

**To Wear or Not to Wear a Face Covering:  
Understanding Socioemotional Factors that Predict Sustained Adherence to Novel  
Behaviors for the Prevention of COVID-19**

PI: Barbara L. Fredrickson, Ph.D., Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

With no vaccines on the near horizon, correct and consistent use of face coverings by ordinary citizens is essential for mitigating the spread of COVID-19. As stay-at-home mandates expire, tensions grow (both between and within individuals) between the opposing desires to return to familiar and “normal” public behavior versus the adoption of novel, effortful, and inconvenient public behaviors like wearing face coverings and maintaining 6’ apart from others. In addition, face coverings conceal smiles and other subtle facial cues that disrupt—and perhaps inadvertently reduce—friendly public interactions among community members. Psychological theory predicts that such disruptions and/or reductions will erode communal virtues—dispositions such as felt unity, empathy, and altruism. Paradoxically, then, face coverings may both protect the greater common good of public health and at the same time also undermine communal virtues that are vital for motivating citizens to protect the greater common good.

The aim of this project is twofold: (1) To test whether, in a nationally representative sample, communal virtues predict sustained adherence to novel behaviors undertaken to limit viral transmission (e.g., wearing face coverings, maintaining 6’ apart, washing hands); and (2) To test whether a 4-week tech-based behavioral intervention to increase the warmth and friendliness of safe, public interactions can protect and/or strengthen communal virtues and in turn promote sustained adherence to novel behaviors for the prevention of COVID-19.

Proposed Budget for June-December 2020:

EHRA Salary	\$22,332
SHRA Salary	\$0
Grad Student	\$25,320
Temps	\$0
Fringe Pool	\$12,390
Non-Personnel Expenses	\$38,516
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$98,558</b>

Funding Note: The PI has also sought external funding for this proposal from the National Science Foundation (rejected), and from two private foundations that support the science of virtue: The John Templeton Foundation (decision pending) and The Templeton World Charity Foundation (decision pending). Should Foundation funding become available, a matching or cost-sharing arrangement would be sought.