Marketization Reforms and Citizenship Behavior
Ownership of Service Delivery, Users’ Identities and Coproduction

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Abstract
Public services that are tax-funded, public goods, are sometimes marketized to be delivered by private companies. Additionally, marketization often involves the users of services being described and treated as customers for the service rather than as citizens. These two aspects of marketization reforms have transformed the way citizens-as-customers interact with those providers delivering public services on behalf of the state. In this study, we argue that these marketization reforms have unintended consequences for citizenship behavior as measured by people’s willingness to coproduce local public services. On the one side, marketization reforms risk reducing users’ willingness to coproduce because private companies cannot commit ex-ante to not appropriate donated labor for private gain. On the other side, customer language may invoke individualistic market norms that lower prosocial motivation compared to citizenship duty. We assess these unintended democratic consequences of recent marketization reforms in three survey experiments in the United States. We find that making use of private for-profit contractors to deliver local public services undermines users’ willingness to engage in coproduction and the amount of time they would volunteer (compared to public organizations). There is no evidence, however, for the effects of priming to invoke customer- rather than citizen-based thinking on people’s willingness to coproduce. We conclude that institutional service delivery arrangements are not neutral; contracting-out local public services to private delivery companies may reduce capacity for public action through lost coproduction opportunities.

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Introduction

Many local public services are non-excludable, non-rival, public goods that are funded by taxation. In recent years, these services have been subject to marketization that, whilst stopping short of the full use of private markets for funding and delivery, entails the use of private, for-profit organizations in the delivery of publicly funded services. This delivery using contracts with privately owned companies contrasts with publicly owned organizations directly delivering the service (Greve 2008; Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). At the same time, another element of marketization reforms has been the recasting of service users as ‘customers’ of delivery organizations. Their treatment as customers is happening despite their continued role as citizens - in the sense of being members of the political communities that commission and pay tax for public services (Fountain 2001; Clarke et al. 2007).

These two aspects of marketization reform have transformed the way that citizens interact with public service providers. This issue is important because interaction with public services is a crucial part of citizens-as-service-users’ relationship with the state and those who act on its behalf. The transformed relationship has implications for citizenship behavior. An important measure of the outcomes of citizenship is the effect on their involvement in the coproduction of public services. Coproduction entails users contributing knowledge or undertaking effort to help bring about services in a cooperative way in service delivery (Sharp 1980; Brudney and England 1983; Ostrom 1996; Bovaird 2007). Coproduction is synergistic between producers and users, and benefits include more and better services. Coproduction affects the capacity for public action, and the cooperation of users is often vital for services to be delivered (Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006; Bovaird 2007).

This study assesses the effects of the two aspects of marketization reform on citizens’ willingness to coproduce public services. The first is the effect of whether the organization delivering the service is publicly owned or is a private, for-profit firm. Employees of private, for-profit, companies have been found to be less willing to contribute to organizational public goods because they fear the organization will appropriate their efforts and reduce its own contribution to boost profits (Francois 2000; Gregg et al. 2011). Using private, for-profit companies to deliver services may suggest to users of public services that coproduction
efforts by them would similarly lead to lower contributions by the for-profit organization, thereby reducing these users’ willingness to coproduce. In addition, research on public organizations has found pro-social attitudes and motivation by those working in them to produce services in the public interest (Perry and Wise 1990; Perry 1996). Furthermore, public organizations’ missions and environments help to socialize public employees to foster public service motivation (Kjeldsen and Jacobsen 2012; Moynihan and Pandey 2007). On this basis, service users would expect those working in public organizations to work with them to improve services, increasing their willingness to coproduce.

The second form of marketization effect on coproduction is users being treated as a customer in the delivery of the service, using the language of market-type service provision. This language contrasts with users being described as citizens with the associated language of rights and duties that are connected to being members of a political community. Citizenship, especially republican and related concepts of active citizenship, suggests a duty of pro-social community-oriented action by citizens (Dalton 2006). These conceptions promote users’ contributions to public goods, including coproduction. In contrast, the customer orientation brings to users’ minds market contexts and individual choice. These ‘market metaphors’ weaken the civic engagement obligations of citizens (Fountain 2001; Sandel 2012; Falk and Szech 2013). Taken together, a customer rather than citizen orientation in the delivery of services tends to reduce users’ willingness to coproduce.

