



**Safe Systems Summit**

Redefining Transportation Safety



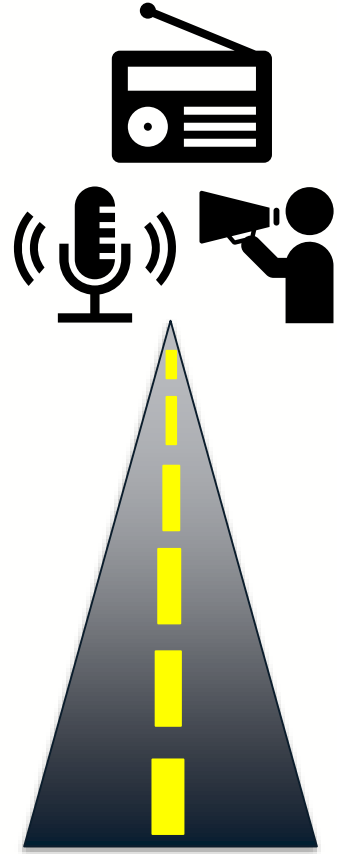
# Which Route Do I Take? Using Behavioral Science to Choose Messages for Traffic Safety Campaigns

Dr. Sarah Parvanta

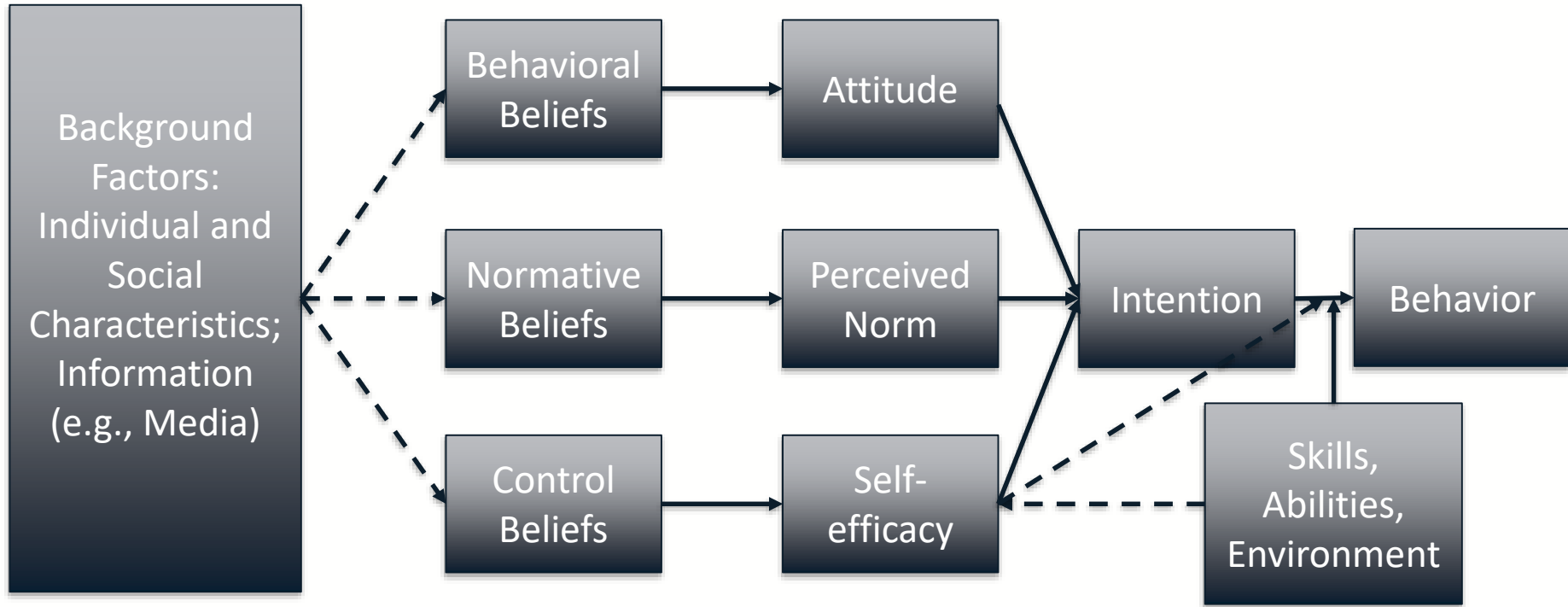
Center for Communication Science, RTI International

April 24, 2019

# What should traffic safety messages say?



# Theories on how to change behavior: Integrative Model



Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (2010). *Predicting and Changing Behavior: The Reasoned Action Approach* (1st ed.). New York: Psychology Press Taylor & Francis Group.

# How to choose message strategies to promote traffic safety

1

Choose the traffic safety behavior you want to change

2

Find out what people believe about doing that behavior

3

Tests the beliefs

Hornik, R., & Woolf, K. D. (1999). Using Cross-Sectional Surveys to Plan Message Strategies. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 5(2), 34–41.

1

Choose the traffic safety behavior you want to change

Distracted Driving

Impaired Driving

Behaviors

Drowsy Driving

Aggressive Driving

Driver Behavior & Performance

## 2017 Traffic Safety Culture Index

The Traffic Safety Culture Index is an annual survey, identifying driver's attitudes and behaviors related to traffic safety. Road safety topics covered include speeding, red light running, seat belt use, distracted, drowsy and drunk driving.

