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Deliberate Silences

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Deliberate Silences

Abstract

This article offers silences to make deliberative democracy more inclusive and diverse. Considering deliberation broadly as conversation, I advance the argument that silence may be the missing link in our democratic theories: that some silences are packed full of meaning, others can be used as temporary tactics for bringing more meaningful voices to the table, and that silent yielding is the most crucial practice for a robust democratic world. Inclusion involves at least two important dimensions. First, excluded subjects must be brought, allowed, welcomed, and embraced to democratic conversations. Excluded voices must become present. Second, and this is the more difficult dimension, exclusionary identities must be transformed in the process. Simply including more voices and meanings does little if there are structural forces that preclude the rearrangement of democratic possibilities. One such structural force is privileged identities that, by their character, are unlikely to hear and be transformed. In this regard, I put forth silent yielding as an enduring democratic habit that, if practiced sincerely, is likely to transform such identities, and transition thin democracies (ones in which citizens participate in order to simply fight for their own self-interests) into strong democracies (ones in which all citizens are welcomed to the table, and all leave the table transformed in the direction of the common). Deliberate silences combine intentionality, meaningfulness, thoughtful engagement, and robust commitment to inclusion, in order to make deliberative democracy more democratic and transformative.

Keywords

deliberative democracy, public deliberation, silence

At the heart of strong democracy is talk...Talk has been at the root of the Western idea of politics since Aristotle identified logos as the peculiarly human and peculiarly social faculty that divided the human species from animals otherwise defined by similar needs and faculties. (Benjamin Barber, 2003, p. 173).

Living together with the dolls
Surrounded by the power of silence,
The world open around us,
We communicate in gestures. –Liu Xia (Stephens, 2012)

Silences surround the lives of Liu Xia and Liu Xiaobo. Mr. Liu, a human rights activist in China, was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. Unable to attend the Nobel Prize ceremony due to his ongoing imprisonment, Liu Xiaobo's absence was symbolized with an empty chair, upon which his medal was placed. This empty chair spoke volumes about the potential plight of human rights activists under authoritarian regimes. The chairman of the Nobel committee stated, "We regret that the laureate is not present here today. He is in isolation in a prison in north-east China...No medal or diploma will therefore be presented here today. This fact alone shows that the award was necessary and appropriate" (Walker, 2010). While the Chinese government sought to further silence Liu Xiaobo by preventing him from attending the ceremony, the presence of the empty chair drew immense international attention to such silencing, and to Mr. Liu's efforts on behalf of human rights. Liu Xia, Liu Xiaobo's wife, is a Chinese artist. Even while she is herself under house arrest, cut off from all communication with the outside world, her art is being shown in international venues, communicating to audiences about life in China. The exhibit, "The Silent Strength of Liu Xia," presents photographs of what she refers to as "ugly dolls." The photographs exhibit sometimes-haunting images of dolls that appear to be screaming out, yet are mute. One observer notes, "To look at them is to understand at a glance that Ms. Liu's theme is the reality of modern China as experienced by anyone who refuses to accept the party line: alienation, confinement, repression, mental and spiritual suffocation" (Stephens, 2012). The curator of the Columbia University exhibition stated, "The dolls are universal in a way. Their suffering is universal. The Chinese are not just Chinese. They are human beings" (Hawthorne, 2012). This art is inaudible, yet the medium of silence combined with inanimate images of dolls communicates in ways the speech alone could not.

A strong emphasis upon speech as that which defines the political animal has led democratic theorists to either neglect silence, or work to bring the silenced to speech. For deliberative democracy, the emphasis upon "the transformation

rather than simply the aggregation of preferences” (Elster, 1998, p. 1) depends upon deliberation through argumentation, which centralizes speech and discussion (Fearon, 1998; Przeworski, 1998). Elster states, “Deliberative democracy rests on argumentation, not only in the sense that it proceeds by argument, but also in the sense that it must be justified by argument” (1998, p. 9). Eschewing a politics that channels self-interested participants into presenting preconceived preferences in a competitive spirit, deliberative democracy promotes citizens who are transformed by talking to one another. All should be welcomed to the table, and all should walk away from a now differently constituted table somewhat changed, and better, for partaking in deliberative talk. Barber states, “With talk we can invent alternative futures, create mutual purposes, and construct competing visions of community” (2003, p. 177). Mansbridge claims that relationships are changed through talk (“In some of the reported instances of women calling a man a ‘male chauvinist,’ the phrase sparked an interchange that led to changed behavior, primarily through persuasion based on an implicit appeal to justice” [1999, p. 219]), and new norms are formed through talk (1999, p. 220). Given the power of talk within deliberative democracy, silence has been both neglected as a contributor to deliberation, and marked as the sign of exclusion; either way, it is to be avoided or overcome. The remainder of this article seeks to question this treatment of silence, presenting the irony that silence may be the key to unlocking our deliberative democratic treasures.

I hope to promote a more engaged and inclusive set of democratic practices by using important aspects of “deliberate” to amplify “silences” that enhance deliberative theories of democracy. These silences communicate, and, more importantly, are highly receptive to the communication of others. Levine and Nierras state that deliberation includes “ordinary political conversations that are diffused throughout society” (2007, p. 2). Deliberate silences allow a fuller range of participants to be involved in such conversations. A deliberate silence is an intentional silence, one not forced upon a subject from above, but embraced by a subject from below. The purpose of such silences is to enhance the quality of deliberations. These silences are not intended to subvert the deliberative system. Such silence may be an intentional means of communicating a message, value, consent, or a disagreement. This silence may also be an intentional means of agitating for a change in a given deliberative context, a change designed to make that context more democratic. A deliberate silence is a posture of thoughtfulness, of deep consideration. These thoughtful silences commit citizens to taking each other seriously. Deliberate silences are also careful silences, executed by slowing things down, taking one’s time to prepare to converse, think, and decide.

Using these dimensions of silence, I begin this article arguing that sometimes citizens need to agitate for inclusion by using silence to fight *silencing*. Agitation, when deliberate and thoughtful, as well as having a trajectory that leads

to deliberation, should be considered part of deliberative frameworks for democracy. I then highlight how silence itself can be robust with meaning, and should be included as one of the many ways people can communicate with one another. By recognizing the meaningfulness of some silences, we enlarge the scope of communicative practices that are deliberative, thereby also enlarging the possibilities of inclusive participation. Finally, I put forward silent yielding as the most important practice for establishing a robust democracy in societies in which inequalities are deep and long-lasting, particularly inequalities that endure due to powerful identity formations. I move from the margins of deliberative democracy to the center—from silence being used to agitate for more inclusion, to silence being the most crucial democratic posture at the heart of deliberative democracy. Interspersed throughout the article, I include a brief instrumental case analysis of The Day of Silence movement—an effort that exemplifies silences used to include, communicate, and transform. Organized by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, participants, typically high school and college students, take a vow of silence for an entire day. By examining the messages and experiences of those who participate in this movement (through movement literature, blogs, participant testimonials, journalist interviews, and news coverage), I am able to describe deliberate silences in practice.

