Guided Group Discussion: A Strategy for Changing Behavior

Carol Werner & Christina Stanley
University of Utah

Plan for Today

- 1. Background (30 minutes)
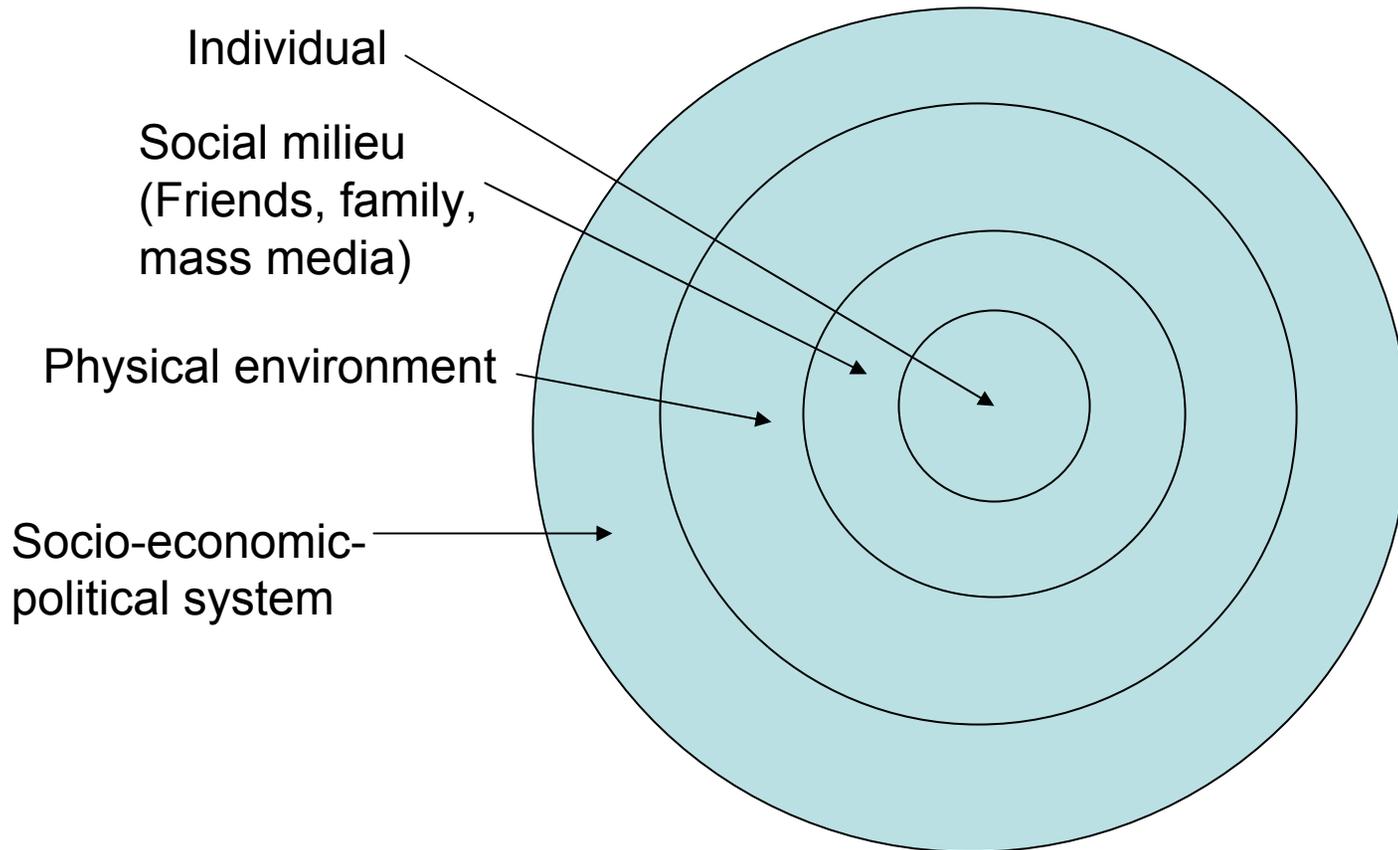- 2. Demonstration of Guided Group Discussion (30 minutes)

BREAK

- 3. Training/How to Do It (30 minutes)
- 4. Audience Members Practice Leading a Guided Group Discussion (90 minutes)
- 5. Q&A, wrap up

Socially Motivated Behaviors

- When individual acts so as to avoid censure or earn praise

  (examples: landscaping, water use, recycling, home & yard chemicals, automobile choice, vandalism, risk-taking).

- Rarely aware of social motivation.

- Persuasion/Discussion can capitalize on this motive.

