

# CTS WINTER CONFERENCE 2012

Monday 10th December, 11.45-12.15  
Room 3S610, UWE, Frenchay Campus

## Legitimising Risk Taking: Articulating dangerous behaviour on the road

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West of England

better together

# Overview

- **Introduction**
  - What we know
  - Introduction to the models
- **Methodology**
  - In-depth re-convened focus groups
- **Mapping data to the models**
  - Brofenbrenner
  - Theory of Planned Behaviour
- **Conclusion and discussion**
  - Implications for road safety
  - Implications for the models



# Introduction

# Attitude

- Studies have revealed that the public know that driving error is a major contributory factor in almost all road user accidents involving vehicles (Cauzard, 2003).
- 87% of the public state speed is a major cause in most road accidents (Fuller, Bates, et al., 2008).
- 90% of the population agree it is important that people drive within the speed limits (DfT, 2008)
- 39% state it is dangerous to drive over the speed limit at all (Angle, Buckley, Fearne and Goddard, 2007).
- However, Fuller, Bates et al. (2008) suggests that 14% of drivers state they are faster than other drivers, yet only 3% state they feel they are more dangerous

# Behaviour

## Conservative statistics

- 46% drive over 30mph in 30mph zone (DfT, 2010)
- 49% speed on motorways (DfT, 2010)

## Self-report

- Most drivers admit to speeding at some point

Especially younger and male drivers

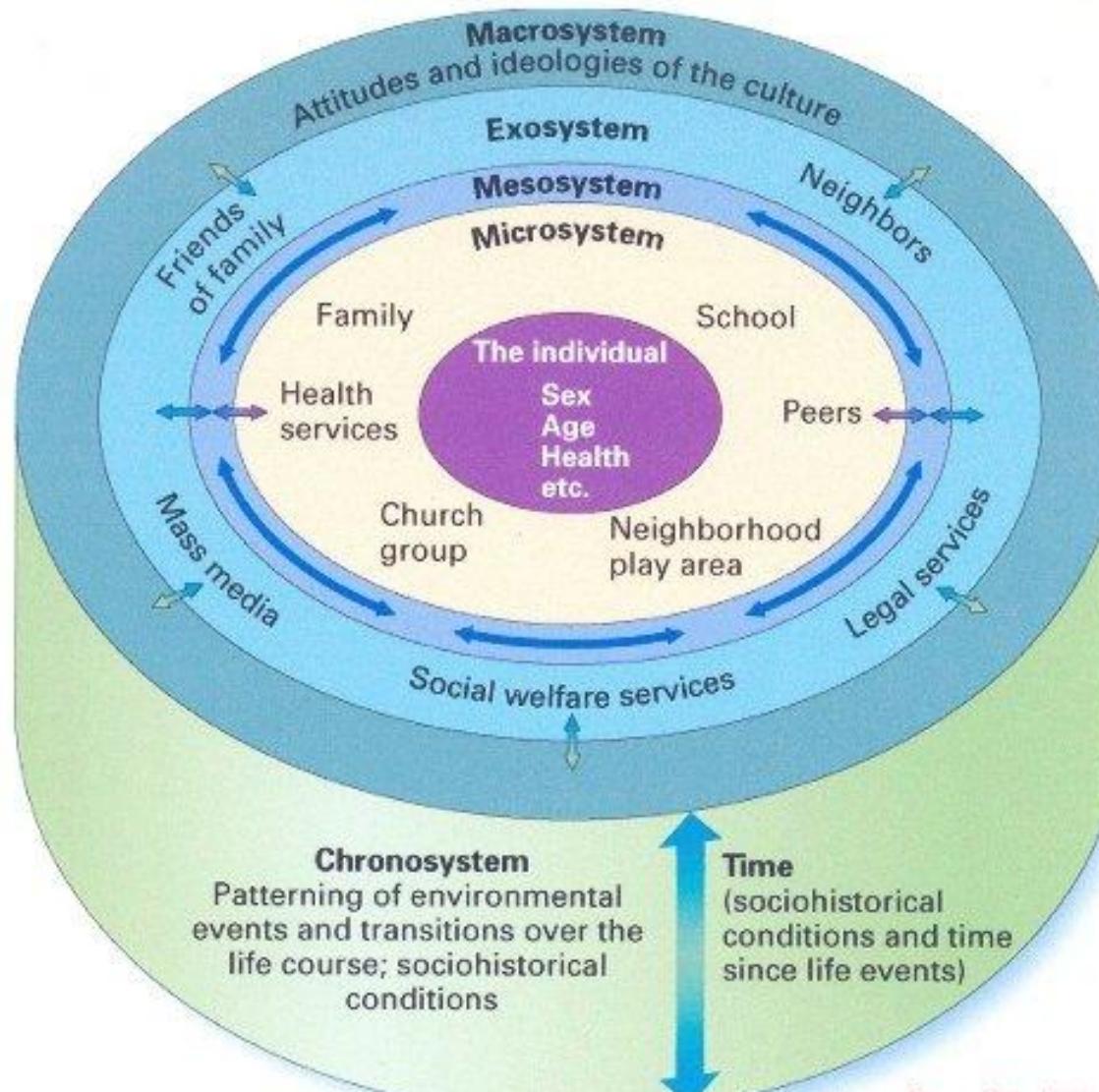
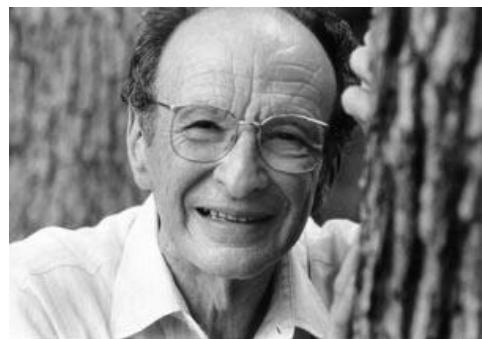
## Gap

### Reasons for the gap

- Norms: Others do it
- Conditions allow it
- When late
- Peer pressure
- Context: different hats/lifestages
- Distancing: others not me

