



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Individual who view this poster will:

- Gain an understanding of background characteristics, spirituality/worldview, and academic experiences of a sample of college students who do not believe in God.
- Consider new ways to include atheist students in spirituality-related and interfaith initiatives.

CONTEXT

According to Kosmin & Keysar (2013):

- College-age Americans are divided among not two but three distinct worldviews:
 - Religious—31.8%
 - Secular—32.4%
 - Spiritual—28.2%

Note: 7.7% said they did not know whether they would describe themselves as more religious, spiritual, or secular.

- Patterns of belief in God are remarkably different in the three worldviews:
 - The Religious group mirrors the general U.S. adult population with 70% firm believers and only 2% saying they don't believe in God or don't know where there is a God and don't believe there is any way to find out.
 - At the other spectrum are Secular students, of whom 77% either don't believe in God or don't know if there is a God.
 - Spiritual students exhibit an array of preferences: 27% believe in a higher power (but not in a personal God); 24% are firm believers; 21% believe in God (while having doubts); 12% don't know if God exists, and only 5% don't believe in God.

DATA & SAMPLE

Higher Education Research Institute (UCLA):

- 2004-2007 College Student Beliefs & Values (CSVB) Survey
- 826 students who indicated they do not believe in God

BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- Sex: 55% Female, 45% Male
- Age: 99% traditional (17-25 years)
- Financial Concerns About College: 52% Some, 35% None, 12% Major
- Race: White 88%, Asian Am 10%, Latino 4%, African Am 1 %, Am Indian 1%
- High School Grades: 72% A, 27% B, 1% C
- Politics: Liberal 67%, Middle of the road 24%, Conservative 9%
- Feel obligation to follow parents' religion : 90% Not at all, 7% Some extent, 2% Great extent

Religion Reported in 2004			
	Mother	Father	Student
None	34.4%	44.1%	83.2%
Catholic	21.6%	19.4%	4.8%
Lutheran	6.6%	4.8%	1.4%
Oth Christian	6.3%	4.4%	1.4%
Methodist	5.9%	5.3%	1.2%
Presbyterian	5.3%	3.4%	.9%
Church of Christ	2.9%	2.6%	.4%
Epsicopal	2.9%	2.1%	.1%
Jewish	2.7%	3.8%	.9%
UCC	2.3%	1.3%	.1%
Buddhist	2.1%	1.9%	1.4%
Unitarian	1.9%	.9%	1.2%
Other Relig	1.9%	2.1%	2.6%
Baptist	1.5%	2.2%	.1%
Less than 1% in the following categories: E Orthodox, Hindu, 7th Day Adventist, Islamic, LDS (Mormon), Quaker			

SPIRITUALITY/WORLDVIEW

	Atheist Scores	Atheist Mean	HERI Mean
Spirituality Factors			
Spirituality	Low	19.96	28.54
Spiritual Quest	Mid	21.52	24.73
Equanimity	Mid	10.52	13.37
Religious Factors			
Religious Commitment	Low	17.11	31.51
Religious Struggle	Mid	11.76	11.83
Religious Engagement	Low	12.08	20.70
Relig./Soc. Conservatism	Low	10.04	14.94
Religious Skepticism	Hi	25.62	17.80
Related Qualities			
Charitable Involvement	Mid	13.64	14.13
Ethic of Caring	Mid	17.05	18.49
Ecumenical View	Mid	31.49	32.41
Self Compassion	Mid	14.30	15.31

Trends:

- Atheists score lower than the total sample on spirituality.
- Atheists score lower than the total sample on religious commitment and engagement.
- Atheists score higher than the total sample on religious skepticism.
- Atheists score similarly to the total sample on "qualities related to spirituality."