Multiple influences: No Silver Bullet

Individual

Social milieu
(Friends, family,
mass media)

Physical environment

Socio-economic-
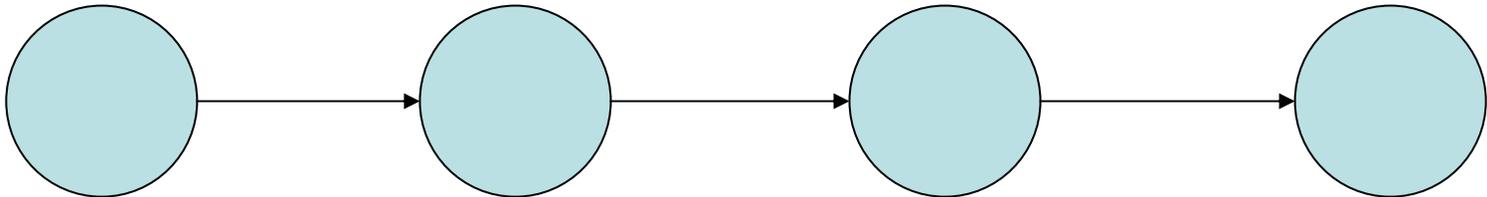political system

Can't change behaviors in a vacuum

Support for Change over Time

- social/physical/political/economic environments must provide support for behavior change over time
- Resistance to contrary pressures

Typical Persuasion: Individually-Oriented

Induce individual to develop strong attitudes (predict behavior, resist influence, last a long time)

Individual responsibility, personal benefits

Need more for socially motivated behaviors

Guided Group Discussion

- Homes as self-expression.
- Care what others think.
- "Socially motivated" to use toxics to achieve "ideal" home and yard.
- County Health Dept: reduce toxic products
- Appeals to individual responsibility & personal benefits do not address "social motivations"

Guided Group Discussion

- Individual in a Social Context
  - friends, family, colleagues, religious group, neighbors ("reference group")
  - more easily persuaded if they see their friends endorse attitude/behavior.

- Change over time
  - Group supports individual; helps change & maintain new attitude and behavior

What is Guided Group Discussion?

Gist:

Getting friends to persuade each other.

Expanded Definition:

Encourage participation from those who accept County's message; get them to answer "challenges" from others

"Guided" with handouts, presenter comments

Is Guided Group Discussion Effective?
Persuasion

- PERSONAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

	Organizers (Attended)	Control (Missed)	n
Took things to HHW facility?	35%	10%*	20
Shared leftovers?	35%	12%*	17
Begin/continue sharing?	5.3	3.6*	18
Important to reduce use	9.7	9.0*	23
Plan to use nontoxics	8.7	7.2*	23

- Mailed survey, 1-2 months after meeting
- 11 is most positive; 6 is mid-point of scale
- *$p < .05$ ("reliable")

Is Guided Group Discussion Effective?

PERCEPTIONS OF GROUP

	Organizers (Attended)	Control (Missed)	n
• Group shared leftovers?	27%	DK	22
• Group begin/continue sharing?	6.0	4.2*	12

WHY EFFECTIVE?

Relevant Discussion → ■ → Attitude change

POSSIBLE REASONS

CONTENT MORE PERSUASIVE?

MORE LEARNING?

ACTIVE LEARNING?

PERCEIVED GROUP ENDORSEMENT?

High School Sample

- *n* = 280 females, 26 classes (males, different pattern)

- Used "true experiment/causality"; random assignment to discussion or lecture

- Content & Interest: Discussion=Lecture

- Different styles: For discussion, presenter encouraged participation and involved students in demos

Survey Questions:

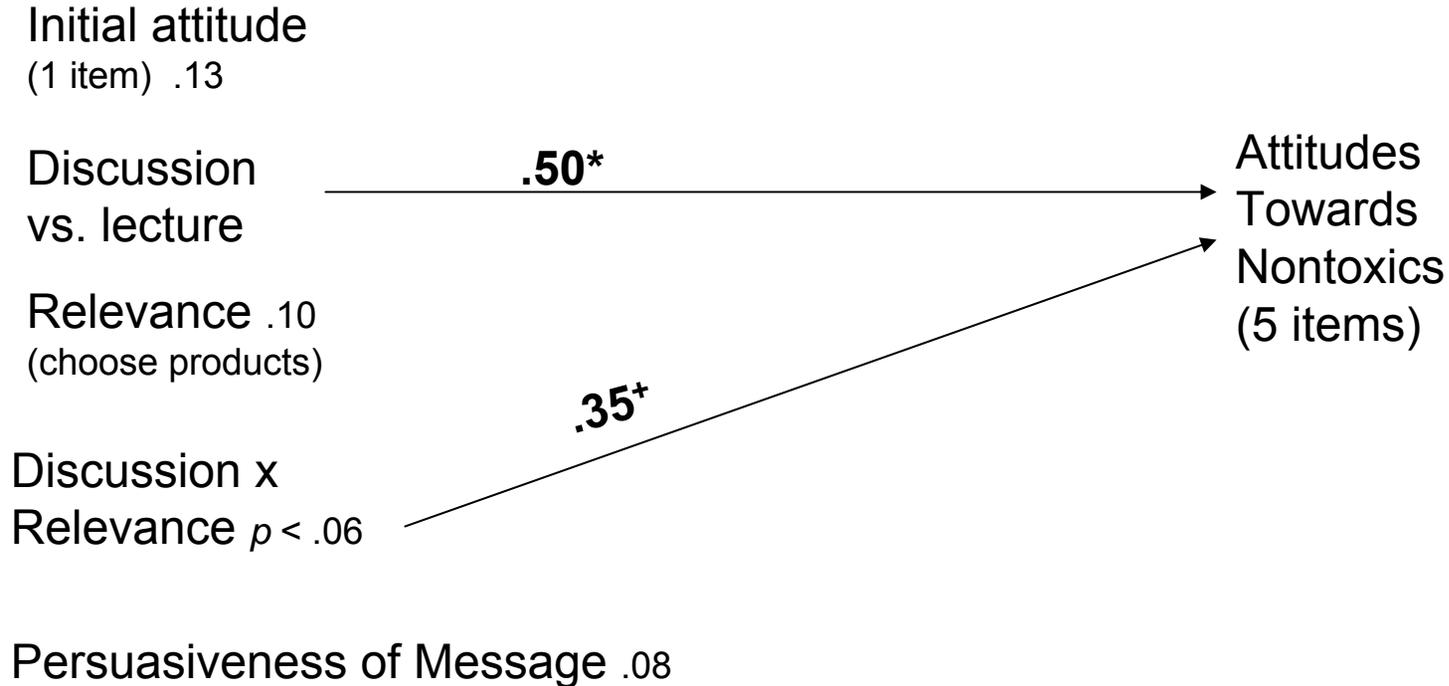**Post-meeting Attitude towards Nontoxics:**

5-items (summed): effectiveness of nontoxics, importance of using nontoxics, likelihood of using a nontoxic, interest in learning more, no problem using nontoxics

"Perceived group endorsement"

5-items, similar to above, "what would your classmates say?"; alpha = .77.

Showing "Why"
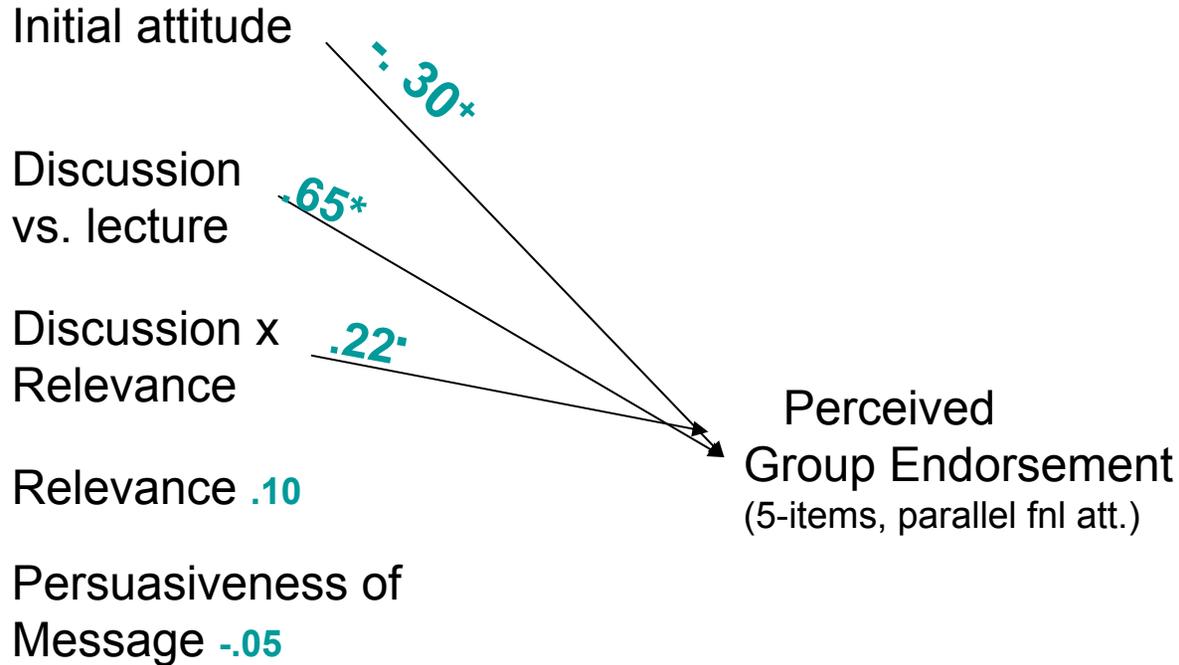## 1. Predicting post-meeting attitudes (female students, $n = 26$ classes; male students, different pattern)

