"Sociology Around Me"

For this project, you will submit **FIVE – ONE to TWO PAGE (DOUBLE SPACED) TYPED ENTRIES** about sociology around you; I would prefer that these be naturally occurring examples, not sought out (except for the journal article). The project is due in class as listed on your tentative course outline. You might also share in class during the semester.

As I mention on the first or second day of class, one of the main things I hope you gain from this class is a sociological imagination. I hope that you will look at the same ol' things in a new light - "with sociological eyes". If you look, you will see examples of sociology all around you. You will see it in the media, in your interactions, and in your understanding of social institutions. Each "SAM" will have one entry **from media and the world around you of the material we cover in the chapters. For your 5 entries, use at least 3 different sources:**

Possible sources include:

1. Newspapers -- the O'Colly or any other
2. Magazines -- Time, Newsweek, Glamour, Readers Digest, Rolling Stone, etc
3. A professional journal -- the librarian can help here or ask me
4. A movie or television show or even a commercial
5. A song
6. An internet site
7. Something happening on campus or in our community
8. An interaction with a friend, family member …and yes, even a stranger!

SAM 1 should be relevant to something in Chapters 1 – 3
SAMs 2 and 3 should be relevant to something in Chapters 4 – 7
SAMS 4 and 5 should be relevant to something in Chapters 8 - 11

For each entry:

1. Include your **name**, the **chapter** and the **term/concept** that relates to this observation.
2. IF POSSIBLE, include the "**source/medium**" (the newspaper clipping , print of the internet site, song lyrics, cd, etc.) (this does not count as part of the 1pg minimum)

If you cannot include the item, first state what it was – book, movie, interaction, etc. and then write a brief paragraph summary of the content/event/ item **(you will write the summary even if you provide the source)**

3. **Define the term or concept** (be sure to cite the source – probably your text). Provide an explanation – your critical thinking - of how it is an example of something we covered in the text. **Tell me specifically to which chapter and term or concept you are relating your entry**. Correct use of sociological terminology/concepts will be very important . **Each entry should pertain to a different chapter.**

I hope you enjoy this project. If at any time you wish to share of your own volition, something you have found (for 5 pts extra credit toward the next exam)… by all means just let me know and you may "have the floor" for a few minutes (especially if you have missed class activity).

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Crime

As noted earlier, crime is a more formal sort of deviance, not only subject to social sanction but also punishable by law. Sometimes an act falls clearly at one end of the spectrum or the other. Situations of self-defense aside, killing a person is generally agreed to be criminal; nose picking, however unpalatable, isn't. In other cases, though, the distinction is not so clear. Whereas you might get strange looks for wearing aluminum-foil hot pants to class, if you show up with no clothes on at all, you will likely be sent to a mental health care provider for assessment or arrested and thrown in jail for indecent exposure. But what if your hot pants weren't foil at all but just silver paint? Would this be indecent exposure?

Crime runs the gamut in type and degree. Most of us think of violence or drugs when we contemplate crime, but there are many other ways of breaking the law.

STREET CRIME

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>
> —"Johnny Boy" Civello in *Mean Streets*

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Street crime generally refers to crime committed in public. The term invokes specific images, however, of violent crime, typically perpetrated in an urban landscape. Both historically and today, street crime is often associated with gangs, and currently it is also associated with both disadvantaged minority groups and poverty. Just why people are drawn to a career of street crime has long been a favorite question of social scientists and is still a matter of heated debate. Explanations for the fluctuations and trends in violent crime rates also vary widely. One theory, for example, posits that street crime rises and falls in relation to the availability of opportunity within the legitimate economy. When this is lacking, people turn elsewhere. A wrinkle on this theory is provided by "differential opportunity theory" (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Differential opportunity theory states that in addition to the legitimate economic structure, an illegitimate opportunity structure also exists that is unequally distributed across social classes. That is, some groups have more opportunities than others in the illicit economy and it is really the ratio of risks and rewards in tion

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the legitimate economic structure, an illegitimate opportunity structure also exists that is unequally distributed across social classes. That is, some groups have more opportunities than others in the illicit economy and it is really the ratio of risks and rewards in the formal and black market economies that influences participation in crime (rather than just the opportunities in the mainstream economy alone).

