

Class, gender, and space: The case of affluent golf clubs in contemporary Mexico City

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Ethnography

0(00) 1–20

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DOI: 10.1177/1466138118770208

journals.sagepub.com/home/eth



Abstract

This article examines how class and gender hierarchies are reproduced through spatial dynamics among affluent golfers in contemporary Mexico City, using the concepts of collective visibility and invisibility. The analysis focuses on how class and gender principles make some sites and actions visible while reducing the perceptibility of other spaces and acts. To do so, the article addresses three questions: to what extent and in what ways are privileged social spaces, like golf clubs, exclusively organized by class principles? How do Mexican golfers understand the class and gender principles operating in golf clubs? And, how do multiple axes of differences inform space and spatial practices? The study is based on an ethnography of three up-scale golf clubs and 58 in-depth interviews with members of the golfing community, including club members, instructors, caddies, and golf journalists in Mexico City.

Keywords

elite, gender, class, space, inequality, club, golf, Mexico, Latin America, Global South

Introduction

During an ethnography of three up-scale golf clubs in Mexico City, five different golfers suggested that I should contact Miguel.¹ ‘You should talk to him’, one of the golf players said, ‘he knows everything about golf [in Mexico]’. In his early-70s, Miguel was a charming, well-known, and very knowledgeable golf player. He had belonged to and played in a highly prestigious club in Mexico City since childhood. We met on a mid-week afternoon in the snack bar of his club, a site that offered a pleasant view of the green of hole nine and the tee of hole ten (the end of one hole

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and the start of the following). The interview touched upon the relationship between business and golf, which opened up a conversation about class, gender, and power issues with wealthy individuals in Mexico. Early in the interview, I asked Miguel if he could put me in contact with female golfers who were also in high-ranked business jobs. His response was revealing: 'a woman in business who plays golf is an oddity, I don't know any, but I will think about it'.

While we talked, we saw about 12 male golfers passing in front of us playing on the course. Near the end of the interview, we saw a ball flying high, landing with great precision on the green near the hole (the scoring area), indicating great technical skills. The dense trees did not allow us to see who hit the ball. However, Miguel exclaimed, 'let's wait to see who's coming, that was a great shot'. Suddenly, a pair of players appeared, one male and one female, walking in the middle of the course. The female player walked in the direction of the ball that caught our attention. At that moment Miguel told me: 'Claudia is an executive', pointing at the woman on the course. Once they finished playing the hole, Miguel invited Claudia and the second player, her husband, to sit with us to talk about business and golf. They stayed with us for 23 minutes.

Near the end of the conversation with Claudia and with a notable degree of skepticism, Miguel took the lead in questioning her about the role gender plays in creating uneven social dynamics for women golfers. After offering some examples of discrimination, Claudia said: 'women are discriminated [in golf] by the fact of being women, there isn't any other reason'. Expecting a nuanced explanation, Miguel restated the question: 'are women discriminated on the sole basis of being women?' To this, Claudia swiftly and boldly answered, 'yes, that is true'. Miguel immediately added: 'in golf?', to which she quickly responded, 'in golf, in work, everywhere'. She provided three more examples to support the statement and then apologized for not being able to continue talking with us. Claudia and her husband went back to the course and disappeared by the line of trees that separated holes nine and ten.

Social scientists interested in 'studying up' (Nader, 1972), have argued that economic privilege commonly becomes *natural*, and therefore invisible, for those who hold it (Cattani, 2009; Khan, 2010; Koh et al., 2016; Twine and Gardener, 2013). The invisibility of privilege sometimes extends to residential spaces, where gates and other architectural barriers render neighborhoods invisible to the average city dweller (Caldeira, 2000; Dinzey-Flores, 2013; Hay and Muller, 2012; Salverda and Hay, 2014). Scholars interested in wealth have also shown that this otherwise invisible privilege becomes highly visible when one's acceptance by fellow affluent individuals is at stake (Salverda, 2011; Schulz and Hay, 2016; Spencer, 2016; Wilson, 2013). However, the visibility of privilege changes according to the gender identity of the individual, as women occupy a subordinate position among dominant classes (Kendall, 2008; Ostrander, 2010; Schulz and Hay, 2016; Sherwood, 2012; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 2011). Using the concepts of collective visibility and invisibility, I examine how class and gender hierarchies are

reproduced through spatial dynamics among wealthy golfers in contemporary Mexico City.

The study is based on an ethnography of three up-scale golf clubs and 58 in-depth interviews with members of the golfing community, including club members, instructors, caddies, and golf journalists. The analysis focuses on the ordinary interactions that make some sites and actions visible while reducing the perceptibility of other spaces and acts (Deener, 2010, Licona and Maldonado, 2014). To address the visibility of privilege, this article elaborates on three key questions: first, to what extent and in what ways are privileged social spaces, like golf clubs, exclusively organized by class principles? Second, how do Mexican golfers understand the class and gender principles operating in golf clubs? And third, how do multiple axes of difference inform space and spatial practices?² Before elaborating on the methodology and data set, it is important to explain why golf clubs are ideal sites to study dominant classes in Mexico.