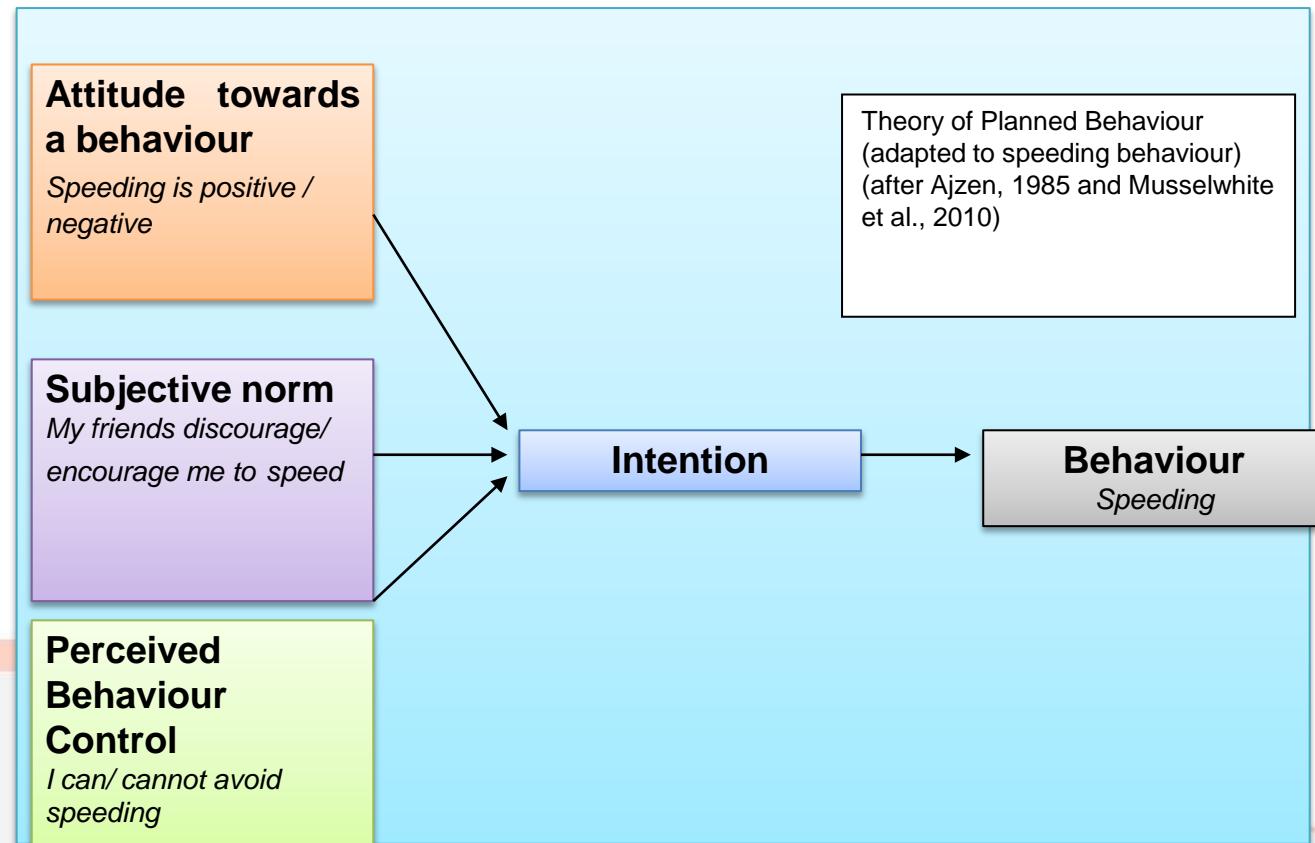
# Re-presenting conceptualisations of risky driving

- Uri Bronfenbrenner



# Re-presenting conceptualisations of risky driving

- Theory of Planned Behaviour
- Icek Ajzen





# Methodology

# Methodology

240 participants were recruited in groups of ten participants, of which 228 eventually took part.

Four locations in the UK:  
London, Bradford,  
Glasgow and North-West  
Wales. Each location had  
6 groups with c.10 in each.



Participants were reconvened in three different workshops:-

- Wave 1: explored risk taking on the road in the context of wider risk taking and norm guiding behaviours.
- Wave 2: explored the relationship between different road user groups, including car drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians.
- Wave 3:- Explored participants' views on potential road safety interventions, in terms of perceived effectiveness and fairness

**Group 1:**  
Young male drivers



**Group 2:**  
Those who drive for work (21-54)



**Group 3:**  
Those with children at home



**Group 4:**  
Older people (55+)



**Group 5:**  
No children (21-35)



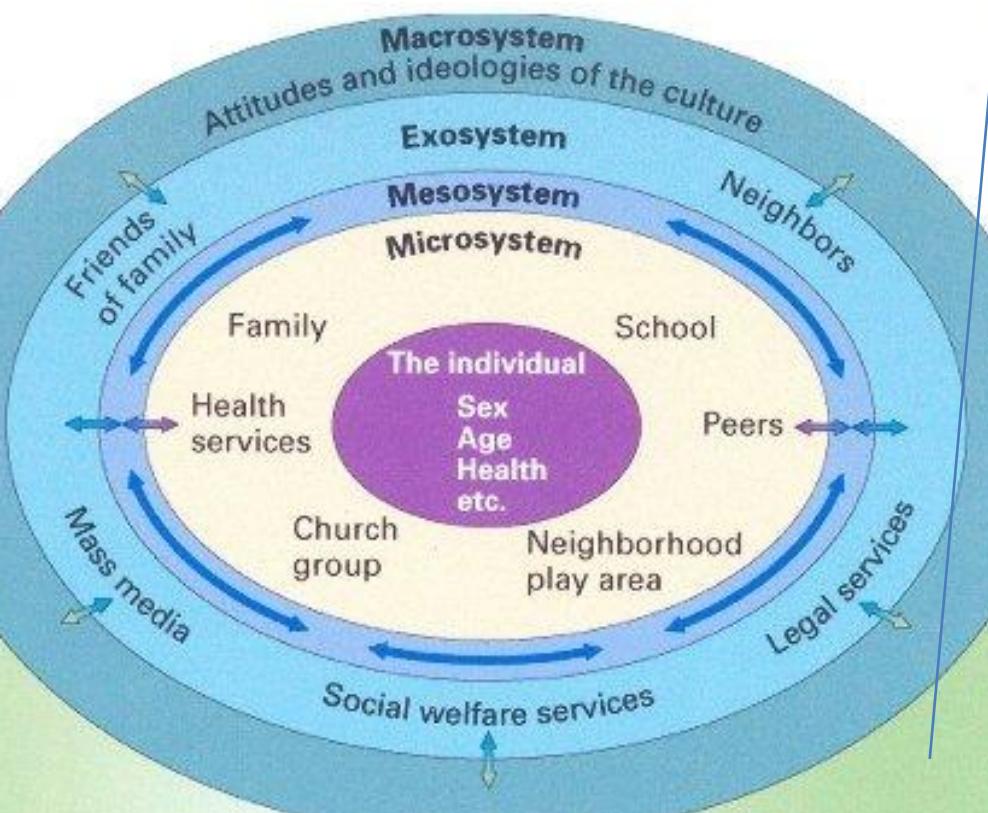
**Group 6:** Individuals with different attitudes to risk. Assigned based on a screening questionnaire (Musselwhite, 2006)

