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Comparing A Two-Factor Theory of Religious Beliefs to A Four-Factor Theory of Isms

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 The assistance on this study of professor David Leung,
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Abstract: The present author=s two religious beliefs factors, Religious Fundamentalism and Kindly Religious Beliefs, are compared to Saucier=s four general belief system (Aism@) factors: Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta. McConochie=s Religious Fundamentalism seems reflected in Saucier=s Alpha trait. In terms of social and political significance, McConochie=s Fundamentalist and Kindly Religious Belief factors show overall stronger correlations with warmongering, human rights endorsement and related politically-relevant traits than do the four Saucier factors. The belief systems held most prominently by the public are Kindly Beliefs (88%) and Gamma (Rational/Scientific Humanism) (43%), with Delta (Æclectic spirituality@) a distant third (22%). Fundamentalism and Alpha, which appear to be the same trait, are held by 11% and 9% respectively in this study sample. Both the Saucier and McConochie traits are related to political attitudes.

Introduction: Spiritual beliefs have been studied by Saucier from a lexical approach, starting with belief systems reflected in dictionary words ending in Aism@ (Catholicism, Materialism, Spiritualism, Animism, Deism, etc.)(Saucier, 2000). Factor analytic studies by Saucier have yielded four or five factors, the fifth being a combination of two of the first four. These have been labeled Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta by Saucier. Brief 6 to 8-item scales of the first four are available at a web site, with corresponding normative data for over 800 subjects (Saucier, 2009). Based on the content of the items in these scales, they are described by the present author as follows:

Alpha: Religious fundamentalism. Characterized by a strict and literal code of religion and morality, organized religious practices, belief in an all-powerful god, belief that religion and politics should be melded, and disbelief in biological evolution.

Beta: Selfish materialism. Includes endorsement of these beliefs: Physical well-being and worldly possessions are the greatest good and highest value of life, Everything can be explained simply in terms of physical matter and phenomena, and that one=s own ethnic group is superior.

Gamma: Rational/Scientific Humanism. Includes beliefs that emphasize reason, scientific inquiry, facts and truth based on observable data, concern with economic growth combined with social justice, and devotion to country.

Delta: Eclectic spirituality: Belief in supreme beings of many forms, vital forces, spiritual realities beyond the senses, conscious life in natural objects such as stones and trees, anthropomorphic views and the ability of the dead to communicate with living beings through mediums.

Saucier provides norms in terms of means, etc. but not in terms of frequency of persons holding these beliefs.

McConochie has studied religious beliefs and related traits, including endorsement of human rights, a positive foreign policy and endorsement of sustainable policies and programs (McConochie, 2004-2010). His religious beliefs have included 24 taken from the major world religions supplemented with six different definitions of god/God and two general worldview beliefs. The 44 human rights beliefs were gleaned from three universal charters by the United Nations, the world religions and an international ecology organization. Factor analysis of the religious beliefs has consistently yielded two primary factors. The Religious Fundamentalism factor is characterized by beliefs that there is only one true god and that people who disagree with this belief are wrong, seeing God as vengeful against wrongdoers, and that the peoples of the world should compete, in war if necessary. The Kindly Beliefs factor is characterized by beliefs that god takes many different forms for different peoples, that one should be kind to the unfortunate, that god is forgiving of wrongdoers, and that the peoples of the world should cooperate and share. About 5% of persons hold fundamentalist beliefs, 85% kindly beliefs in various studies by McConochie.

McConochie=s traits have been shown to have considerable social and political relevance, reflected in substantial correlations with other traits. Religious Fundamentalism is consistently antisocial in import while the Kindly Beliefs factor is pro-social, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1.
Correlations between Fundamentalist and Kindly Religious Beliefs Factors. N= 109.

