The Culture of Cooperation in Three Japanese Worker Cooperatives

Robert C. Marshall
Western Washington University

The critical problem in the relations of production for worker-owned and managed enterprises is not the exploitation of labor by capital, but processes homologous to free-riding on the collective provision of public goods. Market, constitutional and collegiality barriers fail to attenuate opportunism in such work relations because paradoxes in the logic of rational selfishness lead to contradictory applications for collective action. In order to be effective, symbols as safeguards to opportunism must operate within the actual work itself. One such safeguard, the symbol 'help' performed as the willingness of workers to assist one another in their quotidian tasks in order to monitor each other's work performance tacitly, was found in three service sector worker cooperatives in Tokyo in 1993–4.

Keywords: collective action, cooperation, free-riding, symbolism, worker cooperative

> It seems palpably obvious that humans, unlike birds and bees, bring all variety of 'irrational' cultural beliefs to bear on decisions about cooperation – a fact, perhaps, that could count as news only to economists and evolutionary biologists. (Orr, 1998: 4)

The ethnography of offers, refusals, solicitations and obviations of offers of help by the members of three Tokyo worker cooperatives opens a window onto the most vexing problem for human cooperation, free-riding on the collective provision of public goods (Elster, 1989: 15). In each of these three worker cooperatives work patterns have evolved through which workers systematically and successfully monitor each other's work performance by offering help with work in ways that let them keep up their confidence in each other as they work even while recognizing that their willingness to work

Economic and Industrial Democracy © 2003 (SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi), Vol. 24(4): 543–572.
[0143–831X(200311)24:4;543–572;038075]

effectively might be eroded by free-riding. Here I understand these work patterns built around opportunities to regularly offer help as symbols of cooperation in these organizations, patterned actions which let workers tacitly monitor one another's work performance.

Cooperative workplaces provide a uniquely valuable setting in which to study the problem of free-riding, the greatest threat both to employee-owned and managed firms (Hansmann, 1990). Evidence continues to accumulate showing that firms which couple employee ownership to participatory decision-making enjoy a synergy leading to superior performance (Vanek, 1992: 185–6; Dow, 1993: 115; Winther and Marens, 1997; Altman, 2002: 272). Yet such firms face the double dilemma that even when their workers know that free-riding may well 'kill the goose that lays the golden egg' (Russell, 1995), and while they are often willing enough to monitor each other's performance (Bowles and Gintis, 1993), cooperative workers still will strenuously resist explicit monitoring by fellow workers (Mellor et al., 1988; Müller, 1991).

A robust conception of symbolism which understands symbols as public patterns for action based on local, interested knowledge rather than as embodied loci of encoded, disinterested meanings, bears the primary analytic burden in this investigation. The robustness which makes this conception of symbolism suitable for use in analyses of complex strategic interaction arises from our knowing *that* and *how* symbols are always already implicated in strategic relations, interactions in which outcomes depend not only on what one actor does, but also on what others do in response. Conceiving symbols this way allows us to identify and measure the effects of important interactions which remain below the horizon of organizational analyses limited to market, institutional and informal incentive structures. As a way of working, the symbol 'help' couples the technology of the work, through pace, intensity and organization, to the social relations and informal incentives of the cooperative workplaces examined here.

In this article, I first sketch an approach to the analysis of strategic interaction which regards symbols as public patterns for action which arise where rational selfishness evidently does not provide a secure basis for individual strategic action. A longer ethnographic section then analyzes the mostly taken-for-granted quality of the quotidian streams of helping in three service-sector Japanese worker cooperatives to show how the symbol 'help' alleviates potential problems of free-riding there. A concluding section discusses the

problem of cooperation and free-riding in relation to organizational governance practices, symbolism and strategic action.

Symbol and Strategy

Concern for how symbols construct culture has dominated the discipline of anthropology in the long postwar period. Lévi-Strauss's (1955: 105) hypothesis that 'the purpose of a myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction' opened an immensely productive period in the analysis of symbolism. Yet in time it became clear that insofar as symbols allow if not encourage contradictory interpretations (Kertzer, 1988: 69), the useful work of cultural analysis to which the concepts meaning, symbol and communication might be put is entirely vitiated when symbols are conceived as bearers of meaning in systems of communications.

In one wing of poststructuralist anthropology, Dan Sperber made the compelling case that, as is true of sentences, 'if symbols had a meaning, it would be obvious enough' (Sperber, 1975: 84), concluding that the Saussurian semiology project 'established, all unknowing, that symbols work without meaning' (Sperber, 1975: 52). In Sperber's conception, symbolism is one kind of knowledge, distinguished from analytic knowledge by being incapable of paraphrase, and from synthetic knowledge by immunity from being dislodged by novel experience. *What* symbols do is establish relations among the categories of thought, to the end that people might still act in the face of paradox, indeterminacy, contradiction and dilemma. *How* symbols achieve this effect is by linking figuratively rather than causally the domain in which action is necessary but problematic to other domains of experience, knowledge from which *does* provide a basis for confident action. Multivocality, the characteristic capacity of a symbol to serve as an instance of more than one category, ruins symbols as bearers of meaning while suiting them exquisitely to pattern action.

Another wing of poststructuralism arose from Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) recognition of the inherently strategic aspect of symbols: the logic of symbols is a logic of relations, the foundation of this logic is the act of making a difference, and distinguishing is always *interested*. For Bourdieu, *habitus*, the system of lasting dispositions that 'functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions*' (Bourdieu, 1977: 82–3; emphasis in original) to

make improvisation possible, is 'an operator of rationality, but of a practical rationality immanent in a historical system of social relations and therefore transcendent to the individual' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 19). This is a strategic rationality, the rationality of people who are playing the game rather than making up rules.

The practice that lets us understand how we blur primary strategies (acting through a symbol) and secondary strategies (acting so as to seem to be acting though a symbol) (Bourdieu, 1998: 141) in our performances to prevent each other, researchers and even ourselves from definitively separating primary from secondary strategies analytically, begins with what Bourdieu (1991: 77–81) identifies as the decision for 'self-censorship in anticipation of profits'. This practice engenders the social dilemma around which the tale of 'The Emperor's New Clothes' develops, where to make any remark at all or to make no remark at all must reflect badly on the speaker either in others' judgments or in his or her own, once contradictory premises are permitted to make the market.

Maurice Godelier (1999: 173) reminds us why we hide such matters from our social selves: 'there is something in society which is part of the social being of its members and which needs *opacity* in order to produce and reproduce itself' (emphasis in original). Knowing the nature and function of symbolism lets us account, in particular, for the opacity for both actor and observer between primary and secondary strategies. Where we cannot unambiguously distinguish primary from secondary strategies, we cannot conclusively construe motives and so must allow actions to retain their 'plausible deniability'. Paige and Paige (1981) show how, in several varieties of reproductive ritual, symbolism is deployed at strategically critical moments to serve the monitoring interests of the ritual's sponsor through its capacity to focus attention on the person undergoing the ritual.

Action then continues in silence between the horns of the dilemma. No one speaking at all lets everyone still seek strategic advantage even in situations characterized entirely by falsehood, as actors purposely avoid problematizing their situation, deliberately but tacitly refusing to identify it as one even permitting, far from requiring, explicit comment in the form of a question such as 'What is going on here?' Godelier (1999: 152–3) remarks that 'every social order, if it is to convince itself and others of its legitimacy, needs both to pass over in silence certain aspects of its workings and to thrust others to the fore by loading them with imaginary

meanings and symbolic weight', but 'passing over in silence' can also load an act with enough symbolic weight to thrust it to the fore.

