Exit, Voice and Loyalty: a Reading of an Ongoing Debate

Abstract

Hirschman’s (1970) model of voice, exit and loyalty is of great interest to communication and organization studies, since Hirschman was the first social scientist who introduced voice as a response to discontent in organizations. The model has been utilized, developed and complemented, but rarely criticized. The goal of this article is to endeavor in a two-fold critique based on a literature review of current organization studies. First the model is shown to eliminate from its structure a fundamental cognate concept: silence. I will demonstrate that the two decisions that actors have to make on the verge of organizational deterioration, voice or exit, revolve, in fact, around the concepts of voice and silence, and that these two are so interrelated and intertwined that they presuppose each other. Second, this functionalistic model silences identity issues that employees have to deal with when faced with fundamental organizational decisions: to voice discontent or to exit the organization. Moreover, a post-structuralist perspective on employee identity construction process is presented.

Keywords: exit, voice, loyalty, silence, identity, post-structuralism.

1. Introduction

For more than 40 years, Hirschman’s theory has represented a fundamental step towards advancing organization studies focused on the problematic of voice and silence, as he was “the first social scientist to consider voice as a response to organizational dissatisfaction” (Greenberg & Edwards, 2009, p. 8).

Hirschman (1970) argues that every organization, be it public or private, goes through temporary lapses or discontinuities in functional behavior. When facing deterioration in organizational functioning or decline in organizational performance, employees could respond in two distinct ways: they can discontinue their relationship with the organization (exit), or they can complain and make an active attempt to instigate change (voice).

However, his approach is focused on economic theory, which states that market forces not only determine declines in organizations, but also constrain actors’ decisions whether to use voice or exit. Therefore, rather than taking this functionalistic/rational approach and concentrating on the economic/market perspective of this model, I will concentrate mainly on organizations, hence the question of interest is: how can we criticize this model on the basis of

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current literature in organization studies? My interest is to build on a literature review of current organization studies in order to show the evolution of the concepts introduced by this model and how it can be correlated to other organizational dynamics like silence and identity.

First, Hirschman’s (1970) model will be discussed in detail by highlighting the three main concepts. Exit is an impersonal and indirect option that signifies departing from the organization towards competitive alternatives. Voice, on the other hand, is a more direct, active and personal option that implies expressing discontent and protest to significant others who can influence change and redress. Finally, loyalty will be discussed as a form of attachment to the organization which gives more power to voice and reduces the possibilities of exit.

Second, Hirschman’s (1970) model will be criticized because of its lack of focus on silence. It will be shown that actors have, in fact, two options when dealing with deteriorating organizations: either to remain inside the organization, or to discontinue their relationship with it. Both choices actually revolve around voice and silence since both remaining and exiting can take the form of either voice or silence. After presenting the evolution of voice and silence in organization studies, I will emphasize, as a personal take on the subject, that voice and silence should not be treated as two separate concepts, but as two interrelated and intertwined strategic forms of communication that employees use in their daily activities in order to survive and advance inside organizations.

Third, Hirschman’s (1970) model will be criticized, because it assumes a rational actor who can calculate the efficiency and impact of his actions (voice and exit), taking into consideration a multitude of contextual, organizational and personal factors. Voice and exit represent two decisions with a strong impact on individual identity because exit from a relationship with an organization can ultimately mean denying and erasing a part of oneself, while remaining inside a deteriorating organization and voicing discontent entails personal efforts and energy, as well as a projection of multiple selves. Thus, a detailed literature review of voice and silence in connection to identity will be presented, emphasizing the post-structuralist tradition.

2. The importance of the theme for the field of organizational communication

Greenberg J. and Edwards M. S. (2009) argue that in recent years organizational scientists have made a strong case for studying voice and silence in organizations. “Both empirical studies and conceptual papers exploring the dynamics of voice and silence in organizations have appeared on the pages of major scientific journals in the field of organizational behavior, human resources management, industrial/organizational psychology, social psychology and communications. This body of work is vibrant and growing […]” (Greenberg & Edwards, 2009, p. xii).

From the 1970s to present day, the research on voice and silence has been very rich both conceptually and empirically, touching on subjects, concepts and themes that occupy a central place in organizational communication studies. Greenberg and Edwards (2009) divide these contributions into three waves.

The first wave starts with Hirschman’s (1970) model of voice, exit and loyalty which will be described in detail in this paper. It continues with concepts such as the MUM effect (Rosen & Tesser, 1970) and the spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1993).
The second wave, which started in the mid-1980s, brought into the forefront several new constructs such as: whistle-blowing (Near & Miceli, 1985), principled organizational dissent (Graham, 1986), organizational justice (Greenberg, 1987), issue-selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), complaining (Kowalski, 1996), organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988), social ostracism (Williams, Shore & Grahe, 1998) and the deaf year syndrome (Peirce, Smolinski & Rosen, 1998). This was the most prolific wave, because for almost 20 years communication and management scholars discussed, developed and researched these theoretical concepts in strong relation to voice and silence, thus advancing the field.

The third and final wave, which started at the turn of the century and continues nowadays, has registered a growth in popularity for voice and silence in organizational studies. Articles published in prestigious journals like the Journal of Management Studies, Academy of Management Review and the Journal of Applied Psychology have shown much more interest in silence which started to be treated as meaningful and not simply as the absence of voice. Concepts such as organizational silence (Morrison and Milliken, 2000) and employee silence (Pinder & Harlos, 2001) occupied center stage and developed this new perspective. Moreover, voice and silence have been discussed in connection to job withdrawal and organizational learning and knowledge sharing.

In conclusion, research on voice and silence has significant importance both conceptually and empirically for the field of organizational communication. This paper comes not only to complement all these endeavors, but to advance the discussion further by critiquing Hirschman’s (1970) model, by bringing together the literature on voice and silence with the literature on identity in organizations, as well as by introducing the perspective of voice and silence as so interrelated and intertwined that they presuppose each other.

### 3. Hirschman’s model

Hirschman (1970) identifies two main options that actors have when facing organizational deterioration, discontinuous functional behavior or lapses in performance: the exit option (more economical, impersonal and indirect) – when employees quit the organization; and the voice option (more political, direct and straightforward) – when dissatisfaction or protest is expressed to an authority that can influence change.

#### 3.1. The easy way out: exit towards competition

Exit is a very powerful option for employees, although it is impersonal and indirect. Exit causes a loss, either in revenue, or in time, resources and knowledge. On the one hand, exit is a way out of a relationship that is no longer satisfying for the employee who resorts to changing the relationship with another organization. On the other hand, exit is a sign for management that something is wrong and needs to be improved. For the employee it could be work relationships, climate, tensions, contradictions and conflicts or a mixture of them.

