

# Guided Group Discussion: A Strategy for Changing Behavior

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## Acknowledgements:

Appreciate EPA and NSF funding (does not imply EPA/NSF endorsement of our content).

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RAs: Marilyn Hanks, Sari Byerly, Steve Behling, Ronica Symes & Trina Miyamoto

# Plan for Today

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

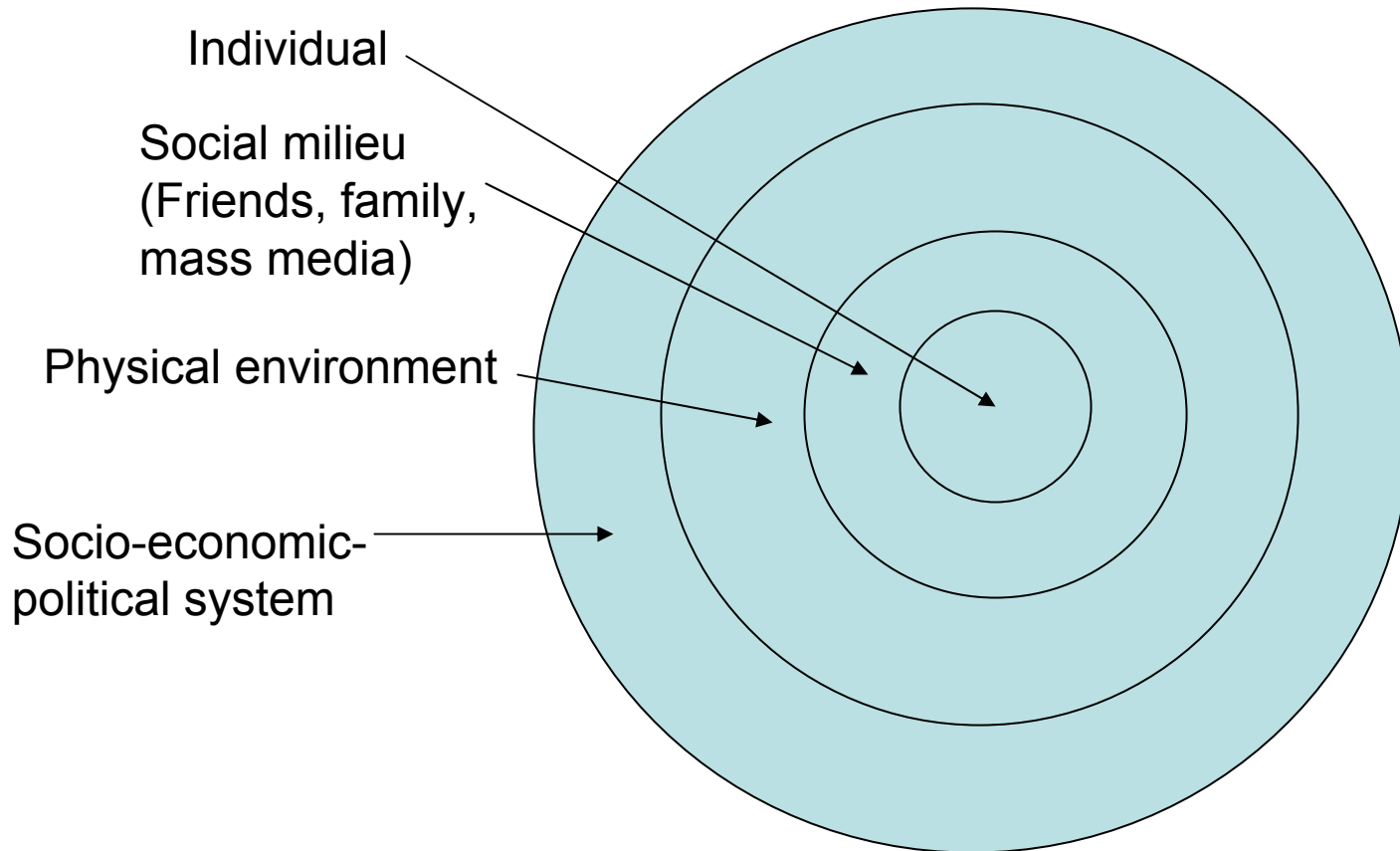
## BREAK

- 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.