A system of classification and a system of social relations are both necessary for us to know the difference between the infinite number of things we don't say and do because they remain undistinguished within the still merely possible, and those few we don't say and do because we must not, aside from whether we could or could not bring ourselves to say or do them, even should we want to do so. Taboo then takes the act of not saying or doing to the third power, turning this Pareto-optimal strategy of tacit silence into an overdetermined, explicit virtue of conservatism to preserve the system of distinctions maintaining the social relationships at issue.

Marvin and Ingle (1999) deploy Durkheimian taboo in their thesis that to realize the symbol 'nation' in American civil religion, any but the final sacrifice is too little. The core of their understanding requires that action be able to unify alternative and ostensibly incompatible interpretations of symbols: 'This book argues that violent blood sacrifice makes enduring groups cohere, even though such a claim challenges our most deeply held notions of civilized behavior' (Marvin and Ingle, 1999: 1). For Marvin and Ingle symbolic action creates this effect through taboo, the strategic refusal to speak or have spoken, do or have done. In their fully reflexive Durkheimian totemism, a model which can finally appreciate that we have never been modern (Latour, 1993) and participate in Bourdieu's project of erasing the difference between ethnology and sociology, the flag is the ritual instrument of group cohesion, and 'The totem secret, the collective group taboo, is the knowledge that society depends on the death of its own members *at the hand of the group*' (Marvin and Ingle, 1999: 2; emphasis in original).

Taboo operates in the same way in the less highly charged atmosphere of the worker cooperatives discussed here. 'If *bodily* sacrifice is the totem core of American nationalism' (Marvin and Ingle, 1999: 4; emphasis in original), it is equally so, although of much reduced magnitude, in the context of offers of, requests for, refusals of and obviations of offers of help in these Japanese worker cooperatives, emphasizing as they do the importance of group cohesion and the currency of work effort. In this conception, symbol and strategy are indissolubly linked: to monitor another's work performance by appearing with offers of help and related strategic maneuvers, a worker must be prepared to work more, rather than less, than typically, and there is no explicit, determinate

relation between this additional expenditure of effort and increased personal tangible benefit.

Perhaps 'plausible deniability' rather than the classic notion of taboo more accurately characterizes the actors' cover in the effort to create a bit more room for strategic maneuver in this commercial context; nevertheless, here too word and deed form a gestalt: 'Violence is an essential social resource, just as denying this constitutes an important group-making tool' (Marvin and Ingle, 1999: 8). Monitoring, denying that monitoring is an important social resource and refusing to be monitored are all important social resources in cooperative workplaces. In each of the three cooperatives here, what makes a worker's denial plausible and help valuable is that all the workers in each cooperative do almost exactly the same work. In a democratic cooperative workplace, only so long as workers can justifiably refuse to accept from each other explicit interpretations asserting that 'helping' is a form of monitoring, can they continue monitoring without being accused of arrogating the structural authority of a 'boss'. And in these worker cooperatives, the way they do *this* is by helping.

But if 'help' must forestall both free-riding and accusations of arrogation, at the same time it must not force 'helpers' to understand themselves to be transferring their own resources to the person they are helping, the person whose work they end up doing, even while it allows them to say and have it said that this *is* what they are doing. The notion of 'passing over something in silence', that something necessary and important to group solidarity and even group existence can only function as long as it is *not* talked about, perhaps not even thought about much, flies directly in the face of the fundamental self-conscious conviction of worker cooperatives that cooperation without abundant communication is undesirable and ultimately impossible. Unlike workers in a conventional firms who often have to hold their tongues, cooperative workers know they can and must speak their minds openly for the good of the business. A large banner in bold red characters across one wall of the locker-*cum*-lunch room of the Jigyōdan work crew, one of the three cooperatives discussed in this article, reads 'Let's talk about it.'

In this construction, cooperation is structurally opposed to hierarchy rather than to competition, as two ways to reduce competition. Whether centralized authority can be *the* or even *a* primary mechanism through which conventional firms function remains a focus of continuing research (March, 1966; Latour, 1986; Elster,

1989), but in a worker cooperative's self-representation, 'worker' and 'employee' can be neither synonyms nor opposites. The solidarity of worker cooperatives depends not on each worker being each other worker's boss, but on there being, in an ultimate sense, no boss. Yet there must still be workers who really do work.[1] In this way, the symbol I am calling 'help' here underwrites 'the *moral* community that implements prosocial blueprints – without which cooperation is not possible – even as it suppresses aggressive egoism' (Boehm, 1999: 254; emphasis in original).

These arguments and observations shape a tool with which to pry into the central theoretical problem of collective action and free-riding in worker cooperatives. In the three Tokyo worker cooperatives discussed in the following sections, workers appear mutually dependent and at the same time make their individual contributions conspicuous in measurable ways. In all three cooperatives, the members were keen to tell me what a good job they do collectively, that everyone works hard, and that everyone gets along well. I take this as a sign of their confidence in each other that they wish to convey this image to an outsider working alongside them as a participant observer: almost no one was clearly identified by co-workers as working much less than everyone else, and even for much more pay they could not work much harder in a sustainable way. The ethnographies of these Tokyo worker cooperatives explore how the symbol 'help', despite its evident immediate costliness to individual workers, is actually practiced in the mitigation of the deleterious effects of free-riding.

Helping Each Other Clean

Nine women and two men, all between the ages of 55 and 75, make up the North Tokyo Jigyōdan crew which cleans Azusawa Hospital's floors and toilets. They also clean the hospital's attached out-patient clinic, dental clinic and pharmacy, check and bundle its bed linen, launder its staff's surgical uniforms, and collect and incinerate all hospital trash. One of the men routinely collects and burns trash in addition to cleaning floors, and one woman routinely does laundry as well as scheduling, as crew chief, the day's work she puts in with the others. Two other women come in the afternoons to sort, shelve and distribute linen but do not clean. None of the

others specializes explicitly, though work routines include some regular preferences and deferences.

Azusawa Hospital treats patients in about 250 beds among seven wings on five floors. The same crew member cleans the same section of a wing each morning, sweeping, dusting, mopping. Afternoons, all the cleaners come together as a group to scrub and wax two or three patient rooms selected on a rotating basis. When they push the beds out of the way everyone can see, at the same time, whether the floor's been swept. Crumbs beneath a bed, dust in a corner, scuffed linoleum, always brings forth the question 'Who didn't get to this room today?'

When a worker finishes her own responsibility early, she often goes off to find someone to help. Workers ask each other as they meet in the halls and stairwells what has and hasn't been done, what might remain to do where. On a typical day, when asked if she needs help, a cleaner will say: 'Nothing for you to do here, just 301 left, then I'm done, I'll get it before the break.' Workers are not rigid in this; there is no rule or explicit formulation, it is their work practice. Workers go to the break area without asking anyone's permission, and they do sometimes go to the break area without asking anyone if they need help. At morning break, a worker entering the break area a little early might greet someone already there with a variant on 'Done already?' Perhaps a worker greeted this way might feel in it a hint that she ought to have offered others a hand rather than rushing off directly to take a break.

An offer of help is never unambiguous. Offers of help test the ideal of self-reliance and come as a challenge to a reputation for being able to do one's own work. To need help and not be judged incompetent or slack, a worker must have some special reason why she could not get her usual work done. And there can be plenty of reasons. Hospital cleaning work varies: some places get dirtier than others, and at different times. One patient in despair of living any longer pulled his IV needles from his arms, letting the bottles' sticky contents drip onto the floor throughout the night. For almost three weeks one incontinent old fellow dribbled as he hobbled, day and night, up and down the halls of his wing. Patients and their different demands come and, finally, go.[2] When a special reason has derailed a worker's routine, she will accept the help offered, give the reason she is behind schedule, and direct the helper toward the places where she can be most helpful. The usual fills the hospital uniformly;

special reasons are necessarily unexpected and ruffle the general pattern.

