The Exit of Residential Mobility or the Voice of Political Action?

Strategies for Problem-solving in Residential Communities

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Abstract

This research investigated two different action strategies for residents to deal with

dissatisfying community services, moving out of the community (exit) or communicating

dissatisfaction to local authorities (voice). Data were used from a Population Movement

Survey that was held among 1529 households in three major cities in the UK in 1997.

Employing concepts from interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), we predicted

that dissatisfaction with community services would lead to more exit and voice-responses.

Furthermore, exit was predicted to be dominant among residents who – for diverse reasons

-- were less dependent and voice for residents who were more dependent upon the

community. These predictions were supported and the relevance of these findings for

understanding community stability and improvement are discussed.

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Strategies for Problem-solving in Residential Communities

How do residents solve problems within their local community? How do they respond, for example, when they perceive a decline in the quality of local community services, such as schools, health and leisure facilities, libraries, and police? Will residents improve their situation by moving to an area offering better facilities or by communicating dissatisfaction to local authorities, thereby hoping that services will be improved?

The social-psychological literature has addressed several aspects of this central question, yet without resolving the issue completely.   In social justice research, for example, social-psychologists have examined which factors shape citizens' evaluation of authorities. Several researchers emphasize the importance of satisfaction with the material outcomes that people receive from authorities (Adams, 1965; Crosby, 1976; Hollander, 1985). Other research stresses the importance of receiving a fair treatment in how individuals evaluate authorities (Folger, 1977; Tyler & Lind, 1992). However, from these theories it is quite difficult to predict what specific behavioral strategies residents may undertake when they are dissatisfied with services provided by local community authorities (cf. Tyler & Smith, 1998).

Other areas of social-psychological research examine, in greater detail, the behavioral responses to dissatisfaction. Frequently, a distinction is made between individual versus collective action strategies. Social dilemma research, for example, tends to concentrate on individual actions in response to community problems by studying people's willingness to engage in voluntary cooperation (Dawes, 1980; Komorita & Parks, 1994). Recently, social dilemma researchers have also started to take an interest in collective actions to tackle community problems, for example, by empowering local authorities (Tyler & Degoey, 1995; Van Vugt & De Cremer, 1999; Van Vugt, Snyder, Tyler, & Biel, 2000). Finally, research on social and political movements (Kinder, 1998;

Klandermans, 1997; Tyler & Smith, 1998) has focused almost exclusively on collective

efforts to tackle community problems, such as through voting in local elections,

participation in demonstrations, or membership of local interest groups. Although the

distinction between individual and collective action strategies is useful for heuristic

purposes, we believe it is not the only way to classify residential strategies to overcome

community problems.

In this study, we propose an alternative framework for understanding the way

residents try to solve community problems. In dealing with a decline in community

services, for example, residents can either collaborate with authorities to improve these

services, what will be referred to as the voice-strategy, or they can leave their community

and move into a community with better facilities, what will be referred to as the exit-

strategy.   Obviously, residents can (and often will) decide to do nothing about these

problems. Yet, when dissatisfaction about community services grows, for example, because

the quality of local schools and health services deteriorates rapidly, residents may have no

choice but do something about the situation. In this study, we will present a social-

psychological model to understand when residents choose either an exit or voice-strategy in

response to dissatisfaction about community services.

Exit or Voice? Two Community Action Strategies

Our framework is inspired by the seminal work of economist Albert Hirschman

(1970) on consumer responses to a decline in product quality of firms and states.

Following Hirschman's argument, residents may react in two different ways when they are

dissatisfied about local community services, and wish to do something about the situation,

either they exit or voice.   Exit can be formally defined as an attempt to escape from a

problematic situation, such as moving out of a bad neighborhood (cf. the "voting with your

feet"-principle; Tiebout, 1956). Voice, in contrast, pertains to any attempt to turn around a

problematic situation, for example, by communicating dissatisfaction to local authorities and urge them to undertake community-improving actions.[1]

Both exit and voice are active problem-solving strategies, in contrast to simply getting used to these problems. Yet, they differ in both their means and ends. First, the exit of residential mobility is by and large an individual response to community problems, whereas the voice of political action can either be conducted individually (contacting the local authority or "council") or collectively (electing a local council).[2]   Second, whereas voicing is generally constructive, because residents make an effort to help improve their local community, exit is generally destructive for the community. Indeed, residential mobility, if it occurs frequently, can lead to a further decline of the community, because communities are refrained from individuals that could be actively engaged, thus leaving behind a group of residents who "suffer in silence" (Orbell & Uno, 1972). Hence, the distribution of exit and voice strategies among residents may have important implications for the stability and welfare of communities. It is therefore paramount to investigate when residents use these community problem-solving strategies.

