

# On the Problems and Power of Silence in Democratic Theory and Practice\*

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## Abstract

Contemporary democratic theory is focused on the task of empowering voice in collective political decision-making. The opposite of voice is silence: Actors may choose to remain silent rather than articulate their needs, preferences, or goals. How, then, should we theorize and assess those individual and collective actors who choose silence to engage in democratic politics? In this article, I offer conceptual tools for assessing the normative consequences of silence as a form of political engagement. I identify four types of silence that communicate politically: affective silence, demonstrative silence, emulative silence, and facilitative silence. I argue that these choices for silence can function as low cost, but potentially effective forms of engagement for those without resources for voice. When these choices are recognized and integrated into democratic institutions, silence may also advance basic democratic norms by improving responsiveness, competitiveness, and inclusion in collective decision-making processes.

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Democratic empowerment traditionally centers on *voice*: public acts of choice with linguistic content that register as communicative contributions to collective decision-making. It is through voice, as Aristotle ([384-322 BCE] 1998, 1253a14-17) first argued, that citizens transform raw sense into reasoned judgment – distinguishing right from wrong, good from bad, and useful from harmful. And it is only by expressing judgments as voice, as democratic theorists argue today, that citizens have sway over government – choosing who should hold power, how it should be used, and to what end. It follows that much of contemporary democratic theory is concerned with deepening institutions and practices that strengthen voice in democratic life. It also follows that contemporary democratic theorists view *silence* – the opposite of voice – as evidence of deficits of democracy.

This article aims to rethink the democratic potentials of silence. One obstacle to such rethinking is a consensus within contemporary democratic theory that voice trades off with silence in the political domain. The firmness of this conviction in the literature has, in turn, led democratic theorists to overlook an entire set of practices that do not fit easily into the traditional voice/silence dichotomy. To take one recent example, Congressman Mick Mulvaney, a Republican from South Carolina, launched a failed coup against John Boehner, standing in silence as the clerk repeatedly called his name during a roll call vote on Boehner's reappointment as Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. As Mulvaney himself explained, his silence was meant to embolden the Republican caucus to vote to oust Boehner. A strikingly similar tactic was adopted in another recent example in Turkey in the summer of 2013, where thousands of dissidents held a weeklong silent vigil in Taksim Square, Istanbul, against the policies of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan. The vigils quickly spread to cities across Turkey. What motivated these different kinds of actors to use silence to engage in democratic politics? Put differently, when and how is silence itself a form of political engagement?

To answer these and similar questions we need a theoretical framework that clarifies what it is actors are doing when they use silence in democratic politics, and criteria for judging

the normative consequences of those uses. Currently, when democratic theorists encounter silence, their default frame is to read silence as an absence of voice, and to then read various disempowerments into silence, ranging from apathy and disaffection to acquiescence and domination. Yet, as I shall argue, a framework that *also* recognizes the democratic potentials of silence can and should be developed out of an essential political and legal right at the core of most strong, liberal democratic states: *the right to remain silent*. I argue here that not only does the right to silence function as a key limitation on state power, and on relations of power generally, but in doing so it also *transforms* the very act of remaining silent into a form of political engagement, as an *active expression of individual or collective choice*.

Once we frame silence in terms of choice – as paradoxically arising from expressions of choice and from various disempowerments that undermine choice – we can develop a series of distinctions that will allow democratic theorists to think systematically about silence in the political domain, and to distinguish different types of silence as more or less beneficial for democracy. What I call *disempowered silences* occur whenever institutional empowerments supporting choice are weak or nonexistent, due either to unequal distributions of social, political, or economic rights, or to a lack of choice-enabling resources like education, status, and wealth. By comparison, what I call *communicative silences* are active choices for silence that reveal the internal attitudes, judgments, or preferences of actors to a wider audience. Mick Mulvaney's silence, for example, clearly signaled his opposition to Boehner. Likewise, the silent vigils in Taksim Square were a public expression of deep discontent with the Erdoğan government. I argue here that if we pay attention to how actors use silence to communicate politically, we will find several types of *communicative silence* – types that serve important political functions, and so should be anticipated and supported by democratic institutions. *Affective silence* involves choosing to remain silent in order to sanction the decisions or actions of others. With *demonstrative silence*, actors instead choose silence as a substitute for speech to respond to the cues, questions, and promptings of others. In *emulative silence*, actors signal their compliance

with formal rules entitling some to speak instead of others, or none at all. *Facilitative silence* is the result of actors remaining silent in conformity with informal conventions of civility, listening, tact, and cooperative conduct. All four types of *communicative silence* can be empowering forms of political engagement in a democracy. What makes them empowering in some circumstances is their contribution to basic democratic norms like *nondomination* and *inclusion*.

The article unfolds in six sections. In the first, I note that silence is poorly theorized within contemporary democratic theory, largely because it is equated to deficits of democracy. The roots of this conception of silence lie in the tight connection traditionally drawn in democratic theory between voice and empowerment. Since democracy is, firstly, about empowering the voices of citizens, most democratic theorists treat voice as the primary measure for judging empowerment. But this normative assumption, which I term the *speech clause*, conflates what are two distinct measures of democracy: *empowerment* and *communication*. In the second section, I note that there is nothing inherently undemocratic (or democratic) about silence in itself. This is because silence is, essentially, a form of *conspicuous nonbehavior* that has a range of positive and negative political meanings. Thus, if we wish to think systematically about silence in the political domain, we require a framework that identifies what silence signifies or accomplishes in different contexts. In the third section, I begin to develop such a framework by looking closer at the causes and consequences of *disempowered silence* in democratic systems. In section four, I broaden this analysis by noting that silence may also be *enabled* as a choice in democratic systems through liberal rights and protections to remain silent. The right to remain silent can be politically empowering in at least two ways: as a means of providing actors with choices sufficient to resist domination within collectivities; and, as a way of preventing collective decisions from being undertaken without mutual agreement. A further benefit potentially follows: Because silence has a lower threshold for effective use than voice, those with fewer resources can use silence to induce responsiveness from representatives or other elites. Each of these potential benefits counts as a contribution to basic norms of democracy. In section five, I clarify how and

when we should expect silence to contribute to democratic norms by tracing the generic effects that follow from different choices for silence. I then theorize these effects as *communicative* features of silence, identifying four types of silence that constitute forms of political engagement: *affective silence*, *demonstrative silence*, *emulative silence*, and *facilitative silence*. In the final section, I illustrate how this conceptualization of silence – particularly, the distinctions between types of silence – pays off in institutional design. I use these distinctions to highlight three areas of democratic systems in which *communicative silences* can be, and should be, anticipated and supported institutionally. Theorizing the problems and power of silence in democracy, I conclude, provides a framework for evaluating neglected forms of political engagement, enhancing our ability to detect hidden agendas and interests, to imagine alternative methods of influence, to improve democratic responsiveness, and to strengthen bonds of authorization and accountability between citizens and democratic institutions.