Initial attitude
(1 item) .13

Discussion
vs. lecture   **.50***   Attitudes
                                                                            Towards
                                                                            Nontoxics
Relevance .10   (5 items)
(choose products)

                              .35⁺

Discussion x
Relevance $p < .06$

Persuasiveness of Message .08

Survey Results

2. Meeting "activates" perceived group endorsement

(female students, *n* = 26 classes)

Initial attitude

Discussion
vs. lecture

Discussion x
Relevance

Relevance **.10**

Persuasiveness of
Message **-.05**

-.30₊

.65₊

.22·

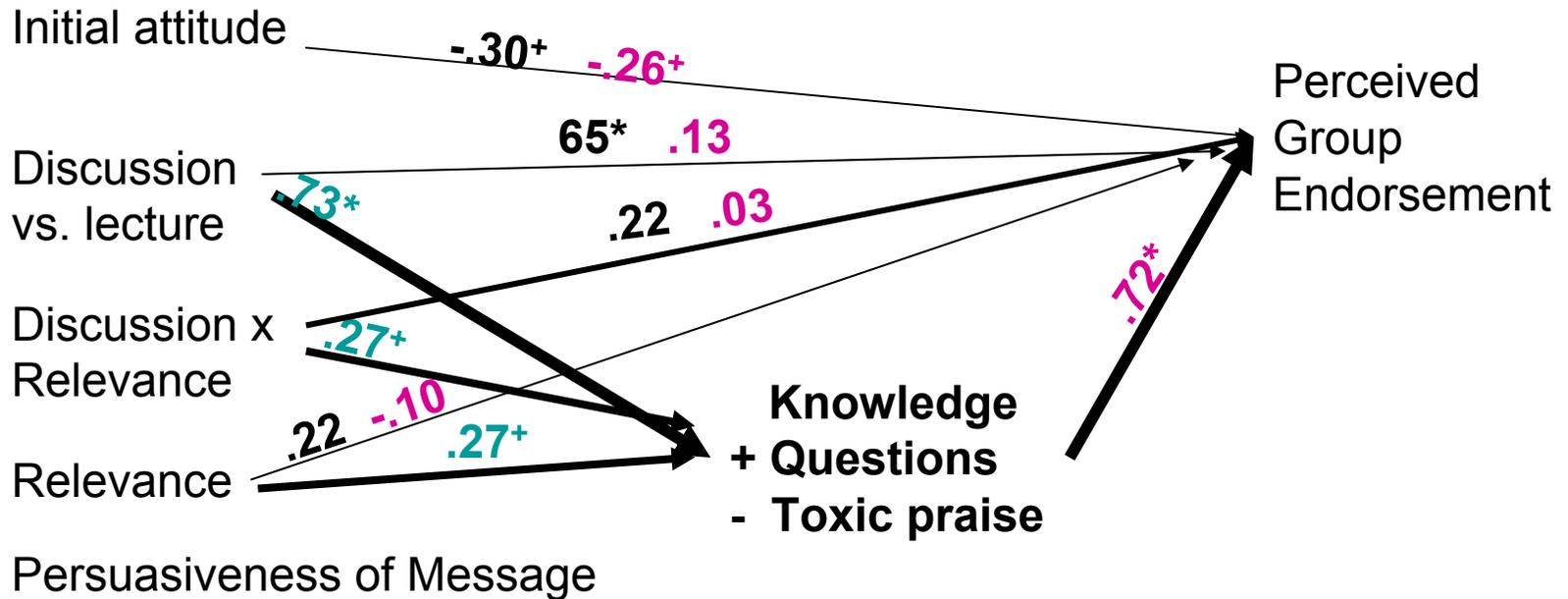Perceived
Group Endorsement
(5-items, parallel fnl att.)

