



Will M. Gervais

CENTRE FOR CULTURE AND EVOLUTION | BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON

Senior Lecturer

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Employment

Senior Lecturer

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON

2020-

Associate Professor

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

2017-2020

Assistant Professor

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

2012-2017

Education

Doctor of Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Social Psychology

2008-12

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Social Psychology

2006-08

Bachelor of Science (Hons., Magna Cum Laude)

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Psychology (Biology, Anthropology)

2001-05

Recent Awards

- 2019 SAGE Young Scholar Early Career Award (top career stage prize in social/personality psychology) *SPSP/FPSP*
- 2018 Daniel M. Wegner Theoretical Innovation Prize (top theory prize in social/personality psychology) *SPSP*
- 2022 Atheism and agnosticism in Europe's Catholic-nationalist 'secularisation outliers' (£177k) *John Templeton Foundation*

Research

I am a cultural and evolutionary psychologist who studies why people believe what they believe about the world. I adopt a dual inheritance (gene-culture coevolution) approach to studying the forces that shape human beliefs. This rich theoretical toolkit can help illuminate many enduring scientific puzzles: How do people's core beliefs (moral, religious, etc.) shape the success or failure of different groups and organizations? Can some religious beliefs foster resilience in the face of economic hardship? Why do people believe or disbelieve in the existence of gods, and what are the consequences of this (dis)belief? What's the deal with atheists, in terms of lay perceptions and scientific realities? What are the best ways to manage and shape the cultural evolution of groups towards desired goals? How can we shift norms and incentives in science? How do culture, evolution, and cognition interact to shape our world?

Research Philosophy

Science is about not only the topics one studies, but also about how one studies them. I've made a deliberate decision to prioritize the empirical quality of my research. To maximize the evidential potential of my studies, I employ large samples and powerful designs. To address generalizability, I supplement research from university samples with more diverse and representative samples. Additionally, as a commitment to research transparency, my materials and data for all work are made freely available. My continued growth as a researcher is at least as important as any empirical results I have published.

Publications

(Data accurate as of August, 2022)

Publications: 60

Total Citations: 5977+

h-index: 32

i10 index: 41

- Hoogeveen, S., Haaf, J. M., Bulbulia, J. A., Ross, R. M., McKay, R., Altay, S., **Gervais, W. M.**, ... & van Elk, M. (2022). The Einstein effect provides global evidence for scientific source credibility effects and the influence of religiosity. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 6(4), 523-535.
- Vohs, K. D., Schmeichel, B. J., Lohmann, S., Gronau, Q. F., Finley, A. J., Ainsworth, S. E., **Gervais, W. M.** ... & Albarracín, D. (2021). A multisite preregistered paradigmatic test of the ego-depletion effect. *Psychological Science*, 32(10), 1566-1581.
- Beheim, B., Atkinson, Q. D., Bulbulia, J., **Gervais, W.**, Gray, R. D., Henrich, J., ... & Willard, A. K. (2021). Treatment of missing data determined conclusions regarding moralizing gods. *Nature*, 595(7866), E29-E34.
- R McCarthy, **W Gervais**, B Aczel, RL Al-Kire, M Aveyard, ... et al. (2021). A multi-site collaborative study of the hostile priming effect. *Collabra: Psychology*, 7.
- **Gervais, W. M.** (2021). Practical methodological reform needs good theory. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(4), 827-843.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, Najle, M. B., & Caluori, N. (2021). The origins of religious disbelief: A dual inheritance approach. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 12(7), 1369-1379.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, McKee, S. E., & Malik, S. (2020). Do religious primes increase risk taking? Evidence against "Anticipating Divine Protection" in two preregistered direct replications of Kupor, Laurin, and Levav (2015). *Psychological Science*, 31, 858-864.
- Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., Golding, J. M., Lynch, K. R., Wasarhaley, N. E., Bainter, S., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2019). Will jurors believe non-believers? Perceptions of atheist rape victims in the courtroom. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*.
- Ross, R. M., Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., **Gervais, W. M.**, Jong, J., Lanman, J. A., McKay, R., & Pennycook, G. (2019). Measuring supernatural belief implicitly using the Affect Misattribution Procedure. *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 1-14.
- Carter, E. C., Schönbrodt, F. D., **Gervais, W. M.**, & Hilgard, J. (2019). Correcting for bias in psychology: A comparison of meta-analytic methods. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 2(2), 115-144.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, & Norenzayan, A. (2018). Analytic atheism revisited. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 2(9), 609-609.
- Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., Najle, M. B., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2019). The illusion of political tolerance: Social desirability and self-reported voting preferences. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 10, 364-373.
- **Will M. Gervais**, Michiel van Elk, Dimitris Xygalatas, Ryan T. McKay, Mark Aveyard, Emma E. Buchtel, Ilan Dar-Nimrod, Eva Kundtová Klocová, Jonathan E. Ramsay, Tapani Riekkki, Annika M. Svedholm-Häkkinen, & Joseph Bulbulia (2018). Analytic atheism: A cross-culturally weak and fickle phenomenon? *Judgment and Decision Making*, 13, 268-274.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, & Najle, M. B. (2018). How many atheists are there? *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 9, 3-10.
- Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., McKee, S., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2018). Atheist horns and religious halos: Mental representations of atheists and believers. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 147, 292-297.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, Xygalatas, D., McKay, R. T., van Elk, M., Buchtel, E. E., Aveyard, M., Schiavone, S. R., Dar-Nimrod, I., Svedholm-Häkkinen, A. M., Riekkki, T., Kundtová Klocová, E., Ramsay, J. E., & Bulbulia, J. (2017). Global evidence of extreme moral distrust of atheists. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 1(8), s41562-017.

