10. týden - Spirála mlčení

Povinná četba:
- Kunczik, M.: Základy masové komunikace. Karolinum. 1995. str.204-207.
- Noelle-Neumann, E.: The Spiral of Silence. Chicago University Press. 1984, pp. 1-57.

Klíčové pojmy: *konsonantnost mediálních obsahů, train test, band wagon effect.*

GRAFICKÉ PŘÍLOHY:

Schéma č. 1 Role médií při spouštění spirály názorové marginalizace

dech a moci. Násilí v médiích, jakožto symbolické násilí, vypěstovalo v lidech vědomí dávající přednost hierarchickým hodnotám a vztahům založeným na síle. Předváděné konflikty, ve kterých stát vždycky vyhraje, názorně ukazují nebezpečí pro ty, kteří se od norem odchýlí.

KUNCZIK

7.7. Spirála mlčení

Německá badatelka v oboru masové komunikace Elisabeth Noelle Neumannová ve své teorii „spirály mlčení" rovněž předpokládá, že média mohou strukturovat představu reality. Domnívá se, že hypotézy, pokládající masová média za téměř neúčinná, s nimiž se argumentovalo až do konce šedesátých let, byly chybné. Tvrdí, že po desetiletí byli lidé mylně informováni o síle, kterou masová média mohou ovlivňovat lidi a která s prudkým rozšiřováním televize podstatně vzrostla. Hypotéza o spirále mlčení je „návratem ke konceptu silných a mocných masových médií".

Tato hypotéza vychází ze základního předpokladu, že veřejné mínění vyvolává podvědomou snahu lidí žijících ve skupinách o dosažení společně zastávaných úsudků a konsensu. Společnost odměňuje přizpůsobení se a trestá prohřešky proti společně sdílenému mínění. Ve všech lidských společnostech mohou být integrační tlaky založeny na strachu jednotlivce z opovržení, zesměšnění a izolace. Strach z izolace je pokládán za antropologickou konstantu, stálou veličinu. Tlak k přizpůsobení, ke sdílení společných názorů, vytváří sociální integraci. Podle Noelle-Neumannové (1986, 305) „žádná společnost nemůže existovat bez této společenské podstaty, beze strachu z izolace".

Veřejné mínění definovala autorka takto (1983, 141): „Názory s hodnotovým nábojem, zvláště pak názory s morálním nábojem, a způsoby chování nabyly podoby stálé společenské dohody (např. zvyky a dogmata), k níž se jedinec musí veřejně hlásit, nechce-li se dostat do izolace, nebo které může veřejně projevovat, aniž by se izoloval, v období, kdy jsou věci ve stavu přeměn." Ta druhá zmínka se týká kontroverzních názorů. Spirála mlčení pak znamená (1983, 142): „Lidé nechtějí být izolováni, neustále pozorují, co se kolem nich děje, a jsou schopni vnímat i ty nejmenší vzestupy a poklesy v obsahu názorů. Ten, kdo vidí, že jeho názor získává podporu, se cítí být silnějším, hovoří otevřeně a nemá žádné zábrany. Každý, kdo vidí, že jeho názor ztrácí podporu, umlká. Ti, kteří hovoří hlasitě a jsou veřejně viditelní, se zdají být silnějšími, než skutečně jsou, a ti ostatní se pak zdají slabšími, než tomu ve skutečnosti je. Vzrůstá zde optická a akustická iluze o reálné převaze a síle, což vede jedny k tomu, že mluví stále hlasitěji, a ty druhé pak k tomu, že jsou stále mlčenlivější, až nakonec jeden z názorů zcela zanikne. Koncept spirály mlčení obsahuje pohyb, který když se rozvine, se již nedá zastavit." Předpokládá se tudíž, že názor, který se v tomto procesu začne prosazovat, se zdá být silnějším, než skutečně je, což zatlačuje ostatní názory hlouběji do nitra lidí, kteří je zastávají. Mlčení zkresluje představu o velikosti podpory kontroverzním tématům.

Myšlenka, na níž je spirála mlčení založena, naznačuje příbuznost s názory dalších autorů. Například „band-wagon efekt" popisuje jev, kdy poptávka po určitém zboží stoupá proto, že ostatní lidé tento produkt také kupují. („Band-wagon" v původním významu znamená „vůz s kapelou" používaný při propagaci a volebních shromážděních; v přenesném významu se používá jako označení pro módní tendenci, pro úspěšné hnutí, k němuž se přidávají lidé, kteří chtějí jít s vítězným proudem. pozn. překl.) Tato poptávka je vyjádřením přání lidí získávat výrobek, „aby drželi krok s Jonesovými odvedle", což je třeba chápat jako přání lidí činit totéž, co skupina, k níž chtějí náležet, pokládá za módní, stylové nebo za udržování „kroku s dobou" (viz Leibenstein 1950 1950). (Existuje však také „snobský efekt", pokles poptávky po výrobku, protože ho mají ostatní. Ten vyjadřuje usilování o výlučnost, snahu být odlišný a nemít nic společného s masou.) Pojem „band-wagon" se užíval rovněž ve spojení s volebními studiemi v USA. Byly zde obavy, že by informace o výsledcích presidentských voleb v časnějších časových pásmech (např. New York) přenášené televizí a spojené s počítačovými projekcemi mohly ovlivnit volební chování voličů v pozdějších časových pásmech (např. Kalifornii), kteří dosud své hlasy neodevzdali. Myslelo se, že taková komunikace může voliče ovlivnit buď tak, že budou hlasovat pro zjevného vítěze (band-wagon effect), nebo že podpoří zaostávajícího kandidáta (underdog effect) (Weiss 1969, 167).

Zde je třeba také připomenout názor o mlčící většině, podle něhož většina lidí ve svém soukromí sdílí jeden názor, ovšem veřejnou diskusi ovládá hlučná menšina. Pojem „pluralistická ignorance" se používá k popsání situace, v níž se mnozí lidé vyhýbají výměně soukromých názorů s jinými lidmi, a v důsledku toho získávají pocit, že jsou v menšině.

Noelle-Neumannová (1980, 64) napsala: „Společenská povaha lidstva

způsobuje, že se lidé obávají sociální segregace a že chtějí být ostatními lidmi uznáváni a milováni." Strach z izolace nutí jednotlivce, aby neustále pozoroval a zkoumal, jaký postoj k dané otázce zaujímá většina a menšina. Člověk je schopen pozorovat toto rozdělení názorů s pomocí jakéhosi quasi-statistického orgánu, tj, jedinec má schopnost vnímat změny v souboru veřejného mínění, aniž by byl schopen odhadnout přesný počet lidí, kteří se k nějakému názoru přiklánějí. Vyjádřený názor může tudíž vypadat různě v různých situačních souvislostech, záleží na tom, kde tento quasi-statistický orgán tuší většinu; „Pro jednotlivce je jeho vlastní názor méně důležitý než nebýt izolován!"

Jednotlivci svůj odhad veřejného mínění vytvářejí ze dvou zdrojů:

1. z osobního pozorování lidí kolem sebe a jejich signálů souhlasu a nesouhlasu,
2. z masových médií, kde pozorují signály, jimiž se jednotlivá média navzájem potvrzují.

Noelle-Neumannová (1979) zpracovala různé studie a statistické přehledy, které ukazují, jak se veřejné mínění v Německu přibližovalo a vzdalovalo mínění masových médií. Byly zkoumány výstupy médií a názory žurnalistů na řadu otázek, např. na politiku SRN k Východní Evropě („Ostpolitik"), na volby do Bundestagu v roce 1976 a na změny hodnotového systému. Autorka zjistila, že veřejné mínění se může změnit ve směru názorů vyjádřených předtím v médiích. Federální volby v roce 1972 byly objasňovány v pojmech spirály mlčení, protože stoupenci vlády byli mnohem víc slyšet než jejich odpůrci a – podle Noelle-Neumannové (1980a) – názorové klima produkované televizí rovněž vytvářelo silnou podporu pro tehdejší vládu. Ti, kteří se obávali izolace, volili spíše vládu než opozici. Naproti tomu při volbách v roce 1976 Noelle-Neumannová (1980a) diagnostikovala dvojí názorové klima. Zjistila, že celková politická situace byla vyrovnaná, ovšem mezi televizními žurnalisty převažoval názor, že naděje sociálně demokratické vlády na znovuzvolení jsou větší než šance konzervativní opozice dostat se do vlády (na základě statistických výzkumů veřejnosti a novinářů). Rovněž diváci, kteří sledovali hodně televizních pořadů, hodnotili vládní vyhlídky výše než lidé, kteří se na televizi dívali méně. Názorové klima rozšiřované médii se výrazně lišilo od reálného názorového klimatu. Noelle-Neumannová vyslovila podezření, že to mohlo ovlivnit výsledek voleb.

Noelle-Neumannová (1979, 165) tvrdila: „Čím obtížněji dělá médium nebo systém médií selektivní výběr, tím větší bude účinek v obou směrech; potvrzující, jestliže převážně podporuje již existující postoje, a měnící, jestliže je s existujícími postoji převážně v rozporu." Tyto dva faktory účinků – konsonanci (soulad – souhlas s obsahem) a kumulaci – pokládá za nejvíce charakteristické pro masovou komunikaci. Umožňují médiím nejen posilovat již existující názory, ale také působit změny tím, že vytvářejí názorové klima. Masová média mohou vykonávat tlak na okolí. Ve značném rozsahu jsou to právě média, která vytvářejí „veřejné mínění". Podle Noelle-Neumannové existují myšlenky, události a osobnosti ve veřejném povědomí prakticky „jedině tehdy, když jim masová média poskytnou dostatečnou publicitu, a jedině v podobách, které jim média přisoudí".

Noelle-Neumannová se nedomnívá, že by žurnalisté manipulovali vědomě. Naopak tvrdí, že žurnalisté podávají zprávy jenom o tom, co vidí, na věci se však dívají z velice specifického úhlu pohledu. Podává zprávu o levicové politické soudržnosti mezi západoněmeckými žurnalisty. Naznačuje, že zjevný konsensus při výběru zpráv vede ke konsonanci, souladu celkového informování médií. Vzniká tak mediální kultura, která může existovat nezávisle na reálné kultuře. Dvojí názorové klima vzniká tehdy, když se názory převažující mezi novináři ostře liší od názorů veřejnosti.

Na základě těchto skutečností Noelle-Neumannová i další autoři žádají od žurnalistů, aby reprezentovali celkové politické spektrum. Jedině tak může široká veřejnost poznávat prostřednictvím médií „celkovou realitu" (1986, 321). Autorka uvádí: „Pokud v současných výzkumech veřejného mínění nalézáme lidi s chybnými výchozími předpoklady (pluralistickou ignorancí), lze je téměř vždy vystopovat ve směru převažujícího tónu médií, k tomu, jak média na věci pohlížejí."

Teorie spirály mlčení tedy připisuje médiím a následně pak žurnalistům rozhodující vliv na politické procesy. Noelle-Neumannová (1980, 204) však poukazuje i na slabá místa této teorie: „Na otázku – ‚jak začít znova' – nejsme schopni odpovědět." Teorie spirály mlčení přiznává šanci na změnu společnosti těm, kteří neznají strach z izolace. Ovšem změna může začít také v případě, jestliže ti, kteří zastávají většinový názor, postupem času ztratí schopnost jej obhajovat, protože se už nesetkávají s nikým, kdo má názory odlišné a konfliktní (1980, 246). Nicméně podle Noelle-Neumannové inovace častěji začínají z toho důvodu, že menšiny jsou připravenější obhajovat své názory než většiny, které propadly příliš velkému sebeuspokojení.

Vzhledem k jejím politickým důsledkům je tato hypotéza vysoce kontroverzní, zvláště v Německu. Hodně se o ní polemizuje a používají se proti ní různé subjektivní argumenty. Aniž bych se zabýval všemi pro a proti, uvádím zde jedno z posledních vyjádření Noelle-Neumannové (1986, 312) k této hypotéze: „Nezapadá do pohodlného způsobu myšlení a zavedených kategorií a nabízí se jako cíl útoků, protože není ještě dokončená, uzavřená." Pro výkonné žurnalisty vyplývají z teorie spirály mlčení dvě poučení. Doufejme, že jim velice důrazně připomene jejich odpovědnost vůči společnosti. A za druhé je výzvou k zastavení „krvesmilného" rozšiřování názorového klimatu mezi žurnalisty, které je vzdálené sociální realitě. Rozmanitost mínění v médiích vyžaduje rozmanitost názorů a rozmanitost sociálního původu žurnalistů.

8. Násilí v televizi: Nekonečná diskuse a nová zjištění

8.1. Poznámky ke kvalitě diskuse

Diskuse o působení mediálního znázorňování násilí je srovnatelná s průběhem ekonomických cyklů, přičemž právě nyní zase jednou panuje vysoká konjunktura. Momentálně stojí v centru pozornosti soukromá televize a tématem dne je „Reality-TV" (viz 6.5). Téma účinků předvádění násilí a s ním úzce spojené debaty o působení pornografie je na veřejnosti i ve vědeckém zkoumání velmi aktuální. Dokladem toho je mj. titulní článek časopisu DER SPIEGEL z ledna r. 1993 věnovaný tématu „Necudná společnost: Obchod se sexem a násilím". Do diskuse vstoupily mezitím i jiné aspekty, a sice možné účinky hrubé rockové a populární hudby. Britská heavymetalová skupina „Jesus Priest" byla obviněna, že údajně rozšiřovala výzvy k sebevraždě. Podobné problémy jsou s rapovými skupinami jako např. „Public Enemy" a „N.W.A.", které ve svých textech pozitivně hodnotí gangsterství a násilí (zejména znásilnění). Ve čtyřsvazkovém díle „Analýzy a podněty Nezávislé vládní komise pro zamezování a potírání násilí" (Schwind a Baumann 1990 – tzv. Komise pro potírání násilí) je masovým médiím (a zvláště zobrazování násilí) připisována hlavní role při zrodu násilí. Komise mimo jiné požaduje drastickou redukci předváděného násilí i v zábavných pořadech.

Zkoumání účinků médií stojí v podstatě před problémem společným všem sociálním vědám. Protože však má každý s médii vlastní zkušenosti, vystupuje tento problém velmi zřetelně do popředí: Na veřejnosti a v politice panuje vůči sociálním vědám a výsledkům jejich zkoumání všeobecná skepse. O účincích masových médií existují velmi rozšířené populárně vědecké představy, jež by se daly charakterizovat takto: Já sám jsem rozvážný, kriticky distancovaný mediální konsument nebo expert, ale ti ostatní („masa obyvatelstva") jsou extrémně ohroženi násilím rozšiřovaným v masových médiích. Rozšíření laických představ o účincích médií, jež často již nabyly charakteru kulturní samozřejmosti, tvoří vysloveně velkou překážku pro šíření vědeckých poznatků. (Zdrojem předvědeckých či nevědeckých tezí je literární studie Karl-Heinze Hochwalda: „Nová média – vliv na rodinu a výchovu" (vydaná v roce 1983 v Comenius Institut Münster).

