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Comparing co-production in public, for-profit, and non-profit organizations: A survey of homes for the elderly in Sweden

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Abstract
This article contributes to research on co-production in non-profit organizations. By comparing co-production in public, for-profit, and non-profit organizations, similarities and differences between types of organizations are identified. The empirical material is delimited to homes for the elderly in Sweden, collected by a questionnaire, and combined with secondary data. In terms of main results, most analyses revealed neither any differences in the co-production of welfare between types of organizations nor correlations with size of the homes. However, the differences that were identified indicate that managers and residents in non-profit homes value and participate in co-production to a higher degree than managers and residents in public and for-profit homes. These results support assumptions and results from previous research, including the finding that co-production in different types of organizations varies, and that co-production could be more widespread in non-profit organizations.

Keywords
co-production, welfare, non-profit, for-profit, public organizations

Introduction
As many countries are searching for new ways to govern welfare (Pestoff, 2009), co-production is promoted as a potential solution (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Verschuere et al., 2012). Co-production is here defined as a process that takes place between users and professionals, rather than as processes in the collaboration between, for example, the public and the non-profit sector or organizations (Brandsen et al, 2018; Pestoff, 2012; Segnestam Larsson et al., 2021). Even though co-production is far from a panacea (Brandsen & Helderman, 2012; Porter, 2012), research has established that it could increase quality, democratic participation, and user satisfaction (Rantamäki, 2017; Vamstad, 2012).

One important policy and academic issue is the similarities and differences between public, for-profit, and non-profit welfare organizations in co-production (Benjamin & Brudney,

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2018; Pestoff et al., 2006; Segnestam Larsson, 2019). Even though co-production is often associated with public organizations (Voorberg et al., 2015), some researchers argue that type of organization has only minor implications for co-production (e.g. Brandsen et al., 2018), whereas others support the assumption that co-production in different types of organizations may vary (Pestoff, 2009; Vamstad, 2012). In addition, there are researchers stating that non-profit welfare providers have a longer tradition of co-production and that it could be more widespread in non-profit organizations (Benjamin & Brudney, 2018; Lelieveldt et al., 2009).

Hence, politicians, professionals, and academics focusing on co-production need also consider the types of organizations that are providing welfare services. Like co-production research in general (Verschuere et al., 2012), however, we need more comparative studies on the role of types of organizations in relation to co-production.

The aim of this article is to study and analyze the role of non-profit organizations in co-production. We will achieve this by comparing co-production of welfare in public, for-profit, and non-profit organizations in elderly homes in Sweden. The research questions that direct the article are:

- Which similarities and differences can be identified in the co-production of welfare?
- To what degree can identified differences be attributed to different types of organizations?

The article draws on a questionnaire distributed to a sample of public, for-profit, and non-profit organizations in the field of homes for the elderly in Sweden. In addition to organizational size, the questionnaire focused on attitudes towards co-production, and levels and areas of co-production in the homes (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Segnestam Larsson et al., 2021; Verschuere et al., 2012).

The article contributes to previous research by identifying results related to a) similarities between public, private and non-profit organizations (Brandsen et al., 2018; Voorberg et al., 2015) as well as b) distinctive contributions made by the different types of organization (Pestoff, 2009; Vamstad, 2012). The article also contributes to the discussion on the distinctive role of non-profit organizations in co-production (Benjamin & Brudney, 2018; Segnestam Larsson, 2019), and provides more empirical and analytical results of a comparative nature to the research field of co-production (Verschuere et al., 2012).

Theoretical framework: Institutional logics

This article approaches co-production in welfare from an institutional logics approach. The core of the institutional logics approach is that individual and organizational decisions and actions are assumed to be embedded in societal institutions, such as types of organizations that are driven by various logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991). These logics refer, among other things, to organizational fields and attributes, including structure, ownership, and identity. Institutional logics have been defined as "socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules" (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804).