Although Hirschman (1970) discusses mainly how the exit option works for customers, the principles apply also for employees, as exit is the easy way out for both. For the management, the more massive the exit, the greater the cost incurred by the company, therefore the more motivated they are to improve their activity. Alert employees offer the necessary feed-
back for recuperation and improvement, while inert employees offer the time and resources for this change process to be completed (Hirschman, 1970). This premise fails to take into account two important elements. First, there are waves of employees coming and going, continuously circulating among organizations. Therefore, as some employees exit, others enter and thus exit may not cause the intended recuperation. Second, exit is posited to have no influence on and no cost for the employee, while in reality, departing from an organization causes personal drama.

3.2. The certain way towards change: voice

Voice is an alternative recuperation mechanism. It can come into play instead of exit, or alongside it. Voice is enacted when dissatisfied employees choose not to change the organization for the competition, but to remain and protest so that managers can improve things. “Voice is here defined as any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs […] known sometimes also as ‘interest articulation’” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 30).

There are three premises for voice: a decline in the performance/climate of an organization, a possible remedy tightly connected to management’s involvement and alert, active and vocal members. Therefore, voice depends on both the capacity to articulate the discontent and on the degree of discontent. The supposition is that the effectiveness of voice will increase with its volume (Hirschman, 1970). But taken to the extreme, voice could turn into harassment and noise and thus obliterate its very initial purpose. Therefore, the voice option requires both expression and expectancy. On one hand, managers should know what members of the organization want so that they can improve the situation and recuperate the organization from its decline. On the other hand, members have to understand that every change takes time not only to implement, but also to take effect, therefore managers should benefit from a temporal buffer.

Another question to be addressed is why employees choose to stay. On the one hand, there are those who wish and expect the organization to recover. “Loyalists will actively participate in actions designed to change […] policies and practices, but some may simply refuse to exit and suffer in silence, confident that things will soon get better” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 38). On the other hand, there are those who want and are able to influence change either alone or alongside others with similar intentions. Actors put in balance both the effort and their probability to influence change when they choose to stay: voice will be used only in important situations and only when it is worthy of. Hence, voice incurs direct costs which could be measured in money, time, effort, knowledge, stress and/or identity erosion, contrary to exit which is posited to imply no or very small costs.

3.3. Loyalty: remaining inside and fighting for change

Loyalty appears when employees choose the uncertainty of change and improvement instead of the certainty of exit (Hirschman, 1970). If loyalty is present, exit is less likely to be chosen, and voice becomes more powerful. However, loyalty doesn’t always signify influence and voice, but it will always come with “the expectation that someone will act or something will happen to improve matters” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 78). Loyalist behavior, as opposed to faith, thus retains a dose of rationality.
By raising the costs of exit, loyalty forces employees to become creative, inventive, and influential and change the organization from within. Moreover, loyalty maintains core employees inside the organization by reducing the tendency to be the first to exit, thus stimulating voice, minimizing deterioration and motivating recuperation.

Loyalty implies its opposite, disloyalty, which may involve the possibility for exit, without which loyalty would have no intrinsic value. Moreover, the power of the employee and his voice is maximized when there is a credible possibility for exit and the threat to use it is known either explicitly, or implicitly by significant others in a moment that counts. Exit could be an option of last resort, after everything has been done to try to improve and change the organization from within, after a long time of unhappiness and discontent. Thus, there are two types of loyal behavior: loyal members who do not think about, nor choose exit, and loyal members who think about and finally choose exit. Loyalty holds back employees from exiting because of the loyalist’s belief that s/he needs to stay on to prevent the worst from happening. This belief grows stronger all the time, leading to a paradoxical loyalty where employees do not exit even if the organization has reached an intolerable level of deterioration. Loyal members care about the organization even after they exit, so a “full exit is impossible” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 100).

Loyalty also presents unintended consequences. On the one hand, loyalty can lead to a neglect of exit. On the other hand, loyalty can lead to the repression of both exit and voice through “high fees for entering and stiff penalties for exit” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 93).

Those who pay high fees for entering are more inclined to self-deception, a delay in recognizing organizational deterioration, and to be not acquiescent or complacent, but more active and determined in using their voice, once deterioration is observed and recognized. Those who pay high fees for exit lose an important weapon – the threat of exit – which was giving voice more power and importance. With exit repressed, “the threat will not be uttered for fear that the sanction will apply to the threat as well as to the act itself” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 97). But this only means that the threat will not be mentioned, not that exit will be postponed, thus voice will be as repressed as exit in organizations where both entry and exit presuppose a high price, and stimulated in organizations where only exit is sanctioned, while entry is natural or low-priced.

4. A first critique of Hirschman: silence as another option

Hirschman (1970) presents only two main choice options, voice and exit. However, voice and exit are not an either or solution. In my opinion voice can complement exit and vice versa. It is possible that employees use voice and exit together, or use them successively depending on the degree of deterioration: the first stages of deterioration can be dealt with voice, while the later and more severe deterioration stages with exit. There is also the possibility that at the first sign of deterioration actors will search for a competitive option and only if they do not find this option they will use voice. “The decision whether to exit or not will often be taken in the light of the prospects for the effective use of voice” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 37).

Although Hirschman (1970) presents voice and exit as the two main options available, there is always another option that many employees elect: silence. Hirschman’s (1970) initial view on voice, exit and loyalty was developed along the years to include silence as a concept so interrelated and intertwined with voice, that the two cannot be separated anymore (Morrison...
Based on a literature review of voice and silence beyond Hirschman (1970), in this section I will attempt to shed light on this theoretical model and show that social actors inside organizations have both voice and silence which they enact in their daily organizational activities as strategic resources, and that exit is either a form of voice, or a form of silence. Exit is a form of silence when departing from an organization can be interpreted as a retreat in silence, a retreat from arenas of speech and sound. Sometimes however, even a silent exit can send a powerful message to managers and fellow employees, hence even the most silent exit could imply voice, or could speak louder than words. To better understand these arguments, a conceptual clarification is in order.

4.1. Definitions of voice and silence

The simplest definition of voice and silence refers to either 1) the acoustic dimension (Pinder & Harlos, 2001) – here silence appears as the absence of sound, while voice represents the presence of sound, specifically of vocal speech; or 2) the pragmatic dimension (Pinder & Harlos, 2001) – here silence is linked to speech and it consists of pauses in conversations and discourse.

