, Mangia, Taylor, & Toraldo, 2018; Suddaby, Ganzin, & Minkus, 2017). The contemporary configurations of craft we have described here capture

different images of this sort, ranging from the romanticized past to the distinguished artist-maker that is involved in every step of the process.

As such, while actual work practices may resemble those of an industrialized craft, the projected images of such work practices may resemble more those of a pure or creative craft to benefit from positive evaluations that follow from a desire for authenticity and human touch in making and consuming (Peterson, 1999). This phenomenon could be described as “craft washing” (Kuijpers, Popa, & Kroezen, 2019). Beverland (2005), for example, described how wine makers often present themselves as pure craft firms, while the ordinary reality of work resembles much more that of a technical or even industrialized craft. This tension may also manifest in the context of job design, where ordinary work may be craft-washed to enhance job satisfaction and performance. This has historically been illustrated, for example, by the frequent mismatch between managerial rhetoric about total quality management or lean production and the reality of work (Alcadipani, Hassard, & Islam, 2018; Zbaracki, 1998), or the related struggles with management-initiated teamwork (Hodson, 2010). As management concepts are notorious for becoming fad-like and are regularly used rhetorically in ways that may actually reinforce, rather than change, established orders (Abrahamson, 1996; Alcadipani et al., 2018), similar dynamics should be expected for the notion of craft.

Future research on the social construction of craft imaginaries seems crucial to further examine the extent to which craft is associated with the alluring kinds of change it promises, or the causes and implications of using craft as a rhetorical device, masking more sober realities of work (cf. Bell, Dacin, & Toraldo, 2021; Fischer, 2019). Interestingly, the reverse dynamic also appears worthy of exploration, as concepts of “fauxtimation” (Taylor, 2018) or “math-washing” (Woods, 2016) have been used to describe the practice of hiding the ordinary craft realities of work behind the imaginaries of “objective” machines.

The aesthetic versus the utilitarian. Finally, our review also indicates how the human–machine duality may manifest as an experienced tension between aesthetic and utilitarian dimensions of work that could be illuminated from a craft perspective. Our framework suggests how work is naturally more craft-like when there is an appreciation for aesthetic qualities that tend to require reliance on human skills and attitudes, and distinctively less craft-like when there is a primary concern for utilitarian

qualities that rely on mechanical skills and attitudes. However, in practice, any form of work, even those that resemble the contemporary craft forms that we describe, ultimately requires some consideration for external standards of utility (Becker, 1978). The configurational framework can be interpreted as different organizational solutions to this tension, where industrialized craft strongly emphasizes utility over aesthetics, while creative and pure craft clearly prioritize distinct aesthetic qualities and technical craft involves a more equal balance. Organizational actors that grapple with this tension may encounter it in particularly salient form, for example, when pursuing market growth for art-infused products (Patichol, Wongsurawat, & Johri, 2014; Rindova et al., 2011; Sasaki, Nummela, & Ravasi, 2021). During such moments of organizational expansion or change, the duality between human and machine is likely to become salient as decisions may trigger shifts between the different craft configurations described here. There is an opportunity for future research to explore these moments more deeply from a craft perspective.

Inside organizations, this tension between aesthetics and utility can also be related to the reproduction of valued skills and attitudes. When work becomes too art-like, it may become exceptionally difficult to reproduce or sustain the underlying capabilities, as cases of lost skills in violin making (Cattani et al., 2013) and painting practice (Dalí & Chevalier, 1992) teach us. In such instances, refined skills were attributed to the virtuosity of individual artisans in a manner that appeared to inhibit skill transmission. Yet, when a utilitarian view of reproduction prevails and efforts are made to capture craft skills and attitudes in formal rules and procedures to facilitate “socialization” or commoditization (Adler, 2007), there is a risk of losing particular organizational capabilities or meanings that do not lend themselves to formalization. While the codification of skill for knowledge transfer has been associated with a strategic trade-off between effective growth and the risk of imitation (Zander & Kogut, 1995), from a craft perspective there thus appears a more fundamental risk of transforming core capabilities if aesthetic forms of knowing and practicing are lost (e.g., Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007). Another interesting area for future research, hence, is to explore how the various configurations of craft involve different “teaching–learning ecologies” (Bailey & Barley, 2011; Quinn & Bunderson, 2016), and how these relate to the resolution of this tension.

