

Jerry A. Jacobs — *Revolving Doors: Sex Segregation and Women's Careers*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989. Pp. xi, 230.

In 1985, over two-thirds of women in the civilian labor force of the United States worked in occupations which were at least 70 percent female. *Revolving Doors*, by Jerry Jacobs — an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania —, examines how and why women continue to do “women’s work” despite the rise in individual rates of mobility between male-dominated, sex-neutral, and female-dominated occupations. Throughout, he presents the metaphor of “revolving doors” to suggest that women pass in and out of occupations in a fluid labor market which remains characterized by sex-typing and is reinforced by social control system which operates in both formal and informal ways. Although primarily a sociological study, Jacobs also refers to perspectives from the disciplines of anthropology, history, and economics.

The principal sources examined in this study are two National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) of Labor Market Experience. The NLS of Young Women looks at a sample of over 5,189 women aged 14-24 surveyed ten times between 1968 and 1980, and the NLS of Mature Women contains data on 5,083 women aged 30-44 interviewed eight times between 1967 and 1977. In addition, Jacobs looks at data from the Current Population Survey, National Center for Educational Statistics and the Census Bureau. He uses these materials to test several explanations for sex segregation and explain how individual women move between “male” and “female” jobs despite the persistence of large-scale gender segregation in the work place. *Revolving Doors* presents this material in nine chapters, with 37 statistical tables, a bibliography, and an index.

The book opens with a review of comparative data on the sexual division of labor and its relationship to gender inequality. Jacobs examines the sex allocation of activities in 185 societies and representation of women in major occupations in 42 countries in 1980, and suggests that the data for the United States show how women have made progress by being represented in a wider range of occupations over the course of the century, although they remain more concentrated than men. In general, though, sex segregation has remained stable over time.

How has this segregation been maintained? Jacobs argues for a theory of life-long social control which operates in three areas: early sex-role socialization, education, and work. He discusses, for example, the occupational aspirations of young women. He looks at data on women who choose male-dominated occupations, but finds that the connection between aspiration and career choice is weak. Socialization in the end tracks men and women into different occupations, and the revolving door model accounts for a pattern of individual change despite the reproduction of gender segregation on the larger scale.

Jacobs then explores the issue of sex segregation in higher education, and suggests that this segregation, represented in the choice of a college major, has declined for women since the 1960s, affected by the women’s movement and subsequent programs aimed at reducing sexual inequities.

Jacobs next looks at the extent of mobility among male-dominated, sex-neutral, and female-dominated occupations. The findings on mobility in this chapter are

interesting, but occasionally limited by relatively small numbers in the data sets. Still, he documents career movement between the types of occupations, and cautions that this mobility is not evidence of equal access alone, but also reflects attrition, particularly because women who leave male-dominated occupations tend to enter female-dominated occupations instead. Jacobs also suggests that sexual harassment may contribute to the decision of some women to leave male-dominated professions. Looking more closely at the cases of physicians and attorneys, he finds in both occupations the choice and timing of specialization to be a microcosm of the same pattern of career circulation in the labor force as a whole.

Finally, Jacobs turns to economic theory to test his conclusions. He proposes three kinds of economic arguments to predict the maintenance of a sex-segregated labor force. First, he examines the argument that feedback from historical discrimination can result in its persistence, and suggests that changes in values can affect this cycle. Second, he looks at such new developments in labor economics as implicit contracts, efficiency wage theory, and stable employment conditions to see how these explain the persistence of segregation. The third perspective on discrimination in economic theory looks at workplace interactions that limit the efficiency of victims of discrimination, and undermine forces against discrimination.

Jacobs suggests that the social control theory is most useful for understanding the revolving door pattern in the labor force. As to implications for policy, he argues for two strategies to combat discrimination: comparable worth and the provision of child care. Comparable worth might lessen men's resistance to women's entry into male dominated professions, by reducing financial inequities, and child care for obvious reasons would assist the entry of women into the labor force (although why that would be into male-dominated jobs is not clear). To really end the revolving door model, of course, comparable worth should work to ways, bringing men into female-dominated occupations, such as elementary school teaching and nursing, and child care would be seen as an issue for fathers as well as for mothers.

Jacobs concludes with some suggestions about possible future resolutions to the "revolving door". One is that women will solidify their gains, which would likely require extension of child care and a flexible approach to career patterns which would mesh more neatly with family needs. This resolution would depend on the persistence of social definitions about gender equality. A second possibility would be that women would again become a secondary labor supply, because of the resurgence of conservative values emphasizing the importance of women staying home with their children, as well as the lack of child care alternatives. A third possibility is that of the continuance and extension of the two-tiered female labor force, where one group of women work in high status careers, and another in more marginal jobs. This latter scenario is, Jacobs argues, most likely, unless educational access for women improves and child care support increases. In the end, he suggests, the revolving door pattern will continue, unless social supports become institutionalized which facilitate the careers of women, or unless barriers are formed against the continued movement of women into male-dominated professions.

Revolving Doors is an important book, for it contributes to the understanding of the historical and contemporary context of sex segregation in the U.S. labor force. This book will be of interest to scholars of labor force dynamics, sex discrimination, and public policy. Though sometimes the book's readability is marred by overly-dense

discussion of statistical data, still Jerry Jacobs presents an interdisciplinary, original and provocative discussion of one of the most pressing economic issues facing women and men today.

Lynn Weiner
Roosevelt University

Ono Kazuko — *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850-1950*, edited by Joshua A. Fogel. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1989. Pp. xxvi, 255.

The English translation of Ono Kazuko's *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850-1950* represents a splendid addition to the growing western-language literature on women in China. First published in Japanese in 1978, and now translated into elegant English by a team of translators working under the direction of Joshua A. Fogel, this is an important work. It is welcome for the wealth of detail it presents to English-speaking audiences and for its woman-centered analysis of a century of Chinese history.

As Fogel and Susan Mann write in their introduction, the book is "more a history of women in the evolution of the Chinese revolution than it is a modern history of Chinese women" (xxiv). And in Ono's telling, the Chinese revolution of the past century represents, albeit in fits and starts, nothing less than the transformation of Chinese society. For Ono, the revolution in gender relations is as essential as the revolution in land relations to the process of socialist transformation. Where she parts company with some other analysts is the degree to which she concludes that the Chinese revolution has in fact effected a transformation in gender relations. Ono's is a triumphal history, a history of individual heroism articulated in individual voices, and portrayed with clarity and compassion. It is a heroic story, and the heroes are the women of China, with socialism as the tool which empowers them.

This rendering audible the voices of Chinese women is one of the book's great strengths. Another is the way in which the discussion of women and gender is deeply integrated into the social and political history of the last century. This work charts ways in which women have participated in the revolutionary changes that have transformed China since 1850. It opens with several earthy songs of the nineteenth-century Hakka peasant women: it is a felicitous beginning. (The Hakka are a people who live in southern China, whose culture differs from mainstream Han culture in a number of ways, many of them having to do with gender markers. Hakka women, for example, do not bind their feet.) The songs celebrate work and they celebrate love. In the voices of this minority group, Ono has identified two of the themes that will dominate the revolutionary quest of Chinese women for the next century: work and love.

After her discussion of the role of women in the massive Taiping rebellion, she treats the late-nineteenth-century reformers, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong and Kang Youwei, in gendered terms. Because the family, particularly with respect to hierarchy, was targeted by reformers as key to China's backwardness, gender issues of crucial interest to reformers. After a brief discussion of the participation of women in the