# General Considerations in Measuring Social Norms

- Identify the reference network
- Beliefs about others
- Investigate counterfactuals to discern causality

- Creative, practical, affordable, and effective ways to collect data approximating the above fundamentals
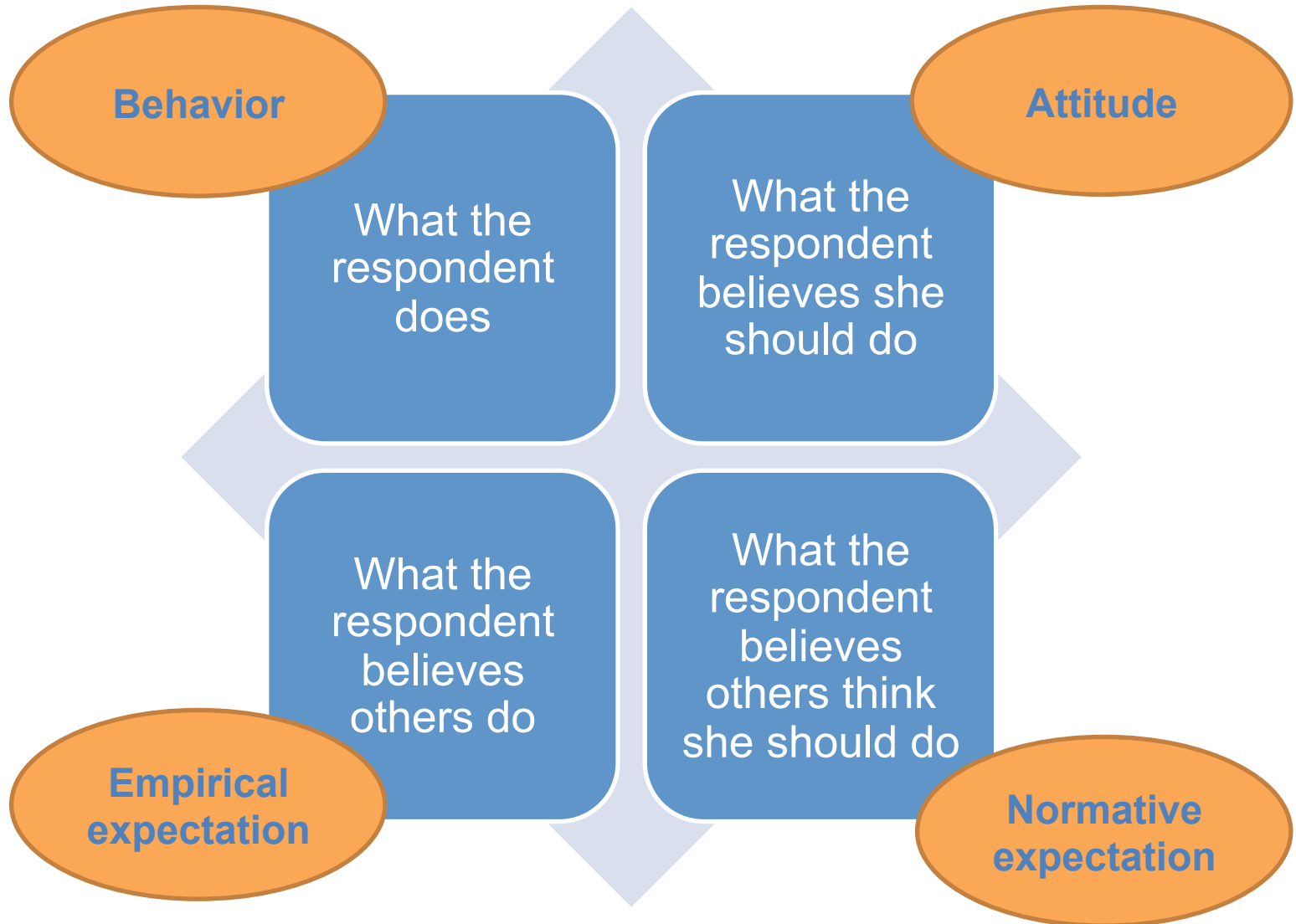
Relevant social network

