SOC 100W

Professor CohnSaul Cohn Ph.D.

TTH 3:00

Breaking Norms Paper

INTRODUCTION:

Giving up a seat to an elderly on a bus, sitting down in your seat silently when the teacher enters the room, and even going to sleep at night and waking up in the morning are all social norms. We might not recognize it, but we follow social norms in our day-to-day activities constantly. Social norms are society-based beliefs on what is acceptable and unacceptable in our society. Breaking social norms may lead to confusion or disapproval. It might not be against the law but it might be against social standards. Therefore, for my experiment, I decided to break a social norm by bursting out in song on the shuttle to school. My song of choice was I Believe I Can Fly by R. Kelly.

The Setting:

The setting of my experiment took place on the shuttle bus from the park and ride parking lot to Duncan Hall on the SJSU campus during the day around 11:00am. There were perhaps around 8-10 people on the shuttle during the experiment, not including the bus driver.

EXPECTATION:

This author expected to get disapproving looks and probably feelings of annoyance. I wouldn’t even be surprised if someone told me to “shut up” as my voice sounds similar to a dying whale when I try to sing. In a similar situation, I myself might just try to ignore the situation or muffle a laugh depending on how it triggered me. Sometimes when things are out of the norm I start laughing because it feels random or I may avoid the situation because it might be awkward. And I do it because it does not fit the social norm, so I expect over people in society to do the same or disapproval in a way.

RESULTS:

People turned to stare at me. One person laughed while others glanced back and forth at each other. Another person asked, “Having a good morning?” as a rhetorical question to the oddness of me singing without any background music. It was interesting to see and kind of embarrassing for me myself. [But I found the results to be an overall questionable response as to why I was just singing loudly at random and breaking a social norm.]

CONCLUSION:

In sum, this author recognized the impact breeching social norms. Rules exist that may not be concrete but abided by nonetheless; if you break them you will perceive social repercussions. Even if it not offensive there is a slight stigma in doing things not considered “normal”. Perhaps the people on the shuttle think I’m crazy or abnormal instead of me just being in the mood to sing. Because social rules dictate appropriate times to act, and, more importantly, not to act. In this experiment, singing loudly in the middle of silence was not considered a norm, and so I was socially sanctioned. realize that you are not completely liberated without at least judgment being passed.