- Schiavone, S. R., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2017). Atheists. *Social Psychology and Personality Compass*, e12365.
- Murray, D. R., Kerry, N. T., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2017). On Disease and Deontology: Multiple Tests of the Influence of Disease Threat on Moral Vigilance. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 948550617733518.
- Norenzayan, A., Shariff, A. F., **Gervais, W. M.**, Willard, A. K., McNamara, R. A., Slingerland, E., & Henrich, J. (2016). The cultural evolution of prosocial religions. *Behavioral and brain sciences*, 39.
- Ross, R. M., Pennycook, G., McKay, R. T., **Gervais, W. M.**, Langdon, R, Coltheart, M. (2016). Analytic cognitive style, not delusional ideation, predicts data gathering in a large beads task study. *Cognitive Neuropsychiatry*, 21(4), 300-314.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, & Najle, M. B. (2015). Learned Faith: The influences of evolved cultural learning mechanisms on belief in gods. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 7, 327-335.
- Mudd, T., Ng, B. K. L., Najle, M. B., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2015). The origins of morality: Do concepts of innate morality reduce implicit feelings of distrust towards atheists? *Secularism and Nonreligion*, 4, 10.5334.
- **Gervais, W. M.** (2015). Override the controversy: Analytic thinking predicts endorsement of evolution. *Cognition*, 142, 312-321.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, Jewell, J. A., Najle, M. B., & Ng, B. K. (2015). A powerful nudge? Presenting calculable consequences of underpowered research shifts incentives toward adequately powered designs. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 6, 847-854.
- **Gervais, W. M.** (2015). Mickey, Yahweh, & Zeus: Why cultural learning is essential for the evolutionary study of religion. In Shackelford, T., & Liddle, J. (eds) *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Religion*.
- Najle, M. B., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2015). Dislike of and discrimination against atheists. In Zuckerman, P. (ed) *Beyond Religion*.
- Ng, B. K. L., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2015). Religion and prejudice. Sibley, C. G., & Barlow, F. K. (eds) *The Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Prejudice*.
- Najle, M. B., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2015). The nonreligious in religious societies. Shook, J. & Zuckerman, P. (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*.
- Lund, E. M., Najle, M. B., Ng, B. K. L., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2014). No global kumbayah implied: Religious prosociality as an inherently parochial phenomenon. *Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion*.
- **Gervais, W. M.** (2014). Everything is permitted? People intuitively judge immorality as representative of atheists. *PLoS ONE*, 9, e92302.
- **Gervais, W. M.** (2014). Good for God? Religious motivation reduces perceived responsibility for, and morality of, good deeds. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 143, 1616-1626.
- Norenzayan, A., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2014). Secular rule of law erodes believers' political intolerance of atheists. *Religion, Brain, and Behavior*
- **Gervais, W. M.** (2013). Perceiving minds and gods: How mind perception enables, constrains, and is triggered by belief in gods. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8, 380-394.
- **Gervais, W. M.** (2013). In godlessness we distrust: Using social psychology to solve the puzzle of anti-atheist prejudice. *Social Psychology and Personality Compass*, 7, 366-377.
- Norenzayan, A. & **Gervais, W. M.** (2013). The origins of religious disbelief. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 17, 20-25.
- **Gervais, W. M.** (2013). Religious cognitions. Chapter in V. Saroglou (Ed.), *Religion, personality, and social behavior*. (pp. 71-96). New York: Psychology Press.
- **Gervais, W. M.** & Norenzayan, A. (2013). Religion and the origins of anti-atheist prejudice. In S. Clarke, R. Powell, & J. Savulescu (Eds.), *Intolerance and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*. (pp. 126-146). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- **Gervais, W. M.** & Norenzayan, A. (2012). Analytic thinking promotes religious disbelief. *Science*, 336, 493-496.

