



How citizens' dissatisfaction with street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion leads to the alternative supply of public services: the case of Israeli marriage registrars

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journals.sagepub.com/home/ras**Niva Golan-Nadir** 

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Abstract

Can street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion lead to clients' dissatisfaction with policy implementation? If so, under what conditions could such disaffection lead to the alternative supply of public services? Building on Albert Hirschman's model of exit, voice, and loyalty, this article contributes to the literature by pointing to street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion as influencing citizens' dissatisfaction with policy implementation. We identify three main elements—personal, organizational, and environmental—influencing discretion informally, causing clients' dissatisfaction. We also point to a combination of three conditions triggering the creation of an alternative supply of services: (1) citizens' dissatisfaction with policy implementation; (2) street-level

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bureaucrats' monopoly over policy implementation because only one supplier exists; and (3) clients' perceptions of participation channels as blocked. Using a qualitative case study approach, we test our claims by analyzing the case of Israeli marriage registrars. We demonstrate how Israeli citizens' dissatisfaction with how government bureaucrats implement marriage regulations led to the creation of the Tzohar non-governmental organization that provides alternative marriage services.

Points for practitioners

In situations in which street-level bureaucrats have a monopoly over policy implementation and citizens feel they cannot exercise their voice about that implementation, their dissatisfaction with how street-level bureaucrats use their discretion in implementing the policy may eventually lead to the creation of alternative sources of public services.

Keywords

alternative supply channels, discretion, street-level bureaucrats

Introduction

What do people do when they are dissatisfied with public products and services? Based on Albert Hirschman's (1970, 1993) theoretical concepts of *exit*, *voice*, and *loyalty*, they may: choose the voice option, meaning they will demand better outcomes; use the exit option and simply leave the firm offering the product; or remain loyal even if they are unhappy. The choice between these alternatives depends on the existence of an exit option. If it does not exist, they may seek an alternative source of public goods and services. The alternative supply of public goods and services is a worldwide phenomenon (Minow, 2003; Narrod et al., 2009; Shleifer, 1998). It refers to individuals and groups who are dissatisfied with policy outcomes and feel they cannot change them through civil participation. Hence, they use various strategies to satisfy their pressing desire for public services outside the established government institutions (Cohen, 2012). A careful reading of these studies reveals that the consensus among scholars is that the source of the alternative supply of public services is rooted in dissatisfaction with the formal policy as designed by high-level decision-makers. In other words, the dissatisfaction lays in the instructions on how services ought to be designed (Cohen, 2012; Cohen and Filc, 2017). Furthermore, this literature focuses on dissatisfaction as the independent variable. However, it has not yet explored the possibility that street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion in implementing policy may cause citizens' dissatisfaction as the dependent variable.

Adding to this view, we ask: Can street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion lead to clients' dissatisfaction with policy implementation? Hence, our primary goal is to explore the possibility that the discretion that street-level bureaucrats

exercise is an element that influences citizens' dissatisfaction with the policy's implementation. We also identify three main elements—personal, organizational, and environmental—that influence how street-level bureaucrats exercise their discretion informally, causing clients' dissatisfaction with the implementation.

Indeed, the implementation literature regards street-level bureaucrats as pivotal players in the making of public policy (Brodkin, 2011; Gofen, 2013; Hupe and Hill, 2015; Lipsky, 2010; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003). They are *de facto* policymakers, in the sense that they informally construct or reconstruct their organizations' policies, thereby directly influencing the lives and fates of many people (Hill and Hupe, 2014). Their discretion is crucial in matching the requirements of policy to the demands of the field (Tummers and Bekkers, 2014). Through their daily choices, they leverage resources to secure favored policy outcomes (Lipsky, 2010; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003). Unlike previous studies that focused on the dissatisfaction with services as the independent variable, we examined such dissatisfaction as the dependent variable, influenced by street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion. To our knowledge, only one study (James, 2009) has investigated the relationship between individual citizens' and users' expectations about the quality of local public services, the performance of these services, and satisfaction and dissatisfaction with them, treating the last as a dependent variable.

