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symbols convey specific meanings. The English language uses a combination of twenty-six letters to create words. These twenty-six letters make up over 600,000 recognized words (OED Online, 2011). We can compare the reliance on tone and inflection to Mandarin Chinese. It contains over 8,000 characters, but the same character may symbolize different concepts depending on the tone used.

English today contains an English and French version for the same concept. For example, in the English version, one eats, but in French version, one dines. In the English version, we meet someone. In the French version, we encounter someone. Readers of American English may be surprised by the inclusion of a 'u' in some spellings of words like 'behaviour' or 'flavour.' Americans have dropped that 'u' that writers of British English include. Billions of people speak English, and there are almost as many pronunciations of it. Rules for speaking and writing vary even within cultures, most notably by region. Do you eat a grinder, a sub, or a hero/gyro? Do you refer to a can of carbonated liquid as 'soda' or 'pop'? Is a household entertainment room a "family room," "rec room," or "den"?

When leaving a restaurant, do you ask your server for a "check," the "ticket," or your "bill?" Language is constantly evolving and adding new words as societies create new ideas. In this age of technology, many cultures have adapted almost instantly to new nouns such as "e-mail" and "Internet," and verbs such as "downloading," "texting," and "blogging." These would have considered nonsensical words just the world twenty-five years ago. Even while it constantly evolves, language shapes our perception of reality and our behavior. In the 1920s, linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf advanced this idea which became known as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or linguistic relativity. It is based on the idea that people experience their world through their language, and therefore understand their world through the cultural meanings embedded in their language. The hypothesis suggests that language shapes thought and thus behavior (Swoyer, 2003). For example, words have attached meanings beyond their definition that can influence thought and behavior. In the U.S. where the number thirteen is associated with bad luck, many high-rise buildings do not have a 13th floor. In Japan, however, the number four is considered unlucky since it is pronounced similarly to the Japanese word for "death." Many sociologists believe that language can have a broad and lasting impact on perception.

In 2002, Lera Boroditsky and her colleagues conducted experiments with native German and Spanish speakers in English. Unlike English, these languages assign gender to nouns. The researchers asked participants to make judgments about the words for moon, der Mond, is masculine, and for sun, die Sonne, is feminine. They found that German speakers used more masculine adjectives, while Spanish speakers used the adjectives, golden, intricate, little, lovely, shiny, and tiny. The team concluded that gender perceptions acquired in a person's native language carry forward to how they see the world even when they switch to a language without grammatical genders (Boroditsky, Schmidt, and Phillips, 2002). Some sociologists also believe the structure of language can have consequences on both individual and group behavior. For example, a series of studies have found that Finland has a significantly higher rate of workplace accidents than Sweden despite the fact that the languages have similar workplace regulations (Salminen & Johansson, 2000). John A. Lucy explained this discrepancy through differences in the structure of these languages. Swedish places a greater emphasis on the timing of movement in three-dimensional space. Consequently, Lucy argued, the Swedish factories are physically arranged in a manner that supports the smooth running of the product process. Finnish factories experience frequent disruptions, so that workers must rush and have more accidents (Lucy, 1997). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been interpreted to suggest that if a word does not exist in a language, then users of that language cannot have the experience. Studies have shown, for instance, that unless people have access to the word "ambivalent," they don't recognize having conflicting positive and negative feelings about an issue as "ambivalence." However, the hypothesis should not suggest that people do not have conflicting feelings but rather that they interpret the feelings differently. In addition to using spoken language, people communicate without words. Nonverbal communication is symbolic, and, as in the case of language, is learned through one's culture. Some gestures are nearly universal; some are not. Smiles often indicate positive reinforcement in the U.S., whereas in some cultures it is rude as you do not know the person. A thumbs-up in Russia and Australia is an offensive curse (Passero, 2002). Other gestures vary in meaning depending on the situation and the person. A wave of the hand can mean many things, depending on how it's done and for whom. It may mean "hello," "goodbye," "no thank you," or "I'm royalty." Winks convey a variety of messages, including "We have a secret," "I'm only kidding," or "I'm attracted to you." From a distance, a person may "read" the emotional situation of people just by watching their body language and facial expressions. However, many cultures communicate with lots of physicality, which people outside that culture may interpret as an argument. So, for example, you might believe two people are arguing when, in fact, they are simply having a regular conversation. When she was six, Lucy and her family immigrated to the United States and attended a school that allowed for the use of both English and Spanish. Lucy's teacher and many staff were bilingual (fluent in English and Spanish), and the district offered books in both languages. While she was being driven to learn English, the dual-language option helped to ensure that she did not become lost and get behind in her learning of all subjects. Having math, science, and computing taught in both languages helped her understand those concepts and skills. Within two years of enrolling in the school, Lucy was getting nearly all of her instruction in English, and rarely used the Spanish-language books or resources. While she still had trouble with some intricacies of English, her math progress was above grade level and she did well in other subjects as well. Some people might believe that Lucy would have learned faster had she been instructed only in English. But research indicates that is not the case.

