

Does Certification and Self-Governance Professionalise Co-operative Home-Care Workers? The Attractions of Autonomy in Kōreikyō's Co-operative Model of Home Care

Robert C Marshall

The rapidly-growing home care co-operative Kōreikyō combines features of consumer and worker co-operatives of, by and for over 30,000 seniors throughout Japan. In the Kōreikyō model, the active elderly provide home care services to the frail elderly. Caregivers and care-receivers are alike members.

The task of personal care of the elderly in Japan is traditionally assigned to daughters-in-law typically aged 35 to 55. While still almost entirely female, Kōreikyō home care workers are older (55 and over). The features of Kōreikyō that make it a co-operative – democratic control of work conditions, opportunity for personal initiative, participation in organisation policy making – make it especially attractive to such women.

The complexity of Kōreikyō's organisation goes well beyond the market model of a simple instrumental nexus in which an activity once embedded in family practice becomes commodified and then professionalised. That Kōreikyō practices do present a significant shift from traditional, market and even other co-operative solutions to home helper services does not seem a drawback to members either as caregivers or care recipients. Kōreikyō home helper services grew rapidly during the period of greatest opportunity for home helpers, the three years following the inauguration of Japan's Long Term Care Insurance programme (kaigo hoken) in 2000.

Founded in 1995, the rapidly-growing home care co-operative Kōreikyō (Seniors' Co-operative) uniquely combines features of consumer and worker co-operatives of, by and for over 32,000 seniors throughout Japan. In the Kōreikyō model, the active elderly (generally 55 to 75 years old) provide home care for the frail elderly (typically 75 and older) in the care receiver's own home through the co-operative's home helper dispatch centres in municipalities throughout Japan. Care givers and care receivers both belong: members can be found in both roles alternately. Evidence from the Kawasaki City Kōreikyō chapter shows that even without a wage premium, workplace autonomy was sufficient to attract qualified women home helpers 55 and older to this unique co-operative during a period of unprecedented increase in demand for qualified home care.¹

Introduced in 2000, Japan's inexpensive and mandatory Long Term Care Insurance kaigo hoken reimburses home care worker expenses contingent on demonstrated need and care giver qualifications rather than ability to pay or family situation (Takako and Muramatsu, 2005: 225). One of three major goals of kaigo hoken was to help the elderly remain in their own homes as long as possible (Ozawa and Nakayama, 2005: 69). As expected, demand for certified home helper services exploded. Consequently, municipalities (which have the responsibility to administer kaigo hoken) asked Kōreikyō chapters already operating locally to offer publically available training courses for Class 1 and Class 2 certification for home helpers. Upon completion of a course, Kōreikyō offers graduates the opportunity to join. Perhaps as many as one-third do.²

The task of personal care of the household's infirm elderly in Japan has traditionally been assigned to daughters-in-law, formerly the young wives of successors to the family headship. This work now more typically falls to the household head's wife, commonly 35 to 55 years of age (Hashizumi, 2000: 3). By contrast, most Kōreikyō home helpers, many of whom were previously employed in other homecare industry businesses, are older (55 and over). Home helpers in Japan are still almost entirely female.

The multi-dimensional complexity of Kōreikyō's organisation and activity goes well beyond the market model of a simple instrumental nexus in which an activity once embedded in family life becomes commodified and then professionalised. "Membership opportunities" within Kōreikyō's organisational complexity provide a sense of community and of self-fulfilment (ikigai) to members as givers of care and receivers of care and other services, as well as through participation in the co-operative's many different other activities unrelated to home care. The significant differences of this model from traditional family-centred practices, from market-oriented for-profit businesses, and even from other co-operative-based and not-for-profit solutions to elder care, do not seem a drawback to members either as care providers or care recipients.

The features of Kōreikyō that make it a worker co-operative — individual autonomy in work practices, democratic control of work conditions policies, and participation in organisational development arising from shared ownership through capital investment — resonate with homecare workers to a high degree. The appeal of workplace autonomy makes Kōreikyō more attractive than conventional and even not-for-profit home care businesses to many home helpers. But even worker co-operatives cannot call forth, in an occupation dominated by less-educated middle-aged and elderly female volunteer or part-time workers, the other typical major reward for successful claims to professionalism, increased remuneration. However, organisational complexity remains a source of continuing tension between those who would like to see Kōreikyō expand rapidly as a home care business and those who see it fundamentally as a community organisation for seniors. Kōreikyō remains both.

To assess the appeal of participation in Kōreikyō to members who join primarily to work as home helpers, I first discuss Japan's cultures of care and of work with regard to the elderly, and the ways Kōreikyō organises these concerns in one organisation. I then conclude with a brief discussion of the ways participation in Kōreikyō seems to produce at least in part the results of effective status elevation campaigns that in other forms of work can result in the recognition of an occupation as a profession.

Japan's Sense of Care

The tradition of extended family care of the aged in Japan continues into the present. At the time Japan's Long Term Care Insurance (LTCI) system *kaigo hoken* was introduced in 2000, just over half (50.3%) of Japan's elderly were living with their children or other close family members (Hashimoto, 2000: 3). However, as women continue to join the paid labour force, as in-home care-givers age, as households of one and two elderly members increase, and as fewer children are born, families lose their capacity to care for their infirm elderly members.

