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A Vicious Oval

Why Women Seldom Reach the Top in American Harness Racing

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This article explores the gendered contradictions of visibility for self-employed women in male-dominated occupations. It provides a link between the extant literature on women's workplace issues with visibility and the recent, dramatic increase in self-employed women, especially those who work in male-dominated fields. The author uses a harness-horse racetrack as the site for exploring the social mechanisms behind the invisibility and negative visibility experienced by these women in their work. Through an ethnographic study of their daily work experiences, an insidious pattern of events surfaced in which every path leads to the same endpoint: the underutilization of self-employed women in a male-dominated field. This article also explores the social processes and pressures that lead these women to contribute to their own oppression in male-dominated fields.

Keywords: *self-employed; women; male-dominated fields; occupational sex segregation; visibility*

Self-employment is growing rapidly in the United States, especially among women (Devine 1994; McManus 1994; Silver and Raghupathy 1994). Researchers have identified several reasons why women enter self-employment (Apitzsch 2003; Boden 1999; Carr 1994; Grasmuck and Espinal 2000; Hall-Hoffarth 2004; Hundley 2000) and have explored the problems these women experience (Anthias and Mehta 2003; Hundley 2001; McCrary 1998; Reskin and Hartmann 1986). Yet most studies focus on the challenges faced by self-employed women in "female occupations" (Hughes 2003; Hundley 2001; Loscocco and Leicht 1993). The numbers of self-employed women in male-dominated occupations are growing rapidly (Devine 1994; Herizons 1999), and these women face a unique set of challenges.

Barbara Reskin (2003) has pointed out that extant research does not analyze exactly how ascriptive inequalities, such as occupational sex segregation, are sustained. Central to our understanding of occupational sex segre-

gation's persistence is the issue of visibility in the workplace (Padavic and Reskin 2002). Visibility is critical to the economic success of all self-employed people because it creates opportunities to display skills or products and to attract customers. The issue of visibility for self-employed women is particularly significant because of the deeply sex-segregated nature of self-employment (McManus 2001).

Research is needed to show exactly how visibility, invisibility, and negative visibility are constructed and sustained in the workplace. Positive visibility, or simply *visibility*, exists when workers have adequate opportunities to display their talents, competencies, and accomplishments and to be rewarded (Padavic and Reskin 2002). *Invisibility* refers to situations where people are either impossible to see (hidden from view) or simply are not conspicuous or readily noticeable. Invisible workers tend to be unpaid (O'Hara 1998; Padavic and Reskin 2002), do not own or inherit the means of production (O'Hara 1998), and occupy domestic, nurturing roles in the workplace (Gillis-Danovan and Moynihan-Bradt 1990). *Negative visibility* is manifest when workers are highly visible based on some ascriptive characteristic, not on their performance, and are noticed more for their mistakes than for their achievements. As Barbara Reskin and Heidi Hartmann (1986, 56) observe, "When women hold male jobs, it is their gender and not their performance that is highly visible." Given the growing numbers of women who own and operate businesses in male-dominated fields, how do these women deal with issues of visibility in their work? What are their coping strategies? And do these have any effect on maintaining or breaking down occupational sex segregation in these industries?

In the pages that follow, I first offer a review of the literature on self-employed women and invisibility. Here, I identify gaps that suggest the need for a study on self-employed women's strategies for dealing with invisibility and negative visibility as they operate businesses in male-dominated fields. I then present findings from my research at one harness-horse racetrack. Through ethnographic fieldwork, supplemented and informed by semi-structured interviews, I found that women who run their own racing businesses lack certain resources necessary to become visible and successful in the eyes of customers (racehorse owners) and colleagues (male peers). Moreover, no matter what strategies these women employed to remain visible and viable in harness racing, their efforts did nothing to disrupt existing structures of segregation in this male-dominated industry. In fact, many women ended up "erasing" their gender—in effect, self-identifying with the dominant masculine culture—in order to remain in the industry. I found that these mechanisms of invisibility for women occur over time and through negative experiences, effectively educating women on how they need to behave in this

environment. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of these findings for understanding how self-employed women try to survive in male-dominated industries and with questions this study has raised for further research.

Self-Employment, Women, and Visibility

Self-employment is growing rapidly in the United States. The number of nonagricultural workers who were self-employed in their primary jobs increased by 74 percent between 1975 and 1990, from about 7,097,000 to 12,355,000 workers (Devine 1994). In comparison, overall nonagricultural employment during this period grew by only 33 percent (Devine 1994). The proportion of self-employed women increased during this period as well and at a faster rate than that of men (Devine 1994). These trends are mirrored in other highly industrialized nations (McManus 1994; Silver and Raghupathy 1994).

The sheer numbers of women entering self-employment in recent years make this topic important, and indeed, it has not been completely ignored. Researchers have identified several major incentives for women to enter self-employment, including the desire to escape glass-ceiling effects in male-dominated work organizations (Apitzsch 2003; Coleman 1988; Hughes 2003; Loscocco and Leicht 1993; Navarro 1988), to gain more autonomy and control over their work lives (Altobelli 2003; Anthias and Mehta 2003; Apitzsch 2003; Boden 1999; Grasmuck and Espinal 2000; Heidman 1997; Herizons 1999; Hughes 2003; Loscocco 1997; Loscocco and Leicht 1993; Mannheim and Schiffrin 1984; Morgan 2003; Navarro 1988), and to realize more flexible work-family arrangements (Anthias and Mehta 2003; Apitzsch 2003; Boden 1999; Carr 1994; Hall-Hoffarth 2004; Heidman 1997; Herizons 1999; Hughes 2003; Hundley 2000; Loscocco 1997; Loscocco and Leicht 1993; Morgan 2003).

The focus of most recent studies has been on self-employed women in female-dominated fields, especially those that involve sales or service work in small businesses with low revenues (Anthias and Mehta 2003; Apitzsch 2003; Carr 1994; Devine 1994; Grasmuck and Espinal 2000; Herizons 1999; Hughes 2003; Hundley 2000, 2001; Loscocco and Leicht 1993; McCrary 1998; Silver and Raghupathy 1994). This is not surprising considering the widespread sex segregation of the self-employed by occupations and industries (McManus 2001), with most self-employed men and women operating businesses in male- and female-dominated fields, respectively.