Study site

According to the Mexican Golf Federation (FMG), there are 27,631 golfers in the entire country (FMG, 2017). Most of these golfers live in one of Mexico's three largest urban centers: Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Mexico City. Including its surrounding metropolitan area, Mexico City has a population of around 20 million inhabitants and contains the largest concentration of golf players and clubs. However, even if all the golfers in Mexico were in the capital city, they would make up only 0.13 percent of the city's population. What's more, in this megalopolis there are no public courses – the sport is exclusively played at private clubs. The price of membership varies greatly at the 13 private golf clubs in the city, with two clubs having one-time membership fees greater than US\$100,000 and the less expensive club charging around US\$7,000 (Rodriguez, 2014; Saliba, 2003). The average cost of membership in most clubs ranges from US\$16,000 to US\$35,000.³ Two of the clubs considered in this study are situated in the upper range of the average scale while the third is located at the bottom.

The exclusivity of the sport becomes more evident when compared with the economic reality of the average population in Mexico. Over half (53%) of the population lives below the poverty line (World Bank, 2017). Workers, on average, earn the lowest salaries of any other member state of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2017) and the average annual income (after taxes) is only US\$15,300 (OECD, 2017). At the same time, the middle class experiences a high degree of economic vulnerability (Atkinson and Brandolini, 2014; Teruel and Reyes, 2017). Therefore, unlike the United States or United Kingdom (Lowerson, 1995; Moss, 2001), but much like the rest of the world (An and Sage, 1992; Cock, 2008; Gerth, 2011; Gewertz and Errington, 1999; Salverda and Hay, 2014), golf in Mexico is not a middle-class sport but rather a pastime for the upper-middle and upper classes (Nutini, 2008).

The interviewees reiterated the affluent condition of the sport time and again. An old player eloquently told me: 'in Mexico people strongly believe that golf is an elitist sport, very expensive. It is debatable whether it is elitist or not, but it is true that very few people have the resources to pay for a membership, the monthly fees and so on.' The upscale characteristic of golf makes it look like a homogeneous community from the outside. However, from the inside, participants noticed class distinctions. Some golfers, for example, made sarcastic jokes about the less-than-ideal 'class condition' of fellow club members, whereas others complained about the lack of gentlemanly attitudes commonly shown by some of the newly arrived members. The recognition of class differences within Mexico's golf community is connected to the popularity this sport has recently experienced in Mexico. This pattern is replicated elsewhere around the world (Cave, 2008; Cock, 2008; Hirst, 2001; Pow, 2017).

Golf has attracted an important number of newly-affluent individuals in the last decades. According to the editor of one of the most important golf magazines in the country, approximately 30 percent of current players are 'not traditional golfers'. The inclusion of new money in this sport has generated tensions, expressed through rude comments and harsh parody. For example, an old time player told me, 'golf has always been linked to money, but nowadays it is also linked to snobbism'. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Ceron-Anaya, 2017), class animosity coexists with ties of friendship between old and new money. After all, several old-time golfers put me in contact with newcomers and the other way around. It is within these sites for upper-middle and upper classes that I examine how class and gender principles influence multiple dynamics of (in)visibility.

Data and methodology

This paper is based on two periods of fieldwork. The first took place in the summer of 2006, during which time I conducted an ethnography of three exclusive golf clubs in Mexico City over a four-month period and conducted 44 in-depth interviews. The second period took place for a month in the summer of 2010, during which time I expanded the ethnographic material and conducted 14 more in-depth interviews. The focus of the second fieldwork was almost exclusively on caddies. In the first period, the interviews lasted 45 minutes on average and all but four were recorded. They were organized around three questions: Why is golf popular among business-people? How do you define a golfer? What do you think are the most important transformations golf has experienced in your lifetime? In the second period, interviews lasted 30 minutes on average and all were recorded. I asked caddies the same question previously asked to golfers, including two additional questions: 'how do you define a caddy?' and 'how does a caddy learn the trade?' The coding process focused on regularly repeated stories. I listened carefully to the interviews, allowing the participants to classify the world by themselves (Bourdieu, 1991). I develop the categories of visibility and invisibility through the interviewees' understanding of golf and my observations about these privileged sites.

From the very beginning of the project, I struggled with the question of how to ethically present my research. Based on informal conversations I had with researchers who had studied Mexican elites, I knew that most members of the local elite were not interested in letting outsiders access their own spaces (for an international discussion see Baltzell, 1985; Hay and Muller, 2012; Pierce, 1995; Schneider and Aguiar, 2016; Yeager and Kram, 1990). One scholar even noted how some of the best studies in the field commonly included members of the own elite among the team conducting the study (for a similar case in Portugal and the United States see respectively Marcus and Mascarenhas, 2005; Baltzell 1985). Like other researchers 'studying up' concerned about how to gain access (Conti and O'Neil, 2007; Thomas, 1993), my first contacts with golfers generated a set of ethical dilemmas. For the sake of brevity, I resolved the conflict by reaching a similar conclusion to what Gaztambide-Fernández recently labeled as an 'un/ethical position'. In other words, 'in the context of studies about elites and the production of elite status as it is directly related to the production (and justification) of inequality, we need a different understanding of the ethics of representation' (2015: 1141).⁴ An account of the early interviews helps to contextualize my 'un/ethical' decision.