An Interdependence Analysis of Exit and Voice

We propose a generic social-psychological framework for understanding the use of these community problem-solving tactics, exit or voice, which is based on interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996).   The main assumption is that the residential use of exit/voice-strategies in response to a decline in community services is shaped by two separate aspects of the relationship between residents and their local community: Degree of dissatisfaction (with community services) and degree of dependence. According to the model, dissatisfaction predicts whether residents will come into action -- as compared to doing nothing -- whereas dependence predicts whether residents will decide to use an exit or voice-strategy.

Whether residents will do something in response to the local service provision is largely determined by the degree of dissatisfaction they are experiencing. Satisfaction is judged against various criteria, such as how well the local community services fulfill people's personal interests (jobs, leisure and health services), their family's interest (education for children), or the interests of their particular street or neighborhood within the larger community (access to public transport). Degree of dissatisfaction, however, may not only be derived from the actual state of community services, but also from the expectation about what residents think that their quality should be (comparison level; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), or what residents feel that they are entitled to, for example, given the local tax regime (relative deprivation; Crosby, 1976).

It is unlikely that all residents will respond to a decline in services in exactly the same way, however. Residents' evaluation of the relative costs and benefits of different action strategies will vary with the opportunities they think they have for change. Following interdependence theory, a key condition for change is the <u>dependency</u> of residents upon the community and its services.   Dependency can be interpreted here as the extent to which residents believe they are restricted in exit opportunities, hence are forced to stay in this community to fulfill their needs in terms of accommodation, health, education, and leisure. Accordingly, dependence is inversely related to the availability of options to move elsewhere.

Exit opportunities may be restricted for a diversity of reasons, economic, physical, cultural, and social. For example, urban studies (e.g., Orbell & Uno, 1972; Rossi, 1980) have indicated that residential mobility patterns are influenced by socio-demographic factors, such as age (younger residents generally are more mobile), income (mobility increases with wealth), family situation (presence of children restricts mobility) and current housing (property owners are less likely to move than people who rent). Residents' dependency is thus influenced by a conglomerate of different social and demographic

variables. In combination, these factors presumably determine whether residents respond to poor community services by exiting the community or, when this is largely impossible, by using a voice-strategy to tackle the decline.

Taken together, we first predict that dissatisfaction is related to both an increase in use of exit (Hypothesis 1a) and voice-strategies (Hypothesis 1b). Furthermore, weakly dependent residents are overall more likely to use exit as residential strategy (Hypothesis 2a), whereas highly dependent residents will use voice more often (Hypothesis 2b). Highly dependent residents are expected to use voice more, regardless of their actual dissatisfaction with the services, because their voicing keeps the local authorities alert, thus preventing a possible future decline in community services.

Finally, it may be that use of these strategies, exit and voice, among weakly and highly dependent residents intensifies with a growing dissatisfaction about community services. With growing dissatisfaction, more residents will exit, but presumably only those that are weakly dependent. Conversely, highly dependent residents who are dissatisfied do not have that choice-option. They must either wait passively for things to change or try to improve the situation by voicing their dissatisfaction to local authorities. Thus, for exploratory purposes, we also examine whether there are interactive effects of dissatisfaction and dependence that account for residents' use of these action strategies.