On a more abstract and metaphorical level, silence is defined in the literature as “the withholding of any form of genuine expression about the individual’s behavioral, cognitive or affective evaluations of his/her organizational circumstances to persons who are perceived to be capable of affecting change or redress” (Pinder & Harlos, 2001, p. 334). In contrast, voice could be defined as speaking up, as “any attempt at all to change rather than escape from an objectionable state of affairs” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 30).

Since voice and silence are the main concepts of this paper, below I introduce a working definition for each of them, which will be broader, but not holistic, as it tries to incorporate the many sides, the many shades that these complex concepts present.

**Silence** can be defined as the withholding of and voice can be defined as the expression of ideas, opinions, aspects of the identity (e.g. sexual orientations) (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Creed, 2003; Van Dyne, Ang & Botero, 2003) by social actors, be they individuals, groups, or organizations (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Creed, 2003) for defensive, pro-social or acquiescent reasons (Van Dyne et al., 2003).

Silence/voice can be the result of an individual choice (agency) – either rational calculation (strategic behavior), or emotional response (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). On the other hand, silence/voice can be the result of an element of constraint (power, structure) (Morrisson & Milliken, 2000).

Silence/voice can have multiple consequences at the individual level: emotional, cognitive and behavioral consequences (e.g. contagion (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003); as well as at the group and the organizational level: endorsement of or resistance to the status quo (Hirschman, 1970; Cohen, 1990).

In my opinion, **voice** and **silence** are interrelated and intertwined (Creed, 2003) strategic forms of communication (Grice, 1989; Scott, 1993) which denote expressing or revealing ideas, opinions and aspects of identity, respectively withholding or non-disclosing them (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Creed, 2003; Van Dyne et al., 2003). Characterized by being active,
conscious, intentional and purposeful, voice and silence become critical components of social interaction (Van Dyne et al., 2003).

This definition builds upon and re-conceptualizes recent research studies that employ the concepts of voice and silence to address issues of political representation and communicative influence within organizations.

Similar to previous research on voice and silence, this definition employs the terms in a metaphorical sense: voice and silence have moved beyond the simple definitions that relate them to the presence or absence of sound and speech, towards definitions that tightly connect them to political representation, influence and equal-consideration (Creed, 2003; Ward & Winstanley, 2003).

Unlike such research, however, this definition brooks no distance between voice and silence, and declines to treat them as opposites. For example, the 2003 JMS special issue on voice and silence, even though it makes an important step of shifting the analysis from structure to agency, still maintains silence separate from voice since the issue is “devoted to papers that, in one way or another, focus on the question of when and how people in organizational settings will choose voice and how and when they will choose silence” (Morrison & Milliken, 2003, p. 1353).

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that voice and silence are conceptual opposites only at a first sight, since one signifies expressing, while the other one withholding (Van Dyne et al., 2003). In fact, voice and silence presuppose each other. Voice cannot exist without silence and silence cannot exist without voice. One gives meaning and significance to the other in such a way that the absence of one would minimize completely the importance of the other one’s presence.

This re-conceptualization brings several implications into the foreground. But the most important implication is that voice and silence should be considered as social activities, rather than a state of being/state of affairs, since they are strategic and communicative forms of interaction. Social actors are not voice or silence. Social actors can have voice and silence; they can do both. This places more emphasis on agency, dynamicity, change and opens up the road to emancipation, while viewing them as a state of being/state of affairs removes their strategic nature and leads to a certain determinism which minimizes the possibility of change and transformation.

4.2. Relationships between silence, voice and exit

Silence is tightly connected to voice, although researchers still struggle with defining this relationship. Some argue that the two concepts are interrelated and some argue that they are two separate and multidimensional constructs; some consider that they are complete opposites and some see them as opposites only on some levels, while on other levels they are presented to be quite similar.

Van Dyne et al. (2003) argue that silence and voice are two separate, multidimensional constructs that have different consequences for employees. Although behaviorally they appear to be polar opposites, the key difference behind silence and voice is not the presence/absence of speaking up, but the motivation behind it (Van Dyne et al., 2003). This assumption leads to the conceptualization of three types of voice/silence that are based on three types of behavior.

First, we have prosocial voice/silence: a positively intended, non-required and other-oriented behavior that benefits the organization and reinforces cooperation. This kind of behav-
ior was present in Hirschman’s (1970) model as a form of loyalty that impedes exit and motivates employees to use voice. The simplest fact that actors do not quit at the first sign of deterioration, but remain inside the organization is proof enough that their interest lies with the welfare of the organization and not necessarily their own. Once the decision to remain inside the organization and work from within was taken, employees can either use voice or silence to improve daily activities. Silence can be a prosocial behavior when it is used to conceal/to withhold information or opinions that would cause damage to the organization. Moreover, a silent exit can benefit the organization when for example employees become aware of the fact that continuing with the organization can cause more harm than leaving it, or when they have become a liability to the organization.

Second, there could be a self-protective/defensive voice/silence: when the perceived consequences are negative, employees will shift blame and attention or use strategic elements such as excuses, justifications and accounts. Following Hirschman’s (1970) model, voice and exit appear here as purely rational strategies utilized by employees in order to maximize their own interests. Employees are only interested in minimizing their loss and maximizing their profit, therefore they are permanently calculating their options. When the organization presents signs of deterioration actors will either choose to exit in silence towards a competitor who can offer better conditions, or to voice their discontent towards the improvement of the situation of the present organization. In both cases, first and foremost the choice is made not to improve the situation of the organization, but to maximize the “profit” of the employee. Therefore, voice and silence (exit) appear to be self- and not other-oriented.

Finally, voice/silence can appear as acquiescent, caused by a disengaged behavior based on resignation and being unable to make a difference. In Hirschman’s (1970) model acquiescence appears on the form of a silent exit after important efforts have been made to improve the situation from within through voice or any other strategic resources. The same goes for silent exits when the degree of organizational deterioration has reached intolerable levels and employees would not be able to make a difference. Voice can also be seen as acquiescent, which implies that the employee shows signs of resignation, disengagement and passivity (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Voice is perceived as a key characteristic of neglect and inaction, which surfaces as endorsement or passive acceptance of the status quo. Speaking up is considered to be pointless and to make no difference, but is still used by employees to maintain a positive image in front of relevant others.

