

# Spiral of silence



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Name: Edmund Marcio Lugao Diploma in MassCommunicationSubject:

Communication Theory Introduction: I do not like V-neck but I am a Gay and what say you? I do not use handbags similar to those used by women and what say you? “ Gay men have muscular bodies and like to show off by wearing V-neck and sleeveless clothes. They prefer tight and light coloured clothing. They like to carry big handbags similar to those used by women and so on. In a seminar in Penang on Sunday, Sep 16, 2012,

DeputyEducationMinister Mohd Puad Zarkashi said not many people understood or knew the early " symptoms" of homosexuality, bisexuality and transgender inclinations to prevent its spread. The Malaysian Government Education Minister has endorsed a list of the identifiable gay and lesbian guideline for the schools and parents to prevent the spread of what it perceives as a phenomenon among teenagers, especially students. In that seminar, the majority of the audience are teachers. In that situation, are them practicing the Spiral of Silence? Content:

We will always choose to remain silence if someone evaluate their views fall in the minority. According to Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1916 - 2010) (Appendix I) “ Spiral of Silence” been introduced as an attempt to explain in part how public opinion is formed. She wondered why the Germans supported wrong political positions that led to national defeat, humiliation and ruin in the 1930s-1940s. The description of Spiral of Silence is audience will be unwilling to publicly express their opinion if they believe they are in the minority. They will also be more vocal if they believe they are a part of the majority.

Thus, the more marginalized you become, the less you speak and so spiral into a fully marginal position. This works because we fear social rejection. and that when a person appears to be rejected, others will back away from them, fearing being rejected because they associate with the rejected person. It also makes marginalization a powerful way of eliminating political and social competition. Public opinion is 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. According to Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, one view dominated the public scene and others disappeared from the public awareness as its adherents became silent. In other words, the people fear of separation or isolation those around them, they tend to keep their attitudes to themselves when they think they are in the minority. (Appendix II) Example, in a company, the managing director decides to increase their working hour from 8am to 10pm and send e-mail to all employees. Majority of them accept this time changes and few employees are not satisfied with his decision but they cannot or ready to express their through publicly.

That might have few possibility which are " Fear of isolation" like transfer. They may feel unsupported by the other employees, " Fear of Rejection" By rejecting their personal opinion from the public will help to avoid fight or they may try to save their job by suppressing or avoid personal statement in public. Spiral of silence theory describe as a dynamic process. The prediction about public opinion in mass media which gives more coverage for the majorities in the society and gives very less coverage for minorities.

In this reality world, this social environment, people have fear of rejection to express their opinion or views and they know well what behaviors will make a better likelihood. We called this as “fear of Isolation”. Example, When Barack Obama’s (Obama) pastor of twenty years, Rev. Jeremiah Wright conducted radical sermons that caused much public outrage, Obama had no choice but to concur with the public. It can be said that Obama was caught in the spiral of silence where if he had supported his pastor’s comments in any way, he would have had a very hard time winning the elections.

Obama can be said to be in the minority and at the bottom of the spiral while the public, with their opinions against the pastor, as being at the top of the spiral. Hence, Obama had to give a speech, where he had to declare in public that he was not in agreement with his pastor’s comments, failing which he may not have a chance of winning the elections. Being the part of minority, people will concern they lose their confidence and silent or mute to express their views because of the fear of isolation or they feel alone or unsupported.

Sometimes the minorities withdraw their expressed opinion from public debates to secure themselves from the majority. The maximum numbers get more vocal space in the society and lesser number become less vocal space or become silent. In another example, this is a well known fact that gun control is a prevailing issue in United State. However, those politicians rarely touch on this topic during the elections. Especially senator John McCain. Senator McCain has a strong support from the National Rifle Association (NRA) and speaking for gun control will only result in him losing a very critical support for the elections.

On the other hand, while it seems as though the general public are divided by being for and against gun control, the other politicians too avoid bringing up the issue of gun control for fear of rejection by the public, just in case the future trend becomes such that most people's opinions are opposite the politicians'. Hence, once again, the politicians are caught up in the spiral of silence where they have to succumb to present or future trend of public opinion to win the elections.

Neumann mentioned that the suppression of the minority's opinions in the spiral of silence is caused by media. Because of the influential nature of media (Agenda-setting theory), the media tends to set the agenda as to what the public's opinion on an issue is, although it may not be correct. Hence, Neumann describes a condition called "pluralistic ignorance," where people have a wrong idea of what the public's opinion really is. She believes that the television in particular, is one media whose power of influence on public opinion, should not to be underestimated.

In an attempt to describe the extent of the power of television, Neumann claims that she has never found a spiral of silence that went against the tenor of that media. In concurring with Stuart Hall's pessimistic evaluation of the media's intrusive role in democratic decision making, she suggests, that media in general and the television in particular, is the authority in giving people a sense of what the public opinion on an issue is. Hence, people can tell when they are not in the same opinion with the general public through information received from the media and so those people will tend not to voice out their opinions.

Neumann claims that just because those people keep silent, it does not mean that they will change their opinions to suit the public. The German Public Opinion Research Center developed a “train/plane test” that determines whether people are willing to voice out their opinions. It found, very importantly, that those favoring the majority tend to willingly express their views, whereas those in the opposite court do not. Also, it found that the willingness to speak out depends on whether the future trend will be in harmony with their current views.

As such, people feel safe to talk to those who share their same views than those who do not. The test also revealed that low self-esteem will cause one not to talk about his opinions and also, males, young adults and people from middle and upper classes find it easier to speak out. Lastly, the test identified that existing law encourages people to express their opinions when they feel they are in the minority. Conclusion: Ending Spiral of Silence theory has both micro level and macro level explanatory process. It works well during the public campaign, Senate and Parliament.

Spiral of silence theory will also help to raise questions about considering the role and responsibility of media in the society. This theory will not consider the other explanation of silencing. In some cases the person may feel the majority's ideas or opinion is much better than his own view and it overly negative view of media influence the average people too. Edmund's word

October ©2012 References: 1) The Spiral of Silence Theory. Communication Theory (<http://communicationtheory.org/the-spiral-of-silence-theory/>) 2) The Graduated Google Blog. Spot (©2008) <http://thegraduand.blogspot.com/2008/04/spiral-of-silence-theory-elisabeth.html>) 3) Spiral of Silence

<https://assignbuster.com/spiral-of-silence/>

Theory. Changing Minds. org (©2012) ([http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/spirals\\_silence.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/spirals_silence.htm)) 4) Noelle-Neumann, E. (©1984). The Spiral of Silence. University of Chicago, Chicago ([http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/spirals\\_silence.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/spirals_silence.htm)) 5) Noelle-Neumann, E. (©1984). A First Look at Communication Theory - Spiral of Silence 7th Edition. University of Chicago, Chicago. page 372 - 381 (<http://www.afirstlook.com/docs/spiral.pdf>)