**Peer Review History**

**Ms Title:** Three pillars of physical distancing: Anxiety, prosociality, and rule compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Author Names:** Mathias Twardawski, Lena Steindorf, Isabel Thielmann

**Submitted:** Sep 30, 2020

**Editor First Decision—Revise & Resubmit**

**Dec 21, 2020**

Dear Mathias Twardawski,

I have now received all reviews of your manuscript, “Three pillars of physical distancing: Anxiety, prosociality, and rule compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic” from qualified researchers. I also independently read the manuscript before consulting these reviews. I agree that your manuscript has important strengths and also that there are some issues that need to be addressed. I therefore encourage you to submit a revised version for further consideration at Collabra: Psychology.

The reviewers did an outstanding job in their reviews. I will highlight issues I think are particularly salient here. In your resubmission, please include a document with a point-by-point response to both the points I list here and the reviewers’ comments, outlining each change made in your manuscript or providing a suitable rebuttal.

I found myself very much agreeing with both reviews, despite their quite different overall evaluation of your manuscript. That is, I very much agree with Reviewer 1 as to the comparison between responses to covid and to climate change. You have already addressed this to some extent, but I agree that the logic still seems a little flimsy. I likewise agree that the mediator-dependent variable relations might be confounded, as pointed out by Reviewer 1. I won’t reiterate all of Reviewer 1’s points, but I think there are some serious concerns here that need to be addressed. I would like to say, though, that I also concur with Reviewer 1’s appreciation of your sound open science practices.

Reviewer 2 took a very different stance on this manuscript and was, overall, considerably more postive. I will leave it to you to read over the reviews and determine whether you are able to address the issues raised.

I would also like to apologize for the delay in getting a response to you about this time-sensitive topic.

In summary, I think this is a promising manuscript and, I hope you will revise it for further consideration at Collabra: Psychology. I look forward to receiving your revision.

Please ensure that your revised files adhere to our author guidelines, and that the files are fully copyedited/proofed prior to upload. Please also ensure that all copyright permissions have been obtained. This is the last opportunity for major editing, therefore please fully check your file prior to re-submission.

If you have any questions or difficulties during this process, please contact the editorial office at [editorialoffice@collabra.org](mailto:editorialoffice@collabra.org).

We hope you can submit your revision within the next six weeks. If you cannot make this deadline, please let us know as early as possible.

Sincerely,

Beth Visser

# Reviewer 1

##### Open response questions

### **Please write your review here. The author(s) will see this review. Your identity will not be revealed to the authors unless you also include your name (i.e., sign your review) in this box. It is up to you whether to reveal your identity or not, either is fine.**

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper regarding the three pillars of physical distancing. I would like to start by congratulating the authors for engaging in some of the most exemplary open-science practices I have seen. I found all the materials on that were posted by the author team onto the OSF page to be very clear and accessible. I also found the paper to be very clearly written, and of course the subject matter is of importance. Nevertheless, I have several concerns about the paper, both in terms of its framing, and in terms of its results. I articulate these below.

