

# College of Science and Mathematics

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***In our own image: Do images of endangered apes with humans, and human artifacts, negatively impact perception regarding their conservation status?***

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*All four nonhuman Great Ape species, bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans, are endangered in the wild. Their greatest threat is human activity resulting in habitat destruction, poaching, and the illegal pet trade. In response, there are a number of sanctuaries and other organizations that are dedicated to Great Ape conservation. Social media platforms provide these organizations with a fast and effective formula for displaying information to many individuals. Photographs and videos of Great Apes are often used to promote awareness of the species. Frequently, however, these images portray individual apes with human artifacts or in human contexts (e.g. wearing hats or sunglasses, laying on a couch, etc.). Images such as these can be engaging to an audience and can serve individual organizations' missions by motivating people to care and thereby increasing resources for much-needed conservation efforts. However, preliminary research has suggested that displaying nonhuman apes in human contexts or with human artifacts may, in fact, give the impression that they make good pets and are not endangered, promoting the illegal trading of the Apes. This project aims to determine if individuals' perceptions of the conservation of Great Apes are influenced by the images of Great Apes that they see. Human subjects will be presented with images of chimpanzees in human/nonhuman contexts as well as with, and without, human artifacts and asked to respond to a number of questions regarding their suitability as pets and conservation status. The goal is to determine if some imagery of nonhuman great apes, used by the very organizations that aim to conserve them, may actually be detrimental to Great Ape conservation.*

