The Handbook of White-Collar Crime
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The Handbook of White-Collar Crime

Edited by

Melissa L. Rorie

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Preface

Melissa L. Rorie

Philosopher Thomas Reid once wrote:

There is no greater impediment to the advancement of knowledge than the ambiguity of words. To this chiefly it is owing that we find sects and parties in most branches of science, and disputes, which are carried on from age to age, without being brought to an issue. (Reid et al. 1850, p. 1)

This quote succinctly encapsulates the motivation for organizing the *Handbook of White-Collar Crime* in its current form. White-collar criminology has struggled with conceptualizing its primary outcome of interest since Sutherland coined the term “white-collar crime” in 1939. Ultimately, I believe that a failure to define any concept results in confusion surrounding how best to observe, record, understand, and improve that concept. This struggle is not unique to white-collar crime, but the failure to clearly conceptualize the term has – in my humble opinion – stymied research and practice in this domain.

Definitional ambiguity means that the behaviors considered “white-collar crimes” by one person likely differ from another person’s imagery of the term. In other words, if people consider white-collar crime to be “… a violation of criminal law by a person of the upper socio-economic class in the course of his occupational activities” (Sutherland 1941, p. 112), their recommendations for researching and preventing such crimes will diverge from proposals by someone who defines such crimes as “… an illegal act or series of illegal acts committed by nonphysical means and by concealment or guile, to obtain money or property, to avoid the payment or loss of money or property, or to obtain business or personal advantage” (Edelhertz 1970, p. 3). Adhering to the first definition would promote closer monitoring and enforcement of behaviors by the elites in society, while following the second definition would motivate the examination of common property crimes like credit card fraud or welfare fraud as well as upperworld business frauds. Some argue that the powerful in society use the latter (offense-based) type of definition to their advantage; social control agents tout their efforts to combat white-collar crime, yet such efforts have primarily targeted low-level individuals and fail to address systemic violations and their widespread harms (Pontell 2016). Others argue that prioritizing an offender’s status constitutes “antimiddle-class bias” and widens the criminological net to include immoral but not necessarily illegal behaviors (Toby 1979, pp. 519–520). Ultimately,
in failing to decide what the focus should be, white-collar criminologists risk being ineffective in their recommendations for research and policy.

This handbook covers the usual topics found in discussions of white-collar crime – who the offenders are, who the victims are, how we punish these crimes, theoretical explanations, etc. However, most of the authors were encouraged to think about how the “usual” understanding of these topics is impacted by one's conceptualization of white-collar crime, using Friedrichs's (1992) typology (described in more detail in the following chapters) to delineate such knowledge. As reviewed early in the book, criminologists have spent the past 75 years or so debating about the most appropriate definition, but far less time has been dedicated to thinking about how the choice of one definition over another affects the knowledge that we have. As demonstrated in a recent meta-analysis on corporate crime deterrence (Rorie et al. 2018), the way one conceptualizes these crimes (not surprisingly) impacts the measurement choices one makes. Measurement decisions, in turn, obviously have implications for one's findings and conclusions. Failing to find common ground on a definition means that disparate findings will continue to impede knowledge building. Breaking down crimes into different categories is a great first step, but even within those categories there are a wide variety of behaviors that constitute the domain of interest.

In addition to examining definitional issues, the current handbook is unique for a few other reasons. First, I specifically sought out non-Western perspectives on white-collar crime. In fact, in the section comprising international perspectives, research from all continents outside of Antarctica is discussed. There is also a chapter discussing the need for more comparative research on the topic. Second, I recruited a diverse group of authors with regards to career trajectory. There are world-renowned experts in the field as well as relatively new voices making contributions to this handbook. Third, the last section of this handbook discusses emerging topics in the field. By including this section, I hoped to orient future research endeavors toward “urgent matters” in the current political and social climate. Finally, the authors were encouraged to avoid jargon and make the book approachable for more junior scholars; that said, the topics addressed throughout make great contributions to the white-collar crime canon and are relevant to scholars at all stages of their careers.