How This Study Builds on Previous Research

This study extends and complements previous research on residential mobility and community action, published in the political science literature. For example, Orbell and Uno (1972) used a similar framework to understand residents' responses to urban problems in a metropolitan community in the U.S. in the 1960s. Among other issues, these researchers were interested in contrasting the reactions of white and black residents to a range of self-reported problems within inner city communities (e.g., crime, safety, housing). They hypothesized and found that mobility and political action intentions were more

prevalent when neighborhood problems were perceived as more severe. Furthermore, they showed that the dominant preference for white residents was to leave the area and move into the suburbs. In contrast, black residents preferred taking actions to address neighborhood problems (e.g., writing letters, participate in local politics). The researchers attributed these results to a differential availability of exit-opportunities, with white residents having access to a greater range of alternative residential communities than black residents.

The present study extends this earlier work in <u>four</u> ways. First, by studying exit-voice patterns among residential communities within three major cities in the UK (London, Manchester, Birmingham) almost four decades later, our study could add to the credibility of their findings and interpretation. Furthermore, whereas we also rely on expressed mobility intentions rather than actual behavior, unlike previous work we employ a self-reported behavioral measure of voice, whereby we ask residents whether they have actually been in contact with the local authorities. Third, rather than focusing on community problems in general, our study concentrates on the perceived quality of <u>local community services</u>. Because this problem is presumably more controllable than other neighborhood problems (e.g., unemployment), voicing could be perceived as a viable residential strategy. Yet, this also means that our predictive model may not account for a great deal of variance in exit and voice, because there can be many different reasons for using these action strategies, beyond a poor quality of services. A final, perhaps most important contribution of our study is that by using concepts from interdependence theory, satisfaction and dependence, we provide a theoretical basis for specifying the conditions under which exit versus voice-strategies are likely to be used within a residential context.

Method

Participants and procedure.   We used data from a study on Population Movement which was commissioned by the London School of Economics with financial support from

the Economic and Social Research Council (Dowding, John, & Mergoupis, 1998). It was

developed to assess residential mobility patterns in metropolitan areas. Interviews were

held with a total number of 1529 households in three metropolitan areas in England:

London (480), Birmingham (504), and Manchester (545) in 1997. These interviews were

conducted door-to-door. Addresses were contacted up to four times on different days and

times, including evenings and weekends. This led to an acceptable response rate of 65

percent, culminating in a total of 1529 interviews. The survey respondent was always a

member of the core household.

A stratified sampling procedure was used for the survey. The sampling of

households proceeded in two phases. First, a stratified sampling procedure was used to

select twelve to thirteen local communities within each of these cities. Strata were defined

according to the distribution of owner occupied and rented households within these areas

(data were obtained from the 1990 Census). The method ensured that there would be a

diversity of different metropolitan communities represented in the sample. At the second

stage of the sampling, addresses were randomly selected from the Postal Address Files

corresponding to each local community.

Questionnaire.   Participants were instructed that the survey was commissioned by

the London School of Economics to find out why people choose to live in a particular

neighborhood. The questionnaire consisted of 61 questions in total, and was divided into

two parts. One part (31 questions) was designed to provide socio-demographic information

about the sample (e.g., age, household, family composition) and the other part (30

questions) was designed to assess residents' evaluation of their living situation and their

mobility patterns (for details, see Dowding et al., 1998). For the purpose of this study we

selected those items that addressed the evaluation of community services as provided by the

local council/authority as well as the use of exit and voice-strategies. Responses were

assessed using different scales, but all included a Don't Know-option. These responses were treated as missing values in the analyses.

<u>Measures</u> The following items were selected to create indices of dissatisfaction, dependence, voice, and exit. For some of the constructs there were unfortunately only single-item measures available.

<u>Dissatisfaction with community services.</u> This was measured by one general item: "At your current address, in general how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the local council's provision of services (1 = very satisfied, 5 = very dissatisfied).[2]" To help them decide we included a list of services that were provided by the local council, such as libraries, health services, state schools, refuse collection, leisure services, street cleaning, social services, and the police.

