The Role of Trendsetters in the Popularization and Adoption of the Swachh Bharat Mission
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Executive Summary
Background

Open defecation is a global public health priority. Access to sanitation is recognized as a human right because of its link to improved health, economic growth, dignity, and safety. The importance of this issue is compounded by open defecation’s disproportionate effect on the privacy and safety of women and the risk of childhood diseases with long-term consequences such as poor nutritional status and inhibition of childhood cognitive development. India has faced a widespread sanitation problem for decades. To address high open defecation prevalence in India, over the past two decades the Government of India has led multiple national programs to eradicate it. Despite the push to improve toilet coverage, 69% of households in rural India did not have a latrine in 2011 (Census 2011). National sanitation coverage was only 39% in 2014 (Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)).

The decentralized federal structure of the Indian government made it impossible to simply mandate that local governments commit energy and resources to the ambitious campaign.

Yet, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), launched in 2014, spread across the country at an unprecedented rate. The program focuses on both toilet ownership through subsidies, and community-based behavioral change interventions to encourage toilet use and maintenance. India’s Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation now reports that over 100 million toilets have been constructed since the program’s inception. In addition to meeting infrastructural goals, the program aimed to move millions of Indians to use the toilets once they were constructed, making it possibly the world’s largest behavior-change campaign in history. With millions of citizens and numerous institutions joining forces in supporting SBM, it seems to have truly turned into a “Jan Andolan” or people’s movement.

What accounts for the impressive growth of SBM? Our study suggests that the influence of key individuals was a major contributor to its success, with a cascade of influence flowing down from the prime minister to other parties, from government officers down to village leaders. Indeed, a crucial component of SBM’s growth and success were individuals that we identify as trendsetters. Simply stated, trendsetters are individuals who are willing to incur the costs of early deviation from customary behaviors, or the costs of implementing new ones, and are thus essential in spearheading social change. Theoretical work on trendsetters suggests they are likely to have particular psychological traits, such as a high tolerance for the perceived risks, a low preference for the prevailing practice, and high autonomy (Bicchieri, 2016). They act as the first movers who help communities and institutions to overcome collective action problems that sustain harmful social practices.

Objectives

This study focuses on whether (and to what degree) trendsetters were involved and may have influenced the social diffusion of SBM in India. Understanding who trendsetters are and how they can be motivated to act is an important step in building a comprehensive theory of social change. The present research is particularly important for India’s policy efforts post-ODF, as continuous support from stakeholders is necessary to sustain toilet use and maintenance. This study is also a complement to theoretical work on collective action problems that hinder behavioral change across many domains. The data we collected is not only a learning opportunity for the Indian administration, but they may also provide a lesson for other governments that aspire to implement social agendas through major behavioral change campaigns.

We investigate the main characteristics of trendsetters, and under which institutional conditions stakeholders can become trendsetters. We also look for the type of communication strategies trendsetters may
use to attain coordination at several levels of engagement, as well as the structural features of the various institutional and organizational environments that enabled trendsetters to impact SBM. Finally, we examine the role that incentives and other motivational factors played in the program’s success and whether there are any lessons to be learned that can be applied globally to countries wanting to implement extensive behavioral change programs.

Methodology

We analyzed interview data from thirty-two participants to understand their characteristics and role in the Swachh Bharat Movement (see Appendix for a table of responders’ categories and roles). Participants were chosen according to specific selection criteria in order to represent a wide range of decision-making power, methods of influence, networks, and roles in the Swachh Bharat Mission. The respondents have diverse backgrounds, ranging from high ranking government officials and influential Bollywood celebrities to grassroots leaders and NGO workers. Each interview examined the nature of the respondent’s role in the movement, the broader structure in which they were embedded, and whether they exhibit the characteristics of an effective trendsetter.

We focused on three key determinants of being a successful trendsetter: agential, interpersonal, and structural. Agential determinants are associated with the psychological traits and personal attitudes specific to individual trendsetters. Interpersonal determinants pertain to how trendsetters influence others during the campaign and are, in turn, influenced by other agents of change. Structural determinants are associated with the institutional and contextual factors that allow coordination and extensive cooperation to take place.

A comprehensive view of the role of trendsetters in Swachh Bharat Mission and their impact on sanitation in India would require both qualitative and quantitative studies (including, e.g., social network analyses). Nevertheless, we find consistent patterns in our survey that align with our theoretical model and are suggestive of how trendsetters shape social change.

Key Findings and Results

Agential Determinants: Bicchieri’s research (2016, 2018) finds that trendsetters typically have a relatively high tolerance for perceived risk (low-risk aversion), are confident that their actions will lead to successful outcomes (high perceived self-efficacy), are independent yet personable (high reflective autonomy), and care deeply about the issue at hand (sanitation in this context). We found respondents consistently exhibited these characteristics.

Deviating from established practices is usually perceived as risky, so a willingness to take risks (low-risk aversion) is important for someone to be a trendsetter. Respondents were cognizant of risks but expressed a willingness to take even larger risks if the expected benefits of such an action seemed justified. For instance, P. K. Sinha, former Cabinet Secretary of India, now Principal Advisor to the PM, stated, “You have to take risks: the higher the risks, the higher the reward.” Despite the perceived riskiness of their endeavors, respondents generally exhibited high perceived self-efficacy. Believing that they had significant influence over their social environment through their actions, respondents had ambitious goals and were not averse to taking the lead on projects.

We also expect trendsetters to express a degree of independence from the pressures to conform to their community’s expectations. Respondents generally perceived themselves to be meaningfully acting out of their own volition, while caring about the impact of their actions on others. For instance, many respondents mentioned instances where they pursued an independent path of action that diverged from standard or prescribed government practices.
They believed that independent action would yield optimal results, even though it exposed them to professional risks.

Perhaps the most common thread among all the respondents was the deep sense of caring that they expressed about improving sanitation. They were acutely aware of the many negative effects of poor sanitation and how they impacted people’s lives, including specifically women’s lives. They emphasized the right to access proper sanitation, especially for vulnerable populations including women and children, as a fundamental human right. Though a social desirability bias was always possible in this context, we did take several measures to mitigate it, as we explain in a later section.

**Interpersonal Determinants:** We examined the degree to which respondents intentionally tried to influence others and the degree to which they themselves were motivated by specific people. Consistent with the idea of a ‘cascade of influence’ starting at the top, many respondents described themselves as being specifically motivated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who repeatedly stood out as an influencer for many respondents.

Respondents also described how they strived to influence others to improve sanitation. They employed a wide range of tactics towards this end, including media messaging, empowering marginalized voices, financial incentives, and being a role model. In some cases, just being seen as a “role model” through sanitation work, such as cleaning rivers and beaches, swiping, building a toilet on their own, or removing mineralized feces from a dried pit, was enough to inspire and get others involved in SBM activities.

Many respondents were particularly sensitive to the gendered dimensions of sanitation problems in India. They highlighted the power of women’s voices in garnering support for and mobilizing marginalized groups. These respondents specifically targeted women, aiming to influence them as a means to combating the unique challenges (such as sexual assault and loss of self-respect) they face with respect to open defecation.