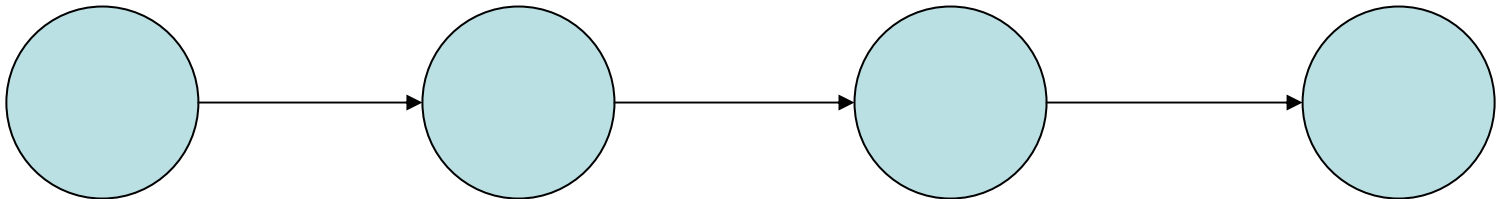
# Multiple influences: No Silver Bullet



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

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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<br>(Attended) | Control<br>(Missed) | <i>n</i> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------|
| • 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<br>(Attended) | Control<br>(Missed) | <i>n</i> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------|
| • Group shared leftovers?       | 27%                      | DK                  | 22       |
| • Group begin/continue sharing? | 6.0                      | 4.2*                | 12       |

# WHY EFFECTIVE?



## 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:**

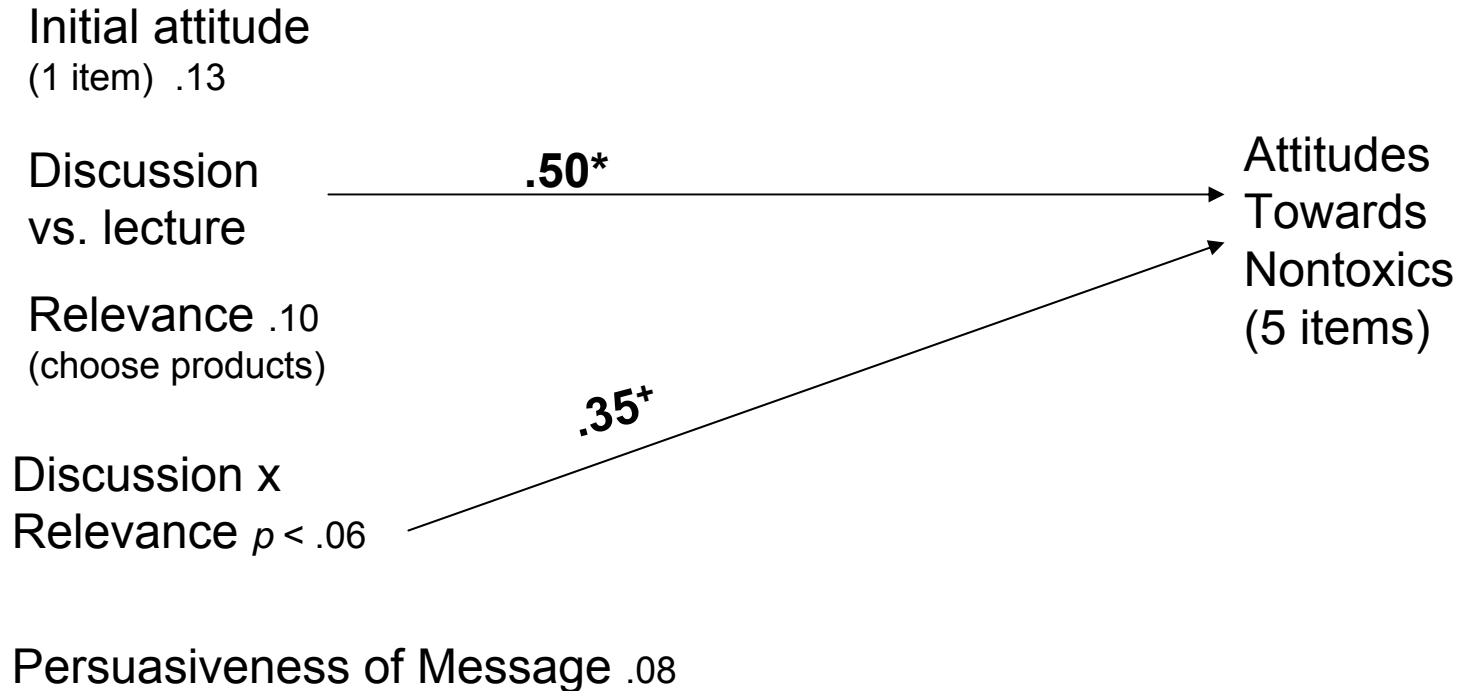
**5-items (summed): effectiveness of nontoxics, importance of using nontoxics, likelihood of using a nontoxic, interest in learning more, no problem using nontoxics**

