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PREVIEW

**EXAMINING THE GENDER GAP IN PARTICIPATORY GOLF USING A
RITUAL DRAMATURGICAL FRAMEWORK AND GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

by

Lee Phillip McGinnis

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

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For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Business (Marketing)

Under the Supervision of Professor James W. Gentry

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DISSERTATION TITLE

Examining the Gender Gap in Participatory Golf Using a Ritual

Dramaturgical Framework and Gender Perspective

BY

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EXAMINING THE GENDER GAP IN PARTICIPATORY GOLF USING A RITUAL DRAMATURGICAL FRAMEWORK AND GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Lee Phillip McGinnis, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2002

Advisor: James W. Gentry

A “churning effect” exists in golf in which nearly the same number of people leave the game each year as enter. Women, however, leave the game faster than men and only comprise approximately a fifth of the participatory golf population. This proportion has seen little change despite the fact that women consistently make up a disproportionately large amount of the beginner population. This study examines the theoretical underpinnings of this gap and looks at why women consistently golf less than men, irrespective of the notion that golf is seen as a sport that is neither masculine nor feminine.

We collected usable surveys from 900 golfers in the state of Nebraska, 617 of which are from women. To examine more closely the impact of the churning effect on women, we broke down the female population by the years of playing experience. Those with five or fewer years of experience are called the NFGs (novice female golfers), and those with five or more years of experience are called the EFGs (experienced female golfers).

The key constructs involved in this study include sacredness, the gendered dramaturgical components, opposite sex privileged status, consumer alienation, play (communitas, flow, and ecstasy), empowerment, leisure entitlement, and enduring involvement. In this study, golf is explored as a dramaturgical ritual, which is deconstructed into stage metaphors or dramaturgical components. These gendered

dramaturgical components or GDCs include the setting, roles, performances, language, and props. As expected, we found that men perceive golf as being more sacred than women do, and women score higher on golf's GDCs. Greater sensitivity to golf's GDCs (or higher scores) is positively associated with higher perceptions of opposite sex privileged status. Overall, the most interesting story that emerges from the relationships between domain sacredness and the GDCs is how higher levels of sacredness is positively associated with more pressure to create appropriate impressions and to stay within one's gender boundaries. This feeling is demonstrated most prevalently among the EFGs.

PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER I

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Golf is a leisure activity or pursuit in which most of the participants in the United States are male. This percentage has been constant despite local and national collaborative marketing efforts towards gender equality. The following statement issued by the National Golf Foundation illustrates this issue:

As in the past years, females—who make up only about 20% of the total golfer population—represented nearly 40% of all beginning golfers in 1998. The fact that their numbers has not increased all that much over the past 10 years is evidence that the churning that impacts the golfer population as a whole impacts female golfers to the same degree (1998, p. 2).

As indicated above, the golf industry as a whole is experiencing a “churning effect” whereby participants leave nearly as quickly as they enter. Currently, approximately 5.1 million females play golf in the United States compared to approximately 21.3 million males (National Golf Foundation 1999a). The raw number of female participants has increased over the last 13 years by 11 percent (National Golf Foundation 2000), but, as stated above, little change has occurred in the actual proportion compared to men during this time period. In fact, the proportion has actually shifted more in favor of men. In 1986, women comprised roughly 23 percent of the golfer population compared to 19.3 percent in 2000 (National Golf Foundation 2000). PGALinks.com, however, reports that female participation is actually up to 26 percent compared to 21 percent five years ago.

Nancy Berkley, a golf consultant who focuses on the female segment, claims that women take up the game in far greater numbers than any other segment, but also leave faster than any other segment (National Golf Foundation 1999b). In 1999, nearly half of

the 3.3 million people who recently quit golf were women (PGA.com 2001). The churning effect may be especially alarming to the golf industry when considering that the number of players per course has steadily declined since 1990 (National Golf Foundation 1999c).

