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HOW COMPATIBLE ARE ETHNOBOTANICAL KNOWLEDGE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT? A CASE STUDY FROM THE TSIMANE' AMERINDIAN, BOLIVIA

Knowledge of plants has accumulated over generations to help people protect their nutrition and health and manage their habitats. The possibility that ethnobotanical knowledge may be rapidly and widely lost in response to integration of indigenous peoples to the market economy has become a concern of scholars and policy-makers. If ethnobotanical knowledge vanishes with economic development, then economic development comes at the cost of losing humanity's heritage and diversity. We test how various forms of integration to the market economy correlate with ethnobotanical knowledge. We hypothesize that only economic activities that take individuals out of their culture and environment correlate with the loss of ethnobotanical knowledge. To explore the topic, we draw on information from 476 Tsimane' – a foraging-horticultural society in the Bolivian Amazon. In contrast to previous studies that only measure theoretical ethnobotanical knowledge, here we also measure skills that draw on ethnobotanical knowledge. We find that participation in wage labor correlates with less ethnobotanical skills, but not with less theoretical ethnobotanical knowledge. We also find that the sale of forest or farm products correlates with more ethnobotanical skills and with more theoretical ethnobotanical knowledge. Our findings have important policy implications: economic development and preservation of ethnobotanical knowledge might be simultaneously achieved *only if* economic development takes place through activities that keep people in their habitat and culture. The challenge lies in finding and promoting local forms of development that do not undermine ethnobotanical knowledge. *Research supported by the National Science Foundation (BCS-0134225; BCS-0322380) and the Wenner-Gren Foundation (Gr-7250).*