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Gender, Millennials, and leisure constraints: Exploring golf's participation decline

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Abstract

This paper addresses the dearth of research regarding why the golf industry, specifically in the United States, is stagnating and, in some cases, losing participants. We focus on why Millennials are not playing golf to the same extent as previous generations. This is a conceptual paper, drawing upon literature in sports, leisure, gender, and marketing to track the current trends in sports participation, leisure, and household production to determine the constraints that might limit golf participation. In this paper, we highlight gender as an important social structure and conceptual lens for understanding social changes, particularly among Millennials, which could also contribute to the reductions in golf participation. We offer practical solutions for the golf industry to grow, especially among the Millennial audience. We suggest, among other actions, that golf should improve its appeal to the entire family.

Keywords: Golf, gender norms, gender roles, leisure constraints, household duties

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Introduction

After years of growth in the 1990s and early 2000s, golf participation is down in the United States. There are currently fewer than 25 million golfers in the United States compared to 2010 when there were over 26 million (National Golf Foundation, 2016a, 2019) and 2003 when golf had its all-time high of over 30 million (Greenfeld, 2015). In 2018, the numbers were still flat for overall play, with just slightly more than 24.2 million golfers, but another 9.3 million who played exclusively in off-course places such as driving ranges and indoor golf simulators (National Golf Foundation, 2019). Although Millennials are playing golf, the rate among people between the ages of 18 and 34 (in 2015) was 9 percent compared to 14 percent among Generation X during the early 1990s (National Golf Foundation, 2016a). If Millennials were playing at the same rate as their predecessors, there would be four million more on-course golfers and, therefore, little decline in participation (National Golf Foundation, 2015).

The decline can be attributed to a variety of factors, among them are leisure choices, race, economic, and gender differences among Millennials. The National Golf Foundation (2015) attributes the decline among Millennials to the availability of more leisure choices, largely provided through technology (e.g. smart phones and video games), as well as less leisure time overall. Since Tiger Woods' decline in golf prominence, the viewership of the Masters has also declined. In 2016, the ratings slipped below 2014 when they were the lowest since 1957 (Gray, 2015). In 2018, ratings of the Masters and PGA Championship bounced back to a slightly higher level with Woods' reemergence in the field (Sportingnews.com, 2018; Statista.com, 2018). In 2019, when Tiger won the Masters, ratings reached a 34-year high (Golf.com, 2019). These patterns indicate once again that peaks only seem to occur when Woods is in contention.

According to the National Golf Foundation (2015), much of the decline between age cohorts in the United States can be attributed to the increase in the non-Caucasian population, which plays less golf than the Caucasian population, or 7 percent compared to 12 percent, respectively. Another factor is income, as the Millennial population is not yet in its prime earning years (National Golf Foundation, 2015). Golf can be an expensive game (green fees, equipment, time involved). The economic recession beginning in 2007, plus raising college loan debt,

likely contributed to the declines in golf participation. Cook (2014) previously provided a systematic analysis of the role of economic issues in golf participation. We argue that changing gender norms and expectations among Millennials likely also contribute to declines in golf participation.

Although the lack of leisure time is indeed a constraint facing golf, perhaps more telling are gender differences in leisure time. Golf requires large blocks of time to play, and for men of previous generations, golf time was an entitlement due to work outside the home (i.e. paid work) and golf would often blend work with leisure (Swensen, 2015). In other words, men felt they deserved to play because they were the chief income earners. We contend, however, that leisure's meaning is defined differently among the Millennial generation and, not only are there more leisure options, but the gap between men's and women's leisure entitlement has narrowed and continues to do so as Millennials age. Data from the most recent American Time Use Survey Summary (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018) support this. Young men aged 25–34 and 35–44 each spend only .95, and .37 more hours a day on sports and leisure than women. And, on average, men spend .55 more hours on leisure and sports per day and .95 on weekend days than women (Bureau of Labor Statistics.gov, 2018). On an average weekend day, just slightly more American women (97.1 percent) are involved in leisure and sports than American men (96.7 percent) (Bureau of Labor Statistics.gov, 2018) – but why are they not playing golf?

We view the decline in participation in golf, especially among Millennials, through the lenses of gender, identity, changing gender norms, and leisure constraints. Specifically, we examine differences in household production and paid work. We incorporate research from notable gender scholars such as sociologist Barbara Risman (1998, 2018), who addresses gender as a social structure occurring at the individual, interactional, and institutional levels. We also draw upon the gender literature to explain whether leisure entitlement has changed. Another issue that we will investigate is that of gender and sexual orientation diversity by contending that golf as an institution has been slow to change. Additionally, we propose that the Millennials are perhaps more accepting of gender diversity and changing gender norms and thus might reject the traditional gendered images held by the golf industry.