- Norenzayan, A., **Gervais, W. M.**, & Trzesniewski, K. (2012). Mentalizing deficits constrain belief in a personal God. *PLoS ONE*, 7, e36880.
- **Gervais, W. M.** & Norenzayan, A. (2012). Reminders of secular authority reduce believers' distrust of atheists. *Psychological Science*, 23, 483-491.
- **Gervais, W. M.** & Norenzayan, A. (2012). Like a camera in the sky? Thinking about God increases public self-awareness and socially desirable responding. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48, 298-302.
- Norenzayan, A., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2012). The cultural evolution of religion. In E. Slingerland & M. Collard (Eds.) *Creating Consilience: Integrating science and the humanities*. (pp. 243-265). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, Shariff, A. F., & Norenzayan, A. (2011). Do you believe in atheists? Distrust is central to anti-atheist prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101, 1189-1206.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, Willard, A., Norenzayan, A., & Henrich, J. (2011). The cultural transmission of faith: Why natural intuitions and memory biases are necessary, but insufficient, to explain religious belief. *Religion*, 41, 389-410.
- **Gervais, W. M.** (2011). Finding the faithless: Perceived atheist prevalence reduces anti-atheist prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37, 543-556.
- **Gervais, W. M.** & Henrich, J. (2010). The Zeus problem: Why representational content biases cannot explain faith in gods. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 10, 383-389.
- Schaller, M., Miller, G. E., **Gervais, W. M.**, Yager, S., & Chen, E. (2010). Mere visual perception of other peoples' disease symptoms facilitates a more aggressive immune response. *Psychological Science*, 21, 649-652.
- **Gervais, W. M.**, Reed, C. L., Beall, P. M., and Roberts, R. J. (2010). Implied body action directs spatial attention. *Attention, Perception, and Psychophysics*, 72, 1437-1443.
- Norenzayan, A., Shariff, A. F., & **Gervais, W. M.** (2010, commentary). The Evolution of Religious Misbelief. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 32, 531-532.

Awards and Honors

2019	SAGE Young Scholar Early Career Award	SPSP/FPSP
2018	Daniel M. Wegner Theoretical Innovation Prize	SPSP
2018-present	Certain religious beliefs may foster resilience in the face of economic adversity (\$234k)	John Templeton Foundation
2017	Early Tenure	University of Kentucky
		Association for Psychological Science
2015	Rising Star	APA Division 36
2015	Margaret Gorman Early Career Award	John Templeton Foundation
2014-17	The cognitive, cultural, and motivational underpinnings of religious disbelief	University of Kentucky
		Canadian Psychological Association
2015	Fostering engagement in large classes: A&S Teaching Workshop	APA Division 36
		Canadian Psychological Association
2012	Certificate of Academic Excellence for Ph. D. Thesis	Psychological Association
2009	Research Seed Grant (\$3k)	APA Division 36
		Canadian Psychological Association
2012	Certificate of Academic Excellence for M. A. Thesis: Do you believe in atheists?	University of British Columbia
2009-12	Four Year Doctoral Fellowship	University of British Columbia
		University of British Columbia
2007	MacDonald Fellowship	University of British Columbia
		University of British Columbia
2006	Elizabeth Young Lacey Scholarship	University of Denver
2005	Phi Beta Kappa	University of Denver
2005	Shaklee-Trowill Research Award, Best Senior Thesis in Psychology	University of Denver
2004	Partners in Scholarship research grant	University of Denver
2004	Bernard Spilka Undergraduate Scholarship in Psychology	University of Denver

Presentations

SELECT TALKS & SYMPOSIA

** Public/Popular Lectures

- Gervais, W. M. (2021). Children of mixed-faith parents are less religious. Society for Personality and Social Psychology.
- Gervais, W. M. (2021). Children of mixed-faith parents are less religious. Cultural Evolution Society.
- Gervais, W. M. (2019). Analytic atheism: Bayesian estimation from a Bayesian dabbler. Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Portland, OR.
- Gervais, W. M. (2018). Atheists (keynote). International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion.
- Gervais, W. M. (2017). Atheists. Justice and Morality preconference at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. San Antonio, TX.
- Gervais, W. M. (2016). Anti-atheist prejudice as a validity threat to theories of religion. Society for Personality and Social Psychology, San Diego, CA.
- Gervais, W. M. (2015). The varieties of nonreligious experience. Invited award address. American Psychological Association, Toronto.
- Gervais, W. M. (2015). Folk intuitions of a religion-morality link. Invited special program symposium. Association for Psychological Science, New York.
- Gervais, W. M. (2015). The psychology of atheism. Invited special symposium chair at the annual meeting of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion, Istanbul, Turkey.