Based on this possibility, we ask: Under what conditions could such dissatisfaction lead to the creation of the alternative supply of public services? We posit that when (1) citizens are dissatisfied with policy implementation, (2) street-level bureaucrats have a monopoly over policy implementation, meaning that only one supplier exists, and (3) opportunities for the public to voice their displeasure are perceived as blocked, civil society organizations arise to provide alternatives. Hence, our secondary goal is to understand whether such dissatisfaction may prompt civil society organizations to create alternative supply channels of public services.

Indeed, to date, the literature pointing to dissatisfaction as leading to the alternative supply of public services has addressed citizens' dissatisfaction with the results, meaning dissatisfaction with the services provided to them (see Ben-Porat and Mizrahi, 2005; Cohen, 2012; Lehman-Wilzig, 1991). However, the literature locates the source of this dissatisfaction in the policy as designed, meaning the instructions on how services ought to be designed. In this study, we contribute to the literature by locating the source of their dissatisfaction in how street-level bureaucrats implement the policy.

Using a qualitative case study approach, we test our claims by analyzing the case of Israeli marriage registrars for the Jewish population in Israel. Jews in Israel must register for marriage through a state religious registrar. Some marriage registrars are stricter than others in religious practices and, in some cases, do not allow a marriage to take place. Public dissatisfaction with the implementation of this policy has led to the creation of the Tzohar Rabbinical Organization.

Literature review

Albert Hirschman's exit, voice, and loyalty model

In his *exit, voice, and loyalty* model, Albert Hirschman (1970, 1993) explains that when consumers are dissatisfied with a certain product, they may choose either the voice option, meaning they will demand better outcomes, or use the exit option and simply leave the firm offering the product (see Cohen, 2012). The choice between these alternatives depends on the existence of the exit option outside the organizational framework. Indeed, in cases where we find a state monopoly on a public service, meaning that exit is not an option, people might adopt quasi-exit alternatives. Good alternatives increase the likelihood that citizens will react strongly to any dissatisfaction they have. Lehman-Wilzig (1991) suggests that there might be a strategy between exit and voice that he terms alternative politics or quasi-exit, which includes bypassing the traditional system of governmental services and establishing alternative social and economic networks to offer what the official political system cannot, or will not, provide (see Cohen, 2012; Levy and Mizrahi, 2008).

Various scholars have tried to extend Hirschman's model to public services, emphasizing citizens' dissatisfaction with public services as rooted in the policy as designed, meaning the instructions on how services ought to be designed, as the main reason for voice and exit. Focusing on public services, Dowding and John (2012: 44) distinguish between two modes of voice—individual and collective—and identify two types of collective voice: participation and vote. Lyons and Lowery (1986, 1989) add neglect to this list, meaning passively allowing conditions to worsen. Other responses to dissatisfaction include the “alert citizen” or the “noisy exit,” meaning that exit and voice may be exercised simultaneously (Barry, 1974). Similarly, at times, exit follows an unmet voice effort (Dowding and John, 2008). Lowery, Rusbult and Lyons (Lyons and Lowery, 1986; Rusbult and Lowery, 1985) propose “abandonment” as an alternative to the exit–voice dichotomy. Nevertheless, the literature has yet to discuss citizens' dissatisfaction with how street-level bureaucrats exercise their discretion when implementing policy in the context of voice and exit.

Street-level bureaucrats' discretion

The discretion of street-level bureaucrats is considered a crucial element for how they perform their duties (Tummers and Bekkers, 2014). Bureaucratic discretion conveys the idea of a public agency acting with considerable latitude in implementing broad policy mandates of a legislative body (Bryner, 1987). It is typically viewed as a range of choices within a set of parameters that circumscribes the behavior of the individual service provider (Lipsky, 2010). It makes them essential players in the provision of public services because they make subjective interpretations about how the policy should be delivered. In certain instances, such

interpretations *become* the policy (Lipsky, 2010). Hence, they enjoy the monopoly provided to them by the state to determine how to implement public policy using substantial discretion. The latter may also be facilitated following the nature of street-level implementation.