Fighting Silence with Silence

Existence on the margins inevitably confronts dynamics of exclusivity. This is an ongoing problem for democracies. Therefore, inclusion, in some configuration, has been an important goal of many democratic theorists (Goodin, 1996; Dryzek and Niemeyer, 2008; Olson, 2011; Deveaux, 2003; Dobson, 2010; Addis, 2009). As a correlate, in confessional and talkative societies, silencing is among the most pressing concerns for democratic theorists, leaders, and citizens alike. Important theorists of power and identity formations have explored how deep silencing can render entire populations virtually invisible—powerless (Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 1980; Buker, 1999; hooks, 1989). Beyond the more straightforward means of coercive silencing, there exist complicated ways that norms regarding social interactions, communication patterns, and identity negotiation can inadvertently silence and exclude. Levine, Fung, and Gastil note, “Some people ‘are more likely to be listened to than others.’ For instance, studies of U.S. juries show that they tend to elect white males as forepersons. Studies of U.S. college students show that white students have much more influence than Black students in joint collaborative projects” (2005, pp. 6-7). Whether more overt forms of democratic exclusion (such as reworking voting districts to silence the increasing prevalence of Latino voters) or more nuanced silencing due to varying ways of communicating, this could be called *the* problem of contemporary democratic

theory and politics. In this section, I explore how silence itself may be used as a means to combat silencing. Deliberate-inclusive silences are those designed to agitate in favor of broader deliberation. At first glance, using silence as a means to enhance voice seems an impossible tactic. However, in societies where talking has become the defining characteristic of existence (“I talk, therefore, I am”), silences can become powerful means of shaking things up. Such silences take advantage of people, institutions, environments, and work that depends upon talk to function. Silence can serve as a form of agitation in order to garner attention for those struggling for voice. Dobson notes, “Progressive politics can be read as the struggle for the right and the capacity to speak” (2010, p. 753).

Activism is an inherent part of progressive politics that struggles for inclusion. However, such activism is not an inherent part of deliberation. In fact, while there is some debate about whether activism or protest should be considered forms of deliberation, for the most part, direct activism has been considered, at best, marginally related to deliberation. However, there are some theorists who want that marginal status to be rendered important enough to the deliberative universe to be considered part of our studies (Levine and Nierras, 2007). Either way, those at the margins face a paradox in relationship to deliberative democracy. To be considered deliberative, they must shun forms of direct action that fall outside the realm of reasoned argumentation, or the careful weighing of alternative viewpoints. However, shunning such action may perpetuate their exclusion from the centers of deliberation, both formal and informal. There is an issue of legitimacy. To be a legitimate democratic agent in a deliberative universe, there are some actions that disqualify and should be avoided. This is another form of exclusion, as those most well positioned for formal deliberation are those in least need of activist politics to be heard. Those who could be best helped by contestation that agitates the system are likely excluded via that agitation.

To address this puzzle, and to help move the debate forward, I propose that activism with a trajectory toward deliberation should be considered “deliberate” democratic participation, and therefore a vital part of studies and practices within deliberative democracy. Of course, the question is, what activism or direct action has such a trajectory? I argue that activism that is intentional, careful, thoughtful, and meaningful has such a trajectory, for its intention is to be included in the deliberative system, to get a seat at the table. Kadlec and Friedman state, “We think it viable to view some instances of activist protest as deliberative communicative acts, meant to foreground important truths and provoke thought and reasonable responses on the part of both direct adversaries and wider audiences” (2007, p. 20). Gastil and Black state:

The approach to deliberation that we offer...is designed to appreciate the role that many forms of discourse play in a larger democratic process. For example...an activist organization's civil disobedience is unlikely to appear a deliberative practice, but when one steps back, it might constructively contribute to a mediated process whereby the public and elites deliberate on what issues should be on the forefront of their agenda. (2008, p. 31)

Such activism is not intent upon dismantling deliberation, and the meanings attached to it are positive-deliberate, meaning they praise the potential of deliberation and simply ask for more deliberation that includes a broader range of voices. They target deliberative contexts in order to open them up for more participation—more kinds of participation and/or more kinds of participants. Activism that is not deliberative in character is that which is more insubordinate, activism or direct action meant to dismantle deliberation as a means of democracy. Deliberate inclusive silences are forms of activism that seek to open up deliberation for more voices. Existing in a garrulous world, they are potentially powerful means of drawing attention to the plight of those at the margins.

Deliberately Navigating the Humming Machinery of Talkative Contexts

Most of our contemporary societies are talking societies—they run on the fuel of words. Our institutions—educational, political, economic, social, religious—hum with talkative subjects who learn and teach, wield power, do business, and engage relationships. Due to the rise of talking societies, silence has been rendered deeply dangerous, yet also very powerful, and enlightening. Being silent does effectively leave many people excluded, absent from life, politics, love, and productivity. Jaworski, discussing the negative biases towards silence, states,

In mainstream U.S. society, humans are metaphorically conceptualized as machines, and the constant “humming” of the machine is regarded as a sign of its proper functioning. Once silence takes over from the humming, the (human) machine is perceived as if it no longer worked well. In metaphorical terms—the machine breaks down. In social psychological terms—the individual fails to communicate and maintain social interaction and social engagement. (1993, p. 46)

In this talkative life, many of our most valued and important institutions would fall apart if the humming stopped. Widespread silences would not just be quickly

noticed in a rarely silent world, they would also threaten the functionality of such a world. It is this reality that gives silence its potential power. In some contexts, a person may be excluded via silencing. Yet, this same person, in other contexts, may be depended upon for voice. In talk-dependent settings, this person's silence may offer a means of contestation—a rearranging of things, even rearranging things in other contexts.

One area of discourse ripe for such rearranging is interlocutor-centered discourse (Dauenhauer, 1980, pp. 27-28), in which a relationship intended can be disrupted so as to draw attention to the way one's absence in relationship construction is detrimental to the love, friendship, educative exchange, etc., being lived or explored. Such absences might indicate that a relationship is unequally balanced, in danger of being lost, or both. In interlocutor-centered discourses, silence can be used to draw attention to the more deeply rooted silencing trends of a conversational and/or educational pattern. In this discursive region, there can be times in which interlocutor A dominates and manipulates via speech to control the conversation and the meaning that emerges, as well as the behaviors that might ensue. Interlocutor B can then, knowing how silence will disrupt, deploy intentional silences to illuminate their more general absence. Also, in talkative-dependent contexts, such as schools, legislative committees, boardrooms, and call centers, silence can also be deployed to rearrange power dynamics—to call attention to one's importance to the "machine." Both approaches involve "inclusive deliberate silences," those aimed at drawing attention to the negativity of excluded voices.

In deploying silences to bring attention to the losses that accompany exclusion, one must do so carefully. Such silences can be noticed and respected for their insight, but they can also be ignored. Such silences can fundamentally reconfigure what was a radically unequal relationship into one of equal respect and worth, but they can also cause irreparable harm. In situations of vast inequality, in which one set of interlocutors seems to hold all the power, silences can be undone by coercion or the threat of sanctions. Engaging impermissibility can have its costs; people will be upset. People resent silences when they expect responses and engagement. When inclusive silences are ignored, neglected, or suppressed, those responsible are rejecting these attempts at inclusion as well as the potential participants being excluded—they are actively re-excluding those they already have left out of social, educational, and political worlds. It is important to keep one's objectives in mind. If the goal is to stay engaged in a holistic way, then these silences should be deployed in ways that do not end relationships. The objective is to use silence in one context (an environment in which one is depended upon for voice) in order to gain a voice in another. There is power in being depended upon for voice and engagement.