Mainz in West Germany, with some assistance from the three staff members of the English department of the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach—Wolfgang Koschnick, head of the department; Mary Siwinski; and Maria Marzahl. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, professor of behavioral sciences at the University of Chicago, who is equally familiar with German and English, thoroughly checked and edited the manuscript once more, and, lastly, he and I edited the final version together. I do not know how to thank these friends and colleagues, who are so busy with their own scholarly work, for all they did to ensure the success of the translation.

Chicago, Spring 1983   E.N.N.

For the election eve of 1965, the second German television network (ZDF) came up with a new idea: an election party in Bonn's Beethoven Hall. There was a stage review, dinner, several dance orchestras, guests sitting at long banquet tables—the house was packed. To the right, up front, just below the stage, a small podium with a blackboard had been set up. There, a notary public was scheduled to open two letters received two days before, one from the Allensbach Institute and one from EMNID—two competing survey research organizations. The heads of the two organizations would then be invited to enter their predictions about the outcome of the election in the grid already drawn on the blackboard. Over the hubbub, the noise of chairs scraping, the sounds of eating and drinking, I wrote on the board: "Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union 49.5%, Social Democratic Party 38.5% . . ." At that moment a cry broke out from hundreds of people behind me and swelled to a thunderous roar. As if suddenly deafened, I completed my entries: "Free Democratic Party 8.0%, Other parties, 4.0%"* The hall seethed with outrage, and the publisher of the weekly *Die Zeit*, Gerd Bucerius, shouted to me: "Elisabeth, how can I defend you now!"

Had my Allensbach Institute been deliberately deceiving the public for months, telling people that the election was neck to neck? Just two days earlier, *Die Zeit* had printed an interview with me under the headline "I would not be at all surprised if the Social Democrats won" (Leonhardt 1965). Later that same evening, as the official election results moved closer to the Allensbach predictions, a Christian Democratic politician gave television viewers to understand, chuckling as he did, that he, of course, had understood the actual situation all along but had been smart enough to keep it to himself—"All's fair in love and war . . ." The quotation in *Die Zeit* was accurate; I had said that. The interview, however, had lain in the editor's files for more than two weeks. At the start of September it had looked like a dead heat. What the people assembled in the

*The Christian Democratic Union is the more conservative of the major German parties. The Christian Social Union is the Christian Democrats' sister party in Bavaria. The Social Democratic Party of Germany represents the left in the spectrum of German politics. The Free Democratic Party (or Liberals) is more middle-of-the-road compared to the two major parties.
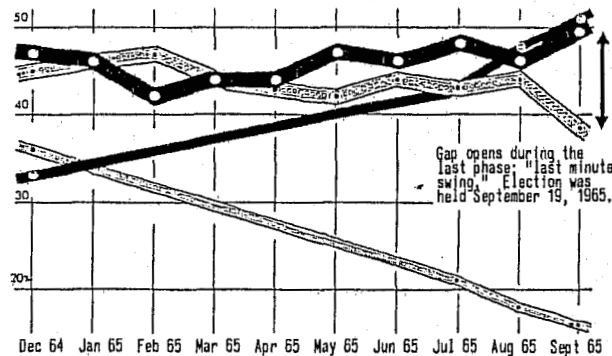
Figure 1

The Election Year Puzzle of 1965

Voting intentions remained almost unchanged for many months, indicating a neck-and-neck race between the CDU/CSU and the SPD. At the same time, however, the notion that the CDU/CSU was going to win spread among voters. How did that come about? At the end we find a bandwagon effect in the direction of the expected winner of the election.

Voting intention: CDU/CSU ▬▬▬   SPD ▬▬▬
Expectation: Who will win the election?
CDU/CSU will win ▬▬▬   SPD will win ▬▬▬

Gap opens during the last phase: "last minute swing." Election was held September 19, 1965.

Dec 64 Jan 65 Feb 65 Mar 65 Apr 65 May 65 Jun 65 Jul 65 Aug 65 Sept 65

Source: Allensbach Archives, Surveys 1095, 1097, 1098, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006

Beethoven Hall got to see was what we, to our amazement, had seen appear on our desks in Allensbach three days before the election but had not been able to publish, since to have done so then would have appeared as a massive attempt to influence the outcome of the election by starting a bandwagon effect in favor of the Christian Democrats. What had occurred had been recognized and named centuries earlier, but was still not understood: the power of public opinion. Under its pressure, hundreds of thousands—no, actually millions of voters—had taken part in what was later called a "last minute swing." At the last minute they had gone along with the crowd, swelling the Christian Democratic ranks from a position of equality with the other major party to what official election returns recorded as a lead of more than 8 percent (fig. 1).*

Knowledge lags far behind measurement

Although we did not realize it in 1965, we had in our hands even then the key to this dramatic change in the electorate's intentions. In an article about public opinion appearing in 1968 in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, W. Phillips Davison, professor of communications research and journalism at Co-

*In figs. 1–5, 11–17, and 22, CDU/CSU stands for Christian Democratic Union; SPD for Social Democratic Party; and FDP for Free Democratic Party

lumbia University in New York, wrote: "Knowledge about the internal structure of public opinions, nevertheless, is still limited and lags far behind measurement" (Davison 1968, 192). That was exactly our situation in 1965; we had measured a lot more than we understood. Thus, while from December 1964 until almost the day of the election in September 1965, the two major parties were locked in a dead heat in terms of the number who intended to vote for them—and these figures were published regularly in the magazine *Stern*—another set of data showed steady and completely independent movement; the question went like this: "Of course nobody can know, but what do you think: who is going to win the election?" In December the number of those expecting the Christian Democrats to win and the number expecting the Social Democrats to win was about even, although the Social Democrats had a slight edge. Then the estimates began to change direction, and the expectation of a Christian Democratic victory rose relentlessly while expectation of a Social Democratic victory decreased. By July 1965, the Christian Democrats were well in the lead, and the expectation of their victory reached almost 50 percent by August. It was as though the measurements of how the electorate intended to vote and which party they expected to win had been taken on different planets. And then, right at the end, people jumped on the bandwagon. As if caught in a current, 3–4 percent of the voters were swept in the direction of the general expectation of who was going to win.

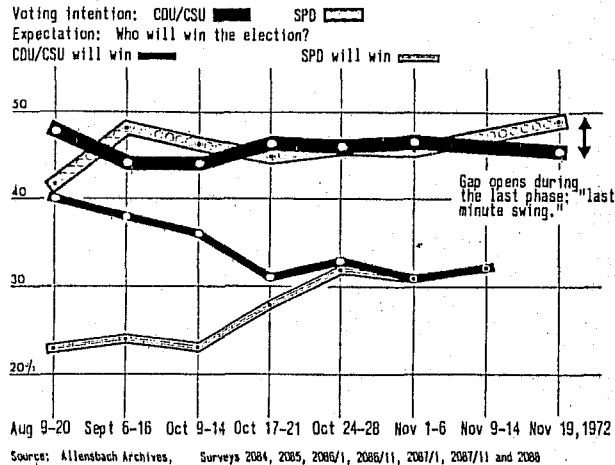### Every piece of research begins with a puzzle

We remained puzzled: How could expectations of who was going to win the election change so completely in the face of constant voter intentions? Not until 1972, when a federal election was called on short notice and there was a campaign period of only a few weeks—not a particularly appropriate election for our purposes—did we set up our survey machinery, with a specially designed questionnaire to gather the kinds of observations we needed. We had already formulated the hypothesis we were to use and had presented it at the International Congress of Psychology held in Tokyo in the summer of 1972 (Noelle-Neumann 1973).

As it happened, the election campaign of 1972 developed just like that of 1965. The two major parties were neck-to-neck when the question of voting intention was asked; meanwhile, the expectation that the Social Democratic Party was going to win grew from week to week like a separate, independent reality, with only one

Figure 2

The Phenomenon of 1965 Repeats Itself in 1972

While voting intentions remain constant—a neck-and-neck race between the CDU/CSU and the SPD—the climate of opinion changes; expectation of a win declines for the CDU/CSU while it increases for the SPD. Finally, there is the bandwagon effect in the direction of the growing expectation of winning.

Voting intention: CDU/CSU ███   SPD ▭
Expectation: Who will win the election?
CDU/CSU will win ▬▬   SPD will win ▭▭▭

Gap opens during the last phase: "last minute swing."

Aug 9-20 Sept 6-16 Oct 9-14 Oct 17-21 Oct 24-28 Nov 1-6 Nov 9-14 Nov 19,1972
Source: Allensbach Archives,   Surveys 2084, 2085, 2086/I, 2086/II, 2087/I, 2087/II and 2088

swing"; people jumped on the bandwagon of the expected winner, this time the Social Democratic Party (fig. 2).

The climate of opinion depends on who talks and who keeps quiet

The hypothesis came to me out of the student unrest at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies; I probably owe it to one particular student. I met her one day in the hall outside the lecture room and noticed that she was wearing a Christian Democratic button on her jacket.

"I didn't know you were a Christian Democratic supporter," I said to her. "I'm not," she said, "I just put the button on to see what it's like."

I met her again at noon. She was not wearing the button, and I asked about the change. "It was too awful," she said. "I took it off."

In the context of the commotion that characterized those first years of the new Ostpolitik, this was understandable. Followers of the Social Democrats and of the Christian Democrats might be equal in numbers, but they were far from equal in energy, enthusiasm, or in willingness to express and display their convictions. Only Social Democratic buttons and emblems appeared publicly, so it was no wonder that the relative strengths of the two parties were incorrectly assessed. A peculiar dynamic developed at this

point. Those who were convinced the new Ostpolitik was right thought their beliefs eventually would be adopted by everyone. So these people expressed themselves openly, and self-confidently defended their views. Those who rejected the Ostpolitik felt themselves left out; they withdrew, and fell silent.

This very restraint made the view that was receiving vocal support appear to be stronger than it really was and the other view weaker. Observations made in one context spread to another and encouraged people either to proclaim their views or to swallow them and keep quiet until, in a spiraling process, the one view dominated the public scene and the other disappeared from public awareness as its adherents became mute. This is the process that can be called a "spiral of silence."

At first, all this was merely a hypothesis. It helped explain what had happened in 1965. During the summer of that election year, support for the government peaked as public attention focused on the combined activities of Chancellor Ludwig Erhard and the Queen of England. The popular Erhard was preparing for his first parliamentary campaign as chancellor, and the queen was traveling here and there throughout Germany in the beautiful summer weather of that year, meeting and being greeted by Erhard over and over again. Television news carried the images of their encounters everywhere. Although there was an almost even split between voter preference for the Christian Democrats and for the Social Democrats, it was pleasant to profess attachment to the Christian Democratic Union, the party in power, and this could be done easily and openly. The steep climb in the expectation of a Christian Democratic win in the parliamentary election reflected this climate of opinion (fig. 1).

Those who went along at the last minute

In neither 1965 nor 1972 were voting *intentions* swept along by this climate. Indeed, in both years just the opposite occurred. From top to bottom, intentions remained almost untouched by what was paving the way for a change just before election day—the climate of opinion. This may be taken as a good sign; voting intentions do not twirl like weather vanes in a storm but possess considerable stability. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, the Austrian-American social psychologist and student of elections, once spoke of a hierarchy of stability, placing voting intentions right at the top as especially firm and subject only to slow change in response to new experiences,

observations, information, and opinions (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948, xxxvi–xxxvii). Still, in the end the climate of opinion made its effect felt. Twice we saw a last-minute swing in the direction of the climate's pressure, and it resulted in a substantial shift: 3–4 percent of the votes. Lazarsfeld (1968, 107–9) had already noted this "bandwagon effect" in the American presidential election of 1940. Everyone wants to be on the winning side, to belong with the winner—that was how the bandwagon effect was usually explained. Always be on the winning side? Most people are probably not so pretentious. Unlike the elite, most people don't expect office or power from a win. We are dealing with something more modest, a desire to avoid isolating ourselves, a desire that apparently all of us share. No one wants to be as isolated as the university student who wore a Christian Democratic badge for a whole morning, so isolated that neighbors look the other way when they pass you on the stairs to your apartment, or fellow workers move away, leaving an empty seat next to you. We are only beginning to observe the hundreds of signals that let a person know he or she is not surrounded by a warm glow of sympathy but by a ring of avoidance.

Repeated questioning of the same people before and after the 1972 election revealed to us that those who feel they are relatively isolated from others—we identify them in our studies by the comment, "I know very few people"—are the ones most likely to participate in a last-minute election swing. Those with weaker self-confidence and less interest in politics are also likely to make a last-minute switch. Because of their low self-esteem, few of these people ever think of being on the winning side or playing the trumpet on top of the bandwagon. "Running with the pack" better describes the situation of those who "go along." Yet this situation applies, more or less, to all mankind. When people think others are turning away from them, they suffer so much that they can be guided or manipulated as easily by their own sensitivity as by a bridle.

The fear of isolation seems to be the force that sets the spiral of silence in motion. To run with the pack is a relatively happy state of affairs; but if you can't, because you won't share publicly in what seems to be a universally acclaimed conviction, you can at least remain silent, as a second choice, so that others can put up with you. Thomas Hobbes (1969, see especially 69) wrote about the meaning of silence in his book, *The Elements of Law*, published in 1650. Silence, he said, can be interpreted as an indication of agreement,

for it is easy to say no when one disagrees. Hobbes is certainly wrong in saying that it is easy to say no, but he is right in supposing that silence can be interpreted as agreement; that is what makes it so tempting.

Drawing the phenomenon into the light of day

There are two possible ways of checking the reality, the validity, of a process like that envisioned in the spiral-of-silence hypothesis. If something like this really exists, if this is truly the process by which ideologies and social movements prevail or are swept away, then many authors from earlier centuries must have noticed and commented on it. It is highly unlikely that phenomena such as these would have escaped the attention of sensitive and reflective men who, as philosophers, students of law, and historians, have written about human beings and their world. As I began my search through the writings of the great thinkers of the past, I was encouraged when I found a precise description of the dynamics of the spiral of silence in Alexis de Tocqueville's history of the French revolution, published in 1856. Tocqueville recounts the decline of the French church in the middle of the eighteenth century and the manner in which contempt for religion became a general and reigning passion among the French. A major factor, he tells us, was the silence of the French church: "Those who retained their belief in the doctrines of the Church became afraid of being alone in their allegiance and, dreading isolation more than error, professed to share the sentiments of the majority. So what was in reality the opinion of only a part . . . of the nation came to be regarded as the will of all and for this reason seemed irresistible, even to those who had given it this false appearance."[1]

Feeling my way back into the past, I found impressive observations and remarks scattered everywhere. They included comments from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and David Hume, John Locke, Martin Luther, Machiavelli, John Hus, and even from the writers of antiquity. The topic never constituted a major theme; it was more often in the form of a marginal comment. My search was like a paper chase, but the reality of the spiral of silence became more and more firmly established.