Evolutionary Trajectories of Craft Decline, Persistence, and Resurgence

While a long tradition of research has shown the decline of craft approaches to work and organization in the wake of the industrial revolution (e.g., Braverman, 1974; Form, 1987; Wallace & Kalleberg, 1982), more recent research has highlighted trajectories of craft persistence or resurgence (e.g., Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Ocejo, 2017; Sasaki et al., 2019). The theory we advance based on our review of such research has implications for our understanding of evolutionary processes in and around organizations.

The variety of manifestations of craft encountered in the literature suggests that the nature of craft work and the value attached to it is subject to constant change as a result of societal and technological progress (also see Fox Miller, 2017). As the development of machines provides new and expanding affordances, craft work changes from being a necessity to becoming a choice—and, at times, a comparatively expensive one. As craft work embraces values that contrast with efficiency, however, social factors, not only technological or economic ones, determine trajectories of craft persistence, decline, or resurgence (cf. Piore & Sabel, 1984). Macrolevel research has a long history of engaging with these types of questions. The framework proposed here, we argue, may advance this research by offering an opportunity to reframe long-standing debates, such as those around deskilling (e.g., Form, 1987) or technological determinism (e.g., Leonardi & Barley, 2008).

A rich tradition of research in economic sociology has examined the impact of machine technologies on craft. Most of this work has appeared as a Marxist discussion around the questions of whether industrialization and the rationalization of production processes has had a measurable deskilling or a skill-upgrading effect (e.g., Adler, 2007; Braverman, 1974; Form, 1987), and to what degree technological advancements were captured by the capitalist class in order to control the craft worker. Our framework offers an alternative perspective on this issue, as it highlights how craft may acquire different forms and meanings as society progresses and the tension between human and machine evolves. With the issue of skill remaining an important topic in the age of AI, we believe it may be prudent to reignite this research and explore the extent to which the craft perspective we develop here can guide new insights.

Our review suggests that the value placed on craft in society is not shaped exclusively by industrial revolutions and technological innovations, but by other

social forces, reflecting the pursuit of glocalization (e.g., DeSoucey, 2010; Fischer, 2019), environmental sustainability (e.g., Sikavica & Pozner, 2013; Voronov, De Clercq, & Hinings, 2013; Weber et al., 2008), individual expression (e.g., Kuhn & Galloway, 2015; Rao et al., 2003), social equality (Haydu, 2002; Moore & Beadle, 2006) and historical reenchantment (Beverland, 2005; Suddaby, Ganzin, & Minkus, 2017). Such forces seem to be pulling work organizations more toward creative or pure craft configurations, in contrast to the industrialized or even technical craft configurations that are often implicitly treated as the most “advanced” form of making by accounts that rely to a greater degree on technological determinism (e.g., Bodrožić & Adler, 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic has also highlighted the societal value of craft during times of disruption and social upheaval. Engaging in forms of craft work appears to be therapeutic when coping with hardship, such as is perhaps illustrated by the sudden popularity of baking homemade bread during lockdown (Openheimer, 2020). At the same time, it also appears to provide concrete economic value, such as affording resiliency in the supply of facemasks during peak demand (Lee, 2020) or the creative, localized production of emergency ventilators (OperationAIR, 2020). Turning to craft—in the making of goods for self-sufficiency or collective benefits—helped people address the disruption of industrial production and global supply chains, and the existential anxiety caused by lockdowns and isolation.

As the value and form of craft may thus evolve with industrial and societal advancement and take different forms in response to various movements, it may be hard to capture using consistent quantitative measures. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution provides greater affordances to replace, augment, or liberate the role of humans in production (cf. Browder et al., 2019; Fitzmaurice et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2020; Raisch & Krakowski, 2020), and advanced societies are simultaneously becoming increasingly concerned with providing meaning to work life (Suddaby, Ganzin, & Minkus, 2017), how configurations of craft will evolve, and whether new configurations will appear—possibly in relation to health crises, social inequality, and environmental sustainability—becomes an important question for future research.