We test whether these two aspects of marketization reform affect citizens’ willingness to coproduce using a series of experiments. The first section of the study sets out the theoretical implications of recent marketization reforms on citizenship behavior as coproduction. The second section describes three survey experiments to assess the empirical implications of public/private delivery scenarios and priming citizen/customer differences on users’ willingness to coproduce local public services. The findings show that making use of private providers to deliver services undermines users’ willingness to engage in coproduction and the amount of time they volunteer (compared to public organizations). There is much less evidence for the effects of priming to invoke customer- rather than citizen-based thinking on people’s willingness to coproduce. The final section draws conclusions about the findings, and develops their implications for marketization reforms, citizenship and the coproduction of
public services. On this basis, we develop an agenda for future research on the democratic consequences of marketization reforms.

Encouraging contributions to coproduce and marketization reforms

Coproduction is important for the many public services that require or otherwise benefit, from mixing the contributory efforts of service providers and their users (Parks et al. 1981; Ostrom 1996; Alford, 2002; 2009; Jakobsen, 2013). Alford (2009: 2-4) notes that “[...] a lot of public sector activity (and for that matter, of private sector activity as well) entails client coproduction.” He quotes Fuchs’ (1968) observation that the customer is an important cooperating agent in the production process and highlights his description of the customer as a ‘coproducer’ for some services in markets. Most work on coproduction to date, consistent with Alford’s (2009) book, have sought to examine the benefits that public sector organizations receive from coproduction, and/or looked at what organizations have to do in order to encourage coproduction. Similar to existing studies, we consider influences on users’ willingness to contribute, but directly assess the effect of two aspects of recent marketization reform components. This includes the effect of ownership status of the organization delivering the service, and the effect of the way service users are treated using language associated with either being citizens or customers.

Whether a user interacts with a public or a private organization delivering a public service matters for their willingness to coproduce. There has been a rise of public service delivery oriented towards private, especially customer focused, provision with the aim of satisfying individual preferences and facilitating user choice, which is a fundamentally different conception to civic republicanism (Jilke 2015). Publicness is multi-dimensional but typically taken as entailing public ownership, funding and/or regulation of an activity (Bozeman 1987). The contrast between a publicly owned and a private, especially for-profit, organization is a particularly salient form of difference of publicness. The literature on pro-social motivation of people working in organizations suggests public or private organizational ownership status will affect citizens’ expectations about their involvement in coproduction. Weisbrod (1988) refers to the legal “nondistribution constraint” of not-for-profit organizations. Indeed, for-profit bodies typically distribute profits to defined groups including shareholders of listed-
stock companies and other private owners including private equity funds (Francois 2000; Folkman 2009; Gregg et al. 2011). This contrasts with public organizations that cannot legally redistribute profits in this way, but instead ought to use them to improve public goods. These differences may create organizational incentive structures that lead their employees to substitute public service standards with a for-profit logic and commercial service standards (Jilke, Van Dooren and Rys 2018). In this sense, for-profit organizations have been argued to undermine mission-oriented, pro-social, behavior because these organizations cannot commit ex-ante not to expropriate donated labor (Francois 2000). Research on pro-social motivation measured as unpaid overtime in hospitals suggests that private sector ownership is associated with lower employee pro-social outcomes (Gregg et al. 2011). An analogous, but so far uncertain possibility is that the coproduction required in many public services will be undermined because users will be concerned that for-profit providers will expropriate their contributions.

Public delivery organizations further potentially encourage coproduction relative to privately owned organizations because of features of these organizations and the individuals that work within them. Studies have found evidence of pro-social attitudes and motivation to produce services in the public interest by those working in public organizations (Perry and Wise 1990; Perry 1996). Public organizations because of their mission and environment encourage the socialization of employees working in these organizations to develop public service motivation (Kjeldsen and Jacobsen 2012; Moynihan and Pandey 2007). These findings suggest that users interacting with public organizations have stronger reasons to think that their coproduction efforts will be matched by efforts of public employees than those interacting with private organizations, raising their willingness to coproduce.