Kaigo hoken was specifically targeted to reduce the caregiving burden on families, especially women in the labour force, yet at the same time was designed to help the elderly remain in their own homes as long as possible (Ikegami, 2000: 30). Ikegami focuses the conflict inherent in these goals:

If we seriously consider this situation, I believe it is apparent that the system has been set up with an excessive bias toward the idealistic objective of freeing family members from the burden of providing care (Ikegami, 2000: 33).

Yet family care is not necessarily the best care available, nor the best way to support the integrity of families (Sugiura et al, 2009). Many people do want to be qualified care givers, in the sense of having gone through a recognised course of training, but those who do not do so are not penalised in this new system. On the contrary, the frail elderly of the household will be entitled to all the care they are determined to need by a qualified care manager, itself a novel position created by *kaigo hoken* (Yamada et al, 2009).

Kaigo hoken gained foreseeable political support in the business and aging-advocacy communities by encouraging businesses through tax incentives to provide employment to,

especially, senior citizens willing to work in the field of home care. It was the compromise to gain support among women that made passage of the kaigo hoken law astonishingly rapid. Contrary to the recommendation of economists and the medical community, the broadly embraced provision that only care expenses from certified non-family care givers could be claimed for reimbursement (except in certain under-served rural areas) suddenly freed households from pressures to provide care through their own limited resources to qualified family members.

Campbell (2000: 95) observes that on this particular point Japan's efforts to integrate public and family care for the elderly diverge most fully from Germany's, that while the main rationale for the cash allowance in Germany was the desire to maintain support by family members, in Japan a "key reason why the cash allowance did not succeed ... was the power of an essentially feminist idea ..." that a cash allowance might raise the family's standard of living a bit, but rarely enough to really liberate the caregiver. Campbell records further that it was women members of the Ministry of Health and Welfare advocacy committee who pushed forcefully for this principle, absent from earlier drafts, during the preparation of the draft legislation to be made public. And when it was, this provision gained strong and increasingly widespread support from the public. In this way, the introduction of kaigo hoken dramatically increased demand for home care attendants, and so, for their training as well (Tsutsui and Muramatsu, 2005: 225).

Nakano, Yamaoka, and Yamo's (2002) survey results show how much current care practice had by 2000 already veered from the traditional model. Immediately after kaigo hoken was introduced, the service most in demand was nursing-home daycare service, most-utilised when a wife was caring for her husband. As home helper care, the second most popular service, increased, demand for nursing-home daycare services and caregiver respite services decreased. Home helper care was especially in demand where there was no caregiver in the household (Nakano et al, 2002: 300). The findings of Washio, Arai, Izumi, and Mori (2003) and Onio, Kobayashi, Ito, and Mikami (2001) from the period immediately following the introduction of kaigo hoken reinforce Nakano, Yamaoka, and Yamo's (2002) conclusion: the kinds of care a care-receiver needs most depends in great part on their relation to their existing caregiver, or if they have no caregiver.

Further, kaigo hoken only reimburses for the services of Grade 2 (comprising both housework and bodywork) and higher home helpers; consequently home helpers holding the lowest qualification, Grade 3 (housework only), found themselves grandmothered out by April, 2003, if they did not quickly qualify themselves for Grade 2 certification. This circumstance created substantial consternation still into late 2002 among Grade 3 Kōreikyō home helpers, faced with the decision either to increase their qualifications immediately through additional training, or withdraw from work that could be reimbursed by kaigo hoken. And so, as demand for Class 2 home helper services exploded, what must have been expected was in fact discovered: "Home-visit care is the service clients complain most about. The complaints are mostly about the quality of the services and attitudes of the care workers. The root causes of the problem are related to inadequate training of home-helpers" (Nakane, 2004: 19).

Japan's Sense of Work

Japanese culture demands a lifetime of productive work; it does not support the Bismarkian concept of retirement, that a person might in the course of life entirely stop working to thenceforward only consume accumulated savings. Unfortunately, however, this view of retirement has long been misleadingly applied to Japan through the phrase "early retirement" because for many years government and businesses enforced mandatory retirement at age 55, now more commonly 60. Japanese have a long history of retirement, often in the prime of life or earlier, but from one level of work and wage to another appropriate to one's capacity with increasing age.

This Japanese conception of retirement, captured traditionally in the term 'inkyō' (abdicate the headship of a family) but replaced in the post-war period by the modern sociological term

'taishoku' (withdraw from an occupation) and by the term in colloquial use today, 'teinen' (fixed year or age limit), evolved from complex considerations of age and inheritance in enduring families. In the Japanese conception of retirement, the work which secures a family's livelihood, and authority within the household, are closely bound. Unlike other Asian cultures such as, especially, China and India, whose conceptions of patrilineal descent expect the several sons of the family to divide its estate more or less equally among themselves following the death of the paterfamilias, Japanese inheritance practice within their kinship system of bilateral rather than patrilineal descent, holds the family property whole for the household head's lone heir and successor. Second and later sons could not marry and remain in the household; and they were entitled to no share in the family estate whatsoever. The household head would formally pass his authority (materially in the form of the family's officially registered stamp (han) and the keys to the family stronghouse) to his successor while still in the prime of life, withdrawing with his wife to a small separated lodging in the family compound.³ A family whose household head is a successor can always be recognised by the presence of the family mortuary altar in the home; a newly-established family must wait for the death of its first household head before it has died of its own to honour.

