Initial Thoughts on Conceptualizing and Measuring Social Norms
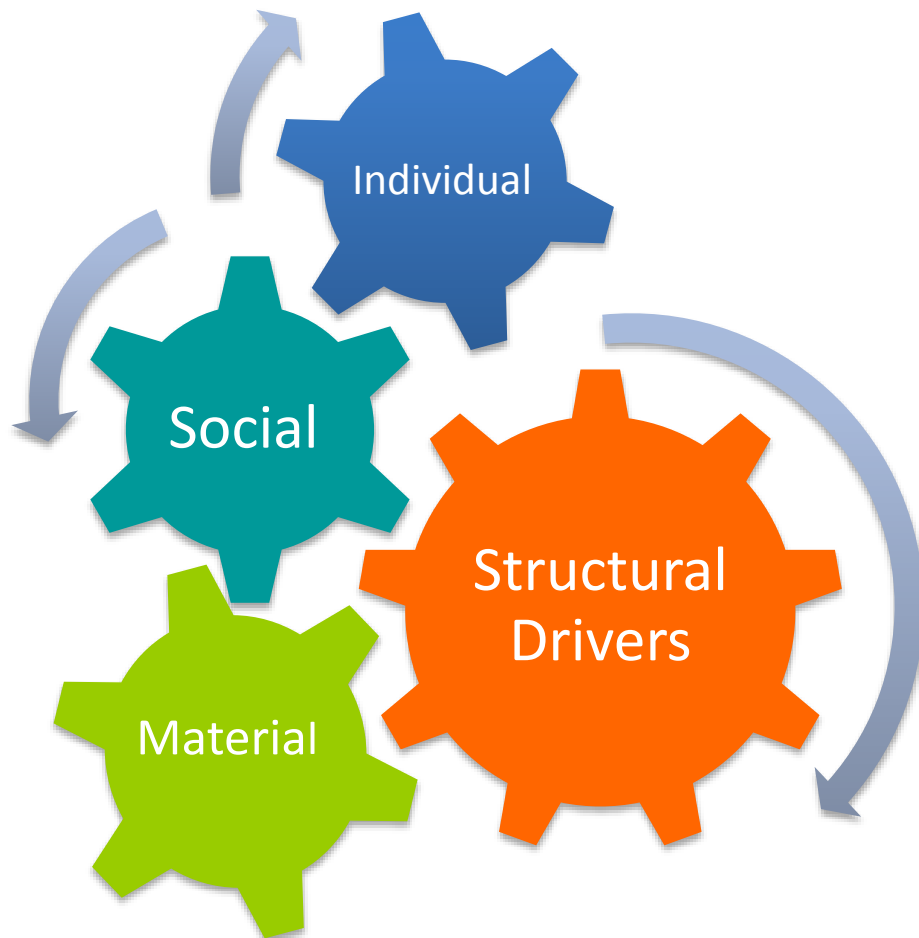
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Limitations of current conceptualization

- Game theoretical approach to norms tends to undervalue power and the contribution of gender socialization
- Alternative conceptualization by Pearse and Connell, 2015:
  - *Gender norms," specifically, mean differential rules of conduct for women and men, including rules governing interactions between women and men.*
  - The *appearance* of consensus may reflect not real social agreement in the symbolic domain, but the operation of power

Norms are only one element of what sustains harmful behaviors

STRUCTURAL FACTORS
- Migration   Globalization
- Conflict   Ideology

MATERIAL REALITIES
- Economic options
- Available infrastructure

SOCIAL
- Norms
- Networks

INDIVIDUAL
- Agency
- Aspirations
- Beliefs

Utility of measuring social norms

Diagnosis:

What matrix of norms, structural factors, empirical expectations, and/or beliefs is driving the practice or holding it in place?

Intervention design:

What insights from social norm theory can help inform efforts to change a harmful practice?

- *Building a new positive norm*
- *Establishing new scripts*
- *Avoiding strategies that communicate that a practice is common*

Measuring change over time

Diagnosis

SAMATA program assumed certain norms

- Girls education is not valued by the family, community or school

- Early marriage of girls seen as a viable option to protect family "honour" and discharge familial responsibility

- Boys feel peer pressure to harass and tease girls

- Girls are not seen as worthy of investment; rather their well being may be sacrificed for the greater welfare of the family

Samata Baseline survey

In point of fact…

- Most parents support girls education and do not openly privilege boy's education over girls.