One way, then, to reduce crime would be to raise the costs of working in the illegitimate economy, thereby lowering the net returns. Such a strategy lies behind tougher sentencing policies, such as "three strikes" laws (if you are convicted of three felony crimes, you are imprisoned for life), which aim simultaneously to deter criminals and to incarcerate habitual offenders. The focus of such policies tends to be violent crime; lately, however, such laws have been extended to nonviolent crimes, such as drug dealing. Another strategy would be to increase the returns to entry-level opportunities in the legitimate economy; raising the minimum wage is one way to do this. Either strategy—decreasing the returns to the illegitimate economy or increasing the returns to the legitimate economy—shortens the distance, or differential, between the two economies.

Many people attribute the decrease in crime rates to the adoption of a community policing ideology, in which police officers are viewed (and view themselves) as members of the community they serve, and not to the punitive nature of prison life. Rather than enforce laws

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Infractions such as fraud are called **white-collar crime**, a term coined by sociologist Edwin Sutherland in 1939. It is typically committed by a professional (or professionals) in his or her (or their) capacity in the professional world against a corporation, agency, or other professional entity. According to the FBI (2003),

> [w]hite-collar crimes are categorized by deceit, concealment, or violation of trust and are not dependent on the application or threat of physical force or violence. Such acts are committed by individuals and organizations to obtain money, property, or services, to avoid the payment or loss of money or services, or to secure a personal or business advantage.

Although street crime is the most prevalent type of crime, looking strictly at the numbers, white-collar crime has greater financial impact. The FBI's prosecution of white-collar criminals resulted in billions of dollars in restitution (repayment) and hundreds of millions in fines in 2011—and those totals reflect only successful prosecutions. In contrast, the FBI has estimated that in 2013 the total loss from robbery, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft combined was $16.6 billion (FBI, 2014a, 2014b).

A particular type of white-collar crime is **corporate crime**, offenses committed by the officers (CEOs and other executives) of a corporation. In the late spring of

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other executives) of a corporation. In the late spring of 2012, JPMorgan Chase trader Bruno Iksil (also known as the London Whale) placed a giant risky trade and ended up losing $6.2 billion for the bank. Losing billions on a trade is deviant but not illegal. Iksil was fired, but avoided arrest. US federal prosecutors have indicted his boss and his assistant for conspiring to cover up the losses by filing false reports. Penalties for their crimes include a $920 million fine for JPMorgan, but no individuals did time (Stewart, 2015). Despite being the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, nobody went to jail for the shady practices that led to the 2007–8 meltdown of the banking system.

INTERPRETING THE CRIME RATE

Although it may seem, after a glance at the gruesome headlines in today's newspapers, that crime is getting worse, the truth is that deviance has always been present. Kai Erikson, in *Wayward Puritans* (2005), demonstrates how even America's seemingly most upstanding and God-fearing community, the Puritans, produced some bad apples—drunkards, adulterers, and thieves. Erikson's point, however, was that while what is defined as deviant may change over time, deviance is forever with us. For example, Erikson found "crimes against the Church," particularly by Quakers in the late 1650s, to be of central concern to the Puritan the

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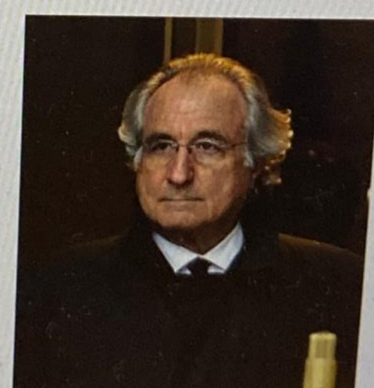
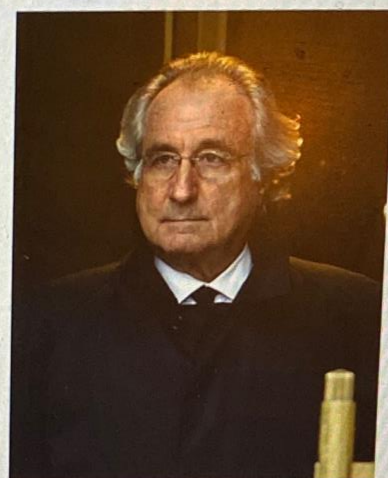
Many people attribute the decrease in crime rates to the adoption of a community policing ideology, in which police officers are viewed (and view themselves) as members of the community they serve, and not to the punitive nature of prison life. Rather than enforce laws from the outside in, as community members walking the streets, police can work to develop reliable relationships and bonds of trust with community residents. On a practical level, this means that greater police presence is felt in areas where community policing is in effect. (However, convincing evidence on this causal claim is still lacking; that said, community policing probably doesn't make crime rates any worse.)