The Day of Silence: Inclusion

Within its organizational materials, under a section titled “Why Silence?” the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network states, “The Day of Silence institutes a visible silence, a silence during which participants protest anti-LGBT discrimination and abuse. Such an effort also allows us to reflect upon how powerful silencing can be, to focus on how we can make our own voices stronger and to begin to stop silencing ourselves” (2006). This is an effort to fight silence with silence. Educational contexts are ripe for deliberate silences. As noted by Thomas, educational settings, such as “colleges and universities are ideal venues to explore and learn approaches to dialogue” (2010, p. 8). Imagine a student who takes this vow of silence. This student is usually quite gregarious. She is also bright, participative, and relied upon by her teachers as one of those students who will “carry” the class during times of silence. Next, imagine the effect her silence will have on the teacher, her classmates, the quality of the discussion, and the educative experience. Her absence will be noticed; and this noticeable silence will convey a message that one voiceless student can significantly disrupt the educational and social experience. Losing even one student’s voice is painful, to the student as well as the community. This message can be used to teach those who ignore the ways in which gay and lesbian students are silenced on an everyday basis that this silencing is both oppressive and detrimental for society as a whole. Thomas continues, “Dialogue is used to...increase intercultural understanding and tolerance” (2010, p. 8). The vow of silence enters such dialogue. One student participant states, “We want people to see how hurtful it is when others have to be silent, when they can’t be open because of discrimination that is around” (Levin, 2010).

This absence can be manipulated within topic-centered discourses (Dauenhauer, 1980, pp. 27-28), where a world is intended, and speech is one necessary means through which such a world is constructed; silence can be used to draw attention to the way that one’s absence in the world construction is detrimental to the overall project. While different voices can represent different substantive viewpoints and analyses, the absence of voice can preclude a fuller and more enlightening exchange of ideas. In drawing attention to silence by using silence, the Day of Silence manipulates, and temporarily reconfigures, important relationships between interlocutors; it thereby also draws attention to the ways that the topics of life might be malformed from exclusionary practices. One participant notes,

I am lucky though. While I have only been temporarily silenced, others’ silence is more permanent. Everyday LGBT teens are silenced by their peers, parents, and other authorities. Some are

silenced for moments, some for years, others for life. Some are bullied into silence, others are murdered into it. This Day of Silence, I will show support to those who have been muzzled in fear by giving up my voice for a day. It is important that we all stand together to make the echo of silence roar through our communities. (Red O., 2011)

Teachers rely upon their relationship with students to get participation in their lesson plans. Students rely upon other students to clarify difficult ideas, to inform each other about assignments, to share ideas about projects, and to communicate about important social events. Intentional silences temporarily arrest these relationships.

Within interlocutor-centered discourses, when one of the conversationalists refuses to talk, confusion, distress, even panic can occur. Teachers whose questions go unanswered quickly rephrase the questions, and many times a volunteer answers before the silence becomes too uncomfortable. Friends may walk away frustrated, with hurt feelings, because what is at stake is the very way they are used to relating to a friend—the relationship itself is threatened by silence. They may wonder: “Did I say something offensive?” “Does my friend not like me anymore?” “Is my friend tired of hanging out with me?” Feelings of rejection, self-consciousness, and loss accompany being given the silent treatment. These are powerful emotions, and they can work to draw empathetic attention to the damaging consequences of silencing more generally. As one participant stated, “We are being silent to show others what it is like when they stay silent toward discrimination and hate crimes” (Levin, 2010).

At the GLSEN website, under “Testimonials,” one student’s experience with the Day of Silence is recounted:

Two years ago, my school participated in its first Day of Silence. Students were harassed for participating. Teachers got mad. The next year, many students did not understand the purpose, but some unlikely people began to participate and the GSA began to hear less in the way of homophobic slurs. This year, we offered stickers for those who wanted to participate but could not take a vow of silence. Many people I did not know came up to me asking for stickers and the student body was generally very excited. All of my teachers gave little speeches at the beginning or end of class about why the Day of Silence is important and told us about the queer people in their lives. Everyone really seems to get it now (GLSEN, 2006).

It is easy to imagine how this student engaged fore-silences (Dauenhauer, 1980, pp. 9-10), mobilizing the anticipatory alertness of her teachers and classmates. There is an intensity that can accompany the anticipatory character of fore-silences. The educational setting is one deeply affected by such anticipation. Most people who have been in a classroom in which a teacher's question goes unanswered know how uncomfortable such moments of fore-silence can be. After the question is asked, there exists a brief after-silence, then the fore-silence before an anticipated attempt at an answer; when silence fills the room after such questions, the silence becomes quite noticeable. The student testimonial above mentions the anger of her teachers during her first set of deliberate silences, the first time she participated in the Day of Silence. She refused to participate in the educational experience; this refusal was visible absence, and the silence became a resource of political agitation. Also, her elongated fore-silence provided the space for education; such silences create educative opportunities in which informational cards can be distributed and students can learn about harassment and silencing. According to this student, the silences helped her and others realize their intended effect—education of her fellow classmates and her teachers, and a decrease in slurs that, in the past, silenced in oppressive and destructive ways. The Day of Silence exemplifies the potential of silence as a form of deliberate contestation. A direct move from silence to voice may not be as effective as an effort that allows people to experience what silences can do to individuals, groups, institutions, and contexts. The Day of Silence is effective because its organizers and participants seem to understand that an important step going from silence to voice is a public demonstration of the costs of absence.

The Sounds of Silence

One of the ongoing problems for deliberative democrats is that the emphasis upon transformation and participation sometimes conflicts with cultural differences—some of our cultural values and practices are both deeply embedded and non-democratic. They appear immutable and impervious to participatory contestation. Such “conflicts of culture” can deepen divisions and exclusions. Monique Deveaux states:

Potential participants can also be excluded from deliberation, or else silenced within a deliberative setting, through the introduction of onerous normative constraints on the form and content of deliberative communication. For example, the insistence that participants adhere to norms of reasonableness and/or rationality by giving “public” reasons...may further render deliberative designs inhospitable or closed to some citizens. (2003, pp. 785-786)

Deveaux (2003) wrestles with these issues, arguing that we should widen the scope of deliberative contexts and consider it a legitimate form of deliberative politics to emphasize “participants’ strategic interests and needs, rather than foregrounding normative argumentation and justification” (2003, p. 781). Iris Marion Young points out how mainstream norms associated with deliberation end up silencing people who tend to shun the importance placed upon reasoned argumentation. She states, “by restricting their concept of democratic discussion narrowly to critical argument, most theorists of deliberative democracy assume a culturally biased conception of discussion that tends to silence or devalue some people or groups” (1996, p. 120). Young proposes that we expand our conception of legitimate communication to include greeting, rhetoric, and storytelling, helping constitute what she calls “communicative democracy.” For Young, and others, democracies must work to meet people where they are, allowing them to express *their* selves in ways *they* choose. Some people use silence to communicate; for some cultures, silences are weaved in and out of talk in ways that convey important values and messages. In order to ensure we are creating robustly inclusive deliberative contexts, we should go beyond simply broadening the scope of vocal communication, and include silence as valuable meaningful interaction.