**Structural Determinants:** Because of India’s decentralized structure, smooth coordination between institutions and individual parties was crucial in the development of SBM. Our respondents were acutely aware of the critical information flow challenges that must be overcome to successfully coordinate across such a diverse range of individuals and organizations involved in SBM. Many of the respondents were personally involved in improving information flows between key actors by, for example, creating collaborative platforms, conferences, and other events explicitly aimed at bringing together key actors who might otherwise not have come into contact.

Coordination of activities requires cooperation among the parties involved, especially since participating in such a complex program presents one with a social dilemma: if everybody cooperates, a free-rider will reap the benefits anyway, but if the program fails because not enough collective effort was expended, the free-rider loses nothing. Cooperation was encouraged by giving individuals latitude with respect to their specific local programming. For example, one government employee viewed the unique flexibility given to administrators under the program as the freedom to innovate: “Luckily, the program was very flexible. The states and the districts and all the administrators in the hierarchy were given enough flexibility in the scheme, to implement or innovate or intervene in a customized manner, as per the requirements of the field.”

Cooperation and coordination are made possible by the presence of individuals who have the ability to facilitate the smooth transfer of information as well as to bring key individuals together and support teamwork. These capabilities align with our theoretical understanding of trendsetters as individuals who exhibit high reflective autonomy.
These individuals tend to be extroverted and personable, which in turn means they tend to be centrally located in social networks. It is precisely individuals with these traits who should be particularly adept at bringing people together or bridging information gaps. They are better connected to perform these tasks. In this way, an agential-level trait such as reflexive autonomy has implications for the well-functioning of the structures that are needed to guarantee an efficient flow of information, coordination, and cooperation among various parties.

Conclusions

PM Modi’s goal of getting India to be completely open defecation free in only five years struck many at the time as too ambitious. Yet it is hard to deny the strides India has made toward this goal. Swachh Bharat Mission represents a massive achievement in terms of behavioral change. This study aims to understand the dynamics of such large-scale behavioral change and the role that key trendsetters play in a multitude of institutional contexts.

Our findings fall into three broad and related categories. First, we found that trendsetters tend to possess particular psychological attributes: they have a high risk tolerance, high perceived self-efficacy, high reflexive autonomy, and a sense of passion for sanitation as a social cause. Second, we found that trendsetters intentionally aim to influence others through their own behavior and are successful in their endeavors. And third, we found that trendsetters play a key “institutional” role by fostering cooperation and providing coordination in a complex decentralized social and political environment.

The findings of our study have policy implications beyond sanitation in India and provide general lessons for other governments and organizations undertaking behavior change campaigns. Broadly speaking, our findings are particularly salient for situations where behavior change involves creating a new set of community-wide expectations about how others act or should act, especially when complying with older, status-quo expectations is easier than deviating from them. When this is the case, trendsetters become indispensable reaching a critical threshold of change within a community. Governments and organizations seeking to change collective behavior should identify individuals with these psychological attributes and empower them to spearhead social change.

Moreover, a strong social change program should not only identify agents with the capacity to act as trendsetters but also foster an institutional environment where they can thrive. Institutional rules that encourage deviance from established practices can help lower the relative costs of abandoning undesirable established behaviors, thereby facilitating perhaps even more risk-averse individuals to act. Institutional and organizational structures may also play a critical role in helping or hindering cooperation and coordination in complex social and political environments. Stressing the importance of cooperation and coordination, especially from the leaders of the project, and providing clear means of communication can help ensure that social change occurs as smoothly as possible.
Introduction
There are billions of people worldwide who lack access to safe, affordable, and sustainable toilets (Manisha, 2016). For example, 600 million people defecated in the open in India between 2016 and 2017 (Tyagi, 2017). Over 72 percent of the rural population relieved themselves in fields, behind bushes, and on roadsides in India (Kumar, 2017). Open defecation is a serious public health concern (O’Reily, Dhanju, & Goel, 2017) that leads to the death of around 117,000 children under-five every year in India, according to UNICEF’s 2016 annual report on sanitation. Increased coverage and usage of toilets to an ever increasing number of trendsetters in the Popularization and Adoption of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) or ‘Clean India Mission’. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the onset of the Swachh Bharat Mission in 2014, he also established the ambitious goal of ensuring every Indian citizen had access to a toilet in a five-year period. This was not simply an infrastructural challenge, but a complex behavior-change problem as well. The dynamics of attaining mass cooperation, as well as the methods used to facilitate coordination amongst various key actors in the movement, is an unexplored area that holds great potential for future research aiming to attain social change.

Trendsetters are individuals who are willing to inculcate into their daily routine the costs of early deviation and are therefore crucial for catalyzing social change (Bicchieri, 2016). Trendsetters can be identified in any social movement, but a deeper understanding of these individuals and their willingness to deviate from ingrained practices is critical for explaining how behavior can change for so many people in such a short period of time. Indeed, it is well known that established practices, such as open defecation, tend to persist due to the high cost of deviating from what is perceived as a common and perfectly acceptable behavior. It is not just community members that may incur a cost in changing their well-ingrained habits. Since many levels of institutional or informal governance are also required to meet the goals of SBM, we should be aware of the costs to be borne at various institutional and informal levels. The tension between individual costs and collective benefits is present at every level of engagement, and it must be overcome in order to achieve the kind of coordination and cooperation required to make SBM a success.

Trendsetters are among the first not just to abandon a practice and adopt a new one, but also to support programs and signal change in many different avenues and institutional contexts. A number of factors play into the ability of these individuals to successfully coordinate with one another, engage with communities, facilitate cooperation, and ultimately influence or motivate others to change their behavior.

Our study aims to study the role of trendsetters on the social diffusion of SBM in India. Understanding who trendsetters are and how they can be further motivated is an important step in learning how to change established practices and behaviors. This research is particularly relevant for India’s decisions and efforts post-ODF, as continuous support from stakeholders is necessary to sustain toilet use and maintenance. Our study is also an important complement to existing theories of social mobilization, as well as to the understanding of how to address collective action problems that hamper behavioral change across multiple domains.

We first provide the theoretical foundation that directs our subsequent analysis of the qualitative interviews of trendsetters involved in SBM. In particular, we highlight the main characteristics of trendsetters and the conditions under which stakeholders can become trendsetters. We proceed to discuss the types of communication strategies trendsetters may use to attain coordination, as well as the specific structural features of the various institutional and organizational environments that enabled these individuals to impact SBM. Finally, we investigate the role that incentives and other motivational factors played in the program’s success, and whether there are any lessons to be learned that can assist other countries hoping to encourage the growth of similar programs.
Theoretical Work on Trendsetters

In order to develop a better understanding of how millions of individuals were influenced to abandon standard open defecation practices, it is necessary to examine the characteristics and behavioral dynamics of trendsetters, the first movers who, in a variety of environments, spearheaded change. First, however, we must understand why trendsetters are needed for change to occur.

