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Book Review

Dawn L Rothe and David Kauzlarich (2016) *Crimes of the Powerful: An Introduction*. Oxford: Routledge.

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Crimes of the Powerful covers significant and important terrain. It traverses the multiple ways individuals, public and private organisations and institutions commit crimes and generate harms ranging from breaching product safety standards to money-laundering and mass deaths of migrants and refugees; from industrial disasters to genocide. In many ways, it resonates with the arguments and scope set by Frank Pearce's (1976) seminal book of the same name, tussling with contemporary theoretical debates and calling for a redirection of criminological attention towards interrogation of the crimes of the powerful.

Rothe and Kauzlarich's text is framed in three parts: 'the foundations', 'types of crimes of the powerful' and 'the master's tools and beyond'. The first chapter of Part I introduces students to the different ways in which crimes of the powerful have been understood. It reiterates a basic but not unproblematic distinction between occupational and organisational crime, and then expands organisational crime to the triumvirate of corporate crime, state corporate crime and state crime. It enlarges the concept to include organised crime and militia, insurgency leaders, and some transnational crime within the overall context of the neoliberal capitalistic system. These elements constitute the crimes of the powerful, crimes generating harms that range from 'the economic to the physical and the psychological' (p. 14). An ambitious agenda is set.

Part I continues with four more chapters. Chapter 2 on the media captures a broad array of illustrations of crimes of the powerful as framed and filtered by film, television interviews and social media. Chapter 3 is a brief overview of research methods and strategies used in the study of the crimes of the powerful. Chapter 4 turns to theory. Here, the student is encouraged to tease apart the various levels of analysis important in understanding crimes of the powerful from the international, structural, meso and micro levels. Criminological theories and conceptual frames (for example, systems analysis) are then identified according to their explanatory relevance in light of a particular level. Criminological theories are linked with different theoretical traditions associated with power (in particular, Foucault) and political economy (from international relations). Chapter 5 urges students to look beyond classifications and typologies to explore the symbiotic nature of relationships central to understanding crimes of the powerful: relationships between levels; between organisations and institutions; and between key individuals in positions of power. This chapter usefully draws on the work of Bourdieu in helping students understand how different forms of power (or rather capital) interact; and how those in positions of power

can move between exerting economic control to amassing political influence, and from political influence to shaping cultural norms.

Part II (types of crimes of the powerful) explores the different constellations of relationships that come to light when particular dominant actors—corporations, states, organised criminal networks and international financial institutions—are placed at the forefront of attention. This section also includes a chapter on state corporate crime which has become a useful conceptual frame for many researching in this area. Not surprisingly, given the overall emphasis on the symbiotic relationships between many powerful actors, the authors express some ambivalence towards this concept. An interesting inversion of perspective in this section is the chapter on victims of the crimes of the powerful. This chapter is divided between direct and indirect victimisation. Ultimately, students are encouraged to see themselves as victims—albeit ‘unknowing victims’—through victimisation for which we should all bear some responsibility ‘through [our] compliance, support, consumption and complacency’ (p. 175).

Part III (the master’s tools and beyond) examines the involvement of laws and regulations in the crimes of the powerful. Chapter 12 analyses their successes and limitations in controlling such crimes and harms. The chapter also examines the importance of protest in control and yet recognises that it can be neutralised, thereby legitimating the status quo. The final substantive chapter, chapter 13, mounts the inverse argument of the law as complicit in the violence perpetrated by the powerful. The laws of warfare permit war, just as legal and (in the US) constitutional sanction of the corporate form permits corporate actors to exert extreme political influence. The conclusion returns to the themes of collective victimisation and most particularly collective complicity. In the final section, Rothe and Kauzlarich anticipate the students’ concern for what they can do. Prefaced by reference to the dialectic, alienation and false consciousness, they argue that the way forward is ‘about people of good faith respecting one another and putting human needs before profit, ego, and self. Capitalism is inconsistent with any of these’ (p. 243).

This is a wide-ranging, at times intriguing, thought-provoking and frustrating book. The strength of the work is the way it directs students to resist classification and categorisation both of the crimes and harms and ways these might be tackled. This is achieved by juxtaposing contrasting vantage points: from analysing actions of individuals that support or fail to challenge corporate behaviour at a micro level to reviewing systemic connections between actors at a more macro scale and by exploring and critiquing disparate viewpoints held by corporations, states and victims. This device complicates an easy narrative and duality drawn between vice and virtue. In doing so, it contains echoes of earlier analyses around ambiguity and its central defining feature of what was then simply termed as white-collar crime (Aubert 1952; Carson 1980).

There are challenges, though, both in setting the book as a text and in understanding its place as an academic contribution in its own right. To an extent, it can be understood to satisfy both these roles. However, at times the scope was too broad and the analysis too scant. As a text, it was not clear what level of student was anticipated as the reader for this text since exposition of the mechanics of both theory and method is assumed and not included. Debates within method and theory (for example, what constitutes neoliberalism) are often lacking. Further, the volume of rich examples could overwhelm conceptual analysis. Greater teasing out of the key elements of specific significance for fewer examples within each chapter and overall conceptual framing referring back to the foundations section was needed. Generalisation risked unhelpful conflation; for example, between privatisation and deregulation, which begged for a tighter analysis. The patterns of regulation in specific areas over time and between jurisdictions have much to tell. Generalisations were substantiated by reference to detail that could seem somewhat idiosyncratic. Nonetheless, some detail was impressive, particularly when it drew on the authors’ own research. But errors (such as in the analysis of the Australian energy system) raised doubt over other examples. More systematic (yet still succinct) summaries that captured in greater detail the key lessons from each chapter would have been a great benefit.

The issues raised in *Crimes of the Powerful* should be debated and discussed within criminology itself, in criminologically informed public debate and, critically, with our students. This book, through both its strengths and weaknesses, demonstrates the enormity of such a task.

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