Indeed, street-level theory recognizes that discretion involving judgment and responsiveness to individual circumstances is necessary for policies to be implemented (Gofen, 2013). Street-level bureaucrats adapt the policy designed by decision-makers to the actual needs of the citizens (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003). Nevertheless, the resources they possess are limited (Brodkin, 2012); thus, to decide what, when, and to whom services should be provided, they use coping methods that facilitate the service delivery process (Lipsky, 2010).

As we argue, street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion is an element that influences citizens' dissatisfaction with the implementation of the policy. The literature identifies three main elements that might influence why street-level bureaucrats exercise their discretion in a manner that might cause their clients' dissatisfaction: personal, organizational, and environmental.

On the personal level, street-level bureaucrats are guided by their ideological worldviews (Lipsky, 2010). They are committed to values influencing their discretion (Friedson, 2001), which, in turn, affect how they interpret information presented by their clients (Cohen and Gershgoren, 2016; Keiser, 2010). On the organizational level, street-level managers encourage their employees to implement policy in a way that corresponds to the managers' perceptions of how the services should be delivered (Brodkin, 2011), and how discretion should be exercised. Indeed, street-level bureaucrats have supervisors who oversee their work and enforce the policy's demands (Hupe and Hill, 2007), and thus influence their behaviors (see also Evans, 2010; May and Winter, 2007). Lastly, in their role as implementers of policy, street-level bureaucrats respond to the situations with which they are presented, adjusting their actions to the multiple demands, priorities, and values in their environment (Cohen and Hertz, 2020; McLaughlin, 1987). They are said to experience hybridity (i.e. complex identities and affiliations) in their everyday environment (Emery and Giauque, 2014). The literature also mentions the influence of politicians (May and Winter, 2007), as well as the political culture, as affecting organizations as an external force (Nelson and Quick, 2011).

At their core, these three elements also encompass the clients' characteristics and interactions, both directly and indirectly. Street-level bureaucrats' face-to-face interactions with clients have a strong influence on them. Indeed, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) confirm that street-level bureaucrats' discretion is based on normative choices that are defined in terms of their relationships with citizens, clients, co-workers, and the system. Street-level bureaucrats are said to behave altruistically when their behavior benefits others (e.g. citizens-clients) at a cost to themselves. Furthermore, Riccucci (2005) highlights their attitudes and emotions, such as compassion, towards their clients. Hupe and Hill (2007) and Keiser (2010) point to the degree to which these bureaucrats feel accountable to their clients, as well as how they feel about the goals of their organization. Tummers and Bekkers

(2014) underscore the degree to which street-level bureaucrats want to make a difference in their clients' lives. Indeed, Lipsky (2010) and Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) claim that the definitive characteristic of street-level work is the interaction between workers and clients.

Thus, our primary hypothesis is that street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion might increase citizens' dissatisfaction with policy implementation. Our secondary hypothesis posits that such dissatisfaction might prompt civil society organizations to create alternative supply channels of public services.

The alternative supply of public goods and services

The alternative supply of public goods and services takes different forms in different areas. Both citizens and civil society organizations act as alternative suppliers of public goods and services when governments fail to provide them in the quantity and quality that satisfies the public. Examples include healthcare (Cohen, 2018), public-private partnerships in agricultural policies (Narro et al., 2009), education (Shleifer, 1998), and religion (Minow, 2003).