- ** Gervais, W. M. (2015). Anti-atheist prejudice (Plenary Address). National Convention of the American Humanist Association, Denver, CO.
- ** Gervais, W. M. (2015). Solving the puzzle of anti-atheist prejudice. National launch of Openly Secular (openlysecular.org), Orlando, FL.
- Gervais, W. M. (2015). Religious self as moral identity? Invited preconference talk, Society for Personality and Social Psychology.
- Gervais, W. M. (2014). No God? No good! Annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Indianapolis, IN.
- Gervais, W. M. (2014). Creationism: The science behind a science-religion controversy. Annual meeting of the Society for Experimental Social Psychology, Columbus, OH.
- Gervais, W. M. (2014). Perceiving minds and gods: Mind perception as a cognitive foundation for religious belief. Annual meeting of the European Association of Social Psychology, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- Gervais, W. M. (2014). The causes and consequences of religious (dis)belief. Invited colloquium, Gettysburg College.
- Gervais, W. M. (2014). Of murderers and missionaries: The paradoxical perceived relationships between religion and morality. Invited talk at the Folk Theories and Everyday Beliefs pre conference session at the 15th meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Austin, TX.
- Gervais, W. M. (2013, May). Symposium Chair: Not Over Dinner: Dual-Process Approaches to Politics, Cooperation, Morality, & Religion. Symposium presented at the 25th meeting of the Association for Psychological Science, Washington, D.C.
- Individual talk: Analytic thinking promotes religious disbelief
- Gervais, W. M. (2013, January). The varieties of nonreligious experience: A four factor model of religious (dis)belief. Invited talk at the Folk Theories and Everyday Beliefs preconference session at the 14th meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, New Orleans, LA.
- Gervais, W. M. (2012, January). The peculiar psychological properties of prejudice against atheists. Invited talk at the Religion and Spirituality preconference session at the 13th meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, San Diego, CA.

SELECT INVITED COLLOQUIA

- University of Illinois, Chicago
- University of Southampton
- Cardiff University
- Victoria University of Wellington, NZ
- University of Otago, NZ
- University of New South Wales, AUS (cancelled due to COVID-19)
- University of Melbourne, AUS (cancelled due to COVID-19)
- University of Maryland
- University of Connecticut
- University of California-Irvine
- University of California-Riverside
- University of Indiana-Bloomington

Editorial and Review Experience

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

- Social Psychological and Personality Science

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBER

- Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science
- Secularism and Nonreligion

GUEST ARTICLE EDITOR

- Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
- SageOPEN

SELECT AD HOC REVIEWER HISTORY

- Science
- Nature
- Nature Human Behavior
- Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences
- Behavioral and Brain Sciences
- Psychological Bulletin
- Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
- Psychological Science
- Journal of Experimental Psychology: General
- Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
- Perspectives on Psychological Science
- Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin
- Social Psychology and Personality Science

Teaching Experience

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON. (FALL 2020- PRESENT).

- PY2802/3802. Personality and Individual Differences
- PY5614. Evolutionary Foundations of Culture

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY. (FALL 2012- 2019).

- PSY 440. Advanced Research Methods in Social Psychology
- A&S 300. The Meaning of Life: Psychology, Evolution, Religion, and Morality
- PSY 779. Graduate Seminar: Culture, Religion, Evolution, and Morality.
- PSY 779. Graduate Seminar: Social Psychology Methods.
- PSY 314. Social Psychology and Cultural Processes.
- Workshops
 - Statistical Evidence
 - Applied Bayesian Data Analysis
 - Data Analysis and Visualization in R

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

- Sessional Instructor (Summer 2011-2012). PSYC 217: Psychology Research Methods.

MENTORSHIP OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

- Lab director: Beliefs and Morality (BAM!!!) Lab.
- ~ 10-15 research assistants per year
- ~ 1-2 Honors students per year

Departmental Service Activities

- Divisional Tutor, Brunel
- Co-lead, Religion, Morality, and Beliefs Working Group, Brunel Centre for Culture and Evolution
- UK Psychology Departmental Colloquium Committee Chair (2017)
- UK Diversity Committee (2015-2016)
- UK Social Psychology Search Committee (2014, 2017)
- UK Psychology Curriculum Committee