

Not the Ladies' Tees:
How Gendered Practices and Language in the Golf Industry in Ontario Impact Women's Engagement

by

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Not the Ladies' Tees:

How Gendered Practices and Language in the Golf Industry in Ontario Impact Women's Engagement

In sporting industries, including the golf industry, there is a long-standing history of gendered practices, events, exclusion, and “typical ‘gendered’ expectations” (Breger et al., 2019, p. 274). These practices are evident in golf through gendered language, gendered dress code, gendered history, gendered leagues, and gendered tee blocks. Specific gendered practices within the golf industry, such as gendered language, contribute to participants’ experiences in important ways. Through gendered language such as “cart girl,” “golfer,” and “lady golfer,” the golf industry is perpetuating gendered ideals, and through a gendered dress code and gender-marked tee blocks, the industry is propagating ideas about women’s ability levels in the sport.

Women’s professional golf is a topic of increasing academic concentration (Bowes & Kitching, 2020a), but there is a gap in research regarding how gendered language and practices impact women in the industry. Golf is historically referred to as a “gentleman’s game” (Billings et al., 2018, p. 97) and has been historically exclusionary to women (Bowes et al., 2020a). Golf participation rates are also lower for women than for men, (Danylchuk, Snelgrove, Wood, 2015) and women often leave the sport due to the experiences they have through their involvement. Augusta National Golf Club, one of golf’s most distinguished golf clubs (Swart et al., 2003), where the Master’s Tournament takes place, did not allow female members to join as members until 2012. When they finally allowed their first two female members, it was a great win for women’s golf (Andrews, 2012, p. 2) and allowing for more equitable participation in the industry.

In addition, there is a history of policies that discriminate against women in golf, and often the experiences women have as a result of these exclusionary policies impacts their participation and comfort in participating. Often, the policies can also limit their involvement in the sport or impact retention and lead to more women leaving the sport. Largely, little research exists on women’s experience as participants in the sport (Mitchell et al., 2016). In recent years, diversity and women’s golf initiatives have been prominent in

Ontario and the rest of Canada. In 2020, the PGA of Canada created a Diversity & Inclusion Task Force with industry professionals to allow underrepresented populations the chance to participate in golf (PGA of Ontario, 2020). Golf Canada and the PGA of Canada launched a Women in Coaching program (Golf Canada, 2020), and Golf Canada and Golf Ontario have recently launched a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Alliance with Korn Ferry (Golf Ontario, 2020). These initiatives bring together diverse and underrepresented voices to contribute to diversity and inclusion in the golf industry and are significant in allowing various populations to experience the sport. However, more research is needed in the area of women in golf to accurately understand women's experiences.

Research concerning women in golf is fundamental as Canadian women continue to gain employment in the golf industry and increasingly play the sport. Women also have increasingly busy work and home lives, and "fewer are maintaining lifelong roles as engaged sport participants" (O'Reilly et al., 2018, p. 16). The trouble goes beyond the sphere of sports participation. Oftentimes, golf is in fact used to host informal business meetings, and when women miss out on participating in these types of opportunities, it can impact their career advancement. It is also well known that golf provides opportunity to men to socialize and strengthen networking, but it does not always have the same social benefit for women (Agarwal et al., 2016). This research aims to fill the gap in the literature surrounding women's experience in the golf industry, including gendered roles and the assumptions women face. This thesis, in particular, aims to gain insight into the gendered practices in golf from an insider's perspective and raise awareness of how gendered practices affect women in the golf industry. Interviews with 10 female golfers who work in the industry were conducted with the aim of understanding how gendered practices in golf have impacted women in Ontario. This research contributes to the areas of sport sociology, gender studies, and communications studies with regard to sports and gender.

Golf as a gendered institution

Golf is a highly gendered institution. There are unique experiences and perceptions women within the golf industry face. There are also large factors related to women's participation in the sport related, like in how the sport of golf has traditionally been inequitable in aspects related to fair gender participation (Bowes & Kitching, 2020a). Golf has a history of being "elitist, racist, and sexist" (Maas & Habrook, 2001, p. 21) and has a long-standing history as "a 'gentleman's game'" (Hundley, 2004, p. 39). Since the start of the sport, women have been interested in playing and having equal opportunities, and have attempted to be included, but have not been welcomed to the same degree as men (Reis & Correia, 2013, p. 324). In addition, from the beginning, the sport started out solely for men. While women now are involved in golf on a large scale and take more golf lessons than men, their attrition rate within the sport is greater than that of men (MacKinnon, 2013). Golf is also known as *homosocial*, meaning it consists primarily of same-sex social interaction (Morgan & Martin, 2006). Historically, many golf clubs only allowed white men as members. Many factors have changed in golf over the years, including a rise in women's golf initiatives within the industry. However, there are still rampant gendered practices. Golf's hegemonic practices have a long-standing history, including gendered practices and opportunities, since men's professional golf started in the mid-1800s (Bowes & Kitching, 2020a).