On one particular day help was given before it could be refused. That day seven patients were discharged, not a usual number. On the morning patients are discharged, the nurses strip all the bedding from those beds – a mattress pad, a sheet, a comforter and its cover, a pillow and pillow case – bundle it all up and put it in the linen room on the ground floor. Seven bundles sat in the linen room to be sorted after lunch.

But starting again after lunch, Mrs Kondo and Mrs Mori, the 'linen ladies', made restocking the shelves in each floor's linen closet their first priority. Long-time crew chief Mrs Kato and I (working as a cooperative member as part of my study) charged off to the basement laundry room to put in a few loads of wash. While the washers were working time hung on our hands, a feeling the bustling Mrs Kato abhors. 'Let's pop in on the linen room.' Did she remember the bundles left for later, that Mrs Kondo and Mrs Mori had gone first to stock closet shelves? So into the linen room we popped, stripped the covers from the comforters, counted and bundled the sheets, covers, pillows and cases. Then, all finished, Mrs Kato said 'You stay here and see if Mrs Kondo needs something done, I'm going down to put the wash in the dryer.' So I stayed put and Mrs Kato popped off. And then Mrs Mori and Mrs Kondo came back.

When they saw the seven bundles all unpacked, sorted and repacked, their work all done, how they began to fume! I had never before seen either of them at all angry or even upset. Adult Japanese women simply do not express anger in public. Mrs Kondo is Number Two and in charge when Mrs Kato is away. Her outburst caught me by surprise. 'You did this with Mrs Kato, didn't you', an accusation more than a question. 'Yes, we did,' I said brightly, still thinking I was on *terra firma*, 'and she told me to ask you if I could do anything for you while she went to put wash in the dryers.'

Mrs Mori then scrunched up her face, and put her hand in a fist at the end of her nose as if grabbing it at the base of her thumb and index finger, pulling and stretching it out, with a slight upward twist of the wrist at the end of the gesture. Mrs Kondo nodded her agreement and said, '*Sō desu yo*! That's for sure!' Suddenly far out to sea, I said I didn't know that gesture, what did it mean? Mrs Kondo replied simply that it meant Tengu, the long-nosed

goblin. At this point I should have asked what Tengu, whose masks are common throughout Japan, had to do with anything, but my surprise and discomfort at the turn of events and attitudes left me momentarily nonplused. And then Mrs Kondo asserted, still pretty hotly, that the two of them, she and Mrs Mori, could handle the linen room work perfectly well by themselves. Kenkyusha's Japanese–English Dictionary captures the Tengu personality sharply: 'a braggart, a boaster, [to] pride oneself on . . . , become vain, conceited'.

The storm blew over as suddenly as it arose, and the topic shifted to Mrs Kondo's realization that I was studying not so much how to clean hospitals per se as how the cleaning crew worked as a co-operative, did its work without a boss, and that I was furthering my understanding of this by working as a crew member.

Jigyōdan was begun by the Zen-Nihon Jiyu Rōdō Kumiai (All-Japan Day Worker's Union) in 1971 in Nishinomiya City, Hyogo Prefecture, to help the elderly and chronically unemployed find work. By the mid-1990s it had evolved into an independent worker cooperative of over 8000 members (Jigyōdan, 1998; Tomizawa, 1988, 1990, 1991; Tomizawa et al., 1996). Members know a great deal about the particulars of the work they do, but few are as sure just how they do what they do as members of a cooperative. Everyone knows they have no boss of the sort 'a regular company' does, of course. Mrs Kato's crew elected and re-elected her as crew chief, yet she is only first among equals, always bossy but never 'the boss'. So I told Mrs Kondo she was exactly right, I wanted to understand how they arranged their work and got it done without a boss.

Mrs Kondo replied instantly, without a moment's pause, 'We do it by looking after each other and helping each other with our work (*shigoto o tasukeau*).' And just four minutes earlier she was furious enough with Mrs Kato to call her a Tengu in front of the anthropologist because Mrs Kato had popped in and helped her with her work! To Mrs Kondo, a Tengu would not simply do her own work better or faster than others do theirs, she would do the work of another worker as well as do her own, thereby depriving the involuntarily assisted worker of the opportunity to meet accepted performance standards, and thus tacitly inviting unjust, invidious comparisons that would make her look bad in her co-workers' eyes. And is this not precisely what helping is? Yet no one would ever call Tengu, a malicious trickster 'with an insatiable desire to

be destructive and wreak havoc upon people's lives' (Fister, 1985: 105), a helper.

A person who will work harder than someone else can only be applauded if her extra effort does not come at the expense of someone else's reputation: extra work, to be 'help' in this strategic sense, cannot be assistance given simply to lighten another's burden from a possible desire to benefit that person or do that person a kindness, but must be extra work that probably would not otherwise get done. The effort expended through the symbol 'help' to attenuate free-riding must add synergistically to the total work performance, and cannot simply reallocate the total burden. Yet the verb *tasukeru* (to help), one commonly used in everyday life, denotes only this latter notion, the reallocation of a burden, and draws not at all the distinction emphasized here. Mrs Kondo seems not to consciously make this distinction, yet the reason for her fury with Mrs Kato depends on it. For help to function symbolically, attention cannot be drawn to this distinction. No one is likely to make the accusation, 'You don't really want to lighten my load, you just want to make sure I'm doing my work. Even worse, you want to make yourself look better at my expense by doing, without even asking me first, work assigned to me that I am entirely willing and able to do.' But someone might, to a confidant, accuse a fellow worker of being a Tengu, whose association with work contexts is not remote: 'villagers would often set out offerings to *tengu* before they started work so that the mountain goblins would not play tricks on them' (Fister, 1985: 109).

Equally, no one who cares about her reputation leans against the wall when there's work to be done. People want co-workers who feel the way Stewart Perry did, describing his own response as a participant-observer in the context of 'dirty work' done elsewhere: 'To watch people work so hard and just stand and look is very difficult' (Perry, 1998: 60). So when a cleaner goes to see how others are doing, she may want to help now and she may want to brag later. If she wants to help, she first asks if her help is needed. A cleaner finding help thrust upon her, help she doesn't need or want, without the chance to turn the offer down, is well justified in feeling resentful and making implicit animadversions. Strategically, a worker will not want another to be able to brag at her expense, but she would want to be surrounded by hard workers. If we carry this argument to its logical conclusion with regard to the organization of cooperative work, we discover everyone hoping everyone else will do the work,

and no one working! Another paradox of rational selfishness, but such logic clearly defeats the institutionalization of behavior motivated by a desire to 'set a good example', which can never be a mechanism to reduce free-riding.

Twenty minutes later I was back in the basement with Mrs Kato folding dry clothes, and our conversation turned to what she calls the 'Murakami case'. Mrs Murakami is not really a good worker, she says, doesn't really pull her weight. 'What makes you say so? Doesn't she get her work done like everyone else?' 'People have to help her a lot, and she doesn't mind being helped.' After a moment's pause, Mrs Kato continued, 'Everyone hates being helped! There is nothing more irritating than to have someone come up to you while you're doing your own work and say "I've finished my floor, what have you got left here to do that I can help you with?"' She followed with a lengthy commentary on Mrs Murakami's laxity in light of the further fact that they all get the same number of yen per hour, a mere ¥800 or so base pay. Whether they work hard or not, have long years of service or not, the job pays the same. These days ¥100 is worth somewhat less than US$1. They make a minimum wage.