Conceptualizing the institutional logics of public, for-profit, and non-profit organizations emphasizes how organizational fields, attributes, and values influence decisions and actions. The extent to which there are clearly distinct logics for types of organizations remains unclear, however. Some argue that there is no absolute distinction between types of organizations and that all organizations demonstrate similar attributes and values on a continuum (e.g., Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Dees & Elias, 1998; see also Brandsen et al., 2018). There are, for example, many overlaps in the way organizations function (Dees & Elias, 1998). At the same time, there is an argument that different types of organizations

have different attributes and values that deserve further consideration. We provide a schematic table below to outline some of the differences that could be found in the literature (e.g. Hall, 1992, Smith & Lipsky, 1993, Salamon et al., 2000, Anheier, 2014).

Table 1. Institutional dimensions of public, for-profit, and non-profit organizations

	Non-profit organizations	Public organizations	For-profit organizations
Target group	Members and users	Citizens and taxpayers	Customers and share holders
Goal	Realize ideology	Uphold and implement laws	Generate profit
Structure	Association/foundation	Bureaucracy	Corporation
Resources	Volunteering, membership fees, donations	Taxes	Risk capital, sales

By exploring ideal types, generalizations can be formulated that are of value to research and practice. In addition, as scholars have suggested that welfare could be particularly sensitive to institutional demands (Brunsson & Olsen, 1993), an institutional logics approach seems suitable for co-production in welfare. The ideal types of public, for-profit, and non-profit organizations could also provide a framework from which to explore distinctive contributions made by different types of organizations.

Context: Non-profits, social welfare, and elderly care in Sweden

Non-profit organizations are prominent actors in welfare services in many Western countries. By comparison, the Swedish welfare regime is still characterized by state financing and public organizations producing welfare (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Svedberg & Olsson, 2010; Sivesind, 2016).

Although non-profit welfare production has increased over time, previous research has shown that the role and size of the non-profit sector in the welfare areas of health, education, and social work are comparatively small (Sivesind, 2016; Svedberg & Lundström, 2003; Svedberg & Olsson, 2010). As an indicator of size, the number of employees in the non-profit sector constituted only 3.2 percent of all employees of the overall welfare system in Sweden during the year 2013 (Sivesind, 2016). Even though the number of employees in non-profit welfare has increased over time, it decreased in the previous decade (Lundström & Wijkström, 1997; Sivesind, 2016).

The size of the non-profit sector in traditional welfare in Sweden has been attributed to historical and institutional factors. Even though it is now commonly understood that Sweden benefits from a large public sector as well as a vital non-profit sector (Lundström & Wijkström, 1997; Micheletti, 1995; Trägårdh, 2007), the field of welfare as well as the non-profit sector are nevertheless characterized by qualities that challenge the participation of non-profit organizations in welfare. These qualities include influences from new public management and a tradition of recreational and cultural activities among non-profit organizations (Chartrand, 2004; Olsson, Nordfeldt, Larsson, & Kendall, 2009; Svedberg & Lundström, 2003).

Previous research: Non-profits, co-production, and distinctiveness

A literature review has summarized research on how non-profit organizations provide distinctive contributions to co-production in welfare (Segnestam Larsson, 2019). To begin with, research has primarily focused on how users participate in the production of their own service in non-profit organizations (e.g. Bano, 2018; Breton, 1999; Roberts, Nimegeer, Farmer, & Heaney, 2014; Derges et al., 2014; Boccacin, 2017). There is also research focusing

on how users and non-profit organizations participate in the management of services, for example in managing asylum seeker integration (Strokosch & Osborne, 2017), or the management of cooperative childcare (Pestoff, 2012; Vamstad, 2012). Furthermore, research also highlights how users and non-profit organizations participate in the governance of services at a sectoral level (e.g., Bode, 2006; Fazzi, 2009; Jagosh et al., 2015; Martin, 2011; Jetté & Vaillancourt, 2011).

