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### The six types of nonbelief: a qualitative and quantitative study of type and narrative

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## The six types of nonbelief: a qualitative and quantitative study of type and narrative

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Extensive research has been conducted in exploration of the American religious landscape; however, only recently has social science research started to explore nonbelief in any detail. Research on nonbelief has been limited as most research focuses on the popularity of the religious “nones” or the complexities of alternative faith expressions such as spirituality. Through two studies, one qualitative and one quantitative, this research explored how nonbelievers’ self-identify. Study 1 (the qualitative study) discovered that individuals have shared definitional agreement but use different words to describe different types of nonbelief. Through thematic coding, a typology of six different types of nonbelief was observed. Those are Academic Atheists, Activist Atheist/Agnostics, Seeker Agnostics, Antitheists, Non-Theists, and the Ritual Atheists. Study 2 explored the empirical aspects of these types related to the Big Five Domain, Ryff Psychological Well-Being, Narcissistic Personality Inventory, Multidimensional Anger Inventory, Rokeach Dogmatism Scale, and intersections related to religious and spiritual ontology.

**Keywords:** nonbelief; atheism; agnosticism; nonreligion; secularity; personality; typology

Atheism is often viewed as a mirrored reflection of the denial of theism. In one sense, every person can be viewed as an “atheist” to the extent they deny a particular theistic view. This does simplify methodology providing a significant “other” in which to compare the beliefs and actions of believers. If the secular is only visible through a religious lens, it may be inconceivable except in relation to religious constructs (McCutcheon, 2007; Vergote, 1997). Explorers of secularity, a term that encompasses atheisms but is broader, utilise methodological paradigms through understanding the orientation of the culturally dominant religious whole, before taking measure of the cultural fringe. The stark distinction of atheism lengthens where a single religion happens to stand as the dominant cultural influence. In more secular cultural contexts such distinctions lose their social gravity in lieu of more democratic discourse and private manifestations of belief. Atheism and religiosity become a zero sum proposition where perceived cultural threat is small or does not exist. Simply, religion and secularity are not polarised culturally charged positions, but are more harmonious in nature. This paper speaks to those contexts where the religious landscape must account for the growing secular movement, particularly in the geographic context of the USA.

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We argue first for a diverging path from current views of secular classification, and those with no belief in a God or gods that is conceptualised in relation to, or at some distance from religion (e.g., Campbell, 1971; Lee, 2012; Quack, *in press*), to a view that is “religion/belief independent”. Second, we introduce a typology of nonbelievers in God informed from a grounded theoretical approach that allowed this population to be studied on their own terms and without the existing theoretical commitments as to how their ontological worldview should itself be conceptualised.

### Studied in its own right – right?

Lee’s (2012) Research Note titled *Terminology for Non-religion Studies* ends with a welcome invitation. In her detailed synthesis of prior terminology, she notes this is “a springboard for future research and debate” (p. 137). Lee has provided an initial springboard with which to leap from, and in recognising nonbelief<sup>1</sup> *in its own right* as we argue for here – that is, not theoretically positioning it in relation to religion/belief – a jump from Lee’s “theoretical springboard” has been taken. Like secularity, nonbelief is a broader term than atheism as many who are nonbelievers do not feel compelled to deny theism, but simply have beliefs that ignore rather than deny theism.

The call to study nonbelief, secularism and nonreligion “in its own right” has been put forth by Bullivant and Lee (2012). However, “in its own right” can be a very confusing statement when such an object is continually based off of, defined by, and in comparison with, a culturally dominating category generally present the world over, such as religion or belief. For secular peoples and nonbelievers to be truly “studied in their own right”, they need *not* be theoretically juxtaposed in relation to religion or belief. Largely absent in past theorisation is the recognition that such oppositional identities as “atheism” (i.e., not a theist) and “nonreligion” (i.e., not religious) are merely the product of the historically hegemonic category of religion itself (Smith, 1963). Thus, when the majority of people around an individual identify as religious, that individual has little choice but to assume an act of identification in opposition to religion when they feel their worldview is ultimately different than one that purposes a superhuman agent or ontological structure (i.e., religion). Thus, the category of religion forces an oppositional act of identification on an individual. A rhetorical question is here posed for social scientists: do nonbelievers actually use the terms of identity we assign them as researchers?