<u>Dependence upon community.</u> We used demographic information from the survey to construe an objective index of dependence (for a similar procedure, see for example Rusbult & Lowery, 1985). Based upon some well-known factors affecting mobility (Rossi, 1980) the following household characteristics were considered to be relevant: (a) children between the ages 5 and 18 (0 = no, 1 = yes); (b) private renting (0) or homeowners (1); (c) single (0) or were living with a partner (1; i.e., married or cohabiting); (d) whether people were 41 or younger (0) or were older than 41 (1) – i.e., 41 was the median age split in the sample and older residents are generally less mobile (Rossi, 1980); and, finally, (e) there was a member of the household in regular paid employment (0) or there were no members of the household in regular paid employment (1). Accordingly, dependence scores varied between 0 and 5, with a maximum score of 5 (highly dependent) for a household with the core including two adults above the age of 41 with school-age children, who owned their house, and had no paid employment.[3]

<u>Voice-activities.</u>   Voice was measured by three behavioral items. "At your current address, have you contacted your local councilor?" "… had any dealings with council

employees about council services?" "…voted in a local election?" (0 = no, 1 = yes). An

overall voice-index was construed by adding up the three items-scores (minimum-score 0 -

no voice; maximum-score 3 – full voice). This scale had a modest reliability (alpha =

0.55). We therefore used the individual items as well in our analysis.

Exit-intention.   Finally, the intention to move was measured by the following item:

"Which of the following best describes what you think you will do in the next two to three

years?" (1 = definitely stay in this home, 2 = probably stay in this home, 3 = probably move

from this home, 4 = definitely move from this home). This is a standard measure in urban

research (Orbell & Uno, 1972). In addition, we asked all potential movers (scores 3 or 4)

whether they considered a move out of this council area (1 = yes, definitely, 2 = yes,

maybe, 3 = no).   Those people answering 3 ("no"; N =114) were excluded from further

analyses.[4]

Final sample. The final sample to test our hypotheses consisted of 1304 households.

This excluded 114 households whose members exhibited an intention to move but only

within their community as well as 111 households with at least one missing value on the

relevant survey questions.

Results

      The data analyses proceeded in three stages. In the first stage, we performed descriptive statistics on the data, inspecting the means and standard deviations for the relevant constructs: Satisfaction, dependence, exit, and voice.[5] In the second phase, we conducted correlation analyses between these constructs. Finally, hierarchical regression analyses were performed to examine our hypotheses regarding the impact of dissatisfaction (Hypothesis 1) and dependence (Hypothesis 2), as well as -- for exploratory purposes -- the interaction between these factors on residential exit and voice-strategies. Following a standard regression procedure (Aiken & West, 1991), before conducting these regression analyses we centered the scores on the variables and included the deviation scores so as to control for any nonessential correlations between predictors and their interaction.

      Descriptive results. A summary of the means and standard deviations of the four factors, dissatisfaction, dependence, exit, and voice is presented in Table 1. This table shows a good variance in scores for each of the constructs, including the composed dependence and voice-variables. A frequency analysis on the dependence variable revealed a normal distribution of scores. A score of 0 (= weak dependence) was obtained by 3% of the participants, a score of 1 by 10%, a score of 2 by 25%, whereas scores of 3 , 4, and 5 (= strong dependence) were obtained by, respectively, 36%, 23%, and 2%.

      Subsequently, we calculated the correlations between the factors in our theoretical model. These results are depicted in Table 1. As can be seen from this table, all correlation coefficients are statistically significant, although the absolute size of these correlations is moderate.

      Predicting exit-intention.   In the first hierarchical analysis (Table 2) we regressed the exit-intention (1 = definitely stay, 4 = definitely move) onto the two predictors, dissatisfaction, dependence (Model 1) and their interaction (Model 2). This analysis revealed that the model factors together accounted for 10% of the variance in moving-

intentions As predicted, exit-intentions were positively associated with dissatisfaction with community services, which is in line with Hypothesis 1a (beta = .12, p <.001). Thus, more dissatisfied residents were more likely to want to leave the community.

Consistent with Hypothesis 2a, exit-intentions were negatively associated with dependency on the community (beta = - .27, p <.001). Thus, the less dependent residents were more likely to consider leaving the community.