I sincerely hope that this book’s approach further encourages an appreciation for the role of conceptualization in white-collar crime scholarship. I am incredibly indebted to the scholars who have written extensively on this topic beforehand – some agreeing that definitional ambiguity is a hindrance, others arguing that it is not problematic. These scholars stimulated my interest in definitional issues, in addition to impressing upon me the importance of studying these crimes more generally. Sally S. Simpson, David O. Friedrichs, John Braithwaite, Michael L. Benson, Wim Huisman, Mark A. Cohen, and Judith van Erp are some of the primary names that come to mind, although I’m sure I’m missing quite a few people. I’d also like to acknowledge the chapter authors, all of whom accepted my suggestions with aplomb and worked incredibly hard to achieve the primary objectives of the book. I’d like to recognize some of my “early-career” peers and University of Maryland colleagues (many of whom are chapter authors) for providing such great support throughout the years – Karin van Wingerde, Jay P. Kennedy, Aleksandra Jordanoska, Natalie Schell-Busey, Carole Gibbs, and Nicholas Lord. It has been wonderful to work with all of you, both formally and informally. Finally, I am so grateful to the series editor, Charles Wellford, who gave me the chance to work on this volume and provided invaluable guidance throughout the process. I have learned a tremendous amount and have met many incredible scholars, all of whom share a passion for research and practice that is unparalleled.
References


The White-Collar Crime Concept

In 1939 (published in 1940), Edwin Sutherland used his speech to the American Sociological Society to focus on crimes by upper-status offenders, bringing these crimes front and center in sociological and criminological research. He called such offending “white-collar crime” and – through such a concise, descriptive catchphrase – coalesced the sentiments of himself and others (e.g. Charles Henderson, E.A. Ross, muckrakers; see Geis 2016) that crimes are not simply the territory of the poor and disenfranchised. He later elaborated on the term in his 1949 book titled *White-Collar Crime* by defining it as “crime by a person of high social status and respectability in the course of his occupation.” He could not have predicted the everlasting impact of his word choice and his attempts to illustrate the types of crimes that fall under the purview of white-collar offender (Geis 2016). Sutherland’s decision to focus on the characteristics (i.e. status) of the offender and his use of regulatory, civil, and criminal corporate violations as the primary empirical support for his main points created fundamental schisms in scholarship that remain present, even 80 years after he coined the term.

Historical reviews of the definitional debates in this domain are provided in Section I of this handbook as well as elsewhere (see, e.g., Coleman 2005; Kramer 1984; Simpson 2013; Shover and Cullen 2008), but here it is important to note that white-collar crime can be thought of as an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of behaviors. Of most import for this volume, David O. Friedrichs (1992) developed a typology of white-collar offending in which violations can be classified as Corporate Crime, Occupational Crime, Governmental Crime, State-Corporate Crime, and “Residual” forms of white-collar crime (Friedrichs 2009). Much more detail on these is provided in his chapter in this volume (Chapter 2), but it is likely obvious from the Table of Contents that the current volume uses his approach as a framework for discussing the impact of definitional ambiguity. That said, one conspicuous variation in Friedrichs’s scholarship and others’ (including the present author’s) is that he omits the hyphen when employing the term “white collar crime.” As he states (2009, xxviii), the use of the hyphen “… suggests too literal a reading of the term, which is better thought of as a metaphor.” He also notes, however, that even Sutherland was inconsistent in the use of that punctuation mark.
The Need to Move Beyond Debating What We Mean and Examine How It Impacts What We Know

After decades of deliberation, white-collar crime scholars generally seem to have resigned themselves to choosing which definition or type of white-collar crime best fits each specific research question or study they are working on at the time. This is problematic because allowing scholars to simply pick which definition serves their specific purpose at one point in time removes the motivation to look critically at how definitional ambiguity impacts our ability to build knowledge about these unique offenses. One study of white-collar crime is likely to look very different from another study of white-collar crime because definitional choices impact the types of samples a researcher wants to study, the types of data a researcher needs to test their research questions, and ultimately the findings of their research endeavor (Rorie et al. 2018). For example, the Yale Studies on White-Collar Crime in the 1970s (see, e.g., Mann 1985; Shapiro 1987; Weisburd et al. 1995, 2001; Wheeler et al. 1988) relied on “offense-based” definitions that reflected their use of existing criminal justice data and criminal justice actors (see also Edelhertz 1970; Edelhertz and Overcast 1982). In taking an “offense-based” approach (similar to what Shover and Cullen have called a “Patrician” approach) that adheres to existing law enforcement agencies’ definitions of crime, scholars argue that those research efforts “trivialize” white-collar crimes and its impacts (Pontell 2016), ignore why certain behaviors (especially those of “elites” in society) are criminalized while others are not, and neglect the public opinion research indicating that citizens view white-collar crimes to be as serious as more traditional crimes (Shover and Cullen 2008). On the other hand, scholars in the “Populist” camp using mainly “offender-based” definitions tend to study crimes by entities seen as “respectable” in larger society, argue that people need to think about behaviors beyond those of focus to law enforcement agencies, and emphasize the public’s desire to see white-collar crimes punished to the same extent as harmful traditional crimes (Shover and Cullen 2008). To the extent that a scholar’s research questions are guided by their fundamental beliefs about the criminalization of behaviors, governmental capture by powerful interests, and the appropriate scope of criminological research, so too do these beliefs guide their choice of a white-collar crime definition.

