

## The Extraordinary Relevance of Barak's *Theft of a Nation*

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Richly detailed and analytic, Gregg Barak's (2012) *Theft of a Nation*, draws us into the world of the financial crises that plague America, and affect the world through the global economy. In recent decades, the recurrence of prominent financial crimes has served as signs of the larger economic crisis that loom around the world. Examples of these egregious crimes include: Bernie Madoff's two-decade long Ponzi scheme; illegal investments made by Stanford International Bank with depositors' resources; revenue manipulations by Bernie Ebbers at WorldCom; financial crimes of individuals like Yasuo Hamanaka, Nick Leeson, and Kweku Adoboli, labeled as "rogue traders" to cover up any notion that these kind of illegal trading activities are routine; and the well-organized financial crimes of Ken Lay, late CEO of Enron and accounting firm, Arthur Anderson. These examples are the tip of the iceberg of financial crime and fraud. In 2002, the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners estimated that white collar fraud accounted for \$600 billion in losses in the US, and costs 354 times as much economic losses as all street crimes combined. It is in the context of these serious, widespread yet neglected financial crimes that Barak's work takes its significance.

In my opinion Barak's book ought to be considered an instant classic in the field of white-collar and corporate crime research, and is so compelling that there is little need to do more than commend Barak on his work. As an academic I could conjure up some criticisms, but such an approach would distract from the work's importance and avert attention from the larger problems Barak addresses. Instead, I examine some of the important implications of Barak's work to highlight its significance. To do so, I examine the power elite's role in producing crimes of the powerful. In addition, I critique traditional criminological arguments concerning assumptions about the individual, psychological causes of white collar crime. In contrast to that view, Barak's approach makes it clear that there is a

need to address the composition and organization of the financial industry, the organization of regulation, and capitalism itself as causes of these offenses. To make that link clear, I also explore a more radical-Marxist analysis of capitalism and the central role exploitation plays in capitalism, and how the expansion of exploitation itself produces these crimes. Finally, I use Barak's "theft of a nation" concept to discuss some other relevant corporate crimes that promote green or environmental crimes that lead to the "theft of public health."

### THE POWER ELITE

Barak's work owes a clear debt to the literature on the power elite, who, as C. Wright Mills noted are those,

whose position enable them to transcend the . . . environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences . . . .[T]hey are in command of the major hierarchies and organizations of modern society. They rule the big corporations...direct the machinery of the state and claim its prerogatives. They direct the military establishment. They occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure, in which are now centered the effective means of the power and the wealth and the celebrity which they enjoy. (1956:3-4)

In this way, the power elite play significant roles in making history and shape the path modern society travels (see also Mills 1959). The power elite, of course, do not have unrestrained control, and the kinds of power they exert and the ways they shape history are limited by the structural organization of society, which is in turn shaped by its economic organization. The elite's power comes from existing economic, social and political relations, and

hence they are not about to undo those relations by changing the prevailing power structures which advantage them.

The power elite concept captures how the elite use their power to shape modern life. The power elite exist in different forms and spheres of society, and occupy decision-making roles in federal and state governments, in the legal structures of those institutions, in the world of business and finance, and in the military. These are “the higher circles” of power in American society (Domhoff 1998, 1990, 1970). The major institutions staffed by the power elite are embedded in the organizational structure of the nation from coast to coast, border to border, and increasingly, in a global economic system, across the nations of the world (Greider 1998).