A second way of testing the legitimacy of a hypothesis is to investigate it empirically. If a phenomenon such as the spiral of

1. Tocqueville 1952, 207; English: 1955, 155. Author's translation in part.

silence exists, it must be measurable. At least that should be the case today; after more than fifty years of testing instruments for use in representative survey research, a social-psychological phenomenon of this kind should no longer be able to escape observation. The following chapter describes the kinds of instruments we developed in order to bring the spiral of silence into the cold light of day.

2   *Testing with Survey Research Instruments*

*T*he word "instrument" may suggest some visible apparatus, whether a tiny machine or a mammoth piece of engineering such as a radio telescope. Still, what appears in a questionnaire and is presented in an interview as a set of questions is an instrument for observation—even if it looks like a game. The reactions of a representative cross-section of people to such questions reveal the existence of motives and modes of behavior, the very things which must provide the groundwork for a process like the spiral of silence. Hypothesizing such a process entails the claim that people observe their social environment; that they are alert to the thinking of those about them and are aware of changing trends; that they register which opinions are gaining ground and which will become dominant. Can we prove this claim?

"How should I know?"

In January 1971, Allensbach surveys began to come to grips with the spiral of silence. The first series of questions contained three queries which ran:

A question about the DDR (East Germany): If you had to make the decision, would you say that the Federal Republic should recognize the DDR as a second German state, or should the Federal Republic *not* recognize it?

Now, regardless for the moment of your own opinion, what do you think: are most of the people in the Federal Republic for or against recognizing the DDR?

What do you think will happen in the future: what will people's views be like in a year's time? Will *more* people or *fewer* people favor the recognition of the DDR then than favor it now?

"Now, regardless for the moment of your own opinion, what do you think: are most of the people for or against . . ."—"What do you think will happen in the future: what will people's views be like in a year's time?" It might well have happened that most people would have responded to such questions with "How should I know 'what most people think,' 'what's going to happen in the future'? I'm no prophet!" But that was not the way people answered. As though it were the most natural thing in the world, 80–90 percent of the people in a representative cross-section of the population over sixteen years of age offered their assessment of the opinions held by the people around them (table 1).

People's views about the future are somewhat less certain, but even questions concerning the future of an opinion do not meet with blank looks. In January of 1971, a full three-fifths expressed their estimate as to how opinion concerning recognition of the DDR would develop, and the estimates were quite clear; 45 percent expected more support, and only 16 percent expected less support (table 2). The results are reminiscent of the observations of 1965. The question "What do you think: who will win the election?" was not answered "How in the world should I know?" by the vast majority of respondents—although in view of the poll figures, which month after month indicated that we had a real horse race, that might have been a very reasonable response. No, at that time expectations were voiced more and more clearly, and not without effect, as the shift of voters at the last moment showed. Carrying over the observations of 1965–71, we would be led to expect a spiral of silence operating in favor of the eventual recognition of the DDR.

A new human ability discovered: perceiving the climate of opinion

Let us stay for the moment with our initial exploratory probes and see the extent to which they confirm the hypothesis of a spiral of silence. After the first attempt in January 1971, numerous sets of questions followed. Just as in 1965, they consistently confirmed the people's apparent ability to perceive something about majority and minority opinions, to sense the frequency distribution of pro and

Table 1. Environmental observation of the climate of opinion

Most people are willing to express an opinion about which side of a disputed issue the majority of the population is on. From among about 50 tests conducted on the basis of representative samples with either 1,000 or 2,000 respondents between 1971 and 1979, table 1 gives twelve examples. The text of the question for the first of these ran: "Now, regardless of your own opinion, what do you think: Are most of the people in the Federal Republic for or against recognizing the DDR (East Germany)?" The other questions were formulated analogously.

Issues	Percentage of respondents providing an estimate
Recognize East Germany? (January 1971)	86
Do something to prevent the spread of hashish and LSD? (January 1971)	95
Stricter laws to maintain the quality of air and water? (March 1971)	75
Allow termination of pregnancy through abortion? (April 1972)	83
For or against the death penalty? (June 1972)	90
More political influence for Franz Josef Strauss? (October/November 1972)	80
For or against the forced feeding of prisoners who go on hunger strikes? (February 1975)	84
Allow a member of the German Communist Party to be appointed a judge? (April 1976)	82
Is the Christian Democratic Union well liked? (August 1976)	62
Is the Social Democratic Party well liked? (August 1976)	65
For or against the building of new nuclear energy plants? (September 1977)	85
Should smokers smoke in the presence of nonsmokers? (March 1979)	88
Average concrete estimate for 55 subject-matter areas	82

Source: Allensbach Archives, surveys 2068, 2069, 2081, 2083, 2087, 3011, 3028, 3032/II, 3032/I, 3047, 3065

Table 2. Expectations as an expression of the climate of opinion

People's readiness to express themselves about the future development of opinion was tested in January 1971. The issue used was recognition of East Germany. *Question:* "What do you think will happen in the future—what will people's views be like in a year's time? Will more people or fewer people favor the recognition of East Germany then than favor it now?"

	Respondents 16 years and older (%)
In a year more people will favor recognition of East Germany	45
More will be opposed	16
Don't know	39
	100
	N = 1979

Source: Allensbach Archives, survey 2068

con viewpoints, and this all quite independently of any published poll figures (table 3).

In the election year of 1976, we systematically compared results to two questions which had been used to measure the perception of the strength of opinions in 1965 and from 1971 on: "Who will win the election?" and "What do most people think . . ." Both approaches brought similar results, but the question, "Do you think most people like party 'X' . . . or don't you think so?" showed itself to be more sensitive and thus a better measuring instrument than "Which party will win . . .?" Its swings in estimates of the strength of the parties, while running parallel to the other measures, were clearly stronger (fig. 3).

The astonishing fluctuations in how respondents estimated the climate of political opinion made us eager to know whether their observations were correct. In December 1974, systematic checks on this question began. Following Lazarsfeld's rule of the hierarchy of stability, voting intentions showed little change during the next fifteen months, although what slight change did occur was continuous. The difference between the largest and smallest percentages intending to vote for the Christian Democratic Union was never more than six percentage points, while that for the Social Democratic Party varied no more than 4 percent. However, severe

disturbances occurred in the climate of opinion as perceived by our respondents over this same period. These swings, amounting to changes of 24 percent, were not arbitrary; on the contrary, we could see that they were set off by slight changes in the actual orientations of the voting public which occurred from time to time (figs. 4 and 5). The puzzling question is: how was the population as a whole able to perceive these slight ups and downs in voting intentions? We continued the observations. Events taking place in the federal states, for example in Lower Saxony or Rhineland-Palatinate, added to our atlas of trends (fig. 6). The Gallup Institute in Britain was willing to check the ability of the British population to perceive

Table 3. Expectations about tomorrow's climate of opinion

Which camp will become stronger, which weaker? Most people will risk a judgment about which camp in a controversy will become stronger. From among about 25 tests based on 1,000–2,000 interviews with representative samples of the population conducted between 1971 and 1979, six examples are drawn. The text of the questions ran: "What do you think, the way things are going now—how will opinions look a year from now? Will more people than today or fewer people be for . . .?"

Issues	Percentage of respondents making an estimate about how opinions will develop in the near future (one year)
Recognize East Germany? (January 1971)	61
For or against the "achieving society"? (August 1972)	68
Should young adults live together without being married? (February 1973)	79
More political influence for Franz Josef Strauss? (March/April 1977)	87
For or against the death penalty? (July/August 1977)	87
Should new nuclear energy plants be built? (March 1979)	81
Average percentage of concrete answers about how opinion will develop in the future based on 27 different issues	75

Source: Allensbach Archives, surveys 2068, 2084, 2090, 3013, 3046, 3065

their political climate. Voting intentions in Britain did not seem nearly as firmly established as those in the Federal Republic of Germany, but the British too seemed able to perceive the climate of opinion (fig. 7).

How many issues are encompassed in this ability to recognize

Figure 3

Who Will Win the Election?

This is a question which has been used for decades in voter research in order to measure the climate of opinion. Another indicator of the climate of opinion—"Do most people like the CDU/CSU . . .?"—measures the same thing but more precisely, that is, with stronger swings of opinion.

Indicator 1:
The coming parliamentary election will be won by the CDU/CSU ▬

Indicator 2:
The majority like the CDU/CSU ▭
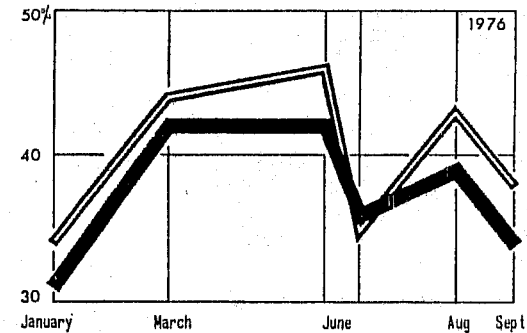
Source: Allensbach Archives,   Surveys 3023, 3025, 3030, 3031, 3032, 3035

Figure 4

Small Variations in the Number of Party Followers Are Perceived as Changes in the Climate of Opinion By a Much Larger Number of People

Voting intention: CDU/CSU ▬
Perception of the climate of opinion:
"I think that most people like the CDU/CSU" ▨
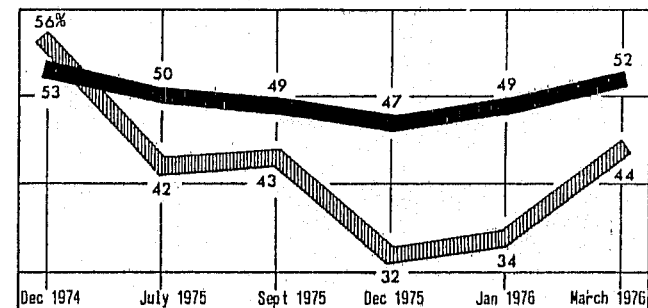
Source: Allensbach Archives,   Surveys 3010, 3019, 3022, 3023, 3025

the climate of opinion? We have to assume that hundreds of issues are constantly included in the observations people make. From March 1971 on, we have data comparing people's attitudes toward the issue of the death penalty to their perception of the climate of opinion on that subject. Because other empirical tasks were more pressing than testing the spiral of silence between 1972 and 1975, data are missing for that period. The six measures taken between 1971 and 1979, however, confirm that the actual changes in opinion
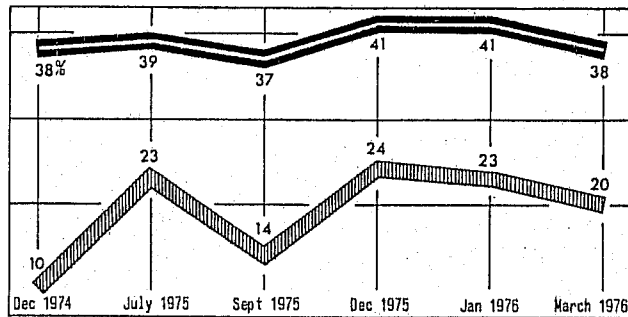
were reflected reliably in the people's perceptions of the climate (figs. 8 and 9).

Sometimes this perception goes awry, and, because it generally functions so well, every instance of a distortion of it is exciting. Somehow, in these instances, the signals on which people base their

Figure 5

The Climate of Opinion Made Visible

Traditional questions about voting intention do not show how much disquiet the intention carries.
For example: SPD 1974 – 1976
Voting intention: SPD
Perception of the climate of opinion:
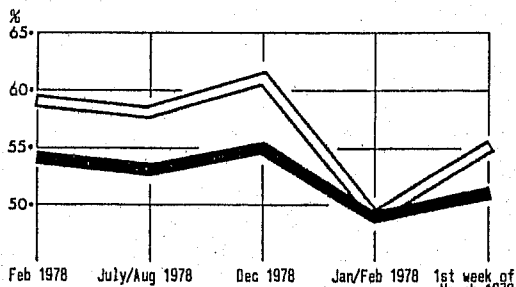"I think that most people like the SPD."

Source: Allensbach Archives, Surveys 3010, 3017, 3019, 3022, 3023 and 3025

Figure 6

Sudden Stormy Weather in the State Elections in Rhineland- Palatinate

Voting intention: CDU
Perception of the climate: "I think most people in Rhineland-Palatinate like the CDU"

Source: Allensbach Archives, Surveys 3114, 3141, 3153/1, 3156, 3158

Figure 7

The Quasi-Statistical Ability to Perceive the Climate of Opinion is Found in England as Well

Questions: "If parliamentary elections were being held tomorrow, which party would you support?"
"Quite apart from how you feel about it, do you believe that most people in Great Britain find the Conservatives to be congenial and likeable, or don't you think so?"
Would support the Conservatives:
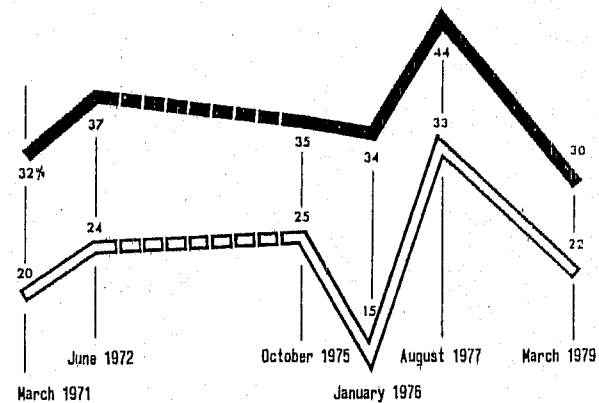Most people find the Conservatives likeable:
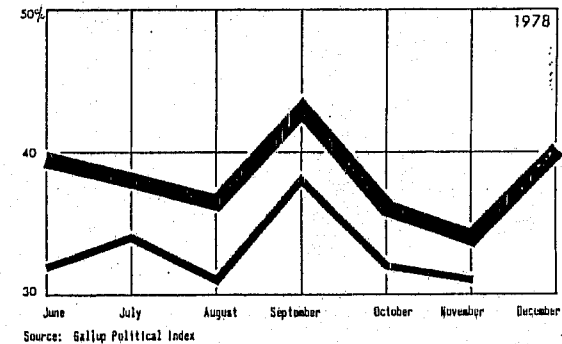
Source: Gallup Political Index

Figure 8

Opinions and the Climate of Opinion

How do people know collectively that an opinion has increased or decreased?
Opinion: "I favor the death penalty."
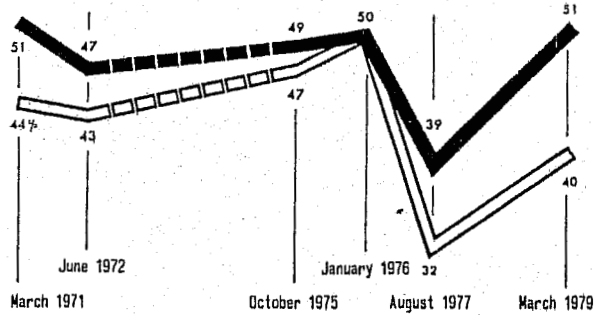Climate of opinion: "Most people favor the death penalty."