A key aspect of marketization reforms of public service delivery entails a shift of how service users are perceived and treated by those providing the service (Clarke et al. 2007). Role conceptions of service users that tap notions of republican and active citizenship on the one side, and consumerism and individual choice on the other, have important democratic implications (Jilke 2015, p. 155; Rys 2018). Thus there are good reasons to think that whether the user of a service perceives him or herself as a citizen or a customer has effects on their willingness to coproduce. The broader importance of considering whether the users of public services identify as citizens, customers or something else, sometimes termed partners, is long
recognized (Thomas 2013). The extent to which citizenship rights and duties extend beyond compulsion to pay tax into activities like coproduction varies across concepts of citizenship. The general issue of citizen responsibilities has long been discussed in responsibilities under the welfare state (Rothstein 1998), for example, to be available for work, and in duties to obey laws. It is increasingly recognized that obeying the law is highly dependent on the legitimacy of the laws and this is influenced by citizens’ observation of procedural justice in practice by police and others implementing it (Tyler 2006). In addition, research on social identity labeling suggests that people exhibit prosocial behavior such as volunteering when they are ascribed an identity label such as citizen, whose traits correspond with that prosocial behavior (Rogers, Goldstein and Fox 2018, p. 371; Tybout and Yalch 1980). However, the issue of citizens’ social identities and their corresponding rights and duties has been analyzed much less for coproduction of local public goods typically provided by local municipalities to their residents. Whilst some services compel citizen engagement, perhaps most notably those in criminal justice or the military, the traditional civic republican conception of citizenship requires a much more generalized active participation in the political life of the community. One aspect of this conception is that citizens should have pro-social motivation, a concern with the welfare of other citizens. In this way, citizenship duty is one way of getting people to recognize coproduction duties across a range of local services, as well as their rights to receive such services.

Collective improvements by means of active citizenship are potentially downgraded when relationships between service recipients and service providers are defined in terms of a customer model with a market logic of individual self-interest and individual utility maximization. Under some circumstances, individual action may have benefits for all users in public service markets, for example where competitive public service markets appear to bring benefits even for vulnerable customers (Fernández-Gutiérrez, James and Jilke 2016). However, Falk and Szech (2013) show that people are more likely to act against their own moral standards when they engage in market interactions. Similarly, Sandel (2012) argues that market norms can crowd out pro-social non-market norms so the scope of markets should be limited. In addition, a body of literature suggests that introducing market-based incentive mechanisms like pay-for-performance into public sector employment crowds out individual’s prosocial and intrinsic work motivations (Georgelis, Iossa and Tabvuma 2011;
Weibel, Rost and Osterloh 2010). This highlights the potentially corrosive effects of a market and customer based model – which is based on market mechanisms - on people’s pro-social efforts. Consequently, we would expect that service users being made aware of this market-dominant logic through priming using the language of being a customer (versus citizen) would be less inclined to coproduce public services.

This focus on the public/private and citizen/customer factors influencing coproduction contributes to a more general literature developing about the effects of institutional structures on coproduction, for example parental involvement in charter schools compared to public school structures in the US (Bifulco and Ladd 2006). It also contributes to the literature on factors that influence the level of coproduction. Following on from Rosentraub and Sharp (1981) who noted the role of regulations, setting up incentives such as monetary rewards, facilitating coproduction by making it easier to coproduce, and providing information, an extensive literature has developed about coproduction initiatives available to public organizations (e.g., Ostrom 1996; Alford 2009; 2014; Thomas 2013; Jakobsen 2013; Voorberg et al. 2018). Within the research on factors affecting coproduction, our work draws on research that has sought to examine and influence the motivation to coproduce through informational strategies (Jakobsen 2013; Jakobsen and Thomsen 2016).

We examine as a dependent variable users’ willingness to coproduce as reflected in time volunteered to help provide the service. Consistent with moves to incorporate insights from psychology into public administration we conceive this willingness as underpinned by motivation to coproduce, referring to the psychological processes that direct, energise, and sustain action or an inner desire to make an effort (Dowling and Sayles 1978; Latham and Pinder 2005; Grimmelikhuijsen et al. 2017). Coproduction is pro-social behavior because it is a form of motivation oriented to helping others, similar to aspects of public service motivation of public employees (Perry and Wise 1990, Esteve, Urbig, van Witteloostuijn and Boyne 2015). The empirical expectations about willingness to coproduce that are evaluated in the experiments described in the next section are set out below (in bold):

Private, for-profit ownership for service delivery invokes an assessment of a producer’s lower prosocial motivation to coproduce and associated fear of expropriation of donated time compared to a public provider which will lead to a lower willingness to volunteer time to
coproduce under a private company relative to public ownership of the delivery organization.