Thus, to speak of “the theft of a nation,” as Barak does, implies the need to understand that those driving the current financial crises must, out of necessity of their structural locations, work together, and aid each other in their objectives. Because the power elite draws its power from the same general set of institutional and structural arrangements it must, in order for each segment of the power elite to survive, facilitate and reinforce the power base from which each segment gains its access to power. These power elite segments are, therefore, likely to work together, or at least they will be unlikely to disturb each other significantly -- for how can they? This would undermine their own positions of power. To be sure, in some cases the power elite must control one another to maintain the system’s legitimacy (Habermas 1975; Wolfe 1977). But they cannot do this in ways that destroy the very basis of their power. They cannot unmask the great power structure itself, or point out its contradictions; they must legitimize and survive within the existing structure of power to maintain their access to power and, as Chambliss pointed out in his structural Marxist analysis, toward maintaining the long-term interests of the capitalist system as a whole. If the power elite constrain one another, it is because they are worried that one segment of the elite is gaining too much power and limiting the kinds of power the other segments can access and exercise. And because each segment of the power elite has access to power, there is a need to maintain a balance of power between themselves, and to exert power when necessary in extreme cases to control the balance of power among the elite. This sometimes means using power to control the most deviant individuals among the power elite. It does not entail using power to reorganize the power structure to eliminate the crimes of the powerful.

As Mills argues, as ordinary people we understand this situation, and that we have little ability to control the power elite who, as Barak notes, move across segments of the power structure (e.g., from banking to government and the regulatory regime, and back again). The ordinary people are led to believe they can have some input into how these processes of power are exercised by

participating in the political structure of a nation. Yet, at the same time, ordinary people come to understand that they have little effect on the power structure, and so they recoil, withdraw from participating, and in doing so, facilitate the further expansion of the power of the elite. But this part of the story is beyond the scope of the present argument. To better understand the importance of Barak’s work, it is also necessary to discuss efforts that oppose his work: efforts to individualize the crimes of the powerful and to make them appear as individual deficits rather than as structural and systemic problems.

## **THE MYTH OF PERSONALITY AS AN EXPLANATION FOR FINANCIAL FRAUD**

One factor that binds the power elite together and facilitates their cooperation and tendency to reinforce the status quo is their psychological properties and makeup, both as individuals and as a group or class (Mills 1956). On this issue, Barak preferences organizational theories of white collar crime over personality theories since it is the influence that organizational structures have over personalities that aid in the production of crimes of the powerful. One could, of course, argue that it is the intersection of organizational forces and personality that produces the crimes of the powerful. To do so, however, is to minimize the structuring influence of organizational forces, and to engage in traditional reductionist explanations of crime which may explain crime as an individual-level choice. Those explanations, however, hide the explanation of crime behind the idea that people make choices, and ignores why they make those choices, how those choices are channeled and how organizational structures play a role in that process. Moreover, choice-based arguments are scientifically questionable since they cannot be refuted empirically (i.e., the “theory” does not identify the criteria for measuring choice, or conditions for the rejection of choice based arguments). The idea of individual choice is part of the mythology of free market capitalism, yet even the most ardent of rational and situational choice criminologists accept the concept of “limited rational choice.” Indeed, the limits to rational choice can be so complex and interwoven that the “freedom” of choice is merely an illusion.

Relying on personality and individual differences, the traditional criminologist draws us into a decidedly one-sided view of the powerful offender’s crimes by implying that there is something deviant about the offender. That assumption detracts attention from the system of power, and how that system establishes the conditions that lead to and produce deviance. The more appropriate view, as Barak demonstrates, is to describe the constitution of power, and how the system of power is established and operates and interacts to produce the crimes of the powerful, and shapes the actors who carry these out.

This does not mean, however, that we should entirely neglect the personality structure of the power elite. Rather, it means understanding personality as a characteristic of the elite as a group or class. In other words, if there is a power elite personality characteristic, it is associated with the mass of the power elite, and not simply with individual members of the power elite—it is a description of the structural aspects of the psychology of the power elite.