### **The Speech Clause in Democratic Theory**

The main obstacle to developing the concept of silence in contemporary democratic theory is a normative consensus about silence among democratic theorists.<sup>1</sup> Democracy is, first and foremost, about empowering *voice*: a shorthand used very generally by democratic theorists to capture public expressions of choice that communicate values, interests, and preferences that translate into influence over collective political decision-making (see Green 2010, chap. 1; Habermas 1996, chap. 8; Przeworski 2010, chap. 5; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012, 10-13; Warren 2011, 685). Whereas voice indicates empowered communication in decision-making, the consensus is that silence is a private withdrawal that contrasts with voice. With a few notable exceptions (Allen 2010; Ferguson 2003; Jungkunz 2012; Pettit 2002), most theorists think of silence and voice as trading off in the political domain: treating silence as evidence of absences of voice, and linking these absences to the erosion of choice in politics. As a result, the concept of

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<sup>1</sup> What I refer to as “contemporary democratic theory” covers several normative theories of democracy – including minimalist, pluralist, participatory and deliberative theories. For my purposes, what unites these otherwise disparate bodies of work into a single body of thought is a shared commitment to the basic ideal of self-rule – the ideal, that is, that citizens should have capacities and opportunities sufficient to make and express choices in collective political decision-making.

silence is left as an undeveloped residual category in democratic theory, almost exclusively associated with deficits of democracy.

Two questionable assumptions underlie this construal of silence. The first is to suppose that public acts of choice are only communicable through voice, because it is only in exercising voice that actors transform private concerns and preferences into publicly actionable choices, both individually and collectively. The second is to assume that, because voice is the public articulation of choice in decision-making, *capacity for voice* is the metric by which democratic empowerment should be judged. I call this second proposition the *speech clause*.

The *speech clause* builds, correctly, on a normative intuition about the ideal conditions required for democratic self-rule: Citizens rule themselves in a democracy, the intuition goes, just because democracies empower those forms of self-expression that enable citizens' choices to enter into collective decision-making.<sup>2</sup> Quite right. But the clause pushes this intuition further and, by doing so, pushes many democratic theorists into a conflation. Since self-rule requires empowering self-expression, particularly voice, the clause suggests that citizens' capacity for self-rule is solely a function of their capacities and opportunities for voice. This is a mistake, and I argue that it obscures the effects of silence in politics by conflating *two distinct measures* along which silence registers in democracies: the *distribution of empowerments* that enable actors to make choices politically; and, the *mode of communication* through which such choices count democratically.

The *speech clause* explains why silence, when it is noticed in democratic theory, is usually noticed as an absence of voice – an absence indicative of weak or non-existent empowerments. For if citizens' capacity for voice sets the threshold for self-rule, then it follows that those who refrain from voice – who are silent – deny themselves, or are denied, equal say in directing the collective powers that shape their lives. This line of reasoning has a long tradition in

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<sup>2</sup> Even Schumpeter (1942), a theorist of the thinnest version of democracy we have, assumes citizens capable of making and expressing choices in periodic elections. As Held (2006) notes, “if one drops the notion of human beings as knowledgeable agents capable of *making political choices*, it is but a short step to thinking that all that ‘the people’ need as ‘governors’ are engineers ... a vision which is anti-liberal and anti-democratic” (2006, 152-154, italics mine).

Western democratic thought. Aristotle ([384-322 BCE] 1998) thought silence only befit those lacking a “deliberative part of the soul” (1260a10-20); Rousseau ([1781] 1997) tied voice to capacities to act collectively – “in order move a young heart, to repulse an unjust aggressor, nature dictates accents, cries, complaints” (253); J.S. Mill ([1859] 1977) argued that for someone to “take an active interest in politics” but “not wish for a voice in them, is an impossibility” (322); while, for Arendt ([1958] 1998), to be silent is to be “isolated” and “deprived of the capacity to act” (170). In sum, Dahl (1998) concludes: “Silent citizens may be perfect subjects for an authoritarian ruler; they would be a disaster for democracy” (97).

The consensus about silence in democratic theory is further reinforced by the methodological difficulties political scientists face in detecting any preferences or interests citizens might hold in silence. Since unarticulated preferences held in silence are “unobservable,” silence generates “exclusion bias” in the findings of polling and survey research on mass public opinion – with silent citizens “effectively removing themselves from measures of the collective will of the public” (Berinsky 2004, 8). The relative paucity of data on silent citizens has important implications for theory. In particular, when and where democratic theorists intervene to deduce causes for silence, the *speech clause* predisposes them to hedge on explanations of disempowerment, at the expense of identifying other possibilities.

### **The Concept of Silence**

The normative limitation of the *speech clause*, then, is that it narrows consideration of silence in democratic politics to the erosion of individual and collective choice. It does so through a contrast of silence with voice in measuring democratic empowerment. This contrast is not necessarily “wrong” – but it is over generalized, usually implicitly, with an ironic result that democratic theorists today know comparatively little about what silence might signify or accomplish in politics besides disempowerment. Specifically, most theorists do not inquire into the conditions under which silence, like voice, may itself be an empowering choice. Thus, if we wish to think systematically about the place and functions of silence in a democracy, we shall need to expand

the traditional conception of silence in democratic theory to accommodate a much broader consideration of the place and functions of silence.

Silence, I shall develop the concept, refers to moments in which an actor's *nonbehavior* stands out in light of prevailing expectations as to how they *ought* to behave in a relevant situation. The link between expectation and our perception of silence is important: for what we commonly call "silence" denotes not so much an empirical matter of fact – for example, the total absence of noise or sound – as it does a social artifact. Silence is a state of *inaction* or *inertness*, we attribute to others in cases in which their inactivity is *conspicuous* in relation to us. The paradigmatic experience of receiving the "silent treatment" is an illustration: a person, be they a family member, a friend, or a fellow citizen, abruptly turns unresponsive in our presence. We are primed to pick up on such unresponsiveness given our previous expectations of this relationship, and so search for the motives behind silence.