Research has also studied the specific role of non-profit organizations in co-production. For example, a set of articles highlights how the role is mainly related to circumstances that facilitate co-production (Derges et al., 2014), including facilitating access to public servants and elected officials (Lum et al., 2016), building relationships and protecting users (Strokosch & Osborne, 2017), and promoting greater citizen participation (Fazzi, 2009; Pestoff, 2012; Thomas et al., 2011). Another set of articles focuses on how non-profits provide mechanisms for co-production, such as co-operative structures (Prentice, 2006), collaborative relationships (Baker & Irving, 2016), enabling citizens' involvement (Lee & Han, 2016; Væggemose et al., 2018), and promoting co-production partnerships (Bano, 2018). There is also research that studies how non-profits affect the quality of services (Vamstad, 2012) or the creation of value (Hager, 2014) in co-production.

Finally, the literature analyzes the significance of non-profits in co-production (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Neubeck, 2016; Pestoff et al., 2006), begging the question of whether non-profits make unique contributions, and if they do, to what degree. The review showed that some articles regarded non-profit organizations as essential to co-production (Tarlau, 2013; Hager, 2014; Ewert & Evers, 2014), whereas other articles provided theoretical and empirical illustrations of distinctive contributions (Lelieveldt et al., 2009; Strokosch & Osborne, 2017; Prentice, 2006; Vamstad, 2012; Væggemose et al., 2018). There were also authors stating that non-profits, to some degree, and under specific circumstances, may make distinctive contributions (Lum et al., 2016; Lee & Han, 2016; Bano, 2018; Pestoff, 2014).

Method

The data is based on a questionnaire, developed for this study, for homes for the elderly in Sweden, and secondary data from a survey of what residents think about elderly care (NBHW; 2019; Neuman, 2006; Rossi et al., 2013; De Vaus, 2013). The number of included variables from the questionnaire is 19, and the number of included variables from the survey is 4.

The sample frame consisted of a register of all homes for the elderly in Sweden (2,233 homes) based on an annual survey of elderly care in Sweden, produced by the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW, 2018). While public and non-public (for-profit and non-profits combined) homes for the elderly are registered, there is no national distinction between for-profit and non-profit homes. For this article, we differentiated for-profit from non-profit homes by reading the statues of the owner organization (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. Homes for the elderly, by type of owner organization

	Public	For-profit	Non-profit
Number	1829	350	54
Share	81.9%	15.7%	2.4%

The sample frame was then grouped according to three strata (see Table 2 above). The first stratum consisted of public homes (1,829), the second of for-profit homes (350), and the third of non-profit homes (54). Our sample scheme consisted of 125 public, 125 for-profit,

and 54 non-profit homes (i.e. all non-profit homes in the original sampling frame) (see Table 3 below). The public and for-profit homes were randomly selected by computer software within their respective strata. The response rate was 47.4 percent (n = 144) and was different across strata (stratum 1 = 48.0%, stratum 2 = 38.4%, stratum 3 = 66.7%). Reminders were sent through the mail to all strata, and by phone to stratum 3.

Table 3. Sample and response rate

	Public homes	For-profit homes	Non-profit homes
Sample	125 (6.8%)	125 (35.7%)	54 (100%)
Responses	60	48	36
Response rate	48.0%	38.4%	66.7%

The questionnaire was distributed digitally in September 2019, and included questions regarding the size of the home, attitudes to co-production, and levels and areas of co-production. It was answered by the manager for each home. The size of each home for the elderly was assessed with two questions, one related to the number of employees, and one related to the number of residents. Response alternatives, as well as no replies, were recoded to numbers for the statistical analysis.

The variable for managers' attitudes to co-production was assessed with seven statements emanating from literature reviews of co-production in general (e.g. Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Pestoff, 2012; Verschuere et al., 2012). In the questionnaire, we asked if the organization is positive toward co-production, and if the organization co-produces. We also asked if co-production increases quality, efficiency, and participation as well as if co-production develops the organization and benefits the residents. The response alternatives ranged from not at all, to some degree, to a high degree, and completely.