In both phases of the research the interviews were collected using a snowball sample. In the first stage, I initially established contact with three businessmen golfers. Only one of them was part of my social circle before joining a graduate program at a British university. The other two were friends of friends I had met while studying in England. The first person I contacted was Sergio, the husband of a woman who was part of my social circle. I called him to request an interview, explaining that I was doing a research project on class and social networks. The words 'networks' and 'class' produced many doubts, resulting in Sergio asking for clarifications. As Ostrander (1993) and Hirsch (1995) suggest, Sergio's concerns might have emanated from the fact that I used the language of social sciences rather than the language of affluent individuals to explain the project. However, it would have been quite challenging for me to use the expressions of the upper-middle class to explain that I was interested in understanding how class and power manifest in daily interactions.

The interview with Sergio lasted for 35 minutes. He used most of this time to talk about the relationship between business and golf. At the end of the interview, I asked him if he could put me in contact with other golfers. In the end, he did not help me contact other players. The second participant was Fernando. When I called him, I omitted the words class, explaining instead that my research was about social networks, business and golf. He accepted the invitation to meet. The interview lasted for an hour and 20 minutes. At the beginning, he offered multiple examples to back up his arguments. The amiable interaction with him changed towards the end of the interview when he realized that I commonly moved about in the city by public transportation (which is a strong class indicator).

He was not rude but stopped elaborating on the answers as he had been doing up to that point. I also asked Fernando if he could put me in contact with other golfers. Despite a tacit agreement, he did not help me. My position in the lower-middle/middle class might have put him off. As Gaztambide-Fernández and

Howard argue, the status of the researcher is 'always implied in their ability to access other elites' (2012: 292). When I contacted my third informant, Daniel, I presented my project as a study about business and golf. At the beginning of the interview, I spent about 10 minutes talking about my familiarity with London and my 'trips' to iconic golf courses in Scotland (which I visited for research purposes, but did not play). Following Hoffman, 'the management of my identification became an important aspect of my research strategy' (1980: 47).

The interview with Daniel lasted for an hour and a half. At the end, I asked him if he could put me in contact with other golfers. Days later, Daniel sent me an email with a list of three of his friends who agreed to talk to me. He wrote in the email, 'they already know about your project, call them'. One of these contacts played a crucial role in the research. He found my project on business and golf amusing, deciding to help me. When I asked him for the contact information of other golfers at the end of the interview, he immediately picked up the phone and started calling his friends in front of me. After greeting them, he started the conversation telling, 'you won't believe what a researcher in England is working on, business and golf. . .'.

After the interview with Daniel, I confirmed that my interest in 'business issues', experience living near London, and vivid memories about iconic courses in Scotland generated a degree of legitimacy that was immediately turned into rapport. The latter, however, often dwindled when I was invited to play, a situation that happened on four occasions. My poor golf skills – acquired through a short course paid for by the office of research at my university as well as some practice at an inexpensive driving range – demonstrated my limited exposure to the world of golf. My poor golf ability limited my research interactions to the clubs' bar, restaurant, and warming up areas. Despite this limitation, the number of business-oriented male golfers willing to talk about business and golf grew rapidly; however, I could not find comparable female golfers. I tried to correct the deficient gender representation of the sample by actively asking male participants to introduce me to their female colleagues, with no success.

For example, at the end of an interview with a male member of an upscale club, I asked him for help contacting female golfers who worked at higher-ranked positions. Right away, he asked his secretary to bring the address book to his office, where the interview took place, and read aloud the names of all the female contacts on it. After each name was read, the golfer said aloud the activity of the referred women. The secretary named about 35 female contacts out of which only one fulfilled both categories (this person, through her secretary, later declined my request for an interview saying that she was very busy). This experience resonated with me weeks later when Miguel, the golfer mentioned in the opening vignette, told me that an upper-ranked female executive who played golf was an oddity. The limited research conducted on women and economic elites in Mexico substantiate the comment (Zabludovsky, 2007). There are very few women in higher corporate or business positions in Mexico and apparently even fewer who play golf (the international literature suggests a similar trend; see Cock, 2008; McGinnis et al., 2005; Reis and Correia, 2013; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 2006).