- **People that matter to an individual's choices** (family, village, friends, clan, religious authority, co-workers, …)
- What she/he expects them to do matters: it influences her/his choice
- What she/he believes they think she/he ought to do matters: it influences her/his choice

    - *In a favelas in Brazil, dwellers punish stealing within the group, but not stealing outside the group*

Social expectations (empirical or normative)

Choice: a behaviour (conditional preference)
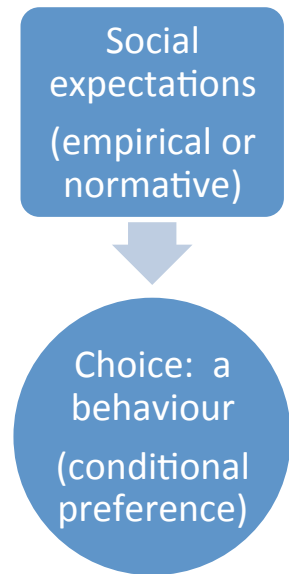
Categories of measures needed

Behavior

Attitude

Empirical expectation

Normative expectation

What the respondent does

What the respondent believes she should do

What the respondent believes others do

What the respondent believes others think she should do

Sample Questions (scales omitted)

- What the respondent does = Individual behaviour
  - Do you use corporal punishment in the classroom?

- What the respondent believes she should do = Personal attitude
  - Do you believe that you should use corporal punishment in the classroom?

- What the respondent believes others do (based on what she sees or hears) = Empirical expectations
  - Do you believe that other teachers use corporal punishment in the classroom?

- What the respondent thinks others believe she should do = Normative expectations
  - Do you believe that other teachers expect you to use corporal punishment in the classroom?

To get at causality, what would happen if one did not comply?

- Explore <u>consequences of **not**</u> following a practice
  - Footbinding: *"The girl would not be marriageable"*

- Explore <u>attitudes of others regarding **not**</u> following a practice
  - FGM/C in the Gambia. *"The girl would be unclean, she would be mocked, she could not cook for others or converse as an adult; the family would be looked down upon"*

Identify Reference Network

- Just ask
- Simple survey method
  - USAID Guinea-Conakry
    - Who do you consult about making the FGC decision?
      - Lower SES in ethnic neighborhoods: consult with family, political, and religious leaders in home village
      - Higher SES in ethnically-mixed class-based neighborhoods: consult friends, neighbors, religious congregation, media
  - Fishbein and Ajzen (2010)
    - "People who are important to me," either generally, or with respect to deciding on the specific practice, OR
    - Role occupants (priest, doctor, mother-in-law, other young wives)
      - Presurvey – ask individual to quickly name 5 most influential role occupants; pick 1-3 most named by respondents
    - First is easier, and maybe more accurate as to exact reference group for the individual
      - Good news: F&A say the first one usually works well

Identify Reference Network

- Social Network Analysis (Valente, *Social Networks and Public Health*; Christakis and Fowler, *Connected*)
  - Egocentric
  - Partial network data (snowball sampling)
  - Total network data
- Example: analysis of secondary network data in Indian location discloses reference groups, & latrine adoption is very high or very low per reference group (Shakya)

Measure Social Norms Change by Behavioral Observations?

