COVID-19 Reduced Age Differences in Social Motivation

Online Supplemental Materials

In the supplemental material, we provided additional measures and results.

METHOD

We measured the extent to which participants thought about the meaning of life in the four samples: "How often, if at all, have you thought about the meaning and purpose of life in the past week?", 1 = *often*; 4 = *never*). The question was taken from the World Values Survey (Inglehart et al., 2018).

RESULT

Thinking about the meaning and purpose of life. We reverse-coded the scale so higher numbers indicate greater tendencies to question the meaning and purpose of life. In the first pandemic phase survey, there was not a significant difference by age in the tendency to think about meaning and purpose of life ($F(2, 251) = 1.29$, $p = .278$) or the pandemic phase replication survey in 2020 ($F(2, 574) = 1.29$, $p = .276$); nor were age differences observed during the first survey deployed during the vaccination phase ($F(2, 524) = 0.10$, $p = .90$), at the point when 23% of the population had been vaccinated. Age differences were observed in the fourth survey ($M_{young} = 3.14$, $M_{middle-aged} = 3.00$, $M_{old} = 2.89$, $F(2, 487) = 4.25$, $p = .015$) after vaccines had become available to all. In the fourth survey, younger adults ($M_{young} = 3.14$) were more likely to question the meaning of life than older adults ($M_{old} = 2.89$, $t(340) = 2.86$, $p = .004$). There were no differences between middle-aged and older adults ($t(279) = 1.17$, $p = .24$), or between younger and middle-age adults ($t(355) = 1.66$, $p = .098$). As previous research has demonstrated, younger adults typically question the meaning of life more than older adults (Alter and

Hershfield, 2014); these results suggest that as vaccines became widely available, younger adults' preferences gradually resumed to the pre-pandemic level.

Additional References

Alter, A. L., and Hershfield, H. E. (2014). People search for meaning when they approach a new decade in chronological age. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111(48), 17066-17070.

Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2018. World Values Survey: Round Six - Country-Pooled Datafile. Madrid, Spain & Vienna, Austria: JD Systems Institute & WVSA Secretariat. doi.org/10.14281/18241.8