In 2013, Statistics Canada surveyed Canadian females and found that golf is the top sport for Canadian female participation, at 15% (O'Reilly et al., 2018). Canada has many golf courses for its population (Davies et al., 2018), leading to golf as a popular sport for many Canadians. Golf is a sport that individuals of varying ability levels can play at the same time, due to the handicapping system. As well as this, there are varying ability levels within golf, varied starting tee blocks, and different average hitting differences for men and women. There are large issues related to the retention of women in golf, with one half of female recreational golfers quitting the game in the first five years, suggesting that experience is a factor (Shapcott and Carr, 2019). Largely, much is misunderstood about the experience of women in golf, but there have been some small-scale in-depth interview-based studies on their experience, such as by McGinnis et al. (2008). It

was found that women who participate in golf experience a sense of community but less overall engagement than men in the sport, primarily based on the male-dominated nature and history of the sport (McGinnis et al. 2008). While women and men can both golf to a varying degree of similarity, women are less likely to participate due to competing home and work lives.

While the sport of golf can provide fair competition to individuals of all ability levels and “does not inherently privilege men or women physically, yet men are much more likely to participate in golf” (McGinnis et al., 2005, p. 313). Golf also consists of tradition, language, and formal aspects that reveal the male-dominated nature of the sport (McGinnis et al., 2008, p. 19). The hegemonic nature of golf is a deterrent for some women looking to join the golfing community, as there are not always fair and equal opportunities for women in the sport. Practices within the golf industry can contribute to women’s inability to fit in (Shapcott and Carr, 2019, p. 276). Women compose one-fifth of golfers in the United States, but largely, it is recognized by the golf industry that there are large retention issues related to women golfers and a cyclical nature of campaigns to recruit and re-think how to attract women into the sport (Consavage, 2001).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the golf industry in Ontario has seen a rise in play (Zochodne, 2020). Golf was one of the first sports allowed to reopen during the pandemic due to the ability to easily social distance, remain six feet apart, and be outdoors. Up until the COVID-19 pandemic, participation in golf has been decreasing over the past few years (McGinnis et al., 2019, p. 1), thus causing corporations such as local Ontario golf clubs, professional associations, and other golf entities within Ontario to question how to attract more golfers. Many within the industry wonder what the barriers are to gaining new golfers. Golf has the ability to be a fair and equal sport to individuals with different ability levels, and individuals of different genders, due to measures such as "handicapping, staggered tees, variably sized equipment, beautiful grounds, social interaction, and endurance" and a variety of other factors (McGinnis et al., 2019, p.3). Gaining an understanding of why women golf, the barriers, and experiences they face, and what attracts them to the sport may help the industry gain participants. It was well-known within the industry that pre-pandemic golf was losing players and having less success in attracting new players (McGinnis et al., 2019).

Gender and sports

The topic of inclusion in sport has been of increasing importance to many golf organizations and researchers alike. Within the field gender studies and sport, there is often discussion about the rampant assumptions made about women in sport, that women are feminine first and athletes second. Women in sport are traditionally regarded as "women" [with the assumption that they should be 'attractive' and 'feminine'] first and 'athletes' second" (Billings et al., 2018, p. 105). Women are not often thought of as athletes, and then women; their gender is always a factor in the assumptions made about them as athletes. In addition, women in sports are also often stereotyped due to their gender.

Gendered stereotypes can impact participation within sport (Agarwal et al, 2016), and often the stereotyping of women through their participation in sport can be harmful and lead to them leave the sport altogether. Assumptions and stereotypes related to women's participation can be limiting or restricting and can often act to demean them and negatively impact their experience. Additionally, there are also significant gender inequalities (Reis, & Correia, 2013) in sport, including the sport of golf. These gender inequalities include a lack of access to sport for diverse and underrepresented populations and not being able to fit in. Often, the institutionalized expectations of women in sport can negatively impact their participation and can significantly impact their experiences as athletes and their enjoyment in participation.

In golf, the expectations, and assumptions about women's participation, both as employees and golfers, are entrenched. The traditionally hegemonic and closed membership of golf clubs is shifting to accept women—either of their own volition or society's. The ramifications of widespread negative assumptions about women in sport and golf are significant, with female athletes being paid less for the same athletic success as men, and the impacts on their comfort in participating in the sport, both as amateurs and professionals; this can lead to outright discrimination against women in sport. An example of this was when a judge in 2005 ruled that "one of Ireland's top golf courses discriminated against females by not allowing them to join [a] prestigious club" (Song, 2007, p.1). There are still golf courses in Ontario, Canada, and globally that

do not allow female members. There are also significant gender differences within golf, focusing on different areas, such as injury, skill, pay gap, gendered tees, and the sport's gendered history.