Johns Hopkins University researchers conducted a series of studies on the effects of bilingual education across multiple subjects (Slavin et al. 2008). They found that students taught in both their native tongue and English make better progress than those taught only in English. Legally, the U.S. has no official language. But many believe English to be the rightful language of the U.S., and over thirty states have passed laws specifying English as their official tongue.

Proponents of English-only laws suggest that a national ruling will save money on translation, printing, and human resource costs, including funding for bilingual teachers. They argue that setting English as the official language will encourage non-English speakers to learn English faster and adapt to the culture of the U.S. more easily (Mount 2010). Groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) oppose making English the official language and claim that it violates the rights of non-English speakers. English-only laws, they believe, deny the reality of our nation's diversity and unfairly target non-English speakers. They point to the fact that much of the debate on this topic has risen since 1970, a period during which the U.S. has experienced new waves of immigration from Asia and Mexico. Today, a lot of product information gets written in multiple languages. Enter a store like Home Depot and you'll find signs in both English and Spanish. Buy a children's product and the safety warnings could be presented in multiple languages. While marketers are financially motivated to reach the largest number of consumers possible, this trend also may help people become accustomed to a culture of bilingualism. Studies show that most US immigrants eventually abandon their native tongues and become fluent in English. Bilingual education helps with that transition. Today, Lucy is an ambitious and high-achieving college student. Fluent in both English and Spanish, Lucy is studying law enforcement—a field that seeks bilingual employees. The same bilingualism that contributed to her success in grade school will help her thrive professionally as a law officer serving her community. Figure 3.7 Many signs—on streets and in stores—include both English and Spanish. What effect does this have on members of society? What effect does it have on our culture? (Credit: istolethetv/flickr) Shanell Sanchez Assignment: We rely on informal social control to influence people's behavior, such as giving the stink eye, cold shoulder, or correcting someone's behavior in order to ensure people conform. Think about a time when a parent, guardian, coach, employer, or teacher (agents of social control) used informal social control to respond to your behavior. What did the agent of informal social control do? Provide an example of when informal social control was applied to another person. What were they doing and how was their behavior controlled through informal social control? Example: Talking on the phone with a work-related matter and kids start bickering over the slime. I am unable to put the phone down, so I relied on hand motions to show them it was unacceptable. There was no need to hang up or say anything at all. The eye actions indicated they were acting inappropriate and their behavior changed. Norms can be internalized, which would make an individual conform without external rewards or punishments. There are four types of social norms that can help inform people about behavior that is considered acceptable: folkways, mores, taboos, and law. Further, social norms can vary across time, cultures, places, and even sub-group. Think back to your first experiences in school and surely you can identify some folkways and mores learned.