- continuous risk takers (Bradford)
- unintentional risk takers (North-West Wales)
- reactive risk takers (London)
- calculated risk takers (Glasgow)



# Findings

# Bronfenbrenner



**Chronosystem**  
Patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course; sociohistorical conditions

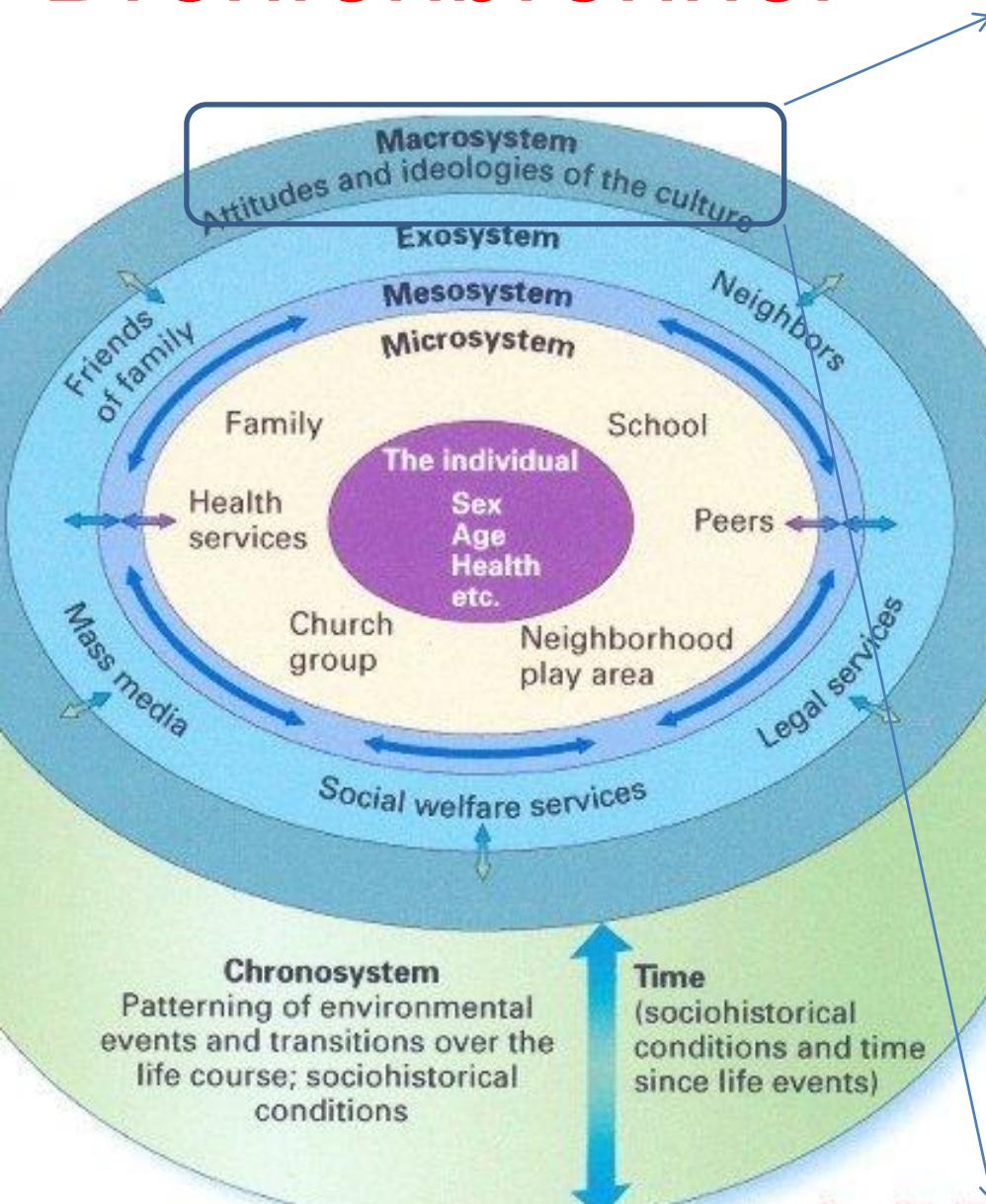
Time  
(sociohistorical conditions and time since life events)

## Chronosystem (changes over time)

Driving had become safer with increasing maturity:-

- having, seeing or knowing people in accidents and learning from these;
- a reduction in negative peer pressure;
- having responsibilities such as children and a job that requires driving;
- a growing sense of mortality;
- increased tolerance for others' behaviour; and
- a realisation that driving faster does not actually match a reduction in time taken to travel.
- Older drivers: often felt they were being judged by others and so had to drive safely
- Younger drivers noted a change as got older
- 'I think I am better. I have calmed down a lot. I'm more aware. I used to have a moped when I was sixteen. I was hyperactive when I first started. I was here, there and everywhere, driving all day long every day. It is a new thing. But once you get used to it, it is nothing. You always feel it when you first pass, forty seems fast on a moped when you go round corners, but after you have been on the motorway and country roads, it is boring.' (London, young male)

# Bronfenbrenner



## Macrosystem

Cultural norms, understanding of others,  
 “Well the speed limits are 30 aren’t they, but no one does it just there no one so no I don’t either, no one can stick to it”  
 (Male, Glasgow, children in household).