This point was addressed by Mills who noted

. . . in so far as the elite flourishes as a social class . . . it will select and form types of personality, and reject others. The kinds of moral and psychological beings men will become is in large part determined by the values they experience and the institutional roles they are allowed and expected to play. . . . [A] man of the upper class is formed by his relations with others like himself in a series of small intimate groupings through which he passes and to which throughout his lifetime he may return. So conceived, the elite is a set of higher circles whose members are selected, trained and certified and permitted intimate access to those who command the impersonal institutional hierarchies of modern society. If there is any one key to the psychological idea of the elite, it is that they combine in their persons an awareness of impersonal decision-making with intimate sensibilities shared with one another. (Mills 1956:15)

In this sense, the personality of an individual member of the power elite is not unlike the rest of its members. That personality is sought out by the power elite, and trained into subsequent generations (Box 1983). To say that a member of the power elite has a given personality structure is simply to recognize in individual members of the power elite the manifestations of the general psychological characteristic of the power elite as a group. In taking this view, we come to recognize that the personality structure of any individual member of the power elite, which the orthodox criminologist points toward as the cause of his/her crime, is nothing but a manifestation of the general personality structure of the power elite as a whole. It is, therefore, not the personality structure of the individual member of the power elite that matters, but the structural composition of personality in relation to the organization of power. There is a paucity of data on this interpretation of the crimes of the power elite, and much of the relevant literature does not examine the power elite but more minor white collar offenders.

The idea that personality matters distracts from the real issues that Barak's work continually points toward – that the structure of the network of power and control, and how that structure produces the crimes of the powerful and the failure of the remaining power elite to control those offenses. In contrast, by drawing attention to the individual differences between powerful offenders and non-offenders,

the orthodox criminologist does a disservice. The orthodox criminologist believes in a general explanation of crime, one form of which includes a psychological explanation of crime and deviance. In this sense, there is little difference between the powerful offender and the street criminal -- both engage in their crimes because they suffer from personality or psychological deficits. An important point of Barak's work, which joins him to others in the classic radical school of criminology (e.g., William Chambliss, Herman and Julia Schwendinger, Richard Quinney, or Jeffrey Reiman) when it comes to explaining crime is to draw attention to the structure of the process that results in financial crime. Since the power elite recruits and sometimes socializes from birth its members, and ensures that they have a given set of values and are predisposed psychologically to the way of life of the power elite, personality itself is a dead end when it comes to explaining how it is that the power elite manages the theft of the nation. That is to say, Barak correctly understands that the theft of the nation cannot be a result of the random impacts of personality (e.g., rogue traders), but rather is a product of the routine organization and exercise of power, albeit through micro-level social processes. The theft of the nation is an organized activity, coordinated across the segments of the power elite by specific actions and by the whole organizational structure of major institutions, and cannot simply be an outcome associated with the distribution of personality types among the power elite. Besides, for personality to produce a persistent outcome that results in the theft of the nation, that elite groups would need, psychologically, to have quite similar personalities. And, those personalities must be consistent with the entire operational structure of the power elite and its organization. That is to say, if personality is the problem, it is not an individual-level problem, but a structural one. Indeed, it is not so much deviant personalities that produce financial crime but conforming ones, operating within the norms and according to the values of the power elite, engaging in different levels of the same kinds of behavior, rather than different behavior.

Thus, in contrast to Barak's approach toward financial crimes, the orthodox view on financial crimes distracts attention from the structural origins of that crisis. As Barak argument correctly implies using different cases and different layers of analysis and theory, the theft of the nation can in no way be a mere manifestation of psychological properties of the isolated individuals who form the ranks of the power elite. Indeed, the very fact that the theft of the nation is so deeply embedded in the structure of American institutions indicates that it is the institutional arrangements themselves that are problematic. But orthodox criminology has long distracted our attention from the ways in which economic, political and social structures intersect to produce crime through the generation of laws and regulations of various types and how those rules are applied.

In sum, if we dispatch the orthodox notion that the theft of the nation is simply an individual-level condition, then we must instead consider how these individuals and their social processes are embedded in a wider institutional and structural context, which requires a structural-level explanation for the patterns that comprise the theft of the nation. This is an important aspect of Barak's work—how organizational structures generate the circumstances that produce the micro-level processes that constitute the theft of the nation. In the section that follows, I take up some of these themes, highlighting an important issue that Barak raises: the role of capitalism in the theft of the nation.