Folkways are behaviors that are learned and shared by a social group that are not morally significant, but they can be important for social acceptance. Each group can develop different customs, but there can be customs that are embraced at a larger, societal level. Imagine sitting in the college classroom with sixty other people around. As a professor who teaches early morning classes, it is always encouraged to eat if hungry. However, everyone must be considerate of those around them. You should not chew loudly. That would be considered rude, and it is against class "customs" to do so. To make it worse, imagine burping without saying "excuse me." These would be folkway violations. Remember, this may not be disrespectful in all cultures, and it is very subjective. Perhaps stricter than folkways are more because they can lead to a violation of what we view as moral and ethical behavior. Mores are norms of morality, or right and wrong, and if you break one it is often considered offensive to most people of a culture. Sometimes a more violation can also be illegal, but other times it can just be offensive. If more is not written down in legislation, it cannot get sanctioned by the criminal justice system. Other times it can be both illegal and morally wrong. If one attended a funeral for a family member, no one would expect to see someone in bright pink clothes or a bikini. Most people are encouraged to wear black clothing out of respect. Although there may not be specific rules or laws that state the expected attire to wear to a funeral, it would be against what most of American society views as right and wrong to attend a funeral in a bikini or be in hot pink leotards. It would be disrespectful to the individual people are mourning. Both mores and folkways are taught through socialization with various sources: family, friends, peers, schools, and more. A taboo goes a step further and is a very negative norm that should not get violated because people will be upset. Additionally, one may get excluded from the group or society. The nature and the degree of the taboo are in the mores.

A student once gave the example of a man in their neighborhood in Colorado that had multiple wives and also had ten different children from the women. In most of American culture, it is seen as unacceptable to have more than one spouse/partner. However, there are instances where having children with multiple people would not be seen as taboo. Specifically, if a man or woman remarries and then has another child with their new partner. However, again, this is more acceptable today than in the past because of the greater societal acceptance of divorce and remarriage. If one is religious think of something taboo in that specific religion? How about a sports team in college? Band? Any ideas? Lastly, and most important to the study of crime and criminal justice, our laws. Remember, a social norm is an obligation to society that can lead to sanctions if one violates them.

Therefore, laws are social norms that have become formalized at the state or federal level, and can laws can result in formal punishment for violations, such as fines, incarceration, or even death. Laws are a form of social control that outlines rules, habits, and customs a society uses to enforce conformity to its norms. Let us go back to our example of having multiple wives for a moment. It is illegal, a violation of law, to have multiple wives in American culture. It has not always been this way, and it is not true in every country, but in the United States, it was viewed as so taboo, morally and ethically wrong, that there are laws that can punish people for marrying more than one person at a time. However, it may be true that it is not that it is a taboo in all groups, but regardless, it is still illegal. The following link is for Oregon statute ORS 163.515 Bigamy. Remember our previous discussion on being the new person to Oregon and trying to figure out if it is allowed to be nude at an ultimate frisbee practice, but they do not feel morally or ethically wrong. The first thing one may do is go home and look up some rules and see if they are violating ultimate frisbee rules. Next, one may check out Oregon laws governing clothing to see if they are violating laws by being nude. In the end, one finds out that it is not "illegal," so you cannot call the cops, but you certainly did find a case in Eugene, Oregon that determined not wearing clothes can be a violation of rules on the college campus. However, this is a recreational league, and it does not appear to have any formal rules established. No one has to make a decision that is hard: Does one want to be part of a subculture that endorses nudity? Does this go against one's morals and ethics? Alternatively, is one willing to be part of the team and encourage acceptance of a new norm? The criminal justice system cannot act for merely to violate norms, but at times, what feels like a norm can lead to criminal justice involvement. For example, walk a town or city, and many may be found jaywalking because it may be safer, faster, or more accessible.

A person can get a ticket for it in most communities because it is technically violating a law. That is the thing with the line between deviance, rule violations, and criminality—it does not allow mean we agree. There are many examples of laws that are not deviant and things that are deviant some subcultures may wish to be illegal. Most, but not all crimes are deviant, and not all deviant acts are criminal. The question then becomes: well, how then do we as a society decide who does and does not have the opportunity to make law?

Jaywalking