Changing norms and leisure

For much of recent history, men have had a decided advantage when it has come to leisure because of male privilege and the rationalization that men's paid work time was more important than women's non-paid work time. However, according to a 2013 American Time Use survey conducted by Pew Research and sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, American men and women differ very little when it comes to their work time, accounting for both paid and unpaid work (Drake, 2013). Men spend about six more hours per week on paid work than women do, but men spend less time on household work and childcare. There was still a significant difference at that time, though, when it came to leisure, with men having approximately five more hours per week to spend on their own activities. The leisure gap is smaller for fathers of young children compared with men without young children at home, indicating that the presence of children reduces leisure time.

Even though men still have more leisure time, one place this seems to be less evident is in golf, as male participation in golf is declining. From 2011 to 2015, the percentage of males playing golf in the United States dropped from 14.8 percent to 12.6 percent (nearly 2.4 million golfers), while the percentage of male players (compared to female players) went from nearly 80.7 percent to 76.1 percent (National Golf Foundation, 2012, 2016a). In 2015, approximately 600,000 men left the sport of golf, and 1.6 million men had left when compared to 2011 (National Golf Foundation, 2016a).

Among both men and women, between 2011–2015, the age groups with the biggest decreases were younger adults 18–34 and 35–49, with each group decreasing by 900,000 golfers (National Golf Foundation, 2016a). Moreover, those in these age ranges still participating in the sport are playing fewer rounds, often opting for nine holes rather than eighteen. The *WSJ* (*Wall Street Journal*) noted that golf is suffering from a generation gap because, for the fifth straight year, participation levels had decreased (Germano, 2014). In sum, the golf industry is facing serious problems because participation and the number of courses remains stagnant or is in decline (National Golf Foundation, 2016a, 2016b).

More recent figures, however, indicate that there might be some light at the end of the tunnel. The National Golf Foundation (2019) reports that interest among Millennials (18- 34-year-olds) is

beginning to stabilize, with 6.1 million on-course participants, 4.1 million off-course only participants, and another 4.3 million saying that they are very interested in taking up the game. While junior golf is steady as well, the growth among female golfers in this segment has increased to 36% compared with 15% in 2000 (National Golf Foundation, 2019).

Cook (2014) lists economic-based explanations for the declining male interest in golf: increases in course and equipment costs, and families in recent economic times having less disposable income and free time. Golf is simply noted as a high-price sport operating in a period when leisure time is increasingly compressed (Rupp & Coleman-Lochner, 2014). Overall, Cook (2014) perceives that the diminishing middle class is the primary reason for the declining participation. Other individually-based activities such as hunting and fishing have also experienced declining participation (Larsen, 2015). However, given the class differences in leisure participation between golf (upper middle-class stereotype) and hunting (blue collar stereotype), Cook's (2014) blaming a declining middle class is much less plausible. Despite factors such as time-constraints and perhaps the declining middle class, golf might also be declining due to changing gender norms, as subsequently discussed.

Leisure constraints theory and gender as a social structure

The hierarchical leisure constraints model is broken down into three constraints: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey's (1993) research suggested that participants in leisure must go through a hierarchy toward full participation, with the most proximal constraints negotiated first (i.e. intrapersonal) before moving to the most distal (i.e. structural). However, later research in the area has suggested that negotiation is more circular in nature (Godbey, Crawford, & Shen, 2010). The reasons for golf's decline may vary, but we attempt to show that part of its decline may be due to changing gender roles, with younger generations having different lifestyles than older generations.

To demonstrate, we turn to gender scholar and sociologist Barbara Risman's (1998) theory of gender as a social structure. Like the leisure constraints theory, Risman organizes the gender structure according

to individual, interactional, and institutional levels of analysis. Recently, Risman (2018) focused specifically on the emerging generation of Millennials. She builds on the idea that much social change involves cohort replacement of previous attitudes and norms, and therefore it is valuable to understand how Millennials understand gender. Through extensive interviews, she finds that Millennials have a stronger conception of gender as a social structure than prior generations, which supports our argument that changing gender expectations about employment, parenting, and time use likely contribute to declines in golf participation. Risman (2018) organizes Millennials into four categories: the true believers (who are religious and conservative), the innovators (who challenge orthodoxy), the rebels (who reject how gender is 'done'), and the straddlers (who both acknowledge the inevitability of gender difference and see the benefits of a less gendered society). From different gender presentations to career choices, Millennials have more options than ever at their disposal when it comes to gender but are nevertheless still constrained by gender structures. As a group, with the exception of the true believers, Millennials are hesitant to place people in restrictive, gendered boxes and are not judgmental of those who make non-traditional choices; in a word, they are accepting. The ways Millennials interpret gender as a part of the social structure may help explain leisure constraints for golf participation.