In terms of levels of co-production, research has long since noted that co-production could focus on different levels, and furthermore that users and organizations could engage at different levels. Based on a typology (Osborne & McLaughlin, 2004), Brandsen and Pestoff (2006) have developed a conceptual framework related to different levels of co-production:

- co-production – users and staff produce services together
- co-management – users and staff manage services together, and
- co-governance – users and staff govern the organization together.

The framework and the three levels were used in the questionnaire. To the three levels, we added questions related to:

- co-organization – users and staff organize user councils together, and
- co-improvement – users and staff improve services together.

Levels of co-production were thus assessed with five questions, asking to what degree residents and staff govern the home, manage the services, produce the services, improve the services, and organize a resident council together. The response alternatives were from not at all, to some degree, to a high degree, and completely.

Areas of co-production were connected to the questions on levels (for example: "To what degree do the residents and the staff govern the home together?"). If the respondent answered that a level of co-production was taking place (i.e. response alternatives to some

degree, to a high degree, and completely), a complementary statement (for example: "That the residents and staff govern the home together works well") asked the respondent to rate the area of co-production by using response alternatives ranging from not correct at all, correct to some degree, correct to a high degree, and completely correct.

The questionnaire was complemented with secondary data from a survey of what residents think about elderly care (NBHW, 2019). The sample frame consisted of all the elderly living in homes for the elderly in Sweden. We were able to obtain data from 127 out of the 144 homes that responded to our questionnaire. The response rate among the people living in these 127 homes was 52.0% and was quite similar across strata (stratum 1 = 49.2%, stratum 2 = 54.3%, stratum 3 = 53.8%). We were not able to determine the response rate between the population and the sample frame as response rates were reported only per home (NBHW, 2019). In the survey, four questions were asked that could be linked to co-production:

1. "Were you offered a place in the home for the elderly you wanted to live in?",
2. "Do you tend to be able to influence at what times you get help?",
3. "Do staff take into account your opinions and wishes about how the services should be performed?", and
4. "What do you think about the collaboration between you and the home for the elderly?".

Response alternatives included a) yes or no (question 1); b) yes, always, often, sometimes, rarely, or no, never (question 2 and 3); and c) very good, pretty good, neither good nor bad, pretty bad, and very bad (question 4). All response alternatives were dichotomized into positive and negative answers.

Data was analyzed by using SPSS. Analyses of differences between types of organizations governing the homes for the elderly were made by analyzing differences among group (public, for-profit, and non-profit) means in the sample by using ANOVA and Kruskall-Wallis. Both ANOVA and Kruskall-Wallis were used as some variables displayed signs of not being normally distributed (tested by using skewness and kurtosis). Analyses of relationships between size and variables in the questionnaire were made by using correlation analysis.

Descriptive results

The results are presented in relation to size of the homes, attitudes, levels, and areas of co-production. Starting with size, the average number of employees per home was 40.5 people (ranging from 8 to 211) and the average number of residents was 45.8 people (ranging from 8 to 206) (see Table 4).

Table 4. Size of homes for the elderly

		Mean	Responses	Minimum	Maximum
Number of employees	Public homes	39.09	43	8	155
	For-profit homes	43.00	39	14	200
	Non-profit homes	39.33	30	8	211
	Total	40.52	112	8	211
Number of residents	Public homes	44.33	43	11	156
	For-profit homes	50.82	39	18	150
	Non-profit homes	41.48	31	8	206
	Total	45.79	113	8	206

On average, managers were positive toward co-production, agreeing to a "high degree" with all statements included in the questionnaire (see Table 5). Even though differences among statements were small, managers agreed relatively more with statements related to co-production increasing quality and participation, and that it developed the organization and benefited the interests of the residents, and relatively less with statements that co-production was positive or part of the organization, or that it would increase efficiency.