- A sizeable minority (~20%), however, exhibit more ambivalent attitudes

- Less supportive parental attitudes towards girls' schooling predict school drop out

Evidence of Pluralistic Ignorance

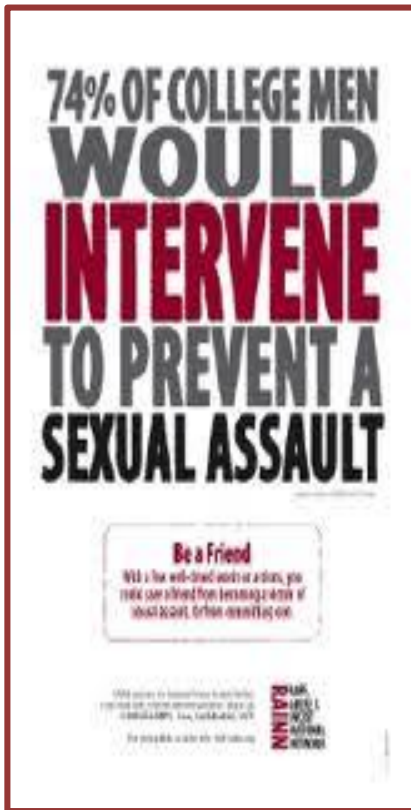| % who agree with the following:	Personal belief	Empirical expectation	Normative expectation
Value sons and daughters education equally	96%	79% report more than half of people in village educate sons longer	40.8% agree or somewhat agree that they should educate their son longer than my daughter
It is a girl's fault if she is sexually harassed by a male student or teacher	23%	43% say more than half of village believe it is girls' fault	43.5% agree that those important to them blame girls if they are teased

Opportunity to publicize discrepancy

Intervention Design

Awareness campaigns can backfire

Emphasizing positive descriptive norms

Helps identify who to target for interventions

Creative dynamic between empowerment and norms-based strategies

- Empowerment focuses on building agency:
  - Expanding horizons/aspirations
  - Building self efficacy
  - Encouraging critical reflection
- Norms, however, can serve as a "brake" on social change
- Agency helps girls resist social expectations, but it doesn't transform social expectations

Measuring change over time

- Communities of Care Program (Somalia) –UNICEF

- Researchers: Nancy Glass and Nancy Perrin

- Qualitative research on norms, beliefs, values
- Generation of items
- Psychometric testing of items
- Identification of latent constructs

Final Outcome Measure

- Four dimensions
  - Protecting Family Honor
  - Husband's Right to Use Violence
  - Gender Equality
  - Cycle of Sexual Violence
- Each measured from three perspectives
  - Community Behavior
    - What people see happening in their community
  - Personal beliefs
  - Social norms
    - What others expect of you
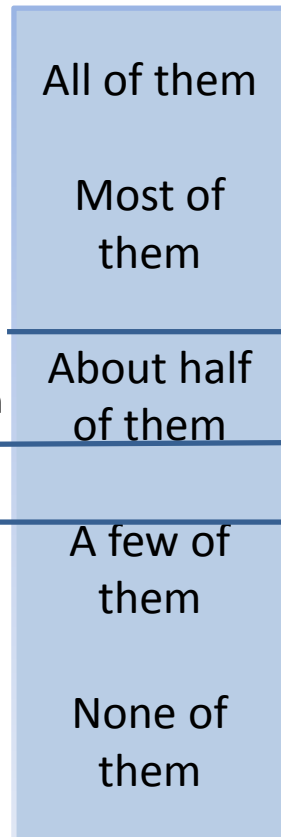
Measure Subscale: Family Honor

What do people important to you expect from you and others?

1. Women/girls not to report rape to protect the family dignity

2. Sexual violence to be handled within the family and not reported to authorities

3. Husbands or fathers will retaliate against alleged perpetrators

Responses on Likert scale from 1-5 (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree), with higher scores indicate that participants think more of the people who are important/influencial to them endorse protecting family honor