Near the end of the fieldwork, I began asking male interviewees to put me in contact with any female golfers who also had a paid job (instead of only high-ranked positions). Nevertheless, I managed to conduct just nine interviews with female subjects. Not all of them worked and two did not even play golf. The latter two were included because they both worked for companies that sponsored golf related events and were always present at them. Female participant ages ranged from the early-30s to the early-60s and those who played golf were all members of upscale clubs. Three of them started playing in their childhood or teenage years while the other four took up the game after their husbands were drawn into the sport. Five of these seven female golfers worked and two did not. The latter two had busy schedules participating in volunteer projects in their own clubs, whereas the former either owned their own businesses or worked in mid-ranked white-collar positions. The two non-working women were good friends with two of the working ones, which is how I contacted them. To sum up, the minimal participation of women in the sample is a result of both the snowball sampling technique I used and the gender exclusion that shapes the overlapping domains of golf and business in Mexico (in reference to the latter see Zabłudovsky, 2008).

(In)visibility

Geographers have eloquently argued that the social world is inexorably spatial and that the spatial is always political (Harvey, 1989: 261; Lefebvre, 1991: 47; Massey, 1992: 10). Despite its relevance, space is often perceived as a background element, as something that is discreetly situated at the back (Tally, 2013). Space appears like an ornamental element that plays no role in shaping social life (Agnew and Duncan, 2014; Bell, 1997; Gieryn, 2000). However, it is precisely this seemingly trivial quality that turns space into one of the most effective conduits for reinforcing class (Low, 2001), gender (Hayden, 1998), and racial (Dinzev-Flores, 2013) inequalities. One of the ways in which social hierarchies are reified through spatial arrangements is by making groups of individuals, and the space they inhabit, visible or invisible to the rest of the community (Whyte, 1980).

Following Licona and Maldonado (2014), I understand collective visibility and invisibility as ways in which notions about inclusion, access, importance, worth, and belonging, on the one hand, and exclusion, refusal, irrelevance, triviality, and weakness, on the other, are manifested in the organization of space. Visibility and invisibility are not always exclusive of each other, however. 'There are various kinds of visibilities and invisibilities, and each has different consequences' (Licona and Maldonado, 2014: 520). It is the complex combination of class and gender hierarchies that determines whether someone is seen or unseen and whether these acts are positively or negatively interpreted. For example, despite their central locations, many golf clubs are invisible sites for the average city dweller. In contrast, the organization of space inside clubs create hyper-visible sites (Ceron-Anaya, 2017).

Gender-specific time-slots, however, made female members less visible than their male counterparts. Moreover, despite long waiting periods inside the clubs, caddies were almost invisible workers. As Massey argued, 'space must be conceptualized integrally with time' (1994: 2). Time fulfills an important role orchestrating precise mechanisms of spatial (in)visibility, allocating people and actions to the same space but at different moments (Bourdieu, 1962). The relevance of one group, for example, can be emphasized by assigning them the most sought-after time-slots. In doing so, the distribution of time and space conveys ideas of prominence without the need to openly spell them out. In contrast, the less desirable time periods not only suggest unimportance but also decrease the visibility of those spatially and temporally assigned to them.

Findings

(In)visible space

Two of the golf clubs studied are situated in central areas, surrounded by major streets and accessible by public transportation. Nevertheless, most of the people who circulate on their perimeters are oblivious to their existence. A good example of this occurred near the beginning of my research. Despite being familiar with the areas, I was unable to locate exactly where these golf clubs were situated. Instead, I found myself relying on google maps to find these large tracts of land. I later interviewed a caddy who had a similar experience. He told me that he arrived late on his first visit to the club for a job interview because nearby pedestrians could not offer directions on how to navigate the kilometer between the metro station and the club.

On two different occasions, I asked taxi drivers parked outside this same metro station for directions to the golf club. Most of them were unable to give me precise directions to the club. On a different occasion, a taxi driver told me that there were no golf courses in the vicinity when, in fact, there was a highly prestigious club. The invisibility of these tracts of land materialized through architectural barriers in the form of tall walls, thick bushes, obscured entrances, and guardhouses. Together, these architectural barriers make large pieces of land imperceptible to the average city dweller. Most of the people who walk, drive, or ride a bus alongside the boundaries of these courses are unable to recognize them as golf clubs – they could just as easily be school playgrounds, enclosed parks, church recreational areas, preserves, or local business grounds.

The invisibility of the clubs is reinforced by the organization of urban space around them. Some parts of the clubs are surrounded by semi-gated communities that restrict the flow of outsiders near the perimeter of the course. Other parts are situated next to important urban arteries. These sections of the clubs are completely blocked by physical barriers. In all my visits to these golf clubs, I never saw anyone resting against the outside walls of club buildings (other than someone waiting for a bus) or friends and families gathering to spend time together next

to the foliage-covered fences that surrounded some of these clubs. I did see people walking quickly, paying little attention to either the walls of the buildings or the tree branches that extended over the walls. In a metropolis characterized by a lack of green space, the barriers that surround golf clubs have made these green oases invisible to the average passersby.

The external invisibility of these sites is radically transformed inside the clubs. Visibility defines the internal space, from the vast and immaculate greens to the modern architecture in the restaurants and main halls that conveys a sense of exposure. After finishing interviews inside the club, I regularly asked people to introduce me to other golfers. Participants who decided to help me commonly stood up from their seat in the club bar, restaurant, or warming-up area and looked around until they pointed to someone. The openness of the space allows people to see each other constantly except when they are playing. While playing, visibility is restricted to the members of the group with whom one plays and the groups that are playing in front or behind one's group. However, the course becomes visible to the entire male community through the bar (known as the '19th hole').