From this work on self-employed women in female-dominated industries, we know that these women often struggle with a lack of financial capital or education (Hundley 2001; Loscocco and Leicht 1993; McCrary 1998), consumer discrimination (Hundley 2001), obstacles to networking (Anthias and Mehta 2003; McCrary 1998; Reskin and Hartmann 1986), and clashes between their domestic responsibilities and their businesses that may compromise both their autonomy and their output (Anthias and Mehta 2003; Hundley 2000, 2001) and that may lead some to be reluctant to expand their businesses (Apitzsch 2003; Loscocco 1997).

Much less is known about the work cultures and experiences of women who pursue self-employment in male-dominated fields, although it is clear that their numbers are increasing. In Canada, women-owned businesses in manufacturing and construction increased from 3.4 percent in 1977 to 13.3 percent in 1997 (Herizons 1999). Even so, except for a smattering of articles in trade magazines that spotlight the achievements of exceptionally successful self-employed women in male-dominated industries (Coleman 1988; Navarro 1988), we know very little about them.

The gender and work literature has established that women must deal with visibility issues in the workplace (Bagilhole 1993; Burke and McKeen 1990; Gillis-Danovan and Moynihan-Bradt 1990; O'Hara 1998; Ragins and Cotton 1991; Reskin and Hartmann 1986). For instance, Barbara Bagilhole (1993, 269) notes that women in male-dominated work environments suffer from "the duality of being both invisible and extra-visible." In waged work, such as coal mining, women may manage their heightened visibility by taking on identities and behaviors that either highlight or erase their gender, such as "ladies," "tomboys," or "flirts" (Yount 1991). What remains to be explored is how self-employed women deal both with their heightened visibility as women in a male-dominated field and with their relative invisibility to male peers and customers. Do their strategies have any effect on maintaining or breaking down occupational sex segregation in these industries?

Understanding these women's perceptions and strategies could shed light on some of the mechanisms behind sex segregation in other male-dominated fields such as construction (Applebaum 1999a, 1999b; Riemer 1979), particularly high-steel ironwork (Haas 1972, 1974, 1984), lumberjack work (Haynes 1945), longshore work and deep-sea fishing (Kaplan 1988; Pilcher 1984), and trades such as carpentry, drywall taping, painting, telephone wiring, plumbing and electrical, and blue-collar work (Cherry, McIntyre, and Jaggernathsingh 1991; Cockburn 1987; Coleman 1988; Lillydahl 1986; Navarro 1988; Riemer 1979).

A harness-horse racetrack is a particularly apt site for an ethnographic study exploring the experiences and strategies of self-employed women in

male-dominated, male-centered, and male-identified (Johnson 1997) fields. As I show in the next section, self-employed women in harness racing experience this type of work culture. A harness-horse racetrack is also a worksite that provides access to the insights of women who initially hoped to run their own training businesses but ultimately slipped into a helper role and now work informally for their self-employed husbands (Abraham and Funk 1998; Anthias and Mehta 2003; Gmelch and San Antonio 2001; Kaplan 1988; Mellow 2002).

American Harness Racing as a Sex-Segregated Work Organization Dominated by Self-Employed Men

The American harness racing industry is a good vehicle toward a better understanding of self-employed women in male-dominated industries. Harness racing today is composed of a large number of small businesses that are often operated by male sole proprietors who work as trainers or drivers and are sometimes assisted by their families and/or hired help. The extreme demarcation between men's and women's jobs and the virtual absence of women in high-income and high-visibility positions in harness racing provide an ideal setting to explore the challenges faced by women who try to rise to the top in this very male-dominated industry.

Many people have heard of thoroughbred horse racing. Perhaps they have visited a racetrack and watched the horses gallop with jockeys on their backs or have seen its most important race, the Kentucky Derby, on television. Harness racing is not as well known as thoroughbred racing and warrants some basic description. A visitor to a harness-horse racetrack will see a breed of horse called the standardbred, which is specifically bred to race at a standard distance of one mile. This horse looks very much like a thoroughbred and is indeed related to that breed, although it has a slightly longer body and shorter legs. It wears a harness and is driven by a person seated behind it in a small, two-wheeled cart. Instead of galloping, these horses exhibit one of two gaits, trotting or pacing. Trotting is known as a diagonal gait because the right-front and left-rear legs move in unison, as do the left-front and right-rear legs. Pacing is a lateral gait that involves the horse's moving both legs on one side of its body forward together while the legs on the other side are extended back.

Although harness racing now also takes place in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, its origins are primarily North American. Starting in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Akers 1938; Dizikes 1981), farm-

ers drove their horses to town on weekends and raced them up and down the main streets for excitement and recreation. According to Ellen Harvey (personal communication, September 30, 2004), executive director of *Harness Racing Communications*, there are 24,977 members of the U.S. Trotting Association (USTA), which includes most, but not all, trainers, drivers, breeders, and owners. Grooms are licensed by individual racing commissions at each racetrack and do not have to be USTA members. The USTA does not maintain official statistics on the gender breakdowns of its licensed trainers, drivers, breeders, and owners. Nonetheless, its annual *Trotting and Pacing Guide* reveals that nationwide, nearly all trainers and drivers are men and that women virtually never break the glass ceiling into the ranks of the top ten in either position (Pawlak 2000).

Hierarchy of Work in American Harness Racing

Racehorse owners are vital to the industry. Without them, there simply would be no harness racing industry and no need for the labor of trainers, drivers, and grooms. Standardbred racehorses vary greatly in quality, and prices range from a few hundred dollars to several hundreds of thousands of dollars. At this particular racetrack, a fairly good horse can be bought for \$10,000 to \$20,000. Owners are a varied group of individuals. Some own racehorses as a hobby or for a side income. These owners buy horses, pay training bills, and usually come to the track only to watch their horses race, although some do have an affectionate attachment to their animals. The other type of owner is the owner-trainer, who owns racehorses but is also part of the labor force of harness racing. Owner-trainers may own all of the horses they train or may train a mixture of their own horses and outside owners' horses. Racehorse owners can be male or female, but my observations of numerous postrace ceremonies in the winner's circle suggest that most who own horses as a hobby are men.

Within the labor force of harness racing, those who work as race drivers are the most visible to the public. Spectators in the grandstand may see the trainer and the groom standing with the horse in the winner's circle, but the crowd cheers for the driver during the excitement of the race. Although there may be a number of people who played a role in a horse's win, the crowd seems to consider the driver, in his brightly colored jumpsuit and race helmet, primarily responsible for the outcome. Drivers can be divided into two categories: catch drivers and trainer-drivers. Catch drivers are professional drivers who are hired by trainers to drive in races. They are specialists who

appear at the races every night but do not work or interact much in the barn areas. Trainer-drivers are trainers who have passed the licensing exams for both trainer and driver, and they are allowed to drive in races.

