Class Activities

# Chapter 14: White-Collar Crime, Organized Crime, and Cybercrime

**Class Activity 1: Definitions and History of White-Collar Crime**

**Define and Apply Concepts (Paired or Group Activity)**

**Instructions:** Read the following section of the textbook: “Definitions and History of White-Collar Crime.” Answer the questions below.

1. Sutherland is credited with coining the term *white-collar crime*. Identify the two authors who discussed white-collar offending years before Sutherland.
2. List the offenses that are considered white-collar crime. Why are these crimes considered white-collar?

In 1949, Sutherland defined white-collar offending in the Encyclopedia of Criminology. How did he define white-collar crime? Do you agree with his definition? Why or why not?

**Class Activity 2: Have You Been a Victim?**

**Identifying White-Collar Crime and Cybercrime (Paired or Group Activity)**

**Instructions:** Create a list of the various types of white-collar crime that have affected you as a victim. Include the three types of white collar crime and five types of cybercrime.

**Class Activity 3: Theoretical Explanations of White-Collar Crime**

**Case Study (Group Activity)**

**Instructions:** Please read the following case study and answer the questions.

**Rita Crundwell: Remaining Charges Dropped Against Ex-Dixon Comptroller (ritacrundwell.com)**

Prosecutors on Tuesday dropped all remaining charges against a former city comptroller who recently began serving a lengthy federal prison sentence for stealing nearly $54 million from her northern Illinois community.

Lee County State’s Attorney Anna Sacco-Miller dropped the 60 state counts of felony theft that remained against former Dixon comptroller Rita Crundwell. The prosecutor explained that the state case would have cost taxpayers more money and would not have resulted in additional prison time because any sentence would have to be concurrent with the federal punishment.  
Crundwell, who was Dixon’s longtime bookkeeper, admitted in federal court in November that she stashed public money in a secret bank account for about two decades and used it to fund her lavish lifestyle and her renowned horse-breeding operation. The money went toward everything from expensive horse trailers and luxury motor homes to jewelry and birthday bashes in Venice Beach, Fla. It ranks as one of the worst abuses of public trust in the state’s corruption-rich history.

Because Crundwell had sole control of the city’s bookkeeping, the theft went unnoticed for years, even as the city’s financial shape suffered, with streets and equipment falling into disrepair and city employees going without raises. There wasn’t even enough money to mow the grass at the cemetery.

The scheme unraveled only when a colleague who filled in for her when she went on an extended vacation became suspicious.

Crundwell was sentenced in federal court in February to nearly 20 years in prison. Her attorney in the state case, Bob Thompson, had argued that subjecting her to another trial would amount to double jeopardy.

The state case covered only the period from January 2010 until Crundwell’s arrest in April 2012, during which time she was accused of stealing about $11 million.

Dixon Mayor Jim Burke said he had wanted to see Crundwell back in court, but that he agreed with the state’s attorney’s reasoning.

“She probably made a wise decision in just dropping the whole thing rather than spending money just to get some kind of emotional satisfaction out of the fact that we’re trying to nail Rita’s hide to the door one more time,” Burke said.

Sacco-Miller said the state charges could still be re-filed if Crundwell’s appeal of her federal sentence is successful.

The 60-year-old Crundwell is jailed in Boone County pending her assignment to a federal prison. She did not appear at Tuesday’s hearing.

1. Do you think Crundwell’s actions should be considered white-collar offending? Explain your answer.
2. If you were the prosecutor in the state case, would you have dropped the charges? Why or why not?
3. What should the City of Dixon do in the future to avoid being the victim of white-collar offending?
4. Do you think white-collar offending is as serious as crimes against persons (e.g., assault, robbery, murder)? Explain your answer.