### **“Perceived group endorsement”**

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

# Showing “Why”

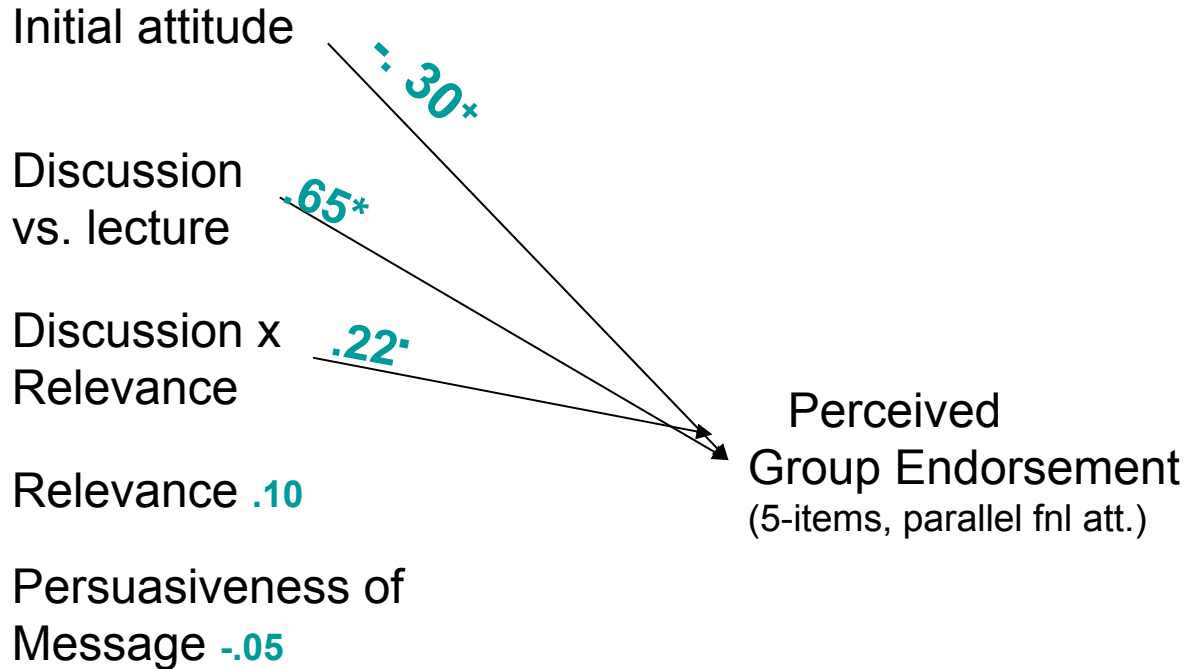
## 1. Predicting post-meeting attitudes (female students, $n = 26$ classes; male students, different pattern)