The trainer position, like that of the driver, is heavily male dominated. The trainer is ultimately responsible for the success and well-being of the racehorse and is held accountable by the racehorse owners who employ him or her. Trainers assess the basic ability and potential of each horse in their care and organize an ongoing program of training and feeding that should maximize each horse's earnings on the racetrack.

The groom position was originally male dominated in the early days of harness racing but appears to have become less segregated and may be in the process of feminization (Barker 1998; Game and Pringle 1983; Preston 1999; Reskin and Roos 1990). The groom helps the trainer harness each horse before it goes out to the racetrack for its morning workout. While each horse is gone, the groom will clean its stall. Upon each horse's return to the barn, the groom bathes it and follows up with any necessary bandages, blankets, and over-the-counter medications.

Although not an official position from a licensing standpoint, there exists another occupational group in the barn areas: trainers' wives. These are women who are married to male trainers. As I show, they themselves may or may not have aspired to become trainers before taking on this role. They may maintain a trainer's license but perform the same work in the barns as grooms, deferring to their husbands in decision making at work. They comprise a large and important, though invisible and unpaid, segment of the harness racing workforce.

In summary, the harness racing industry is ultimately upheld by outside owners who purchase its most important means of production (racehorses). However, trainers may also own racehorses and usually own other important and expensive capital, such as harnesses, race carts, horse trailers, and pasture land. Trainers and drivers are of similar status within the industry, although drivers are more visible and well known to the public and to potential racehorse owners. Trainers' wives and grooms carry out much of the dirty, housekeeping work in the barns. Within this hierarchy, women are heavily concentrated in the lower ranks of trainers' wives or grooms. As I show, this structure replicates the glass ceiling of the corporate world.

Study Description and Research Method

This article emerged from a larger study on the socialization, family, and workplace factors that sustain occupational sex segregation, which I con-

ducted in the barn areas of a harness-horse racetrack in the northeastern United States. The data consist largely of observations from five consecutive months of fieldwork (plus several return visits), supplemented and informed by twenty-two semistructured interviews and six individual day and evening observations ranging from four to six hours each. The grounded-theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) guided my analysis of the data. My aim was to understand the situation through the constant comparison of ideas that surfaced from the fieldwork observations, interviews, and informal conversations and to allow ideas to surface and evolve.

At this racetrack, about 400 people work with the 1,000 racehorses that are stabled on the grounds. Approximately 250 of these people are grooms, 100 are male trainers, and 50 are male trainers' wives (themselves often licensed trainers) who work with their husbands in the barns. Among the grooms, I observed roughly a 50-50 split between men and women. Of the ninety-three trainers at this track, there were only six women, and this breakdown is typical according to my observations at various other racetracks and to racetrack workers with whom I spoke and who travel from track to track as part of their work. The number of women race drivers at this track could easily be counted on the fingers of one hand (Alina, Regina, and Heidi¹). All who drive regularly in races and appear in the top-ten list in the nightly race program at this track are men.

John and Lyn Lofland (1984, 25) note that the outside researcher is more likely to successfully gain access to a desired research site if she enters negotiations armed with "connections, accounts, knowledge, and courtesy." My first point of contact at the racetrack was the track announcer. I approached him because I felt familiar with him from several years of watching him call the races both at the racetrack and on the local cable-television racing network. I sent him a letter explaining my interest in harness racing and my desire to do research with the people in the barn areas. After meeting with him and with the track's publicity director, I was given a pass to the barn areas, normally off limits to the public, and permission to carry out my fieldwork.² The physical environment of the racetrack, made up of grassy areas, service roads, and barns with open doors, made it possible for me to observe, interview, and interact informally with a large number of people without my presence being viewed as overly intrusive.

For this study, it was most appropriate to use a combination of purposive and snowball sampling (Babbie 2003), based on my research questions and on what I already knew of racetrack workers. Michael Quinn Patton (1980) suggests using maximum variation in purposive sampling because by increasing the diversity of variation in the sample, the researcher can have more confidence in common patterns that emerge while being able to explain

unique variations. As such, I sought certain racetrackers (barn-area workers) based on criteria that I believed would relate to occupational sex segregation in harness racing, including trainers, drivers, and grooms of both sexes from stables that varied in terms of size (number of horses).

Over a period of several days, I walked around the twenty-six barns and met the people in the backstretch. I variously spent a lot or a little time in the different barns, depending on how talkative and receptive its inhabitants were. Nonetheless, I later approached people based less on how nice they were to me and more on characteristics of interest to the study. I did select people partially on the basis of my impression that they would actually come to a scheduled interview and that they were game and open to talking in a detailed fashion about their lives and careers. A benefit of my initial self-guided tour through the barns was the opportunity to develop rapport with some of the people, especially those who took the time to chat with me at length about my research.

My final sample contained twenty-two individuals, twelve men and ten women. The age range was from twenty-eight to fifty-nine years. These represent only those I interviewed (see Table 1). I spent time with a number of other people at the racetrack as well. I carried out this ethnographic study at one racetrack, and because of the extremely small proportion of women trainers and drivers in harness racing, there are only a few of them among those I observed and interviewed.

The racial and ethnic backgrounds of the owners, trainers, and drivers at this particular racetrack reflect the heavy concentration of European ethnics who live in the county where the racetrack is situated. This county includes major concentrations of Germans (19 percent), Italians (14 percent), Irish (13 percent), English (9.5 percent), Polish (8 percent), Scotch-Irish (4.3 percent), and Slovenians (0.9 percent; U.S. Census 2000). The racial and ethnic composition of the grooms at this racetrack generally mirrors that of the owners, trainers, and drivers, although the three African-American workers I observed in the barn areas were all grooms.

