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HSS 280- Social Psychology

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Breaking Social Norms

There are many different social norms that I had thought about breaking for this assignment. I thought about sitting next to a stranger at the movie theater, which didn’t work because it was a fairly full theater, or talking loudly in the library, but then I realized that I was technically already breaking a social norm. In the swimming world, as you get closer to a championship meet, its customary to stop shaving your legs, and this is something that most of the girls on the swim team do. The reason is mostly mental, but when you get used to having longer leg hair while swimming, if feels like the water does not stick to you when you shave.

Usually, I am not uncomfortable with the fact that I have not shaved my legs in over a month, because it is something I have done for years. However, I normally have my legs completely covered because of how cold it gets here. I teach swim lessons over the weekend, and I am wearing a swimsuit for those rather than clothes, so my legs are more exposed than I am used to. This is when I get most self conscious about it, because I am around people who do not understand the swimming world.

I think I was most worried about what other people would think when they saw my leg hair, because I was totally comfortable on my own with it; it does not seem that weird of a concept, and in the swimming world, when you get closer to a big meet, its more of a social norm to stop shaving than it is to keep shaving. Most people do not react too much when they see someone who has not shaved their legs in a while. I think I mostly got some quick glances from the parents; just enough to make me feel a little bit uncomfortable.

As I said before, it really was not that difficult for me to actually break this social norm, because I have been exposed to it for so much of my life, I don’t think I ever really thought of this as breaking a social norm until after high school. What does feel weird though is that since this is my last year swimming, I don’t think I will be breaking this particular norm again, at least for a very long time. It feels even weirder to think that my swimming career is almost over, and something that has been a part of my life for almost 15 years is coming to an end, than it does to break this norm.