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## **On the Parallels between Studies of Green and State Crimes.**

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### **Introduction**

The goal of this brief essay is to acknowledge the parallels between green and state crime research. Green criminologists should attend to whether or not the particular green issue they are working on might be framed simultaneously as both a green *and* state crime. That is, moving forward, green crime scholars whose work intersects with environmental harms, social harms and state actions or inactions should strive for a “green crime/state crime” synthesis. Ideally, this essay will hold interest to established green crime researchers, but I am especially hopeful that young researchers new to the green crime discipline will find this essay informative and potentially helpful as they seek to develop their own green crime scholarship.

## **Towards a Green Crime/State Crime Synthesis**

The origins of both green and state crime studies can be traced to the rise of critical and radical criminology in the 1960s (Chambliss et al. 2010; Lynch 1990; Yar 2012). It is fair to say, without belaboring the point, that these anti-establishment roots with foci on issues of environmental and social justice intimately link the two fields of study with one another.

For example, researchers within both the green and state crime disciplines perform work that transcends criminological orthodoxy. That is, rather than focus on the typical criminological fodder, e.g., Chambliss' (2010:xiii) "nuts, sluts, perverts and drug addicts", criminologists of the environment and the state choose instead to explore a range of issues that are not necessarily "criminal", but perhaps should be (Brisman & South 2012; Chambliss et al. 2010; Lynch & Stretesky 2011; Rothe & Mullins 2011; South 2006; White 2008). The overall perspective evidenced in this non-orthodox approach to the study of crime, mutually shared between the fields of green and state crime, is one in which a distrust for power and especially for the efficacy of laws that disproportionately favor the powerful and their systems of governance and economy is paramount.

Those people, academics and non-academics alike, who have found themselves drawn to issues within both fields of study undoubtedly recognize, or at least have an implicit feeling, that the reason they are attracted to both is because the two areas of study are more similar than dissimilar. One useful method of highlighting this point is by noting that many issues now studied separately by green and state criminologists were formerly subsumed under the broader category of white-collar crime (Lynch 1990; Mullins & Kauzlarich 2000). That is, before scholars like Bill Chambliss (1988/1989) and Michael Lynch (1990) clearly articulated distinct intellectual spaces for their respective fields of state and green crime, the subjects those fields now claim ownership over were haphazardly lumped together with all sorts of other harmful, deviant or criminal acts involving wrongdoing by people or organizations in positions of power. It is certainly beneficial that we now have

dedicated bodies of scholarship, and even research institutes, for each field separate from the other.

Still, both disciplines would benefit from studies that specifically articulate the linkages between them, through for instance, the presentation and analysis of what I like to call “green-state” crimes. “Green-state” crimes are events where some grievous environmental harm leads to equally devastating social harms/injuries through the action or inaction of the state and its representatives in the pursuit of some state goal or policy. The green crime/state crime syntheses I advocate for should be easy enough for researchers to achieve, since so many green and state crime studies already intersect but without necessarily acknowledging their high degree of interconnectedness.

For example, Cruciotti & Matthews (2006) presented their analysis of the Exxon-Valdez oil spill as a state-corporate crime, e.g., a criminally harmful act caused by state and corporate collusion and/or negligence. Green criminologists could have easily framed this same event as a significant green crime. Additionally, Hazel Croall (2007; 2012) analyzed “food” crimes and Reece Walters (2007) investigated the regulation of radioactive waste in the U.K. In each of those cases, the author’s framed their issues as green crimes, not explicitly as state crimes, even though state actions and inactions were prominent aspects in both narratives.

Few studies in either green or state criminology actually frame issues simultaneously as both state *and* green crimes, despite the fact that many times the most egregious state crimes involve “green” issues, e.g., environmental harm, pollution, species destruction. Looking back through the historical record presents many examples in which a colonizing power inflicted massive environmental harms that in turn created significant social injuries, especially among indigenous peoples. There is little doubt that similar events continue to occur in our contemporary world. The green and state crime literature would benefit from more explicit green-state crime syntheses.

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