Intrapersonal level

Intrapersonal constraints are 'individual psychological states and attributes' (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 122) that intervene between leisure preferences and participation, which when applied to golf include such factors as lack of knowledge, lack of interest, and lack of time (McGinnis & Gentry, 2006). One psychological state that we contend is largely present in golf is its general perception as a male-dominated phenomenon. Golf for women is still constrained (Pew Research Center, 2013), which means that women do not have the requisite time to develop their golf skills. Research from the Boston Consulting Group indicates that women have left the sport at three times the rate as men, but it is not due to lack of interest; it is due to lack of time, as women must also combine family, social, and work responsibilities (Goulian, 2012). We argue that, traditionally, men simply have had

more time and make more time to develop their golf skills, and perhaps women are less incentivized to practice despite golf's noted importance for business relationships (Swensen, 2015).

Further, we contend that this lack of priority or felt need may be based on identity. Drawing from traditional gender identity theory, Jun and Kyle (2012) found that for men, both their masculine identity (traits such as independence, mastery, and innerdirectedness) and leisure identity as a golfer was related with the intensity of golf participation. For women, feminine identity (traits such as dependence, passivity, and other directedness) had no influence on intensity in golf participation, only leisure identity was positively associated with golf participation. Among women who more strongly identified with a masculine identity, however, the intensity of their golf participation increased, indicating that golf is still gendered, thus inhibiting most women.

For Millennials, challenging gender stereotypes is a priority at the individual level and associating themselves with the stereotypical middle-class white men in golf is not high on their list of ways to spend their leisure time (Risman, 2018). And, while Millennials may have more liberal attitudes towards gender, they are still constrained by gender stereotypes that are part of social structures (Risman, 1998, 2018). Women, for example, remain constrained by the expectation of motherhood and the importance of children, irrespective of feminine ideology (Fischer, 2000; Rich, 1980).

Therefore, we propose the following.

P1a: It is likely that gender identity and time influence both men and women's golf participation at the intrapersonal level. For women, gender identity remains influential in driving their golf participation (or lack thereof). For men, time is likely becoming a more significant factor than identity.

P1b: Among Millennials, gender is more influential because Millennials are interested in representation. While Millennials are more liberal in their gender ideologies, golf is not a priority because it remains siloed as traditionally white, upper class; however, because gender stereotypes are still part of social structures, gender influences will still be present.

Interpersonal level

The second category is the interpersonal level of constraints, which is ‘the result of interpersonal interaction or the relationship between individuals’ characteristics’ (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 123). When applied to golf, the constraint of interaction would include the difficulty of finding a golf partner. Research from Wood and Danylchuk (2011) suggests that persistence in golf is primarily driven by interpersonal factors such as connecting with group members and constructing a group culture. Interpersonal constraints would also include factors such as societal expectations, including gender expectations. In gender studies, this would include ‘doing gender’ (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Doing gender occurs when people are placed into a sex category and are morally accountable to behave as people who belong in that category behave. People who fail to act in a way in-line with their sex category often suffer severe consequences as ‘others’ expectations create the self-fulfilling prophecies that lead us all to do gender’ (Risman, 1998, p. 23). While some Millennials are actively deconstructing these sex categories (e.g. innovators and rebels), consequences are nevertheless still present within gender structures, especially for sexual minorities who must negotiate stereotypes of both gender and sexuality (Risman, 2018). For women and other sexual minorities, making community and finding an ‘in group’ within golf can be challenging, especially given the impression management and social risks inherent in the game to begin with (McGinnis & Gentry, 2006).

Chambers (1995) work highlights how the golf industry has been traditionally slow to adapt to larger cultural issues. The PGA of America commissioned the Boston Consulting Group to help make such changes (Goulian, 2012). The study identified different ways to market to working women in influential positions and women earning more income and having more buying power. The report identified gender differences in communication, how information is processed, and how the golf industry makes marketing assumptions based on gender. Findings from the consulting group indicate that golf needs to acknowledge gendered social change in order to grow. The PGA announced education and training initiatives devoted to understanding women and meeting their needs via social media solutions, time-conducive leagues, and making golf more female friendly, both in and outside the clubhouse (Goulian, 2012).

In 2015, only 30 percent of money winners in the LPGA were from the U.S. Of the approximately 9 million women golfers in the U.S., fewer than forty women made enough prize money to cover the costs of professional golfing (Coakley, 2016). The expense of golf as an equipment-based form of leisure and the fact that American women are not supported as professional golfers does not bode well for the decline in female participation more recently. As further evidenced, only 11 women since 1969 have ever been on the cover of *Golf Digest* (Eitzen, 2016), and women's events generally are less televised (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015). Such statistics highlight the lack of potential role models for American women to 'see' themselves as golfers when less than half of top women golfers are from the U.S., and when leading golf media outlets fail to spotlight women.