Source: Allensbach Archives, Surveys 2069, 2083, 3020, 3023, 3046 and 3065

Figure 9

The Control Test: Quasi-Statistical Perception of the Increase and Decrease in Opponents of the Death Penalty

Opinion: "I am against the death penalty."   ▬▬▬
Climate of opinion: "Most people are against the death penalty."   ▭▭

March 1971   June 1972   October 1975   January 1976   August 1977   March 1979

Source: Allensbach Archives,   Surveys 2069, 2093, 3020, 3023, 3046 and 3065

perception of the climate of opinion must get crossed. As long as we know so little about these signals, the distortions themselves are not easy to explain. Chapter 22 is devoted to this topic.

The train test

We do, however, venture an explanation for the distortion observed back in 1965, when the expectation of which party would win ran far ahead of the actual development of voting intentions. According to the spiral of silence hypothesis, this is explained by the differences in the willingness—indeed, the eagerness—of those in the two camps to express their opinions in public, to expose their views openly where the signals can be seen. The hypothesis can only be upheld if we find empirical evidence for two assumptions. The first is that people have an intuitive grasp of the relative strengths of the contending parties. The evidence that supports this assumption was presented in the last section. The second assumption, which remains to be investigated empirically, is whether people in fact do adapt their behavior to the apparent strength or weakness of the various camps.

In January 1972 a specific question appeared for the first time in an Allensbach interview, a question that had never, to our knowledge, appeared on any other questionnaire in Germany or elsewhere. It dealt with the issue of raising children and occurred in the context of an interview with housewives. The interviewer pre-

sented the respondent with a sketch showing two housewives in conversation, and said: "Two mothers are discussing about whether a child who has been very naughty should be spanked or not. Which of the two would you agree with, the top one or the bottom one?" (fig. 10).

One of the women presented in the sketch declares: "It is basically wrong to spank a child. You can raise any child without spanking." In January 1972, 40 percent of a representative sample of housewives agreed with this view.

The other woman says: "Spanking is part of bringing up children and never yet did a child harm." Forty-seven percent of the housewives agreed with this opinion; 13 percent were undecided.

The following question, however, was the crucial one: "Suppose you are faced with a five-hour train ride, and there is a woman

Figure 10

Test of Willingness to Speak Out or Tendency to Keep Silent in the Event of an Argument About Raising Children

Picture used to identify the two positions in the interview

"It is basically wrong to spank a child. You can raise any child without spanking."

"Spanking is part of bringing up children and never yet did a child harm."

A

B
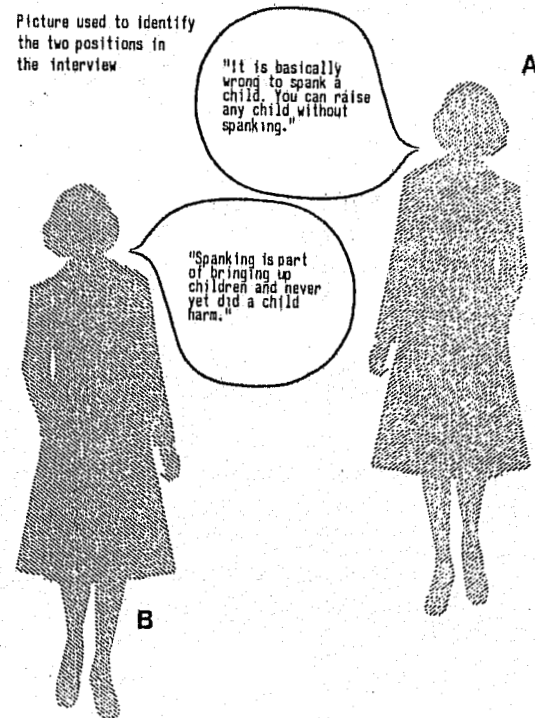
sitting in your compartment who thinks . . ." Here the text of the quesion split; women who had said they believed spanking to be basically wrong were given ". . . that spanking is part of bringing up children," while women who approved of spanking were given ". . . that spanking is basically wrong." Thus, in both instances the housewives were confronted with a fellow traveler who represented a point of view diametrically opposed to their own. The question closed in uniform fashion with "Would you like to talk with this woman so as to get to know her point of view better, or wouldn't you think that worth your while?"

This "train test" was repeated from then on with changing subject matter. In one case it would be a conversation that presented people's views on the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats. At other times it dealt with racial segregation in South Africa, young adults living together without being married, nuclear power plants, foreign workers, abortion, the danger of illegal drugs, or allowing radicals in civil service jobs.

The hypothesis to be checked was whether the various camps differed in their readiness to stand up for their views and convictions. The camp that shows more readiness to proclaim its stand will have greater impact and will thereby exert more influence on others, who may join its apparently stronger or increasing battalion of followers. In individual instances something like this might be observed, but how can such a process be measured in a way that fulfills the scientific requirements of an experiment? Measurements must be repeatable, endlessly retestable, and known to be independent of the subjective impressions of any observer. An attempt must be made to simulate reality, and this under conditions in which measurements can be made. Such conditions can be found, for example, in a survey interview, which runs its course uniformly; its questions are read aloud in a predetermined phrasing and a predetermined order; and its cross-sections of 500, 1,000 or 2,000 respondents are questioned by hundreds of interviewers, so that it is impossible for any one interviewer to have a decisive influence on the results. But what a weak situation is offered by an interview of this kind—how different it is from life, from experience, from the sensations of reality!

Simulating a public situation

Our first task consisted of simulating the public situation in the interview so as to investigate the latent readiness of the respondent

to behave publicly in a particular way. Clearly, people draw their conclusions about the strength or weakness of a position not only from family discussions; so we had to simulate more than the family circle to obtain their general public behavior. Even lonely people, those with few acquaintances, manage to perceive the signals, as our analysis of the "last minute swing" showed. Further, when a swing in the climate occurs for or against a party, a person, or a particular idea, it seems to be sensed everywhere at almost exactly the same time, by all population groups, all age groups, all occupational groups (figs. 11–13). This is possible only if the signals are completely open and public. Behavior in the family, in the primary circle, may be the same as that in public places or it may differ; for the spiral of silence, this is a secondary matter. We quickly learned this when we attempted to paint a scene in the interview in which
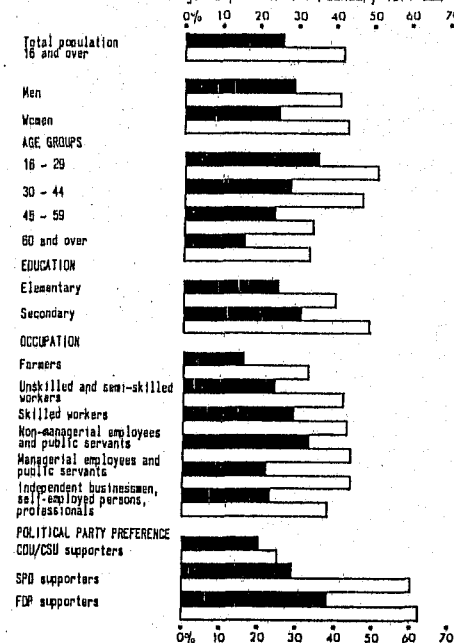

Figure 11

Climate Swing Perceived By All Groups in the Population: An Expression of Being Public

Example: "The Federal Republic should grant the DDR recognition."
September 1968 to September 1970/January 1971
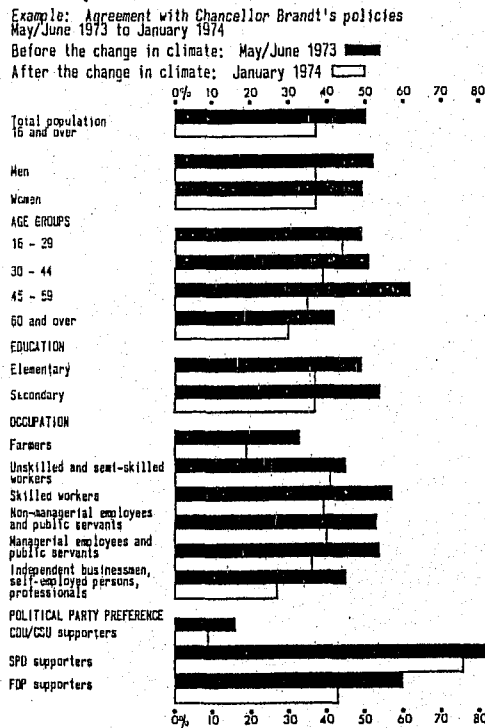Before the climate swing: September 1968 ■■■
After the climate swing: September 1970/January 1971 □

Source: Allensbach Archives,   Surveys 2044 and 2065/2068/A

respondents were supposed to indicate their tendencies to talk or be silent. We told respondents they should imagine being invited somewhere with a fair number of other guests, some of whom they do not know. The conversation at this gathering turns to a certain controversial subject, and at this point the text of the question introduced some concrete issue, Would the respondent enjoy taking part in the ensuing conversation or would he or she not want to take part? The question did not work. The setting was not public enough, and considerations of courtesy to the host and to other guests with respect to the opinions they expressed strongly influenced the reactions of the respondents. We then tried the train test. It presented a public situation somewhat like a public thoroughfare: it allowed everyone entry, and people were there whose names and attitudes the respondent did not know. At the same time

it involved so little exposure that even a shy person might participate, were he in the mood to do so. But would it provide an indication of people's natural behavior in genuine public settings, as on the street, in a grocery store, or as a spectator at a public event? The interview occurs in privacy, perhaps in the presence of other members of the family. Would people express their real responses here, or would the impulse to do so be too weak in the face of a merely imaginary situation?

The second assumption is confirmed: those confident of victory speak up, while losers tend toward silence

As we evaluated one "train test" after another in the surveys conducted in 1972, 1973, and 1974, it became evident that we could measure the willingness of people in various camps to speak up or

Figure 12

A Change in the Climate of Opinion Reaches the Total Population

Example: Agreement with Chancellor Brandt's policies
May/June 1973 to January 1974
Before the change in climate: May/June 1973 ■
After the change in climate: January 1974 □

Source: Allensbach Archives,   Surveys 2095, 3001

Figure 13

Changes in the Climate of Opinion Penetrate Everywhere

Example: Those favoring the death penalty,
fall/winter 1975-1976 to summer 1977
Before the change in climate: fall/winter 1975/1976 ■
After the change in climate: summer 1977 □
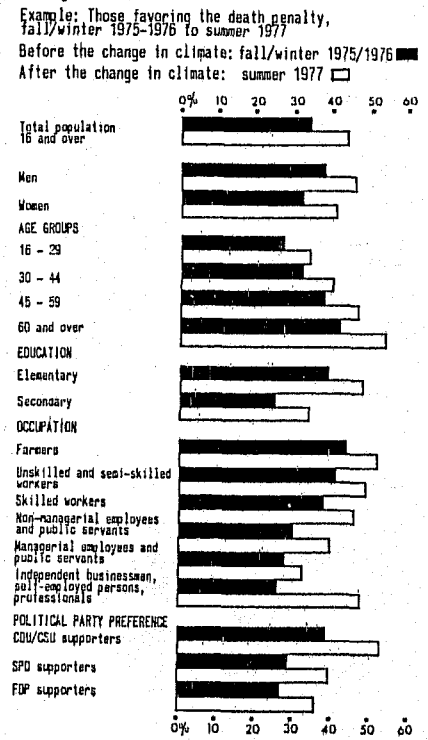
Source: Allensbach Archives,   Surveys 3020/3023, 3046

keep quiet on particular subjects. The 1972 election year presented ideal conditions and issues for such tests. Enthusiasm for the Nobel Prize–winning chancellor, Willy Brandt, reached its height, yet opinions were sharply divided on the subject of Ostpolitik, which Brandt symbolized. One did not need particularly sensitive perceptual abilities to sense which camp was publicly the stronger, whether one supported or opposed Brandt. "What do you think are most people in the Federal Republic for or against the treaties made with the East?" So ran the May 1972 question. "Most are in favor" was the answer of 51 percent; "Most are opposed," 8 percent; "About half and half," 27 percent; and 14 percent sidestepped the issue with the response, "Impossible to tell."

In October 1972, with the election campaign already underway, the train test was included in a survey: "Assume you are faced with a five-hour train ride and someone in your compartment begins to talk very favorably" (in every second interview the question read "very unfavorably") "about Chancellor Brandt. Would you like to enter conversation with this person so as to get to know his or her point of view more closely, or wouldn't you think it worth your while?" Fifty percent of Brandt's supporters (who numbered twice as many as the opponents) indicated that they would like to enter into conversation; only 35 percent of his opponents said they would. "Would not think it worth their while" was the response of 42 percent of Brandt's supporters and 56 percent of his opponents (table 4). Thus, Brandt's supporters were much stronger in actual numbers than his opponents, but beyond that their strength was multiplied by their greater willingness to convey their point of view.

A campaign button is a way of talking too

In connection with this hypothesis, we must understand what is meant by talking and by keeping quiet in the broadest terms. Wearing a campaign button, putting a bumper sticker on the car—these are ways of talking; not doing these things, even if one has firm convictions, is a way of keeping quiet. Openly carrying around a newspaper which has a well-known political slant is a way of talking; keeping it out of sight, in a briefcase or beneath a less partisan paper, is a way of keeping quiet (of course, one is not trying to hide the paper—it just happens to get wrapped up that way). Distributing handbills is a way of talking, as is putting up posters, defacing the opposition posters, tearing them down, or slashing tires of cars that carry the other party's stickers. In the sixties, men

Table 4. The train test

People's readiness to speak up and tendency to or preference for remaining silent in a "minimal public situation" was tested in October 1972, with Chancellor Brandt as the subject matter.

	Majority: Persons who agree with Brandt (%)	Minority: Persons who disagree with Brandt (%)
Would be glad to talk with a fellow train traveler about Brandt	50	35
Would not think it worthwhile	42	56
Undecided	8	9
	100 N = 1011	100 N = 502

Source: Allensbach Archives, survey 2086/I + II

wearing shoulder-length hair were talking; just as today, wearing jeans in Eastern European countries is talking.

Even without the train test, the election year of 1972 gave us more than enough empirical evidence that one side in a controversy will be active and open in its "talk" while the other side, though not necessarily smaller in numbers, perhaps even larger, holds its peace. Former Vice President Agnew's complaint about the "silent majority" became justifiably famous because it touched on a reality that many people felt. It was a reality in which they themselves had participated, although they were not fully conscious of it since it had not been explicitly labeled.