	Warmon gering	Positive Foreign Policy Endorse- ment	Sustain- able policies endorse- ment	Human Rights endorse ment	Military dictator- ship endorse- ment	Special interest group demo- cracy endorse- ment	Public demo- cracy endorse- ment
Kindly	-.51**	.56**	.54**	.60**	-.37**	-.27*	.38**

Religious Beliefs							
Fundamentalist Religious Beliefs	.53**	-.47**	-.50**	-.39**	.35**	.23*	-.09

Public democracy is defined in these studies as government serving the best interests of communities overall, as opposed to any special interest groups. About 90 percent of adults endorse this form of democracy over special interest group democracy (18-20%).

Research Hypotheses/ Questions.

The present study was intended to answer questions and test hypotheses: Would the Saucier factors correspond to the author's measures or measure different human beliefs? Would the Saucier factors show as robust relationships to traits of political and social importance as the McConochie traits? The hypothesis was that they would not. Would the Saucier traits be endorsed by as many people as endorse the McConochie traits? The hypothesis was that they would not.

The reason for the two negative hypotheses was that the Saucier traits, other than the Alpha trait, seem less likely to be seen as meaningful to lay citizens. The traits are based on rather esoteric spiritual beliefs unlikely to be held consciously or vigorously by citizens in their everyday thinking, e.g. materialism, legalism, patriotism, humanism and animism. While these traits are measured in questionnaires via sentences such as: AI stress purpose, practicality, and usefulness@, these were expected to be less central to daily conscious experience than statements based on religious beliefs, e.g. AOne should submit to the will of God@, common to religious sermons, etc. Because the Saucier traits were expected to be seen by persons as more esoteric than common religious beliefs, they were expected to be less closely related to other conscious beliefs, such as political beliefs.

Method. 92 community college students completed various parts of a 245-item questionnaire for class credit or for extra credit. About 80 completed all parts. They were students of a professional friend of the author, who lectured and provided study results and personal scores for participants in return.

The questionnaire was in five-option Likert scale format with response options ranging from strongly disagree through neutral to strongly agree.

Items	Content
1-44	BFI personality measure of the Big Five personality traits.

45-80	Verbal intelligence items measuring similarities, decision judgments information. This is from the authors Quick Verbal Quotient test, which correlates .87 with Wechsler Total I.Q. It is in true/false/I don=t know format.
81-140	60 items measuring skill in handling 5 positive and 5 negative emotions. This is the author=s McEMOT scale.
141-172	McConochie religious beliefs items (for the two scales described above).
173-189	Sample items from three charters of human rights.
190-194	Measures of endorsement of 5 types of government.
195-209	Author=s 10-item measure of warmongering endorsement.
210-237	Saucier=s four spiritual beliefs scales (Alpha, beta, gamma, delta).
238-240	3-item measure of religiosity (author).
241-245	Miscellaneous beliefs items re: supernatural beings, government use of term AGod@, etc.

The students were instructed to take the questionnaire home and enter responses on a five-option machine-scored form. Data was optically scanned with the NCS OpScan 2 and processed by SPSS statistical software.

Results.

The scales had adequate spreads of scores and reliabilities, overall, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Ranges of Scale Scores and Reliabilities.
37 percent of the 92 subjects were males.

<u>Scale/trait</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Dev.</u>	<u>Alpha reliability</u>
Age	16	38	22.1	4.5	
BFI, Extro	2	4.5	3.3	.57	
Agree	2.11	4.7	3.7	.45	
Emot. stabil.	1.38	4.4	3.0	.67	

Consc.	1.67	4.6	3.3	.61	
Open	1.7	4.9	3.9	.62	
Verbal I.Q. Raw	18	34	26.5	3.8	.76
Religious Fundamentalism	25	67	43.6	11.0	.86
Kindly Religious Beliefs	41	65	52.3	5.58	.65
Human Rights	21	85	70.7	11.4	.94
Sustainable programs	8	30	24.8	4.47	.90
Positive Foreign Policy (3)	7	15	10.5	2.05	.00
Warmongering	10	36	20.1	7.53	.88
Positive Feeling Skill	85	133	112.2	11.4	
Negative Feeling Skill	84	128	103.7	12.5	
All feeling skill	175	259	216.4	21.1	
Alpha	6	26	15.1	5.4	.80
Beta	6	22	13.9	4.4	.75
Gamma	17	38	27.6	4.6	.71
Delta	12	39	25.7	6.3	.82
Religiosity	3	15	7.4	3.9	.83

