

RGC Ref. No.: UGC/FDS14/H08/16 <hr/> (please insert ref. above)

**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)

Completion Report
(for completed projects only)

<p><u>Submission Deadlines:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within six months of the approved project completion date. 2. Completion report: within 12 months of the approved project completion date.
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Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1. Project Title

Developing the Model of Inoculated Spiral of Silence (ISoS) for the Insight of Public
Opinion in Hong Kong

2. Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Prof. TSO, Hung Scarlet / Professor & Dean	School of Communication, HSUHK
Co-Investigator(s)	Prof. SIU, Yuk Tai / Professor	School of Communication, HSUHK
	Dr. SONG, Zhaoxun / Associate Professor	School of Communication, HSUHK
	Dr. LIN, Wei-Kuo Wayne / Associate Professor	College of Communication, Fu-Jen Catholic University, Taipei

3. Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval <i>(must be quoted)</i>
Project Start Date	01/01/2017		
Project Completion Date	31/12/2018	31/12/2019	08/05/2019
Duration <i>(in month)</i>	24	36	08/05/2019
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31/12/2019	31/12/2020	08/05/2019

Part B: The Final Report

5. Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. Develop a model for better understanding the characteristics of public opinion in Hong Kong based on considerations of the theory of Inoculation and the theory of Spiral of Silence (ISoS).
2. Employ the model and its strategies of ISoS, such that the true majority of silent citizens may have better chances to speak up their opinion and express their attitude, rather than dominated by so-called “winning-side of opinion”.
3. Examine the new model on the Internet, testing ISoS research hypotheses via Online vs. Offline (O-to-O) contexts in order to gain better understanding not only offline of the reality world (face-to-face communication), but online of the virtual environment, e.g., Social Media (Facebook and Twitter).
4. Contribute a novel perspective of researching public opinion for the academic and the professional for their more effective future decisions in a variety of fields in the context of Hong Kong society.

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: 08/05/2019

Reasons for the change: Adjusting the original objective No.3 to reflect a more realistic and achievable work scope within the current project duration.

3. Examine the validity of the established model through performing detailed analysis of experimental condition means for the dependent measures associated with the test of ISoS research hypotheses.

5.3 Realisation of the objectives

(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

The realization of the project's key objectives has been achieved despite the unexpected circumstances faced by the team as the result of the sudden outbreak of Hong Kong's social unrest and then followed by the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic. Such unfortunate events have been seriously affecting people's normal daily lives and activities for quite a long period of time.

An inoculated spiral of silence (ISoS) model has been developed for better understanding the characteristics of public opinion in Hong Kong context (Objective 1). The ISoS model has been specifically designed through studying the controversial issue of Article 23 of the Hong Kong Basic Law. A field experiment has been successfully designed and implemented to employ such model with relevant ISoS strategies to test out the research hypotheses (Objective 2). The results and data analysis have shown that the ISoS model can generally fit in Hong Kong context. Inoculation would increase people's resistance to attitude change and willingness to speak out, which could mitigate the process of Spiral of Silence. Besides, the study has also suggested that issue involvement and hardcore characteristics could have significant effect on resistance to attitude change and willingness to speak out, contributing to further understanding of the model by explicating how the individual characteristics work in the process.

Based on the use of MANCOVA and ANCOVA as the main statistical analysis methods, the validity of the ISoS model in Hong Kong context has been successfully checked on the research hypotheses (Objective 3). The project team's additional thought of testing the model on another controversial issue has been unfortunately affected, to a large extent, by the social unrest and coronavirus outbreak in Hong Kong. However, the need for conducting such a test can be regarded as quite redundant when considering its relatively low importance and relevance to achieving the project's real aim of developing the ISoS model for the insight of public opinion in Hong Kong context. Since the ISoS model has already been developed and successfully tested on the Article 23 issue for the project, repeating a similar test on another issue would no more than just help check a case of using the developed model again, rather than trying to make further enhancement on it. The purpose of this extra testing has been already fulfilled through testing the ISoS model on the Article 23 issue, and it would be unnecessary to simply repeat such work, especially under the unfortunate situations currently happening in Hong Kong. With the experience gained from this project and better understanding of the need for setting a more realistic and achievable research scope, it is believed that a better approach would be to concentrate on examining a variety of cases in a separate project in future for conducting more thorough and specific tests on the developed ISoS model with different issues to find out how to make possible improvement. Finally, relevant findings of the

project have been consolidated and submitted for journal publication to provide Hong Kong academic and professional with a new perspective of researching public opinion (Objective 4).