Customer primed thinking invokes customer thinking based on individualistic market norms that lower prosocial motivation compared to citizenship duty, thereby lowering personal prosocial motivation which will lead to a lower willingness to volunteer time to coproduce under customer relative to citizen primed thinking.

Experiments about willingness to coproduce

We evaluate these empirical expectations through a series of experiments in which participants were presented with scenarios with the delivery of local public services described as either using a public organization or a private company in its delivery. In addition, we either invoked citizen or customer thinking within these scenarios. As outcome variable, we examined participants’ willingness to donate time to coproduce the services. Here, we focus on the coproduction of local public goods where the benefits from coproduction are enjoyed by a larger group of citizens which may not necessarily have to contribute themselves in order to enjoy them. This is the classic non-rival, non-excludable public good of economic theory (Samuelson 1954). Such goods contrast with coproduction of individual private goods where the benefits are rival and excludable, for example, doing psychical exercises benefits the citizen performing the action (Bovaird et al. 2015). The local public goods we examine have the feature that the recipients of the service pay tax for its provision, so the service is publicly funded in this sense (Goodin 2003). We focus on coproduction responses to there being a failure of the service because research has found that people have stronger reactions to negative events, triggering a search to make sense and try to respond to them (DeHoog, Lowry, Lyons, 1992; James et al. 2015; Van de Walle 2017). Failure events are also service situations where coproduction is requested of local people as a response in order to help improve the situation (James and Jilke 2017). Service failure makes the need for coproduction of the local public good salient such that people would consider stepping in as coproducers. We constructed a series of three experiments to do this.
Experiment 1

The first experiment focused on participants’ willingness to donate time using realistic scenarios about coproduction in response to a service failure. The experiment presented participants with three scenarios, followed by questions about their willingness to contribute time to coproduce. The scenarios were presented in random order to control for order effects, and encompassed a set of local public services typically provided by a municipality: 1) a local park and picnic area, 2) local security and 3) local street cleanliness. The experiment gave participants information about the failure of each service coupled with the treatments set out below, including an appeal to improve the situation by volunteering time individually to coproduce the service. Drawing on laboratory experiments about real-time donations by participants in a lab-based task (Linardi and McConnell 2011) we used a metric of actual time to make the measure as meaningful as possible to participants.

Participants

We conducted the experiment online, using a set of US participants recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (AMT). We included a screening question to assess whether respondents rushed through the survey, and gathered a set of variables for the sample to check against the broader population. After excluding those who did not finish the survey until the end, we were left with 528 respondents in total. To make sure that participants did not engage in survey satisficing and rushed through the questionnaire without paying attention, we added an instructional manipulation check (IMC). IMCs reliably screen-out satisficers, thereby increasing statistical power (Oppenheimer, Meyvis and Davidenko 2009), but also have been found to increase respondents attention (Hauser and Schwartz 2015). A total of 7 respondents (21 scenario-observations) failed the test and were excluded from the analysis (our results are robust to including those additional respondents). In addition, four respondents did not provide information on our dependent variable. We were left with a total 517 respondents and 1,550 scenario-observations in the models reported here (for one respondent we have only responses to two of the scenarios).

Material and Procedure
We implemented a 2-by-3 factorial design. As a first treatment, the organization delivering the service was presented as either a public municipality delivering the service itself or as a private, for-profit company (contracted through a municipality). This information served as an information cue about the type of organization the citizen would face in coproduction activity. Cues are summary shortcuts that help people economize on information and interpret what is appropriate or the best form of action in a particular situation. Such cues have been found influential in similar contexts, for example summary information about the performance of local services influence citizens’ evaluations of the public bodies providing those services and cues affect blame of politicians following service failure (James 2011a; James et al. 2016; Jilke et al. 2017; Marvel and Girth 2016; Piatak et al. 2017). The cues of a public organization contrasting with a private company convey different concepts of the publicness of service delivery to citizens.

As a second treatment, we engaged the participants in a priming task to bring to the fore either citizen or customer based thinking. This task was implemented before and separate from the scenarios. We used a priming method adapted from Kay and Ross (2013) to establish contexts that subsequently affected cooperation in playing prisoners dilemma games. Our priming task involved participants being randomly allocated to reordering a set of seven lists of four words to make sense, with the set invoking either 1) citizen-based thinking, 2) customer-based thinking, or 3) a neutral control condition which did not include any task. For example, the citizen-based set included reordering the words “undertake people their duties”, interpretable as “people undertake their duties” and the customer based set included reordering words such as ”decide consumers themselves for” as ”consumers decide for themselves”. This task was presented to participants as a separate task unrelated to the scenario descriptions that followed.