The practice of inkyo often allows the heir to direct the household with the support of the previous household head for many years. Together they form a formidable combination no second son could hope to overcome to claim a birthright in the family estate. This practice prevailed alike in aristocratic, military, commercial and farming families: the transfer of authority follows the successor's marriage. Families whose prosperity depends significantly on the personal capacity of the household head prefer to this day a highly capable adopted son-in-law over a natural son as successor and heir. Even now families routinely subvert those provisions of the Civil Code written following WWII to undermine the Japanese family system of unitary inheritance, understood in 1946 as a major prop of militant imperialism. In such a system, in such a society, in which each person's primary obligation is the continued prosperity of their family through the generations, we can easily understand that this change in responsibility does not signal a change from effort to leisure. Culturally these patterns are understood and felt by Japanese men and women as the importance of work worth remuneration throughout their lives.

Judit Kawaguchi's (Kawaguchi, 2010) interview with home helper Takanori Kato presents one especially full expression of this pattern of work and age. What makes Kato's story suitable for a Japanese daily newspaper, which is its source, is the fact that Kato is a male dedicated to the intimate bodycare of the frail elderly:

Takanori Kato, at age 68, is in his first year as a home helper in Tokyo's Chuo Ward. Last December, he graduated from a 4-month nursing course and immediately got a job at a nursing home. Since then, he's been learning the ropes of lifting the spirits of bedridden patients while taking care of their physical needs. Kato loves working: From age 19 to 60, he was a printing engineer for a newspaper; from 60 to 65, a quality controller at an ink company; and from 65 to 67, a database administrator. It was while working at this last job that Kato suddenly realised that he wanted to help the elderly. It was a calling that changed his life: Kato has never been happier and he wants to serve others for as long as he lives, which we hope will be for a few more decades (Kawaguchi, 2010).

I include this appreciation of Kato's work with the frail elderly because his personal philosophy of "Roro kaigo, meaning one elderly person taking care of another, is the best welfare solution" (Kawaguchi, 2010) matches so well with the core ideals of Kōreikyō. My own collection of narratives from Kōreikyō offers an additional anecdote developing this theme of masculinity, age and work. I met Uchida Kazuhiko (64) for the first time at the Kawasaki Kōreikyō office where he had come to find a suitable activity for himself:

We, my wife and I, became members because we appreciate the personal touch and the safety of the drivers. She has diabetes and gets dialysis twice a week. So people from Kōreikyō pick her up and drop her off. It's so much better than taxis and it's a little cheaper too.

We heard about Kōreikyō from a flyer at the hospital. Now, I don't know what I can do, maybe pruning and the like, but I'd like to be more active and do something with people in the group. It is really difficult for men much more than women to become involved in something local. Everything is about

work for men. But you can't just stay home all the time watching TV, you'll go boke (senile) in no time. So while I've lived right in this area for a long time, I really haven't been involved locally. But it's so important for people to help each other and do things together, this is really the principle behind co-operatives, whether consumer co-operatives or medical co-ops or senior co-ops. What can people do together, that's what we have to discover (Marshall, 2005: 21).

This conception and practice of retirement leads to two outcomes which at first glance might appear incompatible: the number of seniors in the labour force in Japan is quite high compared to the US or the UK, although employment discrimination against the elderly remains conspicuous. In Japan in 2002 about 21% of people 65 and over — about three times as many males as females, over 30% of males — continued in the labour force, quite high compared to the US at 13% or the UK at 9%. In general, as Japan's social security system has improved, the fraction of seniors at work has declined. So it is not easy to untangle the complex motivations of seniors who continue to work for compensation. In wealthy Japan, where a majority of seniors report themselves well-off, many continue to work after a first retirement both to earn needed income and to maintain a sense of self-worth. Yet about 16% of the elderly live in severe impoverishment in the world's second wealthiest nation.

In light of former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's remarks at a Strategic Initiative on Aging conference on the eve of the inauguration of kaigo hoken in 2000, we should not expect to see these broad patterns reverse soon; they may even grow stronger as both men and women continue to live longer in the national population with the oldest, longest-lived and greatest fraction of the whole over age 55 (34%):

According to OECD statistics on labour force participation rates, Japan has an overwhelmingly high rate compared to Western nations as of 1997, showing that many senior citizens in Japan wish to work to seek self-fulfilment in life. In fact, the labour structure is already undergoing change. Combined with the move toward the revision of the pension system, retirement at age 60 has become commonplace, and reemployment and the postponement of retirement after the age of 60 are being discussed (Hashimoto, 2000: 4).

These remarks, as is so common, confound the Bismarkian and inkyo practices of retirement, but their tenor is clear enough: Japanese will continue to work in significant numbers into old age.

