



# Spiral of Silence Theory (SST)

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann

# [ Spiral of Silence Theory (SST) ]

- people who believe they hold a minority viewpoint on a public issue will remain in the background
- those who believe they hold a majority viewpoint will become more encouraged to speak.

# [ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann ]

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- founder and director of the Allensbach Institute
- a Gallup-like polling agency in Germany, Noelle-Neumann began to examine the meaning of public opinion.

# Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion-Our Social Skin

- Noelle-Neumann separates public opinion into two discrete terms: public and opinion.
- Public opinion is defined as the "attitudes or behaviors one must express in public if one is not to isolate oneself, in areas of controversy or change; public opinions are those attitudes one can express without running the danger of isolating oneself."
- Public opinion refers to the collective sentiments of a population on a particular subject.

# [ Media ]

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- Most often, the media will determine what subjects will be of interest to people
- the media can often turn a subject into a controversial one.

# [ Media ]

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- 1. Ubiquity refers to the fact that the media are pervasive sources of information.
- 2. Cumulative refers to the process of the media repeating themselves across programs and across time
- 3. Consonance applies to the similarities of beliefs, attitudes, and values held by the media.

# [ The train test ]

- 1. Supporters of a dominant opinion are more willing to voice an opinion than those of the minority opinion.
- 2. People from large cities who are male and between the ages of 45 and 59 are more willing to speak out.
- 3. Various ways of speaking out exist (e.g., posters, bumper stickers, flyers).
- 4. People are more likely to voice an opinion if it not only reflects their own convictions but also fits within the current trends and the "spirit of the age." People will voice an opinion if it aligns with societal discussions.

# [ Train test ]

- 5. People tend to share their opinions more with those who agree than with those who disagree.
- 6. People draw the strength of their convictions from a variety of sources, including family, friends, and acquaintances.
- 7. People may engage in "last-minute swings," jumping on the bandwagon of popular opinion during the final moments of conversation.

# [ Three assumptions ]

- 1. Society threatens deviant individuals with isolation; fear of isolation is pervasive.
- 2. The fear of isolation causes individuals to try to assess the climate of opinions at all times.
- 3. Public behavior (speaking out) is affected by public opinion assessment.

# [ The hard core ]

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Noelle-Neumann believes that the hard core are the minority at the end of the spiral of silence who defy any threats of isolation.