According to the National Golf Foundation (1999c), there is currently a latent demand of approximately 41 million Americans (over the age of 12) who want to play golf or play more golf. This 41 million is broken down into four segments, which include 14 million current players who want to play more, 12 million former golfers who want to play again, seven million non-golfers who are interested in trying the game, and eight million juniors between the ages of five and 17 who would like to learn or to play more. Of the non-golfers, 60 percent are women, compared to 20 percent who currently make up the entire golf population. This suggests that there are currently over four million women in the United States who would like to play golf, indicating that the latent demand among women definitely exists.

The overall purpose of this dissertation is to explore why the gender gap in golf persists, despite the increased interest among women. I argue that the primary reason women do not become enduringly involved in golf at the same rate as men is due to gendered social structures (GSS) and the notion that men perceive golf to be a male domain, and a sacred domain at that. Several factors could explain why both men and women leave golf shortly after they start, including time, money, family and work constraints, but the focus of this study is to understand why the gap between men and women continues to persist.

The gender literature typically has three traditions in understanding sex and gender (Risman 1998). The first tradition looks at whether differences between men and women are within individuals (either biological or social in origin). The second looks at how social structures create gendered behavior, and the third focuses on contextual issues and how “doing gender” in social interactions reinforces gendered behavior. Risman (1998) also advocates a fourth tradition, which integrates all three levels, and calls this approach gender as structure. Each of these is briefly explored below to explain why women become less enduringly involved in golf.

The first tradition is an individualist approach, which attributes the differences between males and females as properties of individuals. Risman (1998) suggests that this approach has been criticized for being ethnocentric (i.e., the attitude that one’s group is superior). The focus here is on how biological differences explain differences in behavior. Applied to golf, this tradition might explain the gender gap in golf as being due to physical differences. In other words, women might leave golf simply because they are not good at golf. However, such an approach ignores the fact that golf is regarded as being a finesse sport. The first tradition also focuses on sex-role socialization, emphasizing that the differences between men and women are largely due to early childhood socialization. Applied to golf, this tradition would suggest that the gender gap in golf is due to the fact that boys are more encouraged than girls to participate in sports, including golf. This explanation by itself, however, would not explain why the gender gap in golf persists despite entry levels among women that exceed active participation levels. Risman (1998) adds that this approach is often in dispute, as early socialization often falls short in predicting adult behavior.

The second tradition is basically known as the structural perspective (Risman 1998). In this example people behave differently in society due to the different positions they hold in institutional, work, and family settings. Risman suggests that this perspective has strong explanatory power, but only if I realize that gender itself as a structure is deeply embedded in society. Applied to golf, this would suggest that the gender gap exists because golf is largely associated with work and should remain that way. This tradition would partially explain the gap as it exists today, but again falls short in explaining why women take up the game in greater numbers than they ever have before.

The third tradition is the interactional level and is often referred to as “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987). In this case, when people are placed into a sex category, they are morally accountable to behave as people who belong in that category behave. People who fail to act as they should often suffer severe consequences. “Others’ expectations create the self-fulfilling prophecies that lead us all to do gender” (Risman 1998, p. 23). Applied to golf, this would explain the gender gap in terms of discrimination. Discrimination exists in golf, as indicated in the following passage:

Women now run their own companies, go to war, become doctors and lawyers and bankers. But the golf world and, especially, the world of the private country club have not dealt with these changes. The women who inhabit the private country club world, in particular, find themselves in a cultural backwater, constrained by arcane rules left over from a largely forgotten age. These old conventions are frustrating, especially for the new breed of working women, married or single, in business or the professions, women who expect the same rights on the golf course as they have elsewhere (Chambers 1995, p. 4).

Chambers (1995) emphasizes that women are discriminated against primarily at private country clubs, but she also points out that they are shown differential treatment at a variety of public courses as well. However, public courses have and still do provide the

impetus for several minority groups to learn and enjoy the game. Approximately two-thirds of all beginning women golfers play public facilities (Chambers 1995). The interactional approach, however, is incomplete as well because it slights the institutional level of analysis. The institutional level is based on differences in language, laws, and norms regarding resource allocation. Resources are defined as either access to opportunities or actual material goods (Risman 1998).