Yet it is easy enough to see upon reflection that while many men and women 55 and older genuinely do want paid work for several reasons, there are many occupations and positions for which only people younger than 55 are thought suitable: the inkyo conception of retirement both supports the view that the elderly will seek employment, and supports discrimination in hiring the elderly. One small example in my own experience took me aback entirely. A Kōreikyō crew changes and launders the bedding at New Green Nursing Home. This progressive, private, non-profit elder care facility so frequently awarded for its many best practices, publicly advertised in its front window with a paper sign asking for a geriatric nurse "no older than 55" to apply for an open position.

And while many people have the general impression that Japan's elderly today are fairly well-to-do, having saved over the postwar decades of economic prosperity, using only the arithmetic mean for this judgment also creates serious misunderstandings. As one example, numbers of older, financially vulnerable females live alone on low incomes. During World War II, Japan lost over 3.3 million young men. Two million women lost the opportunity to marry and raise a family (Hashimoto, 2000: 4).

Kōreikyō, Japan's Seniors' Co-operative

I had not been aware of the existence of this category of women myself before I met Yoshida Emiko (75), a member of the Kōreikyō linen changing crew I worked with at New Green Nursing Home in Kawasaki City. Handing me the end of a sheet as we were changing a resident's bed together one morning, she told me:

I don't have any children of my own, because I never married. I was born in Manchuria when it was part of Japan, and after my father died there near the end of the war, my mother and I were brought back to Japan. So I've had to work to support myself all my life. Without a family of my own, this chance to work here and rely on Kōreikyō means a very great deal to me. I'm sure I'll need it even more in the future, so I'm really grateful it's here.

Kōreikyō was started in 1995 by retired labour organiser Nakanishi Gōshu who was diagnosed with diabetes in his 70s. His own situation led him to explore ways seniors might help themselves by helping each other. He had long been involved in efforts to find paying jobs for the elderly. His experience with co-operatives expanded through the years as the Elderly and Chronically Unemployed Peoples' Union, which he helped start in the early 1970s, gradually evolved into a worker-owned, democratically-managed co-operative business, the Japan Worker's Co-operative Union (JWCU), by the mid-1980s.

The first Kōreikyō chapter was started in 1995. By the inauguration of kaigo hoken in April, 2000, more than 20,000 members 55 and older had already joined Kōreikyō chapters around the country. Kōreikyō now has over 32,000 members nationwide at over 300 locations in 35 prefectures. The Kawasaki City chapter that I got to know in 2002 had then about 400 members.

Kōreikyō is a co-operative, a business owned and operated by, and run for, its members. Co-operative members benefit from using the services their co-operative provides rather than from profits on their investment. Typical of co-operatives everywhere, Kōreikyō operates democratically, one member, one vote. Members elect officers and a council of representatives, and each functioning group within a local chapter sends a member to their council. Uniquely among co-operatives, Kōreikyō combines features of both consumer and worker co-operatives through its "fee for services" system.

A simple "pay-as-you-go" ticket system welds these two different kinds of co-operatives into one organisation. The co-op publishes a list of the different prices of its services, generally keeping them slightly below market prices.⁴ Members buy books of tickets and, as they use co-operative services, turn over the appropriate number of tickets to the co-operative member providing the service. Service providers – themselves co-operative members as well – later redeem the tickets they've collected at the co-operative office for their pay. The co-operative retains a small amount from each transaction to pay their local and national professional staff, and to finance continuing development and expansion.

As the number of home helpers rose, Kōreikyō increased its capacity to provide home care services. At the same time the 2002 Kōreikyō Grade 2 home helper course I took was training new potential members, two member committees were planning a second home helper dispatch centre for northern Kawasaki City. This planning was almost entirely undertaken by women who would staff and direct the new centre, for which they chose the name "Hanamizuki" (Dogwood).⁵

People do many things together as Kōreikyō members, not all of them usual parts of a business. In addition to their home helper service and transportation for dialysis and other kinds of therapy, Kawasaki Kōreikyō provides a variety of other services to its members, among them nursing home assistance (feeding, bed linen changing), the clothing re-tailoring group "ReForm", and home environment repair and renovation team "Mago no Te," (Grandchild's Hand). But there are also many activities for members that are not at all business services, such as touring and hobby groups (knitting, doll-making, folk dancing), social service group volunteer opportunities, organisations to raise funds for Kōreikyō and other charitable institutions, reading and discussion circles, and newsletter publishing. Elsewhere in the country, chapters provide lunch and dinner cooking and home delivery, day-care centres for seniors and even three assisted living centres. The Kawasaki Kōreikyō office was until 2003 on the second floor of a building which housed a Japan Workers' Co-operative Union lunch delivery kitchen (shidashi bentoya) on the ground floor. Several of the women workers in this kitchen are Kōreikyō members as well as JWCU members; one of these JWCU-member cooks sits on the Kawasaki Kōreikyō members' council.

