

Norm Breaking Experiment

What is a good norm breaking experiment?

1. It is close to the border between appropriate and inappropriate (slightly on the inappropriate side). You must break a norm, but at the same time if you go too far people will not take you seriously.
2. Different people will respond differently; you are putting it on your subjects to figure out how to respond.
 - Sometimes there are competing norms in the situation, and the subject has to choose which norm is the better one to follow...
3. It attacks a norm that deserves to be challenged. The world, perhaps, may be a better place if the norm you are breaking were not followed as strictly; or at least, the norm deserves to be reconsidered. Have a little bit of a political agenda here!
4. While you can do it, it challenges you.

NOTE: You may purposely choose to vary setting, or other factors, such as your dress (dress up vs. dress down for example) to see how these factors affect the behavior of your subjects. Also, pay attention to natural differences between you and your partner (gender, for example) and how they may affect the results.

Here are topics and situations that lend themselves to good norm breaking experiments.

This list is by no means exhaustive; remember, there are norms everywhere!

- Restaurant behavior
- Level of showing affection
- Level of showing emotion
- More and less formal
 - o Dress
 - o Speech
 - o Ways of greeting
- Adults vs. kids
- When in a conversation...
 - o Appropriate level of sharing info about oneself
- Personal Space
- Pace of Life
 - o Fast-paced and impersonal nature of modern life
- School Cafeteria Norms
- Hallway norms
- Being a minority – become someone who is breaking the norm by his/her very existence.
- Gender/Sexuality
- Clothing Stores
- Food Court Norms
- Level of interaction with strangers
- Church

Step 1 – Proposal

1. Share your ideas from the homework with each other and spend a little time brainstorming some further possibilities for an experiment.
2. Pick an experiment that you and your partner like the best and would like to perform. Also pick two other experiments that you also like and would be happy performing. Share these experiments with me to get approval. **Your experiment MUST be approved by me before you perform it!** If you do an experiment that was not approved by me, you will fail.
3. Realizing that each of you must perform the experiment together multiple times, decide **exactly** when you and your partner will get together to perform the experiment (be specific about **the date and the time**). Pick two dates in case there are problems the first time or you need to do more trials. You will probably need 2 hours to perform plus transportation time.
4. Write down your final, approved experiment and the date and time that you will perform the experiment and submit this to me. The date that you decide to perform the experiment will be placed on a Google calendar; I will be checking in with you the day after that date to make sure you performed it.

Step 2 – Perform the Experiment

Make sure that EACH of you performs the experiment **multiple** times. On average, each of you should perform the experiment a minimum of 5 times (this number can slightly vary based on how elaborate your experiment is and how long each trial takes; talk to me if you are unsure on the minimal number of trails you must perform). Of course, the more times you do the experiment, the more data you have to write about and the more favorably I look on your work.

You and your partner **must be together** when you perform the experiment. While one of you performs the experiment, the other is secretly watching and writing down the reactions of other people. Be as specific and detailed as possible in writing down others' reactions. Focus on all reactions, paying particular attention to the negative body language items that you have learned.

Step 3 – Writing the Paper

1. Start with a good story. Get the reader interested! Tell the story of your most interesting trial. **Bring the moment to life. Dramatize!** Tell us in detail how you or your partner felt, and how the subjects reacted. What did they say? Do? **Put the reader into the moment.**
2. Introduce your specific experiment. Discuss what norm or norms this experiment breaks, and explain why the norm(s) you are attacking is a good one to break.
3. Describe how other people reacted to your experiment. Also, give more specific examples of individual subjects. What did people say? Do? What facial expressions and body language did you observe? Pick up on the subtleties! Make sure to provide data on how others responded both to you and your partner. Feel free to provide a chart or graph of your data.
4. Analyze the data. In general, how did people respond to your experiment? Are there any trends you can pick up on? Were there any factors that played a role on how others responded? Consider gender, age, race, and other characteristics of subjects, as well as your own characteristics. For example, if you are a male and your partner is a female, did subjects respond differently towards you in comparison to your partner?

How so? Also, if you performed the experiment in different settings, were there differences in behavior based on setting? You may purposely choose to vary setting, or other factors, such as your dress (dress up vs. dress down) to see how these factors affect the behavior of your subjects.

NOTE: 3 and 4 can be separate sections, or you can mix them together. Just make sure that I see both the data and your analysis of the data.

5. Describe how **you** reacted – how **you** felt before, during, and after the experiment. Again, paint the scene - be descriptive. Pick up on how you are reacting physiologically as well as what was going through your mind. Was this more difficult or less difficult than you thought it would be?
6. Conclusion: What did you learn? What did you GET out of performing this experiment? Share your realizations. How did this affect your thinking and perspective on yourself and others? How will this experience affect you as you continue on in your life? Finish with some deep and thoughtful revelations about your experience.

Each of you must write a paper. The paper should be a minimum of 4 pages.

Extras that you can do to go above and beyond and earn a top grade:

1. Interview one or two of your subjects and ask them about their experience after you perform your experiment on them. Include this information in your paper. Do NOT interview all subjects – I want you to walk away most of the time after performing the experiment without the opportunity to justify your weird behavior as an experiment for school. :)
2. Make a data chart that summarizes the results you received.