One survey question after the federal election of 1972 graphically demonstrated how unequal the strengths of the two parties were perceived to be, even though the parties remained practically identical when it came to a count of their supporters. The question, asked in December, ran: "The different parties had posters, campaign buttons, and bumper stickers for cars. What is your impression: which party was supported by the most bumper stickers, posters, or campaign buttons?"

"More for the Social Democrats" was the answer given by 53 percent; "More for the Christian Democrats," by 9 percent. A

second question checked out the same issue from a different angle: "The way a party fares in an election depends greatly upon its ability to get its followers to participate in the election campaign. What was your impression: which party's supporters showed more idealism and personal involvement in this past election campaign?" "Supporters of the Social Democrats" was the answer of 44 percent; "Supporters of the Christian Democrats," of 8 percent. One can read such results as indicating that at that time—the fall of 1972—a person favoring the Christian Democrats would look in vain among the campaign buttons and bumper stickers for a fellow sympathizer, for all such had fallen into silence, thereby contributing to a situation in which those who shared Christian Democratic convictions and sought for some kind of a sign must truly have felt isolated and alone. The spiral of silence could hardly have been wound more tightly than it was at that time.

At first these bits and pieces of evidence, assembled in an effort to make the climate of opinion visible, created a rather uncertain picture. Wear a campaign button—paste on a bumper sticker—aren't these things simply questions of taste? Some people are inclined to such actions and others are not; might it not well be that the more conservatively inclined voters are also more retiring, more disinclined to flaunt their convictions? Or, with respect to the "train test," there are some people who like to converse during a journey and others who do not. Can the train test really be regarded as an indication that an influence process like the spiral of silence is taking place?

The advantage of having talkative groups on your side

Our survey results support the proposition that, regardless of subject matter and conviction, some people *are* more prone to talk and others to remain silent. This is also true for whole groups in the population. In a public situation, men are more disposed to join in talk about controversial topics than are women, younger people than older ones, and those belonging to higher social strata than those from lower strata (table 5). This has definite consequences for the public visibility of various points of view. If a faction wins many young people or many well-educated people to its side, it automatically has a better chance of appearing to be the faction destined to gain general acceptance. But that is only half the story. There is a second factor that influences willingness to speak up: the agreement between your own convictions and your assessment of the trend of

Table 5. Willingness to discuss a controversial subject, by population subgroup

	Willing to discuss* (%)	Un-willing to discuss (%)	Un-decided (%)	N
Total population 16 and over	36	51	13	9966
Men	45	45	10	4631
Women	29	56	15	5335
Education				
Elementary (8 or 9 years of school)	32	54	14	7517
Secondary (10 or more years of school)	50	42	8	2435
Age groups				
16–29	42	47	11	2584
30–44	39	50	11	2830
45–59	35	52	13	2268
60 and over	27	56	17	2264
Occupation				
Farmers	19	63	18	621
Unskilled and semiskilled workers	28	54	18	2289
Skilled workers	37	51	12	2430
Nonmanagerial employees and public servants	41	49	10	2628
Managerial employees and public servants	47	44	9	1051
Independent businessmen, self-employed persons, professionals	40	49	11	927
Net monthly income				
Less than 800 DM**	26	56	18	1448
800–999 DM	32	53	15	1875
1000–1249 DM	35	52	13	2789
1250–1999 DM	42	48	10	2979
2000 DM or more	48	43	9	866
Residence				
Villages	32	52	16	1836
Small towns	37	52	11	3164
Medium-sized cities	36	51	13	1797
Large cities	38	49	13	3160

Table 5. *continued*

	Willing to discuss* (%)	Un-willing to discuss (%)	Un-decided (%)	N
Political party preference				
Christian Democratic Union	34	55	11	3041
Social Democratic Party	43	47	10	4162
Free Democratic Party (Liberals)	48	44	8	538

*Persons willing to hold a discussion in the train compartment about: the spread of socialism to West Germany; outlawing the German Communist Party; Federal Chancellor Brandt; and young adults living together without being married (Allensbach Archives, surveys 2084, 2085, 2086/I+II, 2089, 2090—1972/1973).
**Approximately 2.50 DM = $1.00 in 1983

the times, the spirit of the age, the mood of those who seem to be more modern, more reasonable, or simply the feeling that the "better" people are on your side (table 6).

Feeling in harmony with the spirit of the age loosens the tongue

In the fall of 1972, those who supported Willy Brandt were more prone than his opponents to participate in a conversation about Brandt in a public setting, *regardless* of whether they were old or young, male or female, or had lesser or greater amounts of education (table 7). The train test proved valuable. With this instrument it was possible to carry out a continuing series of investigations over the following years and so to reveal which side in a controversy spoke up and which preferred silence. On a journey, 54 percent of the Social Democratic supporters would have wanted to take part in a discussion about the Social Democratic Party, while only 44 percent of the Christian Democratic supporters would have wanted to talk about the Christian Democratic Union (1974). After the change in the office of federal chancellor, 47 percent of Helmut Schmidt's supporters but only 28 percent of his opponents wanted to talk about him (1974). When it came to force-feeding prisoners on hunger strikes, 46 percent of those in favor but only 33 percent of the opponents were willing to express themselves (1975).[2]

2, Allensbach Archives, surveys 3010, 3006, 3011.

Table 6. **Willingness to converse as an indicator of the social climate and self-confidence of population subgroups**

Comparisons over time between 1972 and 1978 showed a general increase in people's willingness to talk; it was particularly pronounced among Christian Democratic Union supporters

	Would be glad to talk about controversial subjects with fellow train travelers		
	1972/73 (%)	1975/76 (%)	1977/78 (%)
Total population 16 and over	36	37	44
Men	45	43	52
Women	29	32	37
Age groups			
16–29	42	41	51
30–44	39	41	49
45–59	35	35	42
60 and over	27	30	33
Education			
Elementary (8 or 9 years of school)	32	34	39
Secondary (10 or more years of school)	50	46	53
Occupation			
Farmers	19	30	29
Unskilled and semiskilled workers	28	29	35
Skilled workers	37	37	44
Nonmanagerial employees and public servants	41	41	48
Managerial employees and public servants	47	46	54
Independent businessmen, self-employed persons, professionals	40	40	47
Residence			
Villages	32	37	41
Small towns	37	36	46
Medium-sized cities	36	38	45
Large cities	38	37	44

Table 6. *continued*

	Would be glad to talk about controversial subjects with fellow train travelers		
	1972/73 (%)	1975/76 (%)	1977/78 (%)
Political party preference			
Christian Democratic Union	34	38	44
Social Democratic Party	43	40	47
Free Democratic Party (Liberals)	48	38	49

Sources:

1972/73: Allensbach Archives, surveys 2084, 2085, 2086/I + II, 2089, 2090 (between August 1972 and February 1973). The topics for discussion in the train compartment were: the spread of socialism to West Germany; outlawing the German Communist Party; Federal Chancellor Brandt; and young adults living together without being married. Total number of interviews was 9,966.

1975/76: Allensbach Archives, surveys 3011, 3012, 3013, 3020, 3031, 3033/I, 3035, 3037 (between February 1975 and December 1976). The topics for discussion in the train compartment were: forced feeding of prisoners; the death penalty; letting Franz Josef Strauss have more political influence; the way Spain was being governed; liking for the SPD; liking for the CDU/CSU; living together without being married; and smoking in the presence of nonsmokers. Total number of interviews was 14,504.

1977/78: Allensbach Archives, surveys 3046, 3047, 3048, 3049, 3060 (between August 1977 and October 1978). The topics for discussion in the train compartment were: the death penalty; building new nuclear energy plants; the death penalty for terrorists; sympathy for terrorists; and a United States of Europe without Russia and the East European countries. Total number of interviews was 10,133.

A shift in opinion helps research

We had come to what was then called in Germany a *Tendenz-wende*, a turning point in the strength of political attitudes. Up to this point we could not tell why supporters of leftist positions and political leaders were more willing to join in discussions; it might have been their favorable political climate, but it could also have been that those who tended to favor leftist positions simply enjoyed arguing more.

Two observations were made during the following period that refuted the second possibility. First, Social Democratic supporters became less inclined to join in arguments about their party between

Table 7. In every population subgroup the supporters of the dominant opinion are more willing to voice their view than those in the minority

Example: Supporters and opponents of the policies of Federal Chancellor Brandt in 1972

	Would be glad to talk to fellow train travelers	
	Representatives of the dominant view: Brandt supporters (%)	Representatives of the minority view: Brandt opponents (%)
Total population	49	35
Men	57	44
Women	42	27
Age groups		
16–29	53	43
30–44	47	37
45–59	55	30
60 and over	42	34
Education		
Elementary (8 or 9 years of school)	45	29
Secondary (10 or more years of school)	61	51
Occupation		
Farmers	39	13
Unskilled and semiskilled workers	40	24
Skilled workers	45	30
Nonmanagerial employees and public servants	57	43
Managerial employees and public servants	62	47
Independent businessmen, self-employed persons, professionals	55	49
Residence		
Villages	46	28
Small towns	46	42
Medium-sized cities	48	40
Large cities	54	36

Table 7. *continued*

	Would be glad to talk to fellow train travelers	
	Representatives of the dominant view: Brandt supporters (%)	Representatives of the minority view: Brandt opponents (%)
Political party preference		
Christian Democratic Union	46	36
Social Democratic Party	52	35

Source: Allensbach Archives, surveys 2086/I + II, October 1972. The base for the percentages of Brandt supporters is 1011; the base for the percentages of Brandt opponents is 500.

1974 and 1976, that is, during a so-called political turning point. This was measured as a change from 54 percent willing to talk in 1974 to 48 percent in 1976. In this regard, however, the overall change was less striking than the sudden sensitivity supporters showed to the wording of the train question: whether it made their fellow traveler, who initiated the conversation, speak favorably or slightingly about the Social Democratic Party. In 1974, the supporters of the Social Democratic Party had seemed almost immune to influence from the nature of their fellow traveler's opinions; 56 percent joined in when the Social Democratic Party was praised and 52 percent when it was criticized. In 1976, 60 percent indicated an interest in joining a conversation with those who saw things as they did, but when the fellow traveler spoke out against the Social Democratic Party, their readiness to participate in the conversation sank to 32 percent! For Christian Democratic supporters, matters were exactly reversed. In 1974 they showed great sensitivity to the nature of the conversational environment by indicating completely different degrees of readiness to participate in the conversation, depending on whether their fellow train traveler was friendly or unfriendly toward the Christian Democratic Union; in 1976, the fellow traveler's view made no difference (Noelle-Neumann 1977a, esp. 152).

After the experiences of 1972 and 1973, we were ready to simplify the wording of the train test so that it would no longer shift between settings in which one confronted either opponents or supporters of a particular idea, direction, or person. The results up to that time showed that this aspect of the environment made little difference in how talkative or reticent a respondent was likely to be. Not until 1975/76 did we learn that dropping this variation in the test would have been premature. As already described, only when a spiral of silence has practically run its course and one faction possesses total public visibility while the other has completely withdrawn into its shell, only when the tendency to talk or to keep quiet has stabilized, are people liable to participate or to remain silent regardless of whether or not the others in the situation are expressly friend or foe. Aside from such settled situations, however, there remain the open controversies, arguments as yet undecided, or instances where latent conflict has yet to break the surface. In all these instances, as later investigations indicated, sensitivity to the tenor of the train conversation is considerable and can be very revealing.

Refuting the notion that those on the left are less attuned to the climate of opinion

The second discovery that refuted the presumption that left-leaning respondents have a greater tendency to participate in discussions arose out of a preoccupation with a phenomenon which, like the bandwagon effect, had attracted the attention of election researchers for decades. If, on the one hand, there was a recognizable preelection tendency for some of the voters to shift their votes in the direction of the expected winner, there was, on the other hand, a postelection tendency for more people to claim they had voted for the winning party than actual winning votes were cast. Just like the bandwagon effect, this could be interpreted as an effort to be on the winning side, this time through selectively "forgetting" that one in fact had voted differently.

To check out this state of affairs, we went back through the Allensbach archives to the first federal election in 1949 and worked forward. We could not find support in our data for the simple rule that after *every* election more people claimed to have voted for the winning party than the actual voting figures indicated. For the most part, the information people gave about the way they voted tallied quite well with the official election results (figs. 14 and 15). Once, in 1965, a suspiciously large number claimed to have voted for neither of the two major parties—the Social Democratic Party, which had lost the election, or the Christian Democratic Union, which had

won. In 1969 and 1972 the numbers claiming to be Social Democratic voters substantially exceeded the actual proportion of votes the Social Democratic Party received. Two striking findings emerged, however, when we looked at the so-called panel method results, where the same people were questioned repeatedly over a period of time. The first was that if people corrected their previous voting decision in a later interview, indicating a party different than

Figure 14

A Way to Measure the Climate of Opinion

A "high" is registered for a party when more people claim to have voted for that party than the party's actual vote indicates.

A "low" occurs when the claims fall behind the actual voting results.

For example; the CDU/CSU shows a low after the end of the Adenauer era

The hatchmarked area's height shows the proportion of votes the CDU/CSU received in each of nine consecutive national elections

● Percentage of respondents who claim to have voted for the CDU/CSU in the previous national elections

Explanation: Theoretically the black circles should lie exactly at the top of the hatchmarked area. Circles that rise above it indicate exaggeration of the vote, while circles that fall below it indicate reticence to admit a CDU/CSU vote.

Sources: Official election returns are from the Statistische Jahrbücher für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Survey results are from the Allensbach Archives. Surveys 031, May 1950; 066, September 1953; 1070, September 1962; 1090, May 1964; 2008, November 1965; 2065, September 1970; 2088, November 1972; 2090, February 1973; 3007, July 1974; 3037, December 1976; 3051, December 1977; 3062, November 1979; 3076, December 1979; 3080, March 1980; 4003, December 1981; 4019, December 1982; 4025, February 1983
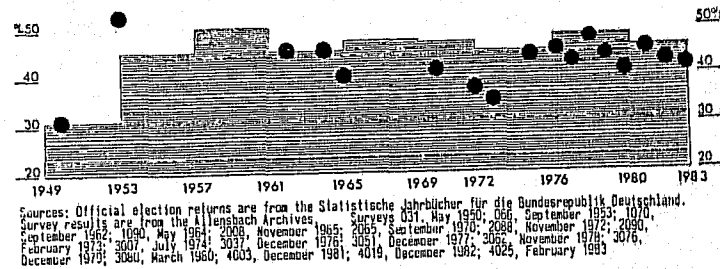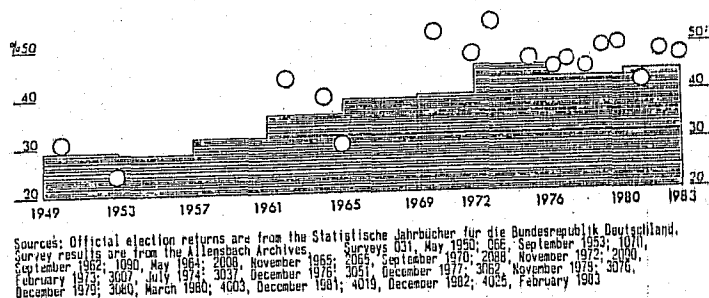
Figure 15

A Way to Measure the Climate of Opinion

The highs for the SPD in the sixties and seventies show an almost continual tendency for people to exaggerate their vote for the SPD in the last national election.