Co-operation, Commodification and the Professionalisation of Work

Two pieces of research on women's work in Japan, one older and broader, the other more recent and narrower, together led me to the concept "profession" to think about the appeal of *Kōreikyō* to its female members who work as home helpers. Lo (1990) locates the popularisation of the notion that a housewife (*shufu*) in Japan might be a "professional" (*sengyō shufu*) in the early 1970s when the term emerged to contrast with the category *kengyō shufu*, a woman with implicitly part-time employment outside the home in addition to her undiminished and unshared duties as housewife. This phenomenon itself was first described, and the phrase "professional housewife" evidently coined, by Suzanne Vogel in the late 1950s (Vogel 1963), although she did not use this phrase itself until she published independently on this phenomenon much later (Vogel, 1978). Even as its accessibility receded in the 1980s, this middle class ideal continues to hold that the mistress of the house does not work for a wage, but nurtures her husband, their children, his parents, selflessly; and to do so properly, she requires both substantial training (if not education) and a degree of autonomy that continues to surprise Western observers informed only by the stereotype of the subservient female in Japan's still strongly patriarchal society (Marshall, 2006b: 164-65; Ogasawara, 1998).

Yet only a decade after Lo, Yoshida (2001) was able to take for granted the possibility that Japanese inn (*ryokan*) workers, who must certainly be included among *kengyō shufu*, could be professionals, to answer the question of how they manage and maintain their professionalism. He records these workers' view that their abundant and willingly suffering (*kurō*) necessary to good work performance transforms their low-wage low-prestige occupation into a profession. These inn workers assert their professionalism through joking relations in contests for control of their work conditions in the face of status ambiguity against competing claims by representatives of gender and managerial hierarchies, males and bosses. The corresponding joking relationships undermine the claims of these competing bases for control over the inn workers' ways of working. That this relationship rests on the plausible deniability of the joke rather than the authoritative assertion of established recognition points to the still-unsettled recognition of their claims.

Prior to this, I had not encountered the assertion that a woman's suffering through skilled personal service might contribute to professionalisation outside the home in the same way her suffering, understood in Japan as sacrifice, transforms a woman with a child into a mother, who may then develop further into the professional housewife of the idealised white collar family. Yet Yoshida is able to show that the people they work with do acknowledge these inn workers' claims to professional status, to the inn workers' advantage in maintaining their autonomy.

This line of thought, that the experience of suffering itself, the willingness of a worker to suffer on behalf of the people she (almost invariably, after all) serves, informs a significant body of research on the emotional capacity of workers and how employers try to harness it (England, 2005). Lopez (2006) reviews this literature within the framework of the organisation of emotional care in order to understand the care work performed in nursing homes. The central debate in this literature focuses on the question of the degree to which employers can call on and rely on the emotional responses of employees to engage them to their often very difficult work, and the extent to which employers can regulate, even to prohibit or require, employees to engage emotionally with those they serve as part of the work for which they were hired.

The emotional content and quality of their work matters a great deal to *Kōreikyō* home helpers. One of the most difficult matters home helpers face is how to handle requests, especially to refuse requests, for services not in the care manager's plan, and so which cannot honestly be reimbursed by *kaigo hoken*. The third home helper quoted below raises this issue somewhat obliquely.

Among the *Kōreikyō* home helpers with whom I spoke and worked, almost all saw the engagement of their emotions as a central and essential (or unavoidable) part of their work. Most saw the opportunity to engage emotionally with their clients as the most positive aspect

of their work, but not all did by any means. One home helper whom I interviewed but had not worked alongside had this to say:

Today is my last day. As you know, the Class 3 certificate will expire in March, and I have decided not to get my Class 2 certificate. Really, this work is just too hard emotionally. The worst thing is the sadness of working with people who are suffering. I think there should be some way to fit more conversation into the insurance plan. Many people have no one to talk to all day with the family at work. Most of my work has been housework, laundry, cleaning. Only a couple of people have been bedridden. But I really don't want to do that kind of work [which requires intimate bodywork and a Class 2 certificate].

A much more common perspective, however, came from a woman who was quite busy but talked with me because the dispatch centre director asked her to:

I worked at a blood bank, but then quit to care for my parents, but then Mother died and then Father died three years ago, so I looked for another job, and I wanted some training. I took the Class 2 course from here [Kawasaki Kōreikyō]! They asked me to work here and I did because I wanted a part time job. Here I control my time and work conditions, and independence. I see three people a day, 5 to 6 hours of work, and two hours travel.

The difficult part of the job? The rewarding part is talking to people, I can almost always talk with them while I'm cleaning or cooking and of course bathing people.

She never did tell me what she thought was the most difficult part of the job.

And one final selection from this collection. This woman had worked part time at an office with a mandatory retirement policy of 60. She consulted in 1999 at age 58 with her high school teacher son, and developed a plan to get a Class 2 qualification at 59, in time for the inauguration of kaigo hoken. She lives across the street from the dispatch centre and when it opened, she came in to ask for a job:

No, I didn't know it was a co-op, I hadn't heard of Kōreikyō before. This is close by and doesn't have a retirement requirement (teinen). I'm glad I came in tho, people here in the office are hard workers and competent. They understand the helper job well.