Mrs Yoshida, by contrast with Mrs Murakami, does not accept help although she works quite slowly, sometimes apparently deliberately slowly, eccentrically slowly. The physical double of Mrs Murakami and conspicuously overweight, she never asks anyone if they need her help because she is always the last one done. She works through all her breaks and almost all of lunch. She never speaks at all except to reply as briefly as possible when asked a direct question. Asked occasionally if she needs help, she shakes her head 'No' with the least possible motion, but does not speak. Uniquely among the crew members, she has a small metal box full of old tooth brushes and discarded dental probes with which to clean cracks, an attention to detail generally regarded as unnecessary. Everyone agrees she is a fine worker and a fine member.

About six months after I left Azusawa Hospital I learned that a transfer had been arranged to send Mrs Murakami to a new crew with a new contract at a nearby hospital. A common acquaintance assured me Mrs Kato was behind the transfer. While Mrs Kato is nominally only a worker like any other, her Azusawa crew's contract was Jigyōdan's first in Tokyo. She is widely known and respected throughout Tokyo worker cooperative circles. I did not ask Mrs Kato directly to explore the implications of how they are

paid for its effects on motivation, but reflection reveals that such a situation, seeming at first glance compatible with cooperation, actually subverts cooperation and worker solidarity. Looked at from the point of view of one worker judging the work of another in a cooperative, an equal wage is in fact a fairly strong mechanism motivating each worker to see that the standard of *everyone else's* work stays high. Equal pay makes one want to make sure everyone else is putting in work effort equal to one's own, if not more. The place to put one's extra effort would seem to be in making sure others are working hard. But how to do so without working harder yourself, and without getting accused of being a boss, or of not working? Well, anyway, you could go see if anyone needs any help . . .

But the Azusawa Hospital crew also has 'extra jobs' outside the hospital: a few neighborhood office toilets, some toilets in a private school, and the 'mansion' apartment building next to the hospital where they do floors in the public areas and the lobby toilets. The hospital cleaning crew does all this work after they finish their routine at the hospital. They keep 80 percent of the pay from these other jobs (with the remaining 20 percent going to the Jigyōdan main office) and divide this money equally among themselves. So anyone who works too slowly makes it harder for everyone else to increase their pay by getting and doing more jobs. Crew members say Mrs Yoshida works slowly and Mrs Murakami worked too slowly. The only difference I could discover is that Mrs Yoshida does not accept offers of help, and Mrs Murakami regularly accepted offers of help and did not learn not to.

I conclude from this seemingly slight distinction, however, that it would be a serious analytic error to understand the help offered in this worker cooperative as 'help: punish: carrot: stick'. Unlike Fehr and Sachter's (1996) cooperators and Boehm's (1999) egalitarians, workers in the worker cooperators in this present study routinely help each other with their work rather than punish each other for work not done. Although the constitutions of all three cooperatives analyzed here do make provision for removing ultimately unsatisfactory workers, questions of punishing rarely arose while I was working at them. But the work that is offered, refused and sometimes resented as 'help' does not finally equal, translate as, function as or stand for a reward for working hard or well. And it is especially not a perverse incentive that encourages workers to work less or more slowly in anticipation that someone will then

come and do their assigned work for them. Help is what workers must sometimes do in order to monitor workers who refuse to accept monitoring from each other, so that the monitored worker cannot accuse the monitoring ('helping') worker of acting like a boss or herself not working. 'Help' is the sacrifice one makes for 'the good of the group' which *does* include oneself (Marshall, 1994: 132–3). Cooperative workers who do not assimilate this home truth quickly despite the fact that, or precisely because, it cannot be told them explicitly may just as quickly be found unacceptable members.

Giving a Taste

The Jigyōdan cleaning crew's story centers on help given before it could be refused. Shun's story tells of help requested before it might be offered, forestalling offers of help, a story of quality, rather than quantity, control. Cooking as Shun does, by routinely asking for help flavoring dishes as they're being prepared, lets cooks from an entirely part-time workforce make the same dish taste the same for 200 on Tuesday that a completely different set of cooks made for 50 last Friday, without a master chef, without an individual coordinator, and without a cookbook. Cooking by casually asking whoever is at your elbow for help maintains Shun's egalitarian ethos as well by forestalling the rise of Boehm's 'aggressive egoism', as this term might be understood among middle-aged, middle-class Japanese housewives.

Shun ('In Season') is a *wākāzu korekuteibu* (workers' collective) of 14 housewives between 40 and 60 years old who operate a *shidashi-bentoya*, a lunch restaurant, as part-time workers. All members of the Seikatsu Club Consumer Cooperative, these women replied individually to an announcement from Seikatsu Club headquarters that it would begin providing economic help to women to start up worker cooperatives (Satō, 1988; Seikatsu Club Kanegawa, 1993). Many other women too, especially in the Tokyo-Yokohama area, have made the most of this opportunity (Marshall, in press). The Workers' Collective Network Japan, the official organ of the Women's Workers Collective movement, lists more than 12,000 women working in 463 *wākāzu korekuteibu* in February 2000 (Iwami, 2000: 234–58). In its fourth year when I went to work

there, Shun was already finding its space on the ground floor of the Saitama Prefecture Seikatsu Club Consumer Cooperative Building cramped.

Shun serves a lunch that any of its members would make for a friend visiting her home, and friends often do drop by Shun for lunch and a chat. Shun's meals are all hand prepared home cooking, made from wholesome Seikatsu Club ingredients. A different lunch is served every day. Each member cooks everything in Shun's repertoire of some 100 main dishes and as many side dishes. No one's appearance suggests she is not at home, cooking in her own kitchen. These cooks explicitly decided not to wear uniforms (*oshikise*). They favor slacks, even jeans, and blouses, even sweatshirts, and big colorful aprons with big pockets. They told me their first year was hard because everyone felt awkward about speaking their mind.[3] Since then it's been busy but fun. After only one month in business one of the original members quit: the work was just too hard. No one has quit since and three additional members have joined.

The building and equipment were all new to start with. The space was designed and built to be a lunch restaurant before Shun was formed. A half-wall and divided curtain (*noren*) split their space into a kitchen at the back and a lunch-counter and tables out front, which area they call *omise*, their 'shop'. On a typical day six women make 125 lunches, 30 of which they serve out front and the rest they deliver to five or six customers. A slow day might reach only half that number of lunches. A busy day has as many as ten members cooking 200 or more lunches in the overcrowded kitchen. There are occasional days where 300 lunches are required, ordered perhaps for a PTA meeting or a consumer cooperative's local convention. Shun's members work long days, from 8.30 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. or later. Rarely does anyone work two full days in a row, though a late afternoon followed by a whole day is common enough.

In the US one grows up hearing the old adage how 'too many cooks spoil the broth'. At Shun the implicit guiding principle seems to be just the opposite: 'too few cooks ruin the restaurant'. A day begins with each cook picking the dish on the menu she wants to make. Gathering up ingredients and implements, she starts to prepare her choice. Later, as she stirs in seasoning, she might offer the cook at her elbow a taste and a chance to comment, to make a suggestion to alter the flavor of what she's cooking. Cooks

offer tastes often and usually make any suggested changes. Most of the time, though, the cook's standard question of *dō*? (how is it?) is followed by the taster's answer of *oishii* (delicious). Occasionally a taster is not quite sure just what a dish does require for improvement and the cook offers a taste to a second taster. I think we must accept in principle that these cooks *do* want each other's comments and criticisms when they ask for them, and are open to those changes tasters sometimes suggest. What requires explanation is why they work this way at all, asking each other to taste and suggest improvements, involving each other in the flavoring of the dishes they are cooking as they prepare them.

A cook does not ask another to take a taste from a lack of confidence in her ability to prepare each dish deliciously. Shun is popular and successful, looking for ways and money to grow and branch out. In Shun's kitchen cooking is a social and collective process for which results the members are collectively responsible. Day after day each cook, all of them and not some more than others, asks whoever is nearest to taste dishes they've all prepared dozens of times since starting Shun, and throughout their married lives at home. Their behavior is spontaneous and genuine.[4] These requests to taste a dish and the responses tasters made were too frequent, too fleeting, too formless for me to type and count. I think I should not even have noticed that Shun cooks this way if I too had not been asked so often, so casually and so futilely to have a taste myself.