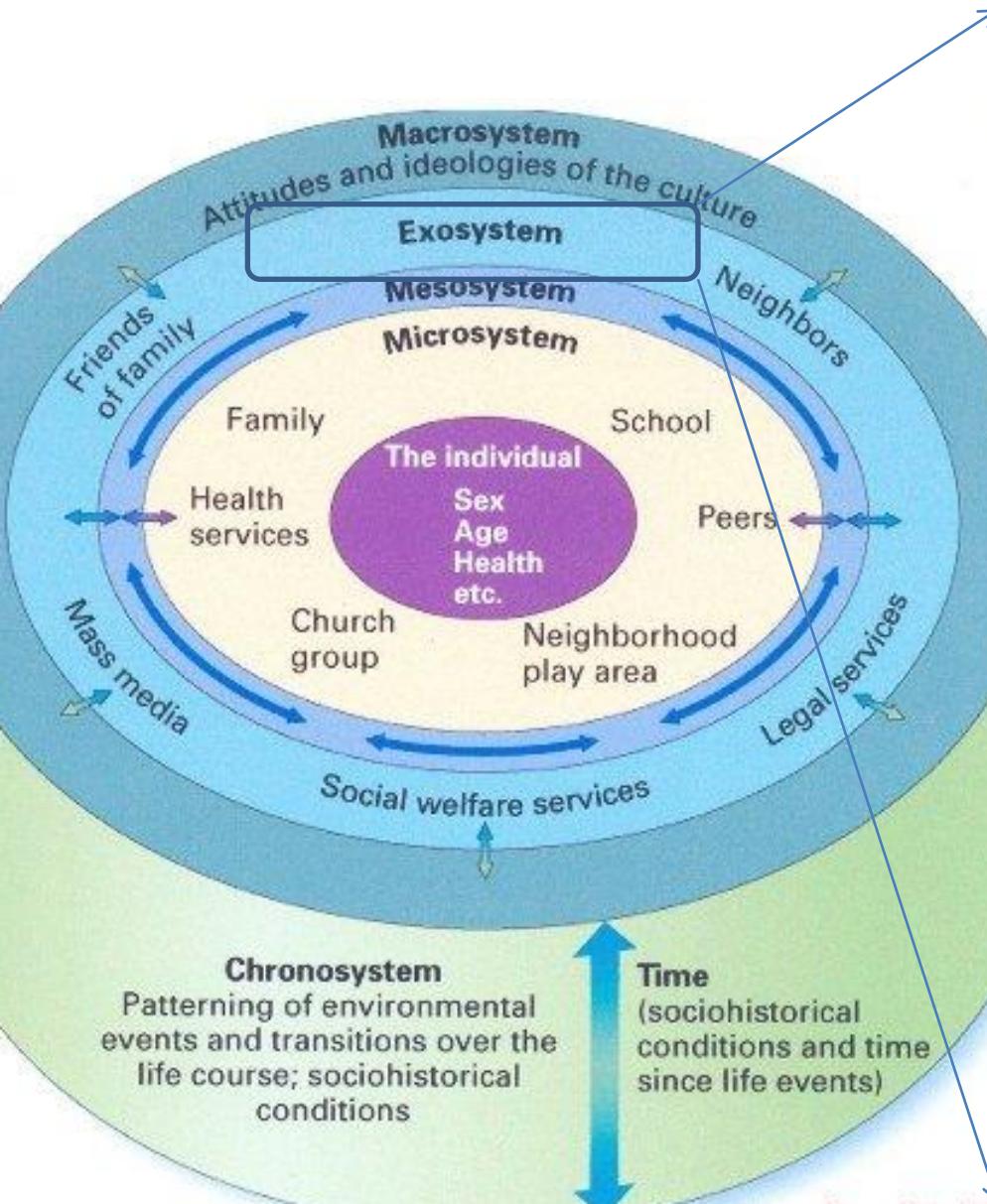
The symbolic role that cars played in the lives of young men in particular was also noted.

- Adrenaline rush
- Programmed to drive at speed
- Glamour
  - *Top Gear* and *Men and Motors*, was also highlighted. It was noted by some respondents there was a need to behave in a manner as would be expected of them.

The idea of ‘playing up to stereotypes’ was also used to legitimise risk:

“I’ve got a white van, so it’s like that’s the rule, isn’t it?” (Male, Bradford, Working, no children in household)