The alternative supply of public goods and services is known by different names. For instance, some scholars refer to the phenomenon as the private provision of public goods, one example of which is private donations to charity (Bagnoli and McKee, 1991). Economics scholars call it voluntary contributions to the supply of collective goods (Fershtman and Nitzan, 1991), and the corporate provision of public goods (Morgan and Tumlinson, forthcoming). Gofen (2012) suggests the term "entrepreneurial exit," namely, a proactive exit response that involves the initiation of an alternative form of service by citizens themselves. Other scholars refer to it as "alternative politics," meaning specific strategies adopted by individuals and groups in response to their dissatisfaction with the declining availability of government services (Ben-Porat and Mizrahi, 2005; Cohen, 2012; Cohen and Filc, 2017; Levy and Mizrahi, 2008). Alternative politics is a significant explanation for political processes, both domestic and foreign (Ben-Porat and Mizrahi, 2005; Cohen, 2012; Levy and Mizrahi, 2008).

Diverse terminology notwithstanding, in all of these studies, the basic cause of the phenomenon is societal dissatisfaction with the way services are designed, according to the official policy. However, we posit that a combination of (1) citizens' dissatisfaction with policy implementation, (2) street-level bureaucrats' monopoly over policy implementation, meaning that only one supplier exists, creating the inability of service recipients to exit, and (3) participation channels perceived as blocked, creating the inability for them to use voice, will prompt civil society organizations to create alternative supply channels of public services.

The case of marriage in Israel

Israel was established on May 15, 1948 and is constitutionally defined as a Jewish and democratic state (Barak-Erez, 2008; Cohen, 2016; Rubin, 2013). The status

quo principle with respect to state–religion relations was first introduced in the government coalition agreements of 1950, and has been included in most coalition agreements since then. The status quo created a delicate consociationalist balance between religious and secular concerns (Don-Yehiya, 1999). In 1953, Israel created rabbinical courts to deal with marriage and divorce for the Jewish population (Edelman, 1994). It also established a Ministry of Religious Services, whose employees include religious leaders from all of the religions in the country.

In Israel, when a couple decides to marry, they register with the government registrar that represents their religious affiliation at the Ministry of Religious Services. Nevertheless, despite having a unified national marriage registration system that, for Jews, is supervised by the Chief Rabbinate, registrars in different municipalities have considerable discretion regarding the content and degree of ease or rigidity of the registration process. While some rabbinical councils take a lenient approach toward the religiously non-observant population, others favor a stricter approach. Indeed, the Ministry of Religious Services (2019b) notes on its official marriage website that “The marrying couple is advised to make a telephone call in order to learn the specific marriage registration demands in the municipality where they file their marriage because different [registration] bureaus may have slightly different demands.” The considerable latitude of marriage registrars’ exercise of discretion, along with different organizational and environmental settings, has resulted in variations in the demands made of couples coming to register for marriage.

Public dissatisfaction with these variations in demands led to the creation of Tzohar, a rabbinical non-governmental organization (NGO), as an alternative. Tzohar was established in 1995 by moderate religious-Zionist rabbis in an effort to improve the image of the Orthodox establishment in the eyes of young secular Israelis. Following a legal struggle against the Rabbinate’s efforts to prevent its formation, Tzohar succeeded in creating an alternative religious marriage registry. The organization uses its own marriage officials to register couples for marriage but utilizes the computerized registration systems in three specific local rabbinical councils. Tzohar rabbis have the official authority to declare that the couples who meet with them are indeed permitted to marry based on Orthodox Jewish law. Couples who marry through Tzohar are considered officially married in Israel (Tzohar, 2019). Indeed, Tzohar was established as a result of the awareness of Zionist rabbis, most of whom are communal rabbis, about people’s dissatisfaction with the state registrars as having a monopoly on issuing marriage licenses.

Research design

To test our hypotheses, we used a single case study design (Franklin et al., 2014). This study is part of a larger project that examines different aspects of religion and the state in Israel.¹ Once involved with the study, we realized that citizens’ dissatisfaction results not only from formal institutions (Cohen, 2012), that is, the services designed according to the official policy, but also with the way the policy is

implemented based on the bureaucrats' exercise of discretion. In the current study, we triangulated information from in-depth interviews and textual analysis of primary and secondary sources to ensure the data's credibility (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