March 2018

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. (March 2019). Retrieved 28 April 2019, from <https://aaafoundation.org/2017-traffic-safety-culture-index/>

# 2

## Find out what people believe about performing that behavior

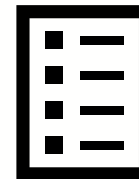
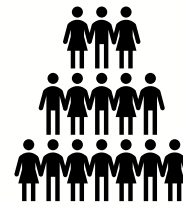
Put away cell phone away while driving

- People's beliefs about a behavior often become the reasons that they do or don't perform the behavior.
- Possible beliefs about putting my cell phone away while driving:
  - **If I put away my cell phone while driving...**
    - I will keep other people in my car safe.
    - I will avoid getting into a car accident.
    - I will avoid getting pulled over.
    - My car insurance won't go up.
    - **I will set a good example for my kids.**
    - My family would approve.
    - My friends would approve

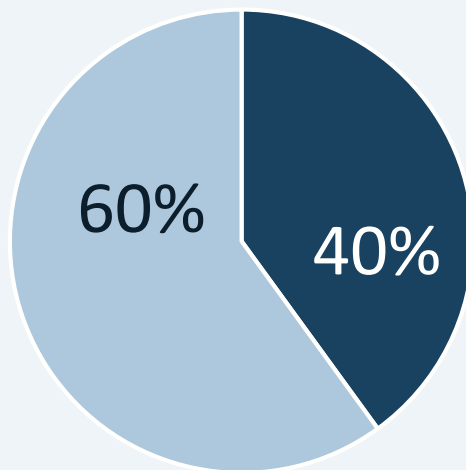


3

## Test the beliefs



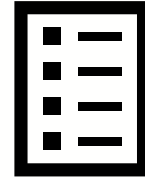
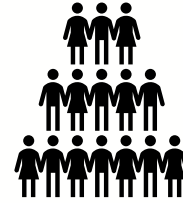
Belief = I will set a good example for my kids



■ Disagree  
■ Agree

# 3

## Test the beliefs



I will put my phone away

5

4

3

2

1

0

Disagree

Agree

I will not put my phone away

Belief = I will set a good example for my kids



# 3

## Test the beliefs

- Could we reasonably argue that putting cell phone away while driving would set a good example for kids?
- Could we reasonably design a message promoting this argument?



# Test all beliefs and then rank order them

## – If I put my cell phone away while driving...

1. I will set a good example for my kids.
2. My family would approve.
3. I will keep other people in my car safe.
4. I will avoid getting into a car accident.
5. I will avoid getting pulled over.
6. My car insurance won't go up.
7. My friends would approve.

BEST  
MESSAGE TO  
PROMOTE



RULE THIS  
ONE OUT

# Promote top beliefs in your campaign messages



1

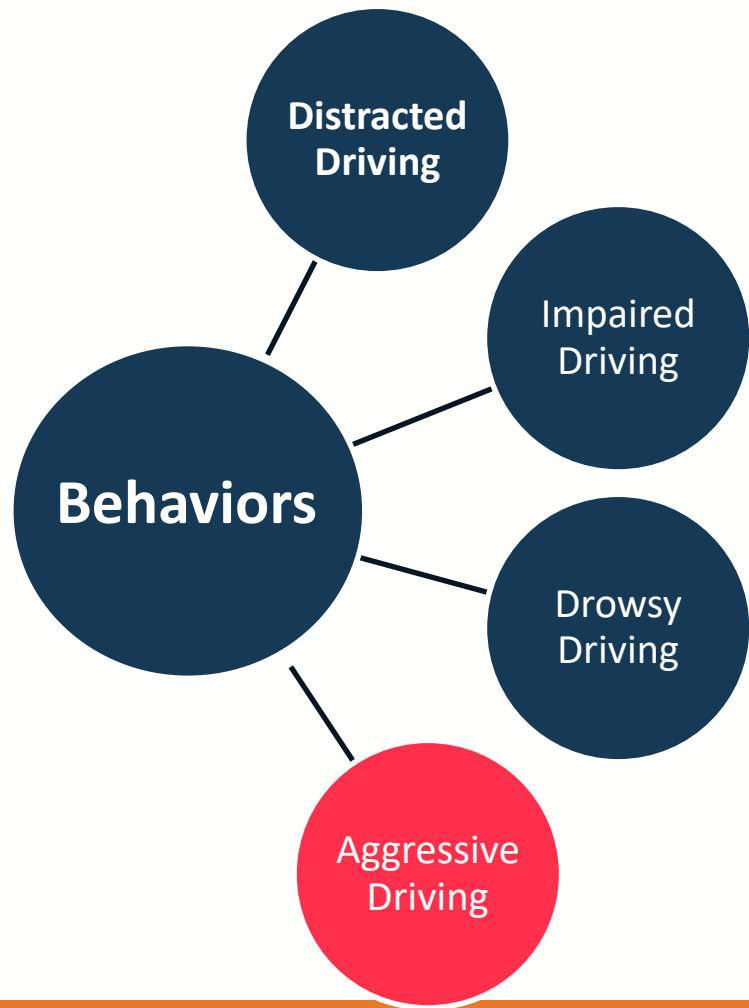
Choose the traffic safety behavior you want to change

2

Find out what people believe about doing that behavior

3

Subject those beliefs to testing



# Thank you!

- Sarah Parvanta
- RTI International, Center for Communication Science
- [sparvanta@rti.org](mailto:sparvanta@rti.org)
- [www.rti.org/communicationscience](http://www.rti.org/communicationscience)