

THREE ESSAYS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation extends our understanding of the relationships among economic growth, the environment and well-being. The first essay examines whether, and to what extent, individual perceptions about the seriousness or otherwise of poor local and global environmental quality influence their happiness. The empirical results indicate that while both local and global environmental quality measures diminish happiness for residents of developed countries, only poor local environmental quality measures have a negative effect on the well-being of people in developing countries. The second essay explores the role of perceived socioeconomic status as a predictor of environmental concern. The results suggest conclusively that in addition to being more likely to choose environmental protection over economic growth and job creation, people who perceive themselves as belonging to the working class, lower middle, upper middle and upper class are significantly more willing to make income sacrifices (i.e., give part of their income and/or agree to pay higher taxes) to prevent environmental pollution than those who believe they are in the lower class in both developed and developing countries. Finally, the third essay studies the relationship between economic growth and air pollution within the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) framework. Aside from testing for EKCs for carbon dioxide (CO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀), it compares turning point incomes for these air pollutants for developed and developing countries.