To check the representativeness of this sample of community college students with people in general, the BFI scores were compared to those of a large normative sample gathered by Sam Gosling. T-tests were run for women. Gosling's sample of 166,579 Caucasian women studied via the Internet were compared with the 32 women in the present study. No significant differences were found. For example, the mean for the present sample was 3.44 on Conscientiousness, identical to Gosling's value of 3.44. For Openness the means were 3.90 and 3.92 respectively. Thus, the present sample does not appear likely to be grossly different from what a random sample of adults in general would reveal.

Data analyses.

General:

Relationships between Religious and Spiritual Traits and Socially Relevant Traits.

There were a few significant but modest correlations between the variables and government type preferences, as follow:

Religious Fundamentalism correlated .24* with Military Dictatorship. Kindly Religious Beliefs correlated -.29** with Military Dictatorship. Alpha beliefs (Saucier=s religious fundamentalism) correlated .26* with Monarchy endorsement. Gamma beliefs (Rational/scientific humanism) correlated .37** with Tribal Democracy (Special interest group democracy).

Correlations between the 6 beliefs traits and the other main variables are presented in Table 3. The three-item religiosity trait is presented in the table also. This trait correlated strongly with Religious Fundamentalism (.61**), and with Alpha (.78**). The religiosity items are:

I am a very religious person. I go to church almost every week. I try to say prayers daily.

Table 3.

Correlations between Religious and Spiritual Traits and Politically-Relevant Traits N = 78.

<u>Trait</u>	<u>I.Q.</u>	<u>Warmonger- ing</u>	<u>Positive foreign policy</u>	<u>Sustainable programs</u>	<u>Human Rights</u>
Religiosity	-.02	.26*	-.06	-.10	-.09
Religious Fundamental.	-.10	.61**	-.42**	-.55**	-.55**
Alpha	-.22	.39**	-.32**	-.18	-.14
Kindly Religious	.36**	-.55**	.41**	.40**	.49**
Beta	-.28*	.30**	-.29*	-.19	-.15
Gamma	.13	.19	-.04	-.16	-.08
Delta	.08	-.24*	.27*	.30**	.25*

Warmonger.	-.20	1.00	-	-	-
Pos.For.Pol.	.33**	-.56**	1.00	-	-
Sustainable Pgms.	.26*	-.66**	.45**	1.00	-
Hum.Rights.	.21	-.65**	.49**	.92**	1.00

Five of the six religious and spiritual beliefs traits correlate significantly with the four politically relevant traits. The Religious Fundamentalism and Alpha traits have correlations that are roughly similar.

The Kindly Religious trait and the Beta traits have correlations in the opposite direction of each other, implying that Saucier=s Beta trait, Selfish Materialism, may be to some degree the inverse of McConochie=s Kindly Religious Beliefs trait.

The Gamma trait (Rational/Scientific Humanism) has no significant correlations with the politically relevant traits.

The Delta trait (Eclectic spirituality) correlations are similar to those of the Kindly trait, but less strong.

In support of the hypothesis regarding expected greater social and political relevance of the McConochie traits both of the McConochie traits correlate substantially with the four politically relevant traits while three of the four Saucier=s traits do. The mean absolute correlation for the two McConochie traits is .57. For the 4 Saucier attitudes it is .22.

The correlations between the 6 beliefs traits are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlations between Beliefs Traits.

	<u>Rel. Fun.</u>	<u>Kindly</u>	<u>Alpha</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>Gamma</u>	<u>Delta</u>
Rel. Fun.	1.00	-.26*	.70**	-.03	.19	-.34**
Kindly		1.00	-.10	-.40**	-.12	.19
Alpha			1.00	-.11	-.01	-.26*
Beta				1.00	.18	.14
Gamma					1.00	.09

Most notable of these statistics is that McConochie=s Religious Fundamentalism trait is positively and strongly related to Saucier=s Alpha trait, as would be expected from the content of the items in these two scales.

Factor analysis.