From the start, I kept extensive field notes on my observations and experiences, which included spending the first three days walking around the barn areas, attending a racehorse owners' seminar and a prestigious harness-horse yearling sale, noting my ongoing reactions to individual interviewees and other people and my frustration over canceled interviews, visiting local and distant breeding farms, attending religious services at the track chapel, witnessing the scene at a local women drivers' competition, spending an evening in the track's prestigious owners' club, spectating at the famous Little Brown Jug stakes race, driving a harness horse at the local fairgrounds, observing harness racing for two days at a county fair, talking with former interviewees

TABLE 1
Demographic Information on Study Participants

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Occupation	Other Tasks	Marital Status	Ethnicities
Sonja	F	28	Groom		Married	Irish, Slovenian
Nicola	F	44	Owner, trainer, breeder		Married	Indian, Italian
Branton	M	59	Owner, trainer, breeder		Married	Cherokee
Alina	F	43	Owner, trainer, driver	Groom	Married	Polish, Italian
Neil	M	43	Trainer, driver	Owner	Married	German, Irish
Karl	M	49	Trainer, driver	Owner	Married to Cheryl	German
Cheryl	F	45	Owner	Trainer	Married to Karl	German, Irish
Violet	F	46	Trainer	Owner	Married to Franz	<i>Italian</i> , German
Franz	M	39	Trainer	Owner, driver	Married to Violet	German, Indian
Lila	F	48	Trainer		Married to Justin	Polish, Italian
Justin	M	48	Owner, trainer, breeder	Driver	Married to Lila	German, Irish, Scotch
Omarr	M	40	Groom	Trainer, driver	Single	African
Ryan	M	45	Groom		Single	German, Irish, Scotch
Dakota	F	33	Groom		Single	<i>Cherokee</i> , German, Polish
Keith	M	49	Groom	Assistant trainer	Single	German, Irish, English
Ike	M	41	Groom		Single	African
Erin	F	45	Groom		Single	German, Irish, Scotch, English
Regina	F	48	Owner, trainer, driver		Single	German, Italian
Patrick	M	39	Trainer	Owner	Single	German, Irish
Gino	M	32	Trainer	Owner	Single	German, Italian
Heidi	F	33	Trainer, driver	Groom	Single	<i>German</i>
Mitch	M	30	Trainer, driver		Single	Canadian

Note: *Other tasks* indicates that person performs the tasks related to this position but does not personally identify with the job title. Italics indicate that the person very strongly identifies with this ethnicity.

and others about a barn fire at the racetrack that killed twenty-eight horses, visiting parts of the Amish country where many retired harness racehorses pull buggies, and visiting other tracks and the Harness Racing Museum and Hall of Fame in Goshen, New York. Due to practical constraints, most of the five months of fieldwork fell during the worst parts of a bitterly cold winter in the Northeast. I believe that the extreme temperatures at times compromised the racetrackers' and my physical capacities for hanging out together, at least outdoors.

Rapport was most difficult for me to establish with male grooms. The significant class and gender differences between us combined to create situations with minimal common ground. Two male grooms were African American, which added race to our mix of differences. One way I tried to alleviate this tension was by openly expressing my love for harness racing, the people involved, and the horses. Sometimes, however, the male grooms did not share my love for the sport or for their jobs, and this technique of establishing rapport backfired and created yet another difference between us.

Clifford Geertz (1973) argues that the meanings and viewpoints held by a people are often not readily apparent. Often, these are "enveloped . . . in a haze of etiquette, a thick cloud of euphemism and ceremony, gesture, allusion" (Geertz 1973, 447). Because I needed to find a way to compare people's words with their actions, I performed day and evening observations with several racetrack workers. I selected these people from the twenty-two I had interviewed, with whom I had already established good rapport. I observed a female groom (day and night), a male groom (day only), a female trainer-driver (day and night), and a husband and wife trainer team (night only), for a total of six separate observations. I also had plenty of opportunities to talk with others whom I had not interviewed. The hours-long exposure to the people and their work environments and interactions helped me to confirm some people's insights and to recognize and address the contradictions in others. I kept detailed notes on all these observations. These represent a set of fairly formal observations; I spent many other days and evenings observing people more casually.

The daytime observations usually began around 8:30 a.m., when the person and his or her stable were getting started for the day, and usually lasted until about 1:00 p.m., when the person's work was finished for the day or until the evening's races. Although I did learn how to clean stalls and harness some very patient horses, my role in these daytime observations was primarily that of an unobtrusive observer. These were valuable, unhurried times for what David Snow, Louis Zurcher, and Gideon Sjoberg (1982) call "interviewing by comment." Unlike the interviews, which sometimes took place under pressure for time, the daytime observations were times when people

had to be at work anyway. It was comparatively easier for them to talk to me intermittently, in short bursts between work tasks, than to sit down for an hour at a time for the interviews. Also, in these longer observations, I could sometimes engage with a group of people, who usually provoked spirited commentary about “the way things are” or “what harness racing really needs.”

The race-night observations were very different in nature from those in the daytime. I had to be particularly careful to stay in the background for these because the race environment was tense for the participants, both human and equine. Races are held four to five nights a week at this track and are run from 6:30 p.m. until 10:00 or 11:00 p.m.; thus, depending on how many horses the trainer had racing that night, and in which races the horses were entered, my evening observations ranged from a couple of hours to up to five to six hours in length.

At night, I usually started off at the person’s barn and then drove over to the paddock, an enclosed stable area where horses wait before they race. During these observations, I was often able to provide mundane help (Lofland and Lofland 1984) by carrying five-gallon buckets containing whips, blankets, scrapers, bandages, boots, and more in my car with the trunk hinge open because of the height of the buckets and their contents. Sometimes, I helped people who needed a lift from the barn to the race paddock or paddock to the barn. One unforeseen benefit of the nighttime observations was that these occurred fairly late in my fieldwork and were like a reunion for me with many of the people I had already interviewed or met elsewhere. Former interviewees and other people were almost always glad to see me and were eager to know “how the paper is coming” and “am I in it?”

The interviews, which informed and were informed by the fieldwork, were semistructured and focused on people’s insights on their lives and career paths and on the harness-racing industry as a whole. I audiotaped and transcribed the interviews, most of which were about seventy-five minutes long. Although these took place in various locations, such as barns, people’s homes, outdoors, and the track kitchen, all the interviewees worked at the same racetrack. I interviewed each person one time and continued to hang out with these persons (and with others whom I did not formally interview) as I observed their workdays.

I experienced only one interview refusal. According to those working around him, this man was an advanced alcoholic whose life was sufficiently out of control to make interviewing him impossible, and I found this to be the case. Although there was only one refusal, I scheduled a number of other interviews for which people canceled or did not appear. This was a tremendous problem, especially early on. I learned to schedule two or three inter-

views on the same day, at different times, to increase my odds of at least accomplishing one that day. Eventually, I made this rule for myself: schedule up to three appointments with any given person and after three no-shows, move on to more available people. This was a reasonable policy in this environment, and with it, I only had to completely eliminate one potential interviewee.