## Survey Results

## 2. Meeting “activates” perceived group endorsement

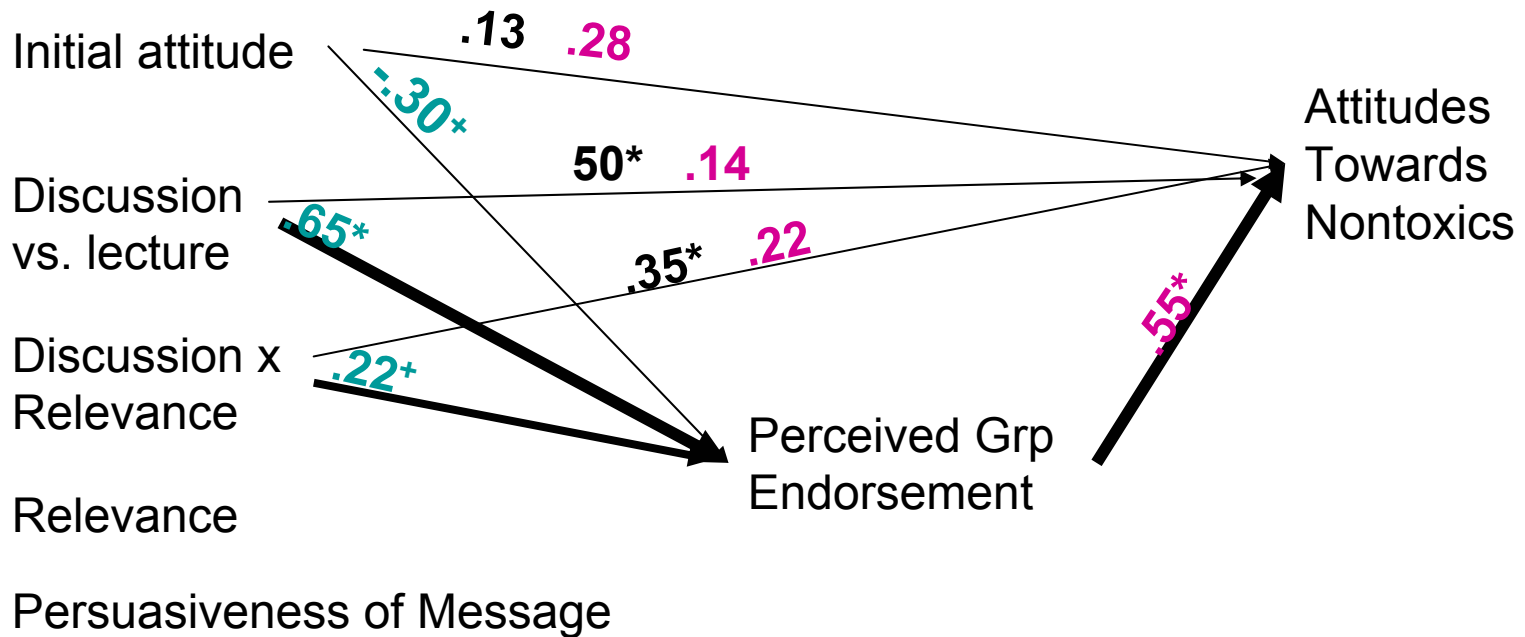
(female students,  $n = 26$  classes)



