**Social Breaching Experiment & Presentation**

*What is a breaching experiment?*

Imagine these scenarios...

***Example 1-****You are sitting in a Starbucks on a crowded morning. Your books are open, your coffee is hot and ready to drink, and your IPod is playing your favourite study tunes. You are tapped on the shoulder by an individual holding a newspaper who says, “Excuse me, can I have your seat?”. What do you do? What do you say? Is there something strange about this?*

***Example 2-****You are standing in line at the registration office to pay for your classes. The wait has been long but you are nearly at the front of the line. Another student walks calmly to the front of the line, cuts in, and is called to the next open window. What just happened? Do you say something? Do others say or do something?*

**Breaching Experiments:** The above examples are adaptations of breaching experiments conducted by famous sociologist Harold Garfinkel. In these cases, the individual who asked someone to move from their seat for no apparent reason, or who cut in the long line, were violating unspoken social norms. Garfinkel and his students designed experiments to test the unstated social rules that we live by, and examine what happens when these unstated rules and norms are violated. ***A breaching experiment is a controlled social situation in which individuals involved intentionally break social rules and violate basic norms and patterns of behavior*** (Croteau & Hoynes, 2012).

You will become a social researcher and conduct a breaching experiment in which you violate a social norm to examine individual’s responses.

**Your Assignment:**

**Become a norm violator for experimental purposes.**

* ***First***, think of unspoken social rules and norms that govern what, how, and why people do basic, everyday things (dress, talk, eat, walk, shop, work, sit, etc,). *Remember that many social rules only become obvious once they are broken - so be creative!*
* ***Second***, think of how you can violate, or breach, one of these norms in a social situation (at school, work, in the mall, etc.).
* ***Third***, design and conduct your experiment! Where, when, and how will you conduct your breaching experiment? You must breach your norm a *minimum of* *ten times* in order to gather observations and collect data on what happens when your norm is violated. Take notes on what happens. How do individuals respond?
* ***Lastly***, you will answer the questions on the following page thoroughly and academically to explain your norm violation and examine your experiment results. Type your answers on a separate page and label each question (15 points).

\* **RULES:** Be careful. Use common sense. No breaking of the law. Do not put yourself or anyone else in danger of any kind. If you think that your experiment/idea is questionable in any way, please consult me in class or via email **prior** to conducting your experiment.

**\*NEED HELP:** Ask questions! Do some outside research (*breaching experiments are a popular assignment; a Google search may give you some good info and ideas*). Consider working with a partner or in a group of 3 people.

**FINAL PRODUCTS FOR EVALUATION**

**1. Presentation**

You will explain your breaching experiment and report results to the class in a 4-6 minute presentation. *If you work in a group, you can present together, but each individual must do their own separate write up.* Presentation format is up to you. Your presentation will be graded based on preparation, organization, and effort.

**2. Experiment Write-up (2-4 pages)**

Write up should be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, and free from grammatical errors. *Please number, re-write and answer the questions below* *in paragraph form, as thoroughly as possible.*

*QUESTIONS:*

1. What is a social norm?

2. What social norm did you select for your breaching experiment? Why and how is this behavior a social norm? Why did you select this norm to violate?

3. *Method:* Please explain your breaching experiment:   
a. What did you do to violate a social norm? *Be specific.*  
b. Where and when did you conduct your experiment? Was there any reason for the place or time?  
c. How many times did you intend to repeat your experiment? How many times did you actually repeat it?  
d. How did you collect data on what happened when your norm violation occurred? (*Notes? Video? Observation?)*

4. *Results:* What happened when your norm violation occurred? Was there a general response, or did people act differently? Was there differing responses depending on age, sex, or race/ethnicity, etc.? Please explain and use at least two specific examples of responses.

5. *Analysis:* Why did people respond the way they did? Explain the responses of individuals. What does this say about your social norm, society, and people? Use your sociological imagination to try and theorize why people act the way they do in micro level interactions.