Table 5. Managers' attitudes to co-production (Data from a 5 point Likert scale, 0–4)

		Responses	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
The organization is positive toward co-production	Public homes	44	2.91	0.98	0	4
	For-profit homes	42	3.05	1.23	0	4
	Non-profit homes	32	3.53	0.84	0	4
	Total	118	3.13	1.07	0	4
It is part of our organization to co-produce	Public homes	44	2.93	0.10	0	4
	For-profit homes	42	3.10	1.28	0	4
	Non-profit homes	32	3.09	1.20	0	4
	Total	118	3.03	1.15	0	4
Co-production increases quality	Public homes	45	3.42	0.78	0	4
	For-profit homes	41	3.24	1.26	0	4
	Non-profit homes	32	3.31	1.18	0	4
	Total	118	3.33	1.07	0	4
Co-production increases efficiency	Public homes	45	3.29	0.94	0	4
	For-profit homes	40	3.12	1.22	0	4
	Non-profit homes	32	3.06	1.19	0	4
	Total	117	3.17	1.11	0	4
Co-production increases participation	Public homes	45	3.56	0.92	0	4
	For-profit homes	41	3.32	1.25	0	4
	Non-profit homes	32	3.31	1.33	0	4
	Total	118	3.41	1.16	0	4
Co-production develops the organization	Public homes	44	3.48	0.93	0	4
	For-profit homes	41	3.34	1.24	0	4
	Non-profit homes	32	3.16	1.30	0	4
	Total	117	3.34	1.15	0	4
Co-production benefit the interests of the residents	Public homes	45	3.56	0.92	0	4
	For-profit homes	42	3.31	1.24	0	4
	Non-profit homes	32	3.22	1.31	0	4
	Total	119	3.38	1.15	0	4

Four questions were asked that could be related to residents' attitudes to co-production (see Table 6). 86.4% of the residents answered that they were offered a place in the home they wanted to live in, 59.6% said that they tended to be able to influence at what times they received help, 78.3% agreed with the statement that the staff took into account their opinions and wishes about how the services should be performed, and 85.6% found the collaboration between them and the home positive.

Table 6. Residents' attitudes to co-production (Share of positive answers in percent)

		Responses	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Were you offered a place in the home for the elderly you wanted to live in?	Public homes	47	84.55	12.61	53	100
	For-profit homes	39	82.41	13.58	50	100
	Non-profit homes	30	94.40	6.99	71	100
	Total	116	86.38	12.66	50	100
Do you tend to be able to influence at what times you get help?	Public homes	47	61.04	16.33	29	100
	For-profit homes	42	55.90	14.31	19	91
	Non-profit homes	28	62.86	16.95	25	91
	Total	117	59.63	15.92	19	100
Do staff take into account your opinions and wishes about how the services should be performed?	Public homes	48	79.25	12.26	50	100
	For-profit homes	41	73.90	12.53	29	100
	Non-profit homes	29	83.07	9.05	65	100
	Total	118	78.33	12.10	29	100
What do you think about the collaboration between you and the home for the elderly?	Public homes	49	84.90	11.16	60	100
	For-profit homes	38	83.21	9.87	59	100
	Non-profit homes	27	90.41	9.78	58	100
	Total	114	85.64	10.70	58	100

On average, managers answered that residents and staff to "some degree" governed, managed, produced, improved, and organized the home, services, and a resident council together (see Table 7). Even though differences among levels of co-production were small, managers answered to a higher degree that residents and staff governed the home and organized the resident council together, and to a lesser degree that residents and staff managed, improved, and produced services together.