To that end, current white-collar crime research papers generally begin with a description of what they mean by the term, but the authors of those manuscripts all too often fail to elaborate on how their definition impacted data collection efforts, analytical decisions, and – ultimately – their findings and conclusions (see Rorie et al. 2018). Furthermore, there is little discussion in the discipline as a whole about the impact of definitional ambiguity on research and knowledge building. If we continue to see the definition of white-collar crime simply as a choice made by the authors, we will be unable to build a body of science that meaningfully informs policy and theory – it is hard to prevent crime if you are unsure what crime it is that you are looking for. Specifically, Simpson (2019) notes that how we define white-collar crime impacts: how we think about it (e.g. the Patrician/Populist conflict discussed above); what we know about white-collar offenders’ experiences in justice systems (e.g. Galvin 2018); what we know about how best to prevent or deter white-collar crime (Rorie et al. 2018); and – ultimately – the perceived urgency to make data accessible on all white-collar crimes beyond those listed in the Uniform Crime Reports. Thus, as part of an overview of the discipline, this handbook examines how the types of crime and/or offenders included in one’s definition might impact typical topics in the white-collar crime domain. Specifically, we detail how failing to clearly conceptualize white-collar crime creates vagueness
in our knowledge of who commits crime, who is victimized by such crimes, and what we can do about them. In addition, we include an international perspective (with chapters focused on white-collar crime research in six continents) and examine “emerging issues” in the field.

We are both broad in scope and specific in this volume. We compile the major research topics in white-collar crime scholarship in one place while also encouraging some definitional clarity to the term “white-collar crime” by distinguishing between the four main types of crimes (occupational, corporate, government, state-corporate) falling under Friedrichs’s (2009) typology. There are other types of white-collar crimes, of course (see Black 2005; Brody and Kiehl 2010; Edelhertz 1970; Friedrichs 2017; Green 1990), but those are the four categories that seem to appear most often in the literature. The handbook provides an overview of the primary issues involved in understanding and teaching on the topic of white-collar crime. Topics covered in this handbook include the origins of white-collar crime study, definitional ambiguity surrounding the term white-collar crime, complications in research and measurement, the extent and harm caused by such crimes, who the offenders and victims are, theories of offending, prevention and intervention strategies, the study of white-collar crime internationally, and emerging issues in this field. What is unique about this volume, however, is that it encourages readers to think about important differences between those four types of white-collar crimes mentioned above.

This handbook provides a “one-stop shop” for readers who want an overview of research on white-collar crime. As such, a variety of perspectives and types of offending are represented here throughout. Specifically, we elicited chapters from authors relatively new to the field (as well as those firmly established as experts), located in countries around the world, and with different areas of expertise. We believe such a broad overview of the field can serve a variety of purposes. Although the authors almost exclusively hail from academia, they were charged with writing these chapters to be approachable for undergraduate students, practitioners, and the public – but to also contain information relevant for advanced academic scholars. It is our hope, therefore, that a wide variety of people and purposes are served by this book.

The Outline of the Book

The book is separated into six different sections. In Section I, three chapters provide a broad overview of white-collar crime and its study, introducing the reader to the origins of the field, the theme of definitional ambiguity, and the unique obstacles white-collar crime researchers face. In Chapter 1, Aleksandra Jordanoska and Isabel Schoultz discuss the importance of Edwin Sutherland’s work in carving out the white-collar crime niche and his criticisms of the young field of criminology. They also detail the enduring nature of his influence, drawing on their recent survey of current white-collar crime scholars who were asked about how Sutherland continues to influence criminology decades after his passing. Chapter 2 provides the template for the book’s attention to definitional issues – in this chapter, David O. Friedrichs reviews his well-known typology of white-collar and corporate crimes, as well as the various motives driving scholars’ choice of terms. He ultimately concludes that an attempt to derive a single definition is in vain – researchers would be best served by choosing the term that serves their purposes, while students of white-collar crime research must be cautious when consuming scholarship. In Chapter 3, April Wall-Parker discusses the difficulties facing white-collar crime researchers, including the definitional
ambiguity of the term as well as the lack of a systematic database. She provides many alternative data sources that might be fruitful for studying specific types of crimes but concludes that definitional ambiguity will continue to hurt data collection efforts and stymie policymaking.