1. I understand that the authors see some correspondence between how individuals should respond to COVID to the benefit of society and how individuals should respond to environmental threats of climate change, to the benefit of society. Footnote 1 rightly acknowledges that this correspondence is far from perfect but I feel that some of the differences between these two dilemmas seemed quite critical to me. Physical distancing – the key behavior of interest here – comes with a very clear direct personal benefit: one will greatly reduce the chances of being infected by the coronavirus. While I agree that we are fundamentally social creatures, I don’t feel that physical distancing is necessarily entirely a negative experience for people, as is implied in the introduction. For example, and admittedly I am basing this on my intuition coupled with anecdotal evidence at best, in addition to being able to avoid catching the virus, physical distancing has meant that people have been able to increase their ‘personal space’ in situations where it was previously lacking (e.g., crowded public transport, elevators, supermarkets). I think a critical distinction here is what it means to physically distance vs. socially distance from others. The latter, by which I mean keeping a physical distance from people one would prefer to be close to, I agree is a big ask of people, but the dependent variable as it was measured does not describe this. Of course, the authors may disagree with my assessment here, in which case, I’d encourage them to identify more evidence to support the claims that physical distancing come at a considerable personal cost and having only weak personal benefits (final paragraph p. 5).
2. In any case, I don’t necessarily think there is a great deal of value in comparing the environmental social dilemmas – where many pro-behaviors do indeed come at a clear personal cost to the actor – to the COVID response. Instead, I’d encourage the authors to consider treating pandemics as special cases that warrant study in their own right; the human race has had to deal with many pandemics in the past, and will deal with many more in the future, and the need to maintain physical distance seems to be a key management strategy option (Christakis, 2020).
3. Perhaps relatively more minor, the rule compliance mechanism did not strike me as very profound – rule followers tend to follow rules.
4. The cross-sectional design is a serious limitation unfortunately. While I can perhaps be convinced that the personality and other trait-like measures are likely exogenous (and indeed, apparently relatively stable during the early phases of the pandemic; Sutin et al., 2020), I am concerned that the mediator-dependent variable relations may be confounded, especially given that both variable sets are retrospectively reported, and two of the mediator comprised the same item text as the dependent variable.
5. I also tend to think that an |r| of .10 is too low of a threshold to consider as relevant. I appreciate both the fact that the authors presumably wanted to pre-register something and the citation of Cohen (1988). However, in the context of a cross-sectional study of self-report measures, where there exist many potential threats of common method variance, that a correlation of .10 is on leaner side.
6. My major concern with the results lies in the descriptive statistics. The dependent variable – physical distancing – had a mean of 5.54 on a scale of 1 to 6. I was curious about the distributions of the items (and again I thank the authors for making this information available to the reviewers), and I noticed that the means ranged from 5.43 to 5.66, and with 94-96% of the sample selecting options 4, 5, or 6. It struck me, then, that this perhaps is not ideally thought of as a continuous variable. Indeed, aside from anchors 1 and 6, the item scale anchors had no labels, and thus it is difficult to conceptualize what the difference between, say a 3 and a 4 or a 4 and a 5 might represent in terms of behaviors. Some might argue that it might barely constitutes a variable at all, per se, given that fewer than 1 person in 40 selected either options 1 or 2. I wondered though whether authors could still frame the low base rate as problematic given the ‘super-spreader’ phenomenon. If that is of interest, I wondered whether the authors might consider investigating this variable dichotomously, or using an approach such as latent profile analyses to identify latent groups. I generally do not condone dichotomizing continuous measures, however in this case, the very strong skew is making me question the true distribution of this variable.
7. Finally, and very sadly, a lot has happened with the pandemic since the study was conducted. Many parts of the world have been inflicted with a devastating second wave and many governments have enacted forced physical and social distancing measures. The authors may wish to consider updating their thinking in light of these changes, or perhaps clarify the context behind them (i.e., being clear about the degree of liberty being afforded [or not] by the government powers).

I wish the authors luck with their research.

References Christakis, N. A. (2020). Apollo’s arrow: The profound and enduring impact of coronavirus on the way we live. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group. Sutin, A. R., Luchetti, M., Aschwanden, D., Lee, J. H., Sesker, A. A., Strickhouser, J. E., . . . Terracciano, A. (2020). Change in five-factor model personality traits during the acute phase of the coronavirus pandemic. PLoS ONE, 15(8), e0237056-e0237056. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0237056