Protecting Family Honor Results
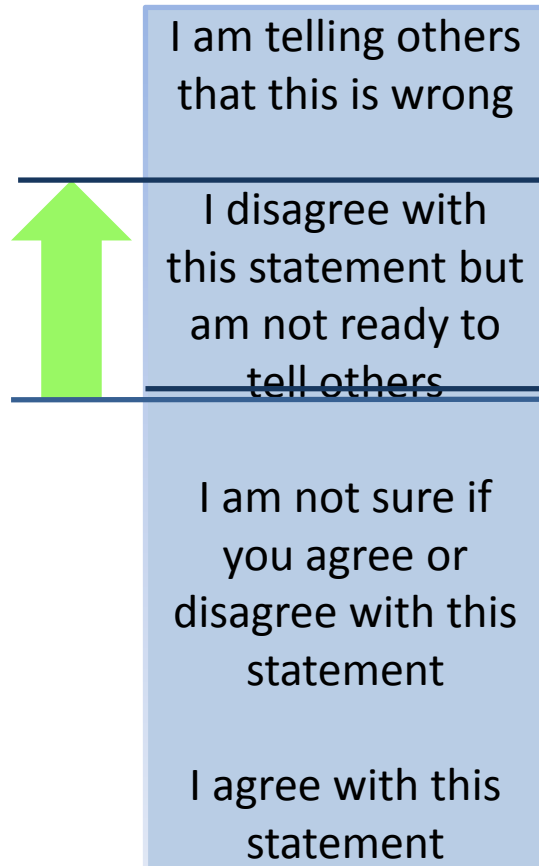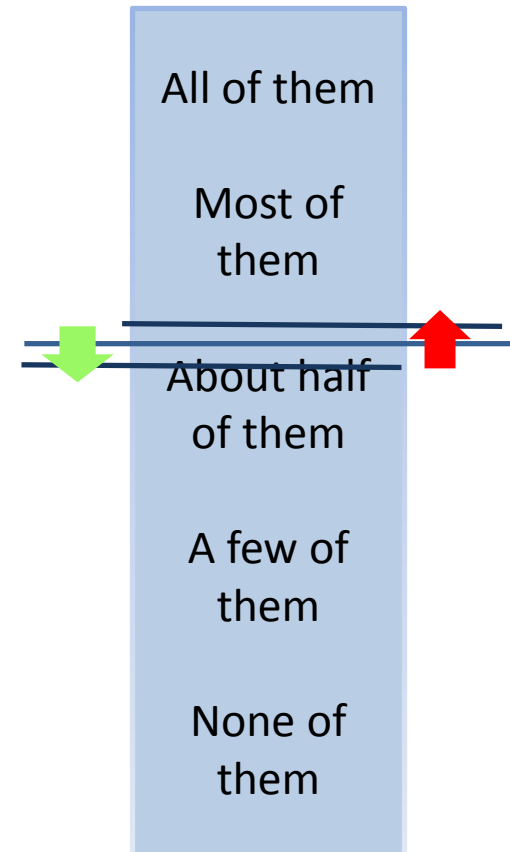
Community Behavior

All of them

Most of them

About half of them

Intervention

A few of them

None of them

Control

People in the intervention communities see fewer people protecting family honor

Personal Beliefs

I am telling others that this is wrong

I disagree with this statement but am not ready to tell others

I am not sure if you agree or disagree with this statement

I agree with this statement

More people in the intervention communities think protecting family honor is wrong

Social Norms

All of them

Most of them

About half of them

A few of them

None of them
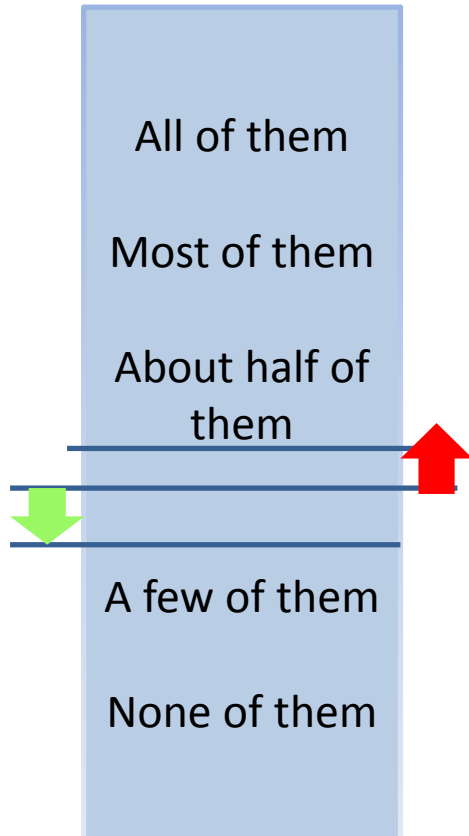
Fewer people in the intervention communities think others expect them to protect family honor