In opposition, Simpson and Lewis (2005) develop a framework that posits silence and voice as being interconnected. They use the twin concepts of voice and visibility to analyze silence, exclusion and inequality. Sometimes voice is just a surface act of speaking and being heard, because from a post-structuralist point of view, discursive practices eliminate certain issues from arenas of speech and sound (Simpson & Lewis, 2005). One example for this normative view on silence could be that by foregrounding certain issues, the organization might be perceived as an arena of voice and openness, while in fact critical issues are kept out of debates. Employees may be encouraged to voice their differences, experiences and opinions, but they often encounter difficulties being heard.

The perspective of this paper moves beyond these views. If one argued that voice and silence are separate concepts, and the other that voice and silence are interconnected concepts, I will argue that voice and silence presuppose each other. Voice and silence represent a unity in duality, the two facets of the same coin. Therefore, voice cannot exist without silence and silence cannot exist without voice. Voice alone has no meaning and no importance. Si-
lence alone has no meaning and no importance. Voice gives significance to silence and silence gives significance to voice. This is the reason why in this paper, the two concepts are treated together, as one. Moreover, this is the reason why in this paper I argue for the simultaneous presence of both voice and silence when discussing Hirschman’s (1970) model.

This “both and” conceptualization, where multiple levels, moments in time and issues are taken into consideration, is much more suited not only for a more complete understanding of voice and silence, but also for gaining a deeper insight into organizational dynamics.

5. A second critique of Hirschman: the impact on identity

Hidden behind Hirschman’s (1970) model is the assumption of a rational actor who can calculate the efficiency and impact of his actions (voice and exit) taking into consideration a multitude of contextual factors, the capacity of the organization to recover, an analysis of past similar experiences, as well as a complete comparison between the advantages and disadvantages of the present organization compared to certain competitive ones. If voice is considered to be effective, then exit will be postponed and vice-versa. Moreover, by focusing on economical market forces and mechanisms Hirschman (1970) loses sight of important subjective and organizational dynamics that can come into play when faced with organizational deterioration: the influence on employees’ identity.

As opposed to Hirschman’s (1970) traditional Western thinking that treated human beings as unitary, coherent and autonomous individuals who are separate and can be separated at any time from social relations and organizations, post-structuralists fought not only against the economic and gender reductionism of the functionalist paradigm, which takes subjectivity for granted and understands it in the narrow terms of rational, coherent and economic man, but also against the separation of individual from society, mind from body and rationality from emotion. Post-structuralists go beyond the dualisms of subject and object, structure and action and power and subjectivity in the need to combine and transform them into dialectics. These dualistic tendencies are counteracted with the argument that people’s lives are inextricably interwoven with the social world around them (Collinson, 2003). Ever since their birth, and throughout their lives, individuals are embedded in social relations to such a degree that they cannot be separated from society. Subjectivity thus becomes a specific historical product embedded within particular conditions and consequences with a discursive, non-rational, gendered and multiple nature (Collinson, 2003).

It is a known fact that employees define themselves by discursive and symbolic resources from within the organization they work for. Our job and our company define who we are, and we define our job and our company, since identity formation is a process of continuous negotiation.

A decision to exit from a relationship with an organization can be devastating for personal identities, as an exit from an organization can ultimately mean denying and erasing a part of oneself. But remaining inside a deteriorating organization has also implications for actors, since voicing discontent directly or through alternative mechanisms such as self-narratives or dramaturgical endeavors entails personal efforts and energy, as well as a projection of multiple selves.

Post-structuralists portray individuals as self-reflexive points of intersection, a nexus of a variety of cultural, institutional and organizational discourses which shape them and prescribe
thought and action. Discourses work to fix identities in particular ways, to favor some interests over others, to constrain alternative truths and subject positions (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). This subject position, this confluence of a multiplicity of forces is “produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices” (Kuhn, 2009, p. 682) and implies reflection, resourcefulness and resistance.

In tone with Althusser, subjects are interpellated/hailed products of social institutions, but they still maintain the exercise of agency, constrained though it may be. The individual is “a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions” (Weedon, 1997, p. 105). Therefore, the self is no longer fixed/essential (the humanist subject), but a product/effect of competing, fragmentary and contradictory discourses of power, most of which come from organizational contexts, even though home lives, or traditional categories such as race, gender, age, ethnicity or nationality still influence the identity formation process (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). However, organizations and workgroups do not determine a totalizing, but an open for negotiation and re-defining identity. Resistance means dissenting the ways in which discourses have defined us, hence identity emerges from hegemonic processes in the space between domination and resistance (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005).

The poststructuralist self is discursively constituted and thus a practical everyday accomplishment. Individuals participate daily in various discourses and experiences and from these they derive a reflexively organized narrative (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). The various discourses become influence and inspiration in the process of accomplishing life projects or life histories and this offers individuals the sense of agency they are continuously looking for. But identity formation processes also “occur in relation to discourses that construct employment and subject positions in institutional settings” (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Organizational discourses stimulate individuals to enact particular identities, but their self is socially constructed through overlapping identifications with multiple organizations and professions (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). The self thus feels like an object on which both subjects and organizations work on. Subjects are more than ever asked to work on their self as part of their everyday job and organizations attempt to intervene at and manage the insides of members, what was once considered to be private (thoughts, feelings, emotions) (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005).

The discussion of identity in relation to voice and silence usually revolves in the literature around four approaches to identity formation processes:

1. Identity as self-narrative – how actors make sense of and project their self through self-narratives and how these could be stable and coherent or changeable and fractured.
2. Identity between agency and structure – how actors are torn between accepting symbolic or discursive resources and creating new ones, adapting or changing existing ones.
3. Identity as dramaturgical endeavor – “how the looking glass of other’s reactions” (Burke, 1991, in Down & Reveley, 2009, p. 385) becomes not only a means to construct, anchor, verify and repair narrative identities, but also a source of anxiety and control.
4. Identity in context – how actors draw upon single or multiple contexts in order to construct their sense of self.

Based on a literature review, these four approaches will be discussed in detail emphasizing the role and the impact of voice and silence on the identity construction process, an element neglected in Hirschman’s (1970) model.
5.1. Identity as self-narrative

Identity and identification are tightly connected to voice and silence, since the presence or absence of language provides actors with the possibility to make sense of and project their self through self-narratives. Identity is subjectively and publicly available through self-narratives that actors construct inside themselves or in interactions with others (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 324).

