

Thinking about Social Phenomena

Constructing Puzzles



Lecture dt. Feb 3, 2020

Dressing for a job interview



Sleeping teacher



Funeral clothing



Norms

What is it?

Set of shared values; socially enforced expectations

Moral vs. social: universal vs. variable over societies

How are norms different from rules?

Consequences of action are uncertain

Jumping the divider



Moral norms examples

- Do not lie
- Treat everyone with respect
- Share equally
- Help others in distress
- Do not harm others

Unconditional: do not depend on how others behave;
proactive

Universal: do not vary across societies

Moral norms examples

Quasi-moral norms: *conditional on the presence or behaviour of other people; reactive*

- *I help X if I see someone helping X: forced altruism*
- *I litter if I see others doing the same*

Quasi-moral norms are triggered when I can observe what others are doing

Saving water



Action triggered by moral norm?

- *Unilateral*

Action triggered by quasi-moral norm?

- *Conditional on others doing it*

Depends on unilateral good-will

Social norms

Conditional, like quasi-moral norms, on the presence or behaviour of other people; reactive

Social norms are triggered when others can observe what I am doing

- Wear white clothes at a funeral (in some countries; black in others)
- Eat with your right hand (in some countries)
- Not renting out your house to ____ community (Black; Dalit; Muslim; Aborigine)

No desirable result; mandatory. Consequence of violation: uncertain

Saving water

Quasi-moral norms

Aggregate water consumption shown on TV

- *Others doing it, why shouldn't we?*

[my action depends on the action of others]

Social norms

Neighbours and visitors monitored usage

- *What if others disapprove of my behaviour?, e.g. 'why are you washing your car every day?'*

[my action depends on others observing me]

Puzzle for Thursday

I am a fair-skinned girl, who is good friends with a dark-skinned girl in my class. But I avoid her in front of other classmates.

Use emotions, actions, and social norms to explain the contradictory behaviour of the fair-skinned girl.

Readings

Elster, Jon (chapter 22, 'Social norms')