The worst experience I have had was with a senile (chihō) violent person and that was extremely frightening. People with bad memories are hard to deal with.

The rewarding part is, especially, peoples' gratitude that you will change dressings, care for injuries, give them physical attention. This is especially true for people who are bedridden.

What I would change if I could is the higher ups who don't respond to users' changing needs and circumstances, especially those who become senile. They just pop in, look around, check their boxes [on the standardised computer forms care managers use to develop care plans], they don't stay and get to know the situation, and they don't pay attention to the helper reports. Well, many don't, tho there are good ones here.

It seems to me now that autonomy in many different institutional locations in Kōreikyō is critical to the women who work as home helpers there. One body of evidence I now find highly persuasive perhaps the more so because I did not know what to make of it at the time, is an extensive record of planning meetings. In the fall of 2002 I sat through, according to my notes, 11 meetings of from one to three hours of the Preparations Committee and of the Nucleus Committee (whose memberships overlapped substantially), about 25 late afternoon hours, although at the time it seemed like many, many more. The task of these committees was to open a second dispatch centre in northern Kawasaki City. The Preparations Committee comprised the male chapter head, a retired business executive as chair, and three women with Class 1 or Class 2 home helper qualifications, two of whom had more than three years' experience and one who was just reaching that point. They were responsible for the planning and licensing for the new dispatch centre. The Nucleus Committee comprised these same three women plus two others with about the same qualifications as home helpers, a committee of five women and no men. These five women would work at the new centre; their committee's responsibility was specifically staffing.

Takayama Emiko (58) headed the Nucleus Committee and was in reality the person most active and determined to make the second Kawasaki helper dispatch station a reality. She had worked many years with Class 1 home helper qualifications and passed the exam to be the care manager for the new hub. We had the following exchange walking back to the office from yet a different meeting:

RCM: This is really your dream come true, isn't it?

TE: Oh, yes, I've wanted to start and run a helper station for years.

RCM: Did you ever think you'd get the chance?

TE: No, never, especially after I saw what happened at the last place I worked when kaigo hoken came in and the place grew so rapidly and had so many terrible problems. They had a good reputation as a non-profit, and just wrecked it.

RCM: Do you think you could have had this opportunity anywhere else, with another group?

TE: Never, everyone wants you to retire, and they won't even look at someone over 55.

In analysis of the struggle over the control (discipline, accountability) of work and workers, the concept of professionalisation has come to stand in complementary opposition to that process of commodification which transforms work into occupations. Activities once performed in other settings are re-organised for sale in markets and their performers alienated from control of their activity and its effects through the deskilling and regimentation capitalisation uses to turn a pattern of activity into a profitable industry. Not all workers find this sequence inevitable in all occupations, however; many occupations still retain and some even come to acquire a higher degree of autonomy in control of both performance standards and practices. How else can we understand the application of the concept "professionalisation" to housewives of Japanese white-collar workers?

Autonomy arises from acknowledged claims that work performance under widely-varying typical conditions can only be successful through the use of capable independent judgment; and that this requirement distinguishes the work of such practitioners from those of other occupations, who cannot avoid scripted performance, supervision and external accountability. Contemporary societies recognise such occupations as professions and typically hedge individual practitioners' autonomy with the ambiguity of licensed privilege within the self-regulating and self-reproducing institutions of the profession. No person practices a profession by right. Yet not all practitioners of an occupation want or try to pin their status claims to successful licensing. For example, news reporters continue to struggle for a privileged status that would allow them to protect the identities of their sources from courts, even as they remain unlicensed (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003).

Earlier research on the professions sought to distinguish them in their inherent characteristics from occupations. More recent research turns from the ambiguity of these findings to focus on both the strategic component in concepts arising from folk taxonomies and the ways symbols stake out distinctions worth making. Aldridge and Evetts raise a critical question: "How is the powerful appeal of professionalism as a discourse rather than an array of institutional protections or checklist of 'traits' being used in places of work as a mechanism to facilitate and promote occupational change and the self-discipline of professionalised workers?" (2003: 548). One perfect recent illustration of how a "trait checklist" might be swept together can be found in McCoy (2011), who writes to reclaim an evidently now-lost higher status for his own occupation, the military. He builds the foundation of his case on the earliest of all distinctions available to Western aristocratic culture, that a professional will do his best from a motivation to promote the public good, entirely apart from considerations of remuneration, while an occupation "receives its legitimacy in terms of the marketplace, where supply and demand are paramount and self-interest takes priority over communal interests" (McCoy, 2011: 16). From this base, McCoy then arrays several characteristics researchers have found among acknowledged professions that might distinguish them from occupations, discovers that the military is like the professions and not like the occupations, and exhorts his fellow soldiers to act professionally to protect their newly re-won prestige.

These separate strands, rewoven, make it clear that substantial symbolic capital, which may be transformed into autonomy at work, can be gained from successfully securing others' acknowledgment that one's work is a professional occupation. Some long-acknowledged professions have even been able to use this symbolic capital to limit entry into their occupation, resulting in practitioners' increased incomes. This has not yet happened for home helpers, however, and probably never will; and higher pay was never given by Kōreikyō home helpers as a reason they chose to work there anyway. The two most common reasons told to me were first, that they could work as long as they needed at each house and were never hurried; and second, that they could work in their own and nearby neighbourhoods and were not required to travel extensively between clients.