The Meaningfulness of Silence

Discourse involves a series of utterances. Normally, we think of such utterances as vocal expressions, things we can hear. Yet, silences utter. They tell of agreement, stress, distress, anger, love, happiness, discomfort, dissent, and negation. Simple silences can convey quite a bit of information, from the mundane to the monumental. Muriel Saville-Troike presents several examples of meaningful silences in which the meaning changes as the context shifts:

Complete ‘utterances’ may also be composed of silence, as illustrated in the following conversational exchanges:

1) A: We’ve received word that four Tanzanian acquaintances from out of town will be arriving tomorrow. But, with our large family, we have no room to accommodate them. (Implied request: ‘Would you help us out?’) B: [Silence; not accompanied by any distinctive gesture or facial expression] (Denial: ‘I don’t want to’ or ‘I don’t have any room either’) A: What do you think? B: Yes, that is a problem. Were you able to finish that report we were working on this morning?

The negative response in the cultural milieu in which this took place violated A's expectation that guests would be welcomed, and frustrated his goal in initiating the conversation.

2) A: Please marry me. B: [Silence; head and eyes lowered] (Acceptance)

The exchange occurred between Japanese speakers. For the girl (B) to say anything would have been considered very inappropriate in this very emotional situation. If it had occurred between Igbo speakers, silence would be interpreted as denial if she continued to stand there and as acceptance if she ran away.

3) A: Are you still mad at me? B: [Silence] (Affirmative) (1985, pp. 8-9)

If we step back and give even a moment's thought to silence's multiple meanings, we quickly put to rest the idea that silence is merely absence—the opposite of speech. Cheung notes that silences employed in literature convey a series of meanings to the audience. She talks about the strategic use of silence by women writers in ways that circumvent traditional norms of acceptable plots, characters, and stories, stating, “The art of silence...covers various ‘strategies of reticence’ (Jane Stout’s term)—irony, hedging, coded language, muted plots—used by women writers to tell the forbidden and name the unspeakable” (1993, p. 4). These strategies of reticence involve silence that is anything but absolutely silent; these are silences that convey diverse meanings, and if the reader is not open to or adept at interpreting such silences, the stories involved might be incompletely digested. Democratic theory has not focused our attention upon meaningful silences, thereby excluding such meaning, and those who deploy it, from deliberation and judgment. Silences are many times one among the limited strategies of the less powerful. Such silences speak, and we should listen.

These silences are meant to be a strategy for those who, under speaking conditions, face a series of prohibitory norms about what can and cannot be said. Cheung continues, “Their dialogic visions are rooted in their marginal position as women and as members of ethnic minorities. To reckon with both, I locate my analysis in the interstices of three modes of “double-voiced discourse” (1993, p. 15). She further describes double-voiced as,

...the term is directly associated with women's writing, which is often “coded” (Radner & Lanser) or made up of a “dominant” and a “muted” story: “The orthodox plot recedes, and another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint” (Showalter 34). A number of black feminists (Hazel Carby, Deborah McDowell, Valerie Smith)

have further shown how African American women writers exploit ambiguous language to deliver covert messages. (1993, p. 15)

Silences can deliver covert messages. This can certainly be a participatory method of creating meaning. For Cheung, we should not shun silence too hastily; instead, we should recognize both its indication of a subordinate status and its character as a vehicle for challenging and critiquing such a condition. For some, silence offers one of only a few technologies to put forth an alternative worldview. Finally, this ability to recognize the double-voiced character of silence can more likely emerge from one's status as existing both on the margins of one cultural context (an outsider) and closer to the center of another (an insider), yet still subjected to norms one does not have an ideal say constructing (an insider-outsider). Cheung notes the influence of dual lineage,

As minority women these writers are subject not only to the white gaze of the larger society but also to the communal gaze. Mediating between a dominant culture that advertises "free" speech (but maintains minority silence) and an ethnic one that insists on the propriety of reticence, all three writers have developed methods of indirection that reflect their female, racial, and bicultural legacies. (1993, p. 16)

Existing in such a position can lead one to create skills and performances that enable negotiating and fluidity. "Methods of indirection" might be pervasive parts of deliberative topographies, yet they go unnoticed and ignored due to the hegemony of speech. The assumption that those who have something to say will say it is one way that such silences are subject to neglect. Yet, even among those who understand that complex power dynamics might silence some persons, there still may be a lack of awareness that not all silences are signs of oppression.

The Day of Silence: Communication

The Day of Silence has a message: harassment and exclusion of LGBT people is unjust, and *silences* valuable voices every day. As one principal noted, "The Day of Silence sends a powerful message that all students have a right to be respected" (Thompson, 2008). This is a political message that could surely be communicated via speeches, verbal confrontation, and audible direct action. Yet, organizers have mobilized silence to carry their message. Silence acts as a powerful medium for their message because the movement is based in a highly talkative context—schools. They have surrounded this silence with written messages, organizational literature, t-shirts, ongoing blog posts, and other symbols of their cause so as to

best communicate their purpose—to combat harassment and exclusion, and to lift all those voices subject to repressive measures. This political use of silence has become “the largest, single-day student-led grassroots action on LGBT rights in American history” (GLSEN, 2006). At the top of the organization’s web page, the query is posed, “What are you going to do to end the silence?” The organization highlights the active and discursive nature of silence as it calls for making “noise” through silence. They continue, “Just as profound, however, can be the use of silence as a form of protest. The Day of Silence moves the power of these personal experiences to a community-based effort. The Day of Silence is a way of turning silence on its head, of reclaiming silence as a tool” (GLSEN, 2006). Turning silence on its head is a reclaiming of the meaningfulness of silence.

Attention to this effort allows the organization to communicate substantive messages about the cause via websites, press releases, and news stories. Such messages include statements of purpose, such as, “For too long, the silencing of LGBT people and their allies has been the norm. Whether it’s the lack of LGBT-inclusive material in educational resources, or role assignments based upon our assumed gender, such silence and silencing affects us all in a profound way” (GLSEN, 2006). The organization is also able to educate about the devastating consequences of harassment—how it can lead to physical absences among those who are bullied and silenced. The group continues,

Why do we need a Day of Silence? GLSEN’s 2003 National School Climate Survey found that 4 out of 5 LGBT students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment at school, and more than 30% report missing at least a day of school in the past month out of fear for their personal safety (GLSEN, 2006).

In addition to the lack of educational materials that represent LGBT groups and individuals, a rendering of these subjects invisible, there is the overt bullying that excludes many from educational, social, and political experiences. These are high percentages of exclusion, of absences from educative and deliberative contexts in which students face harassment that silences their voices and submerges their existences. Under such conditions, speaking out is certainly an option. Yet, it may be even more powerful if the painful lacuna of such absence speaks as well.

Many of the students who participate carry “Speaking Cards,” and hand them to non-participating students, administrators, and teachers. These cards state:

Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement

protesting the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their allies. My deliberate silence echoes that silence, which is caused by harassment, prejudice, and discrimination. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward fighting these injustices. Think about the voices you are not hearing today. What are you going to do to end the silence? (GLSEN, 2006)

The cards clearly and purposefully differentiate deliberate (purposeful) and enforced silences. It is important to note that silence alone is not enough. Such silence will be accompanied by some other symbolic gesture to ensure that one's objective is conveyed. Whether it involves a handmade sign that includes a protest slogan, a flier distributed to passersby outlining one's grievances, or a break-the-silence conversation to explain one's strategic silence, these deliberate silences usually rely upon other discursive devices to engage politically. The Day of Silence movement understands that meaningful silences are most effective when done publicly, in talkative contexts in which silence stands out, and accompanied with substantive messages to convey important meaning. Students who take a vow of silence during study hall, when silence is already an enforced policy for study hall behavior, will go unnoticed, their silence rendered meaningless. Instead, participants go silent the entire day, during all periods and interactions. Such silence is sure to occur in talkative contexts, in which the silence stands out in contrast to the buzz of normal communications.