Acts of identification are always complex and contextual within a given confines involving one set of competing interests against another (Bayart, 2005). In knowing this, we propose a theoretical and critical break from such a limited framework that allows for secular peoples and nonbelievers to be understood, categorised, and researched without always being opposed to, or in relation to religion/belief. Perhaps researchers could take note from psychologists of religion Belzen (2010) and Vergote (1997) who simply situate “religion” as a cultural fact and then encourage the exploration of an individual’s world with religion as the cynosure. Similarly, social scientists could also situate “secularity” or “nonbelief” as a cultural fact that needs no juxtaposition with other constructs such as religion or belief for its exploration – it merely becomes something that is a fact independent of other ontologies. This is an approach worth considering, and as such, we advocate for the investigation of secular and nonbelieving peoples as a cultural fact needing little, if any, juxtaposition or explanation that involves reference to, or distance from religion. Such an approach, however, should be considered but one among many. There is no essential way (sociologically, anthropologically, or psychologically) with which one *must* explore secular and nonbelieving peoples. A plurality of approaches serves our object of investigation best (Hood & Belzen, 2013).

Being secular or holding a nonbelief cannot always be considered to be “in relation to” religion. Quack’s (*in press*) approach, based on the idea of Bourdieu’s concept of a “field” of related

constructs (Bourdieu & Johnson, 1993), is one approach that provides distance between being secular and nonbelief that is further from religion. However, such an approach is useful, but distance is not the only thing that is needed at times. Leaving behind belief/religion as any sort of reference or relational point is a theoretical trajectory that also deserves exploration and cannot be ruled out a priori. Calls for methodological pluralism should be heard in the realm of studying secular/nonbelieving persons as well (Hood & Belzen, 2013). Nonbelief and secularism does not always require a view through religio-spiritual frameworks or points of reference (Coleman, Silver, & Hood, in press). Campbell asserts that studying “irreligious phenomena” will “offer a unique and untried vantage-point” from which to examine the sociology of religion (as quoted in Bullivant & Lee, 2012, p. 20). Taking on Campbell’s perspective, however, shifting it’s object of focus, we argue that a route to viewing and exploring being secular/nonbelieving that seeks to establish the phenomena as truly autonomous from a constant relation to religion and belief (regardless of the semantics and definition of forced terminologies implying a direct relationship to or against belief/religion) offers up an equally unique and untried vantage point with which nonbelief and secularism may be studied. By “jumping tracks” from current theoretical trajectories altogether, and decentring concepts such as atheism and nonreligion from constant theoretical relationship to religion and belief, the growing movement of secularity and nonbelief can be explored in its own right, *and* on its own terms.

### **The six types of nonbelief: research in a new paradigm**

Extensive research has been conducted in exploration of the American religious landscape; however, only recently has social science research started to explore nonbelief in any detail (Bullivant & Lee, 2012). Research on nonbelief has been limited as most research focuses on the popularity of the religious “nones” or the complexities of alternative faith expressions such as spirituality. Simply there has been no detailed exploration of how nonbelievers self-identify nor any of the characteristics of the various types of nonbelief. Through two studies, one qualitative and one quantitative, nonbelief in America was explored and tested for variation by psychological type and profile.