Understanding women's experiences in sport is essential to develop inclusion and diversity within sport (Jones, et al., 2016). The experience of female professional athletes (Chawansky and Francome, 2011) and women's experience in sport (George, 2010) are of increasing academic concentration. Many sporting organizations are focusing on women in sports as a key research area as well. However, largely, the existing research on gender in sport and "gender inequities in sports focuses mainly on differences in relation to men, concerning participation, behaviour and performance" (Reis, & Correia, 2013, p. 325), rather than on women's experience in particular, which leaves a large gap concerning women's sporting excellence compared to other women.

One rampant practice in the golf industry specifically is the use of gendered tees. One popular viewpoint within golf is that the handicap system and gendered tees make golf more equal for individuals of different genders. Another viewpoint that challenges the idea that gendered tees make the sport more equal is that systems like gendered tees, which differentiate between genders, are barriers to women's participation and have the opposite intended impact, rather than being inclusive. Within golf, "LPGA professionals acknowledge gender differences in golf technique, particularly for novice golfers" (MacKinnon, 2013, p. 1), and often this can be used to the advantage of the teaching professional by allowing them to customize golf lessons ahead of time.

Largely, the socialization process in golf including gendered differences in the sport is an area of growing research (Senyard, 1998), but little is known about the impact on women of making assumptions of ability level based on gender. As well as assumptions that are made about ability level and knowledge of the sport, there is also a difference between interest in men's and women's golf at the professional level. Specifically, there are lower television ratings (Shmanske, 2000), and less media coverage for women's U.S. professional golf, and the pay gap between women and men working in the industry, as professional golfers, golf professionals, and other disciplines, is prevalent as well.

Often, gendered experiences in sport relate to language use that reinforces the male-dominated nature of sport (Allen, 2011). The LPGA and LPGA Women's Network recently released an “#InviteHER” campaign (LPGA Women's Network, 2021, p.1) that aimed to get golfers to invite a woman in their life to golf. The importance of inviting women to golf has been the target of many Golf Ontario and Golf Canada communications campaigns and is on the radar of other golf organizations.

Language, sports, and gender

Language is a powerful tool, as it has the ability to influence societal thought and perceptions, it is used to stereotype and discriminate, and it also has the power to subvert and create social change. In addition, “language contributes to gender inequality” (Graham et al., 2016, p. 1). Gendered language has a long-standing history and is a main subject of academic research in feminist communication studies. The use of gender-fair language is of increasing academic consideration (Graham et al., 2016) due to the impact language has on experiences for women in sport and its ability to stereotype and limit these women (Graham et al., 2016). Within gender studies, it has been studied how the socialization process is vastly different for males and females and often includes the way in which they use language (Hussey et al., 2015).

Like many other sports, there is a large amount of language and terminology, and linguistic patterns that are unique to golf. In addition, “language reflects patriarchy and sexism in numerous ways” (Allen, 2011, p. 52). Language and the way we speak influences the way we feel and the experiences we have. In addition, women are often targeted on the golf course through jokes, discriminatory comments (Shapcott and Carr, 2019), and negative stereotyping (McGinnis et al., 2008; Reis & Correia, 2013).

One common linguistic practice used to describe women's sports is the practice of gender marking, which perpetuates the idea that “women's sport is substandard to men's” (Billings et al., 2018, p.109) through attaching gender to women's sports, with men's sports simply being referred to as “sports.” Often, the phrase “ladies' golf” is comparable to the term “golf” when referring to men playing the sport. The use of the term “ladies” is often used to describe many aspects to do with women's participation in the sport of golf: “ladies' tees,” “ladies' night,” “ladies' leagues,” and other similar terms. With regards to the tee blocks, ladies' tees are

the forwardmost tees, closest to the green, leaving less distance between their tee shot and scoring. Often, these tees are red, making all red tees associated with being ladies' tees whether or not the language of "ladies' tees" is used.

Gender-based naming practices are prevalent in golf with the use of ladies' versus men's terminology. In the male-dominated sport of golf, we come to understand that a "golfer" will be male, and a "lady golfer" will be female. Naming practices have the power to "diminish women's sports" (Billings et al., 2018, p.109), and naming practices often serve to make women's sports seem less important than men's sports. As is common practice with women's sports, the men's team or sport can simply be "golf" or "basketball," but we often hear "ladies' golf" or "women's basketball." Often, naming practices are in place to distinguish men's and women's sports (Billings et al., 2018). For instance, the men's professional league is known as the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) while the women's league is called the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). This is not the only instance of this type of qualification being used in the industry.

Another practice that has proven to be prevalent in social interactions in the golf industry is overaccommodation strategies. Overaccommodation strategies include being talked down to or demeaned, or using overly familiar or sexualized nicknames, for example, being spoken to in a condescending emotive manner, or "using diminutives like 'sweetie' or 'honey'" (Allen, 2011, p. 172). Gender is reproduced and performed, through the way we talk, the way we carry ourselves, the way we dress, and other ways in which we present ourselves. Gender is also performed through marketing and images used in media (Allen, 2011). As well as this, "sexual disparagement" when gendered language is used to "stigmatize" and "label" female athletes and is prevalent in golf (Billings et al., 2018, p.111). Gendered language is often used in the golf industry, specifically to draw distinctions between women's athletic success, and men's and women's participation in the sport, and often to qualify their involvement in the sport. The terminology of "ladies' tees," "ladies' leagues," and so on are often used.