Identity’s self-narratives could be stable, coherent and unified, or changeable, fractured and diverse. On the one hand, the challenge of identity is to incorporate multiple and diverse elements in order to build a sense of self-continuity and coherence (Whorthington, 1996 and McAdams, 1996, in Clarke et al., 2009, p. 326). On the other hand, multiple and diverse moments and contexts offer people the possibility to tell many different identity stories which can be contradictory, changing, disparate and fundamentally unstable (Gergen, 1992, in Clarke et al., 2009, p. 326). Moreover, in Butler’s view, “self-narratives are necessarily incomplete and subjects are insufficiently aware of Other’s claims on their subjectivities” (Kuhn, 2010, p. 802).

Sometimes, as Hirschman (1970) points out, the organization that employees/customers so tightly identify with enters a state of deterioration. And if the fees for entering have been high, or the initiation has been severe, employees that have invested so much into this organization will not accept that it is starting to deteriorate. The delayed recognition and the self-deception process will be higher the severer the initiation. It is a form of loyalty that postpones exit and impedes voice, at least in the first stages of deterioration. This situation of cognitive dissonance will produce alterations of beliefs, attitudes, cognitions and identity in the actor’s efforts to overcome or reduce the dissonance. This is possible through creating multiple and diverse self-narratives or identity stories which can be contradictory and sometimes paradoxical.

This view leads to a more postmodern definition of identity which goes hand in hand with voice and silence as interrelated and intertwined strategic forms of communication. Identity becomes “a paradoxical collection of forms clustering in moments of time, similar to a garbage can full of meanings where streams of identity, which condense and vary in moments of time, are forming from fragments of meanings, statements, names etc., that are held together, at the same time” (Hatch & Schultz, in Whetten & Godfrey, 1998, p. 36).

Social actors have fragmented, multiple identities where “who we are” is no longer “who we say we are”, but also those parts of the self that are silenced, or are not talked about, as is the case, for example, with the Canadian mistreated soldiers in Pinder and Harlos (2001), the gay and lesbians in Ward and Winstanley (2003), or with the gay and lesbian Protestant ministers in Creed (2003). As a result we can no longer conceive of identity as that which is central, distinctive and enduring (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998) about one individual, group or organization.

5.2. Identity between agency and structure

Although language and discourse are a primary medium of control and power (Fairclough, 1989, p. 3, in Clarke et al., 2009, p. 331), social actors can choose when, where and what to speak up. The complexity implied by identity is simplified and broken apart in self-narratives voiced in interactions which take place in different moments and contexts. Choosing to speak up implies those parts of self that not only depart from organizational expectations, but also have been historically marginalized (Creed, 2003). There is a tension between claiming
and preserving valued aspects of the self. Therefore silence and voice appear to be aspects of not only agency but also self-authorship.

Clarke et al. (2009, p. 341) support the argument of agency by positing that individuals are active in positioning themselves in the way they story their lives. Down and Reveley (2009, p. 382) sustain the same argument when they present employees as being far from passive in the face of discursive pressures and more agential, creative and generative. They can choose among or play with competing discourses (voice) and they can resist (silence) specific discursive regimes in creating a sense of self.

As Hirschman (1970) contends, management is almost always concerned with restricting both voice and exit as each option brings negative results to the organization in both efficiency and image. This happens in public and private organizations alike and is put into practice through discursive or punitive practices. Employees cannot accept this status quo because of their powerful identification with their job and their organization. Therefore, employees are creative, agential and generative when it comes to improving from within an otherwise deteriorating organization. Employees are not acquiescent when their organization is registering a downturn in efficiency and even though management has put into place discursive restrictions they find a way to resist the dominant discourse by choosing among discursive and symbolic resources, or by silencing them.

Ashcraft (2007, p. 28) argues that there are multiple discourses beyond organizational boundaries that still function to organize work and influence identity. Upholding the same argument, Kuhn (2006) posits that not only organizational, but also social discourses shape identity in the identity regulation process. Additionally, Kuhn (2006, p. 1339) emphasizes large scale social, economic and technological changes, which constitute the reflexive modernity, as the antecedents and determinants of personal identity. The twist is that discourses shaping identity construction vary with local cultures, as the surrounding field provides the cultural meaning system with which both individuals and organizations assert their legitimacy and construct their identities (Bourdieu, 1991, in Kuhn, 2006, p. 1355). Although reflexive modernization argues for generalizability of resources appropriate for identity construction (Kuhn, 2006, p. 1355), culturally varying visions of self, temper these claims allowing for local adaptation and variation.

When faced with a deteriorating organization, actors have to take a decision whether to remain inside the organization and fight for its revival through voice, or to exit in silence (Hirschman, 1970). Their decision does not come in extreme isolation. Choosing either voice or exit in silence is a product of the surrounding environment in the sense that other actors’ behavior and their rate of success is taken into account. When choosing voice, the discourse production process will borrow discursive and symbolic resources from neighboring organizations, from similar situations that have been successfully resolved. However, these resources have to match not only the organization and its situation in order for them to be successful, they have to match the actor and his identity profile. Failing to employ discursive and symbolic resources that match the identity profile of an actor will lead to a lack of motivation and thus low chances of success.

If individuals were to choose only from organizationally based discourses, and discursive practices contribute to the reproduction of existing social and power relations, thus exercising pervasive control over employees, then the agency would be reduced to a minimum. Employees can only choose the position they occupy on a certain continuum comprised of discourse based descriptors, or if they position themselves on that continuum at all.
Not even multiple discourses necessarily create a space of action that enables resistance to managerially defined selves through counter or dis-identification, or through self-consciously fake performances (Kuhn, 2006, p. 1354). The multitude of discourses creates a vision of the organizational self that provides greater or fewer options for self-creation (Kuhn, 2006, p. 1354).

A small sense of freedom against corporate seduction and identity prescriptions is achieved by contesting and ridiculing, as well as through humor, counter-narratives, cynicism and irony (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 345). Therefore, actors who do not choose exit and have their voice considerably restricted still manage to employ voice-related mechanisms of resistance.

In conclusion, identity as self-narrative becomes a game of continuing dialectic between agency and structure (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 347). Identities are constructed within discursive contexts (structure), but individuals are able to influence and shape these contexts (Jenkins, 1996, in Down & Reveley, 2009). From a constructionist point of view, identity signifies “the conception of the self reflexively and discursively understood by the self” (Kuhn, 2006, p. 1340). Therefore, identity is shaped by local and distant discourses which provide scripts, roles, subject positions that tie actors to social structures and orient their feelings, thoughts and values in a particular direction. In response to these multiple and conflicting scripts, roles and positions encountered in daily organizational and non-organizational life, actors struggle to create a coherent sense of self, sometimes complying and sometimes resisting to organizational goals (Kuhn, 2006).