Note that the practice of open defecation could be a simple custom, a descriptive norm, or a social norm. A custom is just a collective pattern of behavior such that individuals prefer to conform to it because it meets their needs. What others do or approve of is not a reason to follow the custom. Open defecation is typically a custom. Customs can change in several ways: people may discover alternative, better means to satisfy their common needs, the external conditions that produce those needs may change, or new preferences may be created. People may come to grasp the advantages of new behavior, but when there are costs involved, change may be difficult to attain. As Bicchieri (2016, p.22) states: “The difficulty is due to the fact that the proposed alternative may require collective action. The collective custom is a pattern of independent actions, but changing it entails introducing interdependencies.” The process of changing from OD to using latrines requires a collective, coordinated change; if only some use latrines, the sanitation benefit is lost: land and water pollution will still occur. People facing change are thus in the grip of a social dilemma: it is tempting and convenient to stick to the old habit, but everyone would benefit if all switch to latrines. To survive, the new behavior will have to be supported by at least the expectation that others are engaging in it, if not the expectation that most people also approve of it. Such social expectations play no role in OD’s survival, but they become critical for its demise. Changing a custom may thus involve the creation of a norm, be it purely descriptive, or fully social. In the first case, individuals will prefer to use latrines on the condition that they believe most other people in their reference network use latrines, in the second case, they will also believe that these people would disapprove of their sticking to the old custom.

Changing behavior thus involves changing expectations about what others do, but who is going to spearhead change, who are the first movers that others may want to follow? In a social environment where only a fraction of individuals are willing to be the first to deviate from an established practice, such as open defecation, these trendsetters should first and foremost have less sensitivity to the practice in question (Bicchieri, 2016). We may say that sensitivity embodies an individual’s personal reasons for adhering to the specific practice, and her attitude towards that practice. The higher the sensitivity, the more central the practice is for an individual, and the more positive is the attitude towards it. For example, we found that many individuals who practice OD described the benefits of going out and socializing with their friends (Bicchieri et al. 2018).

One way to conceptualize this is to let the variable n represent a particular practice, and kn represent an individual’s sensitivity to that practice. While k is highly specific to the practice in question, one might assume that kn is normally distributed, with the majority of sensitivities falling somewhere near the average of a bell-shaped curve. Yet, Bicchieri emphasizes that this is not necessarily what we find in situations where the practice is either socially important or has been in place for a significant period of time (Bicchieri, 2016).

Indeed, when these conditions exist, not unlike the long-standing practice of open defecation in India, it is more likely that the distribution

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1 For an explanation of their differences, see Bicchieri, Norms in the Wild, chapter 1.

2 In the work Bicchieri and her group did in India to study the nature of OD and the ways to change it, the new behavior of toilet use appears to be a descriptive norm, even if when a new behavior becomes well established it also becomes approved. See Social Determinants of Open Defecation, Phase Two Materials (https://pennsong.sas.upenn.edu/literature/)
of kn will be skewed. Namely, the majority of the population will demonstrate high levels of sensitivity to the practice, while only a thin tail of individuals will exhibit a lesser degree of kn (Bicchieri, 2016). In this case, the probability that a practice will be abandoned is very low, as most people prefer to behave in the traditional way. A lower level of sensitivity is one factor that contributes to the decision of individuals to break from a traditional behavior, and understanding how sensitivity interacts with other factors is important to understand what increases the probability that a behavior or practice will be abandoned. Beyond low levels of sensitivity to a specific practice, individuals who hold the potential to act as trendsetters should possess other characteristics that allow them to overcome the difficulties of departing from a customary behavior.

**Risk**

One factor that will influence whether an individual is willing to act as a trendsetter is the perception of risk. Indeed, a person who is particularly insensitive to risk, or misperceives the actual risk associated with deviance, is more willing to act and change behavior. Yet, it is important to differentiate between risk sensitivity and risk perception, which we will call $\alpha$ and $\alpha_n$, respectively. Previous research on risk sensitivity describes how $\alpha$ is usually a stable disposition, that allows one to categorize individuals as either risk-seeking or risk-averse (Bicchieri, 2016). Consequently, an individual’s risk sensitivity is invariant regardless of the particular context and does not depend on the specific practice, $n$.

On the other hand, an individual’s risk perceptions, $\alpha_n$, tend to vary according to the specific situation, the stakes involved, and the amount of involvement or behavior change required. Thus, an individual may behave as a trendsetter when they have diminished $\alpha_n$ for a particular $n$ but may lack the will to deviate from another practice – say $x$ – if the individual has a high $\alpha_x$ value. Low-risk perception does not mean that one does not see the risks involved in a specific activity, but that one considers the risks as worth taking, as one believes the benefit outweighs the cost.

While many leadership models tend to focus on general characteristics of leaders in businesses or organizations, our theoretical work on trendsetters suggests that an individual’s ability to act as an agent of change is local, rather than global.

Ultimately, what is important to consider is that people will have different thresholds for changing behavior in all those cases where the decision to act or not depends on how many others are changing. A low threshold means one will only need to see a few people change in order to decide to act, whereas people with high thresholds will need to be sure that lots of people have changed in order to move away from an established practice. Granovetter and Soong (1983) and Granovetter (1978) show how the exact distribution of these thresholds in a population matters to the possibility of change. Since trendsetters are the first movers, one of the main characteristics they must share is a very low threshold with respect to the specific practice they wish to abandon. These thresholds depend not only on $\alpha_n$, an individual’s risk perception, but also on factors such as $k_n$, an individual’s sensitivity to a specific practice $n$ (Bicchieri, 2016). Clearly, a trendsetter’s threshold may be zero, or a very small number.

**Autonomy**

Individuals who are willing to take the risk of deviating from traditional behaviors should also demonstrate a sense of autonomy, or an insensitivity to societal pressures to conform. In her research on trendsetters, Bicchieri describes two different forms of autonomy as a way to distinguish between “types” of trendsetters, and to clarify how autonomy should be measured in practice. Indeed, a trendsetter may exhibit
reactive autonomy, which is reflective autonomy, is defined as “freedom from the governance of others” (Koestner & Losier, 1996). Previous studies show that individuals who demonstrate a high level of reactive autonomy tend to be more introverted and disagreeable and are less likely to influence the behavior of others. The other form of autonomy, reflective autonomy, is defined as “freedom to self-govern” (Koestner & Losier, 1996). Studies that attempt to measure reflective autonomy assess an “interdependent form of autonomy, strongly and positively interpersonal in nature” (Hmel & Pincus, 2002). Therefore, individuals who exhibit high levels of reflective autonomy tend to be extraverted, altruistic, assertive, open to new ideas, and intellectually curious (Bicchieri, 2016).

This distinction is significant in the sense that people are more likely to be influenced by a reflectively autonomous individual. One explanation for this is that individuals who are reflectively autonomous are more central in their social network, so their words and actions tend to be more visible and thus potentially more influential in shifting behaviors. While being central to a social network may yield positive results for behavioral changes, this increased visibility may also make deviance from traditional behavior riskier (Bicchieri, 2016). A trendsetter must view the potential rewards of deviating from a well-established behavior as outweighing the potential costs of deviating. However, it is not sufficient to exhibit autonomy and low-risk perception - trendsetters must also believe that their actions will be successful.