Table 7. Levels of co-production (Data from a 5 point Likert scale, 0–4)

		Responses	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
To what degree do the residents and the staff govern the home together?	Public homes	44	2.34	0.68	0	3
	For-profit homes	40	2.37	0.77	0	3
	Non-profit homes	29	2.62	0.49	2	3
	Total	113	2.42	0.68	0	3
To what degree do the residents and the staff manage the services together?	Public homes	43	1.93	0.70	0	3
	For-profit homes	39	2.08	0.96	0	4
	Non-profit homes	29	2.31	0.66	1	4
	Total	111	2.08	0.80	0	4
To what degree do the residents and the staff produce the services together?	Public homes	39	1.92	0.66	1	3
	For-profit homes	36	2.17	0.81	0	4
	Non-profit homes	28	2.29	0.66	1	3
	Total	103	2.11	0.73	0	4
To what degree do the residents and the staff improve the services together?	Public homes	39	2.18	0.64	1	3
	For-profit homes	35	2.29	0.86	0	4
	Non-profit homes	28	2.46	0.58	1	3
	Total	102	2.29	0.71	0	4
To what degree do the residents and the staff organize a resident council together?	Public homes	27	2.52	0.89	1	4
	For-profit homes	28	2.71	0.71	2	4
	Non-profit homes	24	2.50	0.83	1	4
	Total	79	2.58	0.81	1	4

On average, managers answered that the governance, management, improvement, production, and organization of the home, resident council, and services worked to "some degree" (see Table 8). Despite differences among areas of co-production were small, managers answered to a higher degree that the organization, governance, and improvement of the home, the services, and the resident council worked well, and to a lesser degree that the management and production of the services worked well.

Table 8. Areas of co-production (Data from a 5 point Likert scale, 0–4)

		Responses	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
That the residents and staff govern the home together works well	Public homes	43	2.30	0.64	0	3
	For-profit homes	39	2.54	0.79	0	4
	Non-profit homes	29	2.66	0.61	2	4
	Total	111	2.48	0.70	0	4
That the residents and staff manage the services together works well	Public homes	35	2.14	1.00	0	4
	For-profit homes	34	2.53	0.66	1	4
	Non-profit homes	27	2.48	0.85	0	3
	Total	96	2.37	0.86	0	4
That the residents and staff produce the services together works well	Public homes	31	2.26	0.73	0	4
	For-profit homes	34	2.44	0.82	0	4
	Non-profit homes	25	2.52	0.92	0	4
	Total	90	2.40	0.82	0	4
That the residents and staff improve the services together works well	Public homes	35	2.29	0.89	0	4
	For-profit homes	31	2.55	0.57	2	4
	Non-profit homes	27	2.81	0.56	2	4
	Total	93	2.52	0.73	0	4
That the residents and staff organize a resident council together works well	Public homes	24	2.62	0.97	0	4
	For-profit homes	28	2.71	0.66	1	4
	Non-profit homes	21	2.71	0.85	0	4
	Total	73	2.68	0.81	0	4

Analytical results

Similarities and differences related to attitudes, levels, and areas of co-production between public, for-profit, and non-profit homes were determined by analyzing differences among group means in the sample. The analysis revealed significant differences (at the 0.05 level) between types of homes and five variables:

1. the organization was positive toward co-production,
2. improving the services between the residents and the staff together worked well,
3. the resident was offered a place in a home for the elderly it wanted to live in,
4. staff considered the opinions and wishes of the residents about how the services should be performed, and
5. the residents found the collaboration between them and the home for the elderly positive.

The significant differences were then analyzed with Tukey's test (see Table 9) and revealed that managers in non-profit homes answered to a higher degree than managers in public homes (1) that the organization was positive toward co-production and (2) that improving the services between the residents and the staff together worked well. The test also revealed that the elderly in non-profit homes answered to a higher degree than the elderly in public and for-profit homes that (3) they were offered a place in the home for the elderly they wanted to live in. Finally, the test revealed that the elderly in non-profit homes answered to a higher degree than the elderly in for-profit homes (4) that staff considered their opinions and wishes about how the services should be performed and (5) that the residents found the collaboration between them and the home for the elderly positive.