5.3. Identity as dramaturgical endeavor

When “who they are” is not fully answered through the organizational (Clarke et al., 2009) or social (Kuhn, 2006; Down & Reveley, 2009) supply of discursive resources, or when there is a lack of locally relevant symbolic resources, the identity formation process requires an additional element: encounters. In the dramaturgical-behavioral perspective promoted by Down and Reveley (2009) identity formation consists of not only narration, but also dramaturgy. The two elements are used simultaneously in order to display and confirm/verify identity. In the identity formation process, voice and silence are strategically used as forms of communication not only to draw upon, select and play with discursive/symbolic resources, but also to adapt to face to face interactions, reactions and to mount credible dramaturgical performances.

Collinson (2003) views dramaturgical performances as a result of surveillance systems’ and new tech’s tendency to make individuals more aware of themselves. Self-consciousness about the gaze of those in authority determines individuals to build alternative expression modes through which they can politically use discourse and information to manipulate, conceal, mystify, overstate and understate self, reputation and image in the eyes of significant others, thus presenting oneself in a favorable light.

Dramaturgical performances are educated over time (Collinson, 2003) as a skill that one can master. Therefore, choreographing practices, managing reactions and strategizing responses are correlated not only to the ways subjects are monitored, but also to the level of self-consciousness.

Dramaturgical selves are important survival strategies when one is under the gaze, but they signify neither a passive accommodation/compliance nor a total resistance/opposition to surveillance and control (Collinson, 2003). Silence and voice as strategic communicative resources employed in the identity formation process can be viewed as rhetorical masks or as
political strategies (Creed, 2003). This shifts the analysis from structure to agency: silence becomes an individual strategic choice.

In the identity formation process, as a rhetorical mask, silence signifies active accomplishment where employees hide more radical voice and action behind a veneer of passivity. As a political strategy, silence signifies complicity and cooptation. Voice may be complicity when it appears in the form of lip service or politically correct speech and hollow gestures where non-action speaks louder than words (Creed, 2003).

Therefore, “the looking glass of others’ reactions” (Burke, 1991, in Down & Reveley, 2009, p. 385) becomes not only a means to construct, anchor, verify and repair narrative identities, but also a source of anxiety and control. Actors voice only those discursive resources constrained by organization and locale that align not only with their own self narratives, but also with the expectations of relevant others in the workplace (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, in Kuhn, 2006, p. 1354). The power moves away from discourses towards the haunting and continuous confirmation or disapproval of surrounding others.

In this sense, Hirschman (1970) attacks an important identity issue: the decision to voice discontent or to exit when facing organizational deterioration. Each option is fundamental to the identity formation process because exit means breaking or neglecting an important piece of identity, whereas voice means maintaining and even consolidating identity. However, following Down and Reveley’s (2009) argument, the decision is taken with consideration to relevant others inside the organization. Therefore, confirmation or disapproval from others are crucial for the decision making process.

Hochschild (1990) argues that employees as emotional actors must instrumentalize inner feelings by use of two dramaturgical elements: surface acting and deep acting. Deep acting requires employees to “change how they feel by deliberately visualizing a substantial portion of reality in a different way” (Hochschild, 1990, p. 121), while surface acting occurs when apparent expression is changed without a correlative inner change. Tracy and Trethewey (2005) posit that both processes are separate from a real self: deep acting “keeps the feeling that I conjure up from being part of myself”, while “in surface acting, the expression of my face, or the posture of my body feels put on. It is not part of me” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 36).

Once emotion enters the realm of organization, it no longer is authentic and immaculate because it is standardized for organizational ends. Most of the time, employees must be fake and live with an emotive dissonance, a clash between inner feelings and outer expression. This psychological discomfort is augmented when employees fake in bad faith, or express prescribed emotions that they believe should not be part of their job.

Tracy and Trethewey (2005) raise a good point in arguing that essentialism is reproduced in this kind of emotional labor literature. If we believe that both emotion and identity are private and real, and once inside organizations we falsify them through acting or faking, we only perpetuate the real-self <-> fake-self dichotomy, instead of understanding emotion and identity as neither real nor fake, but constructed and constrained, fractured and over-determined through various discourses of power.

Employees in marginal, distasteful, subservient or dirty jobs, as well as members of historically marginalized groups are often encouraged by organizations to craft a fake, yet organizationally preferred, self at work in order to protect a more real and private self (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Therefore, work cannot construct the real identity. Although stage characters are different from real identities, employees often have difficulties in specifying when they are off-stage and so the back-stage becomes a myth, a deferred space. Even though em-
ployees try to maintain a real self that is different from the organizationally preferred self, turning off their organizationally preferred self when at home is a challenge that can seldom be overcome as jobs nevertheless transform identities.

In fact, organizational discourses and norms leave little space for non-organizationally prescribed selves and ban certain aspects of the self from organizational arenas if they are considered as counter-productive. “Such processes serve to foster an individual who defines her self-worth in regard to her ability to attain the preferred organizational self in spite of her real (hidden, shameful) self” (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005, p. 183). This type of employee becomes a good worker who sees the job as all but acting.

5.4. Identity in context

Identity accounts presuppose interaction. However, any interaction gains value when discussed in context. There is a variety of personal, social and organizational interests that generate a multiplicity of discursive resources available for identity work and regulation (Kuhn, 2006, p. 1342). These accounts present explanations for past and future activity that guide interactants’ interpretations of experience while molding individual and collective action. Although individuals are subject to and progenitors of multiple discourses in social life, identity work should not be expected to reflect a single category of experience, rather, identity work should involve the construction of multiple selves (Gergen, 1991, in Kuhn, 2006, p. 1345).

There are two main contexts that bare importance to the discussion of identity in relation to voice and silence: the socio-historical context and the cultural context. First, by socio-historical context I understand Ashcraft’s (2007) contention that jobs have core features or essences, which span sites, levels and time and which lend themselves to certain fates and particular types of people (e.g. jobs possess features that are regarded as male or female). Only social constructionism can counteract the essentialist ideology by changing discourse and communication from inertial elements, into generative forces (Ashcraft, 2007, p. 14). It follows that it is not task content, but discursive struggle over the meaning of jobs that is a principal determinant of their initial sex composition.

Even though identities have histories, and the historical origins of occupations are important, identities are eternally in process, constantly reproduced and altered in dynamic interaction, an ongoing persuasive endeavor that traverses time and space, macro and micro messages, institutions and actors that manages the dialectic of lived pressures and material circumstances (Ashcraft, 2007).