**Self-efficacy**

In addition to autonomy and low-risk perception, an individual who acts as a trendsetter should also exhibit high perceived self-efficacy. Although similar to the concept of autonomy, perceived self-efficacy is defined as one’s perceived capacity to exercise control over oneself and the events in one’s life (Bandura, 1993). This is distinct from the notion of autonomy, which encompasses one’s perceived ability to act independently from the control of other individuals.

Perceived self-efficacy, on the other hand, is more central to the idea that one can exert some amount of influence through one’s actions (Bicchieri, 2016). It makes theoretical sense that trendsetters should demonstrate both a sense of autonomy and a high level of perceived self-efficacy, as a trendsetter must first believe that his or her actions will produce some larger societal change before committing to actions that deviate from common, established practices (Bicchieri, 2016). More specifically, before an individual is willing to deviate from an established collective practice, they must perceive their own self-efficacy to be high enough to incentivize behavioral change.

**Methods of Influence**

The *Swachh Bharat Mission* is unique in the sense that it involved a public commitment to improving sanitation from the Prime Minister himself. The impact of public commitments is examined in Bicchieri’s research (Bicchieri 2016; Bicchieri and Mercier, 2014), which describes public commitments as a trust-building tool that assures change is seriously intended, if not already actively occurring. A public commitment may alter the expectations of how others will behave, contributing to a greater sense of self-efficacy for those individuals who are willing to influence change. Any widely observable and temporally specific form of commitment to change behavior may significantly move collective behavior in a positive direction.

Similar to public commitment is the influence of entertainment in the form of television shows, movies, and other highly visible programs that may present alternative ways of behaving. Previous studies have demonstrated the association between cable television access and behavioral changes (Jensen and Oster, 2009), supporting the notion that television itself may act as a trendsetter. Field experiments (Paluck 2009; Bilali & Vollhardt 2013) have also been employed to
test the causal impact of radio plays in reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict. Paluck (2009) found that fictional radio plays featuring messages about reducing intergroup prejudice, violence, and trauma-affected listeners’ perceptions of out-groups and changed their behaviors with respect to intermarriage, cooperation, and empathy, as compared to a control group who listened to a health radio soap opera. The participants in Bilali & Vollhardt study (2013) listened to an audio-delivered questionnaire in the voice of either the main character of the radio drama (priming group) or an unknown actor (control group). They found that participants in the priming condition engaged less in competitive victimhood and expressed less mistrust towards the out-group as compared to the control group.

As these studies show, entertainment, particularly executed by well-known entertainers, presents individuals with new models of acceptable behavior, and may even encourage people to participate in new behaviors. More specifically, by presenting alternative behaviors in television shows and other popular programs, these forms of entertainment signal to viewers that deviation from a particular practice is not necessarily as risky as they may have initially perceived. These signals of acceptance for non-traditional practices may ultimately cause individuals to update their beliefs and preferences, and influence them to partake in behaviors they had previously deemed uncommon or even undesirable.

One of the most challenging aspects of changing a collective behavior, be it a custom or a social norm, is the tendency for people, despite becoming aware of alternative ways of behaving, to remain uncritical of their current practices. Yet, work on trendsetters suggests that if even just a few community members become convinced that traditional practices are harmful, then a possible method of enacting change is the formation of small groups of trendsetters who form a separate network with others who are similarly motivated. Group formation allows individuals to create an independent reference network, which may help to lessen the negative effects of abandoning a common practice. The group may initiate new practices that, when demonstrably successful, encourage imitation.

Lastly, allowing information transmission and encouraging communication among individuals can support cooperation. As we discussed, abandoning OD in favor of latrines creates a social dilemma: moving to new behavior is costly, and the risk is that only a few will change, making one’s effort futile. Communication can increase confidence that collective change will occur. For example, in a study conducted by Orbell, Dawes, and van de Kragt, the researchers designed a social dilemma experiment in which they examined the impact of group communication on the decisions of individuals to cooperate with their group. They found that promises to cooperate significantly increased rates of cooperation, but only in cases when everyone in the discussing group verbally committed to cooperate (Orbell et al, 1988). The results from this experiment add further weight to the notion that facilitating discussion may promote cooperation. This highlights the importance of open communication in any social movement that hopes to produce behavioral change, as individuals who see that others are committed to pursuing a collective goal will have an incentive to cooperate, as they will trust that their efforts will meet with success. We shall further discuss possible methods to enable cooperation.
Methodology
Participants
We analyzed interview data from thirty-two key participants to better understand their characteristics and their impact in the Swachh Bharat Mission. Using a critical case purposive sampling strategy participant were chosen according to specific inclusion criteria and reflect a diversity of institutional contexts that we take to be integral to the growth and spread of SBM. Our inclusion criteria identified individuals who represented an expansive range of institutional decision-making power, methods of influence, networks, and roles in SBM (see Appendix 1). These individuals ranged from the Gram Panchayat and village levels, to popular media figures, and to bureaucrats and selected political leaders. This list was created with help from UNICEF, the Gates Foundation, NGOs and the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Drinking Water and Sanitation (Government of India).

The selection criteria were determined on both theoretical and empirical grounds informed by Bicchieri (2016) and Bicchieri and Funcke (2018). Specifically, we chose a critical case purposive sampling strategy in conjunction with qualitative data analysis because the social phenomenon in question is best explained by a small range of special cases. Finally, participants were asked for consent to publish identifying information in our study.

Interview Protocol
Design: Several theory-driven determinants shaped our study design (see Appendix 1). The interviews were structured to examine the institutional/structural nature of each individual’s role in catalyzing this social movement, the broader elements in which the individual was embedded, as well as whether or not the responders possess the prototypical characteristics of a trendsetter. More explicitly, we used three key determinants to analyze each individual in his/her role as a trendsetter: agential, interpersonal, and structural. Agential determinants pertain to the psychological traits and personal attitudes specific to individual trendsetters. These include the traits previously outlined in the theoretical model, such as their perceptions and attitudes regarding risk, how their actions reflect autonomy, and their perceived self-efficacy. In all cases, we also assessed individuals’ sensitivity to the practice of open defecation.

Interpersonal determinants are associated with the way social diffusion occurs. Lastly, the structural determinants refer to the institutional and contextual features that enabled innovation and coordination of activities.

Data Collection
Our interview questions were open-ended. Semi-structured interviews were conducted both in person in India at an agreed upon private location and online by University of Pennsylvania researchers and UNICEF India personnel. The in-person interviews were conducted across villages and cities in North, East, West & South India. We believed that the qualitative nature of these interviews helped us glean critical insights into the interviewees’ role in SBM.

With the consent of our participants, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed in English. Interviewers also took extensive field notes that included their observations and reflections. All interview protocols were translated and standardized where necessary. Out of 32 participants, five participants were excluded. We excluded participants from our analysis if the audio was of sufficiently poor quality. Eight participants were interviewed in regional languages (Hindi, Assamese and Telugu).