Another gendered practice in the golf industry related to language is the existence of "sex-role spillover" (Allen, 2011, p. 48), where men and women are assigned to specific roles based on their gender,

often based on stereotypes, and preconceived concepts and ideas about the duties and abilities of women and men (Allen, 2011, p. 48). Within golf, gendered roles are prominent, and this is largely based on the male-dominated and long-standing history of the game. Within the industry, most golf professionals and teaching professionals are male, which often leads to the assumption that women are not golf professionals, but rather shop attendants or working in administrative roles. Women also often work in administrative roles in the industry and service and food and beverage roles, while men typically work in leadership roles in the industry. Sex segregation through gendered roles often reveals a male-dominated or patriarchal culture (Allen, 2011). Gendered roles and language are prominent in the golf industry, and in some cases, can impact women's participation and satisfaction both as players and employees. Gendered language is common in settings outside of the golf industry as well but is highly prevalent in the sport at public and private golf courses, and at various levels of athletic success.

Method

This research was conducted using a convenience sample of 10 women in my personal and professional network. The selection criteria included those who work or have worked previously in some capacity in the golf industry at varying levels of seniority, who play golf at varying levels, as amateur or competitive golfers, and have a good understanding of the industry. The data were collected through a reflexive ethnography and semi-structured interviews with 10 women concerning their experiences within the golf industry and is essential to understanding women's experiences while working in the golf industry. Some of the women interviewed have previously been employed in the golf industry and have left the industry. Some of these women were PGA of Canada golf professionals or golf course owners; others were women who have worked in the golf industry in seasonal roles or as league convenors in the industry. One of the women interviewed was a visible minority; the rest of the interviewees were Caucasian. The interviewees ranged in age from 20 to 60 years old. Interviewing women with access to and understanding of the golf industry allowed for more significant insights into gendered practices in golf. In studying gendered discourses in golf, the individual experiences of these women are best explained through a reflexive ethnography.

Reflexivity, in basic terms, “means a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference” (Aull Davies, 2012, p. 4). In this case, my reflexivity sheds light on how my experiences within the golf industry have influenced my expectations and understanding of the industry, and how I interpret the interviews I conducted. I am aware of how “the relationships between ethnographer and informants in the field, [...] form the basis of subsequent theorizing and conclusions, [...] expressed through social interaction” (Aull Davies, 2012, p. 5).

My experience as a woman working in the golf industry who plays golf has a significant impact on my research findings. Through a reflexive ethnography focusing on women in golf, I have gained knowledge of the importance of actions and the significance of the places in which they take place (Griffin, Bengry-Howell, 2017). I am aware of how my gender has significantly impacted my personal experiences in both working and playing the sport of golf. It has affected my opportunity in the industry, how I adhere to a gender-specific dress code in order to work or play in this industry, the actions I take, the way I act, the comments I face, and the conversations I have. I love the sport of golf, which is why I choose to play and work in the industry. I am passionate about understanding other women's experiences to make this sport more equal and advance the opportunity for women in golf. For some, golf is a way to make money, spend leisure time, and build a network; and for some others, it is a sport that they do not get to experience or are often left out of due to the sport's barriers and history. With a greater understanding of the experiences and barriers to participation, golf can be a sport for everyone.

In practicing a reflexive ethnography, I reflect on my experiences in the golf industry and the interviewees' experiences. Based on my experience, I made assumptions about the answers interview participants provided and wrote my thesis based on important topics related to my experience. Ethnography is a method that includes multiple forms of research (Griffin et al., 2017), and the understanding that shared meaning is a large part of any community. With COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time of conducting this research, the fieldwork consisted of video interviews over BlueJeans video conferencing software (Griffin et al., 2017) of interviewing. Rather than viewing data collection and transcription as two separate processes,

both took place as one process; data collection and transcription occurred during the same period. The final data consisted of final coded themes, narratives, and experiences.

To understand the "lived experience" (Sullivan, 2012, p.11) of participants, I have conducted a narrative analysis of stories from interviews and coded "for emplotment, rhetorical structure, coherence" (Sullivan, 2012, p.11) of arguments. Often including "other aspects of non-verbal behaviour" (Griffin et al., 2017, p.16) which related to my belief of the interviewees' ideas and sincerity. Through my experience in the industry and conducting these interviews, I understood and could relate to, and included in my findings "folk tales, or pervasive myths and stories" (Griffin et al., 2017, p. 16) that exist. In addition to this 8,000-word thesis, I have attached a two-page magazine article showcasing research findings to appear in a Canadian golf magazine, highlighting key research results and allowing a greater reach for the research. In order to better represent women's experiences in the golf industry, sharing experiences is essential. The ability to disseminate research findings meets the goal of sharing research through a written thesis and a magazine article to reach Ontario's golf industry.