### **Study 1: a qualitative typology of nonbelievers**

#### ***Method<sup>2</sup>***

For the qualitative portion of the study, the researchers chose a grounded theoretical approach (Creswell, 2007) whereby theory and themes could emerge from the data forming a participant-generated “framework”. This consisted of in-depth interviews with participants recruited from the researchers’ website and through social networking via online and face-to-face solicitation within the USA. Of the 125 individuals who expressed interest in the qualitative portion of the study, 59 ( $n = 59$ ) interviews were conducted with various individuals from around the USA on a first-come first-serve basis. Thirty-seven of the interview participants were males, leaving 22 female participants. Participants were sampled from the four geographic regions of the USA (The United States Census Bureau, 2012; Table 1).

Much of the past data on nonbelievers is predominately gathered from atheists, who belong to atheist/sceptical/freethinking groups (e.g., Cimino & Smith, 2007; Hunsberger & Altemeyer, 2006; Pasquale, 2009, p. 43). As Table 2 demonstrates, this study was unique in that our interviews went beyond nonbelievers who were members of a freethought organisation and incorporated data from many “unaffiliated” nonbelievers.

Table 1. Frequency of participants by geography.

Region	<i>n</i>	%
Midwest	8	13.8
North	7	12.1
South	19	32.8
West	9	15.5
No response	15	25.9

Table 2. Nonbelief organisation affiliation.

	<i>n</i>	%
No	17	29.3
Yes	25	43.1
No response	16	27.6

Participants were interviewed for an hour each on average, with some interviews lasting much longer. A modified version of the Fowler Faith Development interview (Fowler, Streib, & Keller, 2004) was constructed specifically for use in studying the nonbelief population focusing particularly on life marker events of meaning. The questions elicited rich narrative responses from participants as they were asked to reflect upon their own sense of identity, life development, social commitments, and worldview as well as defining commonly used terms for “nonbelief” in order to see if the participants could agree on the use of a single identity marker (i.e., atheist, agnostic, humanist, bright, etc.). While there was no common agreement among participants on the precise term or terms an individual who does not believe in a God uses to identify him or herself, the interviews were thematically coded (Gibbs, 2007) for shared commonalities and points of departures among the participants’ responses. This grounded theoretical approach, combined with extensive participant observer research,<sup>3</sup> allowed the researchers to go beyond single acts of identification and take into account the definitions and lived experiences that played into identity terms of nonbelief. A typology of six secular–nonbelieving paths arose from the participants’ responses that show nonbeliever’s individual identities went far beyond a simple “distance from religion”. For many, religion only played a small part, or none at all in terms of how they saw themselves. A typology of six characteristics emerged within the data and is presented below.

## Results

### *Intellectual Atheist/Agnostic (IAA)*

The first and most frequently discussed type is what could be termed The Intellectual Atheist/Agnostic or IAA. IAA typology includes individuals who proactively seek to educate themselves through intellectual association, and proactively acquires knowledge on various topics relating to ontology (the search for Truth) and nonbelief. They enjoy dialectic enterprises such as healthy democratic debate and discussions and are intrinsically motivated to do so. These individuals are typically versed in a variety of writings on belief and nonbelief and are prone to cite these authors in discussions.

IAs associate with fellow intellectuals regardless of their ontological position as long as the IAA associate is versed and educated on various issues of science, philosophy, “rational”

theology, and common socio-political religious dialogue. They may enjoy discussing the epistemological positions related to the existence or nonexistence of a deity. Besides using textual sources such as intellectual books, IAAs may utilise technology such as the Internet to read popular blogs, view YouTube videos, and listen to podcasts that fall in line with their particular interests. Facebook and other online social networking sites can be considered a medium for learning or discussion. However, not only is the IAA typically engaged in electronic forms of intellectualism but they oftentimes belong to groups that meet face to face offline such as various sceptic, rationalist, and freethinking groups for similar mentally stimulating discussions and interaction. The Modus operandi for the Intellectual Atheist/Agnostic is the externalisation of epistemological-orientated social stimulation.

