

TOP 20 Resources on Social Norms

Members of the Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change are pleased to share the resources they have identified as most useful to their work addressing social norms to improve adolescent sexual and reproductive health. These include reports, manuals, peer review publications and books on social norms theory, measurement and practice.

These top 20 resources on social norms were selected by members of the Learning Collaborative because they were judged to advance current understanding, be full of evidence, synthesize the state of the field, demonstrate foundational thinking, and be a great source for references.

Each resource title is linked to the full publication.

THEORY

Social Norms: A Review

Adrienne Chung, Rajiv Rimal | 2016



The objectives of this article are to (a) provide a review of the fast-expanding literature on social norms, (b) delineate similarities and differences in key operational definitions, (c) review theories that explicate how norms affect behaviors, (d) propose a revised theoretical framework that helps organize our understanding of normative influence on behavior, and (e) provide suggestions for future research in this area.

Transforming Gender Norms, Roles, and Power Dynamics for Better Health

Arundati Muralidharan, Jessica Fehringer, Sara Pappa, Elisabeth Rottach, Madhumita Das, Mahua Manda | 2015



The Gender, Policy and Measurement program undertook a comprehensive, systematic review of the impact of gender-integrated programs on health outcomes. The review presents evidence showing how gender-integrated programming influences health outcomes in low- and middle-income countries and identifies the most effective gender-integrated strategies used by programs in low- and middle-income countries worldwide.

A Re-Explication of Social Norms, Ten Years Later

Rajiv Rimal, Maria Lapinski | 2015



The authors revisit ideas from their previous article on social norms by conceptualizing norms as dynamic entities that both affect and are affected by human action; elaborating on the distinction between collective and perceived norms; summarizing key findings from studies that have adopted the theory of normative social behavior; discussing the attribute-centered approach as a framework for focusing on behavioral characteristics; and highlighting areas for further inquiry.

A Structured Approach to a Diagnostic of Collective Practices

Cristina Bicchieri, Jan W. Lindemans, Ting Jiang | 2014



Programs that have been designed to end harmful social norms are often monitored for changes in objective outcomes and behaviors. Yet, monitoring and evaluation changes in a range of beliefs and preferences important to social norms is still problematic. This paper presents a structured approach to the diagnosis of collective practices. The authors introduce a theoretical framework and then show how it can be used to guide social norms measurement, such as the design of surveys, experiments and vignettes.

Icon Key:



manual



report



book



peer review
publication

Explaining Norms

Geoffrey Brennan, Lina Eriksson, Robert Goodin, Nicholas Southwood | 2013

This book offers a comprehensive account of norms: what they are; how and why they emerge, persist and change; and how they work. The explanation of norms helps understand individual and collective motivations to pursue goals and develop social meaning. The authors describe the ways in which norms influence actions, attitudes and modes of deliberation.



Social Norms and Health Behavior

Allecia Reid, Robert Cialdini, Leona Aiken | 2010

Research that has examined the role of social norms in characterizing, predicting, and ultimately altering health behaviors is reviewed. An important distinction between descriptive and injunctive norms is addressed, and a brief review of literature that has examined norms as correlates of health behavior is provided. The remainder of the chapter (from the Handbook of Behavior Medicine: Methods and Applications) focuses on applications of normative information to behavior change, with an emphasis on social norms theory.



The Grammar of Society: the Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms

Cristina Bicchieri | 2006

Cristina Bicchieri examines social norms, such as fairness, cooperation, and reciprocity in an effort to understand their nature and dynamics, generated expectations, evolution, and change. Drawing on intellectual traditions and methods, including those of social psychology, experimental economics, and evolutionary game theory, Bicchieri provides an integrated account of how social norms emerge, and why and when we follow them.



An Explication of Social Norms

Maria Lapinski, Rajiv Rimal | 2005

This article identifies four factors for consideration in norms-based research to enhance the predictive ability of theoretical models: the distinction between perceived and collective norms and between descriptive and injunctive norms; the role of important moderators in the relationship between descriptive norms and behaviors; the role of both interpersonal and mass communication in normative influences; and behavioral attributes that determine susceptibility to normative influences.



PRACTICE

Applying Theory to Practice: CARE's Journey Piloting Social Norms Measures for Gender Programming

CARE | 2017

While advances in gender equality have been made around the globe over the past two decades, there are still pockets which lack progress, such as the more intractable aspects of women's rights. There are persistent gender inequitable behaviors that are not changing despite efforts to provide information, improve attitudes and put in place good policies. In this report, CARE describes efforts to test whether a deeper understanding of norms could shed new light on what is holding certain behaviors in place and lead to more effective strategies for transforming gender norms and behaviors. This report focuses on CARE's journey to understand social norm theory and apply it to development practice.



Social Norms and Girls' Well-Being: Linking Theory to Practice

Bapu Vaitla, Alice Taylor, Julia Van Horn, Ben Cislighi | 2017

Recent scholarship and advocacy has highlighted a particularly powerful and long understudied force shaping girls' well-being: social norms. The authors review the landscape of theory around social norms, investigate in detail two projects that have facilitated change around norms and practices of female genital cutting and child marriage, and discuss the implications of both theory and practice for the future of social norms change interventions.