Punishment is a common motive for silence in everyday life. But it is not the only motive: silence may also be perceived when, for example, we go quiet to listen to someone speak, we tacitly approve of someone's decisions or actions, or when we remain idle out of apathy or disinterest. Here, I am specifically interested in silences with effects that spill over into democratic politics, whether as a consequence of expressions of choice, of disempowering conditions that undermine choice, or of simple inattention to choice.

In defining silence, I build on Dauenhauer's (1980) pioneering philosophical work on silence, which considers silence to be neither "muteness nor the mere absence of audible sound," but rather, "a conscious activity" we impute to others via surrounding "signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having recognizable meanings to express thoughts, feelings, state of affairs, etc" (4-5). Dauenhauer's work is particularly helpful for understanding silence as it highlights the importance of *perception* both in identifying what counts as silence for different actors under different circumstances, as well as in specifying the range of possible meanings that may appropriately be read into silence at any given moment.



Suppose, then, that an individual, a group, or an organization is conspicuously unresponsive to a question or topic that directly concerns them and, in doing so, is perceived to be silent. There are many plausible explanations. In the case of Congressman Mulvaney, the explanation was explicit: “I think ‘silent protest’ was the right description” (Rosen 2013). Similarly, a leader of the silent vigils in Turkey explained: “This is really silent resistance” (Mohamed 2013). In other cases, relationships of domination or neglect make explanations for silence obvious, such as silence in a bad marriage, in a poor job, or in a domineering ethnic or identity group. In still others, explanations for silence are contested, as is perennially the case in political science, for example, when it comes to the meaning of low levels of voter turnout, gaps in public opinion, or waning grassroots activism and advocacy in the developed democracies (e.g., Eliasoph 1998; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Norris 2011).

Examples such as these reveal two general features of the concept of silence. First, they help us to see that silence, whatever its motives, is something that is attributed *relationally*: emerging, as it does, *vis-à-vis* the perception of others. Silence may derive from a single actor’s nonbehavior, as in Mulvaney’s silent protest, but it is never perceptible alone. Silence exists between, and is oriented towards, others. Crucially, the relational quality of silence distinguishes the concept from closely related ideas of *isolation* and *solitude*, sometimes confused with silence. The difference is that these latter ideas move in more individualistic directions: connoting the retreat from public life. Silence retains a crucial aspect of attachment to the world outside oneself, in ways solitude, for example, does not.

Second, we can also see that attributions of silence involve a presumption of *presence*. When we perceive an actor as silent, we presume, even if one-sidedly, that they are in fact present in relation to us, and that this relationship has not simply broken off – as happens, for example, when individuals run from a quarrel, quit a political party, leave an unsatisfactory job, or emigrate from a state. Silence is attributable only to those who stay put. Mulvaney’s protest, for example, was perceived as *silence* precisely because he stood fixed as the clerk called his name.

Conceptually, the presumption of presence – in either a proximate or mediated sense – is what distinguishes silence from concepts like *exit*, the place and functions of which have been extensively documented in democratic theory and practice (see Dowding and John 2012; Hirschman 1970; Warren 2011).

With these two conceptual features of silence in mind, we can begin to similarly locate the place and functions of silence in democratic politics. Examples of silence in politics are identifiable both in *relational* terms, as nonbehavior occurring *between* actors, as well as in terms of *presence*, as nonbehavior within an *ongoing* relationship between actors. Attending to these two features in practices allows us to delimit silence as a distinct phenomenon. Yet, crucially, neither feature tells us anything about how silence can be used in politics, nor do they provide us with the grounds to make judgments about the variety of uses silence has. We still require conceptual tools, therefore, to theorize about the effects of different types of silence in a democracy, and to determine when, and how, silence itself can be a form of political engagement.

### **The Concept of Disempowered Silence**

An obvious starting point for developing the conceptual tools to theorize about silence is with the one type of silence that *is* well recognized and conceptualized in democratic theory and practice: *disempowered silence*. The concept of *disempowered silence*, as I suggested earlier, captures situations in which actors' nonbehavior is conspicuous in the political domain due to the failure of protections and supports for choice. Adapting Young's (2000) distinction between external and internal exclusion, I discuss the two most common explanations democratic theorists give for *disempowered silence*: what I call *external silencing*, which arises from unequal distributions of social, political, and economic rights that deny actors equal opportunities for voice; and, what I call *internal silencing*, which arises through a lack of choice-enabling resources like education, status, and wealth that deny certain actors equal influence, despite opportunities for voice. Here, I also note in passing several voice-based solutions which democratic theorists – particularly

deliberative and participatory democrats – propose in order to overcome *disempowered silences* in democratic systems.

*External silencing as barriers to voice.* The most widely recognized cause of *disempowered silence* in democracy occurs through *external silencing* (Bartels 2008; Gilbert 2002, chap. 2; Gilens 2012; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995, chaps. 7-8). External silencing is typically caused by structural inequalities in the form of material and distributive disparities between actors. They lead to silence by reducing access and opportunities for voice – stifling those with fewer resources within collectivities within which they lack capacities and opportunities to participate. When such silencing occurs, democratic norms are impaired in two ways. First, as Olson (2006) notes, actors are “rendered vulnerable by silence” and susceptible to *domination* owing to a “lack of exit and lack of voice” (53). Second, because democratic institutions favor those with stronger capacities for voice, norms of *inclusion* are also damaged. The consequence is that some “speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of inattentive government,” while others “roar” (Jacobs and Skocpol 2005, 1).

Democratic theorists have well developed responses to the effects of external silencing. Since structural inequalities obstruct voice, many theorists suggest measures that *amplify* what actors do say – by removing barriers to voice, developing capacities for voice, and increasing the number and kinds of venues that elicit voice. This goal is primarily accomplished via supplementary institutions that correct for the incapacitating effects of inequality or selection devices that correct for well known biases in representation (Fung 2007; Goodin 2008, 31-32). Examples of institutions that amplify voice range from modest devices that encourage more citizen feedback, such as targeted opinion polls and surveys, to formal venues that empower voice directly, like citizen juries, advisory councils, public review boards, and mini-publics (see Smith 2009). In the most egregious cases of silencing, mechanisms of affirmative action may also be necessary to amplify voices within society at large, through quotas, reserved seats, special veto powers, and so on (Guiner 1994; Phillips 1998; M. S. Williams, 2000).