Data Analysis

Two major themes emerged in the interviews. Firstly, through their involvement in the industry, there were often assumptions made about their *ability levels and knowledge of the game*. Secondly, prominent *gendered roles* exist in the golf industry. As we will see, women's experiences were often negatively affected as a result.

“Men are Better Golfers Than Women”

Within the theme related to assumptions about women's ability levels and knowledge of the game, three sub-themes emerged. The first sub-theme is related to the institutionalized belief that men are better golfers than women. The second sub-theme related to women's ability level regarding the placement and naming of tee blocks. The third was the idea that women slow the pace of play and do not understand the rules of golf.

The first sub-theme was related to an institutionalized belief that men are "better" at golf than women. Due to the male-dominated nature of the sport, "70% Male / 30% Female" (National Allied Golf Associations, 2012, p.15), this is a commonly shared belief the women interviewed faced through their participation. Women in the sport often tee off closer to the green because their average tee-shot or drive is typically shorter than the average man's shot. The United States Golf Association (USGA) conducts yearly driving distance reports, where male amateur golfers were an average of 215.6 ± 1.4 yards, and where women amateur golfers were an average of 147.9 ± 0.7 yards (National Allied Golf Associations, 2012, p.15). The assumption that *all* men are more skilled at golf than women, simply because *some* men can often hit their tee shot further than *some of* their female counterparts, is present.

However, it is not true that every woman drives shorter than every man. On any given course, some women drive the ball farther than men present on the same course simultaneously, yet many men assume that every woman will be unable to hit the ball as far as they can. Along with this, there are rampant assumptions about women in golf, often related to the history of golf as a "gentleman's game" (Hundley, 2004, p. 39), as well as the history of the game as "elitist, racist, and sexist" (Maas & Habrook, 2001).

One woman interviewed, Sandra, a head golf professional, spoke about her experience in having her ability level measured against her male co-worker, "I would shoot a lower score than (him). I think if you put us side by side and someone said, 'who's the better golfer?' there would be an assumption towards him as the better golfer. Even at the professional level, I think there's a consumer assumption that a male will be a better golfer than the female." Since her male counterpart had a farther driving distance than her, there was often an assumption that he was a better golfer, even though she often competed in tournaments and he did not. There is a consumer assumption towards the Ladies' Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tour as being less important than the men's tour (Billings et al., 2018). At both professional and amateur levels, there is an assumption that men's golf is more important than women's golf. There is also less money invested in women's professional golf and lower television ratings of the LPGA compared to the PGA (Shmankse, 2000).

Another woman I interviewed, named Alex, who works in the industry and is a competitive golfer, said her experience with assumptions about ability level often centred around the expectation that women are not good golfers. She often felt that her exceptional athletic talent came as a shock to others; she also felt that her participation was not always "taken seriously" (Billings et al., 2018, p. 97). People I meet, Alex told me, "can't believe there's a girl that can golf. I'm shocking to people. If you saw a guy at my exact level, you wouldn't think anything of it. Right? But you see a girl that's at my level. You're like, whoa; Something must be biologically wrong with her. Why can't a girl just be good at golf? Why does there need to be a story?" Her experience aligns greatly with my experience that; often, when individuals find out that I golf, they are surprised that I play the sport, even though I work in the industry and regularly communicate about technical aspects of the sport. I, too, have felt the need to explain myself and prove my understanding of the sport. Many interviewees expressed a similar sentiment that people they met were often surprised that they golfed and the women often felt they had to prove that they had a good working knowledge of the game. Women in sport are regarded as "'women' first [...] and 'athletes' second" (Billings et al., 2018, p. 105), which could explain why women are not often thought of for their exceptional athletic ability first; instead, it is a surprise to some that women could be athletically successful.

Tee Blocks

The second sub-theme related to ability level is regarding the placement and naming of tee blocks in golf. These women explained that they often were met with an assumption that since they were female, they should play from the forwardmost tees or "ladies' tees" and they often faced comments when they played from farther back tees. Sarah, who works in golf merchandizing, discussed the implication that accompanies the tees, the "negative gender stereotype, you go to those cute little tees upfront and, look at you. You've got a 100-yard head start." Many of the women interviewed had experienced gendered implications about their ability level related to the tees. Often, the language directed at the women impacted their experience, and impacted the "gender inequality" (Graham et al., 2016, p.1) they perceived in their interactions. Most of the negative interactions these women described were when comments reflected the "patriarchy and sexism"

(Allen, 2011, p. 52), and when language stereotyped or made fun of them (McGinnis et al., 2005; McGinnis et al., 2008).

