Distraction and Persuasion

- Distraction prevents elaboration
- Examples of factors that prevent elaboration:
  - Fast talking
  - Talking softly
  - Noise
  - Flashy visual distracters (clothes; cigarette ash)
  - Slowing down heart
  - Laying supine
  - What else…?
Distraction & Persuasion

• IV₁: Level of odor
  – Normal
  – Aversive
• IV₂: Strength of message
  – Weak
  – Strong
• DV: Agreement with message

Operational Definitions

• Odor:
  – Normal (no detection of unusual smells)
  – Aversive (chemical combinations that result in significantly higher self-reports of obnoxious odor)
• Strength of Arguments
  – Weak: “My advisor took a comprehensive exam and now he has a prestigious academic position.”
  – Strong: “Prestigious universities have comprehensive exams to maintain academic excellence.”
• Agreement
  – Should we institute comprehensive senior exams at Purdue? (1 = absolutely not; 7 = yes, absolutely)
Predicted Results

Should We Institute Comprehensive Exams?

Typical Results When nCog is Factored In
How To Resist Persuasion

• Our default nature is to accept persuasive messages…resisting takes effort, and sometimes, knowledge, and ability to critically analyze message.
  – Understanding = belief

• Inoculation (McGuire, 1964)
  – Build up reserves of counter-arguments
    • Weak attacks

How To Resist Persuasion

• Poison Parasites (Cialdini, 2003)
  – Poison (strong counterarguments) +
  – Parasite (retrieval cues that bring those arguments to mind when seeing opponent’s message)
How To Resist Persuasion

• Stealing Thunder (Williams, Bourgeois, & Croyle, 1993; Dolnik, Case, & Williams, 2003)
  – Revealing the worst first
    • In courtroom
    • In politics
    • In interpersonal relationships

Driving occasioning death

• With Australian participants and a new case, we replicated stealing thunder effect.
  Framing was not necessary.
• Credibility of defendant higher when he frames revelation by discounting its importance.

From Dolnik, Case, & Williams, Study 1, (under review).
Fighting the tactic

- Stolen Thunder condition unaffected by whether or not prosecution also brought it up.
- Can be counteracted
- Evidence for change of meaning.

![Bar chart showing the effect of different presentation conditions on the percentage of subjects' responses.](image)