*Internal silencing as barriers within voice.* A second cause of *disempowered silence* in democracy is subtler, arising from what I call *internal silencing*. Internal silencing occurs whenever actors find themselves censoring what they say and how – often unknowingly, and almost always to the disadvantage of some and benefit of others. Pressures to self-censor cause disempowering silence when actors identify and relate to one another with unequal influence – as husbands, wives, rich, poor, educated, uneducated, workers, bosses and so on (Sanders 1997; Bohman 1996, 113-118; Wartenberg 1991, chap. 7). These roles are never fixed, but they can fix expectations – devaluing the voices of certain people, even when they enjoy formally equal opportunities to participate. The worry is that these deeper relational disparities produce intractable deficits in democratic norms – specifically because they can operate *within* venues that protect and empower voice.

Democratic responses to the effects of internal silencing go beyond multiplying venues that elicit voice by *augmenting* what counts as voice. Instead of limiting voice to rational persuasion and the giving of reasons, augmenting voice's definition legitimizes narrative, rhetoric, and figurative or unconventional speaking styles as meaningful contributions to collective decision-making. According to Young (2000), the goal is to give actors new vocabularies to identify and share their experiences – ideally, in ways that “move them from a situation of total silencing” to “public expression” (72). Doing so, it is theorized, enables voice to serve as a more inclusive medium for ethical functions, such as recognition and reciprocity (Fraser 1990, 61, 67; Young 2000, chap. 2; cf. Spivak 1988). To this end, theorists focus on reforming institutional procedures – concentrating on questions of “how to fill silence,” by reconsidering roles for self-interest, emotion, pressure, and informal modes of representation to empower otherwise silenced views in decision-making processes (Mansbridge 2003, 175). Were democratic institutions to be more responsive to these factors, so the thinking goes, thresholds for influence would be substantially lowered.

### **Beyond the Voice/Silence Dichotomy**

The concept of *disempowered silence* has its greatest utility when it focuses our attention on relations of domination and exclusion that undermine democracy by undermining conditions of choice. In such cases, democratic theorists rightly characterize erosions of choice – economically, socially, and politically – as externally and internally silencing actors through lack of opportunity, capacity, confidence, information, or articulateness. This article is *neither an argument against voice-based solutions to disempowered silence, nor is it an unqualified argument for the virtues of silence*. Rather, I am arguing that the voice/silence dichotomy through which silences have traditionally been framed in democratic theory makes it difficult to conceptualize and judge the democratic potentials of silence.

One way forward, I shall suggest, is to reflect on a tension within the voice/silence dichotomy itself: while democratic theorists have primarily focused on empowerment *as voice*, the very possibility of exercising voice freely in democratic politics depends on the possibility of refraining from voice as one chooses. In other words, *the empowerment of voice presupposes the enablement of silence*. Indeed, the option of remaining silent is one condition that secures the authenticity of voice in liberal democracies: it implies that actors could, at any time, abstain from voice, but have chosen not to do so – helping certify that voice is neither coerced nor compelled.

The key point here is that when we see silence *as a choice* enabled as a structural complement to voice empowerment, we can also see that *disempowered silences* are not exhaustive of the effects of silence in democratic systems. Contemporary democratic theory notwithstanding, the right to remain silent has long been regarded in legal scholarship as an essential corollary of the basic sets of rights that protect against domination within liberal democratic states: rights including those of free speech, freedom of conscience, non-self-incrimination, and due process (Constable 2005). The right to silence can be strengthened to limit state power, as notably with the *Miranda* warning authorities in the United States must recite

before taking criminal suspects into custody.<sup>3</sup> The right to silence can also be combined with other rights and empowerments to expand choices. In Mulvaney's case, for example, the choice of silence was *enabled* by the rules of the House of Representatives; it was *empowering* insofar as it expanded Mulvaney's options for resisting Boehner's reappointment.

We can spell out the circumstances under which choices for silence are empowering – and thus potentially democratic – by relating such choices to a simple model of power. Most power relationships are relationships of unequal choice: A has power over B insofar as A can structure B's choices; changing the probability of B doing or thinking what B otherwise would not (Lukes 2005, 35-37; Pettit 2012, chap. 1). So in most power relationships, the number of viable choices is key: B is able to resist A's power to the extent B has options, X, Y, or Z, which fall outside the scope of A's interference. Thus, even in the limiting case of a slave relationship, A's power over B is contingent on B having no option but to do A's bidding. The slave who instead refuses to cooperate, even on the threat of death, has effectively broken a dominating power relationship – albeit at the cost of replacing this relationship with one of complete violence.

This simple model of power clarifies one possible motivation for choosing silence, available within any cooperative relationship: *resistance*. Cooperation implies mutual dependency, and mutual dependency implies that a choice made by one party has consequences for both. Thus, B's cooperation is valuable to A just insofar as A *depends* on B's participation for the outcome A desires. So B has an effective veto over A: should B suspend cooperation – choosing silence – then A's objectives may be blocked. This is one formulation of silence and power that *does not* rely on greater power for success: Here, silence is an empowerment just to the extent choosing silence expands B's options enough to resist A. Of course, should B's silence fail as resistance, A might just ignore B's silence altogether. But, especially in democracies,

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<sup>3</sup> After the 1966 *Miranda v. Arizona* United States Supreme Court decision, reciting the *Miranda* warning is a prerequisite to the admissibility at trial of any statement made by the accused while in custody. The warning notifies the accused that they have the right to remain silent, that any statement they do make may be used as evidence against them in the court of law, and that they have the right to the presence of an attorney. The warning is an extension of the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination.

where most political goals require a high degree of cooperation, more often than not B's silence is something A cannot ignore – it will be, at minimum, an obstacle to a collective outcome A wants.

Relating choices for silence to this model of power allows us to pinpoint the circumstances under which choosing silence is empowering. Silence empowers to the degree it expands B's choices, providing B options for resisting A. If B has the choice of suspending cooperation with A, then A cannot rely on B's lack of choices to secure B's compliance, moving a power relationship of unequal choice towards one of mutual assent. We can identify this contribution of silence in the case of Mick Mulvaney: silence was sufficient to test Republican support for Boehner – obstructing the House vote on Boehner's speakership – without risking open conflict in the Republican caucus, or even placing such opposition on the roll call, as other options might. We can also identify this contribution with one a right to remain silent accomplishes in liberal democracies generally: The right to silence, especially when coupled with positive protections, status, resources, and supports, reduces vulnerability to domination by preserving the possibility of suspending cooperation with authorities as one chooses.

