



# Emerging from the COVID-era

## How is this time shaping our worldviews?

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Sociologists tell us that our worldview is typically formed between eight and twelve years of age. In this COVID-Era time, that makes me wonder what worldview elementary and junior high students will have as they move through life following this pandemic. I know that this pandemic time has certainly affected me. I can only imagine what those who are 8 to 12 years of age must be experiencing, feeling and living.

I know how strongly this worldview phenomenon is lived out in people's lives. My father would regularly talk about being someone who grew up during The Depression. It shaped his perspective on food (always finishing his plate!) and his hesitancy towards buying new clothes ("these aren't worn out yet"). But he also demonstrated a deep understanding of how inter-dependent we need to be: that everyone contributes what they can, you help out someone who is stranded, and you always provide a meal to someone in need.

Those who grew up during the Second World War developed a very different worldview. Danger was "over there" but very real and threatening to "our way of life." They endured years of hardship and communal sacrifice, and mourned the death of so many young people. The Cold War years shifted the worldview once again. The unseen enemy, the threat of nuclear annihilation, bombing drills being held in schools, a sense of loss at not being able to control anything — these things shape how one encounters, and lives in, the world.

"The 60s" are often referred to as a time where chasms opened up between old and new, bedrock institutions were being challenged and also ignored, a lack of trust in leaders was expanding, and outrage at social injustices led to renewed activism and a call for transformational change.

The sheer size of the Boomer generation and its ongoing tsunami effect on anything from pension plans to housing availability, from political influence to attitudes of privilege, are readily visible today. Generation X (born in 1967 and following, according to many sociologists) has had to live in the shadow of the Boomers. The Millennial generation, as well as Y and Z, grew up in a rapidly changing world, extensive globalization, increasing social justice awareness, and an understanding of the power of the individual to affect social change. The shift away from institutionalism has continued, but a focus on relationships, meaning, and being change agents characterizes much of their worldview.

Perhaps my understanding of all of these cohorts is somewhat limited, but I wanted to lift up a few of these defining characteristics as way to help us think about the current generation of 8 to 12 year olds. Will fear of the stranger dominate their thinking? How will the prohibitions on physical touch and social gathering affect them? What does community mean, both virtually and in-person? What will it mean for their ongoing relationships with grandparents, extended family, and their peers? Yet at the same time, we read about the incredible resilience of young people and of how adaptable they are. They seem to easily live in the virtual and the non-virtual world. Such attributes might mitigate the effects of lockdowns, isolation, and the threat of "the other," but perhaps they will not.

How we move out of this COVID-Era of restrictions and isolation will also have a tremendous effect on the long-term worldview for all of us. Will we have a renewed appreciation for gathering and for community? Will we have greater empathy for those suffering and those who mourn? Will rituals become more meaningful? Will we think through what is truly of value and meaning?