Survey Results

3. Discussion leads to attitude change *because* students perceive others endorse the information

(female students, *n* = 26 classes)
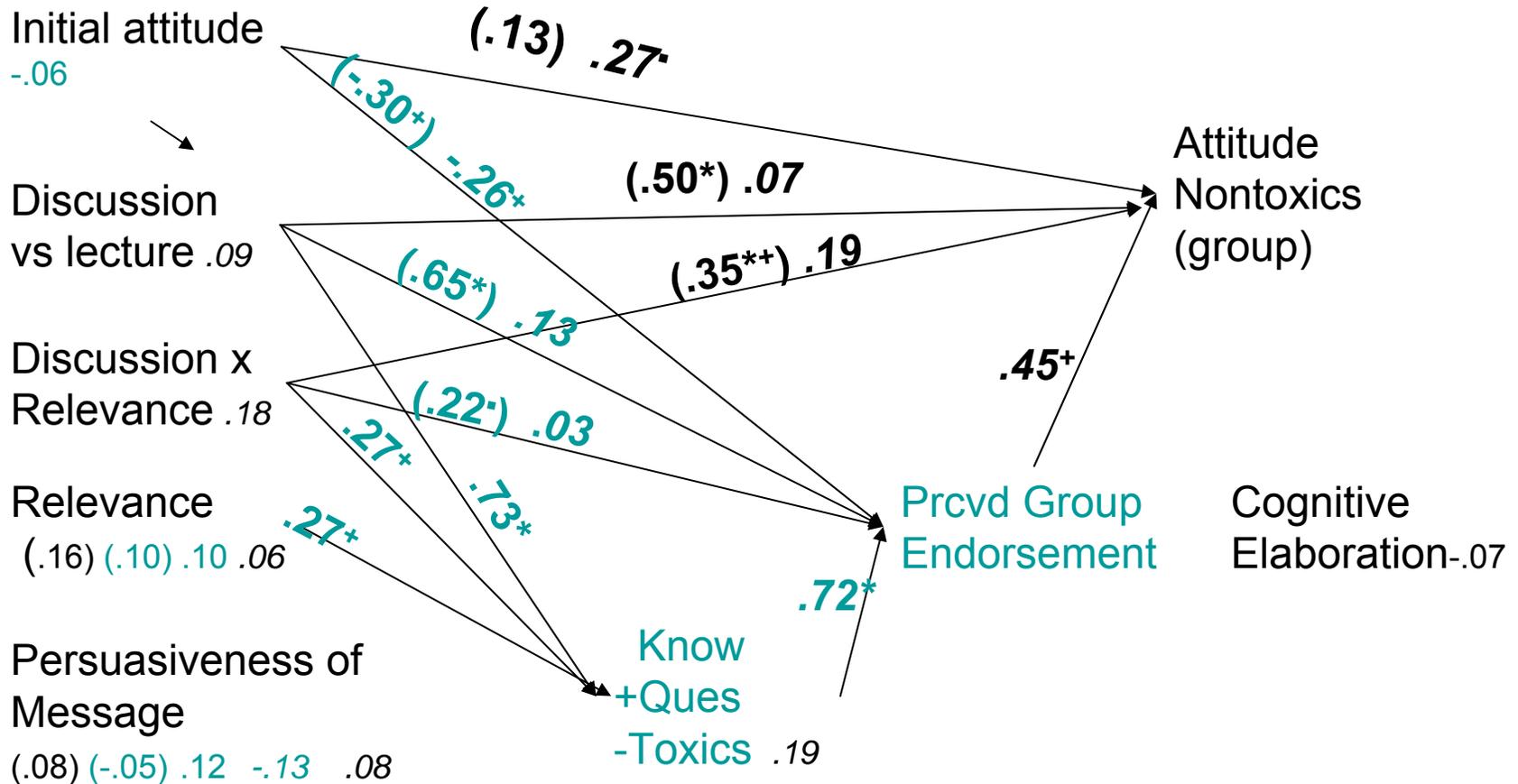
Initial attitude