- Independent action, individual-level behavior change
  - Measure: observable behavior change
- Not as simple with interdependent social norms
  - Measure incidence of observable negative sanctions?
    - They are not correlated with social norms
      - The more effective is the threat of negative sanctions, the less actual sanctions will be observed
      - One may be motivated to comply by esteem/disesteem (invisible attitude) as well as by approval/disapproval (visible action)
  - Measure: beliefs about others
    - Not easy to validly measure subjective states

Identifying Social Norm

- Measure Individuals' beliefs about
  - What others do (empirical expectations)
  - What others think one should do (normative expectations)

Measuring Change in Social Norm

- Measure change in individuals' beliefs about (
  - What others do (empirical expectations)
  - What others think one should do (normative expectations)

Sample Questions, Fishbein & Ajzen (2010); Theory of Planned Behavior

- *Most people who are important* to me

do :_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: do not

 (practice target behavior)

- *Most people who are important* to me think

 I should :_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: I should not

 (practice target behavior)

Sample Questions

- Do you <u>(do target behavior)</u>?
  Yes, always   ☐ Yes, more than half the time   ☐ Yes, about half the time
  Yes, less than half the time   ☐ No

- Do you think you should <u>(do target behavior)</u>?
  Yes, definitely ☐ Yes, probably   ☐ Maybe   ☐ No, probably not
  No, definitely not

- How many of the people important to you <u>(do target behavior)</u>?
  All of them   ☐ More than half of them   ☐ About half of them
  Less than half of them   ☐ None of them

- How many of the people important to you think you should<u>(do target behavior)</u>?
  All of them   ☐ More than half of them   ☐ About half of them
  Less than half of them   ☐ None of them

Beliefs About Others

Table 1: Measures Relevant to Observed Regularities

What Self Believes About:			
	Self	**Others – 1st Order**	**Others – 2nd Order**
Empirical	What I do	What others do	What others think I do
Normative	What I think I should do	What I think others should do	What others think I should do

Using Beliefs-about-Others Data

	Self	Others – 1st Order	Others – 2nd Order
Empirical	1. What I do *More than half the time*	3. What others do *Less than half of them*	5. What others think I do *Don't Know*
Normative	2. What I think I should do *Probably*	6. What I think others should do *Maybe*	4. What others think I should do *Probably not*

For this individual, the action is an independent one, there is little to nothing social about it.

Suppose an individual gives these answers:

	Self	Others – 1st Order	Others – 2nd Order
Empirical	1. What I do *More than half the time*	3. What others do *All of them*	5. What others think I do *All of them*
Normative	2. What I think I should do *Definitely not*	6. What I think others should do *Probably not*	4. What others think I should do *Yes, definitely*

Here, the individual's action is conditioned by a social norm. She does the action more than half the time but thinks she shouldn't do it at all. Everyone else does the action, they all think the respondent does it, and they all think she should do it. We can infer that in the absence of social expectations, the individual would not do the action.

Now, let's aggregate answers for a population of 100 at time *T1*. We'll score Always, All of Them, and Definitely as 4; No, Definitely Not, and None of them as 0; and take the mean of the responses.

	Self	Others – 1st Order	Others – 2nd Order
Empirical	1. What I do *3.5*	3. What others do *3.5*	5. What others think I do *3.5*
Normative	2. What I think I should do *3.5*	6. What I think others should do *3.5*	4. What others think I should do *3.5*

A social norm is strongly in place.

Suppose now there is an effective program in place and the population starts believing the practice is inappropriate. However, the practice is highly interdependent in nature. At time *T2* during the engagement we find this pattern of responses.

	Self	Others – 1st Order	Others – 2nd Order
Empirical	1. What I do *3.5*	3. What others do *3.5*	5. What others think I do *3.5*
Normative	2. What I think I should do *0.5*	6. What I think others should do *0.5*	4. What others think I should do *2.5*

Most individuals in the population do the action, think others do it, and think that others think they do it. Most individuals, however, think that one should not do the action, and think that others should not. But many believe that others still think they should do it. This is a vulnerable social norm ready to collapse if a coordinated abandonment is organized. The typical person in the population believes others think he should do the action, when in fact they do not.