As found in McGinnis, Gentry, and McQuillan (2009), there are three gender roles women appropriate during golf play: (a) accommodating (i.e. acknowledging masculine rituals and working around them), (b) unapologetic (i.e. challenging masculine rituals that threaten entitlement to golf and attempting to create female-inclusive alternatives), and (c) unaware (i.e. focusing on golf as a sport and ignoring or denying masculine dimensions of golf rituals). Of these three, evidence at the broader level of society suggests that people are moving more toward the unaware direction as Millennials and younger generations become more inclusive and more accepting of differences, namely controversial beliefs and lifestyles (i.e. marginalized outgroups) (Keene & Handrich, 2010; Risman, 2018). They are also more likely to remain unaffiliated (e.g. less participative in organized religion), and at the same time they prefer to have a voice. Further, they have little regard for hierarchies (Keene & Handrich, 2010; Twenge, Carter, & Campbell, 2015). To use Risman's (2018) categories, this suggests that younger female golfers entering the sport might enter as either unapologetic 'rebels' or unaware participatory 'straddlers.' In either case, this may bode well for the sport of golf and its growth prospects if the industry can make the sport more appealing to women.

Another issue that has prohibited women from embracing golf is how they do gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). For female professional golfers (likely role models for other female golfers), the expectation placed upon them in the industry as well as at the interactional level is doing gender the 'straight' (i.e. heterosexual) way, lest they

be perceived as too masculine or a lesbian. Doing gender in a male preserve such as golf has long been discussed (Crosset, 1995). Golf and lesbianism, however, have a rich marriage. Consider the preeminent lesbian weekend, the Dinah Shore Golf Classic. Butchontap.com blogger Higgins (2013), noted that ‘the Dinah’ in Palm Springs was originally the site of the Club Skirts Dinah Shore Weekend. The Kraft Nabisco Championship has now replaced the Dinah Shore Golf Classic, but the Dinah still coincides with the tournament. The Dinah, a five-day weekend getaway and music festival, is considered the largest lesbian event in the world, attracting some 10,000 women from many countries. Previously, Higgins had attended the Dinah Shore Golf Classic for golf and not the parties, until more recently. Now, she estimates that only five percent of the women there even know about the golf connection. This lack of overlap is further propagated by the fact that the Ladies Professional Golfers Association (LGPA) does not acknowledge either the lesbian connection or the accompanying events (Hughes, 2006).

However, norms and acceptance toward lesbianism and same-sex marriages have changed in American society, especially those belonging to the Millennial generation (Baunach, 2012; Risman, 2018; Schnabel & Sevell, 2017). Sexual orientation, or how one identifies sexually, is less of a dichotomy among the younger population, including Millennials, than it is by older generations (Newport, 2018; Risman, 2018; Yougov.com, 2015). In an integrative review of women, gender, and leisure literature, Henderson and Gibson (2013) note that leisure has become empowering because women are resisting traditional norms and gendered opportunities for leisure by pushing the boundaries of gender in leisure activities.

Avoiding lesbianism and upholding gender norms prevail in golf. In the Ladies Professional Golfers’ Association (LPGA) Tour, very few women have come out since Muffin Spencer-Devlin’s landmark announcement in *Sports Illustrated* in 1996 (Zimron, 2014). Rosie Jones stands as a more recent example of a professional golfer coming out before the Dinah in 2004. Jones received endorsements from Olivia Lesbian Cruises, but Chawansky and Francombe (2011) suggest that this represents corporatized need over equal rights and representation. On the male side, the Professional Golfers’ Association (PGA) Tour is often criticized, too, for not having out gay male players, despite indications players would welcome them (Weinman, 2014).

Though female athletes have gained strides in physical prowess, evidence suggests that physical differences or the perceptions of physical differences in sports still prevail to some extent, and that there exists the perception, too, that top female athletes, because of their physical prowess, must be lesbian (see Staurowsky, 2011). In golf, gender as a constraint has long existed, particularly for women (McGinnis & Gentry, 2006).

P2a: Though norms in society have become more tolerant and embracing of varying gender lifestyles, golf among the older generation is still largely beholden to straight, heterosexual norms which still shape participation. Younger players (specifically, Millennials) may be less affected by traditional gender norms, but this still might influence their interest in golf.

P2b: Due to gender norms and sexual orientations in a broader society becoming more accepted and embraced, younger female participants in golf may be more inclined to enter golf as unaware of or resistant to golf's masculine hegemony, thereby potentially growing the sport by forcing golf to be more accepting.