Analysis
We used a theory-driven coding approach to answer the research questions. Specifically, we applied a predetermined framework to code our interview transcripts. This enabled us to systematically identify patterns (themes) in each set of responses. We then categorized these themes based on how well they addressed each of our thematic research questions. Additionally, in cases when novel themes emerged in the interview data, we took note of them, even if they fell outside of our original thematic considerations. This allowed us to incorporate new data-driven insights as well. We have followed a four-step coding process adapted from Crabtree and Miller (1999) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006).

We first developed a codebook (see Appendix 3) informed by our overall theoretical framework (Bicchieri 2016; Bicchieri & Funcke, 2018). This
coding scheme helped us check for appropriate fit at each stage of the coding process. For each of the four broad categories (agental, structural, interpersonal dimensions, and role-models), we examined the coded interview data to ultimately identify the sample’s beliefs, goals, dispositions (autonomy, risk propensity, etc.), and actions. Using this process, we identified and summarized relevant passages of text that could fall under each of the codes. Once this process had been applied to all of the interviews, we then examined the passages that we had identified in the coding process for broad categories. For example, for the code “Does the respondent exhibit high or low risk preferences?” we identified passages such as “Again, if I come back to menstrual hygiene, I was taking a bit of a risk in trying to push that into all of these things, ..” Once we had identified passages that were relevant to this code for each interview, we then categorized the collective responses accordingly. For example, one category that emerged could be “high tolerance for risk”; another category could be “being cognizant of the high risk working on the Swachh Bharat Mission” (risk perception). As we advanced through our analysis, we continued to reform and refine our categories. Finally, we examined the relationships between our categorization process and the original research questions (See Appendix 4 for a detailed example).

Limitations
We note several limitations to our study: (1) We could not conduct any network analyses and are therefore unable to assess the degree of connectivity of the individuals interviewed – an important component of a trendsetter’s impact. In many cases, however, the institutional or social position of the responder suggested a central position within the network of interest. (2) Our data are qualitative. Given the nature of the population- ranging from senior-level leaders from diverse fields to village officials, it was difficult to include quantitative elements (3) Finally, some respondents may have felt social pressure to give a positive judgement about SBM, especially if they worried that their words might be monitored by government personnel.

However, we took measures to minimize the risk of a social desirability bias by allowing respondents to choose full or partial anonymity in their responses, by designing our interview probes to be neutral, and by making respondents feel comfortable giving any response. Specifically, we asked about sanitation in the context of other pressing development problems (why is sanitation more critical than, say, corruption?). Therefore, we gave respondents a chance to provide reasons for why they care about sanitation rather than simply stating that they are concerned about sanitation.

Moreover, while we had reason to believe that all respondents were sincere in their passion for improving sanitation in India, some respondents were quite candid about other reasons for pursuing sanitation as a social cause. For example, some respondents were simply told to work on SBM by their superiors in virtue of their roles. Such honesty, set against other mentioned reasons (such as a sense of caring for the relevant community, the importance of sanitation as a women’s rights issue, and so on) suggests that respondents felt comfortable in talking about the variety of reasons for pursuing sanitation in India as a social cause, attenuating worries about social desirability.

In light of these limitations, a more comprehensive understanding of the role of trendsetters in SBM would require additional quantitative studies as well as network analyses. Even so, the present study provides valuable insights into the functional role of trendsetters in spearheading social change. Specifically, we find consistent patterns in our empirical work that parallel a burgeoning theoretical literature, and we provide insights about the methods different trendsetters used to initiate social change.
Results
Agential Determinants

Bicchieri’s research (2016, 2018) finds that trendsetters typically have a high willingness to take risks (either high-risk preferences or low-risk perceptions), are confident that their actions will lead to successful outcomes (high perceived self-efficacy), are independent yet personable (high reflective autonomy), and care deeply about the issue at hand (sanitation in this context). When coding the interview data, we found that most respondents exhibited at least some of these characteristics. Note that the type of perceived risk varies for different categories of people (villagers, development partners, Indian administrations, celebrities, etc.), but what matters here is precisely the asserted willingness to take some risks to obtain the desired results. Whether the risk and its magnitude are accurately perceived is not of interest here. What matters is responders’ self-perception of risk-taking.

Deviating from established practices is usually risky, so a willingness to take risks (low-risk perception) is required for someone to be a trendsetter. More specifically, an individual who is willing to take risks should demonstrate a low \( \alpha_{(n)} \) value with respect to changing a specific collective practice – i.e., a low perception of risk where \( n \) represents the established practice of open defecation. In our survey, most respondents showed a high willingness to take risks. Some seemed to have just generalized low-risk sensitivity, but many others showed low-risk perception.

For some, taking risky decisions was a regular part of their job. Rina Ray,

PK Sinha, Principal Advisor to the Prime Minister, was positively welcoming of risks, stating:

> “Risks you have to take. The higher the risks, the higher the reward...[I] prefer someone who takes risks and fails. Many efforts will not succeed but risks make the difference.”

Sunitha Devi, a rani mistri (female mason) who trained hundreds of other rani mistris in toilet construction, emphasized her willingness to take risks:

> “I would introduce myself [by] saying that I am a fearless kind of person. My idea is that if I have to do something, then I have to do it, and then I do not think of what problem I will face later.”

Secretary, School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, explicitly stated that she “takes a lot of risky decisions” in her work. Furthermore, she mentioned an example of how she advocated for India to participate in an international student assessment program, despite the perceived risk and fear of India performing poorly:

Chidananda Saraswati, faith leader and president of the Parmarth Niketan Ashram in Rishikesh, also spoke about how considering risky options was essential to his decision making. “We would take risky options because without risk you cannot take another step. Take all options. Don’t leave any stone unturned.”
Many respondents perceived Swachh Bharat activities and involvement as highly risky. Beyond the villager’s risk of building a latrine when few others do, and therefore sanitation is not improved, there are many other agents in different positions who have taken risks just to support SBM. Madhu Krishna, a Deputy Director at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s India initiative on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, said that the Foundation wanted to “stick our neck out on this and get people to listen to us.” Krishna made this statement with full awareness of the prevalent attitude of many Indians to view external foundations with skepticism and suspicion, further emphasizing the perceived risk of Krishna’s involvement. Additionally, Nicolas Osbert, Chief of Water, Sanitation, Hygiene (WASH) at UNICEF India, reported that “doubts and risks were frequently encountered throughout this process” while simultaneously reaffirming that he saw risks as “part of the game.”

P. Ulaganathan, a District Magistrate currently posted in West Bengal, provides an explicit example of risk-taking as it manifested in the Swachh Bharat Mission. He intentionally took a risk in deviating from the government’s established rules in an attempt to ensure greater social impact:

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**“**

So, there’s something called PISA, Program for International Student Assessment. About 90 countries participate, and India has participated only once in 2009 and 2010, and we came 72 out of 74 countries. Since the results came out... I don’t know how many people who simply would not take the risk of giving the PISA test again. They didn’t. I’m the first person. I was the first person to suggest this. The PM was totally on board, then our Minister came on board, but the opposition was enormous. Out of fear; fear and risk. Suppose we give the test again and India does badly. I said “So what? When a child falls, you don’t tell the child to stay there. You say stand up, brush off your knees and try again”. That to me is a calculated risk that needs to be taken.