Through this mutually informing combination of fieldwork, formal and informal observations, and interviews, I came to identify certain social mechanisms behind the invisibility and negative visibility of self-employed women in an industry comprised largely of male sole proprietors and their male customers. In the analysis sections that follow, I show how these mechanisms operate regardless of the strategies used by self-employed women to gain reputation and respect and how these mechanisms operate over time, effectively teaching women how to behave in this work environment.

Invisible Yet Visibly Mediocre: The Simultaneous Erasure and Magnification of Women's Gender in Harness Racing

I found that women and men who enter careers as trainers or drivers in the harness-racing industry have similar backgrounds and levels of experience and are equally prepared to pass the required licensing exams. As Violet, a forty-six-year-old trainer's wife, recalls, "It [the licensing procedure] was straightforward . . . because like I said I'd been in the business so long it was not a big deal." Mitch, a thirty-year-old trainer-driver, confirms,

As far as I can remember, my test was like maybe four pages of just pretty basic stuff. I mean, just stuff that I grew up learning all my life so it wasn't like something I had to study out of a book.

However, it is not enough to simply be a trainer or driver in harness racing; to succeed financially, one must be a visible, accomplished, and respected trainer or driver. As I show, the barriers self-employed women face in this industry create and sustain a catch-22 in which women need opportunities to develop and demonstrate their abilities, yet are systemically denied these opportunities. Although necessarily presented in linear fashion, these elements are connected in a myriad of ways. One can imagine them forming a tight mesh fence, a vicious circle, or perhaps more cleverly, a vicious oval (since horse racetracks are often called ovals) in which every path leads to the

same endpoint: the underutilization of self-employed women in the American harness racing industry.

Involuntary Invisibility: The Vicious Oval

Due to their small numbers, women trainers and drivers are highly visible on the racetrack during the morning workouts and evening races, yet they can establish only lukewarm reputations at best. Why? Reputation is based on the current performance of the horses under one's management, and most women trainers' horses do not perform well. To win races, a trainer needs to attract the owners of fast, first-rate horses. To attract owners like that, one needs to have a good reputation since, as Mitch mentioned, "there's no résumé or anything in this business," nothing else by which to judge a person. To develop a good reputation, a person needs to have frequent opportunities to demonstrate his or her skills in front of others. Because the owners of these good, expensive horses generally believe that women are not up to the task of driving them in races, these jobs usually go to men.

As a result, women trainers, because they are not entrusted with these fine horses, most often have to go out and buy their own racehorses with what money they personally possess, which almost certainly results in women training horses of considerably lower quality than the ones men train. It is financially difficult for a trainer to buy good racehorses without the significant cash infusion of wealthy outside owners. Male trainers in harness racing are indeed fortunate that outside owners purchase these horses and pay their expenses, because few trainers, male or female, could afford to do so. Neil, a forty-three-year-old trainer-driver, appreciates the importance of racehorse owners to his livelihood:

A lot of people, a lot of trainers look at owners as a pain in the neck, and they can be, but these horses to most of these owners are a luxury, not a necessity. It's a sideline for them. Maybe even a hobby, so the minute you're rude to them or you treat them like . . . they're second-class citizens, they'll take their business and go elsewhere. You try to hang onto the fact, to keep it in mind, that they're, they're the ones paying the bills.

Women trainers, since they are also owners, themselves must assume all their horses' expenses. And, as people frequently told me, "the cheap ones eat just as much as the expensive ones."

Racing these second-rate horses earns a woman trainer only the most tepid reputation, which is worse than no reputation at all. Observers, such as

other trainers, track spectators, and racehorse owners, draw the conclusion that women trainers must lack competence or some other critical factor for success that their male counterparts are assumed to have.

Why are women not seen as competent drivers? Racetrack workers' rationales for discouraging or excluding women as drivers are largely based in their perceptions of women's inferior physical strength. Probably the most popular explanation I heard for why there are not more women race drivers is that a woman is simply not strong enough to "hold" a horse. As Violet, a trainer's wife who used to drive in races, explains,

They're [women] not strong enough to hold the horse. Those horses are pulling a lot when they're behind the gate; they're racing! When they're doing that, the woman [driver] has no choice but to go to the front with the horse instead of protecting it, trying to save it for later, [so] the horse ends up going out and using itself up before the end of the mile.

Neil, a trainer-driver, offers another biological explanation for women drivers' poor performance on the racetrack and why they may be underutilized by racehorse owners.

I've heard different theories. They're not aggressive enough . . . but I think the biggest thing is . . . they're not comfortable in tight quarters. And if you look at it from a scientific stand, women's eyesight, and this is a proven fact, isn't as keen at a short distance going at speed. Although they might be comfortable in tight quarters, they're not that willing to take that many chances . . . in other words, they're not gonna mix it up as quickly as a man will. . . . And a lot of times will stay away from a situation that will put them in tight quarters.

Significantly, racehorse owners who observe such race scenarios as Violet and Neil describe may draw similar conclusions about women's strength and capacity for risk. They may then avoid hiring women as race drivers, reinforcing the invisibility of these women.

"I took it in my own hands just to buy my own." Despite the difficulties they experience in attracting customers, there exist a few women trainers and drivers in harness racing who are determined to make it somehow. Although their numbers are extremely small, I observed and interviewed every one of the women trainers and drivers at this racetrack at the time of my research. Heidi (thirty-three), Alina (forty-three), and Regina (forty-eight) were the only three women trainer-drivers, or women who train horses and drive them in races at this racetrack. While Regina owns all the horses that she trains and drives, Heidi and Alina train some horses that they own and others that are

owned by outsiders. Nicola (forty-four) buys and trains all of her own horses, but her husband drives them at the races.

These women understand that if a woman wants to be involved in the harness-racing business at the level of trainer or driver, she will have to buy at least some of her own horses and make her own start. She cannot rely on other trainers to mentor her or on owners to approach her with horses. Heidi remarks, "Most [male] horsemen really don't want to say, 'Hey, I got a good groom . . . I think she can drive.' They'll never say that. No. You better do it for yourself." Nicola agrees, "Only time they're [women] called upon is to groom a horse, they aren't usually called upon to train one, you know, so I took it in my own hands to just buy my own."

These women all made their own ways into harness racing. Regina followed a slow but interesting route. When she graduated from high school, she first worked a job at the local phone company that had nothing to do with horses. Then, as she recalls,

I was working at the local plant, RCA, and I was playing with show jumpers and thoroughbreds and I worked with someone that had a harness horse that they couldn't get to the races. I bought the horse for \$500, played around with her, rode her, took my time, got her to the races, and it just snowballed from there.