Now consider how silence may empower actors in ways that advance democratic norms. The silent vigils in Turkey provide an example. The vigils began in Taksim Square, Istanbul, in June 2013 following the death of three protesters in a police crackdown on demonstrations against the Erdoğan government. One man, Erdem Gündüz, stood without moving or speaking, staring resolutely at a portrait of Kemal Atatürk, which hangs in the square. Thousands in cities across Turkey joined him over the next week. Gündüz saw silence as a means of continuing to dissent despite police threats: “The government doesn't want to understand, didn't try to understand why people are on the streets ... I hope people stop and think ‘what happened there?’” Asked for the government's response, Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc conceded: “This is not an act of violence. We cannot condemn it” (Mohamed 2013).

Considered as a strategy of resistance, the normative contribution of the silent vigils is to *nondomination*. To be free from domination is to have capacities and opportunities for self-rule

(Richardson 2002, 28-36). In the limiting case of complete political domination, the more powerful party arbitrarily dictates the decisions and actions of its subordinates. By contrast, silence breaks complete political domination when it empowers subordinates to ignore explicit directives, without provoking backlash or intervention. Silence, remember, is itself nothing more than *conspicuous nonbehavior*, and so lacks the immediately discernable content of a dissenting voice. But, as argued, the perception of silence is also a perception of *presence*: The unresponsive public presence of protestors standing silently in Taksim Square in this case. This silence was sufficient to make the unvoiced grievances of protestors visible and apparent to those watching. At the same time, *the silence* of the vigils in Taksim Square was ambiguous enough to authorities to not constitute direct opposition, thus avoiding further police crackdowns.

These considerations suggest another key feature of silence relevant to democratic norms: the choice of silence has a much *lower threshold for effective inclusion* in collectivities than voice. Part of the reason, mentioned earlier, has to do with *resources*: since exercising voice is often highly resource intensive, options for voice overwhelmingly favor individuals and groups with greater resources, including education, status, mobility, and wealth. By contrast, *silence requires no additional resources* and, while silences may sometimes be ignored or result in neglect, those that *register as resistance* to collectivities do not (e.g., silently ignoring directives, abstaining from verbal agreements, remaining unresponsive in public spaces).

Social psychologists suggest that a second reason silence can be chosen at lower cost is *risk*: Silence is conspicuous enough to be noticeable, but indirect enough for motives to be ambiguous and deniable (K. D. Williams 2001, 2007). Simply put, silence lessens chances of retaliation. Yet silence, well timed, may still signal discontent to its recipients. Thus, when the choice for silence is enabled and protected as a right, it may be used by those with fewer resources to obstruct collective decisions and actions at minimal cost and lower risk of retaliation. To the extent resistance imposes costs on collectivities (e.g., a family, a political party, a corporation, or government authorities), decision-makers have incentives to inquire into the



motives of those who are silent, and to respond appropriately. Decision-makers are also more likely to seek out and respond to the concerns of silent actors *before* silence is posed as an obstacle – ensuring that what silences do exist are those verified as approval, consent, or satisfaction, instead of inattention or latent discontent.

The lower costs and potential benefits of silence perhaps explain why silence has historically been deployed as a tactic for pushing marginalized agendas from the peripheries of society (see Scott 1990). In the history of the United States, silence featured prominently in the National Women’s Party’s fight for women’s suffrage, which was spearheaded by a dedicated group of “Silent Sentinels” who sought to symbolize women’s “voicelessness” by standing silently outside the White House throughout 1917 (Stillion Southard 2008, 402-407). Similarly, W.E.B. Du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People famously organized a “Silent Parade” of 8,000 in New York to demand President Woodrow Wilson fulfill a campaign promise to legislate federal anti-lynching laws (Lorini 1999, 240-247).

In sum, properly framed, we can think of silence as potentially underwriting democracy through several empowering effects. Thinking of the right to remain silent in this framework helps us to see how silence might provide a hedge against domination and exclusion, through the preservation of choice. The enablement and protection of this right in liberal democracies – a structural complement to voice – prevents organizations and institutions from exercising domination over individuals and groups. Silence is “democratic” when it empowers these actors within the collectivities that shape their lives, and when choosing silence forces collectivities to respond to those whose lives they shape. The choice of silence has *strategic value* when it leaves room for multiple interpretations, allowing actors to resist imposed directives or roles while providing grounds for plausible deniability. In situations of unequal power where voice is difficult or dangerous, the choice of silence contributes to *nondomination* when it obstructs dominant parties from undertaking collective decisions and actions without mutual agreement. Finally, because the choice of silence is typically available regardless of resources, it may also

contribute to *inclusion* by providing those with fewer resources a modicum of influence in collective decision-making.

Of course, normative benefits of silence – empowering effects of choosing silence – should neither be assumed, nor inferred from the formal right to silence alone, which by itself just as often masks relations of domination and exclusion as protects against them (Langton 2007). In order to judge whether silence is beneficial without *just* relying on the fact that silence is enabled as a formal right, we require a final set of distinctions to conceptualize the generic effects of different choices for silence.<sup>4</sup> I complete this work in the next section of the article. Here, I simply note that silence can be an empowering form of political engagement in a democracy, either because of the relationship in question, or because options for voice do not reach all affected actors equally.

### **Toward a Theory of Communicative Silence**

I have given the name *communicative silence* to a conception of silence that is not only distinct from, but has effects that go beyond, *disempowered silence*. *Communicative silences* are the nonlinguistic residuals of choice seen as revealing an actor's internal attitudes, judgments, or preferences by a wider audience. I use "expression" loosely here, as strictly speaking silence is not an expression at all – it is, recall, a kind of *conspicuous nonbehavior*. Nevertheless, silence is communicative just because the perception of silence, specifically the perception of silence *as chosen*, has communicative implications. Or, rephrasing slightly, silence is nonbehavior; but silence *becomes* communication when an audience *infers* meaning from such nonbehavior, taking it to be an *active expression of choice*.