In addition, looking at the interaction effects, it appeared that there was an interactive effect for dissatisfaction and dependence (beta = -.05, p <.05). This interaction is displayed in Figure 1, using a standard procedure for plotting interactions between continuous predictors (Aiken & West, 1991).[6] This graph reveals that there is no difference in exit-intention between weakly and strongly dependent residents if they are satisfied. However, if they are dissatisfied, weakly dependent residents have a stronger exit-intention than strongly dependent residents. A different way to look at this effect is by comparing the slopes for the weakly and strongly dependent residents. For residents with a weak community dependence, the slope is significantly different from zero, $t(530) = 2.76$, $p <.01$, whereas for strongly dependent residents the slope is non-significant, $t(772) < 1$. This result shows that the exit-strategy is more preferred when dissatisfaction is combined with weaker dependence (i.e., greater exit opportunities).

Finally, we performed separate regression analyses with each of the demographic factors that formed the dependence construct. These analyses revealed that each variable, except the presence of school age children (beta = -.03, p =.28), uniquely predicted exit-intentions, and each in the hypothesized direction. All of these factors inhibited the exit-intention. The strongest predictors were age (beta = -.27, p <.001), and home ownership (beta = -.22; p <.001), followed by no paid employment (beta = -.14, p <.001) and living with partner (beta = -.07, p <.05). Furthermore, there was a significant interaction between

dissatisfaction and age (<u>beta</u> = -.12, <u>p</u> <.06), indicating that particularly younger residents considered exiting if they were dissatisfied.

Predicting voice-behaviors.   In a second analysis, we regressed voice (0 = no action, 3 = all three actions) on to the predictors in the model (see Table 2). This analysis revealed, first, that the model accounted for eight percent of variance in voice-decisions. Consistent with Hypothesis 1b, this analysis revealed that voicing was positively associated with dissatisfaction with the community services (<u>beta</u> = .10, <u>p</u> <.001), indicating more voicing when residents were less satisfied with community services.

Voice was associated with a greater dependency upon the community (<u>beta</u> = .26, <u>p</u> <.001), which supports Hypothesis 2b. As predicted, the highly dependent residents were more likely to have used voice compared with the weakly dependent residents.

There was no evidence for a significant interaction between dissatisfaction and dependence on voice (<u>beta</u> = -.02, <u>p</u> = .52).

Furthermore, we performed separate analyses with each demographic factor that contributed to the dependence construct. Similar to the previous analyses on the exit-intention, these analyses revealed that each variable, except the presence of school age children (<u>beta</u> = .02, <u>p</u> =.35), uniquely predicted voicing and each in the hypothesized direction. All of these factors enhanced the use of voice. Again, the strongest predictors were age (<u>beta</u> = .23, <u>p</u> <.001), and home ownership (<u>beta</u> = .23; <u>p</u> <.001), followed by living with partner (<u>beta</u> = .11, <u>p</u> <.001) and no paid employment (<u>beta</u> = .08, <u>p</u> <.01). Finally, there was a marginally significant interaction between dissatisfaction and having school age children (<u>beta</u> = .14, <u>p</u> <.06), indicating that particularly residents with school age children had used voice when they were dissatisfied.

Finally, we conducted separate logistic regression analyses for each of the three voice-activities (voting in local election, contacting council, dealing with council employees) with dissatisfaction and the overall dependence-score as predictors.   Recall

that the reliability of the voice-construct was modest.   Therefore we were interested to find out whether the same results would be obtained across the different voice-strategies. For the latter two voice-activities, respectively contacting councilor and dealing with council employees, the results showed that, as predicted, both dissatisfaction , respective Wald's χ^2's (1, N = 1304) = 10.12 and 12.18, p's <.001, and dependence, respective Wald's χ^2's [1, N = 1304] = 7.94 and 5.00, p's <.05, contributed uniquely to predicting voice (i.e., respectively 80% and 67% of respondents were correctly classified;   there were no significant interaction effects, respective χ^2's [1, N = 1304] < 1). Voting, however, was predicted by dependence, χ^2 (1, N = 1304) = 18.21, p <.001, but not by dissatisfaction with community services, χ^2 (1, N = 1304) < 1 (77% of respondents were correctly classified; there was no significant interaction, χ^2[1, N = 1304] < 1). This latter difference is noteworthy and will be addressed in the discussion.

Discussion

In this article we examined problem-solving within residential communities. We made a conceptual distinction between two different residential action strategies, the exit of residential mobility versus the voice of political action. The exit-voice framework was used to understand residents' responses to dissatisfaction with local community services in three large metropolitan communities in the United Kingdom.

