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PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN GOLFERS IN THE WORKPLACE: THE EFFECT OF INFORMAL NETWORKING ON THE GOLF COURSE

Do women who perceive their golf skills positively have more productive work-related interactions on the golf course? Are women with higher golf skill level perceived more positively on the golf course? And lastly, do these perceptions transfer to the workplace? A growing body of research has focused on the building of network ties in and outside the workplace and its effects on workplace functioning and effectiveness (Granovetter, 1973; Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1993). Research findings suggest that different types of network ties are acquired in different contexts, leading to the attainment of varying levels of informational resources (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Research has also focused on gender differences in informal networking, suggesting that much informational resources are acquired outside the workplace during ‘male-centered’ activities such as golf (Scott, 1996; Gazso, 2003; Gamba & Kleiner, 2001).

Sociological research pertaining to women and golf also alludes to some of the barriers faced by women on the golf course such as tokenism, discrimination and inadequate skill level. It has also been suggested that these issues could act as barriers when women are trying to build networking relationships on the golf course (Daddario & Wigley, 2006; McGinnis, McQuillan, & Chapple, 2005). Despite these important findings, little attention has been given to women who play golf with the goal of attaining informational resources and how the perception others have of them on the course may affect their status in the workplace. Therefore, the purpose of this paper will be to explore the literature pertaining to 1) formal and informal organizational networking, 2) gender inequality in and outside the workplace, and 3) women’s experiences on the golf course.

Based on the literature reviewed, it is posited that higher skill level in golf may relate positively to a woman’s perceptions of competence and ability to construct social networks outside and within the workplace. We propose that women who golf will build more beneficial informal networks and will be perceived as more promotable, effective, important and influential within the workplace. Women who golf for networking purposes will also have more potential for success within organizations. Furthermore, women who have higher perceived competence of their own skills on the golf course may engage in behaviour affecting perceptions others have of them on the course and in the workplace. An investigation into these propositions is hoped to yield some information about the characteristics of golf-based informal social networks and how they affect perceptions of women in the workplace.