

Attachment to God: an attempt to build an explicit measure instrument

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Aims

- Creating a self-report to measure the attachment to God, with the purpose to overcome the limits of Kirkpatrick and Shaver's instrument (1992)
- Confirming the relationship between attachment and religiosity that emerged from previous researches

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The main aim of this research is to create an Italian self-report that would be able to measure the attachment to God. The Kirkpatrick and Shaver's instrument, indeed, doesn't seem to work very well within the Italian context, where most of the respondents resulted either as "Secure" or as "Anxious-Ambivalent". Findings that are similar to those described by Kirkpatrick were found just among the consecrated people. This fact may depend both on a different way of seeing the relationship with God and on a different understanding of God.

Hypothesis

- The characteristics of the attachment to God have some expressions on the behavior
- Each type of attachment to God, so, should be associated with some specific behaviors

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The basic assumption we started from, was that the way a person relates to God has some expressions on the behavior. For this reason, for each type of attachment to God there should be an associated set of typical behaviors. By studying individuals' behaviors in their personal, religious and social areas, so, it should be possible to find these specific sets.

Materials

- Socio-demographic data (age, gender, educational level, occupation, religion, “conversion”, political orientation)
 - 1. *The Religious Orientation Scale I-E Revised* (Gorsuch and McPherson, 1989; Italian translation by Rossi and Iovine, 2004)
 - 2. *Revised Quest Scale* (Altemeier, Hunsberger, 1992 ; Italian translation by Rossi and Iovine, 2004)
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A questionnaire made up of five tools and of a series of socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, occupation and political orientation has been used in this research. The first of these five tools is the Religious Orientation Scale, that measures the intrinsic, the personal extrinsic and the social extrinsic religiosity. According to Allport, the intrinsic religiosity can be described as “living” the religion while the extrinsic religiosity can be understood as “using” it. The personal extrinsic orientation leads people to be religious in order to find relief, protection, comfort and happiness, while the social extrinsic orientation helps the believers to find friendships and sociality. The second instrument, the Revised Quest Scale, attempts to measure a special aspect of the religiosity: the looking for answers to existential questions. This scale was constructed by Altemeier and Hunsberger adding some items to those of the Batson’s original scale and to those added later by MacFarland. Both of them were translated in Italian by two of the authors.

Materials

3. Measure of attachment to God (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992)
 4. An *ad hoc* questionnaire about the (“religious”) behavior (derived from the preceding scale)
 5. *Attachment Style Questionnaire* (Feeney, Noller & Hanrahan, 1994)
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The other three instruments we used deal with attachment measures.

First, the most classic question to estimate the attachment to God

Then, a second questionnaire, constructed specifically to measure the behaviors associated with the relationship with God.

Finally, the Attachment Style Questionnaire, that assesses the attachment styles among adults in the following five areas: Confidence in self and others; Need for approval; Preoccupation with relationships, Discomfort with closeness and Relationships as secondary.

Measure of attachment to God

- **Secure:** "God is generally warm and responsive to me; He always seems to know when to be supportive and protective of me, and when to let me make my own mistakes. My relationship with God is always comfortable and I am very happy and satisfied with it." (70%)
 - **Avoidant:** "God s generally impersonal, distant, and often seems to have little or no interest in my personal affairs and problems. I frequently have the feeling that He doesn't care very much about me, or that he might not like me" (23%)
 - **Anxious-Ambivalent:** "God seems to be inconsistent in His reactions to me; He sometimes seems very warm and responsive to my needs, but sometimes not. I'm sure that He loves me and cares about me, but sometimes He seems to how it in ways I don't really understand" (7%)
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The "measure of attachment to God" is composed of 3 descriptions of a possible relationships with God.

It was modeled on similar types of Hazan and Shaver's romantic attachment.

The data collected by Kirpatrick and Shaver indicate a high percentage of Secure attachment (seventy percente), a lower percentage (twenty-three %) of "ambivalent" and a very small percentage of "Avoidant" (seven %).

Preliminary interview

In order to create the *ad hoc* questionnaire about the behavior, we conducted a preliminary operation (12 participants, balanced by gender, age and religious belief):

- for each of the previous descriptions (Kirkpatrick & Shaver) we asked the subject to think of a person who could fit with the description, and to describe that person in terms of behaviors toward others and religion

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In order to create our *ad hoc* questionnaire about the behavior, we asked twelve people (balanced by gender, age and religious belief) to think of a person (imaginary or actual) who could fit with each of the descriptions by Kirkpatrick, and to describe that person in terms of behaviors toward others and religion.

Construction of the questionnaire

- Statements were related to 3 areas:
 - The person himself
 - His religious behavior
 - Life in general and commitment to volunteer
 - The statements were first proposed to 20 participants
 - The final version consists of 77 items
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Analyzing the collected interviews, we extracted a series of statements regarding three specific areas: the person himself, his religious behavior, and his social life in general.

The first series of statements was mixed with each other and proposed to twenty people with the sole purpose of verifying the comprehensibility of the statements and the modality of response.

The final version consists of seventy-seven items.

Sample (N=212)

		f	%
Gender	Male	96	45,3%
	Female	116	54,7%
Age	Young	66	31,1%
	Adult	81	38,2%
	Elderly	65	30,7%
Political orientation	Leftwing	34	16,0%
	Center	65	30,7%
M=6.07 SD=2.6	Rightwing	56	26,4%
	Nothing	57	26,9%

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Our sample consists of two hundred and twelve people. The sample was collected in a northern rural area of Milan, in order to have a high percentage of people who believe.

We tried to balance the sample by gender, age and political orientation.