Investigate Counterfactuals
to Discern Causality

- A Standard approach
  - ~~Here are ten reasons why girls marry at 12. Which three are the most important to you?~~
- What would happen here if a girl did not marry at 12?
  - "She would marry at an older age, and nothing else."
  - "She would suffer materially because there are no education or employment opportunities outside of marriage."
  - "She might get pregnant and burden our family with an unplanned addition."
  - "She would be seen as undesirable, the worst girls are married the latest, we may not find a husband for her," or, "We would have to pay a higher dowry if she were older."
  - "She might get pregnant and bring shame to the family."
  - "People here would think poorly of us for doing so"

Information in available data: KAPs

- Statements or questions about what people see, hear about, are often already included in KAP studies:
  - *"Girls in my community marry before 18"* (empirical expectation)
  - *"….do not marry before 18"* (empirical expectation)

- Information also on people's personal beliefs
  - *"Girls should be married before 18"* (personal normative belief)
  - *"Girls should not be married before 18"* (personal normative belief)

- But limited information what people think others believe they should do (normative expectations) = indication of social obligation
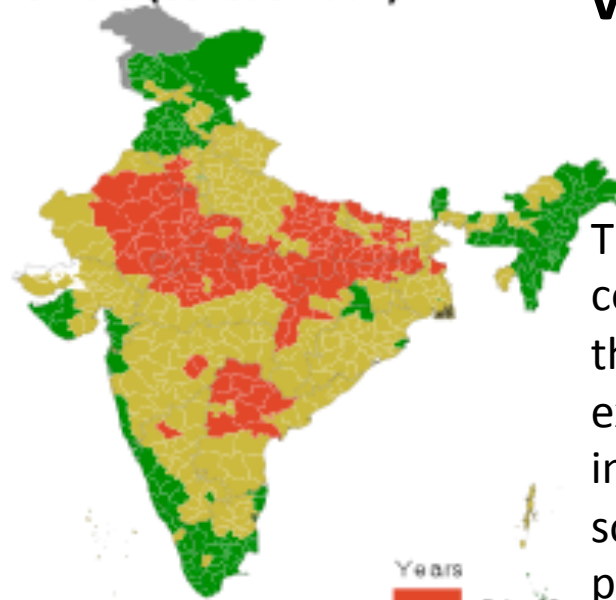
Sub-national mapping shows areas of geographical concentration and high variations (hot spots/leopard skin)

High spatial or ethnic variation

FGM/C prevalence
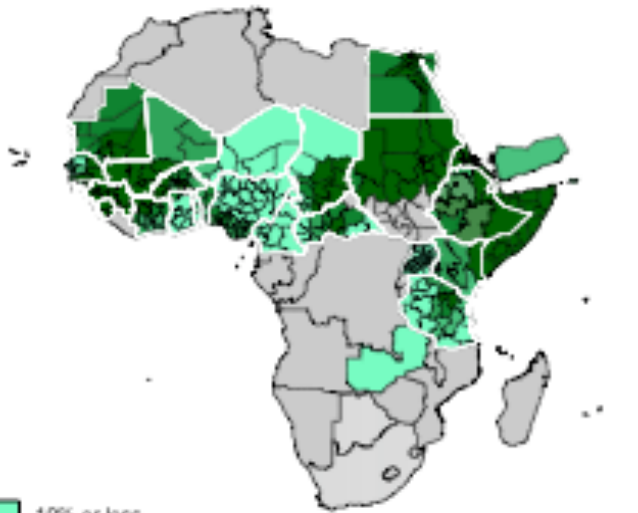
India: Mean age at marriage, Female (census 2001)

The data is not conclusive evidence that a social norm exists, but only an indication that a social norm may be present

10% or less
10.1% - 25%
25.1% - 50%
50.1% - 75%
75.1 or more

Missing data or FGM/C not widely practiced.

Level of data aggregation: district

Years
Below 18
18 - 19
20 and above
Missing Data

unicef 18

Additional clues for DHS and MICS data

Large discrepancy between attitude and prevalence (e.g. support for corporal punishment is low but the prevalence is high)

Virtually no change in the practice over time in spite of other improvements ("modernization") in same geographic area

Major change is a relatively short time after long period of little or no change

Social Desirability Bias? or Keep the Program Here Bias?

