

The idea

- Facemasks signal a sense of social and cultural solidarity by putting other people's health first
- Facemask-wearers are seen as more trustworthy, competent, and a more reliable source of advice (Cartaud et al., 2020; Olivera-La Rosa et al., 2020; Klucarova, 2021)
- **The idea:** Facemasks with a solidarity-related cultural symbol can increase positive social perceptions, beyond other masks.
- These facemask are a potential vehicle to promote solidarity, trust behaviors, and collective resilience by affecting people's malleable social perceptions

Why would facemasks with a solidarity-related cultural symbol increase positive social perceptions?

- When people are reminded that they belong to a social group (“I am a British national”), they use this social identity to define themselves and others, and act according to the group’s norms and values

(social identity approach; Reicher et al., 2010)

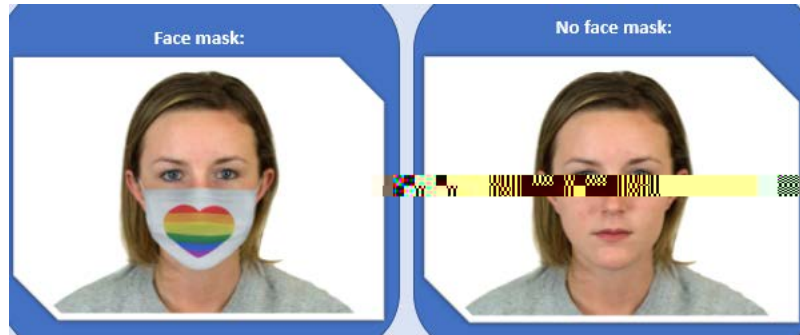
- Facemasks that activate a solidarity-related social identity (e.g., national) can activate cultural values (“we are one people”) and norms such as mutual trust
=> “I trust my fellow people more now that I think of my national identity”.

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Our findings

- Study 1



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Our findings

- Study 3



- NHS and surgical facemask led to comparable increases in social perceptions when death awareness was low
- When death awareness was high, NHS (vs. surgical) facemask exposure led to greater increases in positive social perceptions.
- Overall, wearing facemasks with solidarity-related cultural symbols can increase solidarity, in some cases more so than surgical facemasks

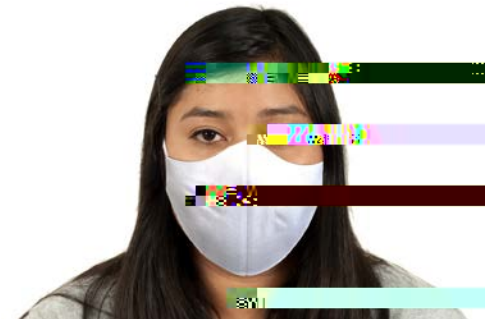
Potential practical implications

Facemasks as a vehicle for shaping people's psychological perceptions

- The delivery of public health messages for targeted social groups
- Promoting positive intergroup relations in settings of potential social conflict such as protests and sport events
- Preventing abuse towards medical staff
- Use in educational settings?

What's next?

- Going beyond basic effect:
 - Does identification with the targeted ingroup mediate the relationship between facemask exposure and social perceptions?
- Comparing to same mask with no symbol
- Does effect depend on death/Covid-19 awareness?
- Other directions?



Thank you



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Perach, R., & Limbu, M. (under review). Can culture beat Covid-19? Evidence that facemasks with cultural symbols increase solidarity.