#### *Activist Atheist/Agnostic (AAA)*

The next typology relates to being socially active. These individuals are termed the activist atheist and/or agnostic. Individuals in the Activist Atheist typology are not content with the placidity of simply holding a nonbelief position; they seek to be both vocal and proactive regarding current issues in the atheist/agnostic socio-political sphere. This socio-political sphere can include such egalitarian issues, but is not limited to concerns of humanism, feminism, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered issues, social or political concerns, human rights themes, environmental concerns, animal rights, and controversies such as the separation of church and state. Their activism can be as minimal as the education of friends or others, to much larger manifestations of social activities such as boycotting products, promoting legal action, or marching to raise awareness. Activist Atheists/Agnostics are commonly naturalistic- or humanistic-minded individuals, but are not limited to these types of ethical concerns. It is not uncommon for AAA individuals to ally themselves with other movements in support of social awareness. The Activist Atheist/Agnostics are not idle; they effectuate their interests and beliefs.

#### *Seeker-Agnostic (SA)*

The third typological characteristic is the Seeker-Agnostic. Seeker-Agnostic typology consists of individuals attuned to the metaphysical possibilities precluding metaphysical existence, or at least recognises the philosophical difficulties and complexities in making personal affirmations regarding ideological beliefs. They may call themselves agnostic or agnostic-atheist, as the SA simply cannot be sure of the existence of God or the divine. They keep an open mind in relation to the debate between the religious, spiritual, and antitheist elements within society.

Seeker-Agnostics recognise the limitation of human knowledge and experience. They actively search for and respond to knowledge and evidence, either supporting or disconfirming truth claims. They also understand, or at least recognise, the qualitative complexities of experiences in the formation of personal meaning. Seeker-Agnostics do not hold a firm ideological position but always search for the scientifically wondrous, and experientially profound confirmation of life's meaning. They may be intrinsically motivated to explore and seek understanding in the world around them. The diversity of others is accepted for the SA and co-existence with the "others" is not only possible, but also welcomed. Their worldly outlook may be mediated by science; however, they recognise current scientific limitations and embrace scientific uncertainty. They are comfortable with this uncertainty and even enjoy discussing it. Some Intellectual Atheist/Agnostics or Anti-Theists may accuse the seeker agnostic of avoiding responsibility or commitment to a more solid affirmation of atheism. In other cases, outsiders may see it as an ontological transitional state from religion or spirituality to atheism.

In some cases, Seeker-Agnostics may generally miss being a believer either from the social benefits or the emotional connection they have with others such as friends or family. At times, their intellectual disagreement with their former theology causes some cognitive dissonance and it is possible they may continue to identify as a religious or spiritual individual. However, taking those exceptions into account, the majority of Seeker-Agnostics should in no way be considered “confused”. For the Seeker-Agnostic, uncertainty is embraced.

#### *Anti-Theist (AT)*

The fourth typology, and one of the more assertive in their own view, is the Anti-Theist. In some cases, they may be labelled as the “new atheists”, as the Anti-Theist is diametrically opposed to religious ideology. As such, the assertive Anti-Theist both proactively and aggressively asserts their views towards others when appropriate, seeking to educate the theist’s in the passé nature of belief and theology. In other words, antitheists view religion as ignorance and see any individual or institution associated with it as backward and socially detrimental. The Anti-Theist has a clear and – in their view, superior – understanding of the limitations and danger of religions. They view the logical fallacies of religion as an outdated worldview that is not only detrimental to social cohesion and peace, but also to technological advancement and civilised evolution as a whole. They are compelled to share their view and want to educate others into their ideological position and attempt to do so when and where the opportunity arises. Some Anti-Theist individuals feel compelled to work against the institution of religion in its various forms including social, political, and ideological, while others may assert their view with religious persons on an individual basis. The Anti-Theist believes that the obvious fallacies in religion and belief should be aggressively addressed in some form or another. Based on personalities, some Anti-Theists may be more assertive than others; but outsiders and friends know very clearly where they stand in relation to an Anti-Theist. Their worldview is typically not a mystery. Unneeded sentence the Anti-Theist’s reaction to a religious devotee is often based on social and psychological maturity.