.13   .28

-.30+

Discussion vs. lecture

50*   .14

.65*

.35*   .22

Discussion x Relevance

.22+

Relevance

Attitudes Towards Nontoxics

.55*

Perceived Grp Endorsement

Persuasiveness of Message
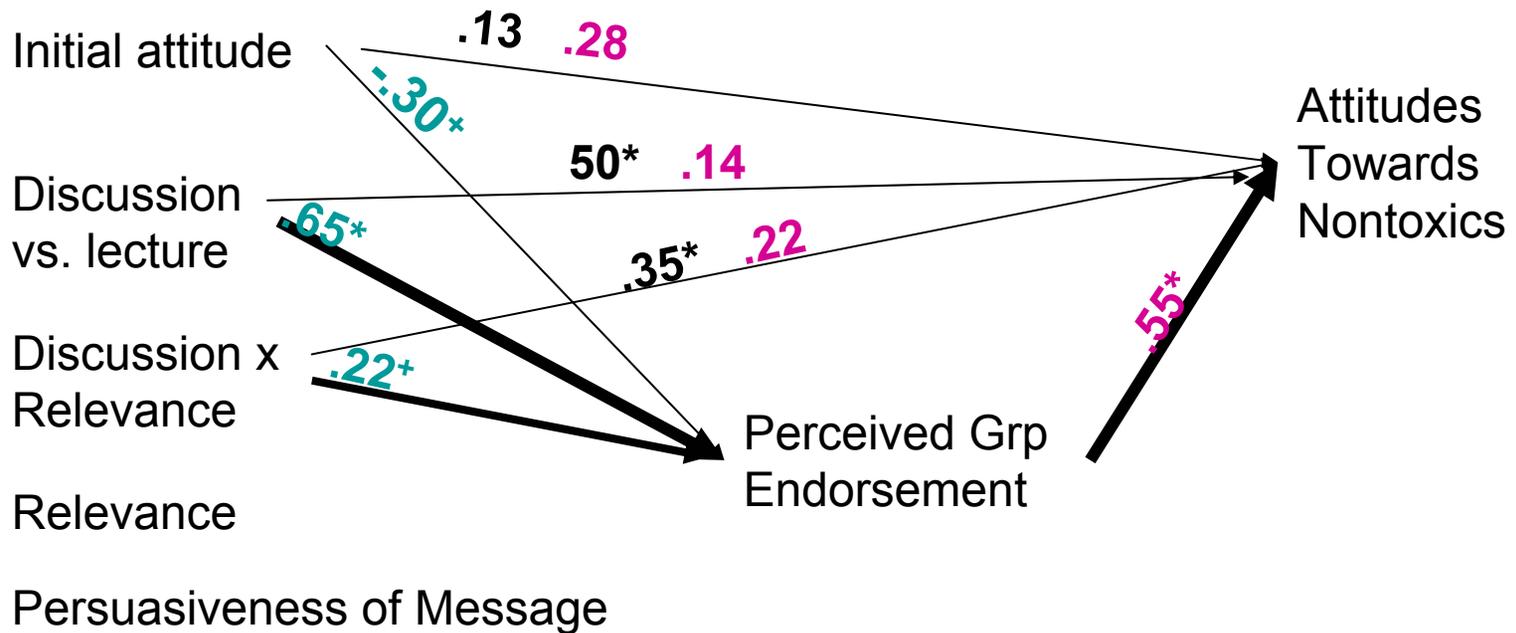
Survey Results

What aspects of discussion make a difference? (female students, *n* = 26 classes)

Initial attitude

-.30+   -.26+

Discussion vs. lecture

.73*

65*   .13

.22   .03

Discussion x Relevance

.27+

.22   -.10   .27+

Relevance

.72*

Perceived Group Endorsement

**Knowledge
+ Questions
- Toxic praise**

Persuasiveness of Message

Systematic Analyses of audiotapes of meetings

Full model (female students, *n* = 28 classes)

Initial attitude
-.06

Discussion vs lecture *.09*

Discussion x Relevance *.18*

Relevance
(.16) (.10) .10 *.06*

Persuasiveness of Message
(.08) (-.05) .12 -*.13*   *.08*

(.13) .27▪

(-.30+) -.26+

(.50*) *.07*

(.65*) *.13*

(.35*+) *.19*

(.22▪) *.03*

.27+

.73*

.27+

.45+

.72*

Attitude Nontoxics (group)