Structural level

Structural constraints have a variety of origins. From the leisure constraints framework, structural constraints are intervening variables between preferences and participation (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991). The factors that could affect golf include stages in the family life cycle, scheduling conflicts, lack of time, seasonal constraints, knowledge of availability, reference group attitudes toward participation appropriateness, financial resources, and prevailing gender norms. There are structural constraints that align with Risman's (1998, 2018) definition as well, in which she argues that 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 it is realized that gender itself as a structure is deeply embedded in society. Furthermore, the nuanced ways Millennials approach, challenge, and influence gender structures may ultimately affect participation in social institutions such as sports and leisure (Risman, 2018).

Leisure constraints theory and gender as a social structure work together to illustrate structural barriers. Applied to golf, the gender gap in participation exists because golf is largely associated with the male domain of 'outside,' supporting a separate spheres ideology (see Hochschild & Machung, 1989/2012). In line with Risman, research has indicated that such gender norms are still prevalent in golf, creating male privilege on the golf course (McGinnis, Gentry, & Gao, 2012). Separate spheres and male privilege resulted in men having the option to participate in very time-consuming forms of leisure, such as golf, hunting, and fishing—the variable of time is a structural constraint explained by the leisure constraints approach. Women, conversely, were traditionally limited to leisure activities that could be interrupted quickly by waking children or that could fit with domestic work such as doing laundry. Thus, women were more likely to watch TV, read, or sew, as these could be returned to (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991; McGinnis, Chun, & McQuillan, 2003). Research from the Boston Consulting Group on engaging more women in golf indicates that while women have advanced in their careers, earning, and purchasing power, and overall influence in the family, they are still less likely to make time for themselves and leisure (Goulian, 2012).

As explained previously, though, the roles men and women hold in the family have changed in recent years (Drake, 2013). Men's roles, for example, are becoming more like women's roles, while women's roles are becoming more like men's roles. According to literature in lifecycle psychology and the sociology of the family (Marin, 2011), America has become a 'Woman's Nation,' implying that society respects the man's role as caregiver, cook, and cleaner, as much as men respect the woman's role in the workplace. Marin (2011) goes on to assert that American males are an endangered species with few job prospects, intractable unemployment, and a host of psychological challenges. The article, 'The End of Men,' sheds light on men's demise from power and their grim prospects in the workplace (Rosin, 2010). However, it should be noted that this trend might be changing; it is argued that part of Donald Trump's popularity in the recent election could be attributed to his 'man's man' appeal, especially among Millennials (Frum, 2016).

Several key changes have contributed to the new status and role of men, especially fathers. First, over the past few decades, women have experienced tremendous success in education and the professions. In the United States each year, women earn 62 percent of the

associate's degrees, 57 percent of the bachelor's degrees, 60 percent of the master's degrees, approximately 50 percent of professional degrees, and nearly 50 percent of PhDs. In 1970, women earned fewer than 10 percent of professional and doctoral degrees in the United States (Mason, 2009).

Second, women make up slightly more than 50 percent of the U.S. workforce. In addition, women have become the primary breadwinners in 40 percent of U.S. households, including single mother-led families (Drake, 2013). Indeed, this is partly due to the unequal effects of the recession of 2008–2010 on male-dominated industries such as housing, construction, automotive, and financial services, whereas the service industries and education sectors, where women have a strong presence, were less adversely effected (Boushey, 2009).

Third, although women have previously placed their career aspirations second to their husbands' careers, young women generally no longer differ from young men in their aspirations for high-responsibility jobs (Drew & Humbert, 2012). As a result, young women may be less prone to be the 'accommodating spouse' in two-career couples; rather they pursue their own career achievements as their husbands do (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008). All these transitions have influenced not only men's status and roles, but also their lifestyles, including their work patterns and family lives. These trends for equal participation in the workforce for women compared to previous generations of women should create more entitlement toward leisure among women. In the next two sections, we discuss how structural level changes in the family and the workplace have influenced men's roles and their impact on leisure.

Family structure

The changes in family structure in the United States over the past 50 years have been profound. The most significant change has been the drastic decrease in the 'traditional family' consisting of two parents, where one works and the other stays at home to care for the children and perform domestic tasks (Boushey & O'Leary, 2009). Specifically, the number of traditional families (families in which the father works and the mother stays home with the children) decreased from 45 percent in 1975–31 percent in 2012 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). In 2012, 59 percent of two-parent households with children under 18

were dual-career earners (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Moreover, in 24 percent of dual-career couples, the woman earns more than her male spouse (Raley, Mattingly, & Bianchi, 2006).