#### *Non-Theist (NT)*

The fifth typology is the Non-Theist. While not many individuals identified themselves as this type, they did have experiences with others who indicated themselves as being Non-Theists. For the Non-Theists, the alignment of oneself with religion, or conversely an epistemological position against religion can appear quite unconventional from their perspective. However, a few terms may best capture the sentiments of the Non-Theist. One is apathetic, while another may be disinterested. The Non-Theist is nonactive in terms of involving themselves in social or intellectual pursuits having to do with religion or anti-religion. The Non-Theist is simply not concerned with religion. Religion plays no role or issue in one’s consciousness or worldview; nor does a Non-Theist have concern for the atheist or agnostic movement. No part of their life addresses or considers transcendent ontology. They are not interested in any type of secularist agenda and simply do not care. Simply put, Non-Theists are apathetic nonbelievers. They simply do not believe, and in the same right, their absence of faith means the absence of anything religious in any form from their mental space.

#### *Ritual Atheist/Agnostic (RAA)*

The sixth and final type was one of the most interesting and unexpected. This exploration termed this type The Ritual Atheist/Agnostic or RAA. The RAA type holds no belief in God or the



divine, or they tend to believe it is unlikely that there is an afterlife with God or the divine. They are open about their lack of belief and may educate themselves on the various aspects of belief by others. One of the defining characteristics regarding Ritual Atheists/Agnostics is that they may find utility in the teachings of some religious traditions. They see these as more or less philosophical teachings of how to live life and achieve happiness than a path to transcendental liberation. Ritual Atheist/Agnostics find utility in tradition and ritual. For example, these individuals may participate in specific rituals, ceremonies, musical opportunities, meditation, yoga classes, or holiday traditions. Such participation may be related to an ethnic identity (e.g., Jewish) or the perceived utility of such practices in making the individual a better person.

Many times Ritual Atheist/Agnostics may be misidentified as spiritual but not religious, but they are quick to point out that they are atheist or agnostic in relation to their own ontological view. For other Ritual Atheist/Agnostics, it may be simply that they hold respect for profound symbolism inherent within religious rituals, beliefs, and ceremonies. The Ritual Atheist/Agnostic individual perceives ceremonies and rituals as producing personal meaning within life. This meaning can be an artistic or cultural appreciation of human systems of meaning while knowing there is no higher reality other than the observable reality of the mundane world. In some cases, these individuals may identify strongly with religious traditions as a matter of cultural identity and even take an active participation in religious rituals. While Ritual Atheists may celebrate their association with ritualistic organisations or call themselves cultural practitioners of a faith-based practice, they are open and honest about their ontological position and do not hide their lack of belief in the metaphysical or divine. Ritual Atheist/Agnostics may identify ritualistically or symbolically with Judaism, Paganism, Buddhism, or Laveyan Satanism, for example.

## Discussion

This classification identifies six types of not only nonbelieving people, but secular people as well. This set of six “types” do not deviate far from prior understandings of the nonreligious gained by demographers and sociologists studying kinds of secularity, such as previous research into the Nones (Kosmin, Keysar, Cragun, & Navarro-Rivera, 2009). These six types are also recognisable by leaders working in grassroots secular organising. However, familiarity does not mean redundancy, since confirmations are welcome in the social sciences and all too often lacking. Widely discrepant results would arouse more concern than confidence. The next section, Study 2, utilises the above typology and provides quantitative confirmation of the qualitatively distinct types using a variety of commonly used measures of personality to detect how each type is psychologically distinct and unique.

