

Homework Assignment #1: 10 points

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 favorite 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 and Hoynes, 2012).

The Assignment: Design a Breaching Experiment

For this assignment, you will think like a social researcher and design a breaching experiment in which you would violate a social norm to examine individual's responses.

To complete your assignment, you will answer the following questions thoroughly and academically. *Write up should be typed, single spaced, 12 pt. font, and free from grammatical errors. Please number each of the questions below (1-3). You do not need to re-write the questions. Use paragraph format to answer each question as thoroughly as possible. Please use a formal, academic, and scientific tone as you answer each question.*

1. **Introduction:** What is a social norm? What social norm did you select for your breaching experiment? Why and how is this behavior a social norm? Explain.
2. **Method:** Please explain/describe your breaching experiment: (Be specific, detailed, and scientific)
 - a. What exactly would you do to go about violating your social norm? Explain *in detail*.
 - b. Where and when would you conduct your experiment? Explain why.
 - c. How many times would you intend to repeat your experiment? How many times do you believe would be needed to obtain valid data.
 - d. How would you collect data when your norm violation occurs? Notes? Video? Observation? Explain why this is a good way to collect data.
3. **Hypothesis and analysis:**
 - a. What do you believe would happen if you conducted your breaching experiment? How would people generally respond? Would there be differing responses from people depending on age, sex, race/ethnicity, or any other important variable?
 - b. Why do you think people would respond in a certain way? Why might there be differences in the way people acted based on variables like race, sex, age, etc.? Or why not?