Assignment 3: Various Changes Over Time

The words “normal” and “abnormal” vary greatly with time. There are phenomena today that are considered normal but in the future they may become abnormal for many different reasons. On the other hand, there are behaviors that are considered abnormal in today’s society that may become normal in the near future. Generally, normality is measured using the statistical perspective, because it is categorized as what majorities of people do. Other perspectives of normality include cultural and evolutionary.

Obesity is one phenomenon that is very common in today’s society. It has become the “normal” because according to the statistical view “two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese” (“Is Fat the New Normal?”). Obesity is a big health concern because it can lead to many medical problems. It is “normal” in today’s society because of unhealthy eating habits, larger food portions, and sedentary lifestyles. With the wide range of food options available, humans have a natural drive to go towards the unhealthy food choices because it tastes better. In addition, many fast food restaurants have started giving larger food portions in one serving, which leads to people eating more than they would otherwise have. With the modern lifestyle, many women are employed and working so they usually do not provide home cooked meals for themselves or their families and so more people tend to order from restaurants. Fast food restaurants are usually cheaper than many other places, which lead to the majority of people eating unhealthy food. Lastly, over time Americans have become lazy and prefer relaxing and sitting at home watching TV rather than being active and exercising. These habits have contributed to the normality of obesity in today’s society.

In the future, I believe that obesity will become abnormal because of the evolutionary perspective and the cultural perspective. From the cultural point of view, society still has a thin body ideal because if we look at the show *The Biggest Loser* it promotes a lean and slender figure. According to Abigail Saguy, “The show’s premise is that anyone can be thin if they work hard at it.” Many forms of media promote a thin figure that is associated with beauty and encourage society to become thin and healthy. Magazines promote thinness and dieting all throughout by providing tips on healthy eating habits, exercising tips, and shows images of the perfect body type. In addition, since society is becoming aware of the obesity problem, they are beginning to teach the population on ways to avoid overeating. For example, many books and TV shows have been published that provide information on being and staying healthy. Schools are making students take a mandatory health class that allows students to learn about eating healthy. Some schools even ban certain food items because they are too unhealthy. Thus, with individuals learning about the risks and dangers of obesity, and society promoting thinness, I believe that obesity will become abnormal soon in the future. I predict that in the next 15-20 years from now obesity will no longer be the “norm.”

Next, according to the evolutionary perspective, obesity will also become abnormal because it leads to many medical problems. Studies show how obesity and overeating have lead to higher increases in the risks of stroke, diabetes, heart disease, and many other medical conditions. Other studies show how obese pregnant woman are more likely to have overweight babies. This many times leads the children to become obese in their adulthood too. In addition, obese pregnant women also have an increased risk of having miscarriages and a Cesarean Section. Obesity should become abnormal because it impairs a person’s ability to survive and reproduce. With all these medical problems associated with obesity, humans will start taking better care of him/herself and strive for a healthier body. This will lead to obesity becoming abnormal in future from the evolutionary perspective.

If this change becomes abnormal, this will be very beneficial to society because obesity is a problem that needs to be eradicated. Since there are many health risks associated with it, I believe that the change from normality to abnormality of obesity will be a good thing. These changes will be beneficial universally because it will reduce many health risks and promote healthy eating habits. Furthermore, this transformation will be great for society, as long as individuals do not get too carried away in dieting and excessively exercising, which can lead to under eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Moreover, other phenomenon’s change from abnormal to normal. For example, having a stay-at-home dad is considered abnormal. History proves how women are usually the ones who stay at home to take care of the kids and home. Seeing a man who stays at home is quite unusual and not common. From a cultural perspective, the man is usually seen to be the moneymaker of the family while the woman is generally seen as the caretaker who usually stays at home. Many times if a stay at home dad says that he does not work, society will frown upon that while for a woman it is easily accepted. According to the U.S Census, in 2013 there are only about 214,000 stay at home dads. A stay at home dad is characterized as one that is not in the labor force, not looking for work, and one whose wife is in the labor force. This statistic shows a very small percentage of dads stay at home to raise their kids.

In the future, I think stay at home dads will become more normal, because the number of dads staying at home is increasing steadily throughout the years. For example in 2000 there were about 93,000 stay at home dads and every year that number has slowly increased to approximately 214,000 in the last year. Since woman are going to college, getting their masters or doctorates, and taking a more active role in the workplace, they are changing the common role for mothers. Women are generally having kids later in their age nowadays, since most woman wish to work and have a stable career for themselves. The workforce is becoming equal in respect to genders, and so in the future more dads will stay at home if their wife has a good job. The economy also factors into this because there is a limited number of jobs, some dads who have become unemployed choose to stay at home to take care of their kids in order to save money by not having to pay for day-care services. Overall, from the statistical perspective the number of stay home dads will raise making it a normal.

In addition, from a cultural perspective many men are becoming comfortable being the less-dominant person in the household. The male-dominant ego is slowly diminishing in males and so they are perfectly okay with being at home. According to Clay Parker “only recently has society begun to soften its barriers against men and women assuming non-traditional roles at home or in the workplace.” Society is slowly going to accept the new role more men are choosing to pursue in their family lives. In the next 25-50 years, stay at home dads will become a normal phenomenon and will not be frowned upon.

This change can be a good thing or a bad thing depending on whose perspective the change is viewed upon from. If there are more stay-at-home dads the type of upbringing a child receives might be very different from the one he would have had from a mother. This upbringing can be a positive or negative change depending on how the majority of fathers do. It all depends on the person. This change can be a good thing for women who always wanted to have a family and be a full time worker. This will allow those women to accomplish their dreams while being able to give their children the proper upbringing. Furthermore as a woman, I think this change will be a good thing because it diminishes the gender roles that have been laid upon by society for many years. This change will slowly allow both men and women to be able to choose what they wish to do in respect of their careers and families. From a man’s point of view, this change is also good because it allows dads to be open and comfortable about their lifestyle choice. Soon enough men will be accepted for choosing to stay at home and raise the kids.

These are just two phenomenon’ that show how normality changes over time. Changes like these have happened all throughout history and are continuing to happen. Normality is a concept that will always be changing.

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