

Values and Decisions in the Time of COVID-19

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Background Information

- Previous research has shown changes in people's value-judgements and risk-taking behaviors following major sudden, and short-term disasters (Västfjäll et al., 2014).
- Effects of ongoing disasters have not yet been explored.

Study Objective

- Through an adaptation of Västfjäll, et al.'s (2014) experimental design, this study will assess changes in risk-perception and value-judgements over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The priming condition will give us the opportunity to observe the effects of pandemic-related mental processes between the two groups.

Experimental Design & Procedure

- Participants are randomly assigned to either an experimental (priming) or control group.
- Priming Condition
Participants asked to write the first three images that came to mind when hearing the word "COVID-19".
- Control Condition
Participants asked to write the first three images that came to mind when hearing the neutral word "round".
- Following the method described in Västfjäll et al. (2014), participants complete a series of life, value, and judgment measures.

References

Västfjäll, D., Peters, E., & Slovic, P. (2014). The affect heuristic, mortality salience, and risk: Domain-specific effects of a natural disaster on risk-benefit perception. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 55, 527–532.

Anticipated Results

- By priming participants, their affect and thoughts associated with the pandemic will be more salient relative to controls.
- We hypothesize that participants in the COVID priming condition will:
 - Think that taking chances is generally less beneficial, carrying greater risks for fewer rewards.
 - Think it is *less valuable* to invest in the long term, by taking care of their health, pursuing career goals, or making financial investments.
 - Think it is *more valuable* to invest in their self-worth, by devoting time to social relationships and giving to charity.