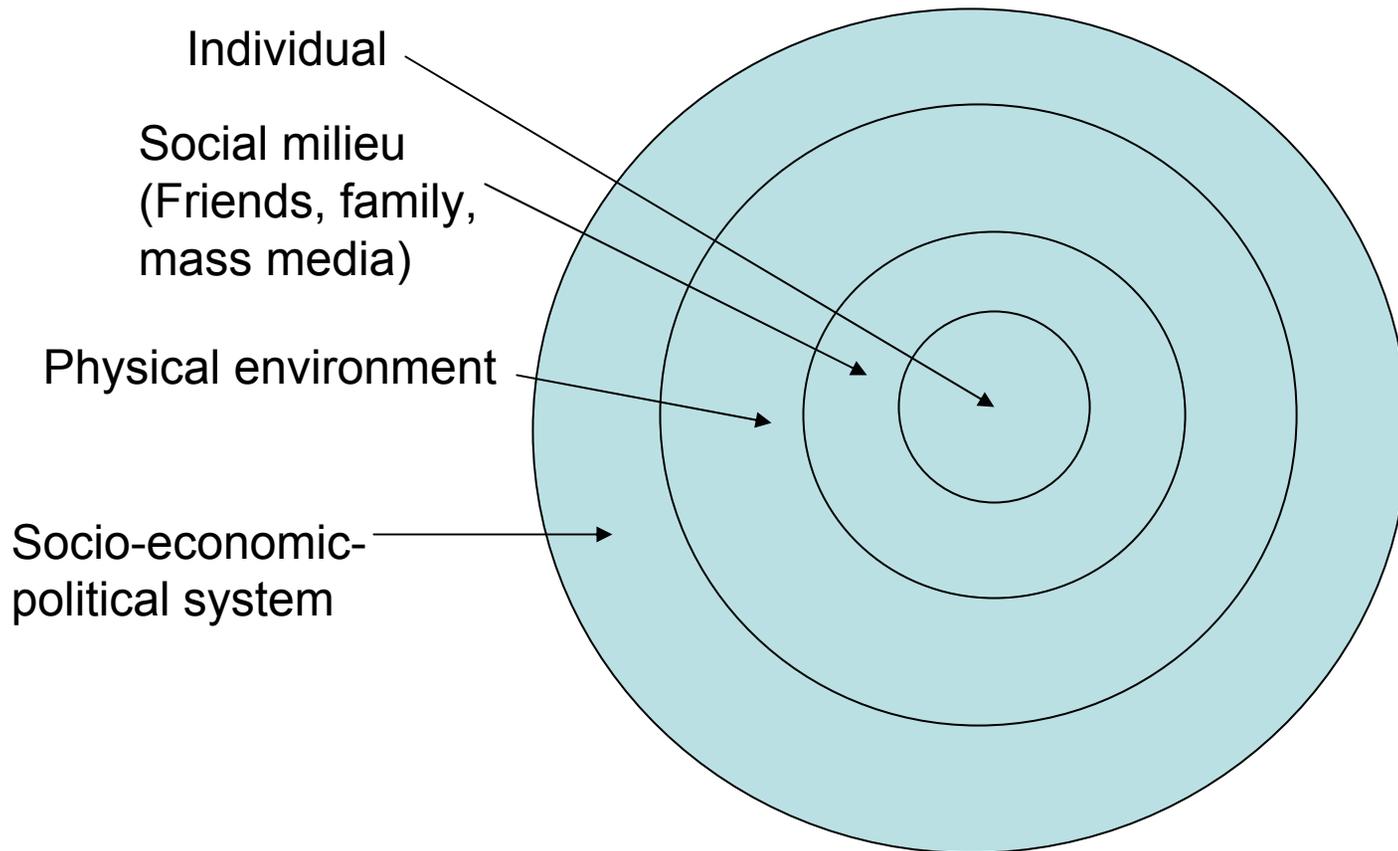Prcvd Group Endorsement

Cognitive Elaboration -.07

Know +Ques -Toxics *.19*

Green coefficients (ßs) show the predictors/mediators of perceived group endorsement [(step 1) step 2 *step 3*].
Coefficients (ßs) in italics are from the final equation,
F(7, 18) = 3.77, *p* < .02;
*p < .05   +p < .10   ▪p < .20

Summary & Discussion

- Supports importance of discussion (hearing others' knowledge; questions about nontoxic alternatives)

- Audience praise for toxic products may undermine nontoxics message

- Ideally, group of friends will encourage and support each other in changing behavior over time

Multiple influences: No Silver Bullet

Individual

Social milieu
(Friends, family,
mass media)

Physical environment

Socio-economic-
political system

Be sure to provide supportive context

- Short Stretch

- Demonstration of our Meetings

- Break

How We Guide Discussion

1. Video from County re: HHW (5-8 mins)

   Credibility/Clear content

   Fun but serious

   Why HHW important

   Toxic Products

   Directions to HHW facility

   Free Reuse Center

   Illegal disposal

   (Nontoxic alternatives)

   Danger to children, water supply

How We Guide Discussion

2. "Scary Stories" (5-10 mins)

Fear motivates (not too scary)

Best from audience

Encourage participation

Wait patiently for examples.

"Teach others"; "Learn from mistakes";

"Reduce danger."

How We Guide Discussion

3. Their choice

Not "you must"

Always "your choice, try it"

How We Guide Discussion

4. Handouts

   a. Problem/Solution (toxic/nontoxic)

      problem as motivator

   b. Recipes

   c. www search term: "nontoxic [problem]"

   d. memory prompts

   e. getting started/continuing/exploring

How We Guide Discussion

5. Audience involvement (30 mins)

    a. Demonstrations

    b. sharing knowledge; www searches

    c. problem solving (counter-arguing)

6. End with free samples and "exchange" commitment

Group Persuasion

1. PERCEIVED GROUP ENDORSEMENT

   CREATE SENSE OF AGREEMENT WITH MESSAGE

2. DESCRIPTIVE NORMS

   VERY POWERFUL

   AVOID SAYING "SERIOUS PROBLEM, MANY VIOLATIONS" (NEG. DESC. NORM)