In-depth interviews. We conducted 22 in-depth interviews with Tzohar's founders and field managers, journalists, academic experts, rabbinical employees, and married couples who used Tzohar's services (for a list of interviewees, see Appendix 1). The interviewees were sampled through snowball sampling, which assigns a defined quota to each group of interviewees. Indeed, one of the limitations of this method is selection bias. However, we maintain that it is possible to overcome selection bias by sufficient planning of the sampling process and goals, initiating parallel snowball networks, and using quota sampling (Cohen and Arieli, 2011). Furthermore, we have taken into consideration the possibility that Tzohar's testimonies might be biased. Consequently, we kept that possibility in mind when formulating the questions and analyzing the data. In addition, we also cross-analyzed and compared the Tzohar interviews with interviews with people outside that organization, statistical data, and other documentation.

We interviewed people within and outside of Tzohar, with the goal of understanding the role played by citizens' dissatisfaction as a component in the Tzohar rabbis' considerations in creating alternative services. Specifically, we asked the interviewees about the degree to which they thought that citizens' dissatisfaction with the rabbinical marriage registrars' discretion was a catalyst in the establishment of Tzohar. We ensured the interviewees of anonymity. The responses are archived for inspection upon request.

Textual analysis of primary and secondary sources. We utilized primary source material such as protocols from state institutions and legislation passed by official state institutions, as well as secondary source material such as reports issued by research centers, newspaper articles, and statistical reports.

Analytical technique. We used content analysis to analyze our data. It is a flexible method for the subjective interpretation of the qualitative content of text that involves coding and identifying themes or patterns (Stemler, 2001). Its advantage is in obtaining information from interviewees without imposing preconceived categories or theoretical perspectives (Kondracki et al., 2002), instead allowing the categories to flow from the data.

Findings

Illustrating the degree of citizens' dissatisfaction with the implementation of existing marriage services, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics data indicate that in 2014 and 2015, 3263 and 2942 Jewish Israeli couples, respectively, married abroad in a civil ceremony. The ratio of couples married abroad in a civil ceremony to

couples marrying in Israel in a religious ceremony in both years was an overwhelming 1:10 (Anonymous 1). Furthermore, over the course of 10 years (1992–2012), the number of Israeli Jewish couples who chose to cohabit without an official marriage ceremony rose by approximately 250% (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010, 2013). Our respondents explained that these numbers may be an indication of the poor implementation of the services designed by the official policy, which prompts many citizens to forgo a religious marriage ceremony and find other alternatives, which are expensive (e.g. civil marriage abroad) and may not be officially recognized (e.g. common-law spouses) (Anonymous 7, 8, 19). Furthermore, recent data from the Ministry of Religious Services indicate a decline in the number of couples who registered for marriage through rabbinical councils. In 2017, there was a 4.7% decrease, and in 2018, a 6.2% decrease (Ministry of Religious Services, 2019a).

Elements prompting street-level bureaucrats to implement policy in a way that leads to citizens' dissatisfaction

Why do street-level bureaucrats, who presumably want to serve the public, implement policy in a manner that results in widespread public dissatisfaction? We identified three elements that contribute to such decisions: personal, organizational, and environmental.

The personal component. The marriage registrars' personal ideology is an important factor in how they make their decisions because the Rabbinate grants them considerable discretion in this regard. Interviewees stated that there are many gray areas within the policy governing marriage and each registrar is given leeway in making a decision (Anonymous 9, 19). Registrars may conduct investigations into their clients' backgrounds that are far beyond the policy as designed (Anonymous 17). Thus, there is a great deal of inconsistency (Anonymous 7, 11, 12, 19).

Indeed, across the board, our respondents noted that the registrars' degree of professional and ideological affiliation with the very conservative, ultra-Orthodox branch of Judaism is clearly a factor that influences how they exercise their discretion in supplying marriage services (Anonymous 7, 8, 15, 16, 18). To illustrate, interviewees noted that the Tzohar religious-Zionist rabbis are relatively younger, modern and educated, and are thus more familiar with the desires of their secular clients (Anonymous 10, 16, 19).