From a theoretical perspective, important to determining if an actor's silence is genuine communication is *intentionality*. Discerning intention poses obvious difficulties (see Heath 2008, chap. 4). But, in theory, we can assume that when an actor freely chooses silence they are basing

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<sup>4</sup> Even the right to remain silent has different effects, depending on legal system. For example, in the United Kingdom, juries are permitted to draw inferences about guilt when the accused exercises their right to silence. In the United States, they are explicitly told not to do so (see Seidmann 2005).

this choice on their own goals and expectations. An actor is what I call *actively* silent – and thus communicates – if their choice for silence is intentional in the sense of having goal-direction. Actively silent actors are not only aware that they are perceived as silent, but purposefully connect this awareness to achieving a desired end. At the margins, active silences might also be motivated by half-formed goals, such as feelings of anxiety or unease.

By comparison, an actor is what I call *inattentively* silent when their silence is wholly unreflective – the result of an absence of intentions or goals. The phenomenon of inattentive silence will be familiar to political scientists studying mass opinion in developed democracies, with surveys routinely revealing “gaps” in public awareness – either because respondents lack “true attitudes” (e.g., Zaller 1992), are a part of “spirals of silence” that cue off the status-quo (e.g., Noelle-Neumann 1993), are unwilling to pay the cognitive costs of forming an opinion (e.g., Lupia and McCubbins 1998), or are not exposed to politics enough to be aware of their political choices (e.g., Lau and Redlawsk 2006). Silence is genuine communication only when it is active; genuinely *communicative silence* manifests intentionality.

Equally important to determining when silence is genuine communication is distinguishing *silence-based* from *voice-based* communication. While communication takes multiple forms in democratic systems, recall that democratic theorists traditionally identify voice with public expressions of choice that are either linguistic in content or immediately translate into the medium of language. As mentioned, the reason theorists focus on empowering voice communication is that it is capable of figuring into collective decision-making *directly*, through arguments, campaigns, deliberations, petitions, and votes, among other things.

By contrast, I am using *communicative silence* to identify nonlinguistic communications that are inferred as a consequence of perceived nonbehavior. *Communicative silences* figure into collective decision-making *indirectly*, through what is read into silence, appropriately or inappropriately, within collectivities or other kinds of social or political relationships. While features of voice may supplement silence – as when silent protesters clarify their silence with

banners or signs – silence *in itself* is communication, even when not supplemented. As communication, silence registers in abstentions, obstructions, passive memberships within collectivities, and collective decisions approved tacitly.

The indirect manner in which silence communicates perhaps explains why silence is so easily dismissed as the (empty) absence of voice. It is true that, unlike voice, which is specific and direct, silence does not provide a vocabulary for *positive* political engagement – it cannot be used to reference ideas, to take positions, to debate, to deliberate, or to critically examine reasons for action. But these limitations of silence should not lead us to overlook its (potentially empowering) communicative implications. Philosophers of language often tell us that *speaking is acting*: We use speech to establish relationships, to set mutual expectations, and to hold one another to account for what we say and do (Brandom 1994, chap. 3). The opposite is also true: By *not acting*, we may also be *expressing* something. What is “expressed” through such silence, however, lacks the meaning and significance of an “ostensive stimuli” unless propositional content is supplied through *inference* (see Wilson and Sperber 2004). For this reason, those subject to silence – family members, coworkers, politicians and parties, state authorities – will perceive silence as communication only if they understand the context in which silence was chosen, including relevant beliefs, expectations, cues, rules, and norms.

When democratic theorists want to answer the question of how beneficial a choice for silence is for democratic norms, they need a typology that clarifies the probable effects of choosing silence on those norms in ways that make it easier to judge whether real world uses of silence support or undermine them. As argued, the causal force of *communicative silence* derives from the fact that it entitles inferences about the internal motivations of silent actors. Thus, if we wish to know the likely effect of a given choice for silence, we should pay attention to the inferences likely to be drawn from silence under the relevant circumstances. If we do, we are apt to find that the generic effects of choosing silence correspond to one of *four ideal-types*, as follows:

- *Affective silence* is about the communicative use of silence to induce others to make decisions or actions in line with one's own preferences, typically by choosing silence as a punitive sanction until others alter their behavior.
- *Demonstrative silence* is about the communicative use of silence to lead others to form specific beliefs or expectations about oneself, usually as the result of a decision to remain silent in response to direct cues, questions, or promptings.
- *Emulative silence* is about the communicative use of silence in compliance with formal institutions and organizations whose rules entitle some to speak instead of others in particular settings, or none at all.
- *Facilitative silence* is about the communicative use of silence in conformity with informal conventions that structure social and political interaction, through norms of civility, listening, tact, and cooperative conduct.

Table 1 summarizes the general characteristics of silence as communication [Table 1 about here]. Working across the table from left to right, we can first note the *direction* of the inferences drawn to or from a given choice for silence, identifying two *forms of inference*: *disclosive* and *regulative* (Table 1, second column). When an inference is drawn *from* an actor's choice for silence, it is *disclosive* (e.g., Mulvaney's choice for silence during roll call *disclosed* his opposition to Boehner). By contrast, regulative forms of inference occur in reverse direction: Here, situational rules or norms imply to an actor that silence is the appropriate choice to make under the circumstances (e.g., it is implied that one *ought* to be silent when someone else is speaking – *regulating* the actor's choice). Second, we can also note the *impact* of inferences to or from a choice for silence, identifying *three functions of inference* (Table 1, third column): Inferences can function as *imperatives* taken as directing action (e.g., giving someone the silent treatment), as *declaratives* taken as conveying reaction (e.g., abstaining from a vote), or as *configuratives* taken as arranging interaction (e.g., taking turns speaking).

Combining categories of form and function, we arrive at the four ideal-types of *communicative silence* listed above (Table 1, first column). This typology is not necessarily exhaustive. It does, however, begin to systematically identify the effects we should expect from, and associate with, specific types of silence. In practice, it may turn out that a given choice for silence reflects a mixture of several types. Isolating each type of silence and analyzing it separately, however, allows us to locate the places in which we should expect specific types of silence to yield specific political outcomes.

Each type of *communicative silence* should also be judged by its likely contribution to *nondomination* and *inclusion*. As we have seen, such contributions are highly circumstantial. Consider *affective silence*, in which actors choose silence to sanction behavior: the emotional and psychological costs the “silent treatment” can inflict on friends, family members, and others, is reason for caution in extolling its democratic benefits. On the other hand, when dominated or oppressed groups, like the protesters in Taksim Square, turn to *affective silences* to make their presence felt, our normative calculus changes. With *demonstrative silences*, in contrast, actors affect political outcomes not by sanction, but by revealing information that adds to decision-making. This best fits the silence of Mick Mulvaney: his silence revealed an internal preference for opposing Boehner, encouraging fellow Republicans to do the same, without using silence to sanction them.

