

The cost of humanity:

More positive attitudes towards humanity curtail concern for animals and nature



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The atrocious effects of climate change concern both humans and animals. Yet, the intergroup dynamic between humans and animals may drive humans to favor humans over animals, thereby bringing more harm to both parties in the long run.

The current research assessed whether positive attitudes towards humanity exacerbated such tendencies.

Study 1 – Attitudes

Research Question:

Are positive attitudes toward humanity and social dominance orientation associated with speciesism?

Sample: 310 online volunteers from the US and UK (aged 16-72, 80% female)

Results: Humanity esteem is associated with negative attitudes toward animals, even after controlling for social dominance orientation.

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Speciesism			
	Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
Step 1:	Social Dominance	0.36	6.83**
Step 2:	Social Dominance	0.34	6.44**
** <i>p</i> < .01	Humanity Esteem	0.16	2.94**

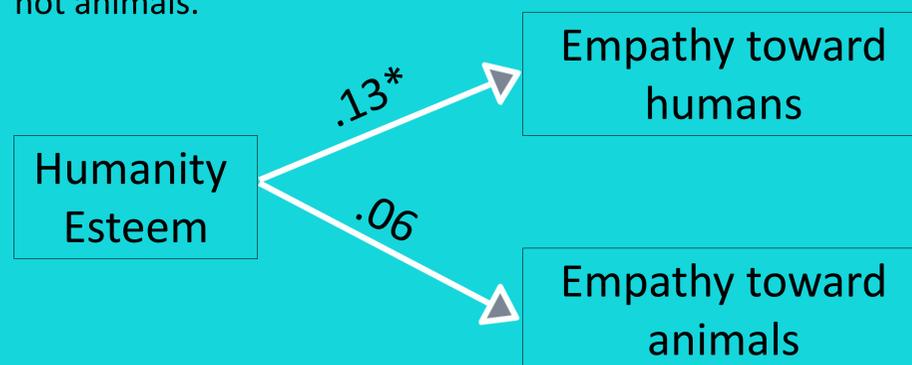
Study 2 – Empathy

Research Question:

Do positive attitudes toward humanity predict empathy toward humans and animals?

Sample: 216 online volunteers from the US and UK (aged 18-69, 82% female)

Results: Humanity esteem predicts empathy toward humans, but not animals.



Study 3 - Cognitive Choices

Research Question:

Do positive attitudes toward humanity affect how people decide whether or not to cut aid programs for humans and animals?

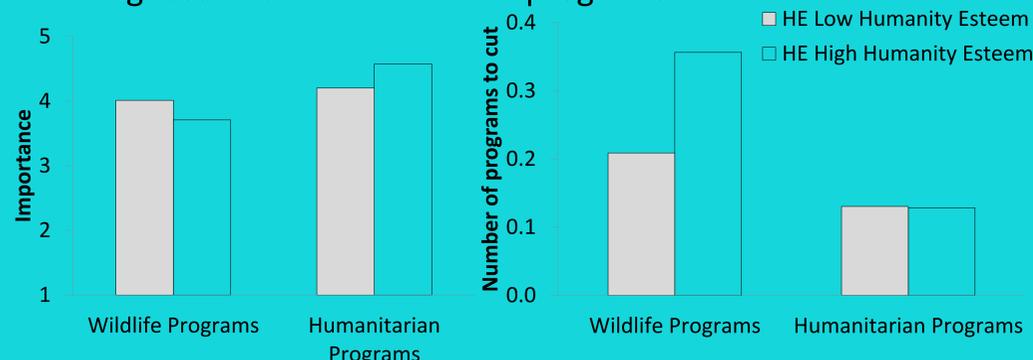
Sample: 136 University of Southampton students (aged 17-39, 85% female)

Results:

Importance – Individuals with lower (vs. higher) humanity esteem placed significantly more importance on nature-related programs. Individuals with higher (vs. lower) humanity esteem placed significantly more importance on humanitarian programs.

Results:

Choice – Individuals with lower (vs. higher) humanity esteem chose to cut less nature-related programs. Individuals with lower and higher levels of humanity esteem showed a similar level of willingness to cut humanitarian programs.



Individuals with higher humanity esteem exhibited stronger outgroup derogation against animals and stronger ingroup favouritism towards humans by showing more empathy and stronger preferential bias to humans rather than animals.

To cultivate long-term, mutual co-existence between humans and animals, it may be wise to promote communication that incorporate animals and nature as part of the ingroup and respect the need of humans and animals more equally.