# Bronfenbrenner



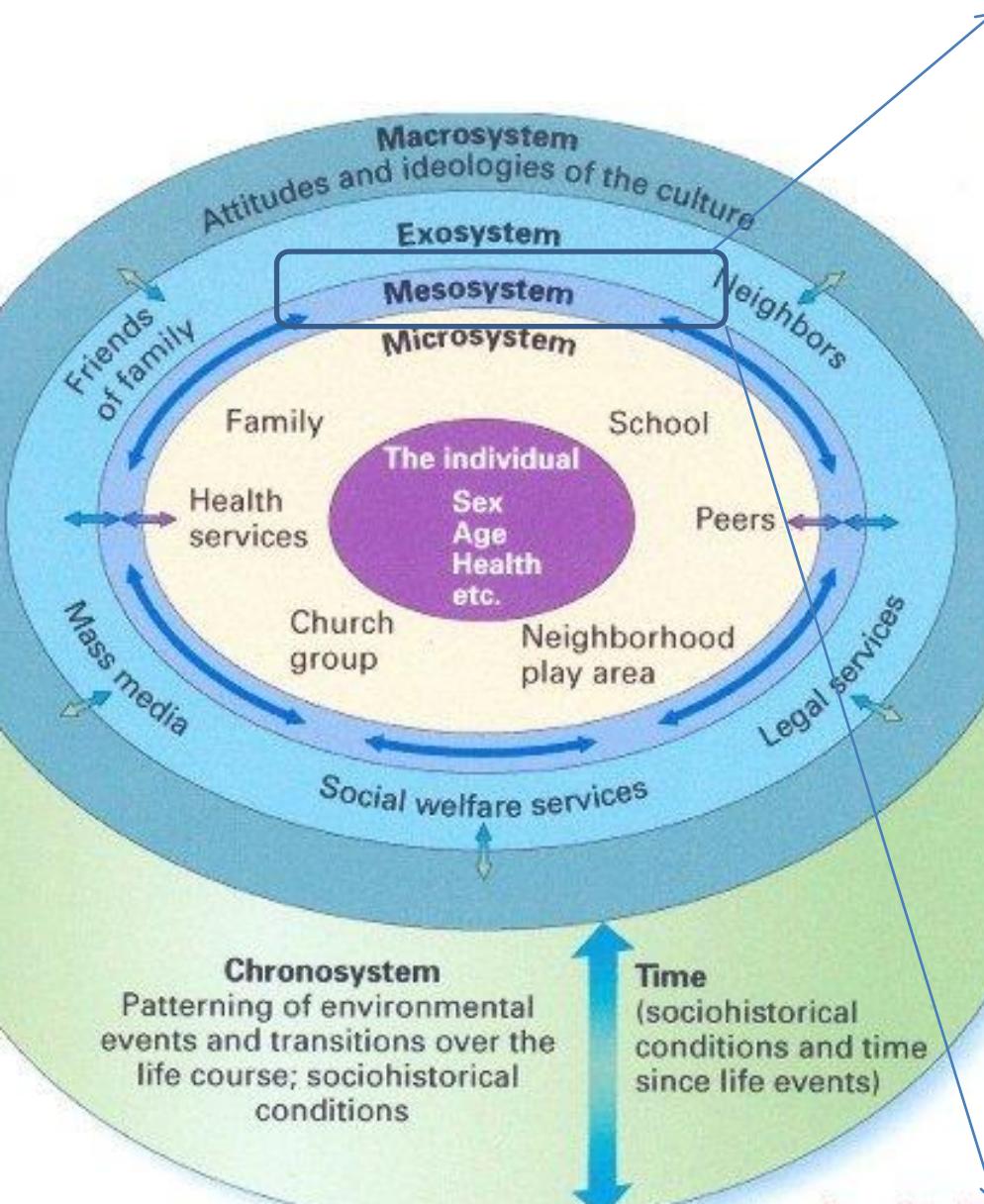
## Exosystem

The importance of reducing travel time and arriving at destinations for appointments on time, most notable work and school (for those with children) resulted in taking risks.

There was more to be lost from missing appointments and wasting time travelling than there was from being a safe road user,

“I couldn’t be bothered at all about crashing. So I cut into the tightest spaces, far too tight spaces, just get in it...There’s the pressure of getting to jobs, getting jobs done, making your time, making money” (Male, Glasgow, children in household)

# Bronfenbrenner



## Mesosystem

### Being late

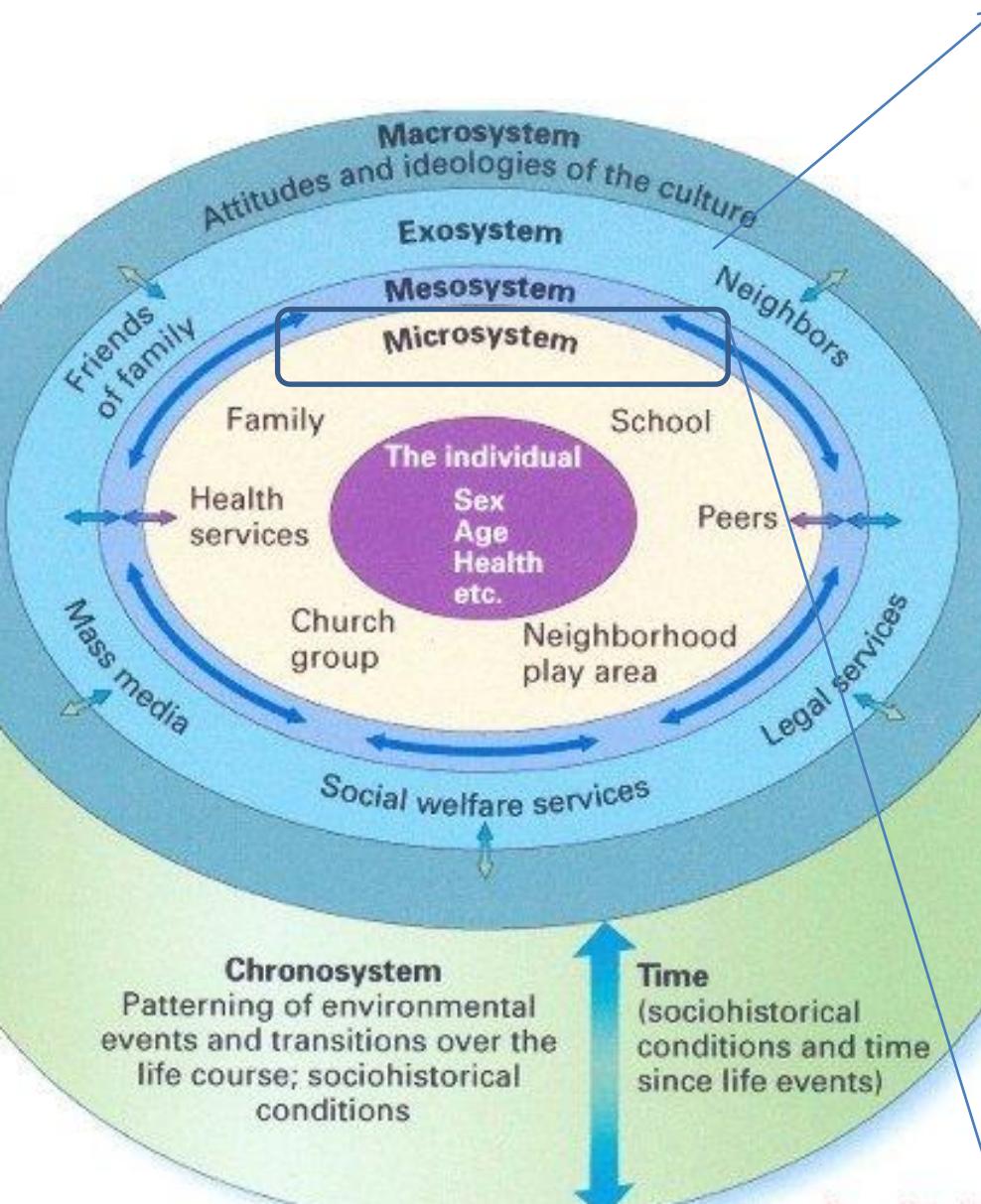
- "To be honest if I was thinking that I was going to be late, I would generally drive a wee bit quicker, which would be creating the risks, you know, but I wouldn't do anything out of control." (Female, Glasgow, Drive to Work)
- "I'm an amber gambler, if I'm in a rush, mostly if I'm in a rush. I won't do it, if I'm not in a rush, I'll just sit at the lights" (Female, London, Children in household)