Table 9. Tukey's test

			Mean difference	Standard error	Significance
The organization is positive toward co-production	Public homes	For-profit homes	–0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
	For-profit homes	Public homes	0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.26643	0.18592	0.328
	Non-profit homes	Public homes	0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
		Non-profit homes	0.26643	0.18592	0.328
That the residents and staff improve the services together works well	Public homes	For-profit homes	–0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
	For-profit homes	Public homes	0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.26643	0.18592	0.328
	Non-profit homes	Public homes	0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
		Non-profit homes	0.26643	0.18592	0.328
Were you offered a place in the home for the elderly you wanted to live in?	Public homes	For-profit homes	–0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
	For-profit homes	Public homes	0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.26643	0.18592	0.328
	Non-profit homes	Public homes	0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
		Non-profit homes	0.26643	0.18592	0.328
Do you tend to be able to influence at what times you get help?	Public homes	For-profit homes	–0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
	For-profit homes	Public homes	0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.26643	0.18592	0.328
	Non-profit homes	Public homes	0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
		Non-profit homes	0.26643	0.18592	0.328
What do you think about the collaboration between you and the home for the elderly?	Public homes	For-profit homes	–0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
	For-profit homes	Public homes	0.26267	0.17419	0.292
		Non-profit homes	–0.26643	0.18592	0.328
	Non-profit homes	Public homes	0.52910*	0.18091	0.012
		Non-profit homes	0.26643	0.18592	0.328

Significant correlations related to size were also determined. The analysis between size and variables revealed two significant correlations at the 0.05 level. These correlations included that:

6. the number of residents in public homes correlated positively with the degree to which resident and staff produced services together, and
7. that the number of residents in for-profit homes correlated positively with the degree to which resident councils were organized together with residents and staff.

Discussion

Main descriptive and analytical results are summarized here. Firstly, a comparison of attitudes, levels, and areas of co-production indicates that managers, on average, agree to a higher degree with statements related to attitudes to co-production than to questions related to levels or areas of co-production. This result could be interpreted as either a yet to be fulfilled ambition among managers to increase levels and areas of co-production, or as a discrepancy between rhetoric and practice in relation to co-production (cf. Segnestam Larsson et al., 2021). It could also be interpreted by considering the Swedish welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Svedberg & Olsson, 2010; Sivesind, 2016). Even though there is a strong emphasis on transforming the welfare state, among other things by focusing on user involvement, patient contracts, and co-production, this transformation has yet to be realized.

Secondly, even though most statistical analyses revealed no significant differences among public, for-profit, and non-profit homes, the five that were identified all indicate that managers and residents in non-profit homes value and participate in co-production to a higher degree than managers and residents in public and for-profit homes (1–5). Thirdly, our analysis of correlations between size of the homes and co-production indicates that other factors than types of homes also contribute to attitudes, levels, and areas of co-production. For example, in our study, the number of residents correlate positively with levels of co-organization and co-production in public and for-profit homes (6–7).

Our results could be related to the institutional logics framework (e.g., Thornton & Ocasio, 1999) as well as previous research on non-profits and co-production (e.g. Benjamin & Brudney, 2018; Pestoff et al., 2006). In accordance with research that argues that type of organization has only minor implications (e.g. Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Dees & Elias, 1998; Brandsen et al., 2018), most of our results showed that there were no significant differences among public, for-profit, and non-profit homes. Similarities between different types of homes include: most attitudes among managers, only one attitude among residents (they tend to be able to influence at what times they receive help), all levels, and most areas of co-production.

Despite these results, we also identified several differences between types of homes. To begin with, the prevalence of co-production in all types of homes indicates that co-production should be associated with, and researched in, not only public organizations, but also for-profit and non-profit organizations (Voorberg et al., 2015). Moreover, the identified differences (1–5) support: firstly, the assumption that co-production in different types of organizations varies (Pestoff, 2009; Vamstad, 2012), and secondly, that co-production could be more widespread in non-profits (Benjamin & Brudney, 2018; Lelieveldt et al., 2009). We would also argue that the identified differences between types of homes support the assumption that organizational decisions and actions are embedded within societal institutions, such as types of organizations (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

In terms of the role and distinctive contributions of non-profit organizations to co-production (e.g., Benjamin & Brudney, 2018; Segnestam Larsson, 2019), this study shows that non-profits may not only facilitate or provide organizational mechanisms for co-production (e.g., Derges et al., 2014; Lum et al., 2016; Prentice, 2006; Baker & Irving, 2016), but that they also are involved in various levels and to various degrees in the co-production of welfare. Moreover, that residents found the collaboration between them and the home for the elderly positive (5), and replied that staff in non-profit homes to a higher degree considered residents' opinions and wishes (4), could indicate that the involvement of non-profits in co-production affects the creation, delivery, and quality of services (Hager, 2014; Vamstad, 2012).