The organizational component. Street-level managers are a significant factor in guiding the discretion of their staff. Our interviewees stated that the religious council managers combine a religious viewpoint with a bureaucratic approach. Their goal is to make a living rather than their service being a spiritual mission carried out with good will (Anonymous 8, 11–13, 18).

Some claimed that when a local religious council is very strict, it is mainly due to the religious agenda of the council's chief rabbi, whose doctrinal approach

influences the entire council (Anonymous 19). Similarly, another respondent maintained that the more Orthodox a manager is, the more likely he is to object to any processes of reform in service provision, with the goal being to make the clients adhere to what the manager regards as the letter of the law. Other interviewees claimed that one could easily categorize local religious councils by the level of strictness simply by learning who heads the council. Certain cities, such as Netanya, Rishon LeZion and Haifa, are very strict owing to their chief rabbis' directives (Anonymous 7). On the other hand, the religious council of Tel Aviv, headed by a moderate rabbi, is more than willing to improve the services given to couples (Anonymous 9).

The environmental component. Our interviewees also noted how the cultural and political environment in which the registrars operate influences the registrar's exercise of discretion, both bottom-up and top-down, respectively. For example, different local rabbinical councils have varied ideas about how religion should be practiced, and these usually correspond to the composition of the population in their area (Anonymous 7, 18). Generally, minority populations will suffer the consequences as, in many cases, local authorities are stricter towards certain communities in their areas. For example, the religious council of Petach Tikva is known for making it difficult for Ethiopian residents to prove their Jewishness (Anonymous 15), sometimes going so far as to ask for a DNA test (Tesler, 2019). On the other hand, councils in cities that have a larger secular population, such as Tel Aviv, are more moderate and try to hold on to their secular clients by softening their approach (Anonymous 4, 6, 9, 14).

Finally, various respondents stated that local politics have a strong influence on rabbinical councils. Mayors with different political worldviews frequently help set the city's agenda. They manage council meetings and influence public policies by voting and exercising their veto power. De facto, mayors exert pressure on these councils (Anonymous 7, 9, 14), which is also evident in political appointees who are not qualified for the job they do: "It's all about political gain, and not the quality of provided services" (Anonymous 11–13).

The Rabbinate's monopoly on marriage services

The couples using Tzohar's services are well aware of the monopoly the Rabbinate enjoys as the only service supplier in the area of marriage. Prior to the creation of Tzohar, they realized they had no exit option, and thus felt trapped (Anonymous 21, 22). Indeed, many of our interviewees acknowledged that monopolies eliminate the incentive to provide high-quality services, leading to possible abusive and corrupt behavior by the registrars (Anonymous 3, 12, 13, 20–22). They also realize that such behavior is evident in the small amount of effort put into helping clients (Anonymous 21, 22).

One of the major obstacles that prospective couples encounter is when the Jewishness of one or both of them is in question. The Rabbinate's registrars

would often simply send the applicants away, telling them to provide them with proof. In contrast, Tzohar helps their clients in any possible way when it comes to the information needed to register for a marriage (Anonymous 16, 19). Our interviewees cited this effort as an example of how Tzohar rabbis are breaking up the Rabbinate's monopoly, providing alternatives and competition to bring about better services, the hallmarks of a free market (Anonymous 3–5, 18, 21, 22). This distinction is important because the essence of the service that Tzohar provides is similar to that of the Rabbinate: religious marriage in accordance with the policy *as designed*. Nevertheless, the exercise of discretion by the Rabbinate's marriage registrars is sometimes so strict that it drives people away rather than attempting to help them overcome obstacles. In contrast, Tzohar does not seek to overthrow the state's Halacha-based marriage policy; it simply argues that the policy is not meant to be implemented in a manner that drives people away.

Perception and experience of voice as not feasible

Our interviewees also explained that in the existing framework, voice options are not available. They argued that there is no way to protest the registrars' behavior (Anonymous 3, 13, 21, 22). Those who are refused services by the rabbinical establishment may feel ashamed and embarrassed by the suspicion that they might not be considered Jewish. They may also want to hide what could be regarded as a stain on their character. In addition, given that they must go through the Rabbinate to marry, they may try to find a way to compromise with the registrars. Therefore, they may believe that giving voice to their dissatisfaction may cause the registrars to harden their position even more (Anonymous 7–13, 15, 16).

