Mr. Nelson – Sociology 101

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**NORM VIOLATION SOCIAL EXPERIMENT PROJECT**

For this next project you will be asked to violate (go against) an established social norm (folkway, not more) with a pre-established audience. You will then be asked to record the reactions your violation inspires in both yourself and others. You may, if you choose, work with 1 other person, but this is not required.

**YOU MAY NOT:**

1. Violate school policy, or do the project within school at all
2. Break any law, or cause/ask others to break the law
3. Cause physical or psychological harm to yourself or others
4. Do anything which is ethically questionable, even if it is technically legal
5. Do anything involving intervention of authorities (police, medics, teacher, etc.).

***\*\*\**If you think your project may violate any of the above rules, speak to me before doing it!**

**General Directions:**

1. Select a social norm which interests you. \*This might take some thought. After selecting a norm you will violate that norm in a social setting of your choosing (\*NOT THE SCHOOL UNLESS PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED).
2. There must be observers for the violation to count. Observe reactions in a timely manner. Observe both your reactions and the reactions of others (both verbal and nonverbal).
3. You will then

**Format for paper/presentation:**

**PRE VIOLATION QUESTIONS:**

1. Describe the social norm that you chose to violate. For example, if you ate soup with a fork, you would have violated the social norm of using a spoon (the socially constructed ‘appropriate utensil’).
2. Describe the setting in which the violation took place. Don’t be general – don’t simply say “the mall”, but rather go into detail. Did you go into certain stores in the mall? Did you target a particular audience such as peer groups, or adults?
3. Describe your intended audience – who exactly are you choosing to witness this norm violation, and why did you choose this/these group(s)? Did you target audience by age, race, gender, socio-economic status? Why?
4. As this is a social experiment, what is your hypothesis regarding how your intended audience will react to your norm violation?

**VIOLATION QUESTION:**

1. Describe what you actually did, in detail.

**POST-VIOLATION:**

1. Hypothesis testing: did people react and respond in the ways you expected, as outlined in question 4? In other words, was your hypothesis confirmed or disproved? If disproved, describe how your audience reacted.
2. How did you feel (emotionally) as you were violating the norm you chose? In other words, were you comfortable, nervous, anxious? Explain your internal process.
3. USING YOUR NOTES (see PowerPoint “DEVIANCE AN D SOCIAL CONTROL, on website) describe, in some detail, what this experiment help teach/reinforce about the following:
   * Social Norms, Cultural values, Social Control

**Tips & Strategies:**

**SETTING IS EVERYTHING!** Remember that for this to be done correctly, it must violate a social norm, not just be generally strange or weird behavior. Norms are dependent on your setting (as we’ve discussed in class). So, if you’re normally a loud person and everyone thinks of you as loud, being loud in front of friends isn’t a norm violation. However, doing that at Church is! (not a recommendation, just a point).

When thinking of what to do and how to do it, **start by thinking of a setting and audience, then ask yourself what are some social norms in that setting** – feel free to make a list. For example, if you were to choose **dinner as your setting**, and **your family as your audience**, you could list the following things as norms:

1. sitting in seats (perhaps even certain seats for certain family members, based on hierarchy, such as mom or dad sitting at the head of the table)
2. using utensils
3. asking for food to be passed to you if it out of your reach
4. waiting your turn to speak in a conversation (or even saying ‘excuse me’ if a child is doing the interrupting)
5. not discussing certain topics that wouldn’t be considered so-called ‘dinner topics’
6. using a napkin
7. eating food in a particular order (e.g., salad, appetizer, dinner, dessert) and, even more formally, eating with particular utensils based on order of meal (e.g., a salad fork versus and entrée fork)
8. asking to be excused if you get up
9. not explicitly stating that you didn’t like the food that was cooked, even if you didn’t
10. Praying prior to the start of the meal (depending on level of religiousness)
11. Waiting for everyone to be served prior to any one person eating

Notice how simple it was to generate a list of 11 differing (but related) social norms around the daily occurrence of eating at a dinner table with one’s family. In terms of the project, after doing this with your chosen setting/norms, you could then choose any or all of these norms to violate, while gauging/recording reactions of your audience (those around who witness the violation). Do this for whatever setting you choose and above all, be creative!

**Norm Violation Presentation (Rubric)**

When you present, I’m going to ask you the following. Please look to see what your grade is based upon, and **the questions you need to ask yourself** before you do your project:

1. **The journalism basics** – the where, what, when, why questions (basically the story of what you did)
2. **The social norm/norms you violated** (\*please remember that **social norms are based on social values** and **means of social control**. So, examples of social norms values might be:

* **Female sexual purity** (a violation of this would be the sexual double standards that exist for sexually promiscuous women that do not exist for sexually promiscuous men)
* **Heteronormativity** (a violation of this might include any sort of homosexual relationship, including marriage and child rearing)
* **Nationalism** (a violation of this would be anything considered ‘Un-American’, such as not saluting the flag, being critical of the government, etc.)
* **Individuality** (a violation of this would include anything collective, such as supporting a communist or socialist program – even things like personal space are based around the celebration of individuality!)
* **Cultural Norms**: perhaps, for example, not looking an adult in the eye is customary for a given culture, because it violates norms regarding how adults (superiors) are expected to interact with children (inferiors). There are hundreds of examples of this, which vary by culture.

\*So your job is to figure out what social norm you have violated, not just do something strange. Part of your grade is identifying the social norm, not just telling the story of what you did.

* 1. **The means of social control:** Remember that social control are the methods in place to encourage (or force) people to conform to normal behavior – this includes informal means (social sanctioning or disapproval, like a look your might get) and formal means (institutionally based punishments such as being arrested, incarcerated, fined, and so forth). In your case, the social control could be your parents, or school policy, or general rules of etiquette. **Social Control (what were the means by which any agents [parents, teachers, authorities, your social group of friends, the general public] created or reinforced a situation in which your project was a norm to begin with. Were there formally established rules? Cultural rules? Were they spoken or unspoken?**

1. **Vocabulary: Do Any of the Vocabulary Terms/Theories Apply?**

* Stigmatization
* Labeling Theory
* Control Theory
* Differential Association Theory
* Social Disorganization Theory
* Conformity
* Obedience
* Functionalist or Interactionist view of the role of deviance
* The Social Constructivist Perspective
* Feminist perspective on deviance
* Shaming/Degradation Ceremonies
* Cultural folkways and mores
* Social sanctions