WHITE-COLLAR CRIME

Bernard L. Madoff rose through the social ranks of wealth on Long Island, then Manhattan, then London, and eventually became the chairman of the NASDAQ exchange, which was based on technology his privately held firm had developed. In 2009, he was sentenced to 150 years in prison—a life sentence for the then-71-year-old.



WHITE-COLLAR CRIME

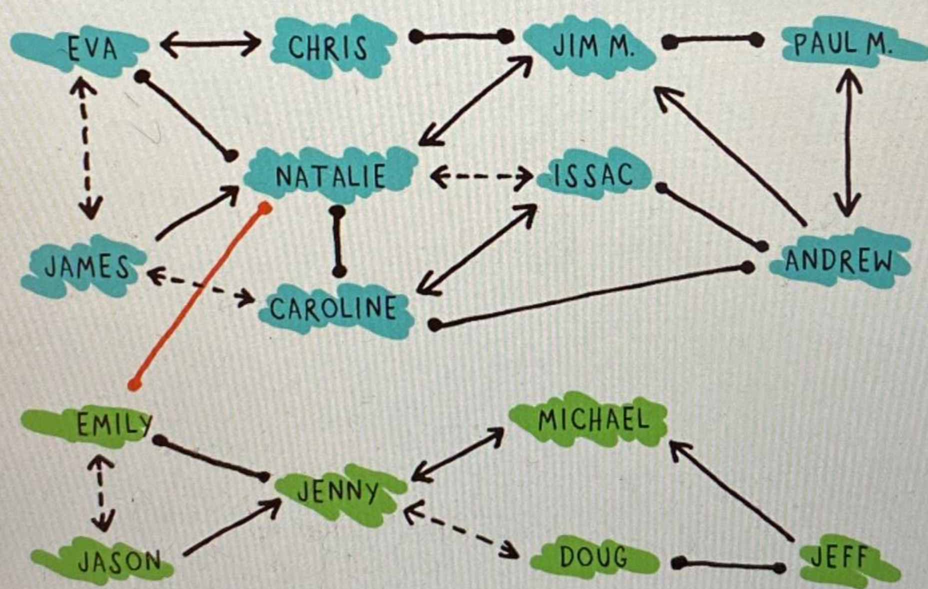


Bernie Madoff.

Bernard L. Madoff rose through the social ranks of wealth on Long Island, then Manhattan, then London, and eventually became the chairman of the NASDAQ exchange, which was based on technology his privately held firm had developed. In 2009, he was sentenced to 150 years in prison—a life sentence for the then-71-year-old. His crime was taking money from investors and fabricating great rates of return to pump up his reputation and keep money coming in when, in fact, his funds were losing money. Returns to investors were paid not from any actual gains their initial investments were accruing, but from the new money coming in the door. Madoff lived an opulent lifestyle, employing well-connected friends and family to keep a steady stream of new investments coming in. During the economic downturn in 2008, Madoff could not keep up with investors' demands to cash out. An investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) led to his arrest. Madoff estimated that he had lost $50 billion, making his the largest fraud in American history.

Infractions such as fraud are called white-collar crime, a term coined by sociologist Edwin Sutherland in 1939. It is typically committed by a professional (or are only indirect, through Jenny. Assuming that the two sides have resources (romantic or otherwise) that would complement each other's, Jenny is in a position to mediate by acting as a go-between for the groups. When a third party connects two groups or individuals who would be better off in contact with each other, that third party is an "entrepreneur," and he or she can profit from the gap. (Sounds like the *tertius gaudens* in the triad? It should.)

FIGURE 5.4 The Strength of Weak Ties



Natalie and Emily are social entrepreneurs; they command information to which the rest of their respective networks do not have access.

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strengthens the ties between you and both of the individuals.

The strength of weak ties has been found especially useful in job searches (Granovetter, 1974). In a highly embedded network, all the individuals probably know the same people, hear of the same job openings, maintain the same contacts, and so on. However, your grandparents' neighbor, whom you see every so often, probably has a completely different set of connections. The paradox is that this weak tie provides the most opportunities. When Granovetter (1973) interviewed professionals in Boston, he determined that among the 54 respondents who found their employment through personal network ties, more than half saw their contact person "occasionally" (less than once a week but more than once a year). Perhaps even more surprising was the fact that the runners-up in this category were not people whom the respondents saw "often" (once a week or more); it was those they saw "rarely" (once a year or less), by a factor of almost two to one. Additional research finds that weak ties offer the greatest benefits

Small business owners exchanging business cards at a speed networking event. In this limited amount of time, participants hope that making as many weak ties as they can will eventually help them expand and improve their businesses.