Husband's Rights to Use Violence Results
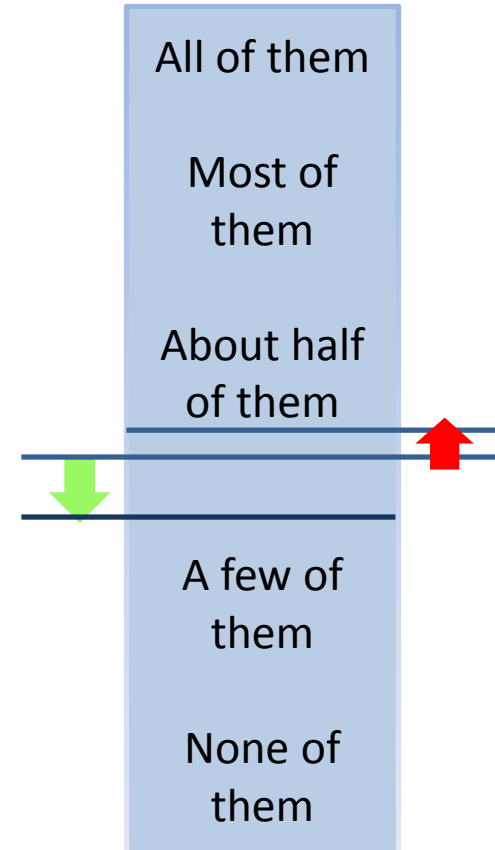
Community Behavior

All of them
Most of them
About half of them
A few of them
None of them

People in the intervention communities see fewer husbands using violence against their wives

Personal Beliefs

I am telling others that this is wrong
I disagree with this statement but am not ready to tell others
I am not sure if you agree or disagree with this statement
I agree with this statement

More people in the intervention communities think husband's right to use violence is wrong

Social Norms

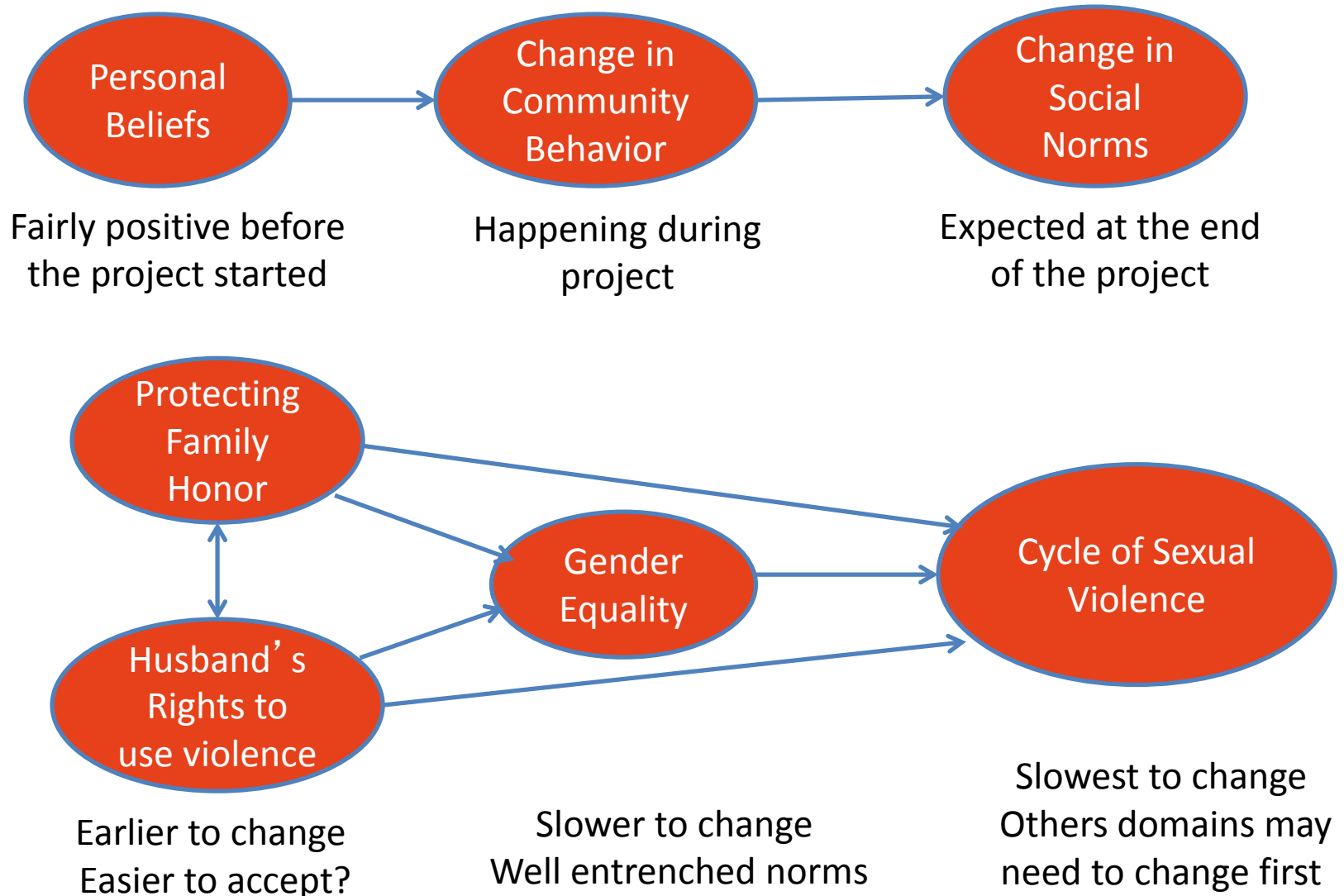| |
|---|
| All of them |
| Most of them |
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| A few of them |
| None of them |