Using the findings from a review of the literature on non-profits and co-production in welfare as a framework (Segnestam Larsson, 2019), even though we cannot say anything about the potential unique or essential contributions for methodological reasons (Neubeck, 2016; Pestoff et al., 2006; Tarlau, 2013; Hager, 2014; Ewert & Evers, 2014), our results provide additional illustrations related to the significance of non-profits in the co-production of welfare (Lelieveldt et al., 2009; Strokosch & Osborne, 2017; Prentice, 2006; Vamstad, 2012; Væggemose et al., 2018), and how non-profit organizations, to some degree, and under specific circumstances, may make distinctive contributions (Bano, 2018; Lee & Han, 2016; Lum et al., 2016; Pestoff, 2012).

A noteworthy finding is that, out of all variables included in the study, three of the seven statistical differences derive from the secondary data. This could be related to a difference between the questions in the questionnaire versus the secondary survey, for example, the questions in the secondary survey might capture co-production better. It could also be related to the respondents. Whereas the questionnaire was directed at managers, the survey was directed at residents. This could indicate that the type of co-production in focus for this article (i.e., a process that takes place between users and professionals) is better captured by gathering data from the user – or potentially from professionals – than from managers.

Finally, another, somewhat perplexing, finding was the statistical result that the elderly in non-profit homes answered, to a higher degree than the elderly in public and for-profit homes, that they were offered a place in the home for the elderly they wanted to live in (3). Should the interpretation be that the elderly wanting to live in non-profit homes are more active and successful in the decision of their placement? Were there more residential homes to choose from in the areas where non-profit organizations operate? Or should it be understood in relation to the comparatively low number of non-profit and for-profit homes in Sweden? More research is needed to better understand the relationship between these and other variables.

Caveats and limitations in our study should be acknowledged. The validity of our results could be affected by the context of Sweden, the role of non-profit organizations in Swedish welfare, and the field of elderly care. For example, in contrast to the theoretical framework (e.g. Brunsson & Olsen, 1993), the field of elderly care could be more regulated than other welfare fields, mainstreamed by new public management, and/or provided with less room for differences among providers, and these could serve as explanations to the results of the study. Methodological aspects, such as the sample frame and scheme, the design of the questionnaire, the time period, and biases in the response rate, could also affect the results. Thus, we cannot formulate empirically supported conclusions beyond these limitations. However, the descriptive and analytical findings are in line with results from other studies (e.g. Benjamin & Brudney, 2018; Lelieveldt et al., 2009; Pestoff, 2009; Vamstad, 2012).

Conclusions

This article has studied and analyzed the role of non-profit organizations in the co-production of welfare services by comparing public, for-profit, and non-profit organizations. Contributions to previous research include the insights that co-production should be associated with, and researched in, not only public organizations, but also for-profit and non-profit organizations; that co-production in different types of organizations varies and could affect the creation, delivery, and quality of services; and finally, that co-production could be more widespread in non-profit organizations.

Our contributions have potential implications for practice, policy, and future research. Practitioners, in particular managers of welfare service organizations, are encouraged to transform existing ambitions related to co-production, and put them into practice at various levels and areas. Policymakers and politicians need to consider types of organizations, and the way they are structured and organized, to a higher degree in policies and regulations, if they wish to promote co-production in welfare services. Future research, finally, should explore the results from this article in other fields, countries, and time periods, and in particular from the perspective of users and professionals.

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