### Driving while tired

### Drink-driving

Linked to unusual wider social context and unexpected changes to plans

# Bronfenbrenner



## Microsystem

Immediate infrastructure, environment and context

- “Do you think 90 miles per hour is dangerous if there’s no vehicles on the road? No, I don’t. I really don’t” (Male, Bradford, Drive to Work)
- “I break the speed limit. I will do, certainly on the motorway” (Male, Wales, Drive to Work)

Frustration caused by congestion,

- “Congestion is a major reason why they speed. You’re caught in congestion, you get a clear road and you speed to try and make up time.” (Male, London, Drive to Work)

Social norms  
Peer Pressure

# Theory of Planned Behaviour

## Attitude

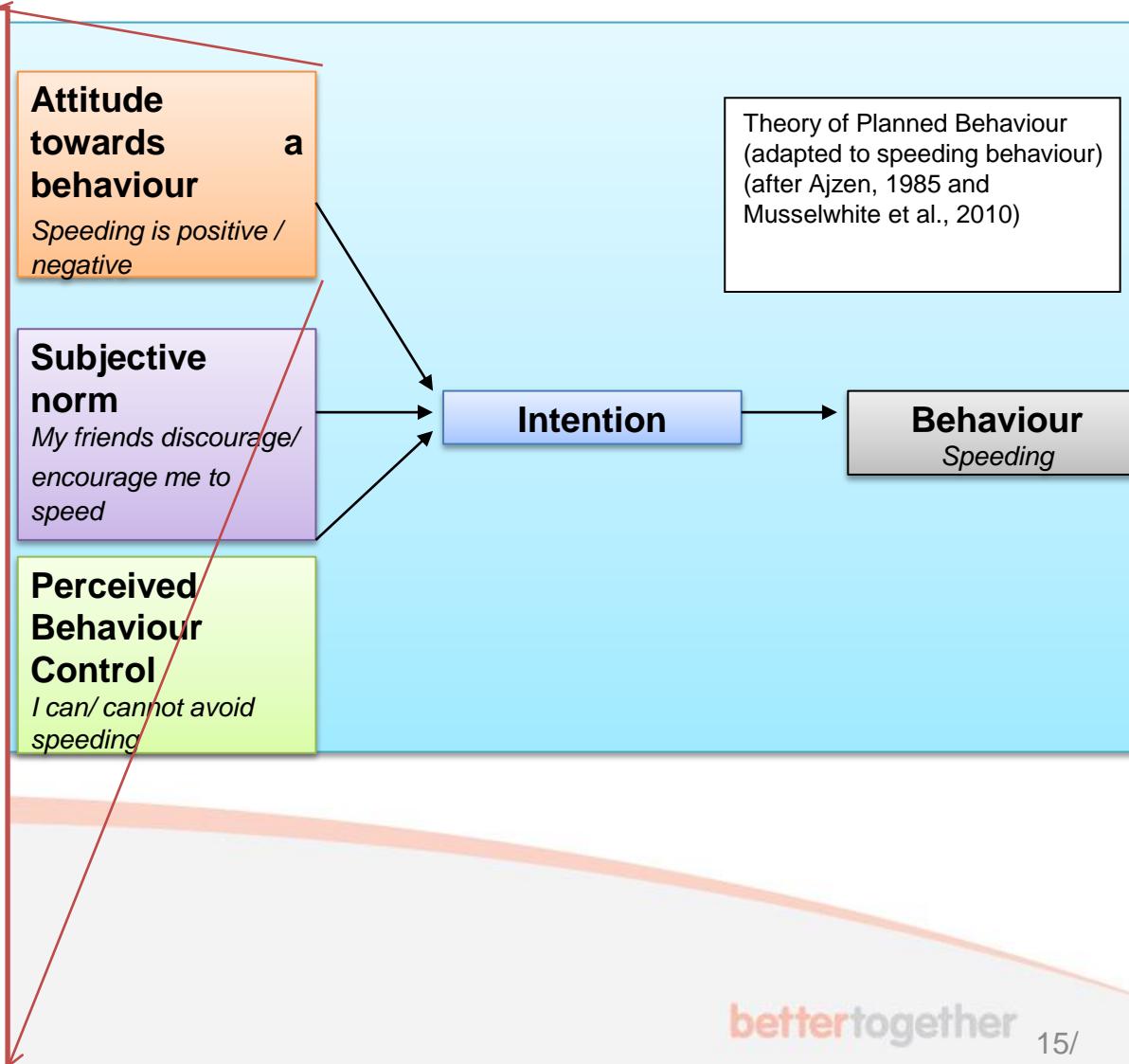
**Speeding is negative when a resident and positive yet safe when a driver.**

**I didn't crash so I'm OK.** There is little or no negative feedback,

- “The more you don’t have an accident, the more you’re invincible I think you feel as well” (Male, Wales, Children in Household)

**It's my risk so it's OK to be risky.**

- “Some people have the opinion of, you know, it's their own safety that's at risk” (Young Male, Wales)