- Rina Ray, Secretary, MoHRD

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Even as respondents recognized the risk they saw in their work, they generally exhibited high self-efficacy, the confidence in their capacity to engage in actions that will produce the wanted results. High perceived self-efficacy implies that
individuals believe in their capacity to control or have a significant influence over their social environment through their actions. Without sufficiently high perceived self-efficacy, one may not be willing to engage in a new behavior or project out of fear of failure.

Respondents identified several personal characteristics and abilities that led to successful outcomes, such as perseverance, confidence, ability to lead others, fundraising ability, and a commitment to open-mindedness. For example, Naina Lal Kidwai, Chairperson of the India Sanitation Coalition, mentioned that at the Sanitation Coalition they “do a lot of creative problem-solving.” Secretary of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Parameswaran Iyer, believes that being a former civil servant who has worked on the ground “made a very big difference because [I] understand the obstacles, the challenges, the problems of ground reality.” Similarly, Rina Ray believed that she was in a place “where I have a skill. If I had been in the power sector, all my experience in constructing toilets would have been totally wasted. All my experience in school education would have gone to naught.”

Like other respondents, Ray also believed that her efforts had been successful, stating that “I know I have touched millions of lives. And especially through an initiative, through Swachh Bharat, we are making change as we sit, we are making history.”

Amitabh Bachchan, a superstar Bollywood actor, mentioned how his fans had formed their own sanitation groups to emulate his own efforts in improving sanitation:

In addition to high-risk tolerance and high perceived self-efficacy, we expect trendsetters to exhibit a high degree of independence from the pressures to conform to their community or organization’s behavior. They perceive themselves to be meaningfully acting out of their own volition but nonetheless care about how their actions impact others. Thus, trendsetters will tend to score high on traits associated with a kind of autonomy indicated by acting with a sense of choice and the ability to self-govern.

One respondent, a sarpanch (elected village leader), described the difficulties of planning and organizing various social programs in the face of deep local resistance in her village, but yet she carried on with her work because she believed in the mission. A few other respondents gave us examples where they pursued an independent path of action that diverged from standard or prescribed government practices. Nicolas Osbert, for example, promoted transparency among his colleagues against institutional resistance by insisting that they be open about their scientific findings, whatever they may be. Akshay Kumar, a high-profile Bollywood actor, described how he decided to make an unusual movie because it would help improve sanitation. Kumar starred and co-produced the movie, which became a great commercial success and the highest-grossing movie of his career. One film critic noted that the movie partly functioned...
as a “primer of How to Break Social Taboos and Make Toilets.”

The most consistent theme expressed by the respondents was commitment and passion for improving sanitation. They were acutely aware of the many negative externalities of open defecation and its impact on development. Secretary Iyer added “I think that sanitation straddles both social and infrastructure. [...] Sanitation addresses many issues. Big

So, I came across this movie called Toilet: A Love Story. And this script was moving around in the industry [no producer wanted to take the script] since the last four years and nobody wanted to touch that film because of its name. And nobody wanted to play a role, and be a hero for a film called Toilet: A Love Story. For four years, the screenplay script was moving around and nobody touched it. So, when I heard about it, I quite liked it, because it portrays a fact, what has been happening in India.

- Akshay Kumar, Bollywood actor

As a woman, it seemed to me such a basic, fundamental right, which affects women exponentially more than it does men.... And how much trauma it is for me that I can constantly relate to... if I don’t have a safe sanitation place.... Just imagine the lives of women who don’t actually have that every day. I would experience it once a month or something, when I went out into the fields or into villages but think about having to do that every single day of your life.

- Madhu Krishna, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

embarrassment due to a lack of proper sanitation. They emphasized that the right to access proper sanitation for vulnerable populations — women and children -- is a fundamental human right. They wanted to keep this narrative front and center and work on promoting women’s dignity and safety.

Interpersonal Determinants

Individuals interact within social networks, and the structure of these networks varies. Individuals occupy specific positions within a network, and the way they communicate with each other may vary from one network to another, as well as with their role and power within the network. We examined the degree to which our respondents intentionally tried to influence others and the degree to which they themselves were motivated by specific others.

In line with the idea of a “cascade of influence” starting at the top, we found that many respondents described themselves as being motivated by PM Narendra Modi and Secretary Iyer. Note that Indian local governments are
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quite independent from the central government and did not, at least initially, all agree to spend their resources on SBM. The PM stands out as a uniquely powerful motivating force in the context of SBM. PM Modi’s initial framing of sanitation in India as a top political and social priority from the outset of SBM represents a significant expenditure of political resources aimed at influencing others and mobilizing them to join the cause. Indeed, we found that many respondents were receptive to this agenda-setting from the beginning, as is reflected by the fact that they took PM Modi’s call to action on sanitation as a unique opportunity with which to advance their own endeavors related to SBM.

While at least part of the motivation of the participants may stem from the PM’s strong endorsement, it was by no means the most important motive, at least initially. We have reason to believe that most followers of SBM sincerely cared about sanitation as a development problem in the Indian context. Nonetheless, both the Prime Minister, as well as Parameswaran Iyer, repeatedly stood out as perceived sources of influence for many of our respondents. Akshay Kumar, echoing sentiments expressed by many others, said, “I listened to my prime minister, for once, and I got also motivated through that talk.” Amitabh Bachchan used a family metaphor (in the box above) to describe how the influence of the Prime Minister percolated throughout the country.

Influential and impactful individuals weren’t limited to just the PM or other high-ranking officials. Vijay Anand Kiran, a civil servant who served in several positions for the duration of SBM, including as Mission Director of the Clean India Mission (Rural), gave a comprehensive description of his various sources of influence when working on Swachh Bharat. He emphasized the influence of grassroot level workers, saying that “many of the ideas that we are talking about now have come from the grassroot level, from the village level.” He gave the example of a villager in the Bijnor district who “came up with this idea, and then it was painted all over Uttar Pradesh [a state with a population of 200 million] as Izzat Ghar (respectful house), to give it a sense of prestige, make it a woman prestige-central issue. Make it a malnutrition-centered issue. Make it an issue of a sense of ownership in the community.” This was not a one-off situation:

“These are common habits that you and me that’s sitting in this room must have developed from a very young age. Because that’s what we saw around us, that’s what we saw in our families, that’s what we saw our parents being involved in. That effect goes down, so I feel that when the head of the country becomes like a parent who is telling the rest of his people you need to clean it up, everyone just follows. It’s like a tradition, it’s like a family tradition. Having that kind of philosophy or thinking, you always follow what your parents tell you. Later on, you may not agree with them, but at that moment you do. It goes from generation to generation, so what I teach my kids and what my kids teach their kids is something that they will follow through.”

