Social Norm Project –

The social world we live in is composed of thousands of rules, norms, and laws.

*Some norms are explicit*: In America we drive on the right hand side of the street by custom and law

*Some norms are implicit*: We shake hands with the right hand

*Some norms apply almost universally*: say hello -- or something equivalent -- when you answer the phone

Norms can be defined in at least two ways. The first is the pressure we feel to behave in certain ways; you know, for example, that you would be criticized if you spit on someone at dinner. Second, however, even when there is no such explicit knowledge of pressures, norms may exist when there are regularities of behavior; for example, students tend to sit in the same seats in a given class even though they may not feel any particular social pressure to do so.

For this project, you must break a social norm and write about your experience. Try to be clever in your observations by looking for the non-obvious.

Rules for norm violating.

1. Be safe. This rule trumps all other rules. \*\*\*\*
2. You must violate the norm alone (no one else can be violating it with you). However, you can have a friend watch you and make observations.
3. The behavior you choose may be non-normative across our culture or a small group (like your family)
4. You may not harm anyone, including yourself. This includes getting yourself in trouble. It also includes intentionally humiliating someone else. \*\*\*\*
5. You may NOT intentionally disrupt your classes. \*\*\*\*
6. You may NOT break any laws. \*\*\*\*
7. Only break one norm at a time. While violating the norm, act totally normally in every other way. Violating many norms at once simply makes you look like a crazy teenager, thus you aren’t really breaking a norm (people expect teens to act crazy sometimes).
8. Do something you wouldn’t normally do.

\*\*\*\* Violation of these rules will result in a failing grade (and possible disciplinary consequences)

Ideas for norms:

1. Break rules of social distance: sit down with a stranger at a restaurant even if other tables are clearly available, speak to an acquaintance at an unusually small distance, stand right next to another person in an elevator when only two of you are there, hold hands with a friend of the same sex, surprise a same-sex friend with a kiss on the cheek, stand too close to someone in line in front of you, ask someone to help you with something you can do for yourself
2. Be unusually helpful: offer to help people at Best Buy, buy a small present and give it to a barely known acquaintance, pass out nickels to strangers on the street
3. Break rules for eye contact: Make too much eye contact (stare) or too little, talk to others while looking at their forehead or ear, stare at strangers walking past on the sidewalk, blink excessively.
4. Dress inappropriately: dress for a different season, dress too fancy or too casual
5. Break norms of social etiquette: cut into the middle of a line, ask someone you don’t know for his/her seat in a public place, applaud at the end of a class, randomly greet people as they walk into school with a handshake and a “good morning”
6. Follow the norms of another culture: try bargaining for the price of something, bow to people or kiss them on the cheek to greet hem, hand people things with two hands, look at the floor when shaking hands with someone.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF NORM VIOLATIONS

**PUBLIC BEHAVIOR**

– WALK ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE SIDEWALK

– HAVE AN ANIMATED CONVERSATION WITH YOURSELF IN PUBLIC

– LOOK UP ALL THE TIME

– SAY HELLO TO EVERYONE

– WHEN PEOPLE ASK YOU HOW YOU ARE DOING, TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR WHOLE DAY

– WEAR YOUR CLOTHES BACKWARDS

– DON’T TAKE YOUR HAT, COAT, & GLOVES OFF, EVEN INSIDE.

– VIOLATE PEOPLES PERSONAL SPACE

– WHISPER TO WHEN YOU TALK

– YELL WHEN YOU TALK

– ASK STRANGERS IF YOU CAN CUT IN LINE. IF THEY ASK WHY YOU NEED TO, THEN SAY YOU DON’T REALLY FEEL LIKE WAITING LONG.

– AT YOUR PARENTS HOME ASK FOR PERMISSION TO DO EVERYTHING (GET A DRINK, USE THE BATHROOM, WATCH TV, ETC)

**BATHROOMS**

– DON’T FLUSH WHEN YOU ARE DONE

– TALK TO OTHERS WHILE THEY ARE BUSY

– TALK TO SOMEONE IN ANOTHER STALL

– ASK FOR THEIR TOILET PAPER

**ELEVATORS**

– TALK TO STRANGERS

– FACE THE BACK OF THE ELEVATOR

– PUSH THE BUTTONS FOR FLOORS YOU’RE NOT GOING TO EVER GET OFF

– SAY YOU WILL "WAIT FOR THE NEXT ONE" WHEN ONLY ONE PERSON IS ON IT

– GO ELEVATOR SURFING

– STAND RIGHT BY SOMEONE EVEN WHEN YOU ARE THE ONLY 2 PEOPLE IN THE ELEVATOR

**CLASSROOM**

– SIT IN OTHER PEOPLE’S CHAIRS EVERY DAY

– MAKE CONSTANT EYE CONTACT WITH THE INSTRUCTOR

– NEVER MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH THE INSTRUCTOR / NEVER BREAK EYE CONTACT WITH THE INSTRUCTOR