All interviewees disliked using the term 'ladies' tees.' As one interviewee, Sarah, who works in golf merchandizing, said, "girls' tees, women's tees, ladies' tees, or red tees can all go to hell. I hate all of those expressions. There's a gender implication that has been there for a million years, and it has to go away." In addition, the women I interviewed had often been the target of demeaning language and were spoken to using "overaccommodation strategies" (Allen, 2011) in their interactions with course staff and marshals. The women often felt they were talked down to or babied through the use of this language. When these speech patterns were used, it harmed their enjoyment and confidence on the golf course. Kate, an interviewee who has been golfing for two years, remarked, "we walked to the first tee box, and one of the gentlemen said, 'okay, baby-cakes, let's see what you got.' And it's like, really? Are we still talking to women like that?"

Another woman I interviewed who is a golf professional had witnessed the use of this language as well, said she "was with my boyfriend, and we're walking to the first tee, and the starter, marshals, are like 'the men's tee is back there. And your tees are right here, sweetheart.'" This language pattern was commonly witnessed by interviewees concerning their ability levels.

Frequently, the women interviewed felt that based on their interactions on the golf course, the assumption was that they were less skilled than male golfers, and this language often disparaged them. The use of overaccommodation strategies was often referenced in conversations with the women I interviewed, as the interviewees agreed that the language used in speaking to them often disparaged them as golfers and perpetuated the idea that women are less skilled golfers than men. They also felt that language was used to demean them and to question their reasoning for playing the sport. In addition, the practice of gender marking, which perpetuates the idea that "women's sport is substandard to men's" was prevalent (Billings et al., p.109, 2018) in the use of "men's tee, ladies' tee" or "men's league, ladies' league" terminology.

Women Slow the Pace of Play

The third sub-theme was that women slow the pace of play in golf and that they do not have a good understanding of the rules. They discussed the "stigma of women being slow and annoying golfers." This assumption often led to fewer invitations to golf and, therefore, less opportunity to network. Kate, who took up the game two years ago, talked about how "it's automatically assumed that [if] the pace of play isn't being kept up to par, that it's your foursome." This is an assumption I too have faced when I have been golfing with other women; there is often the belief that the foursome of women golfers are the ones slowing the pace of play, even if you are skilled golfers, usually I have found the group of women I have golfed with have been targeted for pace-of-play infractions over groups of men golfing. The assumption surrounding women as slow golfers has negatively impacted and limited the invitations they receive to golf with coworkers; it also limits women's opportunities at certain courses when they know specific courses target female golfers for pace-of-play infractions more often than other courses. Fewer invitations to play golf can directly impact women's career advancement, while golf has been proven to strengthen networks for men (Agarwal et al., 2016).

Kate also explained that she often asked to be invited to golf but was excluded due to the expectation that women are less skilled than men at golf, and slow the pace of play, "I've thrown out: hey, let's go golfing, and they don't want to golf [with me] because they assume I'm only at a certain skill level, and I'm going to slow down their game. And so, they won't even give me the opportunity to get out with them." Other interviewees also explained that they feel they get fewer opportunities to golf due to their gender. The sport does not "does not inherently privilege men or women physically, yet men are much more likely to participate in golf" (McGinnis et al., 2005, p. 313), and through this research it was found that men often receive more invitations to informal meetings and networking sessions on the golf course outside of work, limiting the opportunities women receive for career advancement or networking through the sport. As well as this, the ritualized nature of the sport (McGinnis et al., 2008, p. 19) can impact women's ability to fit in (Shapcott and Carr, 2019, p. 276) or receive invitations to play.

In addition, the women often turned down opportunities to participate in the sport when they felt that they would not be supported or have an enjoyable experience. Many of the women experienced comments about their perceived ability level, and they were often concerned they would get paired up with other golfers who were rude to them because of their gender. As for barriers, one interviewee, Linda, who works with a local women's golf organization, explained, "it's not necessarily did I wear a shirt without a collar? It's, do I end up getting paired with somebody who's going to roll their eyes and then I'm going to feel bad if I drop a shot and feel like I'm slowing somebody down. Who wants that? That does not make for a fun experience?" While golf can be a fair sport due to "handicapping, staggered tees, variably sized equipment, beautiful grounds, social interaction, and endurance" (McGinnis et al., 2019, p.3), the fairness diminishes if women do not get invitations. In addition to receiving fewer opportunities and invitations to golf, the women also often turned down opportunities to play when they felt they would have a negative experience.

Prominent Gender Roles

In addition to the assumptions above about the women's ability level as golfers, prominent gendered roles were present in the golf industry. Firstly, one widespread research finding was a significant prevalence of gender roles and gendered expectations of who should perform a specific career. Secondly was the prevalence of stereotyping and polarizing expectations of women in golf. Thirdly, the last significant finding was the prevalent gendered role and stereotype of a cart girl.