##### Rating scale questions

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong construct validity (good measures and/or manipulations of the constructs the authors wish to study). (Choose “Neutral” if this is not an empirical manuscript) |  | ✔ |  |  |  |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong statistical validity (appropriate statistical tests, assumptions are clear and reasonable, no statistical errors, appropriate statistical inferences, etc.). (Choose “Neutral” if this is not an empirical manuscript) |  | ✔ |  |  |  |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong internal validity (any causal claims or implications are well-justified, alternative explanations are thoroughly considered, etc.). (Choose “Neutral” if this is not an empirical manuscript, or no causal claims are made or even vaguely implied.) | ✔ |  |  |  |  |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong external validity (authors appropriately constrain their conclusions based on the limits of the generalizability of their findings to other contexts (including from lab to real world), other populations, other stimuli or measures, etc.) |  |  | ✔ |  |  |

# Reviewer 2

##### Open response questions

### **Please write your review here. The author(s) will see this review. Your identity will not be revealed to the authors unless you also include your name (i.e., sign your review) in this box. It is up to you whether to reveal your identity or not, either is fine.**

I would like to applaud the authors for writing an interesting manuscript. The response to the global pandemic has received a broad coverage from academics. While this leads to some repetition, the sheer scope and importance of this global crisis invite significant research into the topic so that it can be properly understood. In that light, I feel that the current manuscript has the potential to offer important insights. That said, I do think it could benefit from some suggestions. 1- I am curious about whether rule compliance might relate to Openness to Experience. The circulation of conspiracy theories are one of the tragic hallmarks of the global pandemic. I think this might be an important variable to discuss. Similarly, Extraversion should underly the general desire to be with others (e.g., maintain close proximity). It could very well function as an important covariate for the three pillars mentioned in the study. Finally, Agreeableness is also a visible feature of the response to the pandemic as we are treated to scenes of low-A jerks freaking out on staff and officials. All of these combine to make me think that the authors have done a disservice to focus only on the three pillars with a single trait on each. Is it possible that multiple HEXACAO traits underly each pillar? If not, I’d like an explanation why. In fact, I think a general treatment of these other HEXACO traits would be worthwhile. Even if the authors decide to maintain their current manuscript structure, a couple of paragraphs in the intro and discussion could allow them to at least comment on these other HEXACO traits and their relevance to the questions at hand. 2- This is a comment rather than a critique, but I was quite surprised at the extremely “efficient?” compensation! 100 Euros for 1500 participants is quite low. How long did the study take to complete on average? 3- Those are some pretty poor HEXACO consistencies. What about A, X and O? I know that X had a badly-translated item, but was it otherwise internally consistent? I’ve used the HEXACO-24 before and found alphas ranging from .5 to .7. So it’s definitely not the best personality measure out there. I appreciate the authors’ referral to the de Vries 2013 article’s evidence, but can they offer additional evidence for the validity of this scale? In this regard, there does seem to be some construct validity with another HEXACO COVID scale: Volk, A. A., Brazil, K. J., Franklin-Luther, P., Dane, A. V., & Vaillancourt, T. (2020). The influence of demographics and personality on COVID-19 coping in young adults. Personality and individual differences, 168, 110398.

4- I like the indirect effects but they are presented in a way that seems almost post-hoc or random. Perhaps they were in the original declaration or perhaps they weren’t, but I think they could be more strongly presented as being tied to the theory reviewed in the introduction.

Any other additional sources of construct validity would help allay concerns about the validity of the short-form HEXACO. Otherwise, I think the manuscript is well-written and offers a valuable contribution to the literature. The initial introduction does have a sentence where the authors write “to dispense the number of newly…” and I think “dispense” should be replaced with “reduce” or “mitigate”. But that’s the only writing error that jumped out at me. I encourage the authors to continue their interesting research on this important topic.