## Study 2: quantitative

### *Method<sup>2</sup>*

Study 2 sought to explore possible psychological correlates of the typologies. The design of this study sought to focus solely on a cohort of nonbelief from across the USA. Participants were solicited for participation through social networking both face to face and through the Internet. The typology labels were removed and relabelled to limit demand characteristics as “Type 1, Type 2, etc.”. The typology was shortened and rephrased using language at the high school reading level. Using Survey Monkey, an online survey building and collection program, participants were asked to complete demographics, pick from one of the six types of descriptions that most closely resembled themselves, and then complete a series of individual difference measures such as measures of personality. This study explored those connections that may be present by applying

the Big Five Domain from the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg et al., 2006). The overall scale measures five key areas of personality such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Next the Ryff Psychological Well-Being scale was used to determine if different types of nonbelief, as sorted by the adjectives as predictors of type, experience varying degrees of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 1996). The scale covers six key areas of well-being such as self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relationships, personal growth, and autonomy. As an extension of Psychological Well-Being, Narcissism and Anger were also explored. Narcissism was measured using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), this was to determine if one or more groups may be concerned with egoism and self-importance (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Within that same perspective, this study also employed the Multidimensional Anger Inventory to determine if one or more typologies may have more anger than other types (Siegel, 1986). This again may explain why nonbelief may receive a negative stigma with some individuals and not others. Finally, in exploration of open- and closed-mindedness, this study used the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale (Rokeach, 1960). While it is an older measure, it is useful here as the participant's political leanings or potential for authoritarianism is not measured; it simply looks at the participant's open- or closed-mindedness regardless of the ideological position. This scale was slightly modified to reflect more current events in the questions, as it dates back to the 1960s. Of the various scales on open- and closed-mindedness, Rokeach's (1960) work is one of the few where the individual's closed-mindedness is not a product of his or her religious or political leanings; but rather how open he or she is to ideas or values (Silver, 2011). The overall final product was a randomised scale of 310 total items.

## Results

Study 2 consisted of  $N = 1153$  participants. Of the 1153 participants,  $N = 564$  or 48.9% identified as male and  $N = 578$  or 50.1% identified as female. Moreover,  $N = 11$  or 1% identified as a genderqueer or agendered. The ages represented in the data set ranged from 18 to 90 with a mean age of 36.14 ( $SD = 12.939$ ). The largest participant pool by geographic region was the South at 51.7% ( $N = 592$ ) followed by the western part of the USA at 21.8% or  $N = 250$ . The next lowest was the Midwest USA at  $N = 147$  representing 12.8% of the sample. Finally, the Northeast was the smallest sample at 11.4% with  $N = 132$ . The largest group consisted of Type One: Academics with 37.6% of the sample or  $N = 434$ . The next largest was Type Two: the Activists at 23% or 265 participants. The next largest was the antitheist group at 14.8% or  $N = 171$  of the sample. Further, the fourth largest group self-identified as Ritual Atheists at 12.5% or  $N = 144$ . This is followed by the agnostic group at 7.6% or  $N = 88$ . The smallest group to identify was the Non-Theist group at 4.4% or  $N = 51$  (Table 3).

Fourteen separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were computed on a variety of measures/subscales for the six types of nonbelief (IAA – Intellectual Atheist/Agnostic, AAA – Activist Atheist/Agnostic, SA – Seeker Agnostic, AT – Anti-Theist, NT – Non-Theist, and RAA – Ritual Atheist/Agnostic) established in the qualitative analysis. For a complete list of the measures/subscales and related means and standard deviations refer to Table 4. To account for the use of multiple tests, a more stringent alpha level was computed using a Bonferroni correction that divides the standard alpha level of .05 by the number of individual analyses conducted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The corrected alpha level for significance for the individual ANOVAs was set at .0035.

The first ANOVA was computed on the Ryff Autonomy subscale for the six groups. There was a significant between-groups effect,  $F(5, 1158) = 15.37$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .062$ . A Tukey B post hoc procedure showed multiple significant differences between the groups at the .05

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of nonbelief types.