Costing of Social Norm Interventions: A Primer for the Passages Project

Rick Homan (FHI 360) | 2016



This primer is a resource to assist those who are implementing social norm interventions in thinking through decisions that need to be made when assessing the cost of those interventions. While no two analyses are exactly the same, the goals are often the same: to provide insight into the magnitude and type of investment that will be required to implement, sustain, and/or expand a social norm intervention in a particular context. This primer discusses decisions that must be made when developing a cost estimate for a social norm intervention, the pros and cons of alternatives for developing the cost estimate, and how this information can be used to support other types of analyses that may be relevant beyond the intervention costing.

Guidance Note: Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Michaeljon Alexander-Scott, Emma Bell, Jenny Holden | 2016



Although the importance of attitudes, norms, and beliefs that justify violence and gender inequality in perpetuating VAWG is recognized, there has often been a lack of clarity about the definitions of and relationships between these constructs and the practical implications for program design and evaluation. This Guidance Note aims to clarify these constructs, summarize the role of social norms in sustaining harmful behaviors and contributing to VAWG, and provide practical guidance and advice for DFID advisors and program managers on how to identify and address harmful social norms in the context of programming to prevent VAWG.

Redefining Norms to Empower Women: Experiences and Lessons Learned

CARE | 2016



The Redefining Norms to Empower Women (ReNEW) project of CARE International worked with tea plantation communities (2014-2016) to challenge the practice of intimate partner violence. The pilot project explored how the social norms that underpin violence could be addressed and measured using an approach based on social norms theory. This learning paper discusses the approaches that were adopted in this pilot initiative to challenge a social norm that underpins violence against women. It discusses how measurement was carried out, what gains were made, and challenges faced.

Why Do People Do What They Do? A Social Norms Manual for Zimbabwe and Swaziland; Viet Nam, Indonesia, and the Philippines

Cristina Bicchieri (UNICEF) | 2015; 2016



These two training manuals offer detailed explanations of what social norms are and how they influence behavior – with a particular emphasis on behavior related to violence against children. The manual was developed to train researchers in (a) Zimbabwe and Swaziland and (b) Viet Nam, Indonesia and the Philippines to identify and study social norms, and how they influence violence against children.

Changing Gender Norms: Monitoring and Evaluating Programs and Projects

Rachel Marcus, Sophie Brodbeck (ODI) | 2015



To understand whether projects and programs designed to change discriminatory gender norms are having their intended impact, you need to monitor change, or lack of change, at regular intervals. Monitoring and evaluation data can help identify what works (and does not work) in particular circumstances, and can help others avoid mistakes and build on successes. This Research and Practice Note gives some guidance on how to monitor and evaluate programs and projects that set out to change gender norms.

How Do Gender Norms Change?

Rachel Marcus, Caroline Harper (ODI) | 2015



Drawing on ODI fieldwork in Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda, and Viet Nam, as well as a review of literature, this Research and Practice Note outlines some of the main drivers of norm change. The note looks at how new norms develop and are adopted, and some of the main factors that influence how people perceive norms – and whether individuals act on them or not. Examples of research that demonstrate shifts in gender norms, the consequences of those shifts and ways to minimize or respond to resistance to change are highlighted.

Social Norms, Gender Norms and Adolescent Girls: A Brief Guide

Rachel Marcus, Caroline Harper (ODI) | 2015



This Research and Practice Note provides an overview of key thinking on social norms of relevance to challenging gender inequalities that affect adolescent girls. It brings together insights from gender theory and social norms theory to help understand what influences gender norms, and how they operate in particular circumstances.

MEASUREMENT

Measuring Gender-related Social Norms: Report of a Meeting

Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-based Violence of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine | 2017



The learning group convened an expert meeting (Baltimore, Maryland, in July 2016) focused on the measurement of the social norms sustaining gender-based violence. The meeting included discussion on best-practice strategies to diagnose and measure social norms. This meeting report summarizes key learnings, for example, the importance of considering factors other than norms when addressing harmful behaviors, qualitative diagnosis of norms as crucial for intervention design, the need for simple tools to measure social norms and the importance of disaggregating social norms by reference group.

Measurement of Social Norms Affecting Modern Contraceptive Use: A Literature Review

Elizabeth Cotenbader, Rachel Lenzi, Rebecca Hershov, Kim Ashburn, Donna McCarraher | 2017



As a critical building block to developing social norms interventions to support healthy family planning and other reproductive health behaviors, the authors conducted a literature review to identify and evaluate social norms measures related to modern contraceptive use. After reviewing the limitations of the articles, the authors make several recommendations to bring greater consistency and comparability to social norms measures.

What are Social Norms? How are They Measured?

Gerry Mackie, Francesca Moneti, Holly Shakya, Elaine Denny | 2015



Social norms theory has not been widely examined in development circles. The first half of this report attempts a primer on the subject, including clarifying what social norms are and how they relate to other social practices. The second half of the report proposes some principles for measurement of social norms and their change.

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