The second context of importance to the discussion of identity is the cultural context. On the one hand, there is the view that nowadays discourses and symbolic resources are generalizable across cultures due to globalization, global markets and trade, and increased interaction and communication between cultures. It would imply that, regardless of culture or local surroundings, actors would benefit from the same discourses and symbolic resources in their attempt to construct, negotiate and make sense of their identity. On the other hand, there is the view that discourses shaping identity construction vary with local cultures. Culturally varying visions of self temper reflexive modernization’s claims about plasticity and generalizability of resources one may appropriate for identity construction (Kuhn, 2006, p. 1355). Discursive resources are formed and constrained by the Discourses of the locale. The surrounding field provides the cultural meaning system within which both individuals and organizations assert their legitimacy and construct their identities (Kuhn, 2006, p. 1355).
Bringing context into the foreplay, be it socio-historical or cultural, is the major critique of Hirschman’s (1970) model. By discussing voice and exit solely on the basis of market forces which are considered to be generally valid, Hirschman simplifies the decision making process to a minimum since actors can simply choose between voice or exit when the organization goes through a deterioration process. However, the decision seems not to be so simple, generalizable and predictable when we take context into consideration. Decisions depend on a continuously changing context which actors manage through fluid and dynamic identities that determine non-predictable decisions.

5.5. From real and fake to multiple and crystallized self

It is not uncommon for employees who perform subservient, dirty or socially stigmatized work to be encouraged both by organizational and by societal discourses to develop an alternative self for work, one that is separate and totally different from a real, personal and private self (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). The work self must perform inside the constraints of organizational goals, goods and services therefore, the only resistance alternative is for employees to compartmentalize their identity between a private/real self and an organizationally defined/fake self.

On the other hand, if employees perform jobs that are socially and privately valued, like professional white collar or traditional feminine caring positions, employees are encouraged to align their private/real self with the organizationally preferred self. This encouragement is both external and internal. External because societal and organizational discourses of careerism and personal achievement encourage individuals to identify with their jobs and internal because as jobs represent a third of our lives, we need to have this important life chapter as unitary as possible.

Tracy and Trethewey (2005) argue that the real-self <-> fake-self dichotomy serves as a powerful discourse or assemblage of knowledge that can create specific material and organizational consequences or truth effects. The public, profit-driven and institutionalized discourses reinforce the notion that the self can either cohere or compete with organizational norms, values, beliefs and goals. It doesn’t matter if there actually are real and fake selves, or if there are actual differences between real and fake selves, what matters is that people act as if there are. A more fragmented, poststructuralist version of identity would be considered pathologized, sick and in need of work.

The real-self <-> fake-self dichotomy implies a surface analysis of the self and a marginalization of workplace reform and societal change processes. Organizations in which employees construct their identities through consent, as a private/personal and hidden from view process, can no longer negotiate more meaningful responses to employees’ needs.

The real-self <-> fake-self dichotomy is reinforced by discourses of power which advocate for one self as more real, valued and esteemed as opposed to other selves. Discourses of power like managerialism and entrepreneurialism construct identities by articulating an ideal core self, an idealized subject position which mainly reflects the interests of the organization, and not of the individual (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005).

Managerialist ideology controls individuals through money. Therefore, employees become involved into a vicious circle in which every material and symbolic resource and relationship, be it organizational or private, is used as utilitarian means for organizational advancement (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Employees work for money and rewards as a means
to obtain more power symbols and a preferred organizational image. But power symbols and organizational image require more money and thus more work. Although managerialism is a discourse of power that prescribes an organizational ideal and promotes a particular set of interests, it is not imposed on employees as they “take an active strategic role in their acceptance of this organizationally preferred self” (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005, p. 176). This organizationally preferred self will be understood and experienced as real and of one’s own choosing, hence control processes are moved from managers’ to employees’ own management of identity.

Entrepreneurialism on the other hand is a discourse of power that portrays an ideal self that is always developing and growing (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). The entrepreneurial employee is in a constant search for meaning and responsibility that will allow him/her to become a better and more successful person. Therefore the real self is the self that is developing.

Managerialism and entrepreneurialism construct the ideal self as a mold into which employees either fit or not. This ideal self is increasingly defined by the confluence of upward mobility and consumption. Not fitting in the ideal mold is not a social, but a personal/individual problem which must be solved individually and not through collective action (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005).

These discourses of power reinforce the real-self <-> fake-self dichotomy which in turn constrains individuals to either align their real selves with the preferred organizational notions of the self, or to separate them. The alignment can originate in processes such as strategized subordination, creating perpetually deferred selves and auto-dressage, while separation could be produced through becoming good little copers (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Becoming an organizational preferred self used to be a means to achieve material and life rewards, but now it becomes an end in itself. Even though identity compartmentalization “may feel like resistance, it can, ironically, blind employees to the colonizing power of organizational discourse” (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005, p. 184). Hence, employees construct their identity through consent and not negotiation, so the self is never good-enough, but always trying to become the organizationally preferred one.

One way of disrupting the dichotomy is to go beyond the language of the real, fake, authentic and core self and move towards the language of the crystalized self, which is far from being flattened or colonized as it is multidimensional, multifaceted and complex (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). For those who occupy both marginalized and preferred organizational positions, the crystalized self allows employees to reflect different facets of their self in various contexts and thus to relate differently to work, home and the spaces in between work and home (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005).

Employees have to understand that the work self is not the most important self and to elevate alternative/non-professional selves at the same level. The more employees get involved in activities external to work (volunteer organizations, church groups, educational institutions and sports) the more narratives and symbolic/discursive resources they will have to construct a more rich and complex crystallized self.

By embracing conflicting discourses, by traversing, intersecting, choosing from and creating discourses employees gain the necessary agency to continually grow the crystallized self, therefore they have both the illusion of choice and an actual voice in constituting a crystallized self. Even though employees are constrained by discourses of power, “there are always new facets that are themselves neither real nor fake, but are materially and symbolically relevant and ready to be polished, cleaved or transformed” (Tracy & Thethewey, 2005, p. 189).
6. Limitations, implications and personal contributions

I acknowledge that the discussion and critique of Hirschman’s (1970) model has several limitations. First, this paper is a purely theoretical discussion of a 40+ years old model and its critiques with no empirical support, even though most of the literature utilized in this paper is based on empirical research. However, a full test of the issues discussed in this paper would be a complex undertaking, as it is difficult to collect data and test hypotheses regarding all aspects of this discussion at once.