Regina adapted her knowledge of other types of horses as she learned about harness horses and, undoubtedly, learned along the way from her own experiences and from interaction with the other trainers where she is stabled at the fairgrounds. Until last year, Regina owned and operated a large, seventeen-horse stable. At that time, she had the financial support of her husband. Since her divorce, she started a night-shift job at a local factory and has scaled back to a five-horse stable. She explains her daily schedule:

I work [the] midnight [shift], yeah. Eleven to seven and then I come here and take care of them [racehorses] in the morning and then if I race, I go out in the evenings and race before I go to work.

Heidi is a fourth-generation harness horseman. (Both male and female racetrackers consistently referred to themselves as *horsemen*.) Her late father was an important USTA official, and as a young girl, she regularly attended industry meetings, dinners, and other functions at her father's side. She remembers,

My dad always took me with him, like to his meetings, he was USTA director and PHHA which was a small horsemen's group, and he was president of that

for years, so I went to all the meetings and . . . everything. Any banquet that he went to, I always went with him.

Heidi also made regular trips to New York with her father when she was eight years old to race one of their better horses. Now the single mother of a twelve-year-old girl, Heidi owns, trains, and drives about six "little" (poor quality) horses and does odd jobs for other people at the racetrack to make extra money while trying to attend her daughter's basketball games.

During the time of my fieldwork, the track held a women drivers' competition to benefit a breast cancer charity. The women in the race were trainers and trainer-drivers of poor-quality horses, many of which could not even qualify for races under the track's time standards for the mile. Thus, in this special race, most of these women were driving horses with which they were not familiar that were lent by [male] trainers at the track. Alina won this race driving a horse she trains. She remembers, "I was the only one that drove my own! So I knew he was good." The well-known fact that the other women were driving donated horses further cements the image of women in harness racing as needing the helping hand of a man, not only to succeed but even to participate.

Despite their independence, creativity, and hard work, Heidi and Regina can only afford to purchase relatively low-priced horses that rarely win or even finish well. Although Nicola benefits financially by allowing her husband to drive her horses at the races, like Heidi and Regina, she suffers from a lack of support from racehorse owners. Although owning the most significant means of production (horses) would represent a career advantage in most industries, this is not the case for trainers in harness racing. These women's attempts to stay in the business as trainers and drivers without the support of racehorse owners serve mostly to sustain a low opinion of women as simultaneously invisible (due to low numbers) and visibly mediocre (due to poor performance).

Voluntary Invisibility: Deliberately Erasing Her Gender

The few women trainers and drivers in harness racing do their best to cope in their careers, but often, their strategies for enduring in this business actually keep them invisible and work for the benefit of existing structures of occupational sex segregation.

Setting herself up as "one of the boys." One means of survival for women in male-dominated occupations is to try to become "one of the guys" by deni-

grating other women in the business (Cockburn 1991; Ferree, Lorber, and Hess 1999; Schalet, Hunt, and Joe-Laidler 2003; Wajcman 1998; Yount 1991). An important factor in Heidi's survival as a woman driver has been her ability to assimilate herself as much as possible into the male culture of race drivers, illustrated by her insulting women and setting herself up as one of the guys by contrast. The use of gendered language that describes all trainers as some sort of "guy" speaks to the male-centered, male-dominated, and male-identified work culture of harness racing (Johnson 1997).

During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to see how this process can work when I talked to Heidi a few days after the women drivers' competition, in which she participated:

You know what's sad is, I agree [with the men], because I'll say . . . "You never know what those damn women [drivers] are gonna do," I mean I told the guy I was driving for that night. . . . I find myself doing that, making fun of a girl.

It is distressing to see women in the sport being put down not only by men but also by other women, their colleagues. Still, Heidi's apprehensiveness about driving among a group of others who drive only infrequently in races and seldom get to practice their skills is understandable.

Hard as women like Heidi may work to set themselves up as one of the boys, they do not fully succeed. Women trainers and drivers suffer from cultural rules of etiquette in the backstretch that effectively, although not necessarily intentionally, prevent women from making valuable social contacts among their fellow (male) trainers. In the backstretch, whether colleagues consider an instance of social interaction between two people "appropriate" depends upon the relative reputation and status of both people involved. There is an unspoken rule that it is not really proper for most "little-guy trainers" to associate with "big-guy trainers." The terms *little guy* and *big guy* refer to the reputation and financial status of a trainer, as informally evaluated by others in the barn areas. Heidi explains how her interactions as a trainer are constrained by her being a little guy:

We're a bunch of little stables down there in my barn, so we can all, you know, talk to one another about our horses and get ideas off the next guy . . . but you kind of know who you can talk to, and who you can't talk to, you know? I mean, I wouldn't go ask Luke Dixon, whose is a big stable, not now. In the younger days, yeah. You know 'cause his family was the same as my family . . . but now he's become a big guy and he's got the Grand Circuit horses, you know, supposedly, and . . . I'm still just doing my little basic horses.

The situation of restricted access to the company of more-accomplished trainers is unfortunate for women in harness racing. Reskin and Hartmann (1986) find that in occupations in which practitioners are self-employed, collegial networks are indispensable for professional development. Horsemen agree that a person cannot learn harness racing from a book; one must learn by doing and by talking with others. While some have argued that small networks increase one's sense of belonging and larger networks contribute more to job mobility (Podolny and Baron 1997), I found that the quality of one's network may matter more than its size. These conversational restrictions keep the little guys, male and female, from learning from the all-male big guys. The little guys interact among themselves and learn from one another but do not have the opportunity to be guided by more-successful individuals. Since all the women trainers on the racetrack and at the fairgrounds are decidedly little-guy trainers, their lines of communication are restricted to trainers no more successful than themselves and from whom they cannot expect to benefit appreciably. Indeed, if we go strictly by the language of big and little guys, women trainers cannot even exist.

"She can't jeopardize her income by driving the horse herself." While relating his views on the hiring of grooms, Gino, a thirty-two-year-old trainer, made an interesting comment:

If they're good workers they earn a reputation for being good or bad. . . . So, most of the people that come in to see me about a job, I know a lot about them without having to really ask them any questions, just from my friends they might have worked for . . . so really, their performance really speaks for itself.

This casual remark reveals one aspect of the organization of work in harness racing that disadvantages women. What if no one can see your performance? The answer is that you basically become invisible, like so many of the women in harness racing who drive so infrequently in races that they are seen by observers as inexperienced, as perpetual newcomers on the scene.