Sex-role Spillover

One recurrent finding of my research was the significant prevalence of gender roles and gendered expectations of who should perform a specific career. The theory of sex-role spillover is seen by "assigning women and men to certain occupational roles based on societal notions of 'natural' capabilities and responsibilities" (Allen, 2011, p. 48). Traditional attitudes towards gender roles are present in the golf industry. The women I interviewed had primarily expressed that assumptions were made about the roles women in the industry could perform. It is assumed that men are golf professionals or course owners,

whereas women work in the food and beverage department or as administrative staff, such as a 'cart girl' or server.

Along with these assumptions, there are gendered expectations for women's responsibilities versus those given to men within the same roles. For example, women working in the golf shop are expected to fold clothes and be a cashier, and men are expected to have more knowledge of golf and be teachers and coaches, for example. These assumptions are based on gendered expectations about ability level and gendered roles within the industry.

Men in the golf industry have traditionally been golf professionals and expressed that seeing a female head professional was so rare that it was "like a unicorn of golf." In addition, when women were golf professionals, it was often assumed that they were "just a shop-attendant." Many of the women who were golf professionals had experienced this assumption and profiling of their expected role based on their gender. One of the women I interviewed, Julia, a golf professional and a golf course owner, said that often individuals coming to golf at her club assume that the "older white guy" is the head professional. I was told the assumption that men are the golf professionals was "a tale as old as time" in the industry.

The assumption that women cannot be golf professionals is institutionalized and rampant, and something all of the interviewees were used to encountering in their roles. Heidi, a golf professional, for example, said, "I am so used to being in a golf pro shop and members automatically assuming that I'm just a shop attendant, but I'm not a golf professional. I had a member [say] I didn't realize that you actually played golf. I had no idea. I just thought you were just a shop attendant." The women interviewed for this research broke the stereotype of the white male golf professional, and they questioned the reason for this prevalent stereotype. While there are "acknowledge(d) gender differences in golf technique" (MacKinnon, 2013, p.1), and driving distance, this does not necessarily always translate to ability level based on gender alone.

Stereotyping and Polarizing Expectations

Another rampant practice in the golf industry is the stereotyping of women. Gendered stereotypes have direct impact on women's engagement and participation in sport (Agarwal, et al., 2016), Through gender

performance (Allen, 2011) in the golf industry, through dress code, actions, equipment choices, and other factors, assumptions are made about various aspects of a woman's life, including sexuality. Some participants mentioned that assumptions were made about their sexual orientation or marital status through their participation in high-level athletics. One woman explained that "there was an assumption that, okay, you're a golfer, you're a woman. You must be gay." This example of "sexual disparagement" where gendered language can "stigmatize" and "label" female athletes is prevalent in golf (Billings et al., 2005, p.111). Along with the assumption of sexual orientation or marital status, many of the participants explained the contrast of men's and women's experience through the way we dress, act, and even our level of skill and understanding of the game of golf. In addition, women have aimed to be included in golf, but have had low success (Reis & Correia, 2013, p. 324) in being fully included in the sport.

As well as stereotyping, the women also discussed the polarizing expectations for women in golf, "it's this extreme dichotomy where you're either a tomboy, (...) well, you're automatically gay, or you've gotta be so female projecting, you have to be so feminine." Many interviewees felt the pressure to be either "female projecting" or overly feminine in their roles through how they acted, dressed, and presented. Largely, the experience the women interviewed had relating to stereotyping relates to the "gender inequities" (Reis et al., 2013) in the sport, as well as the impact and polarity of making distinctions based on "sexual difference" (Senyard, 1998).

Through these interviews, polarizing expectations were also present in the ideas or beliefs about women's alcohol consumption on the golf course. As Sandra, a head golf professional, explained, "How many times have we seen, sip and swing, or wine and dine, or women's wine o'clock, or the complete opposite where it's, thou shall not drink. Ladies don't drink on the golf club." The interviewees also remarked on the contrasting expectations of female golfers, "there's this wild, ladylike demure concept of what a golfer is. And then there's on the flip side; it's girls gone wild, must appeal to women's desire to, you know, drink wine at every opportunity. It's kind of, it's mommy juice." Many interviewees recognized the polarizing expectations

women in the sport are subject to, and felt that the pressure to act a certain way was often undue and could potentially limit women's participation.

I'm Not the Cart Girl

One of the common stereotypes in the golf industry is that of a 'cart girl.' The interviewees discussed that one limiting belief they had faced was that women's purpose as employees in the industry was to look pretty and serve beer. The stereotype of a cart girl is that of an oversexualized young woman who serves men beer on the golf course. Amanda, an owner of a golf course, talked about the impact and prevalence of this stereotype, "The stereotype of the men with the 'hot cart girl.' And what's the stereotype there? Some hot little bunny. And it's, and it's true. You sell more beer." While the profiling and stereotyping of women in service industries are ubiquitous outside of golf, the stereotype of the beautiful, scantily clad cart girl has become entrenched in popular culture and often appears in memes online.