Several factor analyses were performed. A Varimax rotated component matrix calling for 5 factors, yielded the results presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Varimax Rotated Component Matrix of 6 Beliefs Traits

Component #	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Apparent Component content ...:</u>	<u>Religious Fund./Alpha</u>	<u>Delta</u>	<u>Kindly religious beliefs</u>	<u>Gamma</u>	<u>Beta</u>
Percent of variance.	21.4	11.6	7.3	6.5	5.0
Alpha score	.91	-.15	-.03	.14	.05
Rel. Fun. score	.78	-.32	-.39	.18	-.04
Kindly Rel. score	.01	.13	.65	-.28	-.48
Beta score	-.12	.08	-.13	.09	.91
Gamma score.	-.06	-.06	.04	.92	.01
Delta score	-.08	.97	.09	-.04	.05
Religiosity score	.89	-.02	.13	-.05	-.21

Thus, the first factor appears to be religious fundamentalism, with heaviest loadings on Alpha and McConochie=s Religious Fundamentalism and Religiosity scales. The other factors are defined by the loadings in the bold font. Of special interest is the appearance of the Kindly Beliefs factor as separate from the four Saucier factors derived from lexical studies.

This underscores the apparent value of studying religious beliefs factors by methods

other than the lexical. The Kindly and Fundamentalist factors were based on belief items sampled from the world religions.

Frequency of Beliefs Held.

The second hypothesis of this study related to the frequency with which the various spiritual and religious beliefs are held by members of the public. To compute the frequency of persons endorsing a belief system, the mean item score for each person for each of the six traits was computed. Then frequency distributions of these scores were obtained. Scores of 3.5 and above were considered to represent individuals who held the belief strongly, as a score of 4 meant "Agree" and 5 meant "Strongly agree". The neutral range was represented by mean item scores between 2.5 and 3.5, with 3 meaning "Neutral". The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Percentage of persons holding beliefs.
(78 adults).

<u>Belief type</u>	<u>Percent holding Beliefs</u>
Alpha	9.0
Beta	2.6
Gamma	42.9
Delta	21.8
Religious Fund.	11.2
Kindly Beliefs	87.5
Religiosity	19.5

The belief systems held most prominently by this sample of 78 persons were Kindly Beliefs (88%) and Gamma beliefs (Rational/Scientific Humanism) (43%), with Delta ("Eclectic spirituality") a distant third (22%). Fundamentalism and Alpha are held by 11% and 9% respectively. Beta beliefs (Selfish materialism) are held by only 3%. The percentages of 88 and 11 for Kindly and Fundamentalist beliefs respectively are similar in this study to those in other prior studies by the author.

In terms of the hypothesis of social relevance, Saucier's Gamma and Delta traits run a somewhat distant second and third to the author's Kindly Beliefs trait, which appears the most prominently held spiritual belief system. Of religious beliefs per se, the Kindly Belief system

appears to clearly dominate over the other religious/spiritual options.

In the author=s opinion Rational/Scientific Humanism (Gamma) is not a religious belief system per se, as it does not involve features definitive of religion: belief in a supernatural being or beings to be worshiped, rituals, social meetings to celebrate the belief system, a strong system of social ethics, etc. In terms of social relevance, the Gamma trait can be expected to underlie the behavior of scientists and engineers, and perhaps educators. However, Gamma appears unrelated to political attitudes, as reflected in the Table 3 correlations, above.

Beliefs as Representative of Organized Religious Behavior.

Another index of the social importance of a belief system is how closely related it is to traditional, widespread, organized religious behavior. This can be explored in the present data by examining the correlations (Table 7) between the six belief traits and items in the questionnaire directly reflecting traditional religious thinking and behavior, specifically:

143. There is only one true god (or God) that all people of the world should worship.
 172. God takes many forms that guide the religious lives of many different peoples around the world.
 211. I adhere to an organized religion.
 230. I believe in a supreme being of many forms and natures.
 238. I am a very religious person.
 241. I believe in a supreme supernatural being of only one form.
 242. The idea of a supernatural being or beings, such as a God or gods is **not** of much interest to me.