Antecedents of Exit and Voice-strategies

One of the central aims of the study was to gain insight into both the structural and psychological conditions that shape exit and voice-strategies within residential communities. Inspired by interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996), we proposed that exit/voice-reactions would be influenced by two different properties, degree of dissatisfaction with community services and dependence upon them.

First, in line with our prediction, exit and voice tendencies were stronger the more dissatisfied residents reported to be with the overall provision of community services, such as social, health and leisure services, and the police. Although we were interested primarily in residents' current satisfaction level, responses may well have been influenced by the discrepancy between the experienced quality and their perceptions about what the quality should be or what it had been before, their comparison level (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). For example, in light of the amount of council taxes they paid compared with other communities, residents may have believed that they were entitled to a better quality of service. Accordingly, feelings of entitlement or "relative deprivation" (Crosby, 1976) may well have contributed to the experienced dissatisfaction of residents, thereby reinforcing exit and voice-reactions. In addition, dissatisfaction may also be caused by the perceived discrepancy between the actual state of services and how they were when residents moved into this community.   It is important for future research to establish the relative importance of these evaluations. Perhaps, exit and voice responses are reinforced when people experience a sudden deterioration in services (e.g., as a result of vandalism or increased crime) as opposed to communities in which services are structurally poor, and residents have got "used" to them.

Second, consistent with the predictions, exit/voice strategies were also influenced by the residents' dependency on the community and its services. The level of dependency was measured by aggregating various demographic factors that are known to restrict exit-opportunities within communities (age, home ownership, low income, married or cohabiting, and presence of school-aged children; Rossi, 1980). Dependency is therefore functionally equivalent to a lack of viable exit-alternatives, the comparison level of alternatives (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). We found that, regardless of actual dissatisfaction, residents were, overall, more likely to use their voice to authorities to the extent that they were more greatly dependent on their community's provision of services. Weakly

dependent residents, in contrast, exhibited, overall, a greater desire to move out of the community. Further analyses revealed that each of the demographic variables uniquely contributed to these results, except for the presence or absence of school-aged children. Parents with school-aged children were found to use voice only when they were dissatisfied with local services.

It can thus be concluded that residential action strategies are directly affected by the opportunities for residents to move out of the neighborhood. That is, even when residents are currently satisfied with the provision of community services, those with viable exit-opportunities, for example those who do not own a house, are single, and/or have a good income, are more likely to consider leaving. This is perhaps not all that surprising, because it is quite common for residents to move between communities, particularly within metropolitan areas, and people do so for numerous reasons, just one of them having to do with the state of community services. Of greater interest is that residents without viable exit-opportunities used their voice structurally more to local authorities, regardless of their actual dissatisfaction with these services. Perhaps by voicing they indicate to authorities that for them it is important that the current service quality will be maintained in the future. Hence, by using voice they keep authorities "on their toes," thereby possibly preventing a deterioration of community services (Hirschman, 1970).

It was interesting to see that this pattern of results, as was shown by the logistic regression analyses, was obtained for three quite different voice-activities: Voting in a local election, contacting the local councilor, and dealing with council employees. The first is an example of a traditional collective activity, whereas the latter two are more or less spontaneous actions, displayed individually rather than collectively. Residential dependence can thus account for a range of voice-strategies to overcome community problems.

In contrast, residents' dissatisfaction with community services only predicted the spontaneous, individual voice-activities, but it was not related to voting in a local election. This suggests that residents only engage in spontaneous voice-activities if they are really unhappy about certain events or situations within their community. Yet, there are several reasons why people may choose to vote in a local election, for example, because they see it as their moral duty or because they want to follow a social norm (Kinder, 1998).