Accordingly, these changes have led to couples making different economic decisions for their households than in the past. During the massive entry of middle-class women into the work force in the 1970s and 1980s, the so-called 'work-family' issues initially fell to the female spouse (Hochschild & Machung, 1989/2012). However, the challenges of balancing work and family are no longer only a woman's issue, as they have been seen in the last four decades, but an issue that both parents grapple with daily. The shift toward more balanced earnings is having an impact on the division of home and workforce labor, which causes intense pressure when trying to balance work and non-work commitments without stay-at-home housewives. Increasingly, traditional masculine ideals have evolved in society, making it less stigmatized for younger fathers to participate in household and child responsibilities (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013). For example, in a study on men whose partners had breast cancer, there was a dramatic increase in home-based leisure or reduced leisure for these men (Shannon, 2015). While some men noted frustration with this new arrangement, they tended to pivot to the importance of being a caregiver and provider (Shannon, 2015).

Workplace structure

Researchers have long studied the conflict between work and family; that is, in what ways are the role pressures from the work and family domains incompatible, leading to potentially negative outcomes in one sphere or both (Harrington, Van Deusen, & Humberd, 2011). Fathers today, or 'good fathers,' are now expected to take a more active role in parenting their children while still maintaining an active occupational role (McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014). Fathers reported that work caused more conflict with family life than family life caused conflict with work (Harrington et al., 2011). This suggests that men are more likely to gain satisfaction from their family lives, and they tend to spend more time 'inside' the family life, which may in turn limit the time for 'outside' leisure opportunities such as golf.

This recent gender paradigm shift is having a profound influence on individual males' values, but the link between the transition to

fatherhood and leisure activities has been rarely examined. Research from the National Study of the Changing Workforce found that fathers in dual-earner couples feel significantly greater work-life conflict than mothers, and this level of conflict has risen steadily and relatively rapidly (Galinsky et al., 2008). In addition, as ‘good provider’ or ‘breadwinner,’ a man has traditionally been responsible for supporting his family (Bachrach, Hindin, & Thomson, 2000; Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001; Tasch, 1952). Even though a gender division generally persists in terms of household work and childcare, fathers are becoming more involved in daily household responsibilities. When their spouses/partners are the primary breadwinners in the family, fathers express strong agreement with doing their part in the day-to-day childcare tasks (Harrington et al., 2011). Women, as we demonstrated previously, have closed the workforce gap and are trying new leisure activities somewhat unaware of previous gendered norms (McGinnis et al., 2009). As mentioned earlier, Henderson and Gibson (2013) found that more recent leisure studies have viewed leisure as a means for resistance leading to empowerment. Therefore, we contend younger women should feel more entitled to larger blocks of leisure than they have in previous generations.

Despite recent trends in narrowing the gap in work and pay, we still believe that men will have larger blocks of time for leisure because actions tend to lag attitudes, especially regarding gender norms and women becoming chief wage earners (Commuri & Gentry, 2005). We expect, however, that men will feel less entitled to leisure than previous generations due to changing attitudes about the felt need to participate in household production and childcare. Also, because men are gaining more enrichment from home life, we feel there will be less male desire for leisure and hence golf, which takes place away from the home. Men in dual-career households especially will feel less entitled to leisure, and therefore golf. Though this role conflict of leisure with one’s other roles (e.g. parent, spouse, employee) has often been associated with women, there is increased evidence that commitment to various roles (work, household) is impacting men’s leisure negotiation as well. Younger men still feel the need to provide financial means for their families despite more favorable fathering policies that would give them more time with their children (Kay, 2009). As noted in Trussell, Jeanes, and Such’s (2017) review, even though fathers have been found to spend more time with their children, the quality of this

time compared with mothering time has been called into question. Regardless of the quality of time, the amount of autonomy, freedom, and time spent on leisure and leisure choices, nonetheless, decreases as fathers take on fatherhood responsibilities (Such, 2006, 2009). This growing conflict for fathers is particularly apparent in the context of golf (Jun & Kyle, 2011a, 2011b, 2012), where larger blocks of leisure time are required. Leisure entitlement among younger men may be especially low due to changing realities and norms associated with the breadwinning role. Therefore, we present the following propositions.

P3a: Changing structural influences in the family and workplace have influenced gender norms in society so that leisure entitlement has changed as well. Though leisure time for men has decreased, men still have larger blocks of time to devote to golf than women do.

P3b: Men, especially younger ones, are now less defined by their breadwinning roles, thereby lessening the entitlement they have toward leisure. Younger generations of men compared to older cohorts will feel less comfortable spending large blocks of time and large amounts of money on golf, while younger women compared to older women will feel more entitled to leisure and perhaps also golf.