## **CAPITALISM AND THE THEFT OF THE NATION**

The premiere architect of the critique of capitalism, Karl Marx, found the system of capitalism, which he saw as based in the exploitation of working class labor, to be reprehensible, immoral at its roots and, one could say, a crime against human dignity and the effort of the human race to achieve the kind of lifestyle in which all people would have equal opportunities to enjoy life. On these points, for example, Marx referred to capital in the following ways: “Capital is dead labor, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (Marx 1974:233); and “. . . in its blind unrestrainedly passion, its werewolf hunger for surplus-labor, capital oversteps not only the moral, but even the merely physical maximum bounds of the working-day” (Marx 1974:265; see also p. 243).

I refer to these particular descriptions of capitalism in Marx's work to highlight a connection to the previous section on personality. Though fictional, the werewolf and the vampire are driven by their lust for blood, a trait bound up in their very being. This illusion is, I believe, exactly why Marx makes reference to these fictional creatures and turns that discussion to the nature of capitalism to illustrate his point that at the center of its very being, capitalism is anchored in a need to exploit. This is, one can say, the very soul and psychological property of capitalism is exploitation.

Theoretically, the forms of exploitation that occur under capitalism can be interpreted as “legitimate” to the extent that as a system, capitalism is required to exploit the labor of the worker in order to produce value. As Marx showed in his work, capitalism could not exist without exploiting the worker, and if the capitalist did not extract more labor value from the worker than the value paid to the worker in wages, it would be impossible to have capitalism. That is true because without the extraction of unpaid, exploited labor, there would be no additional value that would result from production to promote the expansion of capital. In short, without unpaid labor resulting from the organization of capitalism, the capitalist, as Marx illustrated, would simply be shifting capital from

one buyer to the next, and there would be no production of new value or the accumulation of value.

Capitalism is now global, and widely accepted. Its practices are not as widely challenged as they were in past decades or epochs, and capitalism is now often held out as the way to not only individual success and freedom, but also as a mechanism for nations to raise themselves and their people up in the world hierarchy of capitalism -- to spread wealth and enjoyment. While space limitations preclude an analysis of this claim, there is significant evidence to suggest that capitalism also spreads poverty and misery, and the greatest benefits of inequality accrue to the power elite (Frank and Cook 2010). Rather, my point here is that even within this system of exploitation, exploitation can become a detrimental force to the preservation of capitalism. Moreover, the logic of exploitation, when applied inappropriately by the power elite, or its individual members, can challenge the legitimacy of that system. In this sense it is useful to discuss the idea of capitalism and the theft of the nation, and to acknowledge the utility of Barak's work in extending this view.

If, as Barak suggests, we think of the theft of the nation as a structural dynamic associated with the organization of society, we are forced to ask a deeper question: why has the organization of American society evolved in such a way so as to produce tremendously large financial crimes? Part of the answer has to do with the inherent structural limitations of capitalism and the contradiction between those structural limitations and other aspects of capitalism such as inculcating the drive for endless accumulation. The summary of this argument that follows is based on the work of Marxist ecologists, who have extended the economic model of Marx to include the exploitation of nature (e.g. Burkett 2005; Foster 2001a, 2011b, 2007, 1992; Hornborg 1998; O'Connor 1998, 1991, 1989a).

The work of the ecological Marxist allows us to recognize that capitalism cannot, as its ideological vision suggests, expand indefinitely. The reason this is true is that the expansion of capital requires the continuous consumption of raw materials and their transformation into commodities by exploited human labor. In other words, the expansion of capitalism is limited by the physical realities of the natural world around us, and capitalism cannot expand beyond the confines of the materials found in nature. In this sense, capitalism needs nature, because it is the work that nature does in its natural economy that provides the stuff for commodities. Those physical realities also include the production of energy from stored natural resources. There is a finite volume of stored energy resources. The more capitalism expands, the faster those resources are used, and the less energy is available for future work. The extensive use of fossil fuels to run the treadmill of capitalist production is also one of the driving forces behind other aspects of the contradiction between

nature and capitalism such as climate change (Stretesky, Long and Lynch 2013).