Conclusion

My argument here is not that Kōreikyō home helpers are engaged in a status-elevation struggle of the sort that demands recognition of an occupation's professionalism, although several home helper narratives do show clearly how much they must struggle with both clients and clients' families for the respect they feel they deserve. On the contrary, Kōreikyō women's specific willingness to work co-operatively is what gives them access to an autonomy in their work practice much like that which conventionally characterises recognised professions. Evidence in three areas shows the appeal of Kōreikyō's way of organising home care work to its members: work site discretion, democratic organisational control, and opportunity for initiative. Autonomy to shape their work and their organisation is available to all members to that degree which fulfills their aspirations within the framework of democratic participation.

Until relatively recently in Japan, daughters-in-law and daughters took care of the elderly fortunate enough to have junior female family members to care for them. But seniors in fact prefer to have someone their own age do many tasks for them, such as, especially, help with bathing, dressing, hair care, and feeding. On the other hand, they prefer to have someone from their own family cook and shop for them, someone who already knows their tastes. And they like to have people of their own generation to talk to at home at any time, although, paradoxically, no one likes to have strangers enter their home. Home helpers quickly cease being strangers, but what do they then become? Friends? Faux family members? Low servants? Allied health care professionals? Survey after survey show widespread overall satisfaction with kaigo hoken among family members, care givers and the elderly who make use of it, but complaints of a lack of trained and licensed home helpers in the industry remain (Nakane, 2004).

Kōreikyō has used sophisticated tools to survey its members as both clients and providers of services and always received very high marks. No member who began home helper services with Kawasaki Kōreikyō changed to a different home helper provider from dissatisfaction with received care between the inauguration of kaigo hoken in April 2000 and the end of my fieldwork there, the end of the year 2002, almost three years and the most trying period of the programme, even though one of the three central principles built into the original kaigo hoken law was the stimulation of competition, not co-operation, among care service providers. Neither planning committee mentioned helper turn-over in Kōreikyō even once. Their entire focus was on attracting scarce trained home helpers.

The Author

Robert C Marshall is Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology, Western Washington University. Japan's worker cooperatives have been a major focus of his research since 1991. With the rise of interest in alternative economies following the recession of 2008, his Japan Focus online article *Japan's Worker Cooperatives into the 21st Century* <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Bob-Marshall/1704> has been reprinted several times. His current research focuses on governance, equality and performance monitoring in worker co-operatives.

References

- Aldridge, Meryl and Evetts, Julia (2003) "Rethinking the concept of professionalism: the case of journalism." *British Journal of Sociology*, 54(4): 547-564.
- Campbell, John C (2000) "Changing meanings of frail old people and the Japanese welfare state." In: Susan O Long, ed, *Caring for the elderly in Japan and the US: Practices and policies*. London and New York: Routledge: 82-97.
- Campbell, John C and Ikegami, Naoki (2000) "Long-term-care insurance comes to Japan." *Health Affairs*, 19(3): 26-39.
- England, Paula (2005) "Emerging theories of care work." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31: 381-99.
- Hashimoto Ryutaro (2000) "Japan's aging challenge. Presentation to the morning plenary session of CSIS Policy Summit on the Graying of the Industrial World." January 25-26: 1-6.
- Hashizumi, Yumi (2000) "Gender issues and family centered caregiving for frail elderly parents or parents-in-law in modern Japan: From the sociocultural and historical perspectives." *Public Health Nursing* 17(1): 25-31.
- Ikegami Naoki (2000) "The launch of long-term care insurance." *Japan Echo*, June: 30-35.
- Kawaguchi, Judit (2010) "Words to live by: Home helper Takanori Kato." *The Japan Times Online*, Thursday, June 24.
- Lo, Jeannie (1990) *Office ladies, factory women*. London: M E Sharpe.
- Lopez, Steven H (2006) "Emotional Labor and Organized Emotional Care : Conceptualizing Nursing Home Care Work." *Work and Occupations*, 33 (2): 133-160
- McCoy, Eric (2011) "Elements of the profession of arms and their impact on the military logistician." *Army Sustainment*. July-August: 16-19.
- Marshall, Robert C (2006a) "Japan's worker co-operative movement into the 21st century." *Japan Focus* <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Bob-Marshall/1704>
- Marshall, Robert C (2006b) "The emergence of worker co-operatives in Japan among middle aged, middle class housewives in the late twentieth century." In: Paul Durrenberger and Judith Marti, eds *Labor in cross-cultural perspective* (Society for Economic Anthropology, Vol 23). AltaMira Press: Walnut Creek, CA. Chapter 7: 155-174.
- Marshall, Robert C (2005) "Of, by and for seniors." *YES! A Magazine of Positive Futures*. Fall: 20-21.
- Nakane, Chie (1967) *Kinship and economic organization in rural Japan*. Athlone Press: London.
- Nakane, Junko (2004) "Elder care in Japan." *Perspectives* (Gerontological Nursing Association (Canada)) 28: 17-24.
- Ogasawara, Yuko (1998) *Office ladies and salaried men: Power, gender and work in Japanese companies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Onio, M, Kobayashi K, Ito M and Mikami H (2001) "The use factor of long-term care insurance after enforcement half a year." *Japanese Journal of Cancer and Chemotherapy* 28(1): 184-87.
- Ozawa, Martha and Nakayama, Shigo (2005) "Long term care insurance in Japan." *Journal of Aging and Social Policy* 17(3): 61-84.
- Sugiura, Keiko, Ito, Mikiko, Kutsumi, Masami, and Mikami, Hiroshi, 2009. "Gender differences in spousal caregiving in Japan." *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 64B(1): 147-156.
- Tamiya, Nakano, Yamaoka, Kazue and Yamo, Eiji (2002) "Use of health services covered by new public long term care insurance in Japan: Impact of the presence and kinship of family caregivers." *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*. 14(4): 295-303.
- Traphagan, John and Knight, John eds (2003) *Demographic change and the family in Japan's aging society*. Albany: SUNY.
- Tsutsui, Takako and Muramatsu, Naoko (2005) "Care-needs certification in the long-term care insurance system of Japan." *Journal of American Geriatric Society*. 53(3): 222-227.
- Vogel, Ezra (1963) *Japan's new middle class*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Vogel, Suzanne (1978) "'Professional Housewife:' The Career of Urban Middle Class Japanese Women." *Japan Interpreter*, 12(1): 16-43.
- Washio, Masakazu, Yumiko Arai, Hisako Izumi, and Mitsuru Mori (2003) "Burden on family caregivers of frail elderly persons one year after the introduction of public long term care insurance service in the Onga district, Fukuoka Prefecture : evaluation with a Japanese version of the Zarit caregiver burden interview." *Japanese Journal of Geriatrics*. 2003(4): 147-155.
- Yamada Miho, Hagiwara, Akihito and Nobutomo, Koichi (2009) "Family caregivers and care manager support under long term care insurance in rural Japan." *Psychology, Health and Medicine* 14(1): 73-85.
- Yoshida, Mitsuhiro (2001) Joking, gender, power and professionalism among Japanese inn workers. *Ethnology* 40(4): 361-69.

