Shaping policy for development
Social norms, adolescent girls and gender justice: understanding change pathways
Firstly identify that there are differing understandings of social norms and why that is important

Secondly describe the conceptual framework we have been using to explore gendered norms and adolescence

Thirdly using the example of early marriage just describe some of the important structural and economic levers of change related to the practice

Finally – a few reflections on child protection drawn from a wider body of work
Different Interpretations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory/Tradition</th>
<th>Definition/ Entry Point of Social Norms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marx</td>
<td>Social norms are …. outcomes of property relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parsons</td>
<td>Social norms are the regulatory patterns that ensure social order</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bordieu</td>
<td>Social norms are part of the habitus into which people are socialised and become ‘doxa’ (beyond the limits of what can be challenged)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Social norms are group rules for appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elster</td>
<td>Social norms work through shame and guilt rather than reward and punishment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mackie</td>
<td>Social norms are held in place by rewards and sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicchieri</td>
<td>Social norms are a pattern of behaviour and an expectation of conformity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Broadly, the sociological tradition emphasises the role of norms in constituting society and governing social behaviour, whereas social psychological and game theoretical perspectives focus more on why people comply with social norms.
Rationalist and Positivist v a v Post-modern and power analysis

These perspectives do inform how we ask questions around a problem and our bias or belief about how change happens.
Social norms are a pattern of behaviour that people conform to because people believe that:

a) most people in their reference network conform to it (empirical expectation) and

b) most people in their reference network believe that they ought to conform to it (normative expectation)
Social norms are group rules for appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. People conform because:

- they have no choice and no determining agency through economic or political power
- they can imagine no alternative - doxa (Bordieu)
- property and asset ownership and power delineated as it is (via men; via the church; via institutions of power)
- women have no voice and political power at local or national level.
Lessons learned

To be clear: No one theoretical perspective of norm maintenance and change is likely to fully capture the range of factors that hold gender norms in place or underpin change in particular situations; an eclectic approach is likely to be needed. Second, and as a consequence, challenging discriminatory norms frequently requires action on more than one underpinning factor simultaneously.
• Drivers of change literature (multi-disciplinary: anthropological, sociological, economic, political)
• Social norms literature (mostly psychological/philosophical; game theory; some sociological insights)
• Feminist analysis of power
• Analysis of positive deviance and literature on role models and leaders of change
• Masculinities literature
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body of literature</th>
<th>Insights</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural drivers</td>
<td>Broad institutions of society as instrumental in change. Role of education and communications as key drivers. Much detail on how economic change leads to norm change</td>
<td>Little analysis of how some drivers (e.g. education) lead to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent social norms theory (e.g. Mackie, Bicchieri)</td>
<td>Role of social convention, rewards and sanctions in maintaining norms</td>
<td>Fails to fully consider power relations; abstracted from analysis of structural drivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power analysis</td>
<td>Role of vested interests in maintaining norms; differential capacity to challenge discriminatory norms</td>
<td>Interests are only one motivation – groups and individuals can do/act altruistically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive deviance</td>
<td>Role of individual in catalysing change in practices and norms</td>
<td>Abstraction from social context. Limited attention to power relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinities</td>
<td>Role individual men/boys can play in challenging gender norms</td>
<td>Too little analysis of masculinity based obstacles to norm change; limited consideration of different models of gender equitable manliness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learnings

Approaches can complement each other but each has its limitations

Power and institutional analysis may not consider individual interests sufficiently

social convention theory and game theory may implicitly treat individuals as free agents who simply need to be persuaded of new norms and practices - irrespective of wider conditions

This ignores both the vested interests in maintaining gender order and the differential capacity people have to resist, challenge or change norms.
Conceptualising drivers of change in tackling discriminatory norms

Effects on norms

Mediating factors
- Socioeconomic circumstances
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Emotional wellbeing
- Household composition and stage of life cycle
- Religious affiliation
- Social networks

Drivers of change in gender norms and practices
- Changes in economic well-being (both increase and declines)
- Social and political mobilisation for change
- Conflict and displacement
- Role models
- Education
- Households and family structures
- Schools and educational institutions
- Public decision making and governance institutions
- Other public and private services eg health services, social protection, extension
- Labour markets and markets for goods and services

Broad drivers of change of urbanisation, economic, and environmental change, and demographic change
- Positive changes in family relationship
- Increased access to media (communication)
- Challenges to discriminatory norms

Weaker capabilities
- Norms remain resistant/norms harden & become more discriminatory
- Social and political mobilisation against change
- Resistance related to cultural and religious beliefs
- Lack of information
- Social psychological and economic rewards of compliance
- Social and political mobilisation against change

Stronger capabilities
- Norms remain resistant/norms harden & become more discriminatory
- Social and political mobilisation against change
- Resistance related to cultural and religious beliefs
- Lack of information
- Social psychological and economic rewards of compliance
- Social and political mobilisation against change

Affecting girls’ capability development
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Emotional wellbeing
- Physical wellbeing
- Voice in household, civic and political decision-making
- Educational capabilities

Forces maintaining discriminatory gender norm
- Norms remain resistant/norms harden & become more discriminatory
- Social and political mobilisation against change
- Resistance related to cultural and religious beliefs
- Lack of information
- Social psychological and economic rewards of compliance
- Social and political mobilisation against change

Operating through these institutions and sites
- Households and family structures
- Schools and educational institutions
- Public decision making and governance institutions
- Other public and private services eg health services, social protection, extension
- Labour markets and markets for goods and services

Voice in household, civic and political decision-making
Forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms

- Resistance related to cultural and religious beliefs
- Naturalisation and lack of questioning of institutionalised practices
- Social and psychological and economic rewards of compliance
- Fear of social or economic sanctions
- Social and political mobilisation against change
- Gender stereotyping in media - schools - other public services and development programmes
- Powerful interest groups oppose change
- Lack of information
Drivers of change in gender norms and practices

- Changes in economic wellbeing (both increase and decline)
- Social and political mobilisation for change inc. community dialogue
- Broader drivers of change eg urbanisation, economic and environmental change, and demographic change
- Positive deviance in family/community
- Powerful interest groups support change
- Conflict and displacement
- Role models
- Increased access to media/communications challenging discriminatory norms
- Education
- Legal change
Unhappily ever after
Slow and uneven progress in the fight against early marriage
Caroline Harper, Nicola Jones, Elizabeth Premier-Marshall and David Walker

Key messages

- Nearly one-third of all girls in the developing world marry before adulthood. More than one-in-ten marries before 15 years. Early marriage is particularly entrenched in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, but trends were significantly across and within countries.

- The consequences of early marriage are enormous in terms of forgone educational and economic opportunities, maternal morbidity and mortality, and more limited voice and power within the family and community; life-course and inter-generational poverty transfers.

- While poverty plays a key role in marriage decisions, discriminatory social norms that value girls primarily in terms of their reproductive capacities are critical to understanding early marriage.

- The interplay of economic and social drivers of early marriage differ between communities, regions and countries; there is therefore no single strategy which is likely to end the practice.

- A combination of community awareness raising, support for girls’ secondary education, economic strengthening initiatives and legal empowerment for girls and women needs to be considered, but designed with an in-depth understanding of the local culture and context to avoid generating negative or unforeseen consequences.

For more ODI resources on this topic visit: www.odi.org.uk/tackling-early-marriage
Motivations

- Early marriage is often seen by parents as a strategy for economic survival,
- It may be perceived as a way to protect girls in unsafe environments
- It can be related to parental status through kinship, financial and labour gains and acquiring reproductive rights.
- Virilocal residence (residence with the husband’s family) compounds the problem, with parents sometimes unwilling to ‘invest’ in a child who will leave the natal home early, making returns on their investments low. Thus, parents may not send daughters to school.
- Underpinned by son bias and socio-cultural norms
‘With one son you have a descendant, with 10 daughters you have nothing’
(Vietnamese proverb)

‘Raising a daughter is like watering your neighbour’s garden’
(Punjabi proverb)

‘When a son is born, Let him sleep on the bed, Clothe him with fine clothes, And give him jade to play […] When a daughter is born, Let her sleep on the ground, Wrap her in common wrappings, And give broken tiles to play’
(China Book of Songs, 1000-700 BC)

‘The birth of a boy is welcomed with shouts of joys and firecrackers but when a girl is born the neighbours say nothing’
(Chinese saying)

‘The birth of a girl grant elsewhere, here grant a son’
(Indian ancient text – Atharva Veda)

‘May you die’
(approximate translation for an ‘endearment’ in parts of Pakistan)

‘She is a true wife who has borne a son’
(Indian scripture – Manu Smriti)
Embedded gender bias

Extremely strong and can drive child protection violations: e.g. infanticide and foeticide, early marriage

Changing the value of girls requires action on multiple fronts
Economic Rationales

Economic rationales are strongly present in explanations which favour boys and lead to girls being ‘married off’, leaving the natal home. They stem from, justify and re-enforce son bias.
Links to economic rationales

- Sons lifetime economic contributions
- Old age security (county-level pension programmes in rural China have been found to lower the abnormal sex ratio at birth by 9 percent (Ebenstein and Leung, 2010).
- 51 percent of respondents in a fertility survey in Hubei province identified the primary motivation for a son as the desire for old-age support, with continuation of the family line a distant second (20 percent) (Ding and Zhang, 2009).
- Sons inherit property (Inheritance spanning a wide range of cultural and religious traditions (from Confucianism to Islam, from Hindu law to Kenyan inheritance customs) also mean that sons inherit property, exacerbating discrimination against girls and women and motivating prioritised investments in boys (Jackson, 2010; Quisumbing, 2007).
- Dowry and escalating costs compound bias – compounds undervaluing girls
- Female employment undervalued; girls used to benefit son’s education

Actions which address ‘economic issues and girls economic ‘value’ have been effective
Addressing other factors

- Education and economic empowerment is pivotal to address the ‘social norm’ of child marriage

- But other actions needed:
  Safe spaces
  Empowerment
  Inheritance law
  Legal custody rights
  Protection services
  Employment schemes

- Premise is that to address early marriage we need to work across sectors and social policy and poverty and engage a wider range of actors and resources
- Implications are wide enough to merit wider actor involvement
- It cannot be treated as a standalone
Economic deprivation and child protection violations: what are the linkages?
Literature reviews: Overview

- Focused on early marriage, sexual and physical violence and inadequate care
- Two intertwined components:
  1) Comprehensive review of literature on extent of relationship between poverty and protection violations
  2) Systematic-style review of 71 programmes examining impact of anti-poverty/economic strengthening activities on child protection outcomes
How did economic strengthening components help reduce child protection violations?

| Helped adolescents develop livelihood skills, that increased their standing in their household, ability to continue their education and room for manoeuvre | Facilitated girls staying in school – protective against transactional sex and early marriage | Attract young people & their parents to programmes which then changed attitudes – and that changes norms about adolescent girls |
In Conclusion

There are multiple pathways to changing discriminatory norms

The challenge is to identify the most effective pathway to change in a particular context - to understand which change action is most relevant or conversely least relevant.

It takes many, many years to change embedded gender bias - and there are many reversals in gains achieved along the way. But attitudes do change through multiple actions and with greater appreciation of effective change pathways much can be done to protect children.
Lessons learned
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