**Introduction to Sociology**

Chapter 6 “Norms”: Assignments

**6.2 What are social norms?**

**Q1**

Describe in your own words what an injunctive norm is, and how such norms differ from a descriptive norm.

**Q2**

What are three types of injunctive norms? Consider your own experiences and come up with one example for each type of norm.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Type of injunctive norm** | **Example** |
| 1 |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |

**Q3**.

Explain in your own words what a social norm is.

**6.3 Social control theory**

**Q1.**

Define the concepts of “social sanctioning” and “social approval” and explain why these concepts are relevant for social control theory. Make sure to define all concepts you use.

**Q2.**

How does “monitoring” play a role in social control theory?

**Q3**

Suppose that a father comes home with a lot of groceries. He has multiple bags to bring inside and tries to carry multiple bags at once. In the process, he drops one. His son, who is at home, decides to help him by picking up the bag and bringing the rest of the groceries inside. Later that night, at the dinner table, the father tells his wife how helpful he was, much to the pleasure of his son.

Q3a. What is the social norm in this example? Why is this a social norm?

Q3b. Does social sanctioning or social approval play a role in this example?

Q3c. Are the third parties in this example part of the same social group? Or a different group?

**6.4 Internalized norms**

**Q1**

Consider the following situation. A group of five friends want to go to a restaurant. One of them, Elise, is vegetarian. Her four non-vegetarian friends prefer to go to the restaurant ‘Beef paradise’, which, however, does not have vegetarian dishes at all. Elise doesn’t want to go that restaurant, she suggests other restaurants. Her friends don’t want that, and she feels pressured to conform to what her friends want. In the end she joins them, her friends think that’s so cool. Her friends have a great time in ‘Beef paradise’. Afterwards she feels bad about what she did. Which norms play a role here? And in which way?

**Q2.**

What is the relation, if any, between social norms and moral norms?

**6.5 Legal norms**

**Q1.**

What is the main difference between social norms and legal norms?

**6.6 Why do norms emerge?**

**Q1**

Explain in your own words the concepts of “cooperation problems” and “coordination problems” and describe how these problems relate to the emergence of injunctive and descriptive norms. Use other relevant key terms from the book in your answer when applicable, and make sure to define any concepts you use in your explanation.

**Q2**

Can you give an example of a cooperation problem (not mentioned in the book)? Why is this a cooperation problem?

**Q3**

Consider the following (stylized) fact: doping in professional sports is quite common. Try to depict this outcome as a cooperation problem.

Q3a. Fill in both the happiness (‘payoffs’) and that of others in the table, on a scale from 0 (very unhappy) to 10 (very happy).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Athlete B** | |
|  |  | **Clean** | **Doping** |
| **Athlete A** | **Clean** | , | , |
|  | **Doping** | , | , |

*Note*: entries of each cell of a matrix represent the player’s payoffs, in this case happiness. The first number is the payoff for Athlete A, the second is the payoff of Athlete B.

Q3b. Explain the rationale behind the happiness scores (payoffs), for each of the four outcomes.

Q3c. What could be possible public goods in this scenario?

Q3d. Which strategy would be an instance of freeriding? Explain why.

Q3e. How could norms mitigate free-rider behavior? Can you give an example of such norms?

**Q4**

Can you give an example of a coordination problem (not mentioned in the book)? Why is this a coordination problem?

**Q5**

Suppose that a husband and wife have to decide what to do on a Sunday afternoon. The husband prefers to attend a soccer match, while the wife wants to go to a museum. Because they are having a small crisis in their relationship, both agree it is better to do something together rather than each going in another direction.

Q5a. Use the table below to present this situation (for example, take the happiness of husband and wife, on a scale from 0 to 10, for each outcome/cell). Can you predict what the husband and wife will do? If so, why not? Use the concept ‘dominant strategy’.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | Husband | |
| Museum | Soccermatch |
| Wife | Museum |  |  |
| Soccermatch |  |  |

Q5b. In what way can norms provide a solution to the issue raised by this situation?

**6.7 Cultural maladaptation and norm change**

**Q1.**

Unpopular norms are argued to be an example of cultural maladaptation. Explain in your own words what these concepts mean, and why this is the case.

**Q2.**

A norm that was once adaptive may turn into an unpopular norm after time. One of the possible ways through which this might happen is through cultural inertia. Why might the phenomenon of cultural inertia apply to immigrants?

**Q3.**

Suppose you want to do research into the influence of pluralistic ignorance on the existence of a norm in a certain group. Say that you study college binge drinking, and you think that this is an unpopular norm which only exists because of pluralistic ignorance. Come up with a set of questions you could ask students in this group, which allow you to test whether pluralistic ignorance is the reason that people follow the unpopular norm.

**Q4.**

Under what conditions can pluralistic ignorance evolve into a spiral of silence?

**Q5**

How do you greed someone? Handshake? Kiss? Bowing? In the textbook, it is mentioned that a greeting convention solves such coordination problem (6.6, p.197), and that it doesn’t matter which convention you use: all are equally good. However, the worldwide covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we greed. A norm that was once adaptive may turn into an unpopular norm after time, because of changing social conditions (6.7). Can you apply this idea to the way people greed each other, and the ‘payoffs’ resulting from the different outcomes? Present your answer in a table comparable to the one presented on p. 197, but now with covid-19 in mind.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | |  | |
|  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Advanced materials: Online Appendix:**

**Q1.**

The literature behind the emergence of norms incorporates insights from game theory. To further deepen your understanding of these processes, you can practice this online with a so-called ‘trust game’. For this, go to <https://ncase.me/trust/>. This webpage will guide you through multiple chapters, of which only the first few will be discussed here. If this has your interest, feel free to complete the story (approx. 30 minutes) or read the appendix for chapter 6.

Q1a. Play the first chapter, ‘The Game of Trust: One Game’. What is the dominant strategy in this instance? Why is this the dominant strategy?

Q1b. Now play the second chapter ‘The Game of Trust: Repeated Game’. Multiple characters are introduced here. Against which opponent(s) would freeriding be an option? Explain why.

Q1c. Which form of social control is exerted by the character ‘Grudger’? And which is exerted by ‘Copycat’? Which behavior gets sanctioned? Which of the two characters is more forgiving?