### Survey Results

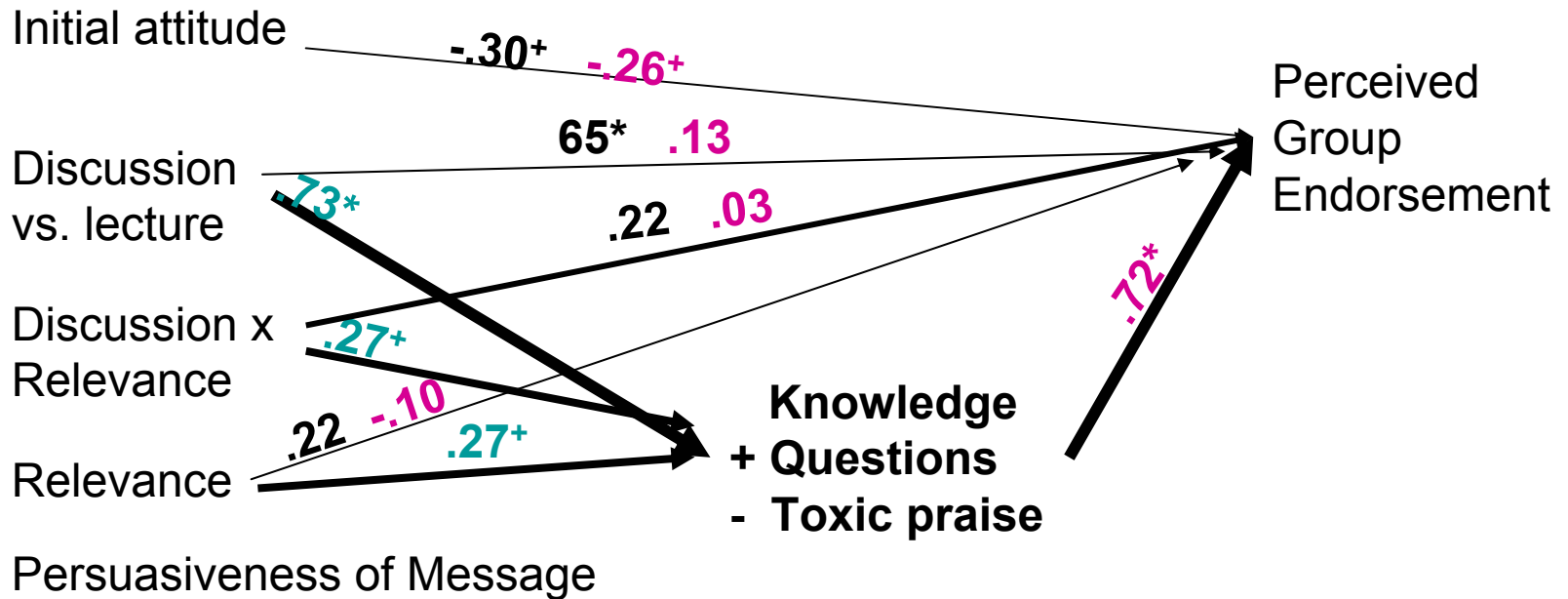


3. Discussion leads to attitude change **because** students perceive others endorse the information (female students,  $n = 26$  classes)



