

Social psychology

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Social Psychology- Reflection Paper 2 I planned to break the social norm of wearing a dress. I wore a dress shirt with my boxer shorts. I went out into the street in the morning when almost twenty men and women stood at the bus stops, waiting for their buses, to head for offices. I stood there for around fifteen minutes, and observed people's facial expressions and verbal comments. This paper tends to reflect on my affective responses before, during and after breaking the norm.

First I express how I felt before doing the activity and what I expected. I was expecting that people would be surprised at my wearing that weird combination of a formal dress shirt with casual boxer shorts. I was expecting some very ridiculous remarks and surprised facial expressions. I also expected that some of the onlookers would come to me, and tell me that I had forgotten to wear the pants. Now, during the time I was breaking the social norm, I heard some very funny remarks. People stared at me, as if I had gone nuts. They looked at me, and then looked at each other, as if they did not believe what they saw. I heard one of them say, "Is he out of his mind?" Some women giggled, while some looked annoyed. A man came up to me and said, "Man! You look awful." I was feeling very stupid after I broke the norm. I experienced that people observed their surroundings very keenly. I came to understand that people were good observers, and that they did not accept things that went beyond the conformity of social rules and norms. My experience was very interesting, as I came to know how people reacted to what they thought was weird for them to accept.

There are reasons why I follow the norm of wearing the dress that matches my gender. One must follow social norms to get accepted by society. It is called being normal; and, what is normal and what is abnormal has already

been defined for us by the society. Just like gender roles are pre-described and we need not discuss what men are supposed to do and what roles suit women. Similarly, we need not discuss why a social norm is the way it is. We are only supposed to accept the social norm so that people around us can relate to us and consider us as normal human beings. “ Norms are statements about what is allowed, what ought or ought not to be done” (Hechter & Opp, 2005, p. 235). Breaking a social norm makes one feel weird, and that is why people prefer not breaking them.

Since cognitive dissonance is the discomfort that arises in conditions where people express conflicting attitudes or beliefs to justify how they behave is right (Cherry, 2014), I guess that I experienced this disharmony to a great extent. This is because I have always felt that breaking social norms is weird, and when I acted on this thought, “ I know I should not wear boxers with dress shirt, but let’s do it as this is the assignment,” I actually tried to justify my breaking the social norm, but inside I knew that people were going to mock at me. Hence, I experienced great cognitive dissonance.

References

- Cherry, K. (2014). What is cognitive dissonance? About. com: Psychology. Retrieved April 13, 2014, from <http://psychology.about.com/od/cognitivepsychology/f/dissonance.htm>
- Hechter, M., & Opp, K. D. (2005). Social Norms. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.