The hatchmarked area's height shows the proportion of votes the SPD received in each of nine consecutive national elections

○ Percentage of respondents who claim to have voted for the SPD in the previous national election

Sources: Official election returns are from the Statistische Jahrbücher für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Survey results are from the Allensbach Archives. Surveys 031, May 1950; 066, September 1953; 1070, September 1962; 1090, May 1964; 2008, November 1965; 2065, September 1970; 2088, November 1972; 2090, February 1973; 3007, July 1974; 3037, December 1976; 3051, December 1977; 3062, November 1979; 3076, December 1979; 3080, March 1980; 4003, December 1981; 4019, December 1982; 4025, February 1983

the one they had indicated immediately after the election, the change was not always in the direction of the winning party (the Social Democratic Party) but occurred *in the direction of the majority view of the group to which those people belonged*. For example, with younger voters the move favored the Social Democratic Party, but with older it favored the Christian Democratic Union; with workers it favored the Social Democratic Party, but with the self-employed the Christian Democratic Union. This suggested less a tendency toward wanting to be on the winning side than an attempt to avoid isolating oneself from one's own social milieu. Since most groups in 1972 had decided by and large in favor of the Social Democratic Party, the overall balance of the results in the postelection survey ran distinctly toward an inflated vote for the Social Democratic Party,
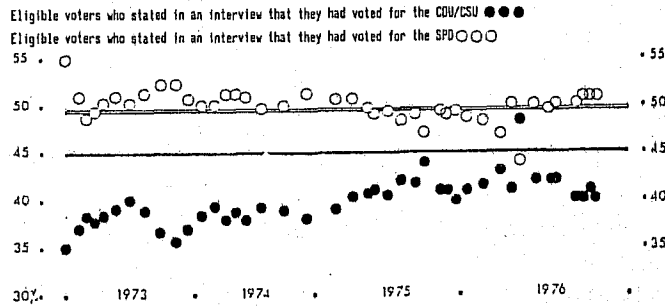
A new procedure for measuring the pressure of opinion

The second remarkable finding was that the tendency to overstate the vote for the Social Democratic Party did not remain constant during the period following the federal election, and neither did the tendency to understate the vote for the Christian Democratic Union. Both appeared to move in subtle response to changes in the climate of opinion. At first, in 1972/73, too many people claimed to have voted for the Social Democratic Party in the previous election, and too few for the Christian Democratic Union. Then, as if in slow motion, people began to recollect having voted for the Social Democratic Party or the Christian Democratic Union, and their statements moved closer to the actual electoral proportions. An excerpt from this series of observations is shown in figure 16. Even as the recollection came closer to the actual results again in 1976, the changes were by no means over. As election day drew near, the old lack of willingness of Christian Democratic Union voters to confess their prior vote began to show itself again (fig. 17).

Today the Allensbach institute routinely measures the strength of these trends, calculating the degree of polarization and the sharpness of the current political discussions by the observed month to month over- or underestimate of the votes claimed for the two major parties in the previous national election. We will later return to the meaning of such distortion. For the moment we want to take some frames out of the slow-motion picture from 1974 to 1976, the turning point in political tendencies, and to show thereby that

Figure 16

Overestimation or Underestimation of the Vote for a Party as an Indication of the Climate of Opinion
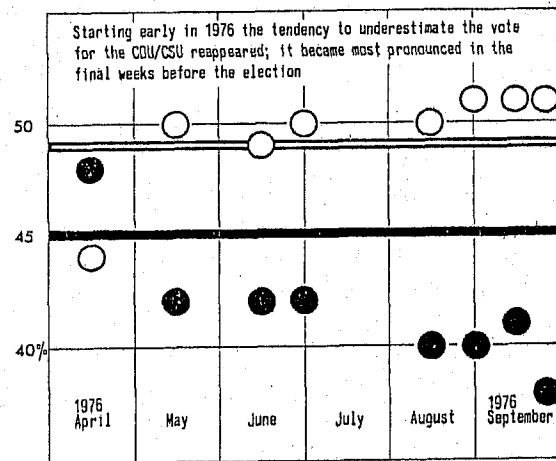
The Figure illustrates the degree to which the claimed vote for the SPD exceeded the official election return during the period 1973 to 1976. The SPD's actual vote of 49 percent is shown throughout by the open line. The Figure also shows the degree to which the vote admitted for the CDU/CSU fell below the actual, official voting return during the same period. The CDU/CSU's actual vote of 45 percent is shown throughout by the filled-in line.——The trend suggests that the supporters of the CDU/CSU were gathering courage during the period.

Eligible voters who stated in an interview that they had voted for the CDU/CSU ●●●
Eligible voters who stated in an interview that they had voted for the SPD ○○○

Source: Allensbach Archives, Surveys 2089-3004, 3006, 3008-3010, 3012-3023, 3025 - 3035

Figure 17

Increase in Opinion Pressure During the Struggle for Voters

Distortions in information respondents gave in election year 1976 about the last party they had voted for

Starting early in 1976 the tendency to underestimate the vote for the CDU/CSU reappeared; it became most pronounced in the final weeks before the election

Explanation: The Figure shows the extent to which too many or too few people claimed to have voted for each of the two major parties, the SPD and the CDU/CSU, as compared to the official election returns from the 1972 national election. The 1972 returns for the SPD are marked with the open line ▭▭▭ at 49 percent. The returns for the CDU/CSU at that line are marked with the filled-in line at 45 percent. ▬▬ Eligible voters who stated in an interview that they voted for the CDU/CSU ●●● ; for the SPD ○○○ .

Source: Allensbach Archives,   Surveys 3028 - 3035

eagerness to join in discussions and an inclination toward silence are not necessarily connected to left- or rightwing political orientation.

Since 1972 we have been able to interpret the exaggerating of votes for one side and the minimizing of votes for the other as forms of "talking" and "remaining silent." Without any effort of our own, a procedure for measuring the changes in the pressure of opinion that cause people to speak or to remain silent had become available to us.

Ready to take a public stand? A battery of pertinent questions

During these years, new test questions and new instruments continued to be developed. In 1975 we first inserted into a survey a battery of questions that were intended to indicate how ready the individual was to support a political party publicly. The text of the lead-in question ran: "Now a question about the political party that comes closest to your own point of view. If someone were to ask you whether you would be willing to do something to help this party, for example, some of the things listed on the cards in this stack, would you agree to do any one or more of these things for the party you prefer?" Eleven possible ways to provide support for a party were presented in the set of cards the interviewer gave the respondent. Not all of them required *public* activity, since people who were unwilling to engage in public actions but who still desired to express their party loyalties needed to be able to find something in the set they could do, such as making a financial contribution. The other suggested alternatives were:

> I'd wear a campaign button or stick-on badge.
> I'd attach a bumper sticker to my car.
> I'd go door to door to talk with strangers about the party platform.
> I'd hang up a party poster or sign on my house or in my window.
> I'd go out and put up signs for this party in public places.
> I'd take part in street discussions and stick up for this party.
> I'd attend a rally for this party.
> If it seemed important, I'd stand up in a meeting of this party and say something in the discussion.
> I'd defend this party's point of view in other parties' meetings.
> I'd help distribute campaign literature.

For analytic purposes, a simple but valuable measure that emerged from this question was the answer: "I would not do any of these things for the party of my choice." An instrument like this proves its usefulness in its ability to detect and measure subtle or slight changes, just like a postal scale that distinguishes between 18 and 21 grams when the ordinary household scale will not even distinguish between 10 grams or 30.

The battery of questions aimed at measuring how prepared people are to provide public support for their party proved to be a delicate and responsive instrument. A falling-off in a party's following registered itself immediately, as for example during the state elections in the Rhineland Palatinate, where quarrels among party leaders almost managed to help them pull defeat from the jaws of victory. Before the conflict among the leaders broke out (December 1978), 39 percent of the supporters of the Christian Democratic Union said they would do "none of these" when questioned about helping their preferred party. Shortly before the election, 48 percent of the remaining Christian Democratic supporters answered they would do "none of these." Meanwhile, the opposition, the Social Democratic Party, maintained a stable 30 percent of inactive supporters who wished to provide support in "none of these" ways between December 1978 and February/March 1979 (Noelle-Neumann 1979, 10). The relative psychological strengths had shifted, even though the voting intentions had changed so slightly that, following the principles of sampling statistics, the shift was not detectable as significant. Nevertheless, the shift eventually led the Christian Democrats to the brink of an electoral defeat.

This concrete instance serves to illustrate how social research attempts to make the invisible visible. Of course, people could be asked directly whether or not they wear a campaign button or have a bumper sticker on their car. From the point of view of measurement technique, this direct approach would have the advantage of observing or determining real circumstances, instead of relying on perhaps dubious expressions of a respondent's intentions. The disadvantage lies in the fact that the group that actually wears campaign buttons or puts bumper stickers on its cars consists largely of hard-core activists, whose reactions to the changing fortunes of a party are liable to be much less sensitive than those of more marginal supporters. Using only the hard core's less sensitive behavior can easily lead to results that lie below the threshold of statistical

detection, and so allow the disturbances in the climate of opinion to escape observation.

In checking to see whether persons with leftist political views are more inclined to discuss and show their convictions, we have uncovered another question. Granted, people seem to have an extraordinary gift for sensing the climate of opinion. There also seem to be factions that understand how to capture the public spotlight and other factions that let themselves be pressured into silence. But how can we tell what motives underlie this behavior? Does a fear of social isolation explain this process, as the spiral of silence hypothesis claims? We investigate this question in the next chapter.

3   *Fear of Isolation as a Motive*

*I*n the early fifties, Solomon Asch (1951, 1952), a social psychologist, reported an experiment he had conducted more than fifty times in the United States. The task of the subjects in this experiment was to judge which of three lines best matched a fourth test line in length (fig. 18). One of the three was always exactly the same length as the test line. At first glance, the task appeared easy; the correct match was quite evident and all subjects spotted it easily. From eight to ten persons took part in each experimental session, all guided by the following format. The test line and the three lines that were candidates for the match were hung up where all could see them. Then each of the subjects in the room, starting from the left, stated his or her judgment as to which line was the best match for the test line. Each session repeated this procedure twelve times.

However, after two rounds in which all participants agreed unequivocally on the correct match to the test line, the situation suddenly changed. The experimenter's assistants, seven to nine persons who were in on the purpose of the experiment, all named as the correct line one that was visibly too short. The one naive subject, the only unsuspecting person in the group, sat at the end of the row. At this point his behavior was scrutinized to see what

Figure 18

**The Asch Length-of-Line Experiment:
Testing Conformity Due to Fear of Isolation**

Subjects in the experiment were asked the following
question: Which of the three lines on the right is
equal to the standard line on the left?

Standard line   Comparison lines
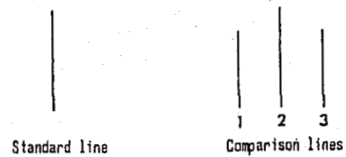
Source: Solomon E. Asch, "Group Forces in the Modification and Distortion
of Judgments," Social Psychology, New York, Prentice-Hall, 1952, p. 452.

would happen to it under the pressure of a unanimous judgment at variance with the evidence of his senses. Would he waver? Would he join the majority view, regardless of how much it contradicted his own judgment? Or would he stand fast?

Solomon Asch's classical laboratory experiment shows how scarce self-reliant individuals are

Two out of every ten naive subjects stuck resolutely to their own impressions. Two of the remaining eight agreed with the group only once or twice during the ten critical passes through the procedure. But the remaining six more frequently announced as their own opinion the obviously false judgment made by the majority. This means that even in a harmless task which does not touch their real interests and whose outcome should be largely a matter of indifference, most people will join the majority point of view even when they can have no doubt that it is false. This was what Tocqueville described when he wrote: "Dreading isolation more than error, they professed to share the sentiments of the majority,"[3]

When we compare Asch's research method to the survey method involving questions like the train test, we realize immediately that Asch's method possesses a completely different attraction and a completely different kind of persuasive power. Asch is working in the tradition of what is called "the laboratory experiment." He can arrange to control conditions during the experiment down to the last pertinent detail—how the chairs are placed, how his assistants behave during the sessions, how visually

obvious the differences in the lines to be matched are, etc. The testing setup, the "laboratory," allows him to create an unequivocal situation and to hold it constant for all subjects. The survey interview is a much "dirtier" research tool because it is subject to a variety of disturbances and contaminations. We cannot be certain about how many respondents really do not understand the thrust of a question, how many interviewers do a poor job of reading the questions in the proper order and sticking to the prescribed wording, or how many make independent "improvements" and free improvisations, or provide explanations that get out of hand when the respondent seems uncertain as to the sense of the question. How much of a burden is placed on the imagination of a typical person when he is asked, "Suppose you are faced with a five-hour train ride, and in your compartment someone begins to . . . ?" In the usual interview, the stimulation to imagine such a situation must be relatively weak. Besides, everything depends on how the question is read, how the answer is transcribed, and how humanly responsive and talkative the particular subject happens to be. All of these unknowns introduce uncertainties in the results. In a laboratory like Asch's, by contrast, a "real situation" can be called into existence. Here, influences that are close to actual experience are allowed to work uniformly on all subjects in the experiment—for example, feeling like an idiot when everyone else seems to see things differently.

Two motives for imitation: learning and fear of isolation

"They dreaded isolation more than error" was Tocqueville's explanation. At the end of the century, his fellow countryman, the sociologist Gabriel Tarde, dedicated a large part of his work to studying the human ability and tendency to imitate, speaking of a human need to be in public agreement with others (Tarde 1969, 318). Since then, imitation has remained a topic of social science research; for example, an extensive article is devoted to it in the 1968 *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Bandura 1968). In this entry, however, imitation is explained not as a result of the fear of being singled out for disapproval but as a form of learning. People observe others' behavior, learn that this or that behavioral possibility exists, and, given an appropriate opportunity, try out the behavior for themselves. Our interest in determining the role played by the fear of isolation becomes more complicated. If we call it imitation when someone repeats what has been said or done by

3. Tocqueville 1952, 207; English: 1955, 155. Author's translation in part.

others, then this kind of imitation can occur for very different reasons. It might be because of a fear of isolation; but it might also reflect the desire of adding to one's stock of knowledge, particularly in a democratic civilization that equates numerical majority with better judgment. The beauty of Asch's laboratory experiment lies precisely in its ability to eliminate all such ambiguity. The subjects in the experiment see with their own eyes that the line selected by the majority as the best match is not the best match. When these subjects join the judgment of the majority, it must be unequivocally because of a fear of isolating themselves, not out of hopes of adding something to their repertory of behaviors or store of knowledge.

