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Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 46(0)

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Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed

Conceptualizations of the human-nature relationship as a predictor of pro-environmental attitudes and behavior

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Abstract

This study examines how mental models of the Human-Nature Relationship (HNR) predict pro-environmental behavioral intentions directly and mediated through anthropocentric and biocentric environmental attitudes. We found that behavioral intentions relevant to environmental protection were directly predicted by two aspects of HNR: human superiority beliefs (negatively) and perceived human impact on nature (positively). Protection intentions were also indirectly predicted by these variables, as well as perceived impact of nature on humans (positively) via their association with biocentric attitudes (SRMR= 0.040). In contrast, no component of HNR directly predicted behavioral intentions relevant to environmental investment, although all three showed the same pattern of indirect association via biocentric attitudes (SRMR= 0.036). Results suggest that mental models of the human-nature relationship provide a cognitive foundation for environmental behavioral intentions both directly and through their association with environmental attitudes. These findings have implications for pro-environmental interventions that deal with conceptual and attitudinal change.