Section II reviews what is known about the harms caused by white-collar crime, broken down by specific crime types. Petter Gottschalk discusses the harms caused by occupational crime in Chapter 4, paying special attention to cases in the Netherlands and explaining victimization using his “Convenience Theory.” In Chapter 5, Gabrio Forti and Arianna Visconti discuss the multifaceted nature of corporate crime victimization, detailing how corporate harms feed back into various nodes (e.g. social inequality, social morale, social disorganization) and emphasizing the interrelated nature of structural elements of society with corporate criminality. In Chapter 6, Dawn L. Rothe and Corina Medley discuss the harms caused by crimes of the powerful, including malfeasance by state actors as well as state-corporate crimes. They offer a critique of the terms “state crime” and “state-corporate crime,” noting that the relationships between the state, corporations, and consumers themselves are overlooked when creating typological definitions.

Section III moves our attention from victimization to offending, reviewing the literature describing white-collar offenders. Much previous research acknowledges that the demographics of offenders vary by the type of white-collar crime being studied (Klenowski and Dodson 2016; Weisburd et al. 2001); the chapters here elaborate on those differences. In Chapter 7, Michael L. Benson and Hei Lam Chio discuss what is known about the demographics of occupational offenders, using federal crime statistics. They find that demographic correlates for occupational offending have changed since the Yale Studies, and the criminal careers of these offenders are surprising. Mary Dodge describes corporate crime offenders in Chapter 8. She outlines major definitional and methodological obstacles in identifying who is responsible for these crimes, ultimately relying on case studies to explore offending motivations and potential prevention strategies. Ignasi Bernat and David Whyte attend to the individuals and organizations who commit state and state-corporate crimes in Chapter 9. They begin with a review of the history of state involvement in criminal enterprises as well as the use of such illegitimate organizations by states for their own “defense” purposes. They then review the state crime and state-corporate crime literature, but – like Rothe and Medley in Chapter 6 – argue that we must not oversimplify the nature of the private–public relationship. Bernat and Whyte posit that we must look beyond those obvious moments (i.e. crises) signifying that the relationship has gone wrong; we must instead recognize that corporate crimes are part of the normal business routines and relationships that flourish in state-sponsored capitalist economies. Of course, it must also be recognized that legitimate organizations (e.g. corporations and governments) continue to be complicit (if not directly involved) in crimes by illegitimate organizations (e.g. gangs or cartels). Wim Huisman discusses those relationships in Chapter 10, highlighting the “conceptual conflation” surrounding the study of corporate crime and organized crime as well as articulating the similarities and differences of the two research domains.

Also in Section III, we provide an overview of many theories explaining why white-collar crime occurs. As opposed to explicitly differentiating by types of crime, Chapters 11–13 instead break theories down by the unit of analysis. Chapter 11, by Rachel E. Severson, Zachary H. Kodatt, and George W. Burruss, focuses on individual-level theories. They note that most theories at this level purport to explain both “traditional crimes” and white-collar crimes, and emphasize how definitional ambiguity and data limitations in the study of white-collar crime hamper our ability to establish the explanatory power of any theory. In
Chapter 12, Jay P. Kennedy reviews organizational and macro-level theories, emphasizing the importance of cross-level approaches and noting how globalization will impact our thinking on the reasons that corporations offend. Our final chapter on theories, by Fiona Chan and Carole Gibbs, elaborates on the primacy of cross-level theories in their discussion of theoretical integrations in the white-collar crime domain. In addition to the prevalence of cross-level integrations, they note that most integrated theories rely on rational choice and opportunity perspectives.

