

Violating social norms

Society



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

For this assignment, I decided to violate the social norm of not talking on the phone while watching a movie in a movie theater. Before the movie started, I tested my sister and asked her to call me during the movie. When she did so, I proceeded to have a 2-3 minute conversation with her and spoke loudly so that those around me would notice and be distracted. The people around me in the theater were obviously bothered by my behavior and annoyed. Several people turned around to stare at me or whispered under their breath to their friends.

A few just shook their heads or sighed. The social norm of refraining from talking on the phone during a movie in a movie theater was an example of an explicit (in this case), injunctive norm. The norm was explicit because during the movie previews, there was an advertisement that read "Please no talking on the phone or texting during the movie." Through this ad, everyone in the theater was made directly aware of the social norm. Not talking on the phone in a movie is an injunctive norm because it is observed as the socially acceptable and polite thing to do.

It is perceived that people approve of this behavior because it shows respect and consideration for those who want to watch the movie free of distractions or disturbances. This social norm is typically enforced through compliance. Even if a person might originally consider talking on the phone in a movie theater, they usually comply with the theater's directly stated request to not do so in the pre-movie "Please do not talk on the phone or text during the movie" message. My violation of this social norm elicited various mechanisms of social control from those surrounding me.

As mentioned above, fellow movie-watchers tried to make me feel guilty for my "rude" behavior by fidgeting in their seats, loudly sighing, frequently turning around to stare at me, and muttering complaints to their friends. A woman at the end of my row even turned to face me and loudly said "Really!? Please get off your phone." During my violation of a social norm, I felt extremely uncomfortable and self-conscious. I felt like all the attention in the theater was focused on me, and that everyone was negatively judging me. As a result of the hostile responses around me, I felt very attacked, anxious and embarrassed.

I wanted to remove myself from the awkward situation as soon as possible. I think the people around me in the movie theater would explain my behavior with the assumption that I have a blatant disregard for others. They would probably attribute my violation of the social norm to what they see as self-centeredness, disrespect, and social awkwardness because compliance with the norm of not using your cell phone in a movie theater attempts to show decency and concern for the enjoyment of others. Since I used my phone and did not try to control my volume, people logically assumed that I just didn't care about those around me.

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