In harness racing, I found that as a rational economic strategy, women trainers and drivers voluntarily erase their gender and become invisible by accessing the networks and other resources of men in the business. Neil, a male trainer-driver, relates his observations on how the process of invisibility can begin for a woman in harness racing:

Some of these girls are easily discouraged because they're trying to make money doing it and . . . they think they're impeding their chances by driving them themselves and then they'll get a man to drive it and the horse might go out

there and do good, and they [observers] say, "Huh, well see there a man drove it and it did good," so there, they're stuck.

Neil goes on to describe a young woman trainer he knows who hires men to drive her horses in races and why it makes economic sense for her to do so:

She has a lot of gusto and a lot of ability but she doesn't drive as much as I think she should, and I think one reason she is discouraged is because she's trying to keep the owners satisfied. She's judged at such a standard that, one screw up, and she's out. She can't jeopardize her income by driving the horse herself . . . she might make a mistake, anybody might make a mistake, but she's judged more harshly.

In describing her own life as a trainer, Nicola explains the rationality of women trainers' using men as race drivers in harness racing:

It's the men and you know if you accept it, you get along, you know I mean, like I said, whenever I was on my own [after my divorce] if it wasn't the men in harness racing, you know, my driver, all my drivers were the top drivers, the *men* made me the money. I don't . . . discredit that even a little bit. You know, I mean if it wasn't for men, I wouldn't, I wouldn't've did as well in harness racing, I couldn't have did it on my own. I got the horses on my own, but it was the men who drove my horse across the line. . . . I *know* that.

Throughout her career, it has been in Nicola's best economic interest to accept, even embrace, men's dominance and visibility in harness racing as race drivers.

The rather unusual situation of Lila illustrates how, under nearly every circumstance, a male driver is more accepted on the racetrack than a woman. Lila (forty-eight) is the only woman trainer in this study who does not own any of the horses she trains. She works as a trainer for an owner who comes to the track not to watch but to drive his horses in races. Lila comments, "I oversee everything. All he does is come in, drive, go. That's it. The decision making and everything is left to me. Jogging the horses, shoeing, vet work, anything that has to be done." It is very unusual for a racehorse owner who is not involved in training to drive his own horses at the races. Such a person is certain to lack experience and skill. I observed this owner-driver many times as he finished last in races. There is no way to claim with certainty that these horses would have performed better with Lila driving them at the races, but I argue that her daily hands-on experience with these particular animals would make her a better choice for their race driver. Still, the male owner, who, according to Lila, "shows up, he drives, he goes back," is considered more

appropriate as a race driver than his experienced female trainer who deals with the horses all day long.

Women trainers often hire male race drivers so that they can at least survive financially in the business as trainers. Sometimes, it is an initial choice, and other times, it can be a strategy of last resort to survive in the business after a turn of bad luck. By the end of my fieldwork, even Heidi had begun to hire men to drive for her in races for financial reasons. I know this was difficult for her to do, given her belief that no outsider can drive a horse as well as its trainer. This was a rational decision for Heidi's financial survival, but the low number of women driving and winning in races serves to confirm gender stereotypes about women's abilities in horse owners' minds and does nothing to disrupt existing structures of segregation.

Literal Invisibility: The Trainer's Wife

It is significant that the vast majority of the women in harness racing sooner or later wind up as unpaid trainers' wives. Some enter the business in this position, and others end up there. Martin Abraham and Walter Funk (1998) found that when a self-employed husband employs his wife informally in his business, the situation has many advantages for him (fiscal benefits and low wage costs) but serious disadvantages for her (loss of former qualifications and one-sided dependency). Like the professional baseball player's wife (Gmelch and San Antonio 2001), the clergyman's wife (Mellow 2002), and the deep-sea fisherman's wife (Kaplan 1988), the main function of the trainer's wife is to support her husband and his career. Whereas women trainers and drivers in harness racing are invisible in the sense that they are inconspicuous—not prominent or readily noticeable—trainers' wives are literally invisible: working inside the barns or away from the track.

Violet's life provides a good illustration of a woman trainer who devolved into a trainer's wife. She drove her first harness horse at a fairgrounds track at age eight or nine, when her father purchased his first racehorse. By her late teens, she owned and operated her own five- to six-horse stable. She described her transition from trainer to trainer's wife as emerging from marital strife because of differences in opinion and training philosophy between her and her trainer husband, as well as cultural beliefs associated with women in harness racing. It was clear from talking at length with her on many occasions that male race drivers have successfully intimidated Violet, as they have other women drivers, off the racetrack. Violet comments, "I just kind of slipped into that [trainer's wife] position, mainly."

Violet recognizes the disadvantages. Her work now is literally invisible, unpaid, and confined within the walls of a racetrack barn. While Franz trains horses on the racetrack and interacts with owners and other trainers, Violet harnesses horses, cleans stalls, and bathes horses upon their return from the track. She also does a great deal of invisible but time-consuming “home-work” for her husband’s stable in the evenings:

I do all the book-work for the barn . . . you have, say you’ve got six, seven owners and each owner owns a third of a horse you have to divide all that out and divide the bill up to a third of the blacksmith, a third of the training to each owner and all that.

When I returned to the track several months after completing my field-work, Violet and Franz were in the process of setting up a side business on their farm with treadmills and whirlpools to rehabilitate injured racehorses. Now Violet stays home on the farm to operate that business, more invisible than ever, while Franz remains visible and successful as a trainer on the racetrack.

Cheryl (forty-five) is an off-track trainer’s wife as well as a racehorse owner. Among the women in this study, Cheryl is the only one who owns racehorses but is not part of the paid labor force of harness racing; the other women owners are also trainers. She has a nursing degree and works in a doctor’s office three days a week. Her girlhood was consumed by harness racing, however, and by the time she married Karl, a trainer-driver, she had a great deal of training experience. Now, in addition to her part-time nursing work, most of her time is spent helping Karl with various aspects of his training business. She explains,

I take care of our bookkeeping. Here’s my bookkeeping right there. In the notebooks and I log it . . . we have to pay for his colors [racing uniforms] and . . . things like that. . . I [also] do the staking, I stake our horses into, in the bigger races. You’ve got your vet bills coming here, the shoeing bills coming. And then I have to log all that in under different horses and . . . that, takes a lot of time, too, to do.

Cheryl also videotapes Karl as he trains their horses: “Karl’s always behind them. He never gets to see from the side. So when I videotape them he can see what they look like.” In addition to her own office job and her considerable unpaid assistance to Karl’s training business, Cheryl also takes care of all household responsibilities and drives Karl’s teenage son, her stepson, wherever he needs to go.