After the section explaining what we know about why white-collar crimes happen and who is responsible, a logical next step is thinking through how we prevent and punish such crimes. Section IV begins with a chapter by Francis T. Cullen, Cecilia Chouhy, and Cheryl Lero Jonson that examines how the general public perceives white-collar crimes, particularly in relation to traditional crimes. They also discuss what little is known about how the public perceives specific types of white-collar crimes. After that, Chapters 15–17 examine the prevention and intervention of white-collar crimes by various parties. Benjamin van Rooij and Adam Fine discuss how companies prevent noncompliance on the part of their employees in Chapter 15. Nicholas Lord and Karin van Wingerde discuss formal law enforcement efforts in Chapter 16, while in Chapter 17 Angela Francis and Nicholas Ryder talk about regulatory agencies and their roles/actions in the global financial meltdown of 2008. Chapters 18–20 discuss prosecution and punishment of both individual and corporate offenders. Ronald G. Burns and Michele Bisaccia Meitl review the literature on the prosecution, defense, and sentencing of white-collar crimes broadly in Chapter 18. They note how specialized prosecution and defense is in this area of law, while the judgment of white-collar offenders is often controversial. In Chapter 19, Ben Hunter reviews the scant literature on how individual white-collar offenders experience incarceration, especially the shock they experience upon entry into the correctional system and the role of shaming. Finally in Section IV, Mark A. Cohen discusses more specifically the punishment of corporate entities.

In addition to examining how definitional variation impacts the broad topics common to all books about white-collar crime, we felt that a more inclusive international perspective is very much needed in the contemporary white-collar crime literature. To that end, the seven chapters in Section V come from authors from every continent except for Antarctica – including often-neglected regions like Africa and Central/South America. Some of the chapters are reviews of the literature in their specific regions while other chapters examine a specific white-collar crime in that region.

In Chapter 21, Christian Walburg examines white-collar crime scholarship in Europe, beginning with a historical overview and concluding with recent issues and debates affecting such research. We then move to Asia in Chapter 22, where Henry N. Pontell, Adam K. Ghazi-Tehrani, and Bryan Burton discuss the reasons why white-collar crime flourishes in the People's Republic of China. They focus on the unique political structure and cultural norms associated with corruption in that country, but also discuss other types of crime occurring there. In Chapter 23, Diego Zysman-Quirós offers a compelling description of the “Laundry Room” investigation into South America’s largest corruption case – one that spanned many borders beyond that continent. In Chapter 24, Miranda A. Galvin and Sally S. Simpson update the seminal Yale Studies on White-Collar Crime as an example of North American white-collar crime research, while in Chapter 25 Ifeanyi Ezeonu critically examines the corporate appropriation of resources in the Nigeria Delta as an example of research in the emerging domain of “Market Criminology”. Our last regionally specific chapter
comes from Arie Freiberg in Chapter 26, who concisely reviews the voluminous work done by Australian white-collar crime scholars. Section V concludes with Tomomi Kawasaki’s review of comparative studies, where he emphasizes the strengths of this methodology through a review of both domestic studies set outside of the United States and research explicitly using a comparative approach.

In the final section of the book, Section VI, we examine emerging issues in the white-collar crime research domain – those contemporary social and cultural changes that are likely to dramatically change how we look at white-collar crime. In Chapter 28, Tom J. Holt and Jay P. Kennedy take a close look at how rapidly changing and advancing technologies impact the commission of white-collar crimes as well as how such technologies help us prevent and punish such crimes. Karin van Wingerde and Nicholas Lord tackle the impact of globalization on white-collar crime in Chapter 29. Using three case studies on corporate tax evasion, corporate bribery, and illegal waste disposal, the authors detail how globalization has complicated efforts to regulate and enforce crimes committed in the pursuit of profit. Finally, Chapter 30, by Steven Bittle and Jasmine Hébert, discusses the particularly timely topic of de-regulation and re-regulation, discussing how it affects the control of white-collar crime. They describe how definitions of corporate crime impact how we think about and respond to such crimes, conclude that citizens’ inability to see corporations as something other than a force of good for society plays a large role in the unabated offending by corporations as well as lackluster policing efforts by the state, and provide helpful suggestions for inducing the changes needed to protect consumers, employees, and the welfare of global citizens.

Conclusion

It bears repeating that the primary premise of this handbook is the need to not merely discuss and debate definitional ambiguity, but also to think through how this ambiguity impacts what we know about who commits these crimes, how we handle these crimes, and what we think about these crimes. To set the stage for the remainder of the book, let’s turn to Chapter 1 and the origins of the study of white-collar crime. The “definitional quagmire” (Friedrichs 1992) is often attributed to Edwin Sutherland and his “failure” to clearly explain what he meant when he coined the term. It is Edwin Sutherland we turn to now before exploring the field of white-collar crime more broadly.

