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Explaining Environmentalism among the Rural Indigenous Poor in the Developing World: Is Post-Materialism Involved?

Amelia Taylor
Illinois Wesleyan University

Abigail Jahiel, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

Kathleen Montgomery, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Poster Presentation 49

**EXPLAINING ENVIRONMENTALISM AMONG THE RURAL INDIGENOUS
POOR IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD: IS POST-MATERIALISM INVOLVED?**

Amelia Taylor and Abigail Jahiel* and Kathleen Montgomery*
Department of Political Science, Illinois Wesleyan University

This project questions the applicability of Ronald Inglehart's dominant theory of post-materialism to environmentalism in the developing world. My research focuses on rural indigenous groups that are actively fighting for environmental protection. However, these rural indigenous people do not fit the criteria that Ronald Inglehart theorizes that one must fit into in order to be an environmentalist. He argues that environmentalism develops in a society when high levels of affluence and education are achieved. In other words, only those who have their basic material needs met have the luxury of concerning themselves with issues like environmentalism.

Case studies of poor rural indigenous groups are utilized in order to question this theory. I argue that these communities have a different relationship with the environment, and that this relationship cannot hope to be explained by a theory that centers around the urbanized West. This is due in part to their dependence on a healthy environment for survival. However, I also argue that their concern for the environment goes further than simple "materialism." These groups have strong cultural and religious ties to the land, which are not considered by Inglehart's theory. These values are demonstrated through the struggles these groups are facing by outside forces whose interests will harm the quality of their environment.

This qualitative analysis includes case studies of three different groups. They include: the Penan people of Malaysia who are fighting to save their land from loggers, the Greenbelt movement of Kenya in which rural women have started a local tree planting campaign to protect their troubled environment, and the Kayapo people of Brazil who are fighting to save their lands from mineral extractors and logging interests.