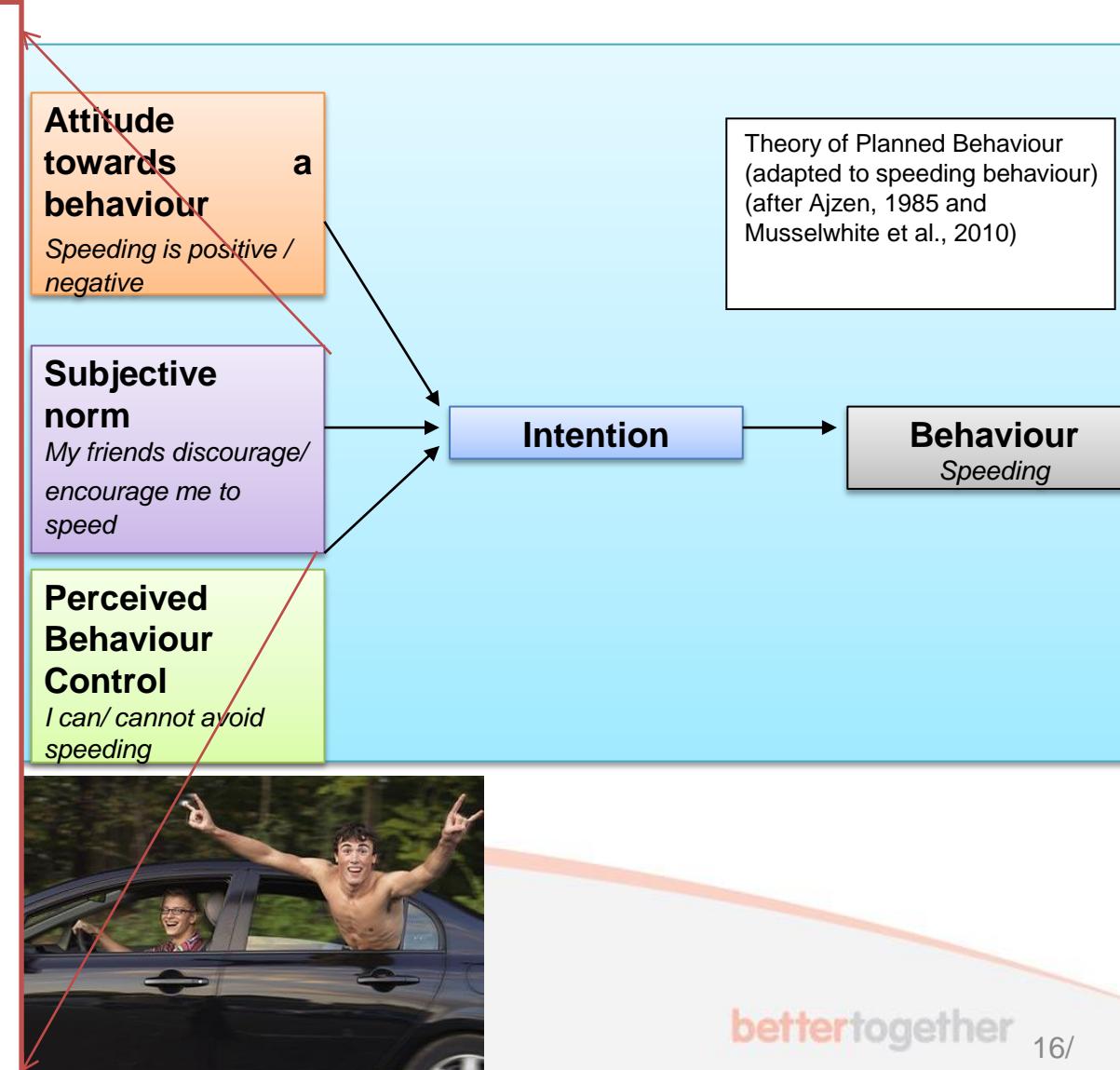
# Theory of Planned Behaviour

## Subjective Norm

**I take risks as others do.** "You know, I find those sorts of situations, you know, when you're being pressured from behind to make an erratic move which could end up causing something else, you know" (Male, Wales, Drive to Work)

## My friends encourage me to take risks.

- Depends on the passenger/driver relationship
- In-vehicle party atmosphere:
- "If you've got, like, two friends in the back or something, yeah, you're turning over talking to them, your friend touching your music, turning it up louder and changing the track and stuff and it annoys you or whatever ... I realise that every time I stop, I just turn around and talk, even when I'm driving, I look at the road ahead and there's nothing there, I'll just quickly turn around and say, blah blah and then turn, do you know what I'm saying?" (London, Young males)
- Passive pressure