Table 7. Correlations between Belief Type Scores and Religious Behavior Items.

<u>Belief type</u>	<u>143</u>	<u>172</u>	<u>211</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>238</u>	<u>241</u>	<u>242</u>
Alpha	.64**	-.37**	.81**	-.12	.75**	.76**	-.58**
Beta	-.14	.04	.06	.10	-.27*	-.07	.34**
Gamma	.14	.11	.02	.05	.02	.16	-.01
Delta	-.11	.43**	-.27*	.74**	-.02	-.08	-.10
Religious Fund.	.80**	-.60**	.65**	-.23*	.57**	.64**	-.33**
Kindly Beliefs	-.06	.26*	-.13	.13	.18	-.13	-.26*

The Alpha and Religious Fundamentalism traits appear to be clearly religious, reflected in the substantial positive correlations with items such as 143, 211 and 238, and a strong

negative correlation with item 242.

The Beta trait is unrelated to the six items reflecting endorsement of religious beliefs and overt denial of interest in supernatural beings as reflected in the negative correlation with item 242.

The Gamma trait is unrelated to any of the seven religious endorsement items.

The Delta trait reflects endorsement of supreme beings of many sorts (items 172 and 230) but denial of interest in organized religion per se, as reflected in the negative correlation with item 211.

The traditional religious relevance of the Kindly Beliefs trait is reflected in the fact that it is made up of belief items taken from the major world religions, includes belief in a supernatural being that takes many forms for different peoples (item 172) and endorses belief in supernatural beings as important (item 242).

Thus, the Alpha/Fundamentalist trait and the Kindly Beliefs trait appear to be the ones most reflective of traditional organized religious behavior.

Intelligence, Personality, and Emotion-Handling Skills.

The intelligence, personality and emotion-handling skills measures were included in the study not because they were expected to be related to the spiritual and religious beliefs but because they were of interest to students participating, as the students were taking introductory and personality classes in psychology. There were no particularly strong correlations between these variables and the other traits, but there were several of interest.

Correlations between intelligence and the spiritual belief traits are presented in Table 3, above, reflecting higher intelligence in persons endorsing the Kindly Beliefs trait and lower intelligence in persons endorsing the Beta (Selfish Materialism) trait. Higher intelligence is also associated with positive foreign policy endorsement (.33**) and sustainable programs endorsement (.26*). Verbal I.Q. is also correlated with the Big Five traits Emotional Stability (.26*) and Conscientiousness (.27*).

Correlations between Big Five Personality Traits and other variables.

Openness correlated -.31** with Religious Fundamentalism, -.31** with Alpha, -.32** with Warmongering, .45** with Positive Emotion-handling Skill, and .28* with Negative Emotion-handling Skill.

Extroversion correlated .30** with Positive Emotion-handling Skill and .29** with Negative Emotion-handling Skill.

Agreeableness correlated .24* with Positive Emotion-handling Skill and .29** with Negative Emotion-handling Skill.

Emotional Stability correlated with Alpha (-.28*) and Negative Emotion-handling skill (.25*). This finding is consistent with a prior study by the author documenting a positive relationship between clinical anxiety and Religious Fundamentalism.

Conscientiousness correlated with Verbal I.Q. (.27*), Beta (Selfish Materialism) (-.24*), Positive Emotion-handling Skill (.27*) and Negative Emotion-handling skill (.39**).

Thus, the Big Five personality traits appear to give persons an advantage in emotional maturity defined as ability to handle common daily emotions skillfully. Such skill is associated with relative absence of clinical depression and anxiety. Low Openness and Emotional Stability are associated with religious fundamentalism.

Correlations between emotion-handling skills and other variables.

Positive Emotion-handling Skill is correlated with Kindly Religious Beliefs (.32**), Beta (Selfish Materialism) (-.25*), Positive Foreign Policy endorsement (.22*), Human Rights Endorsement (.34**), Sustainability Endorsement (.35**) and Warmongering (-.26*). It is also correlated with Negative Emotion-handling Skill (.64**).

