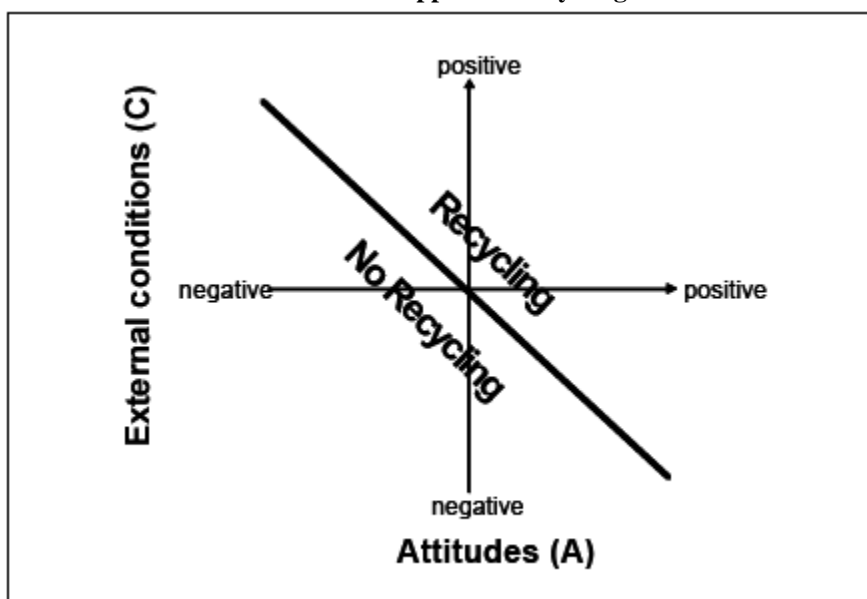


## Stern's Attitude-Behaviour-Context Model

One of the most significant efforts to overcome the internal-external dichotomy in the social psychological literature is the attempt by Stern (2000) and his colleagues (Guagnano *et al.*, 1995; Stern *et al.*, 1999) to develop integrated 'Attitude-Behaviour Context' (ABC) models of environmentally significant behaviour (Figure 3). The fundamental starting point for Stern's approach is the assumption that behaviour is a function of the organism and its environment. Or, in the language of ABC, behaviour (B) is 'an interactive product of personal sphere attitudinal variables (A) and contextual factors (C)' (Stern, 2000). Attitudinal variables considered in such theories might include a variety of specific personal beliefs, norms and values as well as general 'pre-dispositions' to act in certain ways. Contextual factors can potentially include a wide variety of influences such as: monetary incentives and costs, physical capabilities and constraints, institutional and legal factors, public policy support, interpersonal influences (social norms e.g.) and in some cases (Olli *et al.*, 1999) broader dimensions of the social context, such as allegiance to or influence by environmental groups.

Figure 3 the Attitude-Behaviour-Context Model applied to recycling



The structural dynamics between the influence of attitudes (i.e. internal factors) and contextual (i.e. external) factors is a key dimension of the ABC model. In particular, its proponents claim that the attitude-behaviour link is strongest when contextual factors are weak or non-existent; and that; conversely, there is virtually no link between attitudes and behaviours when contextual factors are either strongly negative or strongly positive. So, for example, in the case of recycling, when access to recycling facilities is either very hard or very easy, it scarcely matters whether or not people hold pro-recycling attitudes. In the first case, virtually no one recycles; and in the second case most people recycle. In a situation, however, in which it is possible but not necessarily easy to recycle, the correlation between pro-environmental attitude and recycling behaviour is strongest.