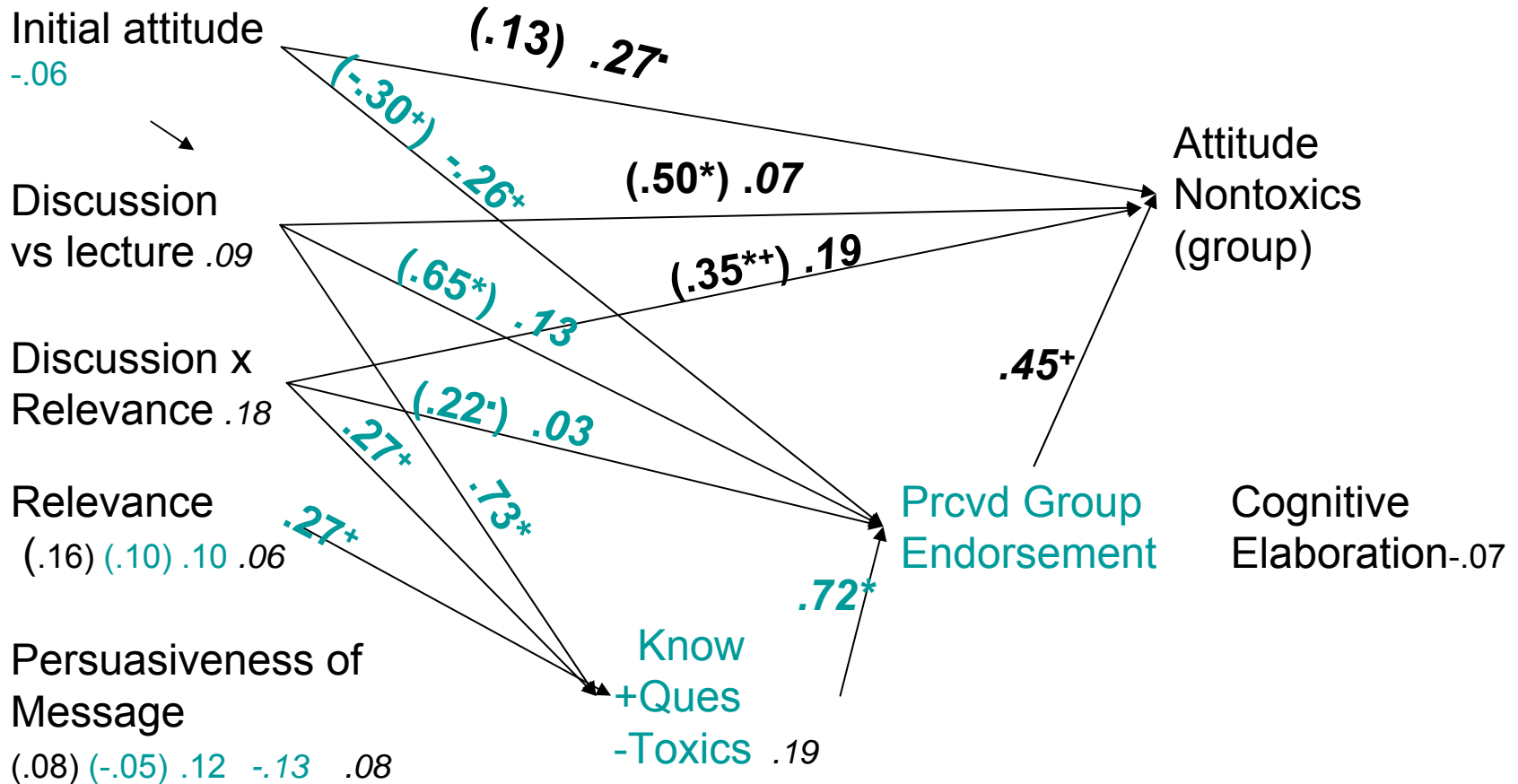
## Survey Results

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



**Systematic Analyses of audiotapes of meetings**

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

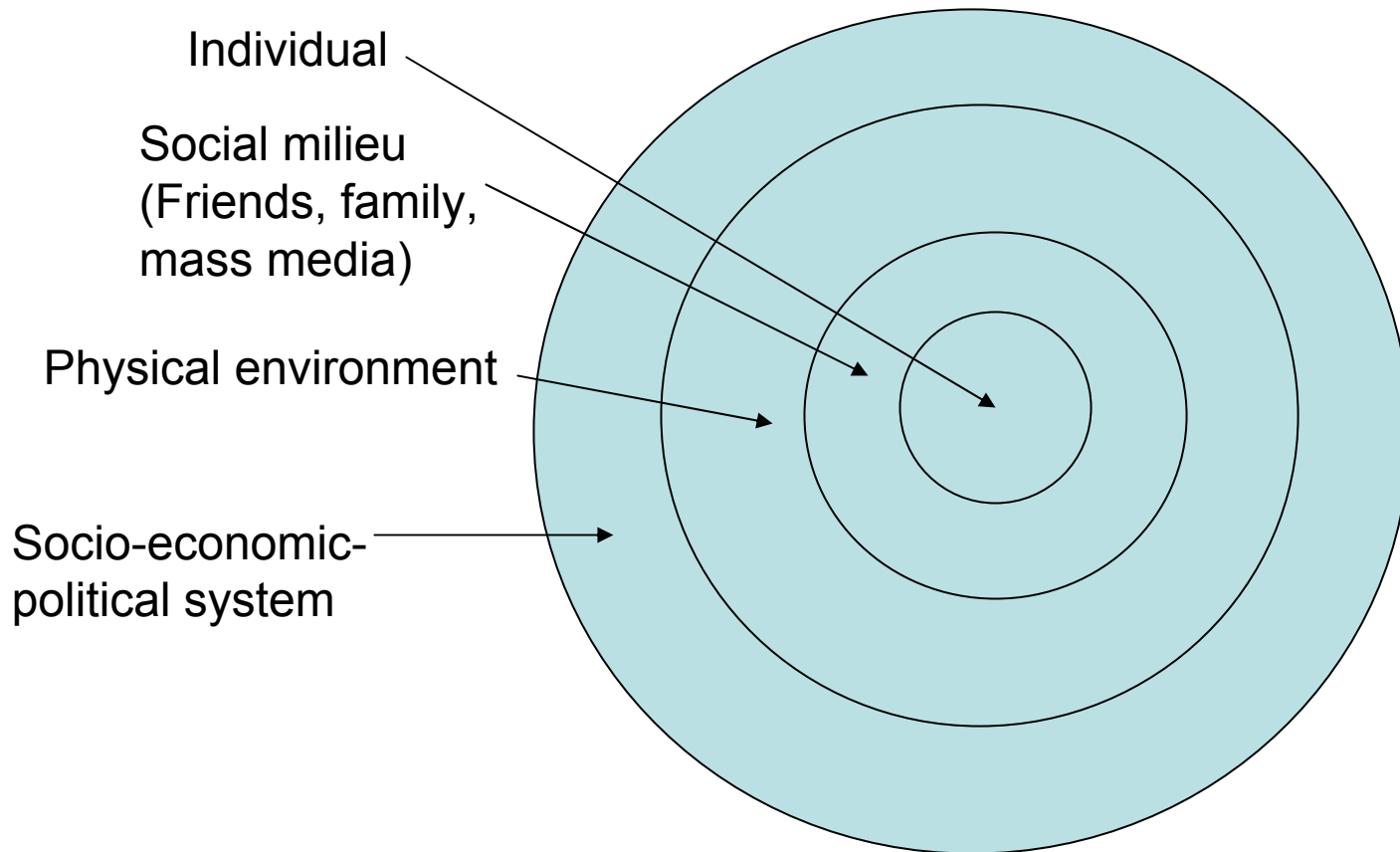


Green coefficients ( $\beta$ s) show the predictors/mediators of perceived group endorsement [(step 1) step 2 step 3]. Coefficients ( $\beta$ s) in italics are from the final equation,  $F(7, 18) = 3.77, p < .02$ ;  
 \* $p < .05$  + $p < .10$  ■ $p < .20$