WWW Pages

Kōreikyō Homepage — <http://kourei.roukyou.gr.jp/>

Japan Worker Co-operative League Homepage — <http://www.roukyou.gr.jp/>

Japan Aging Research Center Aging in Japan Homepage — <http://www.jarc.net/aging/03oct/index.shtml>

Ministry of Health, Labor, Welfare Long Term Care Insurance Homepage — <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/kaigo/index.html>

Notes

- 1 Participant observation at work with care givers, as well as interviews with home-helpers, dispatch center managers, case managers, and nurses belonging to the Kawasaki chapter of Kōreikyō provide much of the data in this paper. The field research for this paper was funded by a grant from the Japan Foundation.
- 2 To my surprise, at least, fully a third of the graduates of these courses are not seeking employment in this occupation, but enroll to become qualified the better to care for family members. The Kōreikyō course costs students approximately US\$ 1000 (reduced by as much as half if subsidised by a requesting municipal government; for-profit schools charge significantly more); the Class 2 home helper certificate course takes 135 classroom and practicum hours from scratch, 50 classroom hours to upgrade from Class 3 to Class 2. (Class 1 another 50 hours up from Class 2, and Care Manager 35 more classroom hours beyond Class 1 qualifications.) This, despite the fact that expenses and wages for the care for family members by family members is explicitly forbidden to be reimbursed by kaigo hoken. Clearly while kaigo hoken now offers a realistic alternative in home helper services for those families and individuals to whom traditional practices are no longer fully available, by no means are these traditional practices of home care by family members disappearing in Japan.
- 3 In her definitive discussion of the inkyo system Nakane (1967:11-16) records retirements of household heads in agricultural households from “while still in his forties” to age 60. In Japanese culture both age 42 and age 60 are marked by ceremonies for men, the former as protection in a year of great personal danger (yakudoshi), and the later a light-hearted celebration of longevity as an entry into second childhood. The typical building of an inkyo-house for the senior couple seems to be an expansion of the fundamental principle that there can be only one married couple in each generation in a household, to the idea that there can only be one married couple in a house.
- 4 I have not been able to document this, but I was told by a Kōreikyō member, a male who drove members to medical appointments, that the cab drivers’ organisation sued to get them to stop undercutting cab fares for these rides, but a judge ruled that because it was a member organisation that used members’ cars and did not give rides to the public generally, Kōreikyō could continue to charge its members whatever fee it wanted to charge. I have as well an undocumented note that some Tokyo wards subsidise cab fares for dialysis travel.
- 5 The then-existing home helper dispatch center had merely the prosaic name “Chubu” (Central District).

How to cite this article

Marshall, R.C. (2013). Does certification and self-governance professionalise co-operative home-care workers? The attractions of autonomy in Kōreikyō’s co-operative model of homecare. *Journal of Co-operative Studies*, 46(3), 24-35.