In addition, the relationship between capitalism and nature is a one way relationship, in which the wealth of nature is transferred to the human economy through the application of exploited human labor. The essence of this one way relationship is to the distinct advantage of capitalism. The flow of material assets moves from nature to capital, as capital exploits nature by taking valuable material from nature without compensation, and in return capital gives nature back useless waste products and a damaged ecological system less capable of reproduction. Both forms of exploitation damage the ability of nature to reproduce the conditions for life.

The point of the foregoing discussion is to highlight the central role exploitation plays in the system of capitalism. Not only must capital exploit labor, it must also exploit nature. This essential connection between exploitation and the health and vitality of capitalism returns us to Marx's caricature of the were-wolf and vampire-like nature of capitalism. Like the vampire who exploits the ability of other creatures to produce blood, capital lives like a parasite on the work generated by nature and the working class. The unnatural nature of this relationship is clear -- the worker does not need the capitalist to do work, but the capitalist must have the labor of the worker to survive. Nature, too, does not need capitalism for its survival, but capitalism must feast upon the work of nature to live. The parasitic nature of the exploitive relationship between the capitalist, on the one hand, and nature and the worker on the other, is the key to understanding what really happens in a capitalist system of production.

In the view of those outside the capitalist system such as Marx, the inherently unequal and exploitative soul of such an arrangement between the capitalist and nature/workers is made to stand out not simply as an outcome that sometimes happens, but as one which must occur systematically. It is not the "bad capitalist" that exploits workers/nature; all capitalists must do so, some perhaps more so than others. In this sense, exploitation is not dependent on the personality characteristics of the capitalist; it is a psychological property of the core of capitalism as a system. Exploitation must occur, and it cannot be otherwise if capitalism is to survive.

But, it is precisely the central importance of exploitation to capitalism, and its necessary expression within capitalism, that causes capital to exploit itself, and to eat away at the structure of the system upon which it is built. Capitalism, if we follow Marx, is corrupt from its inception as a system of legitimized theft and exploitation. That this legitimized theft of labor eventually leads capital to consume and feast upon itself should come as no real surprise. The vampire must live, and when, at some point, the various contradictions of capitalism that limit growth and stunt the continuous expansion of profit making

occurs, the capitalist is all too willing to accelerate the forms of exploitation which are practiced. Indeed, we could argue from the previous discussion of capitalism and personality, that the capitalist is raised, trained, and recruited for just such a task. If, for example, we ignore the legal rules of capital which legitimize the exploitation of the worker and nature as justifiable acts, there is no real difference between the forms of crimes Barak describes and the theft of wages the capitalist must produce to turn the wheels of capitalism.

Unlike the micro-level, orthodox criminologist who only sees the seeds of a deficient personality within the individual as responsible for the crimes of the powerful, we can turn instead to the contextual analysis of Mills (1959) who understands the association between the psychological properties of capitalism as an organization entity, and the psychological properties of the individual. As Mills argued, when we analyze a social problem, we must, if we are to understand the range of factors that produce that problem, first fully situate the problem at hand within the historical context of the society in which it occurs. Following Marx who argued that "circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances," Mills directs us to take into consideration how the individual and social structure intersect and interact. Thus, it is not simply "bad men" who make crime; it is the totality of the lives those individuals lead within the structuring confines of the social system in which they live that must also be taken into account.

It is this rich, contextual analysis of the theft of the nation that Barak exposes throughout his book. For Barak, the crimes that lead to the theft of the nation are not the acts of "bad men" with psychological deficits. Rather, the theft of the nation is intimately connected to the organizational structure of the nation. Without considering that organizational structure and its various layers, one cannot appreciate how it is that the theft of the nation occurs, for it is facilitated, across multiple domains by multiple segments of the power elite. What's more, while Barak uses the financial crimes of the housing market and Wall Street to illustrate his points and to develop a contextual analysis of these problems, there is little reason to believe that this same approach cannot be applied to other crimes of the power elite, an issue I shall return to shortly.