Tzohar as an alternative

Consequently, our findings indicate that faced with the registrars' monopoly on the provision of marriage services and feeling that participation channels were blocked, unsatisfied clients sought alternative marital services in the Tzohar Rabbinical Organization. Tzohar officials (Anonymous 9, 11–13) note that the organization provides marriage services to approximately 5000 couples annually, about 15% of all marriages in the country per year (Tzohar, 2019). Our respondents explained that these figures include couples who began the marriage registration process with the local religious council and found it difficult to prove they were Jewish. These couples typically received no assistance from the Rabbinate registrars in trying to continue the process and turned to Tzohar. There, they were given what they regarded as "high-quality services," which included helping them where the religious councils had failed them, both procedurally and emotionally (Anonymous 5, 9, 10, 19).

Discussion

Taking Albert Hirschman's model of exit, voice, and loyalty as the basis for understanding citizens' response to their dissatisfaction with policy outcomes, we proposed street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion as a neglected element that influences citizens' dissatisfaction with policy implementation. To date, the literature has focused on dissatisfaction as the independent variable. It has yet to explore the possibility that street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion in implementing policy may be the dependent variable causing citizens' dissatisfaction.

We also identified three elements that might lead street-level bureaucrats to implement policy in a manner that results in general dissatisfaction: personal, organizational, and environmental. At their core, these three elements also encompass the clients' characteristics and interactions, both directly and indirectly, because street-level bureaucrats' face-to-face interactions with clients have a strong influence on them.

Furthermore, we posited that when (1) citizens are dissatisfied with policy implementation, (2) street-level bureaucrats have a monopoly over policy implementation, and (3) the public feels that there are no opportunities to voice their discontent, civil society organizations will create alternatives. This hypothesis makes an additional contribution to the literature. To date, most studies pointing to dissatisfaction as leading to the alternative supply of public services have addressed people's dissatisfaction with the results of the services they receive (see Ben-Porat and Mizrahi, 2005; Cohen, 2012; Lehman-Wilzig, 1991). However, the literature locates the source of this dissatisfaction in the policy that *designed* these services. We maintain that the source of the dissatisfaction is not necessarily in the policy itself, but rather in how street-level bureaucrats implement it. Our findings validated our hypotheses.

Our case study demonstrates that even when the public seems to have a choice, the outcomes tend to be the same. For example, despite the fact that clients can choose the rabbinical council they go to, most registrars implement policy in a similar manner—strictly. Another element is lack of transparency. Clients have no way to determine the degree of stringency that will be applied by the registrar randomly assigned to them at the council. Hence, due to their structural position, the marriage registrars enjoy a monopoly in the implementation of policy, making them less concerned about their clients' satisfaction. Indeed, they are more concerned with satisfying the demands of the organization they serve and the environment in which they function. These concerns may be paramount in the work of street-level bureaucrats in various fields of policy.

In such a situation, we might expect the public to exercise its voice, using practices the literature cites such as protests, petitions and pressure groups, some of which do not depend on participation channels (Dowding and John, 2008, 2012). Voice practices can amass various types of resources and transform them into collectively held capital that can be used for collective action (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). However, such expressions of voice are rarely apt when analyzing

policy implementation. When services are implemented differently at the micro level, it is very difficult for citizens to voice their demands jointly. Furthermore, citizens tend to interact individually with street-level bureaucrats, making it hard for them to mobilize as a group against the implementation of policy and voice their demands collectively. Given that the Rabbinate has a monopoly on marital services, the couples tended to try to meet the registrars' demands, hoping for a future compromise. In addition, personal considerations such as shame and embarrassment at being accused of not being Jewish played a major role in citizens' decisions not to use voice. They were also afraid that voicing criticism might cause the registrars to harden their position even more. Thus, they concluded that voice was not an option.