##### Rating scale questions

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong construct validity (good measures and/or manipulations of the constructs the authors wish to study). (Choose “Neutral” if this is not an empirical manuscript) |  |  |  | ✔ |  |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong statistical validity (appropriate statistical tests, assumptions are clear and reasonable, no statistical errors, appropriate statistical inferences, etc.). (Choose “Neutral” if this is not an empirical manuscript) |  |  |  |  | ✔ |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong internal validity (any causal claims or implications are well-justified, alternative explanations are thoroughly considered, etc.). (Choose “Neutral” if this is not an empirical manuscript, or no causal claims are made or even vaguely implied.) |  |  |  | ✔ |  |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong external validity (authors appropriately constrain their conclusions based on the limits of the generalizability of their findings to other contexts (including from lab to real world), other populations, other stimuli or measures, etc.) |  |  |  | ✔ |  |

**Author Response**

**Mar 22, 2021**

**Revision notes**

**Reviewer 1:**

1. I understand that the authors see some correspondence between how individuals should respond to COVID to the benefit of society and how individuals should respond to environmental threats of climate change, to the benefit of society. Footnote 1 rightly acknowledges that this correspondence is far from perfect but I feel that some of the differences between these two dilemmas seemed quite critical to me. Physical distancing – the key behavior of interest here – comes with a very clear direct personal benefit: one will greatly reduce the chances of being infected by the coronavirus. While I agree that we are fundamentally social creatures, I don’t feel that physical distancing is necessarily entirely a negative experience for people, as is implied in the introduction. For example, and admittedly I am basing this on my intuition coupled with anecdotal evidence at best, in addition to being able to avoid catching the virus, physical distancing has meant that people have been able to increase their ‘personal space’ in situations where it was previously lacking (e.g., crowded public transport, elevators, supermarkets). I think a critical distinction here is what it means to physically distance vs. socially distance from others. The latter, by which I mean keeping a physical distance from people one would prefer to be close to, I agree is a big ask of people, but the dependent variable as it was measured does not describe this. Of course, the authors may disagree with my assessment here, in which case, I’d encourage them to identify more evidence to support the claims that physical distancing come at a considerable personal cost and having only weak personal benefits (final paragraph p. 5).

**Response**

We thank the reviewer for the opportunity to elaborate on this point and see two aspects that warrant discussion here.

First, we agree that the differentiation of physical and social distancing is important. In the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) referred to physical distancing behaviors as “social distancing” but now recommends the use of “physical distancing”, simply because it is not necessary to socially distance from one another in a digital world. In fact, the WHO now encourages continued social interactions (e.g., via telecommunication) during isolation periods resulting from the current pandemic. Consequently, we opted for using the term “physical distancing” in our manuscript.

That said, it should be emphasized that physical distancing not only entails increasing one’s personal space in public situations (e.g., in crowded public transport, elevators, supermarkets) but also increasing physical distance to others in situations in which people actually enjoy (and seek) closeness to others. For example, one item of our physical distancing scale asked participants to indicate the extent to which they cancelled joint activities (e.g., clubs or private parties) – something that is arguably an otherwise joyful activity. Furthermore, engagement in physical distancing generally entails the loss of freedom and autonomy (i.e., the freedom to meet as many people at any time) which also leads to corresponding negative consequences, such as the experience of reactance (Díaz & Cova, 2021). Likewise, there is cumulating evidence showing that distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic are associated with higher levels of loneliness (Heidinger & Richter, 2020; Krendl & Perry, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Stolz et al., 2021; van Tilburg et al., 2020) and an increase in serious mental health problems (e.g., Brooks et al., 2020; Gruber et al., 2020; Marroquín et al., 2020). Consequently, although we generally agree that changes associated with physical distancing in public situations may not necessarily be perceived as negative, physical distancing measures that include reducing (otherwise joyful) social activities arguably come at considerable personal costs. In contrast, physical distancing behavior only entails weak personal benefits (in terms of direct self-protection), especially for those with small risks of experiencing a serious course of the disease if infected (Jin et al., 2021). Empirical support for this reasoning can also be found in other very recent publications on issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Ling & Ho, 2020; Pfattheicher et al., 2020).