Both Violet and Cheryl once aspired to careers as trainers in harness racing. They both seem to have been pressured off the racetrack and into the barns at least in part by cultural norms on the racetrack regarding women, especially those women who are married to male trainers. Had they remained unmarried, I suspect they would have had to take on side jobs or external employment to make ends meet, as have Heidi and Regina, or exit the business completely. As women married to male trainers, Violet and Cheryl have secure, if decidedly invisible, positions in harness racing. Working in the industry for free, they occupy even lower-status positions than they might have if, like Heidi and Regina, they had not married or had gotten divorced.

Conclusion

Through an ethnographic study on self-employed women in a male-dominated occupation, this article addresses a neglected theme in the literature on the invisibility of women in the workplace. I began by asking what specific social processes and interactions may be operating to create and maintain self-employed women's invisibility and negative visibility at work and what implications these processes and interactions might have for sex segregation in male-dominated industries.

I found that the barriers to positive visibility and success for self-employed women in harness racing trap these women in a vicious oval that keeps them invisible no matter what strategies they use to escape it. Women who attempt self-employment as trainers or drivers face the cultural beliefs of racehorse owners that women are not effective at this work. These women trainers are forced into buying their own horses, which usually perform poorly. The loop is complete when poor performance reinforces the cultural beliefs against women, making them rare, practically nonexistent, on the racetrack. When they do appear, they suffer a negative form of heightened visibility. This cyclical process operates as a sort of default mechanism, but ironically, its effects are maintained, even exacerbated, when women take action to escape it.

These findings contribute to the gender and work literature in several ways. First, this study creates an important link between the research on women's invisibility in the workplace (Bagilhole 1993; Burke and McKeen 1990; Gillis-Danovan and Moynihan-Bradt 1990; O'Hara 1998; Ragins and Cotton 1991; Reskin and Hartmann 1986; Yount 1991) and the rapidly growing numbers of self-employed women (Devine 1994; McManus 1994; Silver and Raghupathy 1994). The first set of literature, however, has typically focused on women who perform waged work in male-dominated organiza-

tions, while the latter has favored self-employed women in traditionally feminine occupations (Anthias and Mehta 2003; Apitzsch 2003; Devine 1994; Herizons 1999; Hundley 2001). This ethnographic study supports earlier research that found self-employed women impeded by consumer discrimination (Hundley 2001) and by obstacles to networking (Anthias and Mehta 2003; McCrary 1998; Reskin and Hartmann 1986). This study goes a step further by addressing Reskin's (2003) call for research detailing exactly how various social mechanisms, on both the individual and the institutional levels, operate to sustain ascriptive inequalities such as occupational sex segregation.

Second, these findings enable us to see how and why sex segregation persists in occupations with a high proportion of self-employed workers (McManus 2001). Each of the different survival strategies of self-employed women in this male-dominated occupation leads to the same endpoint for the women: erasure of their gender, invisibility or negative visibility, and maintenance of existing sex segregation in this occupation. For example, the strategy of diminishing their female colleagues reinforces the negative cultural beliefs that impede these women's careers. A woman in harness racing who sets herself up as one of the boys resembles one of Kristen Yount's (1991) coal miner "tomboys." In harness racing, however, there were no subcategories of women trainer to parallel Yount's (1991) "flirts" or "ladies," and this is easily understood. Whereas the women coal miners were waged workers in a male-dominated environment who needed to get along with a team of men, the women trainers of harness racing largely face men as competitors. Here, acting as a flirt or lady does not make as much sense as setting oneself up as an equal.

The strategy of accessing the resources of men in hopes of advancing as trainers, usually by hiring male drivers to race their horses, serves to reinforce male visibility and female invisibility since the women are doing the hidden barn and track work of trainers during the day, while the men are performing on the track at night before a crowd. Again, the dearth of women driving in races, easy for the public to observe, reinforces those cultural beliefs. While the outcomes of self-employed women's individual business decisions certainly did not cause occupational sex segregation, their efforts, however varied, did nothing to break it down. Future research could explore whether social mechanisms similar to the vicious oval operate to maintain occupational sex segregation in other male-dominated workplaces (Applebaum 1999a, 1999b; Cherry, McIntyre, and Jaggernathsingh 1991; Cockburn 1987; Coleman 1988; Haas 1972, 1974, 1984; Haynes 1945; Kaplan 1988; Lillydahl 1986; Navarro 1988; Pilcher 1984; Riemer 1979).

Third, this case study of the harness racing industry shows how the invisibility of self-employed women in a male-dominated occupation is a process more than a status. A woman may experience a decline over time in her capacity to survive financially in this business. In this scenario, the strategies of opting out of the business entirely or devolving into a trainer's wife or groom can be, for some women, a rear-guard effort to maintain some small amount of involvement in harness racing after a financial setback. Any of these realistic options takes a woman off the track and out of the crucial limelight, clearly impacting her visibility in the business and exacerbating overall occupational sex segregation in her field.

The trainer's wife position is not necessarily the same type of phenomenon as, for instance, the professional baseball player's wife (Gmelch and San Antonio 2001). Although one trainer's wife may have begun her career in this position, another may have once been a trainer herself. The perspectives of trainers' wives could have been made more substantial in this study by a lengthier period of time in the field. The five months I was able to spend were fruitful, and although the trainers' wives' stories seemed to play out in consistent patterns across women, the constrained time period sometimes forced me to interpret change over time largely from the women's often-retrospective comments and memories and less from my own direct observations. Since people's harness-racing careers can rise or fall quickly, even a one-year (or slightly longer) period in the field would have given a more comprehensive look at this work.

Last, this study began as a broad, exploratory project with the purpose of identifying social mechanisms that create, maintain, or break down occupational sex segregation in a highly segregated industry. Although I observed and interviewed all the self-employed women trainers at this racetrack, my interview sample reflects this expansive focus. Future researchers would do well to consider a multisite ethnography of self-employed women trainers at a half-dozen racetracks in different parts of the United States to zero in on more of these women and collect a larger number of perspectives and observations.

Notes

1. All the racetrack workers' names mentioned in this article are pseudonyms.
2. Prior to entering the field, I secured the approval of the university's institutional review board for the protection of human subjects in research. The board examined and approved the paperwork I submitted, including the protocol for the study, list of interview questions, consent forms, letter of authorization from the racetrack, letters of invitation to potential study participants, and all other required forms and documents.

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