5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

Objectives <i>(as per 5.1/5.2 above)</i>	Addressed <i>(please tick)</i>	Percentage Achieved <i>(please estimate)</i>
1. Develop a model for better understanding the characteristics of public opinion in Hong Kong based on considerations of the theory of Inoculation and the theory of Spiral of Silence (ISoS).	✓	100%
2. Employ the model and its strategies of ISoS, such that the true majority of silent citizens may have better chances to speak up their opinion and express their attitude, rather than dominated by so-called “winning-side of opinion”	✓	100%
3. Examine the validity of the established model through performing detailed analysis of experimental condition means for the dependent measures associated with the test of ISoS research hypotheses.	✓	100%
4. Contribute a novel perspective of researching public opinion for the academic and the professional for their more effective future decisions in a variety of fields in the context of Hong Kong society.	✓	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome

(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

This project aims at exploring the Inoculated Spiral of Silence (ISoS) model in Hong Kong context regarding the effects of persuasion inoculation on people’s attitude change. The effect of fear of isolation resulting the spiral of silence influence on the reaction of people’s perception of public opinion has raised the concern of producing unfavorable consequences that conflict with the democratic ideal of listening and reflecting the true voices of people in civilized societies. McGuire’s theory of persuasion inoculation is considered having the capability of providing a possible mechanism to intervene such a process by enhancing people’s confidence and increasing their resistance to attitudinal change.

Major findings of the project have been highlighted in the submitted paper under review as given in Part C. The research outcome has shown the applicability of the inoculated spiral of silence model to address controversial issues under the social context specific to Hong Kong’s local environment. The triggering of inoculation-conferred resistance has indeed contributed to strengthening the capability of participants in the experiment to behave against the fear of isolation, promoting their willingness to assert themselves more on the controversy over Article 23. Furthermore, such resistance has increased notably for people highly involved in the issue but decreased for hardcore resisters with the attitude showing little fear of isolation. The positive testing on people with hardcore characteristic is particularly encouraging since little research in the current literature seems to have specifically explored such a concept.

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action (Maximum half a page)

As the approval by China's National People's Congress to directly impose a national security bill for Hong Kong has yet created a different situation, further development of the research could be considered for investigating the ISoS model under such a new context. Since the study of this project has been mainly focused on the public opinion in the domain of a specific sector, more participants from different sectors are also required to test out the inoculated spiral of silence concept extensively. With a deeper and wider understanding of the ISoS model, the scope of its validity and applicability can be then more accurately tailored to suit different situations. Nevertheless, the results achieved through this project can still help provide an exploratory understanding of the ISoS model to serve as a possible reference of design and methodology for examining and influencing the decision-making process of addressing various controversial issues within the context of Hong Kong's unique local environment.

7. Layman's Summary

(Describe in layman's language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)

This study adopts McGuire's persuasion inoculation model to explore characteristics that could intervene the effects of spiral of silence through considering the controversial issue of attempting to create a national security law associated with Article 23 of the Hong Kong Basic Law, prior to a new law subsequently imposed by the Central People's Government of PRC under Article 18. A field experiment was conducted to test the concept of inoculated spiral of silence under the specific "One country, Two systems" governance in Hong Kong context. The results indicated that inoculation-conferred resistance would occur in changing people's attitude and promoting their willingness to speak out in public. Moreover, resistance to attitudinal change would increase for people highly involved in the issue but decrease for the hardcore resisters. The relevant findings of this study on associating the persuasion inoculation concept with public opinion could contribute to bringing in a manipulable perspective for Hong Kong academic and professional to address issues of controversy by applying effective communication strategy of persuasion in various fields, such as public policymaking, public relations, and crisis communication.

Part C: Research Output**8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) <i>(denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)</i>	Title and Journal / Book <i>(with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)</i>	Submitted to RGC <i>(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)</i>	Attached to this Report <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Acknowledged the Support of RGC <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Accessible from the Institutional Repository <i>(Yes or No)</i>
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance <i>(For paper accepted but not yet published)</i>	Under Review	Under Preparation <i>(optional)</i>						
		✓		S. H. Tso W. K. Lin Y. T. Siu* Z. X. Song	Inoculated Spiral of Silence Studies: Exploring Inoculation Effects on Public Opinion in Hong Kong Context / Asian Journal of Communication		No	Yes	No

9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered

(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)

Month / Year / Place	Title	Conference Name	Submitted to RGC <i>(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)</i>	Attached to this Report <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Acknowledged the Support of RGC <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Accessible from the Institutional Repository <i>(Yes or No)</i>
N/A						

10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning

(Please elaborate)

N/A

11. Student(s) Trained

(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
N/A			

12. Other Impact

(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)

N/A

13. Statistics on Research Outputs

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (please specify)	
No. of outputs arising directly from this research project	1 under review				Type	No.

14. Public Access Of Completion Report

(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	Reasons
N/A	