The '19th hole' is regarded as the quintessential socializing site in every club. Horacio, a club member in his early-50s, describes it as the place where 'you can see real camaraderie'. These sites are restricted by customary rules for women, who tend to socialize at the restaurant after finishing playing instead. Much of the conversation that took place at the bar revolved around recreating what had just transpired on the course. Players discussed great shots, errors, comebacks, and any other elements that allowed them to memorialize the game they had just enjoyed. Sometimes the group's conversation became a communal interaction when golfers at adjacent tables participated in the jokes or noted parallels between what just happened on the course and other moments.

A hyper-visible metaphor

During the fieldwork, informants regularly lectured me about the relationship between golf and intelligence. People pointed out how each shot is different, requiring an analytical process to determine the appropriate course to follow. According to this narrative, players need to consider many variables to determine which one of the 14 clubs included in a regular set of golf clubs is needed to hit the ball. Then, players must evaluate the strength with which they should hit the ball. Even more, players calculate these elements while keeping conversation with their fellow players. Therefore, according to the interviewees, golf is a sport that requires strong thinking and analytical skills.

The explanation about golf and intelligence was rarely articulated in its entirety by any single golfer. In most cases, participants narrated small parts of the argument, indicating a form of knowledge pervasive in the community. This was the case of Victor, a player in his late-50s who learned the sport in his childhood. Victor invited me to play at his club. After the game, when we were seated in the

club's snack bar, he argued that 'golf is a sport that is played with the mind, this sport is for smart people, it requires a lot of concentration, nerves of steel, it implies a whole attitude in life'. To validate his argument, Victor noted that after a 'bad hole' – an expression used to indicate that someone played terribly on one of the 18 holes – golfers need to show good mental concentration to leave their frustration behind and play the next hole with a positive attitude. Carlos (a male golfer in his early-50s) summarizes this belief saying, 'the US and Japan are the countries where more courses are located. Why? They have discovered that through golf people build character, their intellectual skills, their fitness and concentration'. Caddies also repeated this view, using language such as 'brain', 'concentration' and 'strong mentality' to explain the nature of the sport.

(In)visible workers

According to their own definitions, all caddies in Mexico are part of the lower class. The caddies I interviewed commonly used expressions such as 'humble' and 'poor' to refer to their upbringing and present condition. Caddies were present in all the golf clubs I visited and hiring one was compulsory. Caddies were in charge of looking after the bags, finding lost balls, and keeping track of the player's score. Beyond these menial roles, golfers expected that their caddy would advise them on the distance between the ball and the green (scoring area). Calculating distance is a key factor in determining which clubs and how much strength should be used to hit the ball at every step of the game. Experienced caddies also provided strategic advice such as when to attempt riskier and safer moves. In all of the clubs visited, caddies were contingent workers who received payment only when they went out caddying.

To work, caddies needed to wait for their turn. Caddies were organized on a rotation basis – each one had an assigned number that was called on demand by the starter (the person who controls the pace of play on the course). While weekends were the busiest days, the number of members playing during the week fluctuated greatly. Regardless of the day of the week, caddies needed to be present at the space assigned to them, known as the caddies' house, and wait for their turn to work. A young caddy told me, 'If I am not present when my number is called, I miss my turn and need to wait until the list starts again and my number is called again. [...] We need to be here no matter what, here, here.' The caddies' house indicates their lower hierarchical position within the community. The space that caddies occupy ranges from some plastic chairs shaded by trees and a basic plastic cover to a more solid shelter that includes changing rooms, showers, and an eatery. This space was invisible for club members, who never access it.

Caddies' spatial segregation was replicated in their linguistic interactions with members. Almost all the caddies I interviewed were referred to by nicknames rather than their real names, unless the member talking to or about caddies was a woman. Female members commonly refer to caddies, and workers in general, using the informal second-person pronoun (*tu* [you]), which implies a degree of familiarity

and equality. Some of them used the formal second-person pronoun (*usted*), which conveys a degree of respect. In either case, women commonly used a diminutive of the person's real name regardless of their age (i.e. *Luis-ito* instead of *Luis*). In contrast, caddies used the utmost forms of respect and subordination when talking to members. Caddies always used formal pronouns when talking to members and emphasized their servitude by employing the pronouns *Señor* (Mr.), *Señora* (Mrs.), *Señorita* (Miss.), the courtesy *Don* (Mr.), or the professional title of a golfer before his or her name.