From the perspective of democratic norms, *emulative silences* appear to have the most dubious benefits – arising, as they often do, from compliant choices for silence within institutions and organizations. Corporate scandals such as those involving Enron, WorldCom or, more recently, AIG, Bear Stearns, and Lehman Brothers, become possible when actors choose to remain silent, omitting bad news and information. Yet, even here, we should not rush to judgment. The national “moment of silence” led by United States President Obama in the wake of the 2011 shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and, again, after the 2012 shootings in Newtown, Connecticut are cases in point: In both cases, *emulating silence* helped place citizens in

more determinate relations with one another, fostering a sense of collective solidarity in condemning gun violence.

Finally, *facilitative silences*, which are grounded in conformist conventions about how interactions should unfold, can also be normatively beneficial for democracy. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada ('TRC'), tasked in 2008 with collecting testimony from Aboriginal victims of Canada's residential school system, provides an example (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2013). As a fact-finding body, the TRC encourages Canadians to silently bear witness to the stories of survivors, former teachers, and staff – facilitating "deep listening" in Canadian society about the profound pain caused by the forced assimilation of Canada's Aboriginal populations (Regan, 2010).

### **Communicative Silence and Democratic Institutional Design**

Given the numerous possibilities of silence as communication, how might *communicative silences* be made to feature more prominently in democratic theory, particularly in theories focused on designing democratic institutions to be more responsive to otherwise marginalized and excluded voices? How might the democratic potentials of silence be harnessed alongside voice empowerments to better practices of democracy?

Once we recognize that silence is measureable in terms of empowerment *and* communication, we can explore ways in which *communicative silences* might be designed into the political systems of strong, liberal democracies. We now have the tools: in addition to distinguishing concepts of *disempowered* and *communicative silence*, I clarified the generic effects we should expect from different types of silence as communication. In the cases of Mick Mulvaney and Turkish protesters in Taksim Square, I also suggested that choices for silence could expand options for influencing collective decision-making – typically, by *obstructing* collective decisions and actions, such that decision makers must respond to silence. For *communicative silences* to generate such powers of influence, I shall argue, the consequences of actively choosing silence must be linked to institutional outcomes, either: (a) by strengthening

rights to remain silent within institutions; or, (b) by restructuring decision-making within institutions to sharpen the differential effects of choosing silence. From a normative perspective, democratic institutions that meet both (a) and (b), enabling and protecting silence as a choice and linking it to institutional outcomes, enhance norms of *nondomination* and *inclusion* in decision-making processes.

Below, I highlight three areas in democratic systems where *communicative silences* might serve as a basic element of institutional design. None of the proposals I consider are entirely new. But in considering these proposals through the lens of silence, we find new applications for them, suggestive of ways in which democratic institutions might be designed to better anticipate and support communicative choices for silence in politics.

*Abstention and elections.* First, silence is a central concern in the design of competitive electoral systems. At least since Downs (1957), studies consistently report a negative correlation between voter turnout rates – particularly rates of abstention – and electoral competitiveness (Franklin 2004). When electoral competition is weak, abstention rates tend to rise considerably (Adams, Dow, and Merrill 2006; Callander and Wilson 2007; Ugglá 2008). The problem, however, is that the sort of silence abstention generates fails to incentivize responsiveness: without exercising the sort of “voice” counted in votes, the effectiveness of elections in holding representatives accountable declines. This is one reason why uncompetitive elections such as plebiscites, or essentially single-party districts, are thought “undemocratic”: left with no alternatives but abstention, voters lack powers to discipline their representative relationships.

Ideally, electoral systems should provide a range of choices across candidates and parties sufficient to forestall abstention. But short of this ideal, once we understand the logic of silence in uncompetitive elections, we can look to design mechanisms into electoral systems that link abstentions to electoral outcomes in such a way that representatives have incentives to respond to abstainers. One established, though imperfect, mechanism for doing so is to clarify the conditions



under which voters abstain via compulsory voting rules – making attendance at the polls mandatory, albeit without requiring voters to mark or even accept their ballot (Lijphart 1997).

This proposal is perhaps surprising, because in countries like Australia, Brazil, and Belgium, compulsory voting is usually seen as a means of prohibiting silence in elections (see Brennan and Hill 2014). But what is “prohibited” under compulsory voting is *not* silence as such – rather, it is the sort of *disempowered silence* previously identified as occurring when actors become discouraged with their limited options. What is compelled is *presence* at the polls to make a choice, registered by voters marking (voice) or refusing (silence) their ballot. What is clarified when voters abstain in this process is that their silence is an *active* expression of choice. The communicative impact of this silence is tied to electoral outcomes insofar as it registers as a choice – as an “opt out,” a “blank ballot,” and so on. When voting is compulsory, winning candidates or parties cannot overlook silence or misread it as indifference. Instead, silence becomes an informational basis for directing representatives to seek out abstainers, and to ask for their input in order to make electoral gains. In this way, silence generates not just information, but also positive incentives for responsiveness. For democratic theorists, the question here is whether voters’ interest in not being compelled to vote is outweighed by a broader interest in a democratic system that is more responsive to voters’ choices – particularly to those whose choice for silence would otherwise go uncounted in elections.

*Consent and representation.* Second, silence also raises concerns about the adequacy of elections as devices for authorizing representation. Standard accounts of representation conceive the authorization of representatives to speak for or act for a constituency in electoral terms, such that questions of the legitimacy of representation are, ultimately, framed as questions about constituents’ capacity to authorize or deauthorize representation through elections (Pitkin 1967, 137-140; Rehfeld 2006, 3; Urbinati and Warren 2008). As argued above, however, because voting (unless compulsory) is self-selecting, electoral authorization lacks nuance and sensitivity to silence. Should constituents fail to show up at the polls out of apathy, inattention, or inaction,

they are often assumed to have *tacitly* consented to representation insofar as they had the opportunity to choose otherwise.