Randomization into one of the six experimental conditions was independently determined for each of the three scenarios (i.e., a local park and picnic area, local security and local street cleanliness) – a full description of the used materials for the three services can be found in the online appendix. However, we include the full scenario as follows for the example of a local park and picnic area:
Imagine you are a resident of Middletown, a normal municipality in the United States. In the past few months, the local park and picnic area has got into a poor state of repair with broken benches and damaged facilities.

To investigate who is responsible for maintaining the park and picnic area you visit the website of the municipality (to whom you pay local taxes to provide the patrols).

It says that [Middletown Department of Recreation, part of local government/ Middletown Recreation Company, a private firm] is paid to deliver these services.

We measured the outcome of willingness to coproduce for each scenario by asking: “How much time would you donate to assist [Middletown Department of Recreation/ Middletown Recreation Company] within the next month as a one off initiative to improve the situation by helping them to fix the space?” Respondents were provided a slider scale ranging from 0 hours to 100. Our first outcome of interest is whether users’ stated they would coproduce at all (or not), by dichotomizing the measure (i.e., 0 hours versus 1-100 hours). Our second outcome of interest makes use of the full scale of the response to the question to examine the actual amount (within the provided time scale) participants would be willing to coproduce.

Results

We pool scenario-observations for each of the three scenarios respondents have been exposed to, in order to estimate the average treatment effect of our experimental manipulations on people’s willingness to contribute time. This means that we have a nested data structure with scenario-observations (individuals completed multiple scenarios) nested in respondents. Therefore, our estimation strategy involves clustering respondents’ standard errors because scenario-observations are not independent of each other.² To assess the causal effects of publicness on coproduction we consider two aspects of individuals’ contribution. First, we look at whether respondents would be willing to contributing any time versus not contributing time at all (first measure). We dichotomize the measure of time contribution so that it displays “1” for any time contribution, and zero otherwise. Second, we examine how much time they would be willing to give (secondary measure). Our estimation sample includes a total of 1,550 scenario-observations, nested in 517 respondents (for one respondent we have only responses to two of the scenarios). We estimated a logistic regression model for our primary outcome and a Tobit regression model for our secondary

² When we analyze each scenario separately our results are fully identical to the ones provided here.
measure to account for its censored nature (29% zeros and an upper boundary of 100 hours). Results are graphically represented in Figure 1, with full results being available in the appendix (table A1). The top and bottom panels (first and second outcome, respectively) of Figure 1 includes dot plots which represent parameter estimates and their respective 95% confidence intervals, with the thick inner lines representing 90% confidence intervals.

We find that the information cue about private provision has a substantial meaningful and statistically significant effect. Model 1 shows that private ownership, compared to public, reduces willingness to engage in coproduction, reducing the probability of contributing by about 14 percentage points. This means that respondents were about 14 percentage points less likely to coproduce with a private, for-profit service provider, compared to a public service provider. The citizen versus customer prime, however, did not have an effect on the probability of whether somebody would give their time, and no significant interaction effect between both could be detected.

Model 2 (using the second measure of number of hours volunteered) presents consistent findings. Providing respondents with a cue about private provision of services decreases the amount of time they would donate to fix a hypothetical service failure. The effect is not only statistically significant but also nontrivial in size, accounting for a loss of about 5.7 hours on average. This means that respondents stated that they would coproduce for notably less time with a private for-profit provider when compared to a public service provider. If we look at the citizen/customer primes, however, we have to conclude that they did not alter respondents’ willingness to give time in a substantively important way. While the direction of the effects is as anticipated (with citizen primed participants being more likely to donate time versus the customer prime), the effects and their corresponding standard errors are too small to satisfy conventional thresholds of statistical significance (also no interaction effect between both experimental factors could be detected). We can, therefore, conclude that the publicness of the service provider, but not the service user priming, seems to matter for users’ willingness to coproduce the services.
Figure 1: Results from Experiment 1 (95% confidence intervals)

Note: The top panel displays results from a logistic regression model (first DV; no coproduction versus coproduction) and the bottom panel comes from a tobit regression model (second DV; 0 to 100 hours coproduction). The thick inner lines of the confidence intervals represent 90% confidence intervals.