- Amitabh Bachchan, Bollywood superstar
Many of the respondents we spoke to employed a diverse set of tactics to motivate others to work towards improving sanitation in India. For example, some respondents capitalized on their celebrity status and creative prowess to influence others through cinema work, specifically portraying ideas and themes in order to solidify the goals of SBM. Other respondents, sensitive to important gender dimensions implicated by sanitation issues in India, explicitly aimed to leverage and empower women’s voices by educating individuals about those very issues and encouraging female participation in the program. Still other respondents aimed to achieve programmatic success through the creation of incentives, such as motivating district leaders by creating a competitive environment between them. In some cases, just being seen as a “role model” through sanitation work, such as cleaning rivers and beaches, was enough to inspire others to get others involved in SBM activities. In other cases, just being seen engaging in a particular activity was enough to inspire others to get involved in SBM activities. Bollywood star Amitabh Bachchan, for example, encouraged some of his fans to clean Versova Beach every week.

"I know a lot of [success stories] came from some village. They have no authority there, they have no say there. Still, they came out as champions. Someone was a group trainer, someone came up as a great mason...In fact, we had champions who made their own village ODF. We brought them into the campaign and made them Swachhagrahi. They had 10 other villages made ODF, on their own. These were success stories that are multiplying. Somewhere you had a physically handicapped, divyang person. Maybe he could not use a toilet on his own, but he motivated people, his entire village to become ODF. These stories, if they could come up in your story, in your documentation, that will be a great service to this campaign, .... Spending money by the government or making it a flashy program was not a big deal. The bigger deal was the community accepting it and taking it as a cause. That bodes well for all the challenges that we have in the Sustainable Development Goals."

- Vijay Anand, SBM Director, Uttar Pradesh

"So in that way, where there is a small festival or big festival, a small congregation or a big congregation, every day we need constant reminding, constant reminders ... talking to the local people, talking to the faith leaders ... understanding the problems of sanitation is very different ... bringing all of them together, I think is making a big difference, and I can see the change, the change is amazing."

- Collective feedback from other respondents
It was not only Bollywood Stars who inspired this kind of energy. Chandrakant Kulkarni, a retired teacher and “SBM Champion,” told us about when he began cleaning a local river. Every Sunday we would go to the river and work. Many people would approach me and ask me to stand and watch while they did all the work as they were motivated by me. I have a little problem in my spine, so I cannot bend and work for a long time. They would tell me to stand and watch, and would say that ‘your presence is enough for motivating us to clean.’

- Chandrakant Kulkarni, a retired teacher

Structural Determinants

Success as a trendsetter depends on having a network that allows change to propagate. A structural analysis of how the cooperation and coordination of many institutional and individual parties is enabled or instead hampered by their network structure is vital to understand how trendsetters can spearhead social change. Different people will have different thresholds for changing an established behavior, so if a network allows information to propagate quickly and consistently, trendsetters will be able to reach more people and likely ensure that different people’s thresholds are met and surpassed. Though we could not do a network analysis, our results make it clear that many of the respondents were at the center of their respective networks, and also functioned as crucial connecting bridges between different networks.

There are some community leaders who didn’t like this kind of idea initially. Some political resistance was there initially, but slowly, slowly, they all changed after seeing the results coming in, but initially there were issues we had to face. We had to convince them. Some of our volunteers were beaten up. Some were given threatening calls. We know that in a community movement these things happen. We have used our administrative machinery to handle the problem, our people went and spoke to them, police had to go and speak to them, but the beauty is that we are seeing those who are resisting initially, later they become a big supporter of this program. They started providing the kind of leadership we wanted. There are some people who changed the village, made it ODF, initially they were against the entire idea. These things happen, and it is part and parcel of this community-level movement.

- P. Ulaganathan, a District Magistrate in West Bengal
Coordination and cooperation can be difficult to attain, and success can be hard won. P. Ulaganathan mentioned how he initially encountered political resistance, including violence against his volunteers, which only dissipated as SBM was successfully implemented.

This testimony shows how attaining local cooperation is vital, and further highlights the obstacles to cooperation experienced by key actors of change. In this case, we see that a coordinated effort was successful in convincing people to cooperate and change behavior, by providing information to the whole community, and also by showing positive results and encouraging local leadership.

Local cooperation is important, but the coordination of actions and changes at various levels is also crucial in such a major endeavor. Will a village stay OD free if other, nearby villages lag? Will a state spend huge resources in a sanitation campaign if other states do not? An important enabler of coordination is the perception that there is open and strong institutional support. For example, Nicolas Osbert mentioned that while sanitation issues are generally not prioritized in other parts of the world, “I could see that in India, thanks to the leadership that really came from the top, prime minister level, there was a strong vibe to make a difference.” This clear support from the Prime Minister became a coordination enhancer by strongly signaling to others that SBM was a priority. Amitabh Bachchan gave examples of how this support trickled down the government hierarchy:

“\[the success of SBM\] was due to a huge amount of backing from the government...That had an effect, so when I meet, say, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra...he will always stop to talk about the fact that within a year the state of Maharashtra is going to be open defecation free. There is a certain pride in what they have done and achieved.

- Amitabh Bachchan

sectors (Education, Health, Rural Development, Transport), Secretary Iyer stated that vertical coordination was also an explicit strategy to generate and sustain enthusiasm for the programme:

“We operated what in UP we call this whole formula of PM, CM, DM, VM. Prime Minister, Chief Minister, District Magistrate and the Village Motivator. I was functioning along with my team like a traveling salesman. I had to go out and market sanitation and put it on the top of everyone’s agenda. You’ve got to get the grassroots people. The NGOs, the CBOs (Community Based Organizations) out, and most of all these village motivators who are from the community.

- Parameshwaran Iyer, Secretary DDWS, Ministry of Jal Shakti

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In addition, our respondents were aware of the barriers they would have to overcome in order to successfully facilitate information transmission and coordination across the diverse group of individuals contributing to improved sanitation. Indeed, many of the individuals interviewed were personally involved in improving the diffusion of information, including sharing successful strategies with key actors in the movement. For instance, Naina Lal Kidwai, chair of the India Sanitation Coalition, described the costs of information gaps.

A number of strategies were adopted to overcome these problems. One successful approach that Kidwai highlights is to encourage sharing information through the creation of a “best practice” award system. These best practices are then broadcasted on the public India Sanitation Coalition website, making them more accessible and further increasing the spread of successful methods and strategies of influence.

Another strategy adopted to improve and enable coordination between key actors is exemplified in the interview of district magistrate P. Ulaganathan. On his efforts to improve sanitation through the institutional power specific to his government position, P Ulaganathan said:

> As I am the district magistrate; every departmental official reports to me, so it’s very easy to coordinate. We used to have monthly and weekly meetings, and, you know, we used to give them targets [to work towards]... You pool the resources and manpower, and you make the entire community aware of this. The integrated coordination between various departments is what made the district open defecation free.
> - P. Ulaganathan, a District Magistrate in West Bengal

We can see from this testimony that key actors in this movement were able to better achieve coordination when someone in a position of institutional power facilitated meetings and created opportunities to share crucial information.