(Less) visible members

Almost all clubs in Mexico City have policies related to gender wherein certain days and time slots are reserved almost exclusively for one gender. This was the norm in all clubs visited, where prime time is reserved for men. Women are never allowed to play during early-morning hours on weekends. The same is true of most weekdays, except one day a week known as *lady's day*. The decision to reserve early time slots for men and late-morning/afternoon for women was based on two premises. First, most male members assumed that women are not salaried employees and, therefore, they had plenty of time during regular working hours to visit the club and play. And second, several male interviewees assured me that women are slower and weaker players by 'nature' and thus require more time to complete a round, implicitly suggesting that women benefit from playing during less crowded time slots.

In regard to the first point, Mercedes (a female golfer in her mid-50s) questioned its validity saying: 'this is nonsense, nowadays, half of the female population in Mexico works'. Although it is true that a large percentage of women in today's Mexico work, the percentage of female golfers working is smaller than the average population. About her club, for example, Claudia pointed out that 'most women here [in the club] are housewives', adding later that 'we [working women] are about a third of all women in the club'. The distinction between working and non-working female members is a source of tension among the female members. In this regard, Claudia explained: 'it is sad, but many of the women here in the club [housewives] look down at us [salaried], they are rude'. Claudia explained that homemakers organized events at times they know working women like her would not be able to attend and later complained that working women did not contribute to the social life of the club. In regard to this issue, the two non-working women participating in the sample said that they were unaware of any conflict. It is unclear whether they were genuinely unaware or did not want to compromise their situation, as they were friends with both working and non-working women.

In regard to the second point, and in spite of club policies concerning gender, I found two female players who successfully fought against these restrictive rules. First, Laura is a 50-year-old player who started golfing in her late teens after years of playing competitive tennis. She is part of one of the two all-women foursomes that were allowed to play among men in her club.⁵ Second, Mercedes is a mid-50s golfer who took up the sport in her early 30s after her husband became a golf

enthusiast. She is also part of one of the two all-women foursomes that can play during prime time at a different club. Beyond ties of friendship, both of them are outstanding players and are well known outside of their clubs because they have been involved in the development of amateur golf events for women in the city.

Laura explained that when her foursome requested to play during prime time, they showed evidence that some of them work and could not come mid-day. However, the most important argument, according to Laura, was that all members of the foursome were excellent players who would not slow down the pace of other (male) players. She concluded her remarks saying: 'the president of the club at the time let us play on early mornings. Since then, [nine years ago] every new president that takes office immediately wants to ban us [from playing at prime time].' Mercedes is a friend of Laura's and followed the same course of action at her club. Mercedes said the president of her club at the time refused the request, but after a clash with the next president, in which she argued that half of the money to pay for her family's club expenses came from her own money, the foursome was allowed to play during prime time. Six years later, Mercedes adds, 'some men still ask us why don't we play with the rest of the women'.

The assumption that women are weaker players presumes a degree of athletic incompetence. Some women touched upon the topic. For example, Ruth, a golfer in her early-60s who has played the sport for 40 years, pointed out how men commonly complain about women's skills: 'They said that we are slow and we take a lot of time to reach the hole'. In a sarcastic tone, Ruth added, '[however] unlike many men I know, I calculate the distance [between the ball and the green] by myself and don't expect caddies to tell me how to play'. In a similar vein, Claudia, the player included in the opening vignette, said: 'when there is a group of male players looking for an extra golfer [to complete the foursome], they never want women to play with them. I have, many times, heard comments like, "no, dude! Why a gal? No way". Men don't like to play with women'. I brought up the point of gender inequality during the interview with Mercedes. She sarcastically answered: 'Haven't you heard the joke that golf stands for [*speaking in English*] G-entlemen O-nly L-adies F-orbidden', after which she laughed out loud and moved the conversation onto another topic.

Discussion

The findings have shown how strongly golf clubs are shaped by the overlapping forces of class and gender. Class principles are connected to the dynamics of invisibility that differentiate insiders from outsiders. For example, even though some of the oldest and most prestigious clubs occupy large tracts of land in central locations, these golf clubs remain invisible to outsiders. Workers near the perimeter of these clubs are unable to tell precisely where these sites are located. Following geographers' argument that the spatial is always political, the invisibility of clubs fulfills a political role. It prevents any challenge that might emanate from the public exhibition of these affluent clubs, such as questions about water consumption and

land rights. On the other hand, the restrictions concerning social contact stand as a symbol of social superiority (Donaldson and Poynting, 2007; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2010). Laura, one of the members who defied her club's restrictive gender policies, visibly exemplifies this idea when, in a self-congratulating tone, she said: 'how many Mexicans play golf? Very few. We are a tiny minority, but there are many who want to try it, but they don't know anything about golf'.

The class division that separates outsiders from insiders does not fully disappear inside the clubs. The lower class position of caddies relegated them to an invisible place. For example, most caddies possess all the technical skills needed to be regarded as golfer, such as knowing how to hit the ball and understanding golf strategy. However, not a single club member suggested that caddies could be golfers. Some even regarded them as impostors. Caddies' positive attributes, such as their work ethic, demonstrated by their willingness to wait for their turn to work, are rendered invisible by the seclusion of the caddies' house. Following Crewe and Martin, caddies are 'highly visible workers who remain largely invisible to consumers' (2016: 332). Interestingly, Cock (2008) reached a similar conclusion in regards to caddies in South Africa.