Conclusion

Exploring the combination of theories about street-level bureaucrats with the alternative supply of services is important not only in the academic realm, but also in professional settings, for two reasons. First, it indicates that policy implementation leading to citizens' dissatisfaction may indeed be the cause of a market failure that will eventually lead to the alternative supply of public goods and services. Second, understanding that there are personal, organizational, and environmental elements that influence the street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion illustrates the complexity of the concept and how the three components of influence overlap. Typically, the personal characteristics of the street-level bureaucrats remain relatively stable. However, variations in their managers and/or environments may lead to differences in how they exercise their discretion.

From a normative perspective, the alternative supply of public services is not necessarily negative; it may encourage citizens' participation in the political realm and increase their involvement in public policy and civil society. Nevertheless, from a democratic perspective, such a phenomenon may be considered not a form of political participation, but rather a threat to the democratic system's stability. Ultimately, such actions might have damaging economic and political outcomes. Thus, one could argue that as implementers of public policy, it is the street-level bureaucrats' responsibility to exercise their discretion in a manner that provides services that satisfy the public. They must do so in order to encourage democratic values such as the accountability of the public sector to its clients.

One of the limitations of our study is that the case presented here is specific in terms of time, place, and context. Thus, we do not claim that precisely the same mechanism will operate in all circumstances. Nevertheless, although other or additional elements may lead to citizens' dissatisfaction in other contexts, street-level bureaucrats' exercise of discretion, as presented here, is a preliminary framework for future research. Such discretion is still one of the most enigmatic variables in public administration. Furthermore, even though we used a single case to create our theoretical framework, we maintain that it is general enough that future

researchers need make only minor adjustments to use it to investigate other realms of policy and implementation.

While our hypotheses were validated using data from the area of religion, we maintain that it applies to other areas such as education, taxes, and social work. Hence, future research in other countries and policy realms should focus on the role played by street-level bureaucrats' discretion in implementing policy as a factor causing citizens' dissatisfaction, leading to the creation of an alternative supply of public goods and services. Doing so would shed further light on the importance of this factor. Other fruitful research directions, such as focusing on different types of alternative public goods and services, will improve our understanding of this critical aspect. Other interesting paths might focus on dissatisfied street-level bureaucrats who feel that citizens are entitled to better services. Such street-level workers might feel that they cannot provide better services because they are constrained by the organization and their peers. Therefore, they may consider other strategies to bring about change, including engaging in entrepreneurship.

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Note

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Appendix I: List of interviews

- Anonymous 1—The Israeli Population Registry, 5 June 2017
- Anonymous 2—Academician, 6 March 2016
- Anonymous 3—Moderate rabbi, 18 April 2016
- Anonymous 4—Moderate rabbi, 14 February 2016
- Anonymous 5—Tzohar official, 18 February 2016
- Anonymous 6—Rabbinite official, 27 July 2016
- Anonymous 7—Moderate rabbi, 20 December 2018
- Anonymous 8—Tzohar official, 30 December 2018
- Anonymous 9—Tzohar official, 10 January 2019
- Anonymous 10—Tzohar employee, 20 January 2019
- Anonymous 11—Tzohar founder, 31 January 2019
- Anonymous 12—Tzohar founder, 31 January 2019
- Anonymous 13—Tzohar founder, 31 January 2019
- Anonymous 14—Academician, 24 January 2019
- Anonymous 15—Journalist covering religious affairs, 24 January 2019
- Anonymous 16—Journalist covering religious affairs, 24 January 2019
- Anonymous 17—Chief Rabbinite former official, 29 January 2019
- Anonymous 18—Academician, 29 January 2019
- Anonymous 19—Journalist covering religious affairs, 29 January 2019
- Anonymous 20—Academician, 31 January 2019
- Anonymous 21—A couple married by Tzohar, 16 March 2016
- Anonymous 22—A couple married by Tzohar, 23 March 2016