- ## Social desirability (horizontal)

  - Some respondents "attempt to depict themselves as similar to the norms and standards of their society and community"

  - Just the change we want to measure!

    - Also, Paluck JPSP 2009

- ## Please the interviewer bias (vertical)

  - See four approaches in next slides

Social Desirability Bias

- 1. What Others Do? What Sanctions are Anticipated? Has the Norm Changed?
  - Ethiopia – three community conversation programs on harmful practices
  - From entirety of evidence, likely that FGC mostly ended in Program A, but much less so in Programs B & C
    - In all three programs nearly all respondents expressed awareness of harsh new law against FGC, and nearly all said his or her family had ended it
      - In program A, respondents said that nearly all others had stopped, and that sanctions had mostly reversed, now shaming FGC and praising not being cut
      - In programs B &C respondents said a good number had not stopped, and that uncut girls faced negative sanctions from community members
    - Just asking, Has the social convention of FGC ended? is as informative as the remainder of the data

Social Desirability Bias

- 2. Unmatched count technique
  - Have you done any one of these things?
  - Random Sample 1: 105 say yes
    - I have moved house in the past
    - I own a pet.
    - I like to go to the theatre.
  - Random Sample 2: 125 say yes (inference: 20 have cheated on an examination)
    - I have moved house in the past
    - I own a pet.
    - I like to go to the theatre..
    - I have cheated on an examination.
- 3. Randomized response method (Warner)
- 4. Matching Game
  - Incentivize accurate response –
  - Ask respondent to estimate what a randomly chosen other person in community will say about how many people do x, & think you should do x
  - If respondent is correct, she gets a reward
  - Problem: given an intervention known to all, respondent will estimate what another person in the community would tell the interviewer!

Social Norms in Conversation

- After Session 3, a participant from Village C recalling a memorable skit, reports:
  - Another woman said **her job is** to cook and clean and **she accepts that**. **Everyone agreed** because **that is what women do**."
    - Her role is to cook and clean, and she accepts that expectation of others as legitimate (normative expectation). Everyone agrees (enough others in the reference network). That is what women do (empirical expectation).
  - "One woman said her job was to have babies and nurture. We **all agreed** with what she said because **everyone appreciated how she accepted** what she was in life."
    - All agreed (beliefs about others). She accepts (normative expectations of others are legitimate) and everyone (enough others in the reference network) appreciates that (would positively sanction).

Change in Gender Norms

- Ten sessions later, after Session 13, a participant from Village A recalling a memorable skit, reports:
  - One woman said it is **important** for women to work hard and strive to do anything a man can do. The **whole class agrees with this**." And a man thinks it memorable that, "One woman said, **the best thing** for a man to do is treat his women equally. **Everyone agrees with this**."
    - Important, best thing (normative expectation, legitimate, positively). The whole class agrees, everyone agrees (enough others in the reference network).