'Cooking by offering tastes' was never talked about in my presence, never identified or named, never highlighted as a distinct practice. Cooking this way, each cook puts her reputation for skill, sensitivity and taste into the hands of her co-cooks two or three times a week. While the usual answer to 'here, try this' is 'delicious', sometimes, not often, not on average more than once during a meal's preparation, the unusual answer might be 'maybe a little *shōyu* [soy]', or 'what about some *mirin* [thick, sweetened rice wine]', or any of a range of possibilities appropriate to the dish being tasted. But suggestions made politely are not mere politeness. They affect the food. They are considered as well as considerate. The cooks eat the leftovers, of course, so they know the taste of their cooking, but a judgment then is too late to affect that day's flavors. A taster doesn't just reply automatically, but makes a genuine judgment on the taste. Otherwise, would a taster sometimes say one thing, and other times another, add this, add that, and so on? Or a second

taster sometimes disagree with the first taster, suggesting a different flavoring? During Shun's first few years, this way of cooking became reflexive.

Several consequences equally relevant to taste, work organization and mutual monitoring follow from this practice. The most obvious is that everyone gains confidence in each other's abilities and maintains those levels of confidence daily. There is speed of preparation: a cook must have her dish prepared on time, and in time to have others taste and comment on it and for her then to change it a bit before it has to be sent out. So, if a dish is proving slower to prepare than anticipated, a hand can be given. Further, each cook has gradually become entirely familiar with the flavors that characterize the restaurant's cooking and become able to reproduce those flavors in batches of any size, from 30 to 300 servings. Each cook can make any of the restaurant's 200 or so dishes to any number of servings from experience. I never saw a cookbook or a written recipe although every day the next day's menu is sketched out on paper to plan how it will fit and appear in the lunch box compartments.

Each day she works each cook makes a dish from the menu planned the previous day by her colleagues with ingredients they will have purchased. And all the different combinations of cooks will cook a meal that tastes just like Shun's cooking always tastes. Between 4 January and 30 March 1994, the period of my fieldwork at Shun, chance matched the same crew (of seven) only twice (7 and 14 February). Finally, for this business to be successful and endure as a cooperative based entirely on part-time workers, it must not have a great dependence on any one or two members. Shun even had three of its members get training as bookkeepers. These women do not worry that one of them may be working not as hard as the others, all working in plain view and to a deadline, side by side in a tiny kitchen day after day. In general, a member works no more days than she wants to work.[5] This opportunity to monitor one another's work is not a matter of how much or how hard a member works, or even how well she cooks. It is a matter of taste, of each cook's knowledge and ability to achieve the consistent quality of Shun's cooking. A request to taste tests and informs the taster's judgment just as much as it does the cook's.

No one woman can take on the role of 'master chef' and begin to feel that she alone is the arbiter of taste, that her judgment

alone is superior.[6] Everyone must offer her food to be tasted, must taste and comment, and must be amenable to changing its flavor according to suggestions given. No one ever *asks* to taste something, and there is certainly no one person whose approval is needed to serve a dish. Neither is there a small group of superior cooks to whom the rest defer. Nor is there one, two, or any other number of members whose cooking is thought by the rest to be somehow inferior to the standard. Nor, in contrast to my experience in the linen room at Azusawa Hospital, did anyone ever taste a dish during its preparation while the cook's back was turned and comment on it or alter it without having been asked. The practice at Shun is to ask to have one's dish sampled: the work talk is always 'here, taste this, what do you think? Here, you taste it too. Too little shoyu? Too sweet? What do you think?'

These 14 women, who have cooked as housewives for 10, 20, 30 years, put their skills and taste to their colleagues' direct judgments every time they cook, every time they taste. They cannot say or even really think 'anyway, what does she know, I'm a much better cook than she is, I certainly won't let her fool with my cooking'. Thus, this practice of asking, tasting and responding has become casual, unobtrusive, impersonal, constant. Utterly crucial, yet it seems, really *has* to seem, virtually innocuous and unthinking, routine almost to the point of invisibility. No matter who cooks which of 200 dishes, the taste is Shun's. Shun's members do deliberately and carefully monitor the contents of the lunch boxes they've retrieved as they scrape each compartment out and submerge each box in the hot, soapy dishwater. They are eager to know what people ate and what they didn't. But they don't blame the cook for what customers might not have eaten all of, even if they remember, because they certainly don't ask who cooked what. Actually, I don't think anyone but the cook herself remembers, aside perhaps from the deep-fried dishes which need two or three cooks working in close coordination. They blame the recipe, more or less, or just leave it at that, since they have each made all these dishes many times before and have long since weeded out the unpopular ones. 'Guess they didn't like the spinach today' is about as full a comment as anyone makes now. But almost always all the boxes are completely clean and everyone is satisfied all around: '*Kyō wa oishikatta, desu ne!* Today was tasty, wasn't it!'

Asking for It

Japan's highly seasonal moving business fills city streets with vans full of furniture, clothes, appliances and toys from March through June. The 22 movers and 18 trucks of Tsubasa Ryūtsū, Wings Transport, move from four to 10 households a day to, from and around the Tokyo area during these four months. Tsubasa advertises an unblemished record for safety: no wrecks, no injuries, no insurance claims during its 10 years in the household moving business.

This cooperative's roots are in the transportation industry, organized labor and labor activism: five of the original 10 members founded the group after being fired for organizing workers in the trucking company where they worked, and a few years later they took on another four drivers, members of the same union, who had just been fired for the same thing. With its president in his early sixties, its vice president in his mid-forties, other long-time members in their forties and thirties, and several relatively new members in their early to mid-twenties, Tsubasa has an unusually wide range of ages and, as well, a remarkable diversity of experience and consciousness from oldest to youngest. Tsubasa's two women members are both wives of members; one drives a produce van, the other keeps the books and answers the phone.

At Tsubasa help is offered before it has to be requested. The way Tsubasa typically works, a mover reaches his arms out to the single person in front of him to get what he is carrying and then turns and carries it until the next guy comes up with empty, open arms and takes it from him. This practice works wordlessly as a technique superficially resembling the fire-fighters' 'bucket brigade'. Unlike the 'bucket brigade', however, where the principle is 'move water, not people' and the fire-fighters form a sort of living conveyer belt, the principle animating the Tsubasa movers' practice holds that 'everyone touches everything'. There could never be enough movers on a job to approximate a real bucket brigade anyway. The analogy lies in both practices' hopes to convey their hard-to-carry cargo effectively with a minimum of human movement.

Tsubasa's movers don't adhere to principle slavishly, any more than each cook at Shun offers a taste of every dish, or each cleaner on the Azusawa Hospital crew always turns down offers of help when she's on schedule. These work practices are not explicit rules

imposed, policed and enforced by bosses. They are ways of getting work done that seem reasonable, useful, practical to the people who developed them as they worked. The analyst's task is to understand why these patterns seem this way to the people who rely on them. My understanding is that these practices, each in its own setting, allow workers to work in ways that as they work they can, without seeming to be doing so, check up on important aspects of each other's work performance, at the cost to each of having to do a bit more work than if they were indifferent to how well the others worked. Movers must especially be able to monitor each other's strength and stamina as each day and as the years go along, in order to judge whether a member's slowing down might be short-term or long-term exhaustion, or free-riding. Working with workers who seem to be doing a bit more than they have to may raise a worker's confidence in his or her fellow workers and in their organization as a whole. In this way these practices are symbols of cooperation, and important components in these firms' cultures of cooperation.