It is clear that by working in the classical tradition that C. Wright Mills explored, Barak returns us to a richer, more intellectually satisfying depiction of the crimes of the powerful. These crimes cannot be reduced to the individual level explanations traditional criminology favor as explanations of all crimes. If in reading Barak's work the reader feels unsettled by these revelations, then Barak has done his job well, because he has made the reader question her/his assumptions about how it is that the theft of the nation can occur, and how the structure of the nation



contributes to that theft, and why each portion of the power elite is willing to allow the theft of the nation to continue.

More disturbing than accepting Barak's view on this matter, is realizing that if Barak is correct, then the theft of the nations will occur repeatedly, because it is part of the structural composition of the economic, political, and social life of modern society. The anxiety this view generates in us stems from the fact that when we accept Barak's argument, we realize that there is nothing we can do about such crimes unless we are willing to change the very nature of the system. This means challenging the very basis of capitalism and its inherent tendencies to legitimize exploitation as an acceptable form of social and economic arrangements.

Capitalism, as Marx predicted, is based on a set of relations that pose various contradictions which must be continually reorganized to facilitate profit making. There are various forms of contradictions in the modern era. In two classic economic works, James O'Connor (1973, 1989b) analyzed issues such as the fiscal crisis of the state, and the mounting accumulation problem. The fiscal crisis of the state involves the need for the state to meet two often contradictory functions: facilitating capital accumulation and promoting the independence and legitimacy of the state. One way in which the state traditionally facilitated capital accumulation and state legitimacy was through welfare expenditure, which reabsorbs wages and redistributed them to promote economic equity among the working class. Building on O'Connor's argument and other relevant economic arguments, it is clear that in the 1970s and 1980s, the state began to lose control of its accumulation and legitimation functions with the advent of neo-liberal capitalism and the decline of the welfare state. Unable to facilitate accumulation and legitimacy in traditional ways, the state instead accelerated deficit spending to stimulate accumulation. This "trickle-down" economic approach should, in theory, promote not only the expansion of capital accumulation, but job creation and increased income for the working class -- an idea that one of its most ardent supporters during the Reagan Administration, David Stockman, now rejects. The result, however, was an increase in the concentration of wealth, significant job losses, the transference of manufacturing capital overseas, and a decline in the economic power and inflation adjusted income of the working and middle classes.

The changes that occurred in the US economy shifted capital investment from manufacturing to the financial and service sectors, and as Barak points out, made financial markets a target for investors seeking large financial returns. In the absence of a solid manufacturing base, finance capital took on greater importance as a means for accumulating wealth, and the importance of this sector to the power elite also expanded. At the same time, deregulation of the financial sector established conditions under which large scale financial frauds could be

undertaken. And, given that those recruited into or raised in the tradition of capital shared personality traits consistent with taking advantage of such opportunities, large scale financial crimes accelerated.

Within the structural confines of capitalism, there is little that can be done to control the consequences of these economic transformations. The state has little motivation to do so since with the advent of neo-liberal capitalism, the state largely abandoned its commitment to maintaining legitimacy among the poor and the working classes, and began to more visibly shift its legitimation function to maintaining conditions for capital accumulation. Coupled with enfeebled enforcement and regulation, the organizational context of American capitalism became ripe for promoting the theft of the nation.

### Extending the 'Theft of a Nation' Argument

Above, I have extended Barak's argument to illustrate its importance with respect to the classic traditional of sociological analysis of the deleterious impacts of capitalism. This is a more general view than taken by Barak, who more aptly wrestles with the manifestations of these conditions at various organizational levels of analysis in ways that cannot be produced by my structural imagination. I have not suggested these comments as criticisms, and in fact believe that Barak's model is a fine example of the forms of integrated, classical thinking he has examined elsewhere (see Barak 2009).

Turning from that discussion, in this section I briefly address additional implications of Barak's argument beyond the explanation of financial crimes, and apply his theft of a nation argument to one of the primer concerns of our times: the theft of public health. By "theft of public health" I mean the tendency for the power elite to adversely impact ecology in ways that undermines public health.