Another finding of this research is that dissatisfaction and dependency operated in conjunction in affecting residents' exit-intention, albeit that there was only a marginal improvement in the predictive value of the model including this interaction. Further analyses revealed that exit was most likely among residents who were dissatisfied with community services, but who had an opportunity to leave (i.e., weak dependence).   This result is quite consistent with research carried out in a metropolitan community in the US in the 1960s (Orbell & Uno, 1972) which found that, compared to black residents, white residents (i.e., a group with more viable exit-options) responded to inner city problems by exiting to the suburban areas. Interestingly, this earlier research observed a rise in voice-intentions once these residents had moved to the suburbs. This provides indirect support for the dependence-hypothesis, as it suggests that if a better alternative is lacking, because these residents can only move to a worse area by leaving the suburbs, the use of voice could increase.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Before closing we wish to note several limitations of the study and suggest new directions for research into community action. The main limitation is that our theoretical model accounted for a relatively modest portion of variance in both exit and voice-strategies. There are several reasons for this. First, there are a myriad of different factors that determine why residents move, besides the poor state of local community services (Rossi, 1980). Residents may move out of the community because of their job or a change

in their private circumstances (e.g., marriage, divorce). Or, they may move simply because they can get a nicer house elsewhere. Similarly, residents may contact a local councilor for various reasons, for example, to ask for information about a particular community service.

A second reason is that we concentrated on the use of behavioral strategies only. Yet, a large portion of the residential population, although they may be dissatisfied with community services, probably do nothing about the situation. Sometimes residents simply wait and see whether community services improve by themselves, and other times they might do nothing, because they do not care too much about them. In previous research in social-psychology, such behavioral responses have been labeled loyalty and neglect, respectively (Farrell, 1983; Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983). Although it is difficult to see how these could actually help to solve people's community problems, hence how they contribute to improving residential outcomes, they might be taken into account in future research.

In this regard, it would be interesting to see what distinguishes the active from the passive residents. Perhaps the latter group of people either do not realize that they have a voice-opportunity, they do not know to whom they should raise their voice, or they do not believe that local authorities will be responsive to their complaints (Folger, 1977).   Thus, the perceived efficacy of voice may be an important predictor of residential action. Furthermore, demographic factors like age, or personality factors, such as individual differences in self-esteem (Brockner et al., 1998), assertiveness or attribution style perhaps play a role as well in determining who exits or voices, and who remains silent in response to dissatisfaction with services.

A third reason for the relatively modest explanatory power of the model, in particular for voice, pertains to the complexity of this strategy.   In the present study we have concentrated on three different voice-activities, but voice can be expressed in many other ways as well. Voice can be expressed either individually or collectively, but also in more or less constructive ways (Hagedoorn,1998; Wright et al., 1990). For example,

residents can engage in problem-solving actions that threaten the social order within the community, such as through a petition, demonstration, boycott, or even through a riot. Further research is needed to develop a systematic classification of different voice-activities in residential communities and when they are likely to be used.

A second limitation of the study pertains to the fact that it was based on a crossectional survey, hence it does not allow for drawing causal inferences between the variables. For example, residents who indicated to have used voice to local authorities might have regarded this as an indication of their dissatisfaction with services rather than the other way around (cf. cognitive dissonance; Festinger, 1957). Research is needed which employs a longitudinal approach to examine the temporal aspects of both voice and exit, whereby it is also needed to study actual exit-behavior rather than intended exiting as was done in our study. It may well be that residents, when they experience dissatisfaction with services, try out voice first, and resort to exit only if local authorities are repeatedly unresponsive to their complaints.

Practical Implications

The exit-voice framework yields some important implications for the welfare and stability of residential communities. This model suggests that in areas where residential mobility is limited, fewer problems are likely to emerge, because the level of political and community activity will be higher than in areas where residential mobility is fairly common. In communities from which exiting is relatively difficult, hence in more stable communities, there will be a stronger commitment from residents to prevent a deterioration of neighborhood services. In less stable communities, however, local authorities could not afford any decline in services, otherwise they lose residents. Indeed, when residents respond to community problems by leaving, they will no longer make efforts, either actively (via voice) or passively (e.g., via local taxes), to maintain a satisfactory level of community services. This is likely to produce a further service decline, which may well be

followed by more exits from other residents. This dynamic, destabilizing process may help to understand the relatively poor state of many inner city neighborhoods in otherwise wealthy cities in the UK and US.