The spatial subordination of caddies is reinforced in their linguistic interaction with members. Male golfers almost always refer to caddies by nicknames. Women generally used the name of the worker, either in the informal or formal second-person pronouns, adding a diminutive of the person's name regardless of their age, which is commonly regarded as a sign of appreciation. This linguistic form, however, is also frequently used to talk to kids. A diminutive of an adult's name in the context of a significant class disparity seems like an ambivalent way to express domination, recognition, and condescension all at the same time. In contrast, caddies never used nicknames to refer to members. Instead, they include courtesy and professional title before talking to both male and female members, linguistically reproducing the class differences that exist between each other (Bourdieu, 1991).

Contrary to the invisibility of caddies, the commonly repeated and hyper-visible metaphor of golf as a mental sport functions as a mechanism of class domination.⁶ First, the metaphor positions golf as a distinctive sport, almost like an athletic exceptionalism, in which players must use both mind and body. Golfers describe this in contrast to other popular sports, which are perceived as physical activities. Second, the emphasis on the mental aspect of the sport is an attempt to legitimize the position of golfers by implying that it is 'intelligence' rather than wealth that defines the sport. In other words, it conveys the message that it is not wealth but a unique biological condition that constitutes a golfer. The mental metaphor gives the community an aura of distinction. This narrative is similar to the cultural boundaries used by upper-middle class people to disassociate themselves from lower strata in the United States (Lamont, 1992) and how the super-wealthy underline the work ethic as the source of their success (Schulz and Hay, 2016).

Class is not the only principle that modifies the dynamics of visibility in affluent sites. Gender also intervenes in determining temporal and spatial arrangements in golf clubs. For example, the gender-specific time slots turned the club into

a male-only site during early-morning hours, with the exception of *lady's day*, which gave the clubs a feminine dimension once a week. However, golf clubs become gender-mixed spaces the rest of the day. This space-time transformation reinforces the subordination of women inside clubs by justifying the gender division of space over the assumption of the male career (Pyke, 1996). Although the majority of female members are not salaried workers, gender-specific time slots penalize women who decide not to follow traditional gender roles because professional women have fewer possibilities to play (for a similar discussion about the United States see Hundley, 2004; McGinnis et al., 2005; Sherwood, 2012). Second, during weekends men could start a round of golf (four hours approximately) during the early-morning and be able to join family/social events by mid-day. In contrast, women who start a game in the early afternoon cannot be present at the main meal of the day, which occurs between 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm. This afternoon meal commonly functions as a central family/social gathering occasion on weekends. Since women are also in charge of coordinating social events, their possibilities to play on weekends become even smaller.

Time regulations not only limit the possibility of women to play, but also reduce their visibility. Relegating women's play schedule to late morning on weekdays and early afternoon on weekends limits interactions between male and female players. Most male players are out of the club by the time most women play. In doing so, women's playing abilities, one of the most valuable assets inside a golf club, are rendered invisible for the community of male players. The invisibility of women's golf skills became evident during the interviews with male players. Nearly 80 percent of them reported that they rarely see women playing. The other 20 percent reported that they have played with a partner, participated in tournaments where women are playing, or visited the club during mix-gendered time-slots. This invisibility is one of the reasons why women felt that they were belittled by their male colleagues. Most men were unable to differentiate between good and bad female players, assuming in many cases that all women belong to the second category. As Licona and Maldonado (2014) argue, invisibility reproduces ideas of unimportance and irrelevance. These notions are emphasized by the customary exclusion of women from the main bar (19th hole).

Men use the bar to talk, joke, and recall key moments of past games. Men at adjoining tables sometimes joined nearby conversations, asking questions or sharing their own experiences. The bar functions as the space that renders visible what is otherwise invisible: the actions and behaviors of golfers on the course. At the bar, male members learn information about other male golfers in the club, such as who is a good/bad player, who has luck, who is a funny person, and who gets angry on the course. The fact that women are not welcomed at the bar contributes to their invisibility, as male players are unaware of women's playing skills, humor, and character. These gender dynamics strongly resemble Massey's argument that space, and our perception of it, is 'gendered through and through' (1994: 186).

In spite of the multiple forms of spatial and discursive exclusion women faced, the cases of Laura and Mercedes, the two golfers who played at prime time in their

respective clubs, illustrate the possibilities women have to subvert the spatial-temporal constraints that exclude them. These two players, however, had amassed a considerable amount of capital, a situation that allowed them to engage successfully in the struggle for gender equality. First, Laura became a good player in her adolescence (her family had a membership in a well-established club). This represented a clear sign of intergenerational wealth, as Laura was part of a golf club at a time when the sport was even more elitist than it is at present (for the 1960s see Ceron-Anaya, 2010; Wray, 2002). Mercedes took up the sport in her early-30s and has since played in an upscale club. In the beginning, she did not work and, according to her account, invested a significant amount of economic assets and time (both scarce resources) to develop her golf abilities.

