Violation of a culture Norm

- Assignment Two -

Michelle Oakland
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Prof. Methvin
Norms and How they Operate in Society

Norms are rules and expectations that guide the behavior of the people of a society. Normative behavior is expected in every culture. In our society for example it is expected that we have the right to freedom of speech and that we can dress in styles and fashions that we choose. In another society however these actions would be considered violations of the norms because their society does not follow the same pattern of norms as our American society. This does not make those actions wrong or strange, only different compared one to the other. There are different types of norms in every society, proscriptive norms and prescriptive norms. Proscriptive norms state what we should not do in our society. For example kids should not play around with loaded guns. Prescriptive norms though are norms that that tell us what we should do, such as store weapons in a safe place where children cannot find them.

Important norms in a society apply everywhere and at all times. Children for example are expected to behave and listen to their parents no matter what situation they are in. The most important norms in our society are protected by laws. These types of norms, such as thou shall not kill and thou shall not steal, if broken causes the law to step in and take action. Violations of these norms could put a person in jail or sentence some other punishment whereas violation of a less important norm could just lead to a disappointed look or glance. These other norms are time relative, status relative, and situational relative. At the end of a musical performance or a play for example, it is expected that the audience applaud the performance, however, at the closing of a religious ceremony or service it is unnecessary to give any applause and traditionally it is not given.

Some norms carry greater significance in our lives than others. The term mores (pronounced morays) was given to norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance. Mores also means taboos of society, things that are not accepted, such as
intentionally putting another person’s life in danger or walking down a busy public sidewalk in the nude. Mores distinguish between what is right and wrong. In the examples it would be wrong to place someone else’s life at risk and it would be wrong to walk down the street naked.

Folkways are another type of norm that are less significant than mores. They are norms for routine, casual interaction, and include such ideas as appropriate greetings and dressing properly. For example walking down town in the middle of winter in a swim suit would be violating a folkway. It is not entirely wrong, but it is a step away from the usual. Folkways draw the line between what is right and rude.

The rules of mores and folkways create unofficial rules for our everyday lives. We may not intentionally conform to the ways of our society but it is obvious that these rules give us some order and predictability to our lives. The reactions from others help control the behavior of people in society. Sanctions, which are reward or punishment for following or deviating from custom behavior, are critical in keeping people operating on standard behavior. It could be as simple as an accepting smile or a shake of the head. This is a system of social control, which is the various means by which the members of a society encourage conformity to norms.

As we learn the norms of our culture and society we also gain the capacity to evaluate our own behavior. Doing something wrong can lead to the feelings of either shame or guilt; shame is the painful sense that others disapprove of our actions, and guilt is a negative judgment we make of ourselves. These are also elements that help control the behavior of a society and bring balance into a culture.

Source:

Norm Violation and what’s Expected

It was difficult at first to decide which norm in our society I wanted to violate. Then unfortunately I injured my knee in a volleyball match and this limited me even more in my choices for violations. However, the more I thought about it I saw that I could use my misfortune to my advantage. Walking around on crutches I obviously already stuck out in the crowd, but I wanted something a little different. If I got rid of my crutches and did not have to walk around I would look like any normal healthy athletic individual. This then brought me to Fred Meyers. I could not shop around the store with my crutches and carry all my groceries, so I hopped onto the handicapped shopping cart.

Typically in our society the elderly, handicapped, or physically impaired often need the aid of a motorized cart to assist them at a shopping center while shopping for groceries. Since this group of people is usually older, our society has come to accept seeing the elderly use these types of motorized carts for assistance. However, when a young healthy individual uses the aid of a cart society does not expect this and some people will even frown and look down on the young person driving the cart. People in our society do not like to see others take advantage of situations when they are very capable of managing on their own. For example it is like seeing a person park in a handicapped space in front of the store and then very spiritedly and healthily walk inside. We do not know for sure why this person is parking there but from what we see they are very capable of making the walk into the store.

Just as it appears that the person parking in the handicapped space does not need a handicapped permit at all, it definitely appears that I do not need to be driving around a handicapped cart at our local Fred Meyers. With this experience I was violating the norm in our society that it is wrong to take advantage of a situation especially when that person if physically able to accomplish the task without extra assistance.
What Happened, How I Felt, What I Learned

Driving around in the handicapped scooter at Fred Meyers was an experience I will not forget for a while. I was a little embarrassed at first to be climbing onto a motorized cart because just as most of our society I associate these carts with the elderly. Also first starting to use the cart I did not know what I was doing and did not know how to operate the machine. With a few jolting starts, stops, and crazy turns, though, I was on a roll, literally.

I moved throughout Fred Meyer starting at one end in produce and slowly moving to the other side of the store. It was kind of late so the store was not busy but I hunted down the isles with the most shopping customers. I tried my best to keep a straight face while driving but I could not help laughing a little. The first people I met gave me a double take. As I mortared by the coupled just glanced up quickly, then they both had to look again as I sped by. I think they were expecting to see an older person driving the cart but were shocked when they looked up to see a young healthy person. Rounding the corner of that first isle I approached my nest subject. An employee was stalking the dairy shelves and as I drove closer he stopped what he was doing and had to laugh. He asked me if I was just being lazy or if I was actually hurt. Several more times throughout the store, as I zigzagged back and forth, I crossed his path and each time all he could do was laugh because he could not believe I was actually driving the cart.

Many of the other people I came across joked around with me as well. As I was backing my way out of the light bulb isle one of the other employees jumped up on his step ladder and said, “Whoa! Quick jump up on the ladder out of the way!” Another man had parked his cart in the middle of the isle so it would have been impossible for the motor cart to get by. When he heard me coming he reached out to move his cart out of the way and then just had to laugh when he saw who was driving. Later on in the store I ran into the same guy, and once again he was blocking the isle. This time he had to laugh at both me and himself.
The best encounter I had was another University of Portland student. As I drove down the long isle that stretches from one end of the store to the other he could see me coming from a long distance away. I was laughing almost the entire time as I approached him so I’m pretty sure he thought it was a big joke. As I passed him he half smiled, but it was more of a “what the heck are you doing” smile. The best part was though, my friend later heard him tell someone else in the store, “I just saw a girl from UP driving one of those handicapped carts.” I think she was embarrassed for just having known me at that point.

In this situation and with violating this norm I found that people can generally find the humor in it. I think though when people violate social norms frequently and purposefully society begins to get frustrated and this is when the humor of the situation is harder to find. It is also more difficult to accept violations of the norm when the person doing the violating comes across as rude and inconsiderate. I had no problems with the customers of Fred Meyer because I was having too much fun driving the scooter around. I was not rude or inconsiderate to anyone, but was cracking jokes along with them, especially when I passed them more than once as I zigzagged back and forth through Fred Meyer.