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

- IV$_1$: Level of odor
  - Normal
  - Aversive

- IV$_2$: 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, (2003).*
Fighting the Stealing Thunder Tactic

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