With the exception of an expanding literature on green criminology, criminologists pay little attention to issues relevant to green crimes and justice, and how environmental damage undermines public health and causes extensive victimization. Any number of examples can be described here to reinforce the claim that green crimes cause extensive damage, damage that is well in excess of the harms produced by street crimes (Lynch 2013; Lynch and Stretesky forthcoming). Unlike street offenses which typically involve one victim or sometimes a handful of victims, green crimes such as pollution victimize millions. Moreover, green crimes, such as environmental pollution, not only harm humans, they also victimize other species as well as ecosystems. Because of their very nature, green crimes of pollution tend to have far reaching consequences as pollutants, once emitted into the environment, travel through various environmental media. Confirming that observation, industrial pollution has been discovered in remote regions of the world where there are

no industries or expansive human settlements (Bargagl 2000, 2005), and in the world's oceans and marine animals (Jensen 2006; Noyes et al. 2009; Ueno et al. 2004).

For human populations as well, industrial pollution is a ubiquitous problem (Carpenter 2006). The historical record of harmful pollutants such as mercury, for example, illustrates the impact of the industrial revolution and even modern manufacturing on the prevalence of mercury deposits in ice core samples (Schuster et al. 2002). These industrial pollutants have numerous consequences for human health which are beyond the scope of this paper to review in their entirety (e.g. see Carpenter 2006; Colborn, Dumanoski and Myers 1997; Faroon, Jones, and De Rosa 2001).

Consistent with Barak's argument, the organizational structure of the forms of social control designed to contain these environmental harms is ineffective (Burns, Lynch and Stretesky 2008). As research suggests, the laws and enforcement mechanisms that regulate environmental crimes are enfeebled, and affected by the influence of various sectors of the power elite which seek to preserve economic expansion over public health. Similar to the story told by Barak, rich, detailed works on these concerns have been published (Markowitz and Rosner 2013, 2012; Rosner and Markowitz 1994), and should play a greater role in influencing criminological research. Also important to the criminological examination of the power elite's role in producing green crime and victimization, are issues of environmental justice, or the unequal distribution of pollution across communities with varying racial, ethnic and class compositions (Liu 2001) and the struggles of those communities, including issues related to the contested illness process (Brown 2007), to address their victimization, which includes the development of environmental community-based pollution and compliance monitoring (Lynch and Stretesky 2013). These latter issues in particular are in some sense "peculiar" to the study of pollution, since perhaps with the exception of the "Occupy Wall Street" movement, there is no similar, widespread development of a social movement against financial crimes (on the extend of environmental social movements see Stretesky, et al. 2011).

With respect to other issues described above, pollution is an example of the inherent tendency of capital to exploit nature to generate profit. In the case of the pollution, exploitation occurs when wastes are emitted back into nature. There are, of course, other ways to solve the problem of pollution, such as changing the manufacturing process, treating and reusing waste streams. Financially, however, these available technologies would lower profits, and for the capitalist, there is little reason to promote public health and environmental quality at the cost of reduced profit.

## CONCLUSION

Barak's books is not only an exceptional contribution to scholarship on white collar crime, evident by the awards this work has already received, it provides criminologists with a guide to exploring other forms of white collar, corporate and green crimes as well. It is an excellent example of the kind of work criminologists ought to produce more often.

The problem, which has always been the case -- and an issue Edwin H. Sutherland took up in the late 1930s -- is convincing criminologists that the kinds of issues Barak explores are of much greater concern to society than the street crimes of the poor. In general criminologists, like the public, are obsessed with street crime despite the evidence of the significant harms the power elite produce. As a discipline, criminology contributes to the image of crime as a lower class phenomenon, and it is high time criminologists take the issue Barak and others describe much more seriously. Societies do not collapse because of the behavior of street offenders, but rather in many cases because the power elite and the capitalist system of exploitation in which they are enmeshed, lead us in the wrong direction. The financial crimes of the power elite and the inability of other segments of the power elite to control those crimes presents a serious example of how it becomes possible for the power elite to undermine the very basis of social organization, and, indeed, even undermine the social organization on which their system depends.

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