

The Meaning in Life and the Content of Mental Images of Temporal Mental Simulations in Poles and Americans

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Abstract : Experiencing the meaning of life is widely recognised as a vital element of well-being and central human motivation. Studies have shown that a higher meaning of life is associated, among other things, with a higher quality of life, higher levels of happiness and better declared health. The subject of the study is the meaning in life measured with The Meaning in Life Questionnaire and the presence of such emotions as nostalgia, awe and hope, and the content of imaginations measured after temporal mental simulations in Americans and Poles. The respondents had to imagine themselves in future, in 40 years and describe two events that would take place at that time. Next, participants assessed the importance of the events described by them, recognised whether during their journey through time they felt awe, hope and nostalgia, and answered the questionnaire examining the meaning in life. 204 (102 from Poland 102 from the USA) people aged 21 to 60 participated in the study. The study checked whether there were differences in the content of the imaginations of the respondents from Poland and USA, and whether there were statistically significant difference between the declared sense of meaning in life among participants from both countries. The result of the study hane shown that there were no differences in the overall result obtained by the participants in The Meaning in Life Questionnaire , while there were statistically significant differences among the subscales of the questionnaire. It turned out that Americans have a higher presence of meaning in life than Poles, but they obtained lower results in searching of meaning in life. Studies have also shown that there was a statistically significant difference between Poles and Americans in feeling awe after a mental simulation. Poles felt higher level of awe. Images about the future differed between Poles and Americans. Poles judged that the events they described were very important to them. Interestingly, the content of American participants' imaginations was dominated by topics related to the future of the world, ecology and world peace. There were also ideas about nice moments spent with friends and family. Among Poles, ideas related to professional career and development as well as family events dominated. Research shows that despite the lack of differences in the general meaning in life, Poles are more focused on searching for meaning in life than Americans. The study shows interesting differences between the two cultures.

Keywords : meaning in life, mental simulations, imaginations, temporal mental simulations, future, cultural differences

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