Considered from the perspective of institutional design, a key challenge is to find ways of connecting representatives to silent constituencies beyond the electoral domain, so that it is clear what (if anything) silence authorizes (see Mansbridge 2009, 391). The problem is that silence, by itself, is information-poor: because the communicative content of silence is not symmetrical with positive choices to join a party, to voice feedback, or to vote, representatives must shoulder the burden of interpreting silence themselves. On average, however, silent constituents are also less likely participate in those forms of organization that provide direct points of contact with representatives, including local media, opinion polls, town halls, and business and professional networks (Fenno 1978, 235-240; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012, chap. 11; Strolovitch 2007). As a result, electoral representation often skews towards the interests of more vocal, well-organized citizens and groups.

These kinds of biases are difficult to engineer out of electoral institutions. One workaround solution is to look for criteria to apply to silence to spot deficits of representation. Here, our typology of silence proves invaluable. Whatever constituents' motivations for silence, identifying the type of silence, its generic effects, and the inferences representatives draw, provides a method for judging the degree of authorization silence communicates. When an elected representative takes questions after delivering a speech, for example, the silence of their constituents may be *demonstrative* of interests well served. Constituents' silence may also be a *facilitative* recognition of their representative as deserving a fair hearing. Such silences generate stronger or weaker authorization. Conversely, if constituents remain unresponsive to their representative's overtures, during campaigns, constituency events, or canvassing, silence is arguably an *affective* indication of deauthorization. It may indicate contestation, latent grievances, or underrepresented interests. For democratic theorists, clarifying authorization in relation to types of silence helps guard against mistaken assumptions of tacit consent. Institutionally, it also

points to places in which informal representatives – advocacy organizations, civil society groups, and other grass roots actors – might legitimately stand in for the interests of silent constituents, providing an alternative mechanism for alerting elected representatives to deficits of representation (see Montanaro 2012).

*Consensus and deliberation.* A final area where silence raises problems of institutional design is consensus-based deliberation. Within the developed democracies, the task of crafting and evaluating policy is increasingly shifting into deliberative bodies with specialized capacities and expertise, structured for reaching consensus in difficult policy domains (see Urfalino 2012). Part of the reason for this shift is the technical and political complexity of modern government: The size and scale of governance demands on issues like healthcare, climate change, or trade, means that elected branches of government can at best function in ways that are broadly directive, leaving substantive policymaking to expert agencies, committees, commissions, and panels (Rosanvallon 2011, 134-136; Richardson 2003, chap. 16; Warren 2009).

Consensus is vital to the public credibility of expert deliberative bodies, which are often insulated from formally democratic channels of public voice and oversight. Consensus signals unanimous agreement to citizens and legislators – making a credible case that expert opinion is undivided after a careful weighing of arguments (Christiano 2012). But consensus also carries dangers for deliberation, specifically because it trades on silence. Insofar as consensus requires the absence of vocal dissent, deliberators may face pressure to silently acquiesce to a group position. In this way, the integrity of deliberative outcomes becomes suspect: potentially producing false consensus on policy issues where there is (or exists) continuing disagreement.

The danger of false consensus should prompt us to search for mechanisms that parse silence in deliberation along the same lines we have distinguished silence conceptually: separating *disempowered silences* that arise from self-censorship, from *communicative silence* that reflect opposition or assent. One proposal here is to introduce iterative voting into deliberation, not as a decision device, but as a means of registering disagreement as deliberation

unfolds (Moore and O’Doherty 2014). As discussed previously, voting has the virtue of clarifying the conditions under which silence is actively chosen. Within deliberation, one cannot always tell by looking at silence what motivations lay behind it. Silence might, for example, be *demonstrative* of genuine consensus. But silence might also be motivated by *emulative* conformity with what deliberators perceive to be the majority viewpoint. Or silence might stem from *facilitative* motivations to pause, to listen, and to bracket views that irreducibly conflict from those held in common. Designing iterative voting into deliberative processes clarifies the differential effects of these silences on the overall status of deliberation – on whether genuine consensus is close. When a consensus proposal is put to a vote, deliberators have the opportunity to vote their opposition, or they can silently abstain from voting in a way recognizably *demonstrative* of dissent. In either case, voting provides a mechanism for minority views to be expressed and recorded, preventing the appearance of false consensus. For democratic theorists, the trade off to consider here is whether the imperative of reaching consensus in difficult policy domains overrides the need to preserve the diversity of dissenting opinions that might be held in silence.

### **Conclusion**

Under the contemporary circumstances of democratic politics, individual and collective actors are increasingly relying on silence to organize and influence collective decision-making. They do so in response to normative deficits produced by democratic institutions, including in electoral systems, in democratic representation, and in deliberation. They also do so strategically: using silence to sidestep controversy, to communicate opposition, and to tacitly influence political outcomes. We therefore require a framework that clarifies what it is actors are doing when they use silence in a democracy, and that distinguishes types of silence as more or less beneficial for democracy. Democratic theory has yet to develop such a framework – specifically, because democratic theorists traditionally think of silence and voice as trading off in the political domain, linking silence to various kinds of disempowerment.

The traditional understanding of silence as disempowerment remains important insofar as it draws attention to areas of collective decision and action where certain voices have been marginalized and excluded. Yet disempowerment ought not to exhaust the meaning of silence in democratic theory and practice. Properly framed, silence can be seen as both an expression of choice in politics, as well as evidence of disempowerments that erode choice. When silence is symptomatic of the erosion of choice within collectivities, or functions to deny actors capacities and opportunities to make choices, silence clearly undermines democracy. But when choosing silence empowers actors to influence collective decision-making, otherwise without options for influencing those decisions, then silence may support democracy. The problem, which I have aimed at formulating here, is to conceptualize the generic effects of different choices for silence, so that deeper normative judgments can then be made about the democratic potentials of these choices. To the extent these potentials are identified and translated into institutional design, silence may provide an alternative channel for registering choice in collective-decision-making, improving responsiveness, competitiveness, and inclusion in democratic systems by strengthening bonds of authorization and accountability between citizens and democratic institutions.

Table I. Types of Communicative Silence

Type of Silence	Form of Inference	Function of Inference	Examples
<b>Affective</b>	Disclosive	Imperative	The "silent treatment"; silent abstentions, protests, vigils; ostracism, shaming.
<b>Demonstrative</b>	Disclosive	Declarative	Silence as tacit consent or approval; trust; acquiescence; omission; silent abstentions, protests, vigils.
<b>Emulative</b>	Regulative	Imperative	Collective moments of silence; rules mandating silence; legal "gag orders"; nondisclosure agreements.
<b>Facilitative</b>	Regulative	Configurative	Conversational turn taking; silence for listening; deference; silence out of tact or politeness.

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