Experiment 2

Experiment 1 provided evidence for the prediction that private service delivery undermines people’s willingness to coproduce to help remedy the problem. However, we found no support for a citizen/customer priming effect on coproduction. This may be so because of two reasons. On the one side, it could be possible that our theoretical predictions were not supported empirically, and encouraging citizens to think like citizens/customers does not
affect their willingness to coproduce. On the other side, it could also be that our treatment was ineffective in activating citizen/customer type thinking. To reduce the risk of the latter, we replicated experiment 1 (using the dirty streets scenario) but with an alternative form of priming to assess if the particular way of priming was the reason behind the null result in Experiment 1.

Experiment 2 was further conceived of as a way to increase the external validity of findings to broader populations by using a general population sample (in contrast to Experiment 1 which used participants recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk). While a number of past experiments using subjects recruited via AMT have reliably replicated results from random probability samples (e.g., Amir, Rand and Kobi Gal 2012; Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012; Horton, Rand and Zeckhauser 2011), the non-naïveté of MTurkers may affect the way how they respond to experimental materials (Stewart et al. 2015). We therefore used a general population panel for Experiment 2 which allows the empirical expectations to be assessed on a more diverse sample than AMT participants.

Participants, Materials and Procedures

In Experiment 2 we used Qualtrics’ general population panel to recruit a total of 1,043 US respondents, who all completed the study’s tasks. We implemented a 2-by-2 factorial, between subjects design. The first part of the experiment experimentally manipulated the ownership cues (public vs. private provision) of the hypothetical, but realistic scenario about street cleaning. The same wording as in Experiment 1 was used. However, unlike Experiment 1, the second experimental manipulation used a different priming method, a reflexive recall priming technique to activate people’s citizen/customer modes of thinking. We included more elements and emphasised the customer role more explicitly to strengthen the treatments and reinforce the distinction between citizen and market based descriptions. Respondents were randomly assigned into one of two experimental conditions: a citizenship prime, or a customer prime. Unlike in Experiment 1, we did not use a neutral control category this time to increase statistical power. In either of the priming conditions respondents had first to rate their baseline conceptions of what it means to be a citizen or customer. Three attributes representing citizenship/customer behavior respectively were presented to them, and respondents had to indicate how important they find each of the attributes for either
being a citizen or customer (using a 7 point scale ranging from “not at all important” to “Extremely important”). The attributes for the customer prime were: Customers choose between different options (1); Customers negotiate with suppliers (2); Customers pay for the products they buy (3). The attributes for the citizen prime were: Citizens vote (1); Citizens support their community (2); Citizens serve their country (3). These attributes tap into latent conceptions of being a customer, or being a citizen.

After assessing respondents’ baseline conceptions, which aimed to make salient in respondents’ mind the concept we aimed to prime, the actual priming took place. Here subjects were asked to recall the last time they themselves acted as a citizen, or customer depending on experimental condition, for at least two of the three listed attributes from the baseline assessment. They had to provide a short, written description of their memory. This type of task is different from the word order task used in Experiment 1 in that it capitalizes on individual’s own personal experiences to activate modes of citizen versus customer type thinking. The priming task and the actual scenario were, like in Experiment 1, clearly separated from each other, and respondents were told that these were two independent tasks.

Results

The results are in Figure 2. Model 1 (i.e. top panel of Figure 2) reports respondents’ willingness to coproduce, while model 2 (i.e. bottom panel of Figure 2) examines the amount they would be willing to coproduce – full regression tables are in the Appendix (table A2). Respondents in the private ownership condition were about 7 percentage points less willing to coproduce than those in the public condition. This decreased the percentage of respondents reporting their willingness to coproduce from 81 per cent to 74 per cent. With regard to the second manipulation, being primed to think in a citizen/customer mode, these factors did not alter respondents’ willingness to coproduce. Interacting both experimental factors did also not produce a statistically significant effect. When examining our second outcome, time contributions, the private ownership cue reduced hours volunteered by 3.99 (statistically significant at a 10% level) and the citizenship/customer primes did not have significant effects on the time people are willing to coproduce.
Figure 2: Results from Experiment 2 (95% confidence intervals)

Note: The top panel display results from a logistic regression model (first DV; no coproduction versus coproduction) and the bottom panel comes from a tobit regression model (second DV; 0 to 100 hours coproduction). The thick inner lines of the confidence intervals represent 90% confidence intervals.