To address the reviewer’s comment, we have added further information on the definition of physical distancing (see a brief discussion of the terms social vs. physical distancing on p. 3) and a paragraph explaining that physical distancing can be considered a real-life social dilemma, representing a conflict between individual and collective interests (Johnson et al., 2020; Ling & Ho, 2020) (pp. 6-7). We further discuss the reviewer’s concerns regarding our physical distancing items (and the general reasoning that these behaviors are personally costly) in the discussion section (p. 27).

Second, we agree that the comparison between the current pandemic and the environmental threats resulting from climate change is far from perfect (as already acknowledged in Footnote 1 of our original submission). However, both physical distancing and pro-environmental behavior bear some resemblance (see also Schmidt, 2021, for an in-depth discussion). For example, both crises affect humanity as a whole (although to varying degrees), they both involve uncertainty that may elicit anxiety among people, their development is dependent on individuals’ behavior, and fighting against the crises requires accepting personal restrictions. We therefore maintain that research from environmental psychology can be informative to derive hypotheses about predictors of physical distancing behavior. Nonetheless, we now justify and discuss this comparison (and its shortcomings) more thoroughly in the introduction (pp. 4-5). Moreover, we removed any implications of our findings for the climate crisis.

1. In any case, I don’t necessarily think there is a great deal of value in comparing the environmental social dilemmas – where many pro-behaviors do indeed come at a clear personal cost to the actor – to the COVID response. Instead, I’d encourage the authors to consider treating pandemics as special cases that warrant study in their own right; the human race has had to deal with many pandemics in the past, and will deal with many more in the future, and the need to maintain physical distance seems to be a key management strategy option (Christakis, 2020).

**Response**

We agree that pandemics warrant research in their own right. As outlined above, we now specified and qualified the comparison of the COVID situation with the climate crisis. We further stress that the comparison of the current pandemic with other social dilemmas should not diminish the unique value and importance of research studying pandemics (pp. 4-5).

1. Perhaps relatively more minor, the rule compliance mechanism did not strike me as very profound – rule followers tend to follow rules.

**Response**

To address the reviewer’s comment, we now provide a summary of recent evidence which revealed a mixed picture regarding the rule compliance pillar, thus stressing the need for further investigation, as provided by our study (pp. 7-8). Furthermore, we discuss the practical implications of this pillar more thoroughly in the discussion section (p. 25). Using concrete examples from politics, we suggest that the compliance mechanism can be very useful for understanding and influencing people’s behavior. Consequently, we are confident that rule compliance is a central pillar influencing people’s behavior in the current pandemic that warrants consideration and further investigation.

1. The cross-sectional design is a serious limitation unfortunately. While I can perhaps be convinced that the personality and other trait-like measures are likely exogenous (and indeed, apparently relatively stable during the early phases of the pandemic; Sutin et al., 2020), I am concerned that the mediator-dependent variable relations may be confounded, especially given that both variable sets are retrospectively reported, and two of the mediator comprised the same item text as the dependent variable.

**Response**

We agree that the cross-sectional design and the retrospective questionnaire are limitations that warrant further discussion. As we already discussed in our original manuscript, the correlational design prohibits strong causal claims. In our revised manuscript, we more prominently discuss this method-inherent limitation that particularly dictates caution concerning the interpretability of the exploratory mediation analyses, most prominently for the two motives for physical distancing (self-protection motive and social welfare motive) given the overlap in the items measuring these motives (as mediators) and physical distancing behavior (as dependent variable) (p. 27). Furthermore, the use of retrospective self-reports of participants’ distancing behavior may be subject to socially desirable responding. Importantly, however, recent evidence suggests that the use of self-reports to investigate people’s physical distancing behavior is a valid approach to measure actual distancing behavior (Gollwitzer et al., 2020). Additionally, the self-reported distancing behavior from our study aligns with recent publications showing that most people in fact supported and engaged in physical distancing behavior, in particular during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic (Rosman et al., 2020). That is, we are confident that the physical distancing behavior reported retrospectively in our study can be considered valid measures of actual distancing behavior. Nonetheless, in the Discussion, we now more prominently point readers to these two limitations (pp. 27-28).