We also see an opportunity for our framework to enhance evolutionary models of organization and organizational fields. Research has often depicted craft as an elementary form of technology and organization that is indicative of the early stages of evolution, with natural forces ultimately leading to

rationalization or industrialization of craft. For example, Adler (2015) used such a lifecycle model to describe the evolution of the software industry. During its infancy, the field functioned like a craft, dependent on software developers who mastered the craft of coding, relying largely on tacit expertise; later stages of rationalization, however, appeared to tame the chaos and particularism of prior stages and afforded “the collective worker” much greater capabilities (Adler, 2015). Analyzing this case through the lens of our framework, however, suggests that craft does not necessarily disappear as fields develop. Instead, fields may experience a transition from one configuration to another, as, for example, initial emphasis on creative craft may shift toward a more technical or industrialized configuration, possibly to give way, as an industry enters a more mature stage of development, to manifestations closer to pure craft.

Indeed, in this industry we can see a craft resurgence, in response to the practices of the mainstream software industry, in the Agile Manifesto, which cherishes an approach that prioritizes “individuals and interactions over processes and tools” and challenges the assumptions underlying the scientific and engineering approaches of the mainstream industry (Beck et al., 2001; Martin, 2009; McBreen, 2002). This movement explicitly draws an analogy between modern software development and the guild craft of medieval Europe. This example points to a different role of craft in evolutionary models of organizations and organizational fields, showing that craft may be more common in these cycles than is often acknowledged. It also exposes distinct types of tensions that add more nuance to established categories used in common models such as those of generalist versus specialist strategies (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000) or rational versus normative ideologies (Barley & Kunda, 1992). Rather than associating craft with niche strategies in industrialized fields or normative corrections to technology determining the evolution of forms of work organization, our framework shows how craft, in its various forms, plays a more fundamental role in models of evolution.

Among new organizations and organizational fields, we may indeed see an initial prevalence of a particular type of craft configuration; however, once they evolve, we are likely to observe varied patterns of craft decline, persistence, and resurgence. Akin to *s*-curve models of innovation, craft may, in fact, evolve in tandem with mechanical approaches to work. Recent studies of contemporary forms of craft have suggested that craft is associated with value creation that is then captured through increasing

mechanical approaches until there is a wider need for new sources of value (e.g., Raffaelli, 2019). Where mechanical forms of work organization are associated with the maximization of exchange value through efficiency and satisfying extrinsic demands, craft forms of work organization are associated with the maximization of use-value through embracing more intrinsic values of technical excellence, nostalgic purity, and creative stimulation. However, more macrolevel research is needed to better understand the configurations and trajectories of craft across organizations and organizational fields. For example, how can our framework illuminate the different trajectories that work organization follows after the introduction of AI (e.g., Glaser, 2017; Waardenburg, de Rond, Sergeeva, & Huysman, 2018)? How will emerging tensions ultimately be settled in cases where traditional craft skills and those possessing them may now be replaced by mechanical processes? Will settlements naturally resemble one of the configurations described here, or is there an alternative? How are the concepts of craft and its various forms described here harnessed to fuel resistance or support for algorithmically mediated work?

Most of these questions have received little attention in contemporary macrolevel research as it has long neglected the role of craft in modern society and instead painted a picture of increasing rationalization. However, scholars have recently started to become attuned to processes of craft reemergence and reenchantment (e.g., Bell et al., 2021; Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Ocejó, 2017; Suddaby, Ganzin, & Minkus, 2017). Moreover, the turn to work, practice, and now personhood in institutional theory is allowing us to better see the “humanity of institutions” and is providing the ontological and epistemological toolkit to observe configurations and trajectories of craft anew (Voronov & Weber, 2020).

CONCLUSION

In this review, we have strived to integrate the rich but highly fragmented literature on craft in organization and management theory. The conceptual apparatus we have proposed synthesizes a vast body of work that touched upon craft, in sociology and organization studies, in a way that (a) encourages a more explicit theoretical recognition of craft as a humanist and timeless approach to work and its organization; (b) brings together a fragmented research landscape, tracing connections and highlighting differences and similarities among prior studies; and (c) inspires cross-fertilization across different theoretical domains.

More research is needed to advance this new perspective on craft to improve our understanding of how actors grapple with the evolving tensions between human and machine in the age of AI. Somewhat counter-intuitively, craft, as a humanist approach to work, appears increasingly relevant to any form of work in this context. We encourage future research to explore more deeply the implications of our framework for our understanding of skill development, use, and transfer, as well as the construction of meaning in and around work. Future research may also consider how craft can be part of novel approaches to tackle grand challenges related to climate change and social inequality, but should also attend to the potentially more problematic impact of the growing allure of craft imaginaries in society, such as in cases of craft-washing.

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