One important component of the power of silences in talkative contexts is that they can be noticed, and reported upon, by those in the media. This, in turn, works to spread the message, and to make such silences potentially more meaningful. Silences sometimes can speak for themselves, yet, to avoid confusion and to take advantage of the opportunity for exposure, the addition of media coverage (silence plus) is advantageous. National media such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*, as well as a variety of local outlets such as the *Boston Herald*, the *Sacramento Bee*, the *Seattle Times*, and the *Grand Rapids Press*, have reported on this movement. In an article titled "Silence Speaks Volumes About Gay Support," the *Washington Post* reported,

One girl wondered what her choir teacher would say later when half the class refused to utter a sound. Another girl collided with her friend in the hall but couldn't say, "Sorry!" Instead, she made big wide eyes and clapped her hand over her mouth in apology. A boy with a persimmon-dyed crew cut communicated by writing messages on an erasable board until his pen ran dry. They were among 40 or so students at Alexandria's T.C. Williams High

School who did not speak yesterday in observance of the ninth annual “Day of Silence” -- an event that, as notes they passed out explained, was a way of “protesting the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their allies” (Bahrapour, 2005).

The headline of the article in the *Washington Post* infuses the silence of the movement with meaning: the broad silence among students means there is substantial support for LGBT persons. What does the silence communicate? It says, “we are here for you; we support you.” Jessica Haney, one of the teachers at T.C. Williams, said, “I already so often have to deal with comments such as . . . ‘That’s so gay.’ I just want to use [the event] as a forum for explaining, like: ‘You all know that I’m straight and I have a husband, but if I weren’t, would I feel comfortable sharing it with you? Maybe one of you has a gay parent. Every day, someone is being silenced’ (Bahrapour, 2005).”

The *Buffalo News* reported about the Day of Silence, stating, “The normally peaceful halls and classrooms in some schools around the nation and Western New York were filled with scenes of protest Wednesday, April 18. Students shouting, chanting, or pushing? Not quite. Utter silence? Yes” (Miller, 2007). Framing the day in these terms calls attention to the way that speech acts as a background, with silence in the foreground when used intentionally and effectively. An editorial in *The Charlotte Observer* links the Day of Silence to a call for official action in order to protect students from harassment: “The Day of Silence spotlights a real problem. No student should have to fear coming to school because of bullying, name-calling, threats and violence...School officials must work to root out such intolerance” (Observer Staff, 2008). Levine, Fung, and Gastil state, “When dozens of newspapers covered ‘Listening to the City’ deliberations around rebuilding lower Manhattan, tens of thousands of newspaper and Internet readers participated, albeit virtually, in a conversation about urban planning” (2005, p. 4). Media coverage of the Day of Silence, including the controversies surrounding it, has been quite expansive, and thereby likely to contribute to conversations about harassment of LGBTQ youth.

Silence is Golden

Within conversations, silence plays the important role of providing the “empty” frame within which one can engage, listen, and reflect upon what is being said. Silence and talk must coexist in understandable ways in order for us to communicate. Without silences, sociality would break down. Barber calls for embracing silence as part of the deliberative process, before decisions are made. Silence and democratic talk go hand in hand. Barber states,

“I will listen” means to the strong democrat not that I will scan my adversary’s position for weaknesses and potential trade-offs, nor even (as a minimalist might think) that I will tolerantly permit him to say whatever he chooses. It means, rather, “I will put myself in his place, I will try to understand, I will strain to hear what makes us alike, I will listen for a common rhetoric evocative of a common purpose or a common good” (2003, p. 175).

This listening in favor of a common good or purpose is based in a quieting of oneself, an attentive and reflective silence. Andrew Dobson points out how democratic theory, and deliberative democratic theory more specifically, with a few exceptions, has failed to spend enough time theorizing good listening. Listening prepares one to reach beyond and receive the “subjecthood” of the other. He concludes, “periods of silent ‘attunement’ could be incorporated into political debate to encourage those periods of silence that are so important to better listening” (2010, p. 766). Silence is golden in that it can provide the all-important space for receiving and paying attention to others. Yet Dobson, while citing some of the important, though rare, work of those who have emphasized listening, does not explore the implications of silences for good democratic listening.

Robert Goodin also, indirectly, emphasizes the importance of silence for democratic engagement and decision-making. He describes how “deliberation within” is a necessary component of deliberative systems, providing the silent mental space that allows for imagination and understanding. Contemporary deliberative contexts face the problems of time, numbers, and distance. Goodin proposes that embracing deliberation within would help us alleviate these problems, as deliberators would not have to exclusively rely upon face-to-face interactions and conversations in order to gain understanding of one another’s lives, desires, and problems. If we required face-to-face talkative interactions (“external-collective” dynamics) in order to designate a democratic system legitimate, systems of any large size would find it impossible to meet this standard. Also, the amount of talking required would leave little if any room for the reflection necessary for the transformative experiences necessary for truly deliberative democracy. The focus of deliberative theorists upon discussion fails to adequately attend to the “consideration” phase of deliberation, in which we reach understandings “inside our own heads” (2003, p. 629). Deliberation within, if practiced habitually, is a marked improvement for deliberative democracy. It emphasizes a silencing that opens one up to the vast array of experiences and epistemic resources that might helpfully inform deliberations among one’s peers. By mobilizing such deliberation, a citizen may be more likely to think broadly

about conceptions of the good life, and the common good. However, such deliberation still lacks a more outward and proactive silence, one intended to reach out to others who may deliberate or be affected by deliberations. Goodin himself outlines problems with “deliberation within,” problems all emerging due to inadequacies related to the other—“attending to the other,” “understanding the other,” “representing the other,” and “finding time for the other” (2000, pp. 99-106). Silent yielding can help solve this problem. It is a silence intended to focus one upon another, to intentionally yield discursive space so that the life stories, experiences, and conceptions of the good can emerge from those we may hardly know. It is a position that recognizes one’s own epistemological limitations.

Deliberate Yielding

Dryzek states, “The most effective and insidious way to silence others in politics is a refusal to listen, which is why the practice of effective listening has to be central to any discursive democracy” (2000, p. 149). I want to return to conceptualizing the “deliberate” part of deliberate silences, and how this unfolds as an active and engaged yielding. Such yielding might be the most important democratic practice, if what we normatively want is transformation, robust inclusion, and a sense of the common that unites us. Gastil and Black state, “Participants have the obligation to consider carefully the words that they hear. Consideration begins with careful listening that is attentive both to the content of a speaker’s words and the speaker’s larger perspective or experience” (2008, p. 4). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, deliberate is both “well-considered” and “unhurried.” These characteristics should be at the core of deliberative democracy. Once we direct our “well-consideredness” to others, we bring them under the umbrella of things we take seriously, things we care about. This is no small matter in democratic struggles. In a confessional and intensely vocal era, without silence there is little chance anyone will be heard. Instead, those with the loudest voices (loud being about the ability to get what one says put into policies and norms that regulate lives) will perpetuate the status quo. In such a setting, democratic theorists should be emphasizing the importance of silences that consider the plights, lives, struggles, dreams, fears, anxieties, and hopes of one another. These are not empty silences, because they are imbued with democratic affect—affection for those with whom we live and create our lives, those we consider well.