Fewer people in the intervention communities think others expect husband to use violence
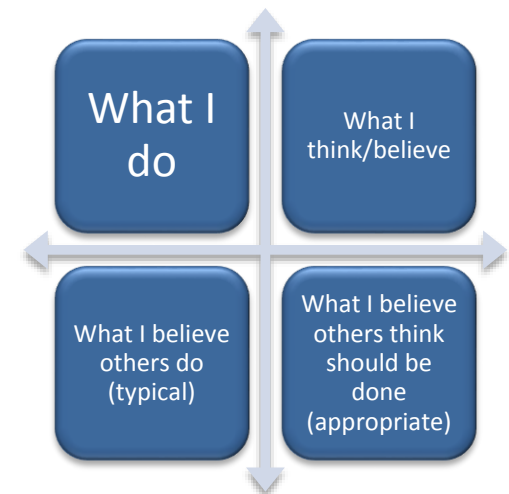
Summary of Preliminary Results

- Community members started with fairly positive personal beliefs

  – They continue to get more positive in the intervention group but not the control group

- Community behavior & social norms are slower to change

- Protecting family honor and husband's right to use violence are making the greatest progress

  – Gender equality slightly behind

- Little change yet in the Cycle of Sexual Violence

  – These things happen less frequently than the other items

  – Haven't had enough time/events in the community to see the change

Some Thoughts on the Change Process

Personal Beliefs → Change in Community Behavior → Change in Social Norms

Fairly positive before the project started

Happening during project

Expected at the end of the project

Protecting Family Honor

Husband's Rights to use violence

Gender Equality

Cycle of Sexual Violence

Earlier to change
Easier to accept?

Slower to change
Well entrenched norms

Slowest to change
Others domains may need to change first

Experience with measurement thus far

- Generic questions regarding "equality"or "support for education," suggest more progressive attitudes than questions that inquire about specific situations

- Bicchieri question quadrant has proven difficult to translate and difficult for some respondents to answer

- Moreover, range of questions requires excessive questionnaire space

- People want social norms questions without doing early qualitative and psychometric work

What I do	What I think/believe
What I believe others do (typical)	What I believe others think should be done (appropriate)

Bihar Adolescent Boys Study
(Pop Council/CEDPA/LSHTM)

A boy will be more respected by his friends (Agree Disagree

- if he helps his mother do her housework 62.9

- if he walks away from a fight 6.8

- if he refuses to hit/beat his girlfriend even if she disobeys him 21.8

Good experience with qualitative vignettes

Let's pretend that a woman called Françine lives in this community. She is 24 years old, has completed primary school and is married to Albert. They have two small children. Most days Francine works in the market selling fruits and vegetables, as Albert does not give her enough housekeeping money.

- In general, what would people in this community think about Françine working rather than staying at home caring for her children?
- Would people think that the fact that Albert's wife works outside of the home reflects badly on him as a man?
- Probe: In what way? Who might think differently about him?

One day, things are slow at the market, and Françine stays later than usual to try and sell her fruits and vegetables. While waiting to catch a moto to get back home, Françine is seen laughing with another man behind the marketDoes Françine worry about certain people finding out that she was talking to another man behind the market?

- Probe: Who? What might they think or say about this?
- Would Albert be upset if someone told them about the incident? Why?

Community of Practice on Social Norms

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