Negative Emotion-handling Skill is correlated with Kindly Religious Beliefs (.31**), Beta (Selfish Materialism) (-.29**), and Positive Foreign Policy Endorsement (.23*).

Thus, emotional maturity is related to religious and political attitudes in expected ways. The more mature a person is, the more he endorses pro-social traits and the less he endorses anti-social traits.

Regarding specific emotion-handling skills,

Anger-handling skill correlates with religiousness (.30*).

Loneliness-handling skill correlates with Beta (-.26*), Delta (.23*), Kindly Religious Beliefs (.32*), Sustainability endorsement (.35**) and Warmongering (-.27*).

Depression-handling skill correlates with Gamma (.27*).

Fear-handling correlates with Delta (.32**), Religious Fundamentalism (-.25*), Human Rights Endorsement (.39**), Sustainability Endorsement (.33**) and Warmongering (-.35**).

Guilt-handling correlates with Beta (-.35**), Delta (.26*), Kindly Religious Beliefs (.35**), Human Rights Endorsement (.23*), Sustainability Endorsement (.26*) and Warmongering (-.29*).

Friendly feeling handling skill correlates with Human Rights Endorsement (.33**) and Sustainable Policies Endorsement (.35**).

Grateful handling skill correlates with Beta (-.31**), Kindly Religious Beliefs (.27*) and Positive Foreign Policy endorsement (.30**).

Interest handling skill correlates with Beta (-.31**), Kindly Religious Beliefs (.25*), Human Rights Endorsement (.24*), Sustainable Policy endorsement (.24*) and Warmongering (.24*).

Happy Feeling handling skill correlates with Beta (-.35**), Religiosity (.27*), and Kindly Religious Beliefs (.24*).

Attraction Feeling handling skill correlates with Human Rights endorsement (.23*) and Sustainability endorsement (.24*).

The Relationships overall between Spiritual beliefs, intelligence, personality and emotional maturity versus political attitudes.

The overall relationships between clusters of traits and measures of antisocial and pro-social traits are substantial, as reflected in multiple correlations. For example, consider those presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Multiple Correlations and Significance Levels between Trait Clusters and Warmongering and Human Rights Endorsement

<u>War-mong.</u>	<u>Human Rights.</u>	<u>Traits used to predict.</u>
.48 (.001)	.35 (.054)	Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta
.73 (.000)	.60 (.000)	Religious Fundamentalism and Kindly Beliefs
.36 (.084)	.30 (.260)	Big 5 personality traits.
.60 (.001)	.54 (.006)	All 10 Emotion-handling skills.
.80 (.000)	.68 (.000)	Verbal I.Q., Big 5, Religious Fundamentalism, Kindly Religious, Positive Feeling Skill Total, Negative Feeling Skill Total.

Thus, we see a generally stronger prediction of Warmongering than of Human rights endorsement. The author=s Religious Fundamentalism and Kindly Religious Beliefs traits are stronger predictors of Warmongering and Human Rights (.73 and .60) than are the Saucier spiritual beliefs traits (.48 and .35). Emotional maturity is a better predictor of Warmongering and Human rights endorsement (.60 and .54) than are the Big Five personality traits (.36 and .30). Using measures of intelligence, personality traits, religious beliefs, and emotional maturity together provides substantial power to predict human rights endorsement and warmongering attitudes. Higher intelligence, lower fundamentalism, higher kindly religious beliefs, higher personality traits and higher emotional maturity are associated with endorsement of the pro-social trait of Human Rights endorsement. The converse of these traits is associated with the antisocial trait of Warmongering.

Summary/ Conclusion.

The present study confirms the apparent social/political relevance of spiritual and religious traits. Some of these traits appear to represent current religious thinking by members of the public and are significantly related to political attitudes of current importance, including warmongering. Intelligence, personality and emotional maturity also contribute to pro-social and antisocial political attitudes.

Political attitudes of national and international importance are a function in part of many basic psychological traits. Hopefully, understanding of how these traits underlie political attitudes can assist efforts to improve or manage political attitudes and behavior in the interest of world peace and prosperity.

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