The contemporary setting has exploded with communicative technologies, without due consideration for hearing one another. In the midst of a plethora of mass media venues, emails, Facebook, Twitter, and so on, the ability to be “well considered” has been eroded. As deliberative democracy has emerged as a top contender for the hearts and minds of democratic theorists, governmental

officials, nongovernmental organizations, and citizens, its timing in some ways could not have been worse. This statement likely goes against the conventional thinking. Many may assume that, because we have been inundated with so many ways to communicate unmediatedly, that this should be the golden age for deliberative democracy—that more citizens now have the ability to say what they want to thousands if not millions of others directly, in their own words. However, this ability to speak profusely to many people simultaneously, or to be able to speak to others almost anywhere, does little for deliberative democracy if the skills and habits necessary for sincere engagement and dedication to common goods are being ignored, neglected, and pushed aside. The sheer speed of contemporary communication technologies certainly means that if we cherish being “unhurried,” we have to work very hard to resist keeping up with it all. Deliberate silences do not rush those to whom we are listening, in at least two ways. They are unhurried in the sense that they enduringly yield discursive space to others. One yields in order to attempt robust understanding; therefore, speakers are not prodded to “wrap it up,” or “get it out.” Deliberate silent yieldings are also unhurried in the sense that they intersect with being well considered. After others have spoken, we deliberate silently. We do not merely consider, we consider well.

Silent yielding should involve an intentional “stepping aside.” Stepping aside should entail at least three intentional democratic postures, three postures made necessary within political contexts inundated with enduring identity-based forms of inequality and oppression. First, of course, there is the silence—the “precious medium in which reflection is nurtured.” This is a yielding of discursive space. Second, this silence entails a conscious privileging of the voices of racialized, sexualized, naturalized, or gendered “others.” Dauenhauer states, “In performing silence one acknowledges some center of significance of which he is not the source, a center to be wondered at, to be in awe of. The very doing of silence is the acknowledgment of the agent’s finitude and of the awesomeness of that of which he is not the source” (1980, p. 25). This is a crucial step toward democratic transformation. So much of our political theorizing has been built upon a supposed autonomous, rational agent. Even though this agent has been shown to be a fabrication, “he” gets in the way of intersubjective democracy. We have invested in him self-interest, cost-benefit calculation, and cold argumentation based upon a strong sense of entitlement—all the things that get in the way of inclusion, listening, and transformation of preferences that emerge more in line with the common good. Silent yielding helps dismantle this rational agent. It starts by reaching out to the epistemological richness that is the “other.” For example, yielding can embrace the commitment that the standpoint of the oppressed be honored as that which provides a richer perspective about inclusion. Guinier and Torres (2002) highlight the ways that race has constituted some

marginalized groups to be more equipped for solidarity and leadership. It is in yielding that we can learn from those around us.

Finally, through yielding to, and privileging the voices of “others,” the white/straight/male/human subject intends to negate itself as a dominant and enduring identity formation. Silent yielding is not only a means of providing a medium for listening—it is also about self-reconfiguration and even self-denial. It is silence guided by purpose. There is a recognition that the autonomous and privileged self cannot truly engage the other, without first stripping himself (or herself) of the very identity that excludes. Stepping aside is really a democratic step forward, creating the space for transformative deliberation and conversation—it is the first significant step toward knowing differently and being different. It is simultaneously the first step toward recognition; toward rendering visible the invisible, and heard the unheard; toward dismantling power that excludes and privileges.

The Day of Silence: Transformation

Silent yielding may be a further step in the direction of drawing our attention away from the speaking subject and toward the subjecthood of the other, not only honing our listening skills but transforming ourselves in the process. I will briefly describe two types of transformation (experiential-reflective and relational-supportive) from the Day of Silence, in which students and contexts are changed through yielding in silence. It is important to note that much of the power of the Day of Silence comes from the participation of more privileged speakers. Allies who join in the silence might be better positioned to manipulate norms surrounding speech and silence because their voices are more prevalent on a daily basis. When such allies take a vow of silence, they are yielding in silence to allow the silence of others to speak. This stepping aside allows for the sounds of the silenced to become foregrounded. Such yielding among participants in the Day of Silence can be quite transformative. Beyond the ways that witnesses of such silence may find themselves with a new perspective regarding power, speech, and silence, connections and relationships are made that, in turn, continue to challenge exclusive power dynamics.

Experiential-reflective transformation is a result of the unmediated and direct engagement of the vow of silence. A given student participates, and feels what a long silence can be like. One student noted, “The experience really helped because you got to feel how these people feel. Not being able to say what you really think, it's basically like you're trapped, but you just want to scream it out to the world!” (Miller, 2007). This is a silence that intersects self-consciousness with other-consciousness, sparking empathy and critical thought at a personal level. It also combines topic- and interlocutor-discoursing; as students for whom

exclusionary silencing seemed to be a mere abstract issue that only affected others now felt the unsettling character of such silence—they became merged with the world of being silenced. Another participant, who also helped organize the effort, states,

Day of Silence isn't just a protest against bullying or something to bring attention to others, but it's to bring a more intense, tangible, awareness to the participants. I tell people it's not as hard as it sounds, just to get them to do it, but in all reality it is hard and stressful and saddening to an extent; however it is also enlightening and eye-opening and incredibly, absolutely powerful. Anyone who has participated the whole day would know. It's inspirational. (Meghann G., 2011)

This student speaks to the transformative power of participation in silence. What is so interesting about this student's reflection is that it mirrors the ways that the three kinds of deliberate silences highlighted throughout this essay build upon one another. She says that messaging against bullying and bringing attention to exclusion are not the only things happening—participants are also being changed. The vow of silence can provoke transformative reflection. This student took time away from the day of silence to write her reflections. She wrote:

How do you tell someone how you feel without speaking and without writing an essay? How do you defend yourself without words? The meaning of Day of Silence is so much more powerful when experiencing it, hearing about it doesn't compare. The feeling of isolation puts you in a daze, where you forget about the "importance" of every day conversations...The lack of voice is so disabling and makes you almost handicapped...There are kids out there who go to school in fear, diaphragm shaking, suffocating, shuttering, inevitable fear. Fear of getting beat up or harassed or even of being killed, just because THEY ARE WHO THEY ARE! (Meghann G., "Day of Silence Student Journal 4/15/11")

Experiencing one day of silence was overwhelming for this student. This feeling of isolation helped transform this student's consciousness.