I came to call Tsubasa's particular practice 'asking for it', although the movers do not have a word for this way of working and do not call it anything. Exactly like 'tasting' at Shun, this way of working wasn't named, it was done. When a mover above or below a large piece carried by two or more men together explicitly does 'ask for it', i.e. asks to be let help carry the piece, the movers conceive their activity as 'changing places or substituting' and use the word *kawaru* to describe their action and as a signal to coordinate their interaction: a mover doesn't so much ask the others to hand a refrigerator over but sees himself taking the place of one of the men who have brought it that far. He deliberately says *Kawaru* in a loud voice and then takes over the closest handhold on the piece. I return to this point later.

Variations on this cooperative way of moving a household's possessions are practiced more widely in Japan, not only at Tsubasa. A few times I did see other companies moving families into apartment buildings where we too were working, but from a distance, and while I was working it was impossible to discern any sharp pattern in their actions. But the following episode demonstrates that this pattern of 'asking for it' should not be taken uncritically as the default moving technique characteristic of Japanese culture but one which requires at least tacit agreement, and maybe explicit instruction, to get started. But it may also take an implicit desire

to monitor fellow workers to make sense to try to start it, and if so, this motivation may have been missing during the job described next.

Tsubasa took on a charity job unloading and reloading instruments, stage and sound equipment for a singer and his band who were giving a 'thank you' concert for an organization to which several Tsubasa members' wives belonged. Other young men, about 30 altogether, who had not worked at or with Tsubasa before were at the stage door to help unload too. The work was not explicitly organized by anyone with authority and confusion reigned for several minutes as two work styles clashed. The other workers picked up boxes alone or in a pair, carried them to their destination and returned to the truck empty handed. Clearly their previous experience in the transport industry had not prepared them for Tsubasa's work pattern. These men did not ask for things from others nor give boxes up to others when arms were held open to them. Gradually the seven Tsubasa workers, outnumbered, gave up trying to establish by example their own way of working. They did not try to establish their customary pattern verbally. Nor did they work together separately, parallel to the others. They integrated themselves into the process mainly as individuals or pairs, working as the others worked, in two lines, one carrying things from the truck and the other back to the truck empty-handed. When movers work this way, however, at least some workers can avoid some of the heaviest lifting and the number of round trips can vary among movers. When movers work as unsupervised individuals, they work at their own different individual paces, something neither Tsubasa nor other moving companies encourage. As one works, it is impossible to monitor the work of others as they work in this pattern without oneself working less.

At Tsubasa a mover working by wordlessly 'asking for' what he carries often runs, especially toward the end of the job, especially up the stairs to get the next piece from the mover behind him bringing things down. One demonstrates in this way one's willingness to work and to give the other guy a hand. No one ever says they won't or can't take something, and no one ever walks past someone and doesn't hand the item over, whatever it is. As a principle, *everyone handles everything*.

Of course the principle doesn't always come into play, especially with large, expensive, heavy, padded chests of drawers on narrow staircases. In some of these instances, four or five men will all be

working closely, as they had to at the concert job as well. This high degree of coordination is obvious when necessary, hard to avoid, and relatively rare while still occurring in almost every job. But when two movers take a big piece, maybe a large refrigerator, down a narrow *danchi*[7] stairwell, this pattern of asking for something to carry still prevails. They take over one from the other, with the bottom guy then taking the top guy's place. Ringing the changes when four men move one large dresser down four flights of stairs, as two men start carrying the object down, the next man met will replace the man holding the bottom, who in turn will replace the man at the top, so that finally the two who began the descent are not the two who lift their load onto the truck.

It is difficult to know whether changing places on narrow stairs, as difficult and awkward as it can be sometimes, is more efficient or less efficient than having the same crew in the same positions bringing a large refrigerator all the way down four flights of stairs. Some heavy things are very heavy, even for four experienced movers, and hard to keep a good grip on after a while. Backs get tired, hands get tired and slip. But, by changing places, everyone gets his hands on everything, and everyone gets a bit of work, and a change, and a bit of rest. Movers need to know as they work that the current job has not pushed anyone to his limit. Workers who must rely on each other for their own safety as they work must monitor each other's reserves as well as current performance. Here is where the macho acts, the physical challenges, the practical jokes, come in. One favorite joke is to act through body movement as if a box is really heavy, to seem to really stagger under its weight, and then hand it over. Of course the box is as light as a feather, so the guy who asks for it almost tosses it up into the air when he gets it.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the evolution of work and governance practices in firms, some innovations make it easier to overcome collective action problems, while others make defection from agreements more attractive, and 'it is only a matter of faith to believe that desirable innovations will always outrun socially counterproductive ones' (Dow, 1993: 123). This is an easy faith to fall into, however: even as astute a student of worker cooperatives as Jaroslav Vanek asserts that in them somehow 'workers tend to supervise each other, knowing

that losses of efficiency or negligence must be covered from the aggregate income of all participants' (Vanek, 1992: 185). But such knowledge alone is *not* enough to prevent free-riding, and *not* enough for workers to permit other workers to monitor them. The matter of mutual monitoring, far from being unambiguously simple, results in paradox and social dilemmas (Kollock, 1998; Huberman and Glance, 1998).

Production necessarily takes place over time, allowing a mutually advantageous agreement to degenerate into animosity, acrimony and adversarial antagonism as that agreement comes to be realized in practice. Williamson (1979: 242) has sharply observed that even where there is 'a long-term interest in effecting adaptations of a joint profit-maximizing kind, governance structures which attenuate opportunism and otherwise infuse confidence are evidently needed'. If a worker can reduce his or her effort without a proportionate decrease in income, an individual motive exists for shirking (Putterman, 1984: 172). Boehm (1999) has assembled abundant evidence that these conditions and responses obtain widely even in hunter-gatherer societies. We must continue to discover under what circumstances workers are more or less likely to act on that motivation or on other motivations.

Discovering rather than assuming what people in one's organization are up to requires monitoring. Monitoring issues are now generally treated as part of 'the monitoring puzzle' because many of the presumably most effective countermeasures to shirking, employee theft and poor performance are rarely deployed even in standard capitalist firms: punishment is not the whole answer anywhere (Dickens et al., 1989). From within the framework of the evolution of work and governance practices within firms, worker cooperatives have been thought to have inadequate incentive to control their own shirking in the course of team production, which in turn has been seen as giving rise to the demand for specialized monitors and, hence, to the 'classical capitalist firm' (Jensen and Meckling, 1976). But the evolutionary sequence this conclusion implies puts the causal cart before the historical horse: 'classical capitalist firms' gave rise to worker cooperatives as a response to their own market failures. What worker cooperatives often lack is not adequate incentive to control free-riding but an effective way to do so. To the extent that Jensen and Meckling are correct in their assertion that worker cooperatives cannot explicitly derive adequate governance mechanisms from first principles to effectively

monitor and reduce their own shirking, it is all the more important to observe that worker cooperatives may evolve effective symbols, a particular kind of pattern for strategic action, through which they can overcome at least this particular paradox of rational selfishness. Here patterns for action deduced from standard microeconomic premises stumble once again over the problem of individual rationality and system irrationality (Schelling, 1978; Axelrod, 1984; Sen, 1990), but this need not be a barrier to effective cooperative action.

It may make some sense to employees to do less than the required standard as interpreted by their supervisor. Employees can and do easily pardon other workers who sometimes do work less, and even themselves sometimes work less. In a worker-owned enterprise, however, it cannot make sense to a member to see another member working unaccountably less, however much work that member her- or himself does. This appears to me more correctly the observation that Vanek, cited earlier, wishes to express. Mellor et al. (1988: 130) report British cooperators resenting co-workers even going to the toilet or getting a cup of coffee.