As may already be supposed from the unpleasant ring of labels like "conformist" or "hanger-on," the tendency to imitate goes against ideals of individal autonomy. It is not an image with which most people like to be identified, although many would agree that it might describe "the other guy."

The question has been raised whether the Asch length-of-line experiment might not have revealed an *American* tendency to conform. Stanley Milgram (1961) repeated the investigation in a somewhat changed form in two European countries whose populations were widely regarded as being, in the one case, strikingly individualistic (the French) and as having, in the other, a strong sense of solidarity, a high level of cohesiveness (the Norwegians).[4] Although the subjects in the Milgram version of the study heard rather than saw the deviating majority, this sufficed to produce the impression that they stood all alone in their perceptual experience. Most Europeans—80 percent of the Norwegians and 60 percent of the French—frequently or almost always joined the majority view. There were later variations in the experiment. For example, checks were run to see how the number of people who sat ahead of the naive subject and made correct judgments about the matching line affected the subject's ability to depart from the majority view and say what was there before his or her eyes.

We do not need to follow these refinements; the Asch experiment in its original version has served an important purpose for our research question. We assume that the normal individual's fear of isolation sets the spiral of silence in motion, and the Asch experiment shows for a fact that this fear can be substantial.

4. See in this connection a later study, Eckstein 1966.

And it would have to be substantial to explain the results brought to light by the survey research method. Only by assuming that people greatly fear becoming isolated can we explain the enormous feat they collectively accomplish in being able to say with accuracy and reliability which opinions are on the increase and which on the decrease, and do this without assistance from any instruments of survey research. Humans invest their attention with great economy. The effort spent in observing the environment is apparently a smaller price to pay than the risk of losing the goodwill of one's fellow human beings—of becoming rejected, despised, alone.

Are we denying the social nature of human beings?

The problem is to make the attention individuals pay to group judgments both empirically visible and theoretically intelligible. Previous work on the phenomenon of imitation seems to regard learning as practically its only motive. Such work reveals a pervasive tendency to deny, or at least fails to recognize, the *social nature* of human beings, unfairly defaming it with the label of "conformity." Our social nature causes us to fear separation and isolation from our fellows and to want to be respected and liked by them. In all likelihood, this tendency contributes considerably to successful social life. But the conflict is not to be avoided. We consciously praise rational, independent thought and unshakable firmness in the judgment that we assume each person should reach by himself.

The psychoanalyst Erich Fromm systematically sought out as many different domains as he could find where contradictions between the conscious and the unconscious impulses of people in our time were as large as the contradictions Freud found in his time between conscious and unconscious sexuality. Among such modern contradictions, Fromm (1980, 26) pinpoints:

consciousness of freedom—unconscious unfreedom
conscious honesty—unconscious fraudulence
consciousness of individualism—unconscious suggestibility
consciousness of power—unconscious sense of powerlessness
consciousness of faith—unconscious cynicism and complete
  lack of faith

Freedom, sincerity, individualism—all these are adopted consciously as expressions of the values we feel in our own beings, but they simply do not fit the ways we must assume people behave.

given our description of the spiral of silence. It is therefore un-
reasonable to expect that people will consciously admit to a fear of
isolation if asked directly about their motives in a survey interview.
However, just as we are able to simulate a public situation in an
interview in order to test for tendencies to speak out or keep quiet,
we can also simulate the threat of isolation in the interview setting
and observe whether respondents react to it as the hypothesis of a
spiral of silence would lead us to expect.

A field experiment to simulate the threat of isolation

The procedure about to be described is called a "field experi-
ment" in technical language. "Field" here stands in distinction to
"laboratory." The subjects remain in the field, in their natural
setting. They are not hauled into an alien laboratory. An inter-
viewer comes into their homes to ask some questions, something
that falls a little outside the everyday, ordinary course of events yet
approximates the familiar experience of a conversation between
two persons.

Why in fact do researchers stick with such a flawed and transi-
tory investigative tool as the survey interview, an approach that
provides relatively weak kinds of stimuli and is difficult to control?
Because one gains thereby the advantage hinted at in the catchword
"field"—the naturalness of all the conditions—and because the
method includes the possibility of observing a representative sam-
ple of the population, not just those well-known groups which can
be obtained for laboratory purposes and on which so much of
experimental social research rests—students, the military, and pa-
tients in institutions. The very things that constitute the strength of
the laboratory approach—its possibilities of painstaking control
and of planned variations in the conditions that might influence
results—are the things that also constitute its weakness. Those
portions of real life that may play a decisive role in the behavior one
wants to investigate may well unintentionally be cut out by the
laboratory setting.

Smoking in the presence of nonsmokers: the threat test

Our first attempt to simulate the dangers of social isolation in a
field experiment occurred in 1976 and dealt with the topic "Smok-
ing in the presence of nonsmokers" (Noelle-Neumann 1977a, esp.
154–55). This theme seemed suitable since public opinion on the
topic was still developing and the strength of the two main camps

seemed to be fairly well balanced. In a hypothetical dialogue, which
was read aloud during the interview, 44 percent selected the follow-
ing point of view: "In the presence of nonsmokers one should
refrain from smoking. To smoke would be inconsiderate; for those
who do not smoke, it is very unpleasant to have to breathe smoke-
filled air." Exactly the same percentage, 44, took the opposite
stance: "One can't expect people to refrain from smoking just
because nonsmokers are present; it's really not that much of an
annoyance to them anyway." In a test of willingness to speak out on
the subject or the tendency to keep quiet, 45 percent of the critics of
smoking in the presence of nonsmokers and 43 percent of those who
defended the rights of smokers declared themselves ready and
willing to participate in a discussion on this topic while riding on a
train.[5]

We move now to simulating the danger of social isolation: The
core of the series of questions that we asked our representative
cross-section of 2,000 persons was framed in the format of the train
test:

1. Use the two statements already presented to obtain the per-
   sonal opinion of the respondent about the issue of smoking in
   the presence of nonsmokers.
2. Obtain an estimate of what they suppose "most people" think
   about the topic by asking: "Now, regardless of your own
   opinion, what do you think most people think about this? Are
   most people here in the Federal Republic of the opinion that
   smokers should refrain from smoking in the presence of non-
   smokers, or that smokers should continue to smoke if they
   wish?" (Results for the total population: 31 percent, "Most
   think smokers should refrain from smoking in the presence of
   nonsmokers"; 28 percent, "Most think smokers can continue
   their smoking"; 31 percent, "Opinion is equally divided"; 10
   percent, "Impossible to say.")
3. Test for speaking up or keeping quiet: "Suppose you are faced
   with a five-hour train ride, and someone in your compartment
   strikes up conversation and says: 'In the presence of nonsmok-
   ers, people ought to refrain from smoking.' Would you want to
   join in this conversation, or would you not think it worth your
   while?" (In every other interview the fellow train traveler was
   given the point of view that "One cannot require someone to

5. Allensbach Archives, survey 3037.

refrain from smoking just because there are nonsmokers present.")

4. Determine whether the respondent is a smoker or a non-smoker.

In order to simulate the threat of social isolation, the 2,000 respondents were divided into two representative groups of 1,000. The experimental group, i.e. the group that was to be subjected to the experimental factor of a threat of social isolation, was shown a sketch of two persons engaged in a conversation. One of them exclaims: "It seems to me that smokers are terribly inconsiderate. They force others to inhale their health-endangering smoke." The other person begins to answer: "Well, I . . ." The model for this question comes from the sentence-completion approach used in diagnostic psychology (fig. 19). The text of the lead-in question runs: "Here are two men in conversation. The upper one has just said something. Would you read it please. The lower one was interrupted in mid-sentence, but what do you think the lower one would have answered? How might he have finished the sentence he started?" With this invitation should come a strong increase in the otherwise weak stimuli that may occur when one simply listens passively to someone scolding those who smoke in the presence of nonsmokers. That such a sentence-completion test does not demand too much of people in a representative sample or overtax the possibilities of a survey interview can be seen by the fact that fully 88 percent of the respondents completed the sentence from the sketch.

The second sample of 1,000 persons constituted the control group. It was treated exactly like the experimental group in every respect, with the sole difference that the sentence-completion test and its threat of social isolation were missing. Following the logic of the controlled experiment, any overall differences in results that are found when the experimental group is compared to the control group can be traced back to the threat test, since all conditions otherwise were the same.

The results confirmed the expectation. After being threatened verbally, smokers who had defended their right to smoke in the presence of nonsmokers showed noticeably less interest in taking part in a discussion on this topic in a train compartment (table 8).

Smokers are particularly intimidated when a double threat of isolation is simulated. First they are given the sentence-completion test with a radical opponent of smoking in the presence of nonsmok-

Figure 19

The Threat Test

Picture used with a sentence-completion test in an interview with smokers to simulate the reality of being intimidated by a strong contrary opinion. The necessity of completing the sentence which has been started leads to experiencing the situation more intensely. Afterwards, one measures to see whether the verbal threat has influenced the tendency to speak out or remain silent.
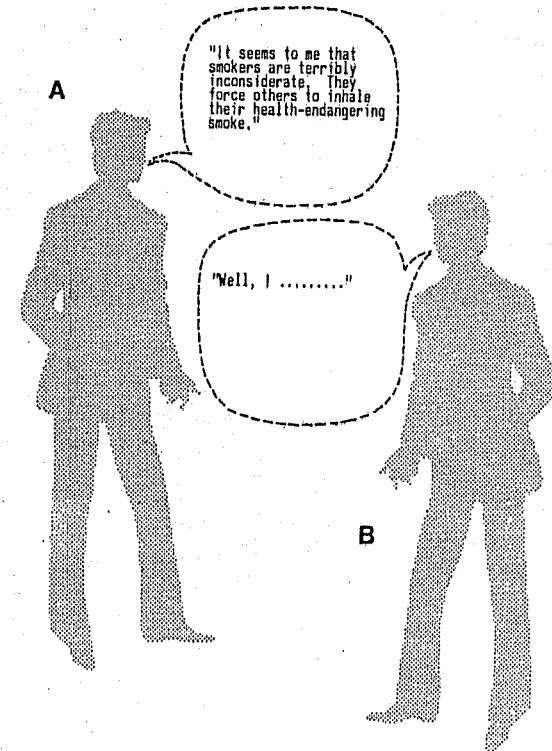
ers, and then they are faced with a fellow traveler in the train compartment who opens the conversation with the demand that "in the presence of nonsmokers people ought to refrain from smoking." Under these conditions, only 23 percent of the smokers are inclined to participate in the conversation.

Empirical tests can also make the other side of the spiral of silence visible. Nonsmokers tend to be less self-assured and consequently less inclined to try to make their point of view stick. When the sentence-completion test shows them, however, that they are by no means alone in their views, they become noticeably more inclined to join in the conversation (table 9). Shyer nonsmokers reach a high point in their readiness to speak up when, besides having an

Table 8. Train test of the silence hypothesis: danger of isolation will lead people to be silent

An aggressive climate of opinion can be simulated in an interview. After the threat test, smokers are less prone to speak out in their own defense.

	Smokers who claim the right to smoke even in the presence of nonsmokers	
	where the danger of social isolation has *not* been made clear (%)	where the danger of social isolation has been made clear (%)
Willing to participate in a conversation on the topic of smoking in the presence of nonsmokers?		
Yes	49	40
No	41	45
Undecided	10	15
	100	100
	N = 225	253

Source: Allensbach Archives, survey 3037, December 1976

Table 9. Train test of the silence hypothesis: with social support, nonsmokers become more inclined to talk

	Nonsmokers who ask that smokers refrain from smoking in the presence of nonsmokers	
	without the social support of an aggressive person of similar views (%)	with the social support of an aggressive person of similar views (%)
Willing to participate in a conversation on the topic of smoking in the presence of nonsmokers?		
Yes	37	48
No	51	37
Undecided	12	15
	100	100
	N = 330	297

Source: Allensbach Archives, survey 3037, December 1976

aggressive champion in the threat test, their fellow traveler in the train compartment forcefully declares that people should refrain from smoking in the presence of nonsmokers. Under these circumstances, only 23 percent of the smokers are inclined to join in, as against 56 percent of the nonsmokers. One can see how, as the spiral of silence runs its course, the standpoint that it is unconscionable to smoke in the presence of nonsmokers can become dominant to the point where it is impossible for a smoker publicly to take the opposite position—that smokers ought to be allowed to smoke even in the presence of non-smokers. What is being expressed here is quite evidently a cumulative effect; step by step, through hostile responses of the environment, one becomes unnerved. The more self-assured smokers do not react to the threat test by itself. When, immediately following the threat test, they are placed in a train compartment with someone who represents their own point of view—that smoking in the presence of nonsmokers is all right— they forget the previous threat. With it, 54 percent, and without it, 55 percent, are inclined to join in the conversation.

If, however, following the threat test, another unsettling experience occurs—the fellow train traveler also thunders against smoking in the presence of nonsmokers—then smokers prefer to take refuge in silence (table 10). For people who are less self-confident, a lesser threat of isolation will suffice. Women, for example, and members of the lower classes generally react to the threat test alone and are not immediately reassured merely by having a fellow traveler take their point of view (table 11).

Reacting to interview situations as though they were reality

The results of the threat test not only allow us to unveil the process of the spiral of silence; they lead us further in another respect. They encourage the assumption that many people have the imagination to experience situations described in an interview so vividly that they react to them as if they were reality. So we do not have to do our research in a secret laboratory, complete with railroad train and scientists, disguised as fellow travelers, conducting their experiments on outspokenness versus silence with unsus-

Table 10. Train test of the spiral of silence among self-assured smokers

In the presence of someone sympathetic to their views in a train compartment, smokers are willing to speak up even when they have been threatened previously.

	Smokers who claim the right to smoke even in the presence of nonsmokers	
	where the danger of social isolation has *not* been made clear (%)	where the danger of social isolation has been made clear (%)
Willing to participate in a conversation on the topic of smoking in the presence of nonsmokers when a fellow traveler has shown sympathy for smokers by saying "You can't expect people not to smoke just because nonsmokers are present"?		
Yes	55	54
No	33	30
Undecided	12	16
	100	100
	N = 119	135

In a hostile conversational environment, smokers too are intimidated, especially if they have previously been threatened.

