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# The Political Psychology of Environmental Civil Resistance

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# The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy

2017 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

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**Research Panel:** Inequalities, Rights, and Sustainable Development

**Presenter:** Stephen Arves, University of Maryland

**Title:** The Political Psychology of Environmental Civil Resistance

**Abstract:**

What persuades individuals to support environmental civil resistance? More specifically, how do emotions and message frames shape support? Despite the recent focus on the political psychology of environmental attitudes, less research has considered the motivations behind environmental civil resistance support. This warrants attention because much of the environmental movement occurs outside of conventional political participation channels (i.e. voting) and instead employs tactics such as nonviolent demonstrations and petition signing.

Furthermore, the environmental movement needs to attract considerable support and participation for these tactics to be successful. Given these considerations, this project aims to explain how emotions (fear or anger), message frames (principled or pragmatic commitments to nonviolence), efficacy (individual and group), and identification with the environmental movement influence support for environmental civil resistance.

I predict that anger, pragmatic messages, high individual and group efficacy, and self-identification with the environmental movement all positively impact willingness to support and participate in environmental civil resistance.

I conduct an original 2 (emotion: anger/fear) x 2 (frame: pragmatic/principled) factorial design survey experiment to test this argument. I administer this survey to a national sample of US participants in the days leading up to the People's Climate March to better understand environmental civil resistance support.

**About the presenter:**

Stephen Arves is an instructor and PhD candidate in the Department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland. He holds a master's from the same program and a bachelor's in political science from the University of St. Thomas. His research examines human rights and civil resistance from a political psychology perspective. Arves teaches courses on environmental politics, comparative politics, and political theory.