In addition to achieving coordination through a variety of strategies, securing cooperation among the many players involved in SBM is crucial for such a large-scale behavioral change. We found that many respondents were personally involved in supporting cooperation between individuals or organizations as part of their work. For example, Radharani Mitra, National Creative Director of BBC Media Action, reflected on the motivation behind a 2015 conference on sanitation called Needle, “where we had made it possible for people from different walks of life ... from
academia, advertising, marketing development, social commentators, anthropologists, to come together to shine the searchlight on social and behavior change communication.”

“What happened was the Secretary then reached out to me in barely a month’s time after Needle and said … “I really found it fascinating and I think you guys have done something quite special and this is the need of the hour. Could you arrange a very informal round table consultation? Could you get some of those people back in the room for me? And we did that.

- Radharani Mitra, National Creative Director of BBC Media Action

The conference, co-organized with the World Bank, explicitly invited a diverse group of individuals: “[We] wanted to put together different types of people to explore the significance of social and behavior change communication in order to move the ‘Needle.’” Mitra expanded on the influence of the Needle conference, further describing how the Secretary was impressed and arranged follow up meetings.

Facilitating cooperation was not only restricted to international organizations such as the BBC or the World Bank. Sunita Devi told us she consciously wanted to bring women to the forefront of the Swachh Bharat Mission’s efforts: “I made a plan [as to] which woman can do what… so like this I got them to work. [For] women, we got a platform to help women and bring them together and get [the] job done.”

The ability to facilitate the smooth transfer of information as well as bring key individuals together aligns with our theoretical understanding of trendsetters as individuals who exhibit high reflective autonomy. These are individuals who tend to be extroverted and personable, which in turn means they tend to be centrally located in social networks. It is precisely individuals with these psychological traits who should be particularly adept at bringing people together or bridging information gaps. They are, in a sense, better connected to perform these tasks.

Finally, cooperation was secured by giving individuals latitude with respect to their specific local programming. For example, one government employee viewed the unique flexibility given to administrators under the program as the freedom to innovate: “Luckily, the program was very flexible. The states and the districts and all the administrators in the hierarchy were given enough flexibility in the scheme, to implement or innovate or intervene in a customized manner, as per the requirements of the field.”

This latitude, in addition to the general atmosphere of support from high up, fostered a spirit of positive competition and spurred further innovation. The employee continued: “At the government-level, the priority was set up very high for this program. We got support from the District Magistrate and the district teams. Everybody was motivated because of that. Everybody was pushing each other….” People wanted to show “We are coming up with this intervention.”
Conclusion
In many ways, the first move that led to the cascade of influence and created the space for trendsetters to jump into action was PM Modi’s initial call to action. Although it was an audacious goal, the sheer level of effort that would be required to get India ODF by 2019 may have been the initial jumpstart that allowed a diverse range of trendsetters to get to work within their own formal and informal institutional contexts. The variety of people required to spearhead behavioral change (villagers, development partners, Bollywood stars, administrators, and so on) were surely inspired to make things happen “on the ground” by such a bold move. The ideas presented in this study may contribute to the work of other governments and large organizations as they strive to use behavioral strategies to induce social change.

We find that many individuals who played a key role in Swachh Bharat exhibit the central traits of trendsetters: they had high-risk tolerance, high perceived self-efficacy, high reflective autonomy, and cared deeply about sanitation. These characteristics were consistently present in individuals holding a wide range of positions—from influential politicians and religious leaders to non-profit workers and village officials.

Beyond identifying players who have a high potential to act as trendsetters in spearheading social change, a well-designed program should also foster an institutional environment in which trendsetters are most likely to thrive. The perceived risks of changing behaviors should be actively diminished, so risk-averse individuals will be more willing to abandon established practices. Coordination (or lack thereof) can also be of central importance, either as a barrier to change or as an amplifier of effort. An environment that fosters communication at all levels can provide a better incentive to cooperate and coordinate activities, share strategies, and compare results.

Such an environment should also allow for flexibility, as different situations may require different solutions. A flexible structure is an ideal environment where trendsetters are free to innovate and test new strategies. Working to achieve cooperation and coordination, especially starting from the project leaders, and ensuring clear means of communication can help ensure that social change will be as smooth as possible.
Appendices
Interviewees

State Government

Anil Raj Ray,
Mission Director
(Interviewed on 27 July 2019)

Aradhana Patnaik,
Former Mission Director
(Interviewed on 16 August 2019)

Lakshmipathy,
State coordinator in Tamil Nadu
(Interviewed on 12 August 2019)

P B Salim,
Secretary,
Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education Department
(Interviewed on 27 July 2019)

P Ulganathan,
District Magistrate
(Interviewed on 27 July 2019)

Rajeshwaree,
District Collector
(Interviewed on 13 August 2019)

Yogi Adityanath
Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh State
(Interviewed on 06 August 2019)

Requested to remain anonymous
Government bureaucrat
(Interviewed on 06 August 2019)

Village Government

Kumari Uttara Thakur,
Sarpanch
(Interviewed on 16 August 2019)

International and Non-Governmental Organizations

Madhu Krishna,
India Chief,
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
(Interviewed on 01 August 2019)

Nicolas Osbert,
Chief, UNICEF WASH
(Interviewed on 05 August 2019)

Poonam Muttreja,
Executive Director,
Population Foundation for India
(Interviewed on 09 September 2019)

Radharani Mitra,
National Creative Director,
BBC Media Action (India)
(Interviewed on 21 August 2019)

VK Madhavan,
CEO, Water Aid
(Interviewed on 14 August 2019)

Religious Organizations

Chidanand Saraswati,
President,
Parmarth Niketan Ashram
(Interviewed on 10 August 2019)

Sandvi Bhagawati Saraswatiji,
Secretary General,
Global Interfaith WASH Alliance
(Interviewed on 10 August 2019)

Popular Culture

Akshay Kumar,
Actor
(Interviewed on 02 August 2019)

Amitabh Bachchan,
Actor
(Interviewed on 13 August 2019)
Private Citizens
A Ramesh,
Swachhagrahi
(Interviewed on 29 July 2019)
Bonti Sakia,
Swachhagrahi
(Interviewed on 16 August 2019)
Champa Devi,
Rani Mistri
(Interviewed on 13 August 2019)
Chandrakant Kulkarni,
SBM Champion
(Interviewed on 03 August 2019)
Jupelli Neeraja,
Swachhagrahi
(Interviewed on 29 July 2019)
Sunitha Devi,
Rani Mistri
(Interviewed on 05 August 2019)
Swaranjit Kaur,
Sarpanch
(Interviewed on 30 July 2019)
Rinku Kumari,
Swachhagrahi
(Interviewed on 20 August 2019)

Private Sector
Arun Pandhi
Director of Program Implementation,
Tata Trusts
(Interviewed on 02 August 2019)
Naina Lal Kidwai,
Chair,
India Sanitation Coalition
(Interviewed on 08 August 2019)

Media
Raj Chengappa
Group Editorial Director,
India Today
(Interviewed on 15 August 2019)
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