1. I also tend to think that an |r| of .10 is too low of a threshold to consider as relevant. I appreciate both the fact that the authors presumably wanted to pre-register something and the citation of Cohen (1988). However, in the context of a cross-sectional study of self-report measures, where there exist many potential threats of common method variance, that a correlation of .10 is on leaner side.

**Response**

While we agree that an |r| of .10 is generally rather small, some scholars even suggest that Cohen’s guidelines may be too strict to be applied in psychological research (Funder & Ozer, 2019; Gignac & Szodorai, 2016). This is because even small effects can have large practical relevance, in particular when considering short- or long-term consequences (Funder & Ozer, 2019). In the current pandemic, even small differences in people’s physical distancing behavior can have considerable consequences for the development of the pandemic due to the so-called super spreader phenomenon (see reviewer comment #6). That is, one single person might substantially influence the spread of the virus. We therefore stuck to this criterion but added a discussion of this decision to the manuscript (p. 18). Importantly, we focused on effect sizes rather than on statistical significance in our interpretation of results throughout both the results and the discussion section.

1. My major concern with the results lies in the descriptive statistics. The dependent variable – physical distancing – had a mean of 5.54 on a scale of 1 to 6. I was curious about the distributions of the items (and again I thank the authors for making this information available to the reviewers), and I noticed that the means ranged from 5.43 to 5.66, and with 94-96% of the sample selecting options 4, 5, or 6. It struck me, then, that this perhaps is not ideally thought of as a continuous variable. Indeed, aside from anchors 1 and 6, the item scale anchors had no labels, and thus it is difficult to conceptualize what the difference between, say a 3 and a 4 or a 4 and a 5 might represent in terms of behaviors. Some might argue that it might barely constitutes a variable at all, per se, given that fewer than 1 person in 40 selected either options 1 or 2. I wondered though whether authors could still frame the low base rate as problematic given the ‘super-spreader’ phenomenon. If that is of interest, I wondered whether the authors might consider investigating this variable dichotomously, or using an approach such as latent profile analyses to identify latent groups. I generally do not condone dichotomizing continuous measures, however in this case, the very strong skew is making me question the true distribution of this variable.

**Response**

We agree that dichotomizing continuous measures results in information loss and therefore refrained from doing so. However, we reran the correlation analyses using Spearman correlations (which, as non-parametric correlation estimators, are arguably more robust when correlating highly skewed variables). This resulted in highly similar results (see updated analyses script and supplemental results on OSF). That said, our skewed data (i.e., most people engaging in protective behavior) is strongly in line with recent publications on distancing behavior during the pandemic (e.g., Rosman et al., 2020). We now discuss the skewed data and the results of the Spearman correlation analyses in our discussion section (pp. 27-28). We also thank the reviewer for pointing us to the super-spreader phenomenon that we now added to our Discussion as a prime reason for studying people’s distancing behavior despite low base rates of negligence (p. 28)

1. Finally, and very sadly, a lot has happened with the pandemic since the study was conducted. Many parts of the world have been inflicted with a devastating second wave and many governments have enacted forced physical and social distancing measures. The authors may wish to consider updating their thinking in light of these changes, or perhaps clarify the context behind them (i.e., being clear about the degree of liberty being afforded [or not] by the government powers).

**Response**

We agree with the reviewer that these new developments are interesting in light of our study and its results. Two aspects of our manuscript are worth highlighting here: First, we already provided a detailed description of the context in which the data has been collected (see methods section). We are confident that this helps readers evaluate our findings, in particular when comparing with related research in the field. Second, we now added a discussion of our study’s context (pp. 28-29), reasoning that pandemic developments and authorities’ decisions (e.g., stronger restrictions) may have an impact on the variables examined in the present research.