By the 2000s, Laura and Mercedes had both become very active in the organization of amateur golf tournaments for women. It was through these contests that they met other golfers (including each other). This activity allowed them to expand their social capital, increasing their visibility within the community. The accumulation of social capital, however, was linked to their outstanding golf skills. Playing abilities represent a form of cultural capital among golfers, where the latter is not recognized as an academic resource. Instead, this form of capital represents the ability to execute with the body a set of preferable movements, such as hitting the ball with great precision. In other words, being a great golfer means having been exposed to the world of golf for an extended period to the extent that the body enacts its regularities with high precision (for a similar discussion about boxing see Paradis, 2012). It is their significant amount of resources (i.e. cultural and social capital) that allowed these golfers to subvert the spatial-temporal gender rhythm in their clubs. However, their success is fragile because it goes against the hierarchies spatially enacted in these elite sites.

Following Massey (1994), the visible presence of the opposite gender during one-gender time slots represents the introduction of chaos into what is otherwise a neat and logically spatial organization. The visibility of a foursome of women who can match the pace of male players around them, do not rely on caddies to play, and can hit the ball with high precision and strength represents a threat to the organization of gender hierarchies. This is the reason these female foursomes remain in a permanent state of peril.

Concluding remarks

This article analyzed how class principles inform social dynamics in golf clubs. As argued, the privileged condition of these sites turned them into almost invisible spaces to the average city dweller. The external invisibility of these clubs radically changes once people are inside. Clubhouses were characterized by open spaces, which turned them into hyper-visible stages that encouraged social interaction. Visibility, however, was not extended to lower class workers. Although caddies spent more time at the club than any other people related to the sport, their actions outside of the course were barely perceptible to golfers. This invisibility was

connected to the spatial seclusion of caddies, who were confined to the caddies' house. This space was separated from the rest of the club by multiple architectural barriers that effectively hide them from golfers' view. In doing so, the long period of time caddies were expected to wait to work was rendered invisible to affluent club members.

The spatial subordination of caddies mirrored the way they linguistically interact with members. Whereas the latter used nicknames, informal second-person pronoun, and condescending terms when referring to caddies, caddies always use all forms of linguistic submission when referring to members, regardless of the gender identity of the subject. The class hierarchy openly and visibly subordinated caddies to female and male members. The dominant position of members over caddies did not imply a form of equality among those at the top, however. Gender took precedence among equally wealthy subjects. Female golfers were relegated to the less crowded and less desirable time-slots as well as regarded as inherently inept players. According to conventional rules, women could not access the main bar and their playing skills were not witnessed by most fellow men golfers. All of these elements obscured women's golfing skills, which is one of the most important assets a golfer possesses. In spite of the privilege women had in relationship to impoverished women and men, their gender still subordinated them to men of an equivalent dominant class position.

The organization of space played a fundamental role in reproducing class and gender hierarchies. Tall walls and guardhouses, for example, removed large tracts of land from ordinary people's horizons despite their central locations. A small fence, a side door, and a line of thick bushes hide the caddies' house and its occupants from open view inside clubs. In the same vein, the assumption that women are not equal to men becomes *obvious* when women's playing skills are not visible for men. In these cases, class and gender hierarchies become logical and coherent realities because they are mirrored and reinforced by the material organization of space. This article represents a 'call to arms' for social scientists interested in studying privilege. It is necessary, even urgent, to develop models that are sensitive to space and gender to examine the multiple ways in which affluent groups perpetuate dynamics of domination beyond class.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Megan Shehaan, Bruce Whitehouse, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback throughout the development of this article. Additionally, the author is also grateful to Jennifer Eggerling-Boeck and Adam Heidebrink-Bruno for their editorial help. Finally, the author wants to express his gratitude to the people who shared their stories with him.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was made possible by a CONACyT-Mexico scholarship.

Notes

1. All names are pseudonyms and multiple details have been modified to protect the privacy of informants.
2. The analysis of class, gender, and racial privilege is at the center of my broader book-length project. In this article, I specifically focus on the relation between class and gender.
3. Throughout the interviews, I did not ask questions about personal finances because of the crisis of insecurity Mexico has undergone in recent years. I did not want participants to think that I was trying to find out how wealthy they were to use the information against them. A handful of participants, however, self-disclosed information about personal finance as well as the cost of membership fees. The data was substantiated by the journalists interviewed and the sporadic information published in newspapers about the cost of the sport.
4. Gaztambide-Fernández (2015) does not embrace an exculpatory argument. Instead, he argues for a more complex understanding of the set of relations that allow groups to concentrate power and also how this power is inextricably linked to the possibility of researching elites. Gaztambide-Fernández's argument is not new – the discussion has been present in the social sciences since the 1960s (see Galliher, 1973; Sieber, 1989).
5. A foursome is the standard group of four players in golf.
6. This trope is frequently expressed by US President Donald Trump when talking about golf (see Roberts, 2015).

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