Conceiving symbols as patterns for action to focus the strategic aspect of symbolism may help us better understand how individuals working together cooperatively might overcome the paradoxes of rational selfishness by acting through symbols and acting to be seen to be acting through symbols. Each of these variations on the symbol 'help', built seamlessly or having evolved into the work practices of these three Tokyo worker cooperatives, allows the workers in their respective cooperatives to monitor their co-workers in important aspects of their work performance. Working in this way, workers can monitor each other (at what seems to me an actually quite low immediate personal cost to themselves) where they are unable to express acceptable justifications to counter accusations that they are in fact doing so. Any explicit accusation that monitoring is taking place can be 'plausibly denied' to anyone, whether co-worker or participant observer, and maybe even oneself. The economist's suspicion that free-riding might be a problem under the conditions outlined here, and the anthropologist's assertion that there can be no default state of 'just working' that is not culturally constituted (Sahlins, 1976: 207), together justify examining these work patterns for their symbolic impact on workers individually and their effects on work performance as a whole in these cooperatives. In an economy where small businesses notoriously tend to instability (Chalmers, 1989: 76), these cooperatives continue to

extend their successful operations across their 12th, 14th and even 30th year in business in highly competitive, low-wage, low-profit service industries even through a decade of stagnation in Japan's national economy.

Perhaps at first glance it seems senseless to consider symbolism as a component of governance in a firm, especially insofar as it requires individuals to seem to be acting irrationally from conventional perspectives. Certainly such symbols, while clearly a part of work, indisputably *how* these workers work and not something tacked on to their work patterns, fall below the horizon of visibility when viewed from the familiar hierarchy of market, organizational and informal incentive structures. But 'help' cannot be usefully regarded as an element in an incentive structure, a reward (as opposed to a punishment) to individuals who accept offers of help, a 'perverse incentive' certain to reduce the amount of work done within the enterprise. Nor can 'help' in this practice be regarded as one side of a bilateral exchange, a return for equivalent but necessarily implicit units of permission to monitor, which a parallel argument with regard to authority suggests underlies employment agreements. 'Help' ought rather to be understood as a step one could take to determine whether a co-worker might deserve punishment without leaving oneself open in turn to accusations of either free-riding or arrogation of authority. It is the core of my argument that acting on such symbols without their being explicitly differentiated from the work itself is a condition of their smooth operation. All the examples Mellor et al. (1988: 129–31) provide of cooperative workers monitoring each other use techniques and perspectives external to the work process; and because they could not deflect one or the other of the two counteraccusations of bossing and loafing, they all failed to function effectively. This research suggests that effective monitoring will not be easily or explicitly identified as such in democratic workplaces.

I would like to conclude in a speculative vein by suggesting that perhaps we might justifiably regard the question of the rationality or irrationality of strategic activity like that presented here centering on the symbol 'help' as irremediably undecidable, and by asking whether there would be any reason not to consider it the logical equivalent of the contingent rationality of opportunistic free-riding. Because production unfolds in time, might we not usefully consider each of the relationships of helping, punishing and free-riding as a species of investment whose possible future value and

its distribution is a problem of 'critical mass', one whose outcome depends on how many fellow workers make the same decision? This relationship too is strategic insofar as the choices some make may influence the choices others make. If many choose to ride free, they will kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. Frequent punishment or even threats of punishment may produce results just as deleterious as free-riding, collectively as well as individually, for a process of cooperative production. But if many, especially if almost all, fellow workers in a cooperative workplace work in a way that makes monitoring by helping undeniably more productive overall, this practice may be felt to be inspiring, as symbols so often are felt. Multivocality, the characteristic property of symbolism that allows concerted action without demanding a consensual interpretation, reminds me, as no doubt it has reminded others, of Schroedinger's cat, which as long as its box remains closed, is simultaneously alive and dead in a quantum-mechanical way.

Notes

Research for this article was conducted in Japan during the summer of 1991 and the 12 months from mid-September 1993 to mid-September 1994. This research was supported in part by the Social Science Research Council, the US Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad Program and Western Washington University. An earlier version of this article was presented as part of the panel 'Work Ideology and Practice in Broader Context: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Changing Organization of Work' at the 1995 annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association in Washington, DC. I thank particularly Professor Tomizawa Kenji for his generous hospitality during my residence as Visiting Research Professor at Hitotsubashi University Institute of Economic Research while he was director of that entirely estimable institute. The staff and members of the Japan Institute of Cooperative Research as well extended to me every consideration and several opportunities to present my ideas while I developed them for criticism and comment. Their collective remarks were always helpful. And I especially thank Professor Tsukamoto Ichiro, who guided me to and around the already large and still rapidly growing literature in Japanese on Japan's worker cooperatives.

1. Worker cooperatives replace the work relation called 'employment', the default relationship of hierarchical authority with which employees are familiar, with a more egalitarian but less familiar alternative work relation (Putterman, 1982). Yet even the current leading model used by worker cooperatives in Europe, the US and Japan remains an 'employment model' (Lushin, 1996: 1–2): the firm is conceived as the principal, rather than the instrument of its worker-owners, who 'merely participate in the selection of their masters'. Institutionalizing ownership among workers alone certainly does not automatically solve all problems of relations of production in the

workplace, by far. Students of worker cooperatives such as Jay (1980) and Bradley and Gelb (1983) who assumed cooperative ownership itself would reduce transaction costs due ultimately to failures of governance have not had their expectations borne out.

2. Eventually patients even leave Japanese hospitals, where stays are on average the longest in the world by far (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984: 191; Powell and Anesaki, 1990: 169).

3. British cooperative workers as well suffer this handicap at start-up (Mellor et al., 1988: 116–17).

4. Faking requests and their responses could not be sustained, it would seem, beyond the first year. The methodological recommendation Wikan (1990: 134) offers for the study of women in Bali applies here as well, insofar as Japan is somewhat similar to Bali with regard to personal expression of emotion and intent. Wikan points out that to be interpreted reliably emotional expression must always occur with a cluster of *other* signs of significance 'that serve to position people with regard to their orientation as a key to what people are beneath (or within) the bright face it is incumbent on all to display'.

5. Several of them would prefer to work more than they do, but their income tax bills would rise dramatically if the second income in the household, the one from Shun, rose above the relatively low level of ¥1,030,000 (US$10,300) (Horioka, 1998: 15). This phenomenon is popularly called 'The Million Yen Wall' (*hyakuman-en kabe*).

6. There are workers' cooperatives like this in Japan, however. I visited but did not work at a bread and pastry bakery centered on a retired master baker eager to pass on his knowledge to a younger generation. This cooperative was not incubated by the Seikatsu Club Consumer Cooperative and is not rooted in the consumer cooperative movement.

7. *Danchi* are sprawling apartment complexes which ring Tokyo and other urban centers by the thousands, four to six stories high and usually without elevators, often of several buildings with hundreds of apartments of two-rooms plus a kitchen. A Dutch journalist called them 'rabbit hutches' (*usagi-goya*) in the 1970s and the name has stuck in Japan as well.

References

Altman, Morris (2002) 'Economic Theory and the Challenge of Innovative Work Practices', *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 23(2): 271–90.

Axelrod, Robert (1984) *The Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Basic Books.

Boehm, Christopher (1999) *Hierarchy in the Forest: The Evolution of Egalitarian Behavior*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1998) *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre and L. Wacquant (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis (1993) 'Agency, Incentives and Democratic Accountability', pp. 1–11 in S. Bowles, H. Gintis and B. Gustafsson (eds) *Markets and Democracy: Participation, Accountability and Efficiency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bradley, K. and A. Gelb (1983) *New Industrial Relations*. London: Heinemann.

Chalmers, Norma J (1989) *Industrial Relations in Japan: The Peripheral Workforce*. London: Routledge.