Nonbelief type	<i>n</i>	%
Type One: Academic	434	37.6
Type Two: Activist	265	23.0
Type Three: Agnostic	88	7.6
Type Four: Anti-Theist	171	14.8
Type Five: Non-Theist	51	4.4
Type Six: Ritual Atheist	144	12.5

level. The Seeker-Agnostics (SA) differed significantly from all other groups. The Ritual Atheist/Agnostics (RAA) differ significantly from the Seeker-Agnostics (SA), Intellectual Atheist/Agnostics (IAA), and the Anti-Theists (AT). The Non-Theists (NT) differ significantly from the Seeker-Agnostics (SA), Intellectual Atheist/Agnostics (IAA), and the Anti-Theists (AT). The Activist Atheist/Agnostics (AAA) differ significantly from the Seeker-Agnostics (SA) and the Anti-Theists (AT). The Intellectual Atheist/Agnostics (IAA) differ significantly from the Seeker-Agnostics (SA), Ritual Atheist/Agnostics (RAA), and the Non-Theists (NT). The Anti-Theists (AT) differ significantly from all groups except the Intellectual Atheist/Agnostics (IAA).

The remaining ANOVAs for the Ryff subscales revealed no significant differences at the corrected alpha level of .0035. Refer to Table 4 for the statistical output regarding analyses of these Ryff subscales.

The seventh ANOVA was computed on the NPI for the six groups. There was a significant between-groups effect,  $F(5, 1158) = 6.05$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .025$ . A Tukey B post hoc procedure showed that Anti-Theists (AT) differ significantly from Activist Atheist/Agnostics (AAA), Seeker-Agnostics (SA), and Ritual Atheist/Agnostics (RAA) at the .05 level.

The eighth ANOVA was computed on the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale for the six groups. There was a significant between-groups effect,  $F(5, 1158) = 8.58$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .036$ . A Tukey B post hoc procedure showed that Anti-Theists (AT) differ significantly from all other groups at the .05 level.

The ninth ANOVA was computed on the Multidimensional Anger Inventory for the six groups. There was a significant between-groups effect,  $F(5, 1158) = 4.34$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .018$ . A Tukey B post hoc procedure showed that the Intellectual Atheist/Agnostics (IAA) differed significantly from the Anti-Theists (AT) at the .05 level.

The remaining five ANOVAs were computed on the NEO subdomains. For the NEO Neuroticism subdomain, there was a significant between-groups effect,  $F(5, 1158) = 3.73$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = .016$ . A Tukey B post hoc procedure showed no significant differences among the six groups. The ANOVA for the NEO Extraversion subdomain did not show any significant between-groups effects. The ANOVA for the NEO Openness subdomain revealed significant between-groups effects,  $F(5, 1158) = 6.32$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .027$ . A Tukey B post hoc procedure showed that Non-Theists (NT) differed significantly from Activist Atheist/Agnostics (AAA) and Intellectual Atheist/Agnostics (IAA). The ANOVA for the NEO Agreeableness subdomain revealed significant between-groups effects,  $F(5, 1158) = 17.69$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .071$ . A Tukey B post hoc procedure showed that Anti-Theists (AT) were significantly different from all other groups at the .05 level. The ANOVA for the NEO Conscientiousness subdomain did not show any significant between-groups effects.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and one-way ANOVAs for the effects of six types of nonbelief on 14 dependent variables.