The fourth tradition, as advocated by Risman (1998), views gender itself as a social structure, whereby consequences exist at every level of analysis. Risman argues that the very creation of difference explains why inequality exists. Structure is a force that opposes individual motivation and exists outside the individual, is observable, and independent of individual motivation. "The social structure as the context of daily life creates action indirectly by shaping actors' perceptions of their interests and directly by constraining choice" (Risman 1998, p. 27). Some of the theoretical support for this dissertation comes from the gender as structure perspective, incorporating analysis mostly from the interactional and institutional levels. Risman states that even when individuals want to change male dominance and have the capability to do so, the influence of interactional and institutional level contexts persist. I argue that the same occurs for women in the golf industry.

PLAN OF STUDY

The overall goal of this dissertation is to gain further insight into how shared consumption activities or rituals may hinder women in achieving sustained participation in golf. Chapter Two begins with a focus on the constraints as they appear in the gender literature, using what is commonly known as the gender perspective (Connell 1987). In

this view, the “conception of what is natural and what natural differences consist of, is itself a cultural context, part of my specific way of thinking about gender” (Connell 1987, p. 76). I will use Reskin’s (1998) gendered inequality framework to analyze the gendered structural constraints found in golf at the institutional level.

Gender as structure is closely related to the concept of post-structuralism, which views assorted realities as social constructions, including distinctions between male and female, as it is embedded in such things as interpersonal relationships, power relationships, and cultural institutions (Bristor and Fischer 1993; Thompson and Hirschman 1995). Poststructuralist feminism sees human experience as mediated by dominant discourses, which makes knowledge susceptible to discourses within a language. In this perspective, assumptions about sex and gender are collapsed. Men are largely associated with masculine and women with feminine. As asserted by some researchers (Fischer and Gainer 1994; Messner 1992), sports, particularly organized ones, constitute an institution where class, gender, and social relations are played out.

After examining Reskin’s framework, I proceed with an explanation of sacredness and develop hypothesized relationships. I then proceed to my dramaturgical framework. Dramaturgy is typically used in the social sciences to analyze social life in terms of staged performances. Dramaturgy is a “theory that explains human action as a product of rules and scripts for action” (Deegan 1989, p. 6). Dramaturgy is widely accepted among gender scholars and is at the base of many papers, including West and Zimmerman’s (1987) seminal piece “Doing Gender.”

In this study, I view the enactment of golf as a ritual performance. Deegan (1989) argues that dramaturgy is a useful analytical tool because modern rituals are increasingly

organized on the basis of theatrical metaphors that are controlled by elites. The interests of the elites are maintained through such core codes as capitalism and sexism. My model (see Figure 1) uses the gender perspective to explain how sexism influences golf. "Sexist rituals simultaneously generate ideas of emotions of belonging and not belonging" (Deegan 1989, p. 22).

Using dramaturgy, I deconstruct golf into its setting, roles, performances, language, and props (see Figure 1). The gender perspective is then used in combination with the ritual dramaturgical perspective to explain golf's gender gap further. I view each of golf's deconstructed dramaturgical components (GDCs) as potentially creating divisions between men and women, which, through various means, help maintain the privileged status for men. Privileged status then leads to consumer alienation.

We argue that consumer alienation prevents women from experiencing the social benefits of ritual, or ecstasy, *communitas*, and flow, all of which fall under the heading "play." I then show how lack of play leads to less enduring involvement (see Figure 1). The outcomes of ritual, which include *communitas*, are important for establishing commitment to the group, oneself, and to the other (Turner 1974). My model illustrates that in order for women to establish enduring involvement in golf, they must gain the benefits of rituals. I use the gender and dramaturgical perspectives in this study as complementary pieces of a puzzle to help explain why golf's gender gap persists despite increasing interest by women.

In Chapter Three, I focus on the methodology used to test the hypotheses raised in Chapter Two. In Chapter Four, I present the results of this study. In Chapter Five, I focus the implications and plans for future study.