Dickens, William T., Lawrence F. Katz, Kevin Lang and Lawrence H. Summers (1989) 'Employee Crime and the Monitoring Puzzle', *Journal of Labor Economics* 7(3): 331–47.

Dow, Gregory (1993) 'The Appropriability Critique of Transaction Cost Economics', pp. 101–32 in Christos Piletis (ed.) *Transaction Costs, Markets and Hierarchies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Elster, Jon (1989) *The Cement of Society: A Study of Social Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fehr, Ernst and Simon Sachter (1996) 'Cooperation and Punishment', Working Paper, Institute for Empirical Economic Research, University of Zilrich.

Fister, Pat (1985) '*Tengu*, the Mountain Goblin', pp. 103–27 in Stephen Addiss (ed.) *Japanese Ghosts and Demons*. New York: George Braziller.

Godelier, Maurice (1999) *The Enigma of the Gift*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Hansmann, H. (1990) 'When Does Worker Ownership Work? ESOPs, Law Firms, Codetermination and Economic Democracy', *Yale Law Journal* 99: 1749–816.

Horioka, Charles Yuji (1998) 'Do the Japanese Live Better than Americans?', pp. 3–10 in James Mak, Shyam Sunder, Shigeyuki Abe and Kazuhiro Igawa (eds) *Japan: Why It Works, Why It Doesn't*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Huberman, Bernardo A. and Natalie S. Glance (1998) 'Beliefs and Co-Operation', pp. 210–35 in Peter Danielson (ed.) *Modeling Rationality, Morality and Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Iwami Takashi (2000) *Shigoto to shokuba wo kyōdō de tsukurō: wākāzu kōpu to shinia kōpu* [Let's Create Work and Workplaces with Cooperation: Workers' Co-ops and Seniors Co-ops]. Tokyo: Shakai Hyoronsha.

Jay, Peter (1980) 'The Worker Co-operative Economy', pp. 9–45 in Alasdair Clayre (ed.) *The Political Economy of Co-operation and Participation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jensen, Michael C. and William H. Meckling (1976) 'Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Ownership Structure', *Journal of Financial Economics* 3: 305–60.

Jigyōdan (1998) *An Introduction to the Worker's Co-operative Movement in Japan*. Tokyo: Japanese Worker's Cooperative Union (Jigyōdan).

Kertzer, David (1988) *Ritual, Politics and Power*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Kollock, Peter (1998) 'Transforming Social Dilemmas: Group Identity and Co-operation', pp. 185–209 in Peter Danielson (ed.) *Modeling Rationality, Morality and Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Latour, Bruno (1986) 'The Powers of Association', pp. 264–80 in John Law (ed.) *Power, Action and Belief*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Latour, Bruno (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1955) 'The Structural Study of Myth', pp. 81–106 in Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.) *Myth: A Symposium*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lushin, Laddie (1996) *The Self-Managed Worker Co-operative*. Randolf, VT: self-published.

March, James G. (1966) 'The Power of Power', pp. 39–70 in David Easton (ed.) *Varieties of Political Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Marshall, Robert C. (1994) 'Urbanized Hamlets, Collective Action and Municipal Administration in Japan', *City and Society Annual Review*: 118–38.

Marshall, Robert C. (in press) 'Why Has an Expanding Movement of Worker Co-operatives Emerged in Japan among Middle Aged, Middle Class Housewives over the last 15 Years?', Ch. 7 in Paul Durrenberger and Judith Marti (ed.) *Labor. Society for Economic Anthropology*, Vol. 21. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Marvin, Carolyn and David Ingle (1999) *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mellor, Mary, Janet Hannah and John Stirling (1988) *Worker Co-operatives in Theory and Practice*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Müller, Birgit (1991) *Toward an Alternative Culture of Work: Political Idealism and Economic Practices in West Berlin Collective Enterprises*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko (1984) *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Orr, Allen (1998) 'Why Do We Cooperate? An Exchange on Genes and Culture: Allen Orr Replies', *Boston Review*; at: www-polisci.mit.edu/bostonreview/BR23.1/Gintis.html#4

Paige, Karen Ericksen and Jeffery M. Paige (1981) *The Politics of Reproductive Ritual*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Perry, Stewart E. (1998) *Collecting Garbage: Dirty Work, Clean Jobs, Proud People*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers.

Powell, Margaret and Masahira Anesaki (1990) *Health Care in Japan*. Routledge: London and New York.

Putterman, Louis (1982) 'Some Behavioral Perspectives on the Dominance of Hierarchical over Democratic Forms of Enterprise', *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 3: 139–60.

Putterman, Louis (1984) 'On Some Recent Explanations of Why Capital Hires Labor', *Economic Inquiry* 22(4): 171–87.

Russell, Raymond (1995) *Utopia in Zion: The Israeli Experience with Worker Cooperatives*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Sahlins, Marshall (1976) *Culture and Practical Reason*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Satō Yoshiyuki, ed. (1988) *Joseitachi no seikatsu nettowāku – seikatsu kurabu ni tsudou hitobito* [Women's Lifestyle Network: People who Gather at the Seikatsu Club]. Tokyo: Bunshindö.

Schelling, Thomas C. (1978) *Micro-Motives and Macro-Behavior*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Seikatsu Club Kanegawa (1993) *Wākāzu kōpu 21 seiki no kanosei: wākāzu korekuteibu kokusai shinpojiumu* [The Possibilities of Worker Co-ops in the 21st Century: Workers Collective International Symposium]. Yokohama: Seikatsu Club Kanegawa.

Sen, Amartya (1990) 'Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory', pp. 22–43 in Jane Mansbridge (ed.) *Beyond Self-Interest*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Sperber, Dan (1975) *Rethinking Symbolism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tomizawa Kenji (1988) 'Chiiki gaiken to rōdōsha kyōdō kumiai undō' [Regional Reconstruction and the Worker Co-Operative Movement], *Chingin to shakai hoshō* [Wage and Social Security] 11: 19–23.

Tomizawa Kenji (1990) 'The Worker's Co-Operative Movement in Japan – Case Study of Jigyödan', paper presented at the International Symposium on 'The Role of Industrial Co-Operatives in Economic Development', Moscow, 5–8 February.

Tomizawa Kenji (1991) 'Chūkōnen kōyō: fukushi jigyōdan no rōdōsha kyōdōkumiai undō' [Middle-Aged and Elderly Employment: Welfare Enterprise Group and the Workers' Collective Movement], *Ohara shakai mondai kenkyujo zasshi* [The Journal of the Ohara Research Institute for Social Problems] 9: 12–26.

Tomizawa Kenji, Nakagawa Yuichiro and Yanagisawa Toshikatsu, eds (1996) *Rōdōsha kyōdōkumiai no shinchihei: shakaiteki keizai no gendaiteki saisen* [The New Horizon of Workers' Cooperatives: The Modern Regeneration of the Social Economy]. Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha.

Vanek, Jaroslav (1992) 'Afterword', pp. 183–92 in Frank T. Adams and Gary B. Hansen (eds) *Putting Democracy to Work*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Wikan, Unni (1990) *Managing Turbulent Hearts*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Williamson, Oliver (1979) 'Transaction Cost Economics: The Governance of Contractual Relations', *Journal of Law and Economics* 22(October): 233–61.

Winther, Gorm and Richard Marens (1997) 'Participatory Democracy May Go a Long Way: Comparative Growth Performance of Employee Ownership in Firms in New York and Washington States', *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 18(August): 393–422.

Robert C. Marshall
is Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology at Western Washington University. He has been studying Japan's worker cooperatives since 1991 and was in Japan during 2002 as a Fellow of the Japan Foundation to investigate the new consumer–worker hybrid cooperatives of, by and for the elderly in Japan, known as Senior Cooperatives.