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“My speedometer cable is broken and I had no idea I was driving so fast!” “My alarm didn’t go off this morning—that’s why I missed the final exam.” “My printer stopped working so I can’t turn in the paper on time.” It’s routine to offer explanations or “accounts” to excuse or justify our misdeeds so that people won’t condemn our behavior. But what happens if we get caught doing something really wrong? In this article, you will read the accounts offered by men convicted of white-collar crimes.

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Here’s another chance to think about what is so special about how sociologists look at the world.