Experiment 3

In a third experiment, we again used the street cleaning scenario from experiments 1 and 2 and the public/private service delivery information cue manipulation. However, we incorporated a complementary behavioral outcome to assess if findings about stated preferences (i.e., people’s willingness to coproduce) can be extended to findings about
revealed preferences. We used the outcome variable of asking respondents to provide an email address that could be used to contact them about potentially becoming involved in actual tasks of coproduction in their local area. While this measure is not tapping people’s actual coproduction behavior, it is further down the line than stated coproduction intentions. However, we need to note that it should not be equated with actual coproduction behavior.

**Participants, Materials and Procedures**

We used Qualtrics’ general population panel (as for experiment 2) to recruit a new, separate, sample of 1,051 US respondents. As in the prior Qualtrics experiment, all respondents were included in the analysis, and none of the participants were identified as satisficing as revealed by our instructional manipulation check. We used the same scenario as utilized in experiment 2 that focused on coproduction to ameliorate the condition of dirty streets. This time, however, we focussed only on the ownership cues and did not include one of the priming conditions. The experiment also sought to separate out the effect of publicness from a private-ness effect by including a neutral control group were the ownership cue was omitted (creating three experimental groups). The behavioral outcome measure was measured through the following question: “*Would you allow us to forward your email to your local street cleaning service [provider/department/company], so that they can contact you in case they are in need of any help?*” Depending on experimental condition, respondents were prompted to agree leaving their contact email for their local service provider (i.e., neutral control group), department (i.e., public cue), or private company (i.e., private cue). Agreeing to provide the email to facilitate coproduction is a measure of action to facilitate coproduction.

**Results**

The effects of the ownership cues on respondents’ intended coproducing behavior was assessed using a logistic regression model and the results are reported in Figure 3 (with full results in the Appendix in Table A3). We estimated the model with respective information cue conditions as independent variables – the public provision information cue was used as reference category. We find that, consistent with our prior experiments about willingness to coproduce, being exposed to a private sector cue (relative to the public sector cue) decreases the probability that respondents would be willing to provide their email dresses to local service providers by about 6.7 percentage points. This corresponds to a decrease
in respondents’ predicted probability to providing their email from 43.3 percent in the public delivery condition to 36.6 per cent in the private delivery condition. We note the p-value of 0.063 for this difference between groups is statistically significant at the 10 per cent level. Comparing the neutral control condition to both ownership cues, we find that the publicness effect (3.8%) is stronger than the private-ness effect (-2.9%) – a difference of about 1 percentage point (or 24 per cent). These differences are reflected in the control group condition probability of providing their email address being between the two other groups (at 39.50 percent). However, the differences between the control condition and the publicness and private-ness conditions are not statistically significant.

Figure 3: Results from Experiment 3 (95% confidence intervals)

Note: The thick inner lines of the confidence intervals represent 90% confidence intervals.

Discussion

Before going ahead to concluding the study’s findings, we need to further discuss some important aspects of the findings. First, we have to note the heightened levels of respondents willingness to coproduction overall. Indeed, in experiments 1 and 2 the overall levels of willingness was above 70% (70.1% in experiments 1 and 77.7% in experiment 2). It is possible that a number of respondents over reported their willingness in light of this being a socially
desirable topic. However, we have no reason to believe that this overreporting we be in any way substantially different across experimental conditions. Thus while, we experience some heightened baseline levels of willingness to coproduce, they do not affect the identification of our experimental manipulations. Second, the effect sizes we have uncovered in this study range from 7 to 14 percentage point change in willingness to coproduce (experiments 1 and 2). Substantively this would mean that if we extrapolate these results against a local community of about 10,000 inhabitants would mean an additional 1,400 to 700 people willing to coproduce. However, this simplified depiction operates under the ceteris paribus assumption of all other important factors being equal across people. Hence we would argue that future research should tease-out the so-called boundary conditions of when the effects of institutional service delivery arrangement are most and least effective in increasing people’s willingness to coproduce.

Conclusion

The findings show that willingness to coproduce tax funded local public services is affected by whether a public or private sector organization delivers the service. Both the experiments focused on willingness to coproduce found that private firm delivery decreased the probability of volunteering to coproduce and reduced the amount of time participants were willing to contribute (compared to a public organization delivering the service). The third experiment extended the findings to a behavioral measure showing reduced cooperation in taking action to facilitate local coproduction when working with a private, for-profit company compared to a public delivery organization.