**Reviewer 2:**

1. I am curious about whether rule compliance might relate to Openness to Experience. The circulation of conspiracy theories are one of the tragic hallmarks of the global pandemic. I think this might be an important variable to discuss. Similarly, Extraversion should underly the general desire to be with others (e.g., maintain close proximity). It could very well function as an important covariate for the three pillars mentioned in the study. Finally, Agreeableness is also a visible feature of the response to the pandemic as we are treated to scenes of low-A jerks freaking out on staff and officials. All of these combine to make me think that the authors have done a disservice to focus only on the three pillars with a single trait on each. Is it possible that multiple HEXACAO traits underly each pillar? If not, I’d like an explanation why. In fact, I think a general treatment of these other HEXACO traits would be worthwhile. Even if the authors decide to maintain their current manuscript structure, a couple of paragraphs in the intro and discussion could allow them to at least comment on these other HEXACO traits and their relevance to the questions at hand.

**Response**

We thank the reviewer for these interesting thoughts. As shown in the full correlation tables in the supplementary materials, Openness to Experience was not correlated with the rule compliance pillar (*r* = -.02). Likewise, Extraversion was only weakly correlated with physical distancing behavior, not exceeding our threshold of *r* = .10 (*r* = .09). By contrast, Agreeableness was weakly correlated with rule compliance (*r* = .11), as suspected by the reviewer. In any case, we agree that there may be other psychological mechanisms leading people to engage in distancing behavior or refraining from doing so (e.g., the belief in conspiracy theories), besides the three pillars focused on in our submission. Based on the reviewer’s suggestions, we enriched the discussion of potential alternative predictors for physical distancing and for the relations between variables across pillars (p. 26). However, we refrained from changing our framework given the lack of a strong theoretical basis to add other mechanisms (including corresponding personality traits) to our pillars.

1. This is a comment rather than a critique, but I was quite surprised at the extremely “efficient?” compensation! 100 Euros for 1500 participants is quite low. How long did the study take to complete on average?

**Response**

The completion time was approximately 15 minutes. We now added this information on p. 13. As described in our manuscript, we used a large-scale panel to collect our data.

1. Those are some pretty poor HEXACO consistencies. What about A, X and O? I know that X had a badly-translated item, but was it otherwise internally consistent? I’ve used the HEXACO-24 before and found alphas ranging from .5 to .7. So it’s definitely not the best personality measure out there. I appreciate the authors’ referral to the de Vries 2013 article’s evidence, but can they offer additional evidence for the validity of this scale? In this regard, there does seem to be some construct validity with another HEXACO COVID scale:

Volk, A. A., Brazil, K. J., Franklin-Luther, P., Dane, A. V., & Vaillancourt, T. (2020). The influence of demographics and personality on COVID-19 coping in young adults. Personality and individual differences, 168, 110398.

**Response**

We thank the reviewer for pointing us to this literature. Indeed, internal consistencies of the other three HEXACO traits were poor, too (A: Ωt = .53; O: Ωt =.49; X: Ωt =.71). Importantly, however, prior research on the BHI has shown high test-retest stability, self-other agreement, and convergent correlations with the full-length scales from the HEXACO-Personality Inventory-Revised, suggesting satisfactory validity despite relatively low internal consistency (de Vries, 2013). As such, the BHI has been used successfully in previous works (e.g., Garbe et al., 2020).

1. I like the indirect effects but they are presented in a way that seems almost post-hoc or random. Perhaps they were in the original declaration or perhaps they weren’t, but I think they could be more strongly presented as being tied to the theory reviewed in the introduction.

**Response**

Given that we did not preregister these analyses, we presented them as exploratory and deliberately refrained from overselling them. That said, although these analyses were not preregistered in the first place, they closely follow the theoretical reasoning of our framework.

1. Any other additional sources of construct validity would help allay concerns about the validity of the short-form HEXACO.

**Response**

Please see our response to reviewer #2’s third comment.

**References**

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