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

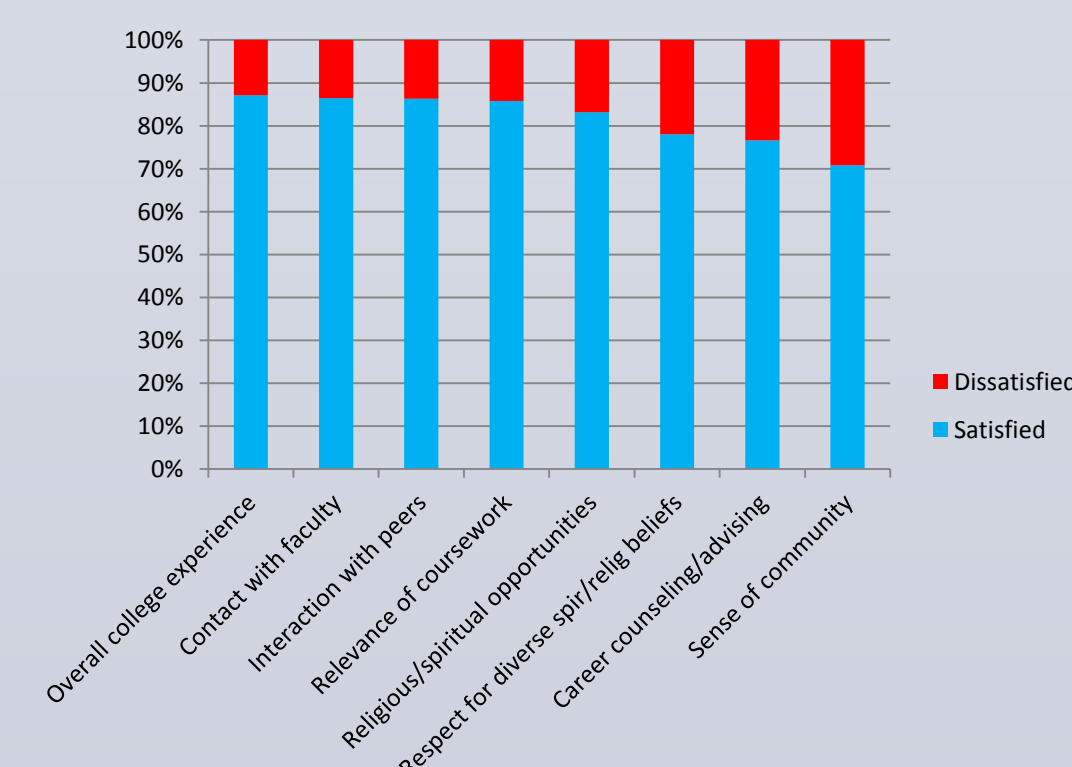
Top 3 reasons for going to college:

- To learn more about things that interest me
- To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas
- To be able to get a better job

Top 3 Areas of Growth During College:

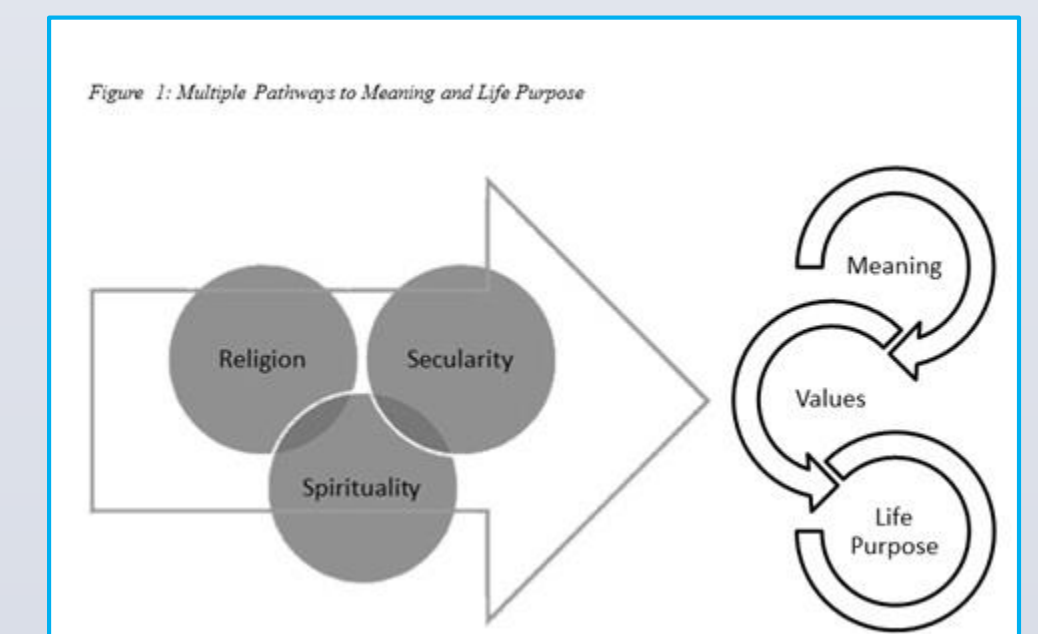
- Critical thinking
- Understanding of global issues
- Understanding of U.S. social problems

Satisfaction with Aspects of College:



DISCUSSION

- Many of the topics called "spirituality" in Student Affairs are salient for atheist students. However, they may not be inclined to attend spirituality programs.
- Within student affairs, starting with the broad concept of "Pathways to Purpose," or "Purpose, Meaning, and Values" (rather than defining that as spirituality) creates a more inclusive environment. This entails shifting our thinking of spirituality to a means rather than an end.
- Creating programming and structures focused on pathways to purpose, meaning, and values rather than spirituality is not meant to minimize religious or spiritual perspectives. It is a way to broaden conversations so students can position themselves in the conversation in ways that are authentic to them.



FINAL WORDS

- Reference: Kosmin, B. A., & Keysar, A. (2013). *Religious, spiritual and secular: The emergence of three distinct worldviews among American college students*. Retrieved from http://www.trincoll.edu/Academics/centers/issc/Documents/ARIS_2013_College%20Students_Sept_25_final_draft.pdf.
- For more information or to discuss this project, email goodmakm@miamioh.edu.
- Special thanks to the Higher Education Research Institute for granting me data access for this project.