The findings are important because much research on contracting of services to private organizations has focused narrowly on comparing the cost of service or limited aspects of economic efficiency under public versus private delivery (as noted in a recent review of the literature by Petersen et al. (2018)). The experiments reported here show that delivery structures are not neutral technology but instead affect fundamental aspects of users’ interaction with delivery organizations. Private delivery companies may reduce the capacity for public action through lost coproduction opportunities. Public organizations may also benefit from drawing citizens’ attention to their public ownership status when soliciting users.
to become engaged in coproduction activities. This means of increasing coproduction is useful for policy because it is an action that can be taken by public bodies, in contrast to the demographic or socio-economic factors often noted as affecting volunteering in general that are more difficult for them to influence (Reed and Selbee 2000).

In a wider sense, our findings have important implications for normative debates about the unintended democratic consequences of market-based public sector reforms (Box et al. 2001; Christensen and Laegreid 2002; see also Gottfried 2001). Our study suggests that privatization and contracting government provided services out to private, for-profit providers has negative effects on citizens’ willingness to coproduce. This crowding-out of civic republication citizenship behavior through marketization reforms is consistent with citizens-as-service-users perceiving for-profit delivery organizations as capitalizing on their prosocial contributions. Public organizations, in contrast, use donated labor for the public good. While the purpose of this study was to examine whether institutional ownership structures of local public service provision affect intentions to coproduce, future studies should investigate the mechanism of why citizens are less likely to chip-in when services are provided by private, for-profit organizations. This research should examine citizens’ perceptions of the delivery organizations. Qualitative, in-depth interviews of service users, paired with experimental designs for identifying causal mechanisms (Imai, Tingley and Yamamoto 2013) would be a valuable part of such a research agenda.

In contrast to the evidence about public versus private service delivery organizations, the experiments did not find an effect of citizen versus customer priming. This finding could point towards a lack of support for the differences in contextual use of language or might, despite using recognised methods for priming from the psychology literature, reflect some of the growing recognition of the limits of priming in that discipline. The role of citizenship attitudes and behavior as an influence on coproduction more generally should be further addressed by techniques that do not rely on priming. For example, the effects of direct exhortation to act in ways consistent with good citizenship by volunteering in specific contexts of coproduction could be examined. As a further extension, citizen and customer identities are not the only two identities that users have that are relevant to coproduction, as the literature on representative bureaucracy also shows (Riccucci, Van Ryzin and Li 2016). Users’ other identities, such as a shared ethnic identity or shared faith based identity are likely to be
influential. When these identities are congruent of those of identity based charities delivering services this matching may tend to boost willingness to coproduce. Drawing on these insights, further research should find out how private not-for-profit delivery of different kinds compares to public and private for-profit based delivery (Weisbrod 1988).
References


Thomas, J.C. 2013. Citizen, Customer, Partner: Rethinking the Place of the Public in Public Management, Public Administration Review, 73, 6.


**APPENDIX**

**Table A1: Results from Experiment 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First DV (no coproduction vs. coproduction)</th>
<th>Second DV (0 vs 100 hours coproduction)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logit</td>
<td>Tobit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private ownership (Ref. public)</td>
<td>-0.140*** (0.026)</td>
<td>-5.706*** (1.390)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer prime (Ref. control)</td>
<td>-0.021 (0.039)</td>
<td>-0.989 (2.182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen prime (Ref. control)</td>
<td>-0.005 (0.037)</td>
<td>0.380 (2.111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.281 (0.161)</td>
<td>8.956 (1.522)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario-Observations</td>
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<td>1,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual-observations</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-squared</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses (clustered by individual-observation)

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, + p<0.10

**Table A2: Results from Experiment 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First DV (no coproduction vs. coproduction)</th>
<th>Second DV (0-100 hours coproduction)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logit</td>
<td>Tobit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private ownership (Ref. public)</td>
<td>-0.065** (0.026)</td>
<td>-3.989+ (2.400)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen prime (Ref. customer)</td>
<td>0.021 (0.026)</td>
<td>-.157 (2.399)</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>18.59 (2.11)</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
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<td>1,043</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-squared</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, + p<0.10
Table A3: Results from Experiment 3

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control condition (Ref. public)</td>
<td>-0.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.155)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private ownership (Ref. public)</td>
<td>-0.281+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.151)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.104)</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-squared</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, + p<0.1