*Please edit to improve the caliber of language and also format the in-text citations according to APA or other widely-used style guide (specify which)*

Recent decades have been witness to headline stories about white collar crimes in Israel and elsewhere, exemplified by Nochi Dankner’s illegal stock manipulation in Israel and Bernie Madoff’s Ponzi scheme by in the USA. In the wake of these crimes, segments of the population have called for more severe punishments in the hope that such change would prove to be a more effective deterrent (Holtfreter et al., 2008; Huff et al., 2010).

No single definition of white-collar crime exists, nor is there a consensus regarding its interpretation (Ragatz & Fremouw, 2010). Ever since the term was coined by Sutherland (1939) various definitions have been suggested, attesting to the complexity of the phenomenon. According to Mann (1990), the term “white-collar offender” suggests a prototype based on a group of parameters: the privileged status of the offender, abuse of position, use of camouflage and deception, economic damage, and perpetration of the crime in an organizational framework or in private. Although these parameters define the phenomenon, the absence of any one of them does not necessarily alter the fundamental nature of the prototype.

Over time attempts have been made to identify subtypes of white-collar criminals. Friedrichs (2009) makes a distinction between organizational or corporate crime, which is oriented to promoting the interests of an organization, and occupational crime, which is committed in a professional capacity for the sake of personal gain. Avocational crimes are related to white-collar crimes, but are committed outside of an occupational context (Menard et al., 2011). Examples include insurance fraud, credit card fraud, and tax evasion.

The present article refers to the white-collar (organizational or occupational) felon who is a member of society's privileged elite and abuses his senior position to commit and conceal financial crime (Logan et al., 2017; Sutherland, 1983; Van Onna et al., 2014). The offences that are normally associated with this category include fraud, blackmail, falsification of official documents, embezzlement, money laundering, breach of trust by means of bribery, insider trading, illegal stock manipulation, tax offences, and computer crimes.

White-collar offenders of the above type generally hold positions that provide them with an opening for committing their crime. Unlike blue-collar crimes, the victims in these cases are faceless, since there is rarely any physical contact between perpetrator and victim (Soltes, 2016). White-collar crimes are usually sophisticated, with few complainants and a host of anonymous collaborators. Discovery of the felony takes a relatively long time since there is a tendency to wrap up such cases within the organizations themselves. Law enforcement agents are therefore unsuccessful in exposing most of the crimes, and even if they do succeed, sometimes find it difficult to make a conviction (Marriott, 2018; Xie, 2015). When convictions are eventually made the perpetrators suffer the ignominy of sullied reputations (Marriott, 2018).

Various estimates have been proposed with respect to the propensity for perpetration of white-collar crimes. Some claim that propensity is low relative to other crimes (e.g., Ben Zvi & Volk, 2011), though others estimate a high percentage of recidivism. Weisburd et al. (2001), for example, examined criminal dossiers on white-collar criminals and found that a high percentage of them were habitual offenders.