Head golf professional, Sandra, talked about cart girl memes in popular culture; it's always, "when you see the cart girl, 'you're so excited,' it all perpetuates like the same crap, which is, it's a male sport, and that we're there to serve, and that it references that it's a gendered position. (...) It still blows my mind that that's a term that's used, it's also the reference of girl, which is like, again, just like minimizing or like infantilizing, the position, you never hear [cart] boy." It's a common expression in golf, explained Amanda, an Ontario golf course owner, "'where's the cart girl?' You know what? I will tell you, in all honesty, we've never, ever had a cart boy."

One participant went so far as to say that she would not want her daughter to work in a service role within the industry due to the expectations and assumptions that accompany that type of role. A majority of the women interviewed recited experiences of being pigeonholed into food and beverage and not being asked or allowed to sell golf clubs and not being respected as a professional. Something similar has happened to me on many occasions; as a communications professional working in the industry, I have been referred to as a server or a cart girl on several occasions, even when it was obvious that working in a marketing or communications role, often having a camera around my neck, or interviewing someone to write an article on

them. Largely, the socialization process for men and women is different (Hussey et al., 2015); this may impact how women are socialized within golf and within their employment in the industry. For the women I interviewed, with some of their clientele not recognizing they were a golf professional, it indicated that gendered assumptions are still commonplace in the industry.

Conclusion

In conducting this research, clear solutions emerged related to women's experience and retention in the sport. They are to: solve pervasive issues in the industry by educating about language use and impact; empowering women and inviting them to golf; and adjusting tee-block use to be based on ability level rather than gender. Within the golf industry, the starter, marshal, and course staff significantly impact golfers' experience on the course. Often, starters are volunteers or low-paid staff who exchange their time for golf playing privileges and are often retired men. All of the interviewees had experience that backed up how starters and marshals often miss out on the education that other team members receive, including diversity and inclusivity training, and training on language use. Many of the interviewees discussed that marshals must "be very careful in the language they use and in the people that they target." They also identified a need for course staff education, "a lot of it is the education of all of our staff, making sure that starters, marshals, pro-shop staff, greeters, aren't using ladies' tees, men's tee verbiage." Another suggestion was that the golf industry must stop using the word ladies when referencing tee blocks, "never should there ever be signs that say ladies' tee with an arrow! I don't know how many golf courses I still see that at." The first recommendation that emerged was that a clear education component from a provincial and national sport organization on equitable language use and removing the word "ladies" from our golf vocabulary would create positive experiences for women golfers and women working in the industry. Reaching women golfers is extremely important as they leave the sport at higher volumes than male golfers (Consavage, 2001), and this is clear to organizations within Ontario, with their recent women's golf initiatives.

The first tangible suggestion that came out of this research was empowering and inviting women to play golf. Many of the women interviewed remarked on the importance of invitations to golf as being

paramount. They also stressed the importance of having female greeters at the club, a flexible first-time golfing experience, and a relaxed dress code to try golf for the first time. The interviewees also spoke about the importance of a support system for women in golf. Shelby, who has focused her career on getting women into golf, had great thoughts on how to achieve this and retain their interest, "[Give] women the confidence with the language. (...) Give them the language to show up." Giving women confidence with language and inviting women to play was part of empowering women in the sport. The LPGA's "#InviteHER" Campaign (LPGA Women's Network, 2021, p.1) mentioned by many interviewees is a prime example of a communications campaign targeted at the importance of inviting women to golf. Women make up 15% of Canadian golf participation (O'Reilly et al., 2018), and "they are also leaving the sport at a greater rate" (MacKinnon, 2013, p.1) than men, almost half of the female recreational golfers quit the game within five years (Shapcott et al., 2019).

Lastly, a viable solution would be to adjust tee block use based on ability level rather than gender alone. Many of the interviewees in this research agreed, including Sandra, head golf professional, "in terms of the tees. I think they should be based on handicap or driving distance. I think it should be more clearly marked; it should not be gendered. I strongly believe that golf courses should recommend, should ask players what they shoot or how far they hit their ball off the tee." Another issue identified was that most golfers associate red tees with being 'ladies' tees,' and the attachment of the colour red equaling the assumption that women would be subpar golfers to men. One tangible suggestion is to remove the terminology of 'ladies' tees' and stop using tees that are the colour red, instead opting for using tees of other colours.

Sarah, a golf professional, remarked, "there's no such thing as a ladies' tee; it's a forward tee because it's not just women that play from there." The handicapping system is a way to create equity and fairness in the sport, allowing golfers of all abilities to compete and play together regardless of gender. The focus areas identified are paramount in changing the language used in the industry, and challenging gendered assumptions of what a golfer is will make golf more inclusive. In addition, understanding the assumptions and experiences women in golf face is paramount to "inform the development of more inclusive sport policies" (Jones et al.,

2016, p. 701). Developing more inclusive policies and guidelines in the sport will allow for more positive experiences for women in golf and contribute to the growing field of research on women's experience in sport (George, 2010; Chawansky et al., 2011).

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