   SAY "THIS IS CATCHING ON" "VERY POPULAR"

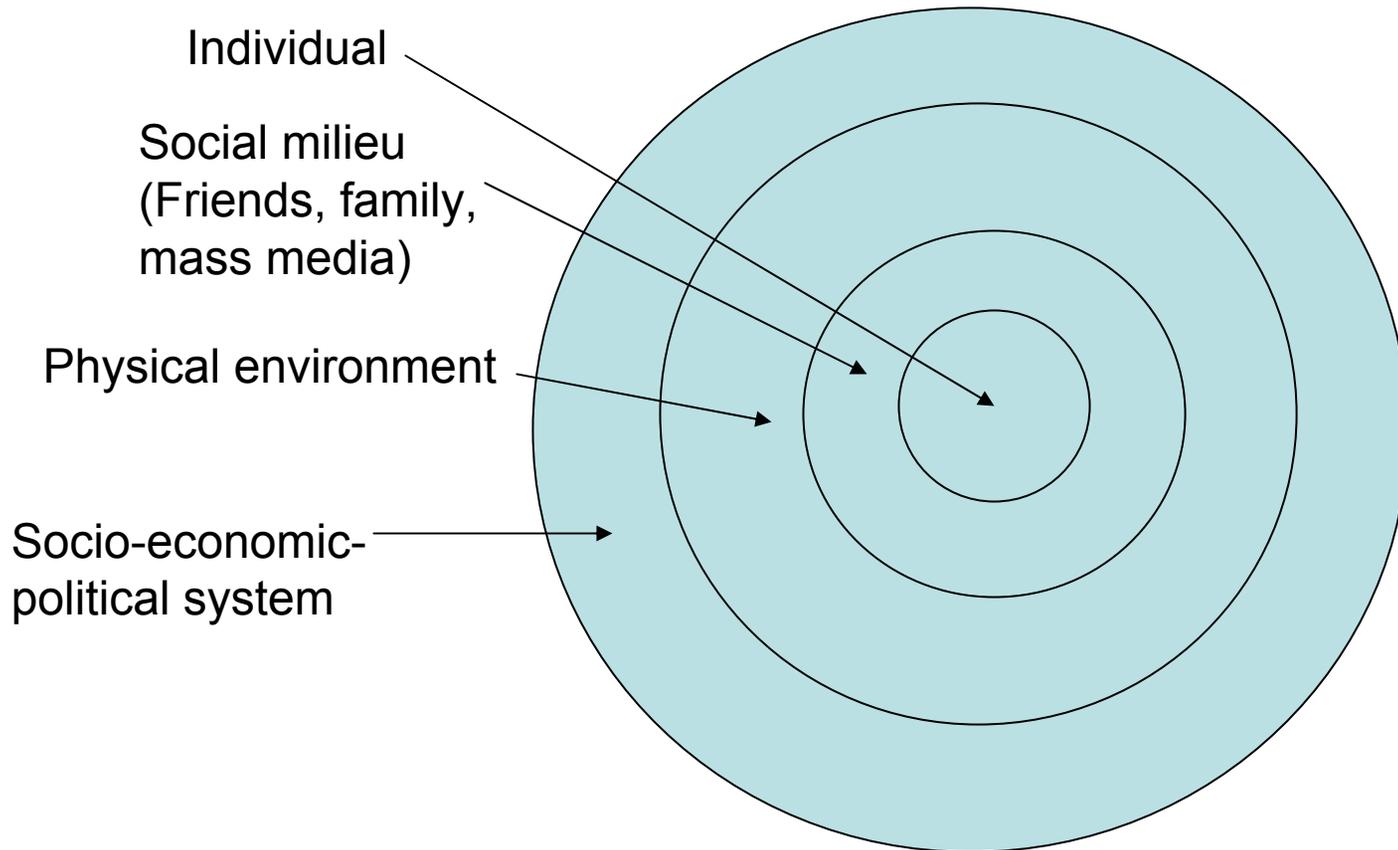3. UNDOING PLURALISTIC IGNORANCE?

Group Persuasion

- "Pluralistic Ignorance"

    - disagree with speaker, but

    - keep quiet to avoid being different

    - group decides others agree with speaker (even though no one agrees)

    - use guided group discussion to reveal true opinions, increase support for speaker

    - Use Discussion To Reveal True Opinions

Group Persuasion

4. Social Insulation

- Surround oneself with similar others

- Maintains new opinions

- Group needs to actively support new behaviors

Big Picture: Address Multiple Levels

Individual

Social milieu
(Friends, family,
mass media)

Physical environment

Socio-economic-
political system

Can't change/maintain behaviors in a vacuum

References

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