Second, one of the most salient limitations of this discussion is that although it depicts many of the implications of the concepts of voice, silence, exit, loyalty and identity in organizations, as well as their dynamic relationships, it is limited in its capacity to predict individual behavior. Not only that this theoretical discussion was not oriented towards discovering predictive organizational behavior, but I can argue that almost any model that predicts voice and silence behavior in organizations is underspecified, as there are many individual, situational, organizational, cultural and societal factors that come into play to shape individual behavioral responses.

Third, I have not addressed all possible cognate concepts that Hirshman’s (1970) model implies, as I have focused primarily and solely on silence and identity. Other organizational cognate concepts such as power, resistance and discourse would have enriched this discussion of voice, exit and loyalty in organizations.

Despite these limitations, I believe that this discussion has important implications for organizational communication researchers. A first theoretical contribution is the integration of the organizational communication literature on identity with the management literature on voice and silence and Hirschman’s (1970) exit, voice and loyalty model. Each of these literatures can benefit from incorporating aspects of the other perspective. For example, research to date on employee identity tends to focus solely on self-narratives, dramaturgical interactions, power and resistance issues, as well as discursive resources. Drawing on the management literature on voice and silence, as well as on Hirschman’s (1970) model of exit, voice and loyalty, has allowed me to take a different perspective by considering voice and silence as central strategic communicative resources that employees utilize in identity building efforts.

Second, this discussion should have implications for research on voice and silence, since the discussion introduces a new and distinctive way of thinking about these concepts. Specifically, I emphasize that these concepts should be treated neither as complete opposites, nor solely as interrelated and intertwined as voice and silence presuppose each other. In my opinion, voice cannot exist without silence and silence cannot exist without voice. One gives meaning and significance to the other in such a way that the absence of one would minimize completely the importance of the other one’s presence. Actors have both voice and silence and they strategically enact them in daily organizational interactions in order to survive or to advance.

Finally, this paper is one of the few pioneer attempts to critique Hirschman’s (1970) model of exit, voice and loyalty. This model is taken for granted in organization studies, promoted and complemented without highlighting its shortcomings. I have argued that the model does not emphasize a critical organizational concept: silence. Both decisions that actors can employ when facing organizational deterioration (remaining inside or exiting the organization) have been shown to actually revolve around voice and silence. Moreover, the functionalistic approach of the model assumes a rational actor with a unitary and essential identity. By pre-
senting several post-structuralist approaches to identity, I have painted a more complex picture of the organizational identity building process involving voice and silence.

7. Conclusions

Hirschman’s (1970) model represents a cornerstone in organizational studies and especially in the debates around voice and silence in organizations. In the last 40 years since its release, the model has been utilized, developed and complemented (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001; the 2003 Journal of Management Studies special edition on voice and silence; Greenberg & Edwards, 2009) but only rarely criticized. Such an endeavor was taken up in this article, which was intended to present a literature review that highlights two distinct critiques of the model. On the one hand, the model ignores silence, a concept that later organization studies have brought into the foreground and that I consider to be interrelated and intertwined with the concept of voice to such a degree that they presuppose each-other. On the other hand, this rational and functionalistic model silences identity issues that arise when employees are faced with fundamental decisions: to voice discontent or to exit the organization.

At the heart of Hirschman’s (1970) model, the decision actors have to take when faced with deteriorating organizations has brought into the foreground voice as a direct and personal attempt to change “rather than to escape from an objectionable state of affairs” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 30). This option, a sign of loyalty, has opened up the road towards emancipation and individual power to influence and improve organizational performance from within.

Although organizations have significant power and can create constraint mechanisms against both voice and exit, actors can still follow their personal or their organization’s interests by employing strategic communicative resources such as voice and silence. It follows that both actors and organizations present power and the interplay between the two is managed by the strategic use of voice and silence.

Treated together, as facets of the same coin, as interrelated and intertwined resources that actors can enact in daily activities, voice and silence enrich Hirschman’s (1970) initial model. When faced with deteriorating organizations, actors can choose to remain inside, to be loyal, or to sever the relationship with the organization. Both choices revolve, in fact, around the concepts of voice and silence.

Actors can choose to remain inside the organization and voice their discontent to relevant others in an attempt to change and improve matters, or they can remain inside the organization isolated in silence, retreated from arenas of speech and sound. On the other hand, actors can choose to exit the organization and move towards competitive alternatives. Exit can be a retreat in silence, or an action that can speak louder than words.

The choice between the two options can be a rational calculus which actors make by taking into consideration past experience, contextual factors, the organization’s ability to redress and their own influence on change. This rational model promoted by Hirschman (1970) was shown to have shortcomings especially when discussing voice and exit, or, to be more accurate, voice and silence, in relation to identity. Exit presupposes ignoring and erasing an important part of identity, while voice engenders ample efforts to manage identity among continuously changing contexts. In these situations actors construct fragmented, multiple identities where “who we are” is no longer “who we say we are”, but also those parts of the self that are silenced, or are not talked about.
Following the post-structuralist tradition, voice and silence are interrelated and intertwined strategic forms of communication which allow individuals to construct multiple identities depending on the context or moment in time, utilizing both local/organizational and distal/social and cultural discursive and symbolic resources and depending on the reactions of relevant others.

Rezumat: Modelul renunțare, voce și loialitate (Hirschman, 1970) este relevant pentru științele comunicării și studiile organizaționale, deoarece Hirschman a fost primul cercetător care a introdus conceptul de voce ca răspuns la insatisfacția față de organizații. De-a lungul timpului, modelul a fost utilizat, dezvoltat, completat, dar foarte rar criticat. Scopul acestui articol este de a realiza un demers critic pe baza literaturii curente din studiile organizaționale. Pe de o parte voi demonstra că modelul elimină din structura sa un concept fundamental: tacerea. Deciziile pe care actorii le pot lua în momentul deteriorării activității unei organizații, vocea sau renunțarea, gravitează, de fapt, în jurul conceptelor de voce și tacere, aceste concepte fiind puternic interconectate. Pe de altă parte, acest model reduce la tacere problemele de identitate pe care angajații trebuie să le gestioneze atunci când sunt nevoiți să ia decizii organizaționale fundamentale: a-și exprima nemulțumirea sau a părăsi organizația. De asemenea, lucrarea prezintă și o perspectivă post-structuralistă asupra construirii identității angajaților.

Cuvinte-cheie: renunțare, voce, loialitate, tacere, identitate, post-structuralism.

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