– TALK AND THEN RAISE YOUR HAND

– SIT ON THE FRONT ROW AND PICK YOUR NOSE

– NEVER BRING A BOOK, PENCIL, OR PAPER

– READ A NOVEL DURING CLASS

**DINNING**

– EAT SOUP WITH A FORK

– EAT DESERT FIRST

– EAT STEAK WITH A KNIFE AND SPOON

– EAT WITH YOUR HANDS

– EAT OFF OTHER PEOPLE’S PLATES

– USE OVERLY FORMAL EATING ETIQUETTE WHEN EATING WITH FRIENDS OR FAMILY

– BE RUDE TO THE WAITER AND THEN APOLOGIZE AND THEN BE RUDE AGAIN

– BRING YOUR OWN CHEESE AND ASK THEM TO PUT IT ON YOUR HAMBURGER.

– WALK THROUGH THE DRIVE THROUGH

– DRIVE BACKWARDS THROUGH THE DRIVE THROUGH

– ORDER FOOD THAT IS NOT ON THE MENU

– ASK FOR SUBSTITUTIONS EVEN WHEN IT SAYS "NO SUBSTITUTIONS"

**PHONE**

– SAY GOODBYE WHEN YOU ANSWER THE PHONE

– SAY HELLO WHEN YOU HANG UP

– SAY "I LOVE YOU" WHEN ENDING A CONVERSATION EVEN WITH FRIENDS AND STRANGERS

– REFUSE TO TAKE A MESSAGE

– ANSWER THE PHONE AND WAIT FOR THE OTHER PERSON TO SPEAK FIRST.

– DON’T ATTEMPT TO FILL IN, UNCOMFORTABLE PAUSES IN CONVERSATIONS

– PRETEND YOU ARE AN ANSWERING MACHINE

– ASK TELE- MARKETERS IF YOU CAN CALL THEM BACK

**Others:**

-Watch a blank tv, cheer when your team scores.  
-Ask a stranger for money.   
-Go to restaurant, pay with pennies  
-Wear clothes backwards, guys could wear girls garments, wear shoes on wrong feet, brush your teeth in public bathroom.  
-Take groceries from other peoples shopping carts (in front of them)  
-Stand while eating in a restaurant, or eat on floor, or under the table.   
-Order food at a restaurant for you and your imaginary friend, talk to your friend, ask waitress for doggie bag for food your imaginary didn’t finish eating.  
-Walk around the mall with an open umbrella  
-Put on your winter clothes and go to the beach with your friends and pretend to play beach volley ball.

Social Norm Project (70 points) Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| **Part I: List of daily norms you follow**  Select one day of your life and record at least 25 norms that you followed that day. Fill in the chart for part I listing these norms. Try to limit your list mostly to things you DO (I look people in the eye when they talk to me), rather than things you don’t do (I don’t look at people’s knees when they talk to me). *(25 points, one point per norm)* |
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**Part II: Anticipated Consequences of Breaking Norms**

Choose five norms from your list in Part I and describe the anticipated consequences of breaking these norms. One of the five you choose should be the norm you actually violate. *(10 points, two points per norm)*

1. Norm: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Anticipated Consequences:*

2. Norm:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Anticipated Consequences:*

3. Norm: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Anticipated Consequences:*

4. Norm: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Anticipated Consequences:*

5. Norm: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Anticipated Consequences:*

**Part III: Breaking a Norm**

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| --- |
| Briefly describe your plan for breaking a norm. Describe both the norm you chose and what you did to break the norm. *(4 points)* |

For each number below, describe at least three different groups of people that you chose for your norm- breaking experiment. The groups should differ in some identifiable way; they may differ in age, how well you know them, status, gender, etc... (2 points each)

1.

2.

3.

**Part IV: Reactions**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| (15pts) | Before | During | After |
| **Group or Person One** |  |  |  |
| **Your Reaction to Group One** | *Your overall reaction:* | | |
| **Group or Person Two** |  |  |  |
| **Your Reaction to Group Two** | *Your overall reaction:* | | |
| **Group or Person Three** |  |  |  |
| **Your Reaction to Group Three** | Your overall reaction: | | |

How did your reactions compare to your anticipated reactions? (5 points)

Choose one reaction to a norm violation that differed greatly between different groups. Explain the difference and discuss and possible reason for the difference. (5 points)