Relational-supportive transformation emerges as the silences and receptiveness of students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members merge together. Relationships are forged, or strengthened. Contexts are reconfigured. Individuals feel buoyed, and respected. As participants step aside and show respect, a sense of awe toward the other, they create new interlocutors

and new worlds. In turn, they engage the other in ongoing relationships. Yielding in silence is an intentional sign of support for those who feel alienated and alone. One participant states,

I want to participate in the Day of Silence to help educate people to how much silence can be caused even by something as simple as a few words. To raise awareness for the people who have been pushed into silence and are unable to raise awareness themselves. To show the person who suffers in their silence that there are people out there who care and recognize their pain and that there is hope. (Melissa, 2010)

Such support can deeply affect those who witness it. Another participant notes,

But the most gratifying moment came when a teacher I didn't think would be supportive walked into the library proudly wearing a ribbon. I was so sure he wouldn't I told Erica, the president and founder of our GSA, not to put one in his box. Erica refused and said that everyone had to get a ribbon—that they needed to make the choice to return the ribbon, we couldn't make it easy for them not to participate! When I told this teacher that I was surprised he was wearing the ribbon he asked me why I felt that way. I stammered that I thought he was very conservative. **He then asked me why being conservative meant that you wouldn't support human rights. He went on to say the Day of Silence was about human rights and that he was for the rights of all humans! A learning lesson for me!** (“Silence is Golden,” 2008)

Enlarging the scope of what we consider to be legitimate forms of democratic participation is an important mobilization of responsibility. By including silence as one among other ways to communicate in deliberative contexts, we provide deliberators with another choice: they can choose to pay attention to potentially meaningful silences, or they can ignore them. Erica, the GSA president, recognizes the power of broadening the scope of participation.

Relational-supportive transformation can forge enduring coalitions between traditionally privileged and less privileged speakers. For instance, a GSA at Holland High School in Michigan emerged leading up to the Day of Silence in 2003. The effort surrounding the Day of Silence at Holland helped bring in further support for the school's newly formed GSA. The teacher advisor to the group stated, “This is the highlight of the year. It's way bigger than we had hoped to do” (*The Grand Rapids Press*). One reporter described the support of

parents and community members, who “stood quietly outside the school as students arrived in the morning. Some wore tie-dye scarves, and a former student waved a rainbow flag” (Thompson, 2008). One of the parents said, “We want to let students in the GSA know they have support in the community” (Thompson, 2008). The emergence of these alliances speaks to the power of silence to help encourage reflection and transformation that, in turn, leads to stronger and more widespread coalitions. Having so-called “straight” students be silent for the entire day can go a long way in bringing home the point that silence can be an absence and exclusion that erodes community and knowledge development; the world intended is less than it could be. The silence of those historically silenced can send a powerful message by itself, surely; however, with the help of those privileged through speech, the movement can be that much more effective. A student who is usually talkative provides a speech background upon which her or his silence will then stand out.

Silence does at least three things. First, it opens space for thought. Cheung discusses silence as being provocative; it can be a provocative force in the sense that it provides a platform that has been emptied of verbiage, a platform that allows for new meanings, ideas, and performances. Second, it draws attention. As stated elsewhere, this world, our world, is quite verbose; we talk seemingly incessantly. Silence, in such a context, gets noticed. Not only does silence get a standing when untimely, unexpected, and insubordinate, it also inspires the unmasking of conflicts that previously were dormant. Finally, it inspires awareness and dialogue, the culmination of reflection and attentiveness. All of these aspects of silence can work to transform social and political contexts. One participant describes this potential:

Now, a year later, it’s amazing to see how far we’ve come. It leaves me in awe to think about how much our support base has grown. Now I have an established Gay Straight Alliance with a student base of about thirty members...It gives me great pride to see how far my community has come, all because of a group of people who stood up for what they believed in. So, while you are silent throughout the day on Friday, remember that what YOU are doing is making a difference. You are paving the way for the change that we all are waiting for. (Clevenger, 2009)

The Day of Silence, as an annual event, is meant to mark the beginning of a new year and all the hopes and possibilities that accompany beginning again. The Day of Silence is about contesting all the silencings that occurred during the previous year so as to construct a context in which the truth regimes from which harassment emerge are eroded and eliminated. Part of the transformation is of a

personal kind. Participants, during breaking the silence events, are encouraged to reflect upon the characteristics of their day of silence. A hope for a provocative silence is put forth, a silence that provokes participants to implement more lasting changes in their lives and the lives of others. Mill points to the tyranny of the majority in society as a worrisome accompaniment to modern configurations of political regimes. Within society, in a series of private spaces and places, we, to one another, police and gossip and tyrannize. Words such as “gay” and “fag” are deployed as discursive bullets and bombs that destroy self-images, personal potential, and love possibilities. In many cases, it is we, we in our societies—homes, workplaces, schools, and relationships of all kinds—who police and tyrannize each other. The Day of Silence is meant to challenge such tyranny, and the reflective and provocative properties of silence can marry needed and many times elusive self-consciousness with an other-oriented consciousness that can transform toward the dialogic, opening previously foreclosed potentialities and lifting previously silenced voices.

Conclusion

Research. By paying more attention to deliberate silences, contemporary controversies or challenges of deliberative democracy could now be approached from a fresh perspective. Gastil and Black emphasize the “relational” or “social process of deliberation” (2008, p. 5). Might deliberate silences be better equipped to enhance such aspects of deliberation? Researchers could look for moments of intentional silence among participants of deliberation in order to see if such silence leads to deeper respect or more civil conversation (Gastil and Black, 2008, p. 32). How do deliberate silences currently impact debates and realities concerning inclusion? When there is more silence, is there more productive effort to include dissenting voices? Karpowitz and Mansbridge (2005) consider the importance of “dynamic updating” in deliberations, noting how important it is for participants to uncover deep-seated conflicts. They do this by contrasting two different “meeting procedures.” Such research should be extended to contrasting meetings in which silence is valued, and ones where it is devalued. What are the social and “analytic” (Gastil and Black, 2008) consequences of each framework? Does silence facilitate the development of “social intelligence,” thereby producing deeper “democratic change” (Kadlec and Friedman, 2007)? Scholarship that is attentive to deliberate silences has the potential to legitimize groups and individuals who have previously gone unnoticed by democratic theorists. For instance, the artists who use images of muted subjects to convey meaning may be ripe for study as part of deliberative systems.

A major complication of broadening our democratic theories and practices to include deliberate silences is that we may, at times, inadvertently re-silence

those who are silenced by power dynamics. There is a danger of over-romanticizing silences. When we treat silences as meaningful and transformative, we may misread some silences as deliberate when they are actually the result of exclusion and repression. For instance, we may read a silence as a yielding of discursive real estate to others, when, in fact, the silence represents that a given subject feels too uncomfortable to speak. This person's silence, which leaves discursive space open for others to talk, may be misinterpreted as a stepping aside when it is really a re-iteration of silencing dynamics. Also, there is another possible misreading—there are some silences that are meaningless, unintentional, and indicate very little if anything about anything. Sometimes, silence is silence. Because silence can sometimes seem to invite others to fill in quiet spaces, theorists have to be careful not to read too much into some silences. In filling some subjects' silences with grand narratives about meaning or transformation, we may give credit where credit is not due. Another issue in researching silence involves discerning deliberate silences from other political silences, such as those involving everyday resistance. William Smith (2004) discusses the justifiable character of insubordinate practices related to the failures of deliberative systems. His focus is civil disobedience. Michael Allen (2009) examines similar dynamics as they relate to terrorism. A complicated question for deliberative democrats is whether we should consider insubordinate silences to have a trajectory toward deliberation? If we want to include these silences as within the shadow of deliberative contexts, how do we distinguish them from silences whose practitioners are intent upon shunning deliberative democracy? In sum, most of the potentialities and complications involving researching silence surround the complex interplay between silence and speech, an ongoing dynamic that will continue to challenge and inspire theorists of democracy for years to come.