References


Section I

What Is White-Collar Crime?
The “Discovery” of White-Collar Crime: The Legacy of Edwin Sutherland

Aleksandra Jordanoska and Isabel Schoultz

Introduction

This chapter examines the very beginning of the criminology of white-collar and corporate crime by focusing on one of the most cited criminologists in the history of the discipline – Edwin Sutherland. Sutherland’s contributions to the criminology of white-collar crime, beginning with his 1939 American Sociological Society presidential address and culminating with the publication of his book White Collar Crime (Sutherland 1949), can hardly be exaggerated. He succeeded in putting white-collar crime permanently on the criminological agenda, with the term itself becoming part of common language across jurisdictions.

The first part of this chapter discusses the life and career of Sutherland as a prominent twentieth-century criminologist. We then move to analyzing the “discovery” of the concept of white-collar crime, its characteristics, and established criticisms. Finally, we address the inspirational legacy of Edwin Sutherland and how he is more relevant now than ever. Exactly 80 years since Sutherland introduced the concept of white-collar crime, and 70 years since his book White-Collar Crime was published, he remains a prime source of inspiration for scores of criminologists across generations and jurisdictions who venture into researching the crimes of the upper classes and corporate transgressions.

The Life of Edwin Sutherland and His Rise to His Position as a Leading Criminologist

Edwin Sutherland has been characterized as the single most important criminologist of the twentieth century by a number of prominent scholars (Vold 1951; Gibbons 1979; Cohen 1990; Laub and Sampson 1991). Sutherland began his engagement with the field of criminology in the early 1920s, and would later on establish himself as the leading criminologist of his time. The late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century period, when Edwin Sutherland was born and came of age, coincided with the emergence of criminology as...
Aleksandra Jordanoska and Isabel Schoultz

a field of study. Sociology as an autonomous discipline was pretty much in its infancy in the United States at the time of Sutherland’s first encounter with the subject. Indeed, the American Sociological Society – of which Sutherland was ultimately elected president in 1939 – was founded in 1905, coincident with the period when Sutherland enrolled in a home study course on sociology (Hinkle and Hinkle 1954).

He began his career as a criminologist at the University of Illinois, where he spent six years (from 1919 to 1925). This came about when his department chair, Edward C. Hayes, invited him to produce a criminology textbook. The book, published in 1924, laid the foundation for Sutherland’s growing reputation as a leading criminologist over the course of the next 25 years. During the coming years, Sutherland revised his textbook while working at the University of Chicago, with its second edition published in 1934. He was later informed by his fellow criminologist and friend Henry McKay that he had set forth a theory (subsequently called Differential Association Theory) in a new edition of his book. Apparently, Sutherland then recognized that in identifying general susceptibility to training, failing to follow prescribed norms due to inconsistent influences, and conflict of cultures as core factors in engagement in criminal behavior, he had produced the foundation for a criminological theory. Sutherland’s crediting of McKay for having recognized that he had produced a theory of crime may reflect his personal modesty and generosity (Schuessler 1973, p. xv).

Simultaneously, he worked on a descriptive project with Harvey J. Locke that was to result in Twenty Thousand Homeless Men, published in 1936, and on the case study that led to the publication of The Professional Thief in 1937. During this period, Sutherland also wrote a paper, first published in 1956, on the Michael-Adler Report where he criticized their conclusions on the status of criminology as a science and rejected the development of an institute of criminology and criminal justice consisting of scholars outside of the field of criminology (Sutherland 1956). In addition, two more editions of his criminology textbook (with refinements of his Differential Association Theory) were published during 1936 and 1937.

By this time (as a consequence of his non-reappointment at the University of Chicago), Sutherland had settled at Indiana University, where his professional reputation was enhanced and he produced his immensely influential white-collar crime work. In 1949, near the end of his tenure at Indiana University as well as his life, he published what many regard as his crowning achievement, White Collar Crime. Thus, the final decade of Sutherland’s life was principally devoted to introducing and advancing the concept of white-collar crime, although he also published on other criminological topics during this time, such as issues relating to crime causation, the punishment of crime, and sexual psychopath laws. By the time Sutherland died in 1950 criminology had established itself as a recognizable academic field (Gibbons 1979, p. 77), and he has been credited for the sociological turn in the discipline – the dominant approach for about 30 years (Goff and Geis 2008). Sutherland was, arguably more than anyone else, responsible for establishing the dominance of a specifically sociological approach to the understanding of crime and its control. Yet, we believe that his most important contribution to criminology is the “discovery” and development of the concept of white-collar crime.

The Concept of White-Collar Crime

At the time when he first introduced the term “white-collar crime,” Sutherland was an already well-regarded criminologist and an author of the influential Differential Association Theory (Geis and Goff 1983) as well as the popular Principles of Criminology (Sutherland