Playing Our Way: The Role of Social Groups in Women's Loyalty to Sport Participation

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Psychological and team-focused approaches have dominated the literature related to sport loyalty, with limited attention paid to the social processes that explain sport participation and loyalty. Employing a symbolic interactionist (SI) perspective, this study sought to understand the role of social groups in the development of women's loyalty to sport. Consistent with an SI perspective, data were collected through an ethnography of an existing social group of 13 women regularly engaged in golf, and included the use of unstructured interviews, numerous informal interviews, and participant observation over a period of two months. An analysis of the findings using a grounded theory approach, suggests two overarching themes, along with a number of sub-themes, that provide insight into understanding the women's experiences and persistence in golf: (a) connecting with group members, and (b) constructing a group culture. Managerial implications aimed at increasing women's participation in sport are also discussed.