Facilitating Silence. Formal contexts of public deliberation rely upon skilled facilitators to guide conversations among participants. There are several important lessons from the Day of Silence that could be useful for facilitators of deliberation. From the testimonials above, we learn that those who take on a vow of silence may come to have a fuller understanding of what it feels like to be silenced. Facilitators of public deliberation might consider beginning deliberative interactions with some exercises of silence. For instance, a facilitator could have some participants take a vow of silence for a given conversation in order to provide some experiential knowledge of exclusion. Also, thinking more broadly about other deliberate silences, facilitators could become more attentive, and direct attention to, the potentially meaningful silences of participants. Instead of ignoring the quiet person at the back of the room, facilitators could encourage engagement of such silences. Finally, per the Day of Silence, facilitators could encourage allies to emerge in contexts of public deliberation where some voices

are consistently drowned out. Gastil and Black state, “Deliberation also refers to the social process of communicating together. Foremost among these considerations is ensuring an adequate opportunity to speak among all participants or points of view” (2009, p. 3). We know that as more privileged speaker-allies go silent, they open discursive space for outside voices. This can be facilitated in formal public deliberations. If you peruse listings of workshops for facilitators of difficult dialogues, you may encounter titles such as, “From Conflict to Connection,” “Moving Beyond Impasse,” and “Transforming Divisive Conversation” (Public Conversations Project, 2013). Deliberate silences should be among such socialization tools and processes for effective facilitators.

Levine, Fung, and Gastil highlight that in “high stakes” deliberations, “individuals with more status or skill will fight back against efforts to support less advantaged participants. They will demean such efforts as “politically correct” or otherwise biased, and they will use their status, confidence, and rhetorical fluency to win the point” (2005, pp. 6-7). While some degree of this dynamic is unavoidable, foregrounding silence may help alleviate it. Facilitating silence can help silence this inclination, and encourage different voices to emerge. Mansbridge, Hartz-Karp, Amengual, and Gastil (2006), in their inductive study of facilitators of public deliberation, discuss the importance of emotional interactions among participants in deliberation. In this context, they state, “One coder even considered it problematic that the presence of experts and ‘more knowledgeable people’ can ‘drive out attention to personal stories, the ‘feeling of the problem’ kind of thing” (2006, pp. 19-20). This problem invites facilitating silent yielding, calling upon more privileged speakers to temporarily silence themselves, to step aside, in order to allow productive storytelling that can breed empathy among deliberators.

Reconfiguring Privileged Selves. Privileged speakers can wreak havoc on democracy. In deliberative contexts, privileged speakers can lead to at least three major layers of exclusion. First, it is their voices that always seem to be present. Second, even with the inclusion of alternative voices, the privileged speakers tend to stand out, and garner more attention. Finally, due to the first two dynamics, it is the words of the privileged speakers that have the best chance at transforming the preferences of those around them. In turn, those whose voices are more valued seem to be least receptive to transformative possibilities themselves. This is likely the most detrimental aspect of privilege for deliberative possibilities. Deliberative democracy’s fundamental focus upon transformation will always fall short as long as privileged selves seem impermeable. Those most likely to be undemocratic are also least likely to be subject to democratic transformation. This is where silent yielding can be crucial. In the Day of Silence, we see how students who normally occupy privileged positions regarding identities

surrounding sexuality are transformed by silence. This silence is a recognition that, as an elite, one's sense of reality is shaped by one's privileged position—that material conditions and social status shape a consciousness geared toward replicating the conditions most favorable to oneself, and injurious to others. If we can expose the privileged to how privilege disadvantages others, we are one step closer to constituting more democratic settings.

One key challenge to deploying deliberate silences in order to reconfigure privilege is determining what groups and individuals should yield in silence (which ones are privileged), and which groups should fill these intentional voids. This is nothing if not a contentious issue, one with high stakes. This is a problem that will be ongoing, and one subject to democratic dialogue. There are several, if not many, starting points that can help participants and theorists alike discern how to navigate privilege. First, Young's (2011) work on the five faces of oppression is an example of a framework that can help guide facilitators and participants as they decide when to yield in silence. Also, intersectionality is a critical theoretical and practical position because it speaks to how faces of oppression can intersect and interact with one another to render a group or individual more or less privileged in contingent and complicated ways. Finally, critical theories (such as Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies) and writings on privilege (see McIntosh, 2004) can guide how we engage productive and democratic self-consciousness regarding our shifting place, and placement, within our society.

Impacting Policy. One of the nagging problems of deliberative democracy and practice is that, even after the best of deliberations have been structured and have taken place, there may be little impact upon actual political decisions by policy makers. The Day of Silence movement, by contrast, has had success in affecting policies and institutions. The rise of gay-straight alliances is an example of such impact. Imagine a deliberative democracy that embraced silent yielding as a necessary condition of the deliberative effort. Imagine that deliberations were structured to include policymakers who adopt silent yielding as they listen to the deliberations and policy recommendations of citizens. In a representative democracy that takes deliberative democracy seriously, it is our representatives who should be mostly silent in relationship to deliberative conversations. But, it is a deliberate silence, one meant to yield discursive space in order to reach out to one's constituents in awe. Legislators should be present at salient deliberations, yet instead of being equipped with strong voices, they should be equipped with pen and paper and smart pads, so as to take notes of the contributions of the people attending. Representatives certainly inhabit spaces of privilege in our democracies, as a privileged identity formation. Kadlec and Friedman state that activists should "aim at compelling leaders and powerbrokers to support deliberation without hijacking it and to respond to real changes people want to see

as they develop a sense of shared interests and become impatient with unresponsive or fraudulent leadership” (2007, p. 21). Silent yielding is ripe with possibilities for robust democratic policies, if and when policymakers yield to the visions of the good life put forward by the thoughtful and engaged deliberations of diverse citizens.

The Day of Silence has quickly become a massive, student-led movement against harassment. What started as a rather small effort of 150 or so students, at the University of Virginia in 1996, has now grown to include more than 500,000 participants at thousands of educational settings across the United States. In the testimonials of participants, as well as its massive size, we see the potential of silence to educate publics about inclusion, as well as the way that stepping aside in silence can transform subjects and contexts. This effort also includes important lessons for democratic theory, especially how we best navigate the problems of power and exclusion. Kadlec and Friedman summarize these problems: “The concern is that in a society that is structured by deep inequalities, such as ours, formal inclusion, even when it exists, is not enough to guarantee everyone the opportunity to deliberate as equals because the more powerful interests always have greater influence in the deliberative process” (2007, p. 5). They emphasize attention to control, design, and change regarding deliberative contexts and conversations. Foregrounding deliberate silences in each of these dimensions could go a long way toward ameliorating the problems of power and inequality that haunt our democratic imaginations and realities. Imagine a democracy that attends to deliberate silences, one that foregrounds silent yielding. We begin with deliberate silences across the variety of political conversations, public and private, among diverse citizens and subjects. Interlocutors listen for meaningful silences, thereby challenging assumptions about others and asking more questions. They pay attention to episodic agitations for voice. They yield to the other, transforming who they are in the process. With each layer, deliberative democracy becomes more meaningful, more inclusive, and more transformative. Finally, as those with the power to put deliberative imaginings into policy yield to the visions of the common good that emerge from these more robustly democratic conversations, the gap between societies’ ideals and practices begin to close. Frustrations that our public servants do not listen to us, that they are self-seeking, decrease. Making silence an inherent part of deliberative democracy directly challenges the power of policymakers and other elites who do more talking than listening.

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