# 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



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

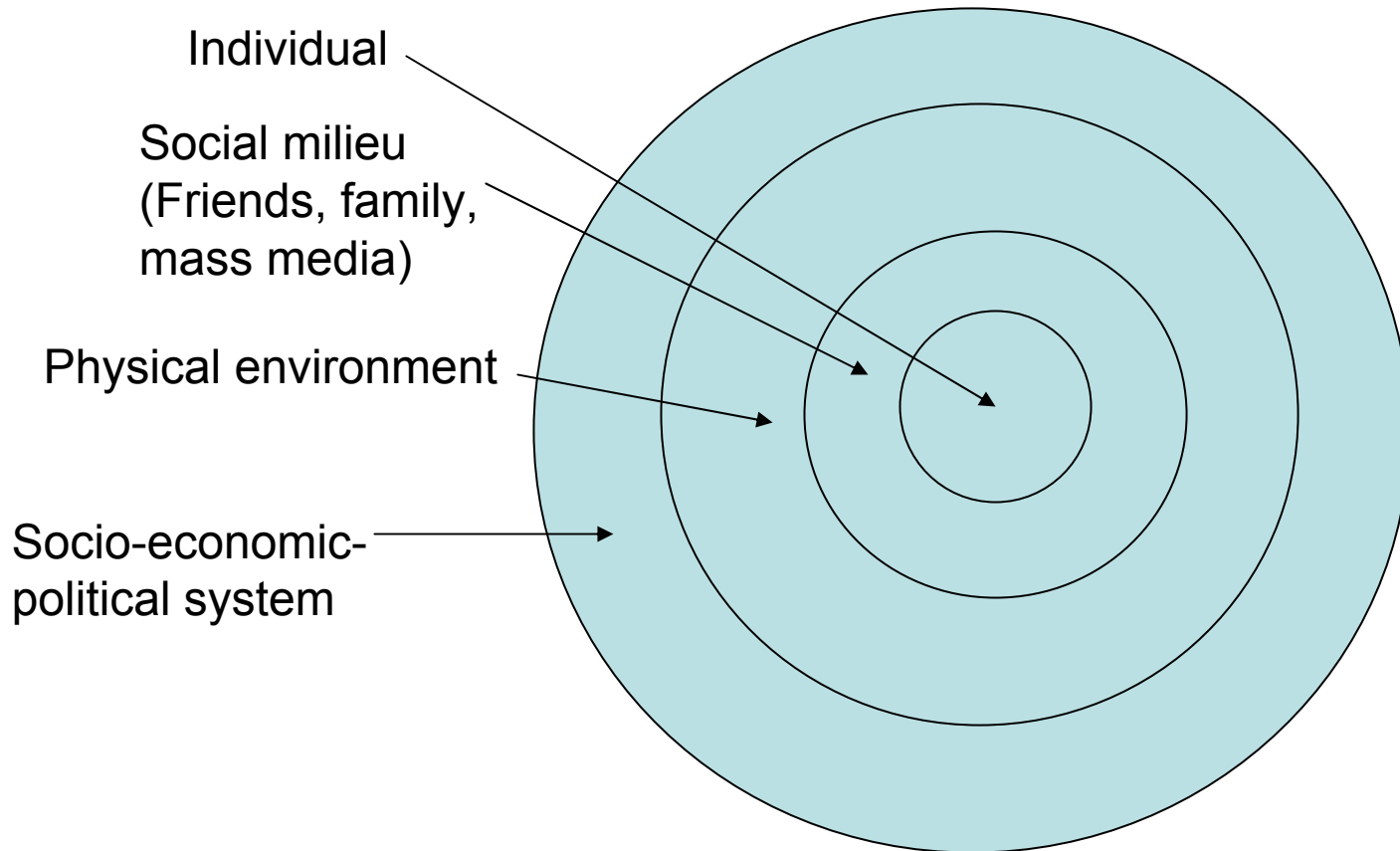
- “Pluralistic Ignorance”
  - disagree with speaker, but
  - keep quiet to avoid being different
  - group decides others agree with speaker (even though no one agrees)
  - use guided group discussion to reveal true opinions, increase support for speaker
  - Use Discussion To Reveal True Opinions

# 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



Can't change/maintain behaviors in a vacuum



# References

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