Explaining Atheism: Pilot 1 Preregistration

INSERT DATE

# Study Information

## Title

Explaining Atheism: Pilot 1 Preregistration

## Description

The present work is part of the broader Explaining Atheism project, which looks to examine popular and scientific causes of belief/non-belief and how these vary across cultures.

Across 3 stages we will examine variables which have been argued in popular and scientific discourse to cause belief and non-belief. In this initial pilot we will look at the largest number of variables in order to test some of the clearest hypotheses and to run explanatory tests to exclude possible variables for the later stages of the project which will have larger samples and a greater proportion of confirmatory tests.

This pre-registration is for analysis of our first pilot data, with analyses looking to include or exclude variables for later stages. Here we look at the most popular explanations of belief/non-belief and whether they predict a number of different measures related to belief/non-belief

Additional preregistrations for this stage testing specific hypotheses, along with preregistrations for future pilots, can be found on our pages on the [Open Science Framework](https://osf.io/df6m8/), our [Figshare](https://figshare.com/projects/Explaining_Atheism/157323), and on C. Russell’s personal [GitHub](https://github.com/cjsrussell/ea_preregs).

## Hypotheses

The current pre-registration is for exploratory analyses, as such no explicit directional hypotheses are tested. We will instead be testing the hypotheses of our explanatory variables having an effect on one or more outcome variables.

# Design Plan

## Study type

**Observational (Survey) Study**

## Blinding

No blinding is involved in this study.

## Study design

This study uses a survey design.

This pilot will run 5 separate surveys, one for each of the explanatory variable clusters, in the UK and Brazil. Survey 5 will also be run in Denmark. The results in 11 independent survey samples.

## Randomization

Question items will be randomised *within* questonnaires, with the following questionnaires being exceptions:

* CREDs
* CRUDs
* Normativity of Religion
* Parental Circumstances
* Existential Security
* Pattern Perception
* Vividness of Mental Imagery
* ISSP
* Religious Identity
* Religious Practice
* Atheism Membership
* Demographics

## Sampling Plan

We will collect representative samples for each survey for each nation. This will be done by an independent survey company, and the samples will be representative for the national population by Age, Sex and Geographic Region.

## Existing data

**Registration prior to creation of data**.

As of the date of submission of this preregistration data is currently being collection, the authors are not yet in possession of any data nor have any information about data collected thus far during data collection.

## Data collection procedures

Participants are recruited by the independent survey company, Savanta Comres, from their pool of participants. Participants will be paid a local rate for their participation, and will be selected to meet representativeness requirements outlined above.

***Exclusion criteria***

## Sample size

The sample size used is 500 per survey per nation, resulting in samples per nation of:

Brazil = 2500

UK = 2500

Denmark = 500

## Sample size rationale

Samples are the maximally viable sample for the financial means of the project.

# Variables

Please find below a list of each variable planned to be measured in the study. A background for each of these, along with the questionnaires from whcih they were derrived, descriptions, subscales, and scripts can be found in the codebook accompanying the pre-registration.

## Explanatory Variables

#### Morals/ Values

* Individualism & Collectivism
* Rebelliousness (complete)
* Rebelliousness (trolling)
* Rebelliousness (activism)
* Individual Choice Norms

#### Cognitive Style

* Tolerance of Ambiguity
* Cognitive Style (correct)
* Cognitive Style (intuitive)
* Non-Verbal Reasoning
* Moralisation of Rationality
* Importance of Rationality

#### Socialisation

* CRED Exposure
* CRED (caregiver)
* CRED (Group Leader)
* CRED (Group Member)
* CRED (Group)
* CRUD Exposure
* CRUD (Caregiver)
* CRUD (Group Leaders)
* CRUD (Group)
* Non-theistic Socialisation
* Normativity of Religion (All)
* Normativity of Religion (Nation)
* Normativity of Religion (Ethnicity)
* Normativity of Religion (Peers)
* Normativity of Religion (Group)
* Religious Emphasis
* Parental Circumstances
* Parental Absence Reason

#### Motivational

* Social Desirability
* Existential Security (Current)
* Existential Security (Future)
* Existential Security (Upbringing)
* Social Security
* Wealth Inequality
* Social Trust
* Need for Structure
* Death Anxiety
* Social Network Size
* Meaning in Life
* Need for Meaning
* Disgust Sensitivity
* Disgust Sensitivity (Core)
* Disgust Sensitivity (Animal)
* Disgust Sensitivity (Contamination)

#### Cognitive Bias

* Anthropomorphism
* Mentalizing
* Dualism
* Pattern Perception
* Pattern Perception (Long)
* Promiscuous Teleology
* Schizotypy
* Schizotypy (Reference)
* Schizotypy (Perceptual Experiences)
* Vividness of Mental Imagery
* Dissociative Absorption

## Outcome Variables

#### Belief in God

* Belief in God (Categorical)
* Belief in God (Continuous/Ordinal)
* Belief in God (Binary)
* Agnosticism (Continuous/ Ordinal)
* Agnostic Identity (binary)

#### Atheism

* Atheist Membership
* Atheist Identity

#### Religiosity

* Religious Identification
* Religious Identity
* Religious Attendance
* Prayer Frequency
* Religious Objects
* Anti-religiosity

#### Meta Belief

* Possibility of Knowing (God)
* Confidence in Belief
* Apatheism (God)
* Apatheism (Life Purpose)
* Apatheism (Combined)
* Possibility of Truth
* Naturalism

#### Supernatural Belief

* Afterlife Existence
* Afterlife Punishment
* Afterlife Reward
* Reincarnation
* Astrology
* Mystical People
* Mystical Objects
* Good and Evil
* Universal Spirit or Life Force
* Karma
* Fate
* Supernatural Being Existence
* Good Supernatural Beings
* Harmful Supernatural Beings
* Evil Eye
* Spiuritual Experience (Personal)
* Lucky Object

## Indices

Coding and scoring methods are included for each variable in the accompanying codebook. Draft scoring scripts are also included.