Discussion

In this paper, we have provided different propositions as to why the golf industry is losing participants even though the industry has made concerted efforts to grow the sport among various segments. We provided possible explanations as to why the industry is losing participation based upon interactions among the three levels of analyses: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints (Crawford et al., 1991; Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Younger men, according to our review, now feel less entitled to leisure than they have previously and spend their time differently from previous generations. Due to changing gender norms, where women are increasingly becoming the breadwinners and men spending more time with childcare, leisure time entitlement has lessened among men. Men, indeed, are aspiring to spend

more time with their children; however, we acknowledge that men's time spent with children is primarily play without planning being necessary; planning appears to still largely be the domain of mothers. Future research, however, should investigate whether women, because of the gaps in gender norms closing and their making strides in education and the workforce, feel they should have more leisure time, especially the larger blocks of leisure conducive to golf.

We also provided several propositions with supporting literature, focusing on changing gender norms and the acceptance (or lack thereof) of evolving sexual orientation norms as some of the potential reasons why golf participation is stagnant, especially among younger generations. Older generations of participants, our research indicates, still adhere to a more rigid system, where golf space is primarily for men; some older women participants do the same. Care must be taken not to alienate the core of the existing market of middle aged and senior males.

Although our research indicates that men might still have more leisure time than women, especially larger blocks of it, entitlement issues seem to have balanced out somewhat between men and women. Men, especially young fathers, are now seeing that it is more important to spend time with their children and families. This means that entitlement, a growing concern among leisure researchers as well, particularly over the last 30 or so years (Henderson & Gibson, 2013), is indeed being impacted, but perhaps in a way that is not entirely expected. Instead of the pursuit and study of women needing to feel more entitled, our research suggests that the playing fields might be leveling somewhat as men, especially younger men, are also feeling less entitled to leisure.

There is growing emphasis among leisure scholars to research intersectionality (Henderson & Gibson, 2013), especially those involving race, social classes, gender, sexual orientation, and, perhaps most importantly, age. Given the advancing age of Baby Boomers and the size of the Millennial generation entering prime earning years, more emphasis should be placed on age cohort analysis. In sum, though, it appears that the golf industry is undergoing a transformation. Such elements as high prices, limited time, and alternate activities have hampered participation. Changing gender norms and expectations, however, appear to be major issues going forward that the industry will need to recognize and adjust for to sustain and even grow in the future.

Research should also investigate how one's lifecycle can affect golf participation. Specifically, a potential solution to reduce childcare responsibilities or the increased desire for fathers to spend time with their children is to determine strategies by which families can spend more time together on the golf course. Is it enough for courses to offer family-friendly tee times or is more structure needed to make this occur more frequently?

Future studies should also address the positioning and image issues facing golf. As indicated in a study on Millennials conducted by the National Golf Foundation (2015), many Millennials believe that golf is an elitist sport and has become passé, no longer aligning with their lifestyles and interests. One suggestion from that study was to create an image that Millennials love, like the affection they show for brands such as Toms and Airbnb. While the National Golf Foundation suggested that changing the core product is perhaps not needed, it is necessary for golf to evolve as a brand to avoid further decline. Studies should address the best way to reposition the sport without alienating its core participants. For golf to succeed, we believe that it needs to address multiple generations simultaneously and with vigor, as perhaps no other sport can close generational gaps like golf can due to the feasibility of playing for men and women of almost all ages.

Potential solutions

Some in the industry have suggested that the golf courses themselves need to change to meet the changing conditions of the family and society. There are now courses with 15- inch cups, for example, with the intent to make the sport faster and easier to play (Rupp & Coleman-Lochner, 2014). Currently, the standard cups are 4.25 in. in diameter, so the new solution would increase the cup diameter by almost four times. Greg Nathan, senior vice-president of the National Golf Foundation, said the following:

A generation from now, the great majority of golf facilities are going to need to make the golf course environment more fun, dynamic, inviting, and certainly more welcoming to novices, women, minorities, kids and families, in order for golf to compete for recreation time...golf needs to adapt and make

its facilities and equipment more technology-friendly. If you need to make your course a 150-acre Wi-Fi zone, so be it (Boyette, 2014, para. 17).

From a commercialization perspective, televised sports are now focused on entertainment and aesthetics. In response, rules have changed to adapt to television (Eitzen, 2016). Golf has adapted to this idea by designing 'golf tournaments [that] now involve total stroke counts rather than match play, so that big-name players aren't eliminated in an early round of a televised event' (Coakley, 2016, p. 348).