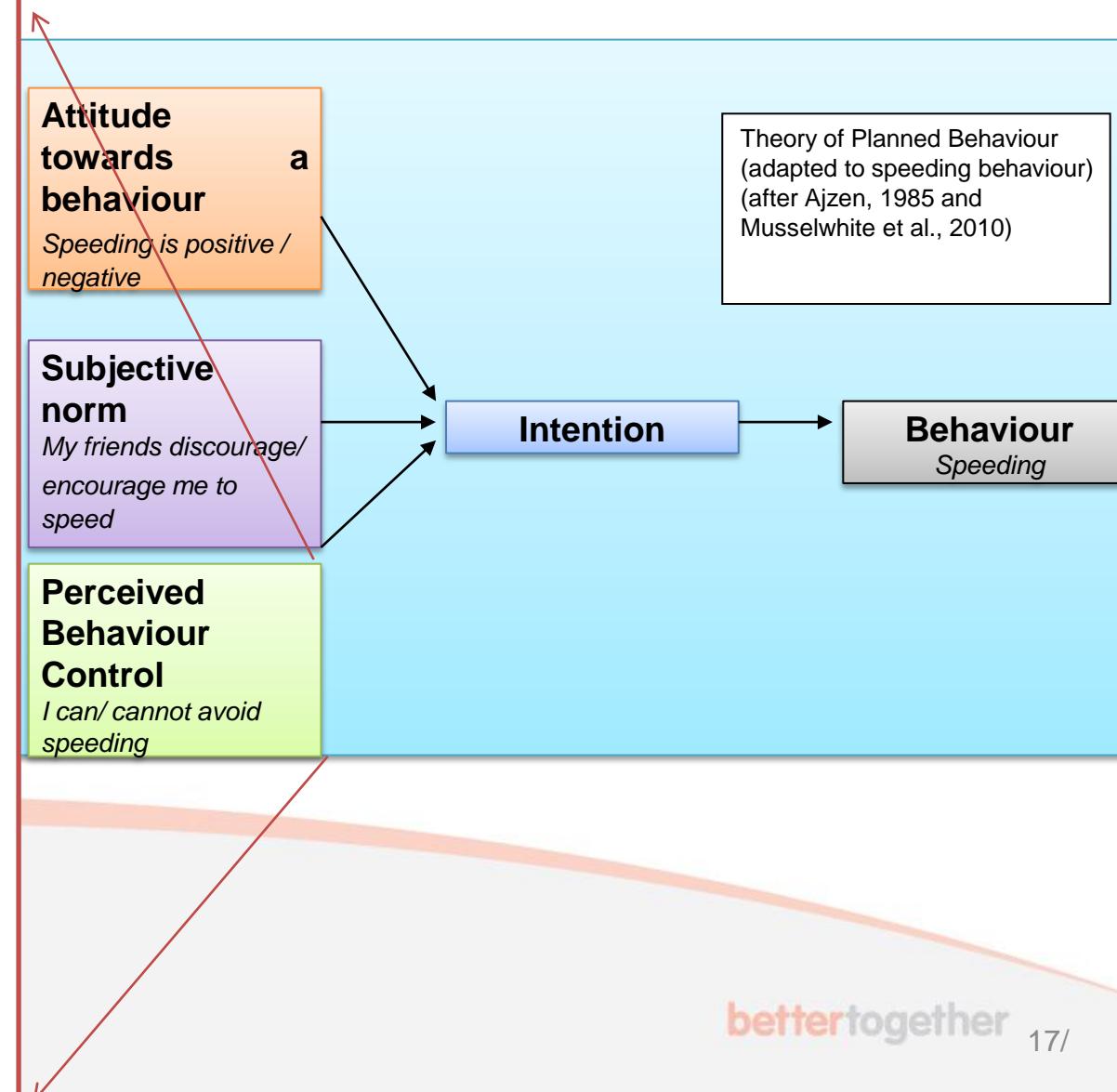
# Theory of Planned Behaviour

## Perceived Behavioural Control

***I have the control over my risk.***

"I suppose in excess of the speed limit but take into consideration the amount of traffic on the road as well. I break the speed limit. I'll do, certainly on the motorway, but I think I would be less likely to do that if it was rush hour" (Male, Wales, Children in Household)

***I can't tell others to avoid speeding.***





# Conclusion

# Key findings and implications

## **Feel it is safe to take risks so (calculated risk) (Microsystem and Mesosystem)**

- feeling speed limits were too stringent;
- were out of date with modern technology of cars;
- speeding when roads were empty;

Calculated risk taking is linked to a level of individual rational logic, and further investigation is needed into how such logic is formed amongst individuals.

Changes in risk homeostasis - context (shared space), changes in education.

## **Emotive issues make risky driving (reactive risk) (mesosystem/.exosystem)**

- late,
- lost
- Stressed

Further investigation is needed into how either of these might be mitigated. For example, the growing use of satellite navigation systems may reduce the stress of getting lost, and the use of mobile phones (hands-free) means individuals can phone ahead to reduce the stress of being late.

## **Passengers and peer effects, (social norms/ microsystem / macrosystem)**

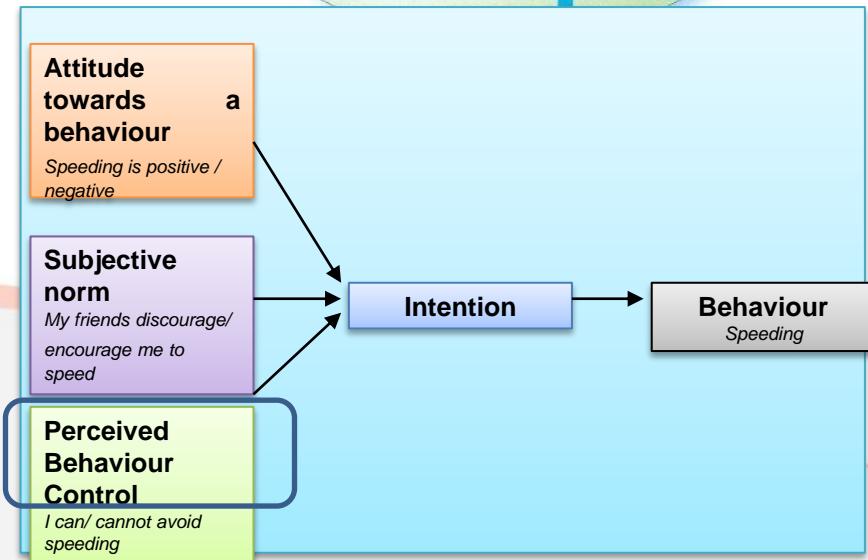
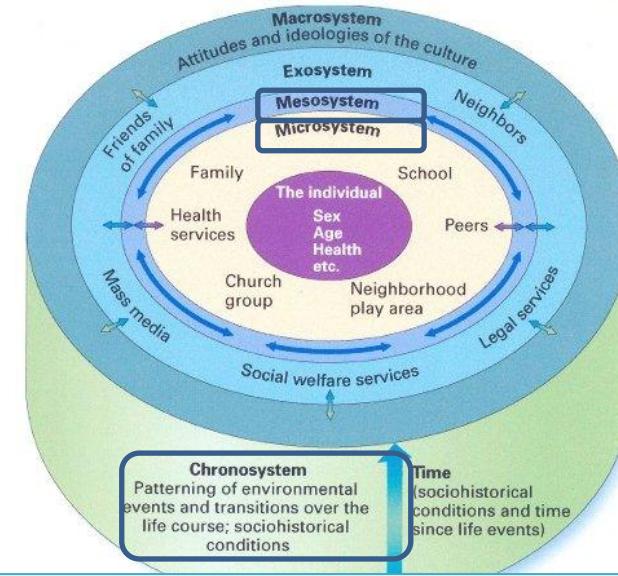
- Negative effect of peer pressure on the young. Both in situ (direct pressure) and outside of the context (norms)
- Difficulty in not responding to type
- Positive effect in later years

## **Changes over time (chronosystem layer)**

- Do become safer for a variety of social and contextual reasons but work and wider pressures remain up to middle age.

# How did the models do?

- Brofenbrenner's ecological model
  - Chronosystem layer adds fluidity
  - Highlights importance of contextual factors
  - Mixing social and contextual factors especially for highly aberrant behaviour e.g. drink driving, driving while tired etc.
  - Social norms / peers
- Theory of Planned Behaviour
  - Perceived behavioural control is vital
  - Social norms / peers
- Missing elements:
  - Intrinsic nature : speeding is fun and thrilling
  - Distraction; doing other things



The data reported in this work was collected in a study commissioned by the UK's Department for Transport (Musselwhite et al., 2010a,b). However it does not necessarily represent Department for Transport opinions and is the opinions of the authors.

Further reading:-

Ajzen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckman (Eds.), Action-control: From cognition to behavior (pp. 11- 39). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer

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Further information

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