Willing to participate in a conversation on the topic of smoking in the presence of nonsmokers when a fellow traveler has attacked smokers by saying: "In the presence of nonsmokers you should refrain from smoking"?		
Yes	41	23
No	51	63
Undecided	8	14
	100	100
	N = 106	118

Table 11. Train test of the spiral of silence among less self-confident smokers: women

After a double-barreled verbal threat, most women smokers are reduced to silence

	Women smokers who claim the right to smoke even in the presence of nonsmokers	
	where the danger of social isolation has *not* been made clear (%)	where the danger of social isolation has been made clear (%)
Willing to participate in a conversation on the topic of smoking in the presence of nonsmokers when a fellow traveler has attacked smokers by saying: "In the presence of nonsmokers, you should refrain from smoking"?		
Yes	42	10
No	54	74
Undecided	4	16
	100	100
	N = 48	49

Source: Allensbach Archives, survey 3037, December 1976

pecting subjects. Nevertheless, in developing the instruments for use in our interviews, we encountered repeated disappointments.

We wanted to go one step further and see if we could make it empirically evident that certain points of view were so stigmatized, so despised, that to adopt them was to isolate oneself. For this purpose we included a test in a number of Allensbach surveys in 1976 which used a drawing that was supposed to be a visual presentation of social isolation. At one end of a table a number of people are shown, congenially close to each other, while at the other end one person sits alone. Cartoonists' balloons plant the suggestion that an argument is taking place involving the members of the group and the loner. The test consisted of asking the respon-

what does the isolated person stand up for? Is he in favor of allowing members of the German Communist Party to become judges, or is he against it?

The text of the question ran: "Coming back, now, to the earlier question whether someone who is a member of the German Communist Party should be appointed as a judge—here you see several people talking about that issue. There are two opinions: one favors appointing such men as judges and one opposes such appointments. What do you think the individual sitting alone here might have said? That he is in favor of, or that he is against, appointing a communist as a judge?" (figs. 20, 21).

A test that did not work

The picture of people around the table turned out to be something like the unresponsive household scales already mentioned—it showed no results. There was a substantially high proportion of "don't know" answers, 33 percent, which in itself pointed toward the possibility that people's imaginations were being overtaxed. Furthermore, the point of view that was put into the mouth of the evidently isolated person at the table seemed to have nothing to do with minority or majority opinion. Although response to the direct question, "Should members of the Communist Party be allowed to become judges?" resulted in a resounding majority "no" at the time it was asked (60 percent no, 18 percent yes, in April 1976), and although the population knew perfectly well which point of view

Figure 20

The Isolation Test

Question: "Which opinion does the lone person at the end of the table represent?"
Proposed test for determining whether certain points
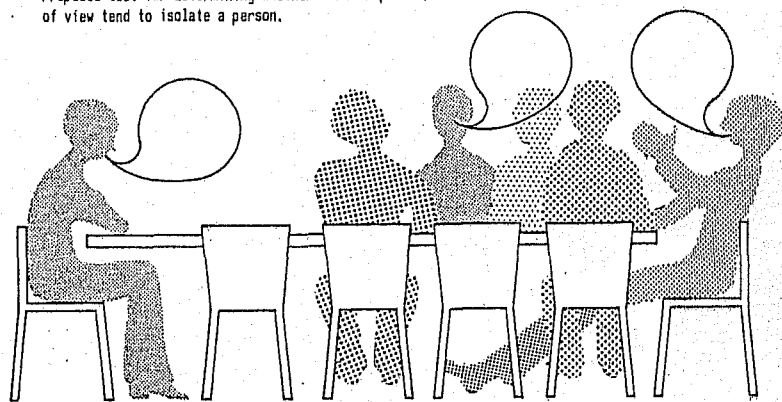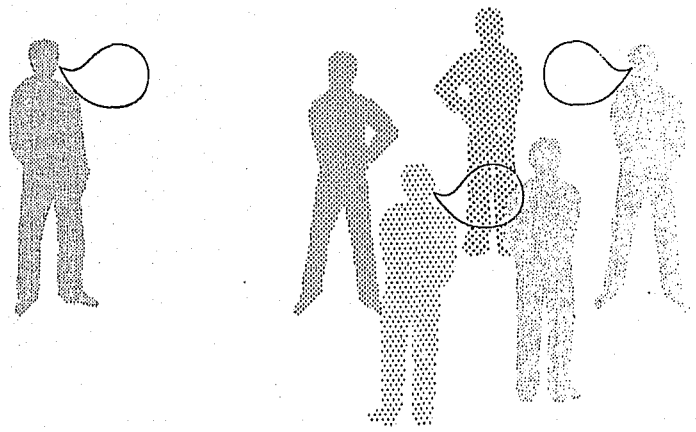of view tend to isolate a person.

Figure 21

The Isolation Test

Second version: Instead of sitting at a table, the group is standing.
The test was sometimes misunderstood; the isolated person
was thought to be a superior.

was in the majority and which might tend to isolate a person (80 percent said most people do not want members of the Communist Party as judges while only 2 percent said most people have nothing against it), the guesses about which opinion the loner in the picture expressed were distributed almost equally between supposing that he was in favor of allowing communists to become judges (33 percent) and supposing that he was opposed (34 percent). Judging from the actual, and quite correctly estimated, popular opinion at this time, most of the people should have taken him to be an advocate of the notion that "a member of the Communist Party should be able to be appointed as one of our judges"—that is, *if* people were actually aware that unpopular opinions might lead to isolation, and *if* they saw the man at the end of the table as isolated. Was the effect of the scene at the table too intimate? Was it insufficiently public? Does someone sitting at the end of a table still belong to the group and therefore not seem isolated to our respondents?

In any event, the second test picture, in which people stood rather than sat, turned out to be somewhat more useful. This time only 21 percent were undecided, and most others (46 percent) guessed that the isolated person represented the minority position, that is, that members of the Communist Party should be given access to judgeships. Even so, 33 percent came down on the oppo-

site side. Those who themselves took the position that one should allow communists the chance to become judges turned out to have a sharper sensitivity to the isolating possibilities of their position; they identified the isolated person with this opinion to the tune of 65 percent (table 12). This test, however, also proved unsatisfactory; even in the instance of an overwhelming majority opinion on a particular side, the results were too unclear. For example, during another test run with the same pictures but using a less polarized issue, a completely unexpected misunderstanding showed up. The question was: "Who would you like to have as the next Federal Chancellor?" Forty-four percent said Helmut Schmidt and 35 percent said Helmut Kohl (April 1976). Each of these two groups, however, tended to assign their own point of view to the person standing off by himself.

For the time being the test was given up; later (see the end of chapter 22) we will encounter it again, albeit with a different diagnostic assignment. We did not, however, give up the goal we had pursued with these picture tests: finding an empirical check for whether people knew which points of view would tend to isolate a person. For the spiral of silence to work, of course, it would be sufficient if such knowledge existed only unconsciously. The tendency indicated by Fromm's work for each person to feel conscious of himself or herself as an individual, an emancipated citizen, and the concomitant neglect of efforts to make us conscious of our social nature (surely a more appropriate term than Fromm's deprecatory "mass man"), are hardly conducive to conscious observations and admissions of the type we seek. Nevertheless, despite its weaknesses the survey interview can provide clear evidence that people know which opinions at a particular time are liable to result in social isolation. To achieve this result, the test question had to be sharpened, and it had to involve such an extreme situation that even a thick-skinned person would clearly recognize the inherent dangers of isolation.

Who gets their tires slashed?

Shortly before the federal elections in September 1976, two questions of the following type appeared in Allensbach interviews. One ran: "Here is a picture of a car that has had its tire slashed. On the right rear window is a sticker for a political party, but you can't read which party the sticker was for. What is your guess: with which party's stickers do people run the greatest risk of having a tire

Table 12. Member of the German Communist Party as a judge? A test of social isolation

Does the population realize that certain points of view expose their adherents to the risk of social isolation? *Question:* "Coming back to our earlier question, whether someone who is in the German Communist Party should be appointed as a judge. . . . here you see several people who are talking about that issue. There are two opinions: one in favor of appointing such men as judges and one opposing such appointments. What do you think this individual standing here alone might have said? (In every other interview it read: "sitting alone at the table.") That he is in favor, or that he opposes appointing a communist as a judge?"

	Presentation of a picture with	
Total population	persons sitting (%)	persons standing (%)
The person off by himself is— in favor of appointing Communist Party members as judges	33	46
opposed	34	33
Undecided	33	21
	100	100
	N = 466	516

Those who hold the minority opinion—Communist Party members should be allowed to be judges—know better than the general population that one isolates oneself from other people by adopting this position.

| Holders of the minority opinion—Communist Party members should be able to be judges		
The person off by himself is— in favor of appointing Communist Party members as judges	45	65
opposed	29	21
Undecided	26	14
	100	100
	N = 83	79

Source: Allensbach Archives, survey 3028, April 1976

slashed?" (table 13). Almost half the sample, 45 percent, left the question unanswered. Nevertheless, the result was clear. Those who did answer differentiated sharply among the three parties represented in parliament: 21 percent named the Christian Democratic Union, 9 percent the Social Democratic Party, and 1 percent the Free Democrats (or Liberals). Table 13 shows the complete

Table 13. The development of further tests to measure the climate of opinion

Which opinions can isolate a person? *Question:* "Here is a picture of a car that has had its tire slashed. On the right rear window there is a sticker for a political party, but you can't read which party the sticker was for. What is your guess: With which party's stickers do people run the greatest risk of having a tire slashed?"
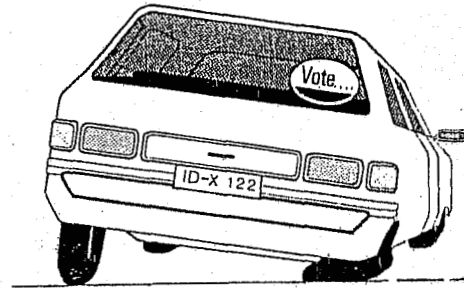
	September 1976			
	Total population (%)	Christian Democratic supporters (%)	Social Democratic supporters (%)	Free Democratic supporters (%)
Christian Democratic Union	21	28	12	21
Social Democratic Party	9	7	11	13
Free Democratic Party (Liberals)	1	2	x	4
National Democratic Party of Germany	11	10	12	10
Communist parties	16	14	22	15
No definite response	45	42	46	43
	103	103	103	106
	N = 556	263	238	45

Source: Allensbach Archives, survey 2189; x = less than 0.5%

results. Christian Democratic supporters felt themselves most endangered; Free Democratic supporters were aware of their own lesser danger and of the relatively greater danger run by Christian Democratic supporters. Social Democratic supporters did not feel themselves particularly endangered; if they had, they would have estimated their own danger as substantially higher than the estimates they gave the other parties, and this was not the case.

The second test question from this series was superior to the first; it led to fewer refusals and it dealt with behavior that was more permissible than damaging other people's property. Consequently, the second question provided a more realistic indication of what people regarded as popular or unpopular; it provided a better simulation of the signals that indicate public rejection. In any event, it clearly made supporters of the Social Democratic Party and the Free Democratic Party less inhibited in indicating their feelings about being accepted.

The question ran: "I want to tell you now about another case and ask you what you think. Someone drives into a strange city and can't find a parking space. He finally gets out of the car and asks a pedestrian, 'Can you tell me, please, where I can find a place to park?' The pedestrian replies, 'Ask somebody else, buddy!' and walks away. I should mention that the driver is wearing a political badge on his jacket. What do you think: which party did this badge support? What is your guess?" (table 14).

Fully 25 percent of the Social Democratic supporters, and 28 percent of the Liberals guessed that it was a Christian Democratic badge, more than double the number who named the Social Democrats. The Christian Democratic supporters apparently hesitated to admit their own unpopularity (table 14). In that month, September 1976, as we have already noticed, the tendency to deny having voted for the Christian Democratic Union during the previous election—a tendency that had evened out for a while—reached its highest point.

Nevertheless, the psychological situation for Christian Democratic supporters was much less threatening at that point than it had been four years earlier during the federal election of 1972. We see this from the answers to a question which symbolically threatened public isolation. The question was asked in both 1972 and 1976 in postelection studies and ran: "In the election campaign, posters again were ripped up and defaced. According to what you saw, which party's posters were most often damaged?" In 1972, the

Table 14. **Test question for the climate of opinion: What points of view may cause social isolation?**

Question: "I want to tell you, now, about another case and ask you what you think. Someone drives into a strange city and can't find a parking space. He finally gets out of the car and asks a pedestrian: 'Can you tell me, please, where I can find a place to park?' The pedestrian replies, 'Ask somebody else, buddy!' and walks away. I should mention that the driver is wearing a political badge on his jacket. What do you think: Which party did this badge support? What is your guess?"

	September 1976			
Answers	Total population (%)	Christian Democratic supporters (%)	Social Democratic supporters (%)	Free Democratic supporters (%)
Christian Democratic Union	23	21	25	28
Social Democratic Party	14	19	12	8
Free Democratic Party (Liberals)	2	4	1	x
National Democratic Party of Germany	8	7	10	7
Communist parties	21	21	21	21
No definite response	35	34	35	40
	103	106	104	104
	N = 546	223	264	50

Source: Allensbach Archives, survey 2189

Christian Democratic Union was named by a wide margin; that is, 31 percent regarded Christian Democratic posters as subject to the most damage, while the Social Democrats came in second with 7 percent. In 1976, the Christian Democratic posters were again most often seen as the most damaged, although now by only 23 percent instead of 31 percent (table 15).

Slashed tires, defaced or torn posters, help refused to a lost stranger—questions of this kind demonstrate that people can be on uncomfortable or even dangerous ground when the climate of opinion runs counter to their views. When people attempt to avoid isolation, they are not responding hypersensitively to trivialities;

Table 15. **Destroying and defacing posters: a symbolic threat of isolation**

Question: "In the election campaign, posters again were ripped up and defaced. According to what you saw, which party's posters were most often damaged?"*

	Postelection studies	
	1972 (%)	1976 (%)
Posters from the —		
Christian Democratic Union	31	23
Social Democratic Party	7	12
Free Democratic Party (Liberals)	1	2
All the same	27	22
Don't know	35	41
	101	100
	N = 912	990

*The wording of the question in 1972 was slightly different: ". . . which party, more than the rest, had damage done to its posters?"
Source: Allensbach Archives, surveys 2129, 2191

these are existential issues that can involve real hazards. Society demands quick conformity over issues that are undergoing change. It must require this to maintain a sufficient degree of unity to remain integrated. As a German jurist, Rudolph von Ihering (1883, 242; cf. 325) noted in his essay *Der Zweck im Recht* (Intention in Law), the disapproval that punishes someone who strays from the majority view does not have the rational character of the disapproval that arises from "an incorrect logical conclusion, a mistake in solving an arithmetic problem, or an unsuccessful work of art; rather it is expressed as the conscious or unconscious *practical reaction of the community* to *injury* of its interests, a defense for the purposes of common security."

Opinion expressed
as dominant by
mass media

Interpersonal
support for
deviant opinion

Amount of people not openly
expressing deviant opinion
and/or changing from deviant
to dominant opinion