# Analysis Plan

### Exploratory Analysis Plan

We will look at the effects of our explanatory variables on various outcome variables. However, in order to examine which variables should be included in later rounds of our research, we will primarily look at the effects of our different clusters of explanatory variables (***bold***) on the following outcome variables:

***Morals/ Values:***

Belief in God; Religious Identity, Atheist Identity, Agnosticism; Religious Attendance

***Cognitive Styles:***

Belief in God; Religious Identity, Atheist Identity, Agnosticism; Religious Attendance

***Socialisation***

Belief in God; Religious Identity, Atheist Identity, Agnosticism; Religious Attendance

***Cognitive Biases***

Belief in God; Religious Identity, Atheist Identity, Agnosticism; Religious Attendance; Supernatural Being Existence

***Motivational***

Belief in God; Religious Identity, Atheist Identity, Agnosticism; Religious Attendance

## Statistical models

To examine the possible relationships between our explanatory and our outcome variables we will run bayesian multiple regression models in R using the ‘{brms}’ package. We will run models for all the outcome and explanatory variable combinations noted in the above analysis plan, among others.

Model specifications can be found in the attached Excel files.

We will treat outcome variables that are single Likert scale measures as ordinal, and as such will use cumulative probit regression following the following structure:

library("brms")  
  
  
exampleProbitModel <-  
 brm(formula = outcome\_variable ~ explanatory\_variable\_1 +  
 explanatory\_variable\_2 +  
 explanatory\_variable\_3 +  
 explanatory\_variable\_n,  
 prior = priors,  
 data = data,   
 family = cumulative(link = "probit"),  
 chains = 4,  
 cores = 4,  
 threads = 2,  
 iter = 3000,  
 warmup = 1000,  
 seed = 2023,   
 backend = "cmdstanr")

For binary outcomes we will use logistic regression with the following format:

library("brms")  
  
exampleLogisticModel<-   
 brm(formula = outcome\_variable ~ explanatory\_variable\_1 +  
 explanatory\_variable\_2 +  
 explanatory\_variable\_3 +  
 explanatory\_variable\_n,  
 prior = priors,  
 data = data,   
 family = bernoulli(link = "logit"),  
 chains = 4,  
 cores = 4,  
 threads = 2,  
 iter = 3000,  
 warmup = 1000,  
 seed = 2023,   
 backend = "cmdstanr")

And for continuous outcomes we will use gaussian multiple regression:

library("brms")  
  
exampleLogisticModel<-   
 brm(formula = outcome\_variable ~ explanatory\_variable\_1 +  
 explanatory\_variable\_2 +  
 explanatory\_variable\_3 +  
 explanatory\_variable\_n,  
 prior = priors,  
 data = data,   
 family = gaussian(),  
 chains = 4,  
 cores = 4,  
 threads = 2,  
 iter = 3000,  
 warmup = 1000,  
 seed = 2023,   
 backend = "cmdstanr")

### Priors

We will set the following uninformative priors for our outcome variables:

For betas and intercepts we will set a normally distributed prior with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

For ordinal probit models we will set a normal distribution for the thresholds, following [Kurz](https://solomonkurz.netlify.app/blog/2021-12-29-notes-on-the-bayesian-cumulative-probit/).

## Transformations

In some instances response variables are dummy coded binary variables from a categorical response option - see attached codebook for all variable definitions.

As a default we will center likert response scores at the center of the scale, unless the scale has a meaningful interval (e.g. age, n years).

## Inference criteria

In the first instance, inferences about whether a variable has or does not have a theoretically relevant effect will be done based on examination of the posterior distributions of parameter estimates.

More specifically we will examine the extent to which the credible intervals of these posterior distributions overlap with a Region of Practical Equivalence (ROPE), that is, a specified region we consider to be theoretically equivalent to zero. This will be done using the {bayestestR} package (<https://easystats.github.io/bayestestR/articles/region_of_practical_equivalence.html>) in R. For our Gaussian and Cumulative Probit models we will use the default range -0.1 to 0.1 for standardized effect sizes, which equates to a “negligible effect size”, and -0.18 to 0.18 for logistic models.

## Data exclusion

Participants who fail data quality checks are removed and replaced by the survey provider prior to our analysis. In the first instance outliers will not be removed, however sensitivity analysis will be run on any published final models.

## Missing data

No missing data will be in

## Exploratory analyses (optional)

See Exploratory Data Analysis Plan above.

# Other

## Other (Optional)

Enter your response here.

# References