We caution against strategies that change the nature and challenge of the sport or take away from its inherent core benefits and strengths. Golf is a sport that demands precision and accuracy. Changes to the sport that would lessen golf's demands, such as bigger holes, might suggest to new players that they are incapable of playing golf the way it is supposed to be played, as judged by traditionalists. Making the sport more interconnected from a social media or Wi-Fi (radio frequency) perspective would lessen golf's inherent strength as a place to get away from the hassles of everyday existence, thereby hampering the ritual gift of transformation (Driver, 1998; McGinnis et al., 2012). Other strategies that might damage golf's traditions and inherent strengths would be the following: making courses more conducive to Millennials by creating more of a party feel (Stewart, 2014); playing music in carts on the course (Ecker, 2015; Hart, 2015); enhancing the sport with modern technology (e.g. radio frequency identification (RFID) chips in balls, course-wide Wi-Fi) (Stewart, 2014); lightening up on tradition (e.g. fewer dress codes and relaxed dress codes) (Jenkins, 2015; Stewart, 2014); or playing foot golf (Ecker, 2015). We do not advocate such changes.

Strategies that would maintain golf's sacredness but also make Millennials and other generations feel more welcome include offering three or six-hole evening rounds (Ecker, 2015; Hart, 2015); providing transparent tee sheets to see where friends are playing (Jenkins, 2015); and encouraging Baby Boomers to reach out to Millennials to help them as guides to the sport of golf (Carney, 2015). The latter suggestion of having Baby Boomers reach out to the younger audience is a strategy we would especially advocate, as it would bridge the gap between the two generations, empowering both. Three-hole rounds, while shortening the traditional 18-hole or 9-hole rounds,

could still allow a person to establish a handicap while still allowing families to play together in less time and perhaps for less money. Our advice would be to not only offer tee times to encourage family play but also clinics and tournaments designed for the family. Yoon (1997) found that the older adults' efficiency peaks in the morning, so more daytime rounds might be allocated to the older population, or other times that can accommodate their more flexible schedules, while the late afternoon shorter rounds can be for families playing fewer holes after work and school. We suggest that the marketing be visible to all family members to send signals that the industry is welcoming to all members. The tee times set aside for families should be exclusive to families due to the fact they will need more time to finish their rounds.

In addition, we suggest that single parents get invited to golf as well, where, if necessary, the courses can provide daycare while the parents spend two hours on the course. The current 9-hole initiative supported by the PGA of America and the United States Golf Association is a step in the right direction (PGA.com, 2013). On the other hand, while single parents may appreciate 'getting away' more, they are greatly more time pressured (Ahuja & Walker, 1994; Harrison, Gentry, & Commuri, 2012) and may not provide a substantial market opportunity.

Finally, advocating no change at all and letting golf be a place where Millennials can get away from fast-paced lives and the noise (Jenkins, 2015) would seem plausible given our arguments. In a world where everyone is connected and wired, golf's traditional respite from such modern conveniences and trappings might be the respite Millennials eventually need and desire. Despite Millennials not playing to the same extent as preceding age cohorts, their numbers as a group are substantial. Millennials currently comprise over a quarter of the participation numbers, contributing around \$5 billion in annual spending (National Golf Foundation, 2015).

Regarding changing gender norms, the golf industry can be more proactive in changing the perceptions of it being a male domain. While middle-aged white men have been the mainstay, the golf industry needs to send more signals to women that golf is not necessarily a masculine domain. McGinnis and Gentry (2006) noted how golf needs to be more women-friendly by sending signals in terms of merchandising displays, tournaments, and other markers. Increasing

accessibility to courses would also help. Given Risman's (2018) findings, many Millennial men and women might find golf more attractive if the industry challenged the racial and gendered organization of the sport. Greater time flexibility was found to be greatly appreciated in Danylchuk, Snelgrove, and Wood's (2015) case study of a country club's efforts to create more flexibility for women's leagues. At the same time, Tuesday was the only day in which the women's leagues were allowed to compete. Even more time flexibility is needed in order to keep women golfers satisfied. Additionally, because both parents among Millennials are involved in spending or wanting to spend more time with their children, the industry could consider marketing to the family, with events, seasonal packages, and other products targeted to the family. The industry might also consider forgetting sexuality altogether and eliminate gendered activities, such as women and men's days and leagues. Marketing to the increasing market of married couples without children and same sex couples provides additional opportunities.

Golf also needs to show signs of being more feminine, whereby traits of grace, finesse, and community are valued as much as masculine traits such as competitiveness, strength, and agency. Courses aimed at stressing shot-making over power and brute strength are steps in the right direction. Team-oriented activities, such as the successful PGA Junior League (Herrington, 2017), are also steps that will help attract those identifying with a feminine identity, thereby being more inclusive to those who currently may be seen as gender outsiders. Similar team-oriented activities for adults, especially single adults looking to join the sport, or parents wanting to play with their children, should also be considered.

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