Variable	IAA		AAA		SA		AT		NT		RAA		<i>F</i> (5, 1158)	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Ryff Autonomy	58.93	6.80	57.09	8.06	53.00	8.30	59.91	6.87	56.31	8.52	55.49	8.49	15.37	.000	.06
Ryff Environmental Mastery	50.24	10.08	49.29	10.37	49.38	10.86	48.04	10.77	51.43	10.17	50.31	9.78	1.63	.148	.01
Ryff Personal Growth	61.92	6.08	62.09	6.37	59.98	7.49	60.64	6.60	60.82	6.68	61.35	6.03	2.61	.024	.01
Ryff Positive Relations	53.16	10.13	54.00	10.20	53.99	10.33	51.45	10.96	51.94	11.31	55.09	10.16	2.48	.030	.01
Ryff Purpose in Life	54.87	9.40	53.91	10.03	52.86	10.58	52.07	10.69	53.82	11.05	54.69	10.04	2.31	.042	.01
Ryff Self Acceptance	53.02	10.59	51.59	11.13	52.24	11.12	50.82	11.10	53.08	11.51	52.30	10.79	1.29	.266	.01
Narcissism (NPI)	4.67	3.16	3.86	2.77	3.88	2.60	5.27	3.10	4.51	3.04	4.17	2.94	6.05	.000	.03
Rokeach Dogmatism	107.73	16.66	106.38	16.56	106.97	16.82	115.50	16.42	108.59	14.44	105.15	16.00	8.58	.000	.04
Anger Inventory	100.83	19.79	102.45	19.78	103.35	15.82	108.66	20.09	105.75	18.96	101.88	19.16	4.34	.001	.02
NEO Neuroticism	25.60	8.45	25.94	9.24	25.49	9.44	26.29	9.36	23.84	8.08	24.54	8.70	3.73	.002	.02
NEO Extroversion	32.34	8.94	32.76	8.79	32.77	9.32	32.67	9.41	32.33	10.32	32.99	8.55	.16	.976	.00
NEO Openness	44.70	4.45	44.47	4.53	43.02	5.06	43.31	5.49	41.73	5.51	43.42	5.58	6.32	.000	.03
NEO Agreeableness	37.57	6.13	38.23	6.18	38.67	5.54	33.50	6.56	37.92	5.29	38.76	5.37	17.69	.000	.07
NEO Conscientiousness	35.86	7.31	34.26	7.66	34.63	7.78	34.51	7.89	37.18	7.15	35.21	6.80	1.48	.193	.01

## Discussion

Overall these exploratory correlates of the typology suggest that personality measures have little correlation with varieties of nonbelief. Only the *autonomy* subscale of the Ryff measure differentiates between various groups in the typology but none of the other subscales reached our accepted level of significance. Likewise, the NEO subdomains offer little in ways of differentiating types with the exception of *openness*. More negative measures of personality such as Narcissistic Personality Inventory offers an exception where Anti-Theists (AT) appear to be more narcissistic than others, a finding that may suggest psychological issues involved in strong denial of theism associated with some of the “new atheism”. Other forms of nonbelief may not involve such strong personality involvement that tends towards the negative, a finding consistent with the fact that this group also scores higher on the Dogmatism Scale than any other group in our typology, as well as differing from the Intellectual Atheist/Agnostics (IAA) on the Multidimensional Anger Inventory. Thus, these correlational data are consistent with other empirical studies indicating little power for personality measures to predict either religion or personality (Saroglou, 2002). However, this is not to say that among one type, the Anti-Theists (AT), personality measures suggestive of closed-mindedness as a defence against anger might not be fruitful avenues to explore. However, it is also true that these negative characteristics are not characteristic of the variety of atheists in our typology and remain in this limited sense, an exception. Just as many scholars have stated that there is no such thing as “religion” in general (e.g., Belzen, 2010) we put forth that there is also no such thing as “atheism” or “nonreligion” in general – nonreligiosity varies because secular identity and activity is quite multidimensional. More specifically, nonbelieving peoples show great psychological variation in their makeup. Researchers can no longer operate as though a unified psychological profile of “atheists” exist. Past psychological profiles that treat “atheism” as a single entity should be revisited in light of the data presented here.

## Notes

1. In this article, “nonbelief” refers to the absence of belief in any and all gods.
2. An even more in-depth method, results, and discussion section for studies 1 and 2 (also contains interview excerpts in the participants own words) is available in the first author’s dissertation online at <https://proxy.lib.utc.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1437233564?accountid=14767>.
3. The researchers were embedded for over two years in a local atheist-freethinking group in their hometown.

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