How then could community action be encouraged within neighborhoods? First, it is important that local authorities have adequate procedures in place to enable citizens to voice their dissatisfaction (Folger, 1977; Tyler & Lind, 1992). One way to achieve this is via the introduction of complaint procedures, the assignment of contact officers, and holding regular local elections or referenda. Such procedures increase the likelihood that residents stay, although they may be temporarily dissatisfied with the community services. If adequate voice procedures are lacking, or authorities are not responsive enough to complaints, residents may choose to leave the community and move elsewhere. This, however, would only happen if residents have viable exit-opportunities. Therefore, a second, more drastic way to prevent residential exit is to increase the costs of leaving, that is, to increase residential dependence. This could be achieved, for example, by giving local council tax-benefits to long-time residents so that it is less attractive for them to leave their residential community.

Conclusion

In a large, cross-sectional survey we examined two distinct strategies for community problem-solving, the exit of residential mobility versus the voice of political action. Using an interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) framework, we predicted and found that exit and voice-responses were enhanced the greater the dissatisfaction with the state of local community services. Furthermore, while exit was the dominant strategy among residents who were weakly dependent on these services, highly dependent residents used voice more frequently. To tackle the decline of residential communities and foster community stability, our findings suggest that local authorities should either increase the costs of exiting or promote residential voice.

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Footnotes

1. Voice pertains to any activity, individual or collective, to communicate dissatisfaction to authorities in order to bring a change in the current state of affairs. It should be distinguished from voice in a procedural/legal sense, where it refers to a structural opportunity to have a say in the decision-making process of the authority (Folger, 1977; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Obviously, the two voices are linked, because voice procedures facilitate the emergence of voice-responses.

2. Larger residential communities in the United Kingdom are organized into city or district councils. The council is governed by a political body, called the Council, which is responsible for the administration of the community. The Council consist of a number of councilors, representatives from the community, who make the decisions regarding community policy, services and finances, and who are elected by the community.

3. Because the measure of dependence was derived from objective rather than subjective estimates, and because it was based on information about respondents' demographic characteristics, an assessment of the reliability of this variable is meaningless; such an analysis would assess, for example, the relationship between having children and owning/renting a house.

4. Moving is defined here as inter-jurisdictional moving, in other words, moving from one community to another. Moving within a community, intra-jurisdictional moving, can not be regarded as truly exit-behavior, because it does not end the relation with the local community authorities nor does it end the use of their services. Yet, because we were unclear about the reasons behind this type of move, we decided to eliminate this group from further analyses.

5. We checked whether there were any differences in average ratings between

households in the three cities, London, Manchester, and Birmingham. This however was not the case and therefore our analyses were conducted with the overall sample of 1304 households.

6. To this end, the scores for each of the two predictors were centered, and, using the original B-weights, we plotted the regression lines for the weakly and highly dependent residents, separately, the results of which are shown in Figure 1.

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Table 1. <u>Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the Factors of the</u>

<u>Exit/Voice-Model</u>

	M	SD	Dissatis-faction	Depen-dence	Exit	Voice
Dissatisfaction	2.31	0.94	--	-.06*	.13***	.08**
Dependence	2.78	1.04		--	-.27***	.26***
Exit	1.70	0.91			--	-.07**
Voice	1.25	0.89				--

<u>Note.</u> * p <.05, ** p <.01, *** p <.001

Table 2. Predicting Exit and Voice from Model Factors in Hierarchical Regression

Criteria	β	%	F	df
		of variance		
Exit				
Model 1		9	63.85	2,1302
Satisfaction	.12**			
Dependence	-.27**			
Model 2		10	44.09	3,1301
Satisfaction	.12**			
Dependence	-.27**			
Satisfaction x				
Dependence	-.05*			
Voice				
Model 1		8	51.83	2,1302
Satisfaction	.10**			
Dependence	.26**			
Model 2		8	34.69	3,1301
Satisfaction	.10**			
Dependence	.26**			
Satisfaction x				
Dependence	-.02			

Note. * p <.05; ** p <.001;

Figure Caption

<u>Figure 1.</u>   How dissatisfaction with community services affects moving-intention for

weakly and highly dependent residents; <u>Note.</u> The exit-scale runs from 1 (definitely stay)

to 4 (definitely move)