Crossing the KAP Gap
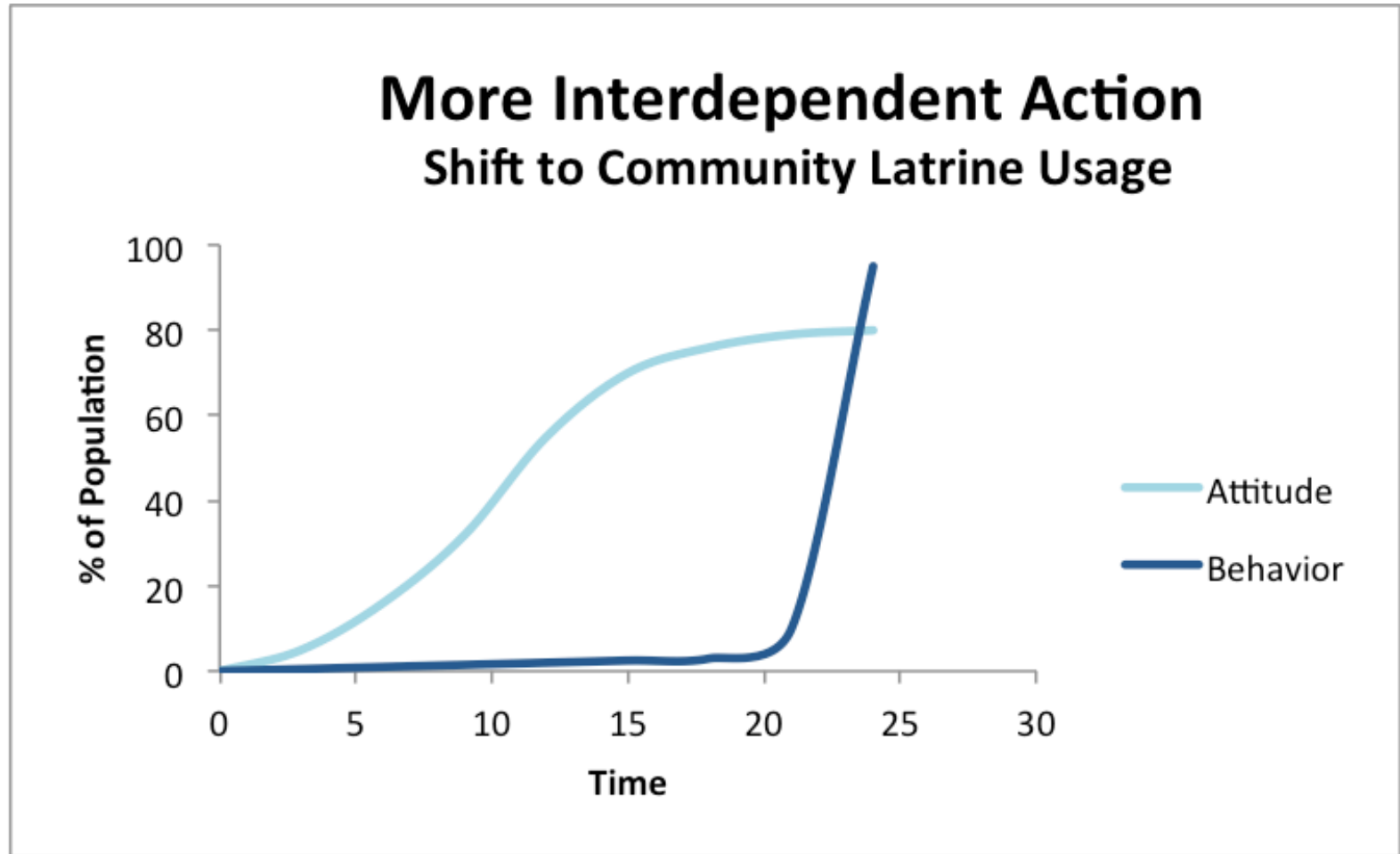
Why Measure Change in Empirical and Normative Expectations

- At some threshold level of the reference group (tipping point), stable behavioral change is possible

- From similar program experience can predict that behavioral change is possible to trigger after a threshold is passed

Table 2: Standard Measure of Behavior and Attitude

What Self Believes About:			
	Self	**Others – 1st Order**	**Others – 2nd Order**
Empirical	What I do		
Normative	What I think I should do		

Table 3: Social Proof: Do What Others Do

What Self Believes About:			
	Self	**Others – 1st Order**	**Others – 2nd Order**
Empirical		What others do	
Normative			

Table 4: Social Convention: Coordinate on Mutual Interest

What Self Believes About:			
	Self	**Others – 1st Order**	**Others – 2nd Order**
Empirical		What others do	What others think I do
Normative			

Table 5: Social Norm

What Self Believes About:			
	Self	**Others – 1st Order**	**Others – 2nd Order**
Empirical		What others do	What others think I do
Normative		What I think others should do	What others think I should do