Political orientation was measured on a 1-10 scale, where 1 indicated "leftwing" and 10 indicated "rightwing" in accordance with Jennings and van Deth's indications. This measure was used both as sub-divided in four categories and as a continuous variable.

As a continuous variable, the central tendency of the sample was slightly to the right. In terms of categories, approximately center, rightwing and not to have any political orientation are the same percentage of responses.

Sample (N=212)

		f	%	
Attach- ment to God	Secure	79	37.3	
	Avoidant	37	17.5	
	Anxious/ambivalent	96	45.3	
Faith and religious attend- ance	Believers practicing	87	41,0	87%
	Believers not practicing	98	46,2	
	Not believers but practicing	1	0,5	13%
	Neither believers nor practicing	26	12,3	

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Compared with the attachment to God as measured by the Kirkpatrick and Shaver's types, our sample was distributed with high percentages both on the "Secure" attachment and on the "Ambivalent".

With regard to the faith, we asked the subjects to describe themselves using four categories, obtained by crossing the faith and the religious attendance. Most of the sample defined themselves as believers and only a small proportion as unbelievers.

Regarding the practice of religion, believers were fairly evenly divided between people who claim to be religious practitioners and people who claim not to be.

Sample

<i>Attendance at the worship's place</i>	No	Yes
Believers practicing	15 (17%)	72 (83%)
Believers not practicing	86 (88%)	12 (12%)
<i>Religious reference</i>	f	%
Roman catholic	153	72
Christian	33	16

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Anyway, focusing on the responses at the question about the regular attendance at the worship's places, it seems that a part of the sample of believers was not consistent with the statements about practicing or not. Indeed a seventeen of those who described themselves as "believing and practicing", answered that they did not attend church. Similarly, among non-practicing.

The religious reference of the sample was mostly Catholic, although a sixteen percent defined themselves as "Christians".

Sample

Religious reference		f	%
Age of change (N=56)	12-15 y.o.	4	7.1
	16-18 y.o.	18	32.1
	18-24 y.o.	14	25.0
	25+ y.o	20	35.7
Direction of change (N=50)	Believers -> not bel.	34	68.0
	Not bel. -> believers	16	32.0

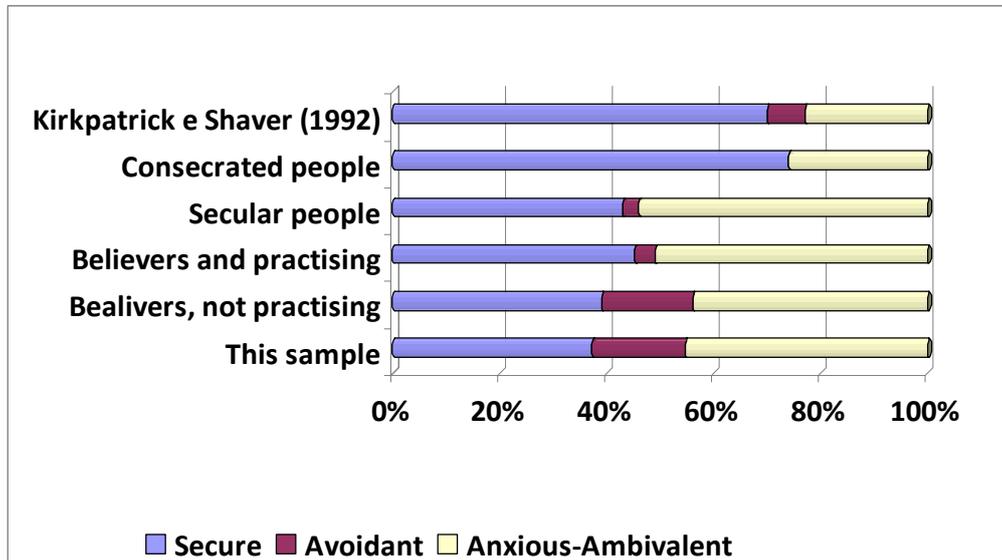
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One of the first questions, asked to indicate whether their religious references changed over time, at what age it happened and in which direction.

A quarter of the respondents experienced some types of changes.

Among these quarter people, sixty percent of changes occurred after eighteen years. Fifty people indicated the direction of change and for sixty-eight percent of them it was towards “unbelief”.

Measure of attachment to God (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992)



In this slide we compare Kirkpatrick and Shaver's results of "Measure of attachment to God" to those obtained in Italy by Cassibba and collaborators and by Rossi and collaborators.

The first line shows the results obtained by Kirkpatrick: most people have a Secure attachment to God. This results are similar to those obtained by Cassibba with religious people (priests, nuns and seminarians). The other lines show the results obtained by Cassibba with Secular people, and by Rossi with a secular believers sample (practicing and not practicing) and with the present sample.

Except for religious people, the Italian sample has in common a large percentage of "Anxious-Ambivalent" attachment to God.

		Attachment to God		
		Secure	Avoidant	Anxious
Faith & rel. attendance	Believers practicing	53	2	32
	Believers not practicing	26	11	61
	Unbelievers	0	24	2

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Analyzing in details our sample, crossing the "Faith and religious attendance" with the "attachment to God question", we can see that the "believer and practicing" relate themselves to God mostly in a secure manner, while the "believer and not practicing" mostly in anxious-ambivalent. Unbelievers describe their possible relation with God as "Avoidant".

Attachment to God and Religiosity

	Secure	Avoidant	Ambi-valent	p<
Intrinsic religiosity	25.75	17.81	21.40	.000
Personal extrinsic rel.	11.27	5.62	9.80	.000
Social extrinsic rel.	5.47	3.97	5.68	.000
Quest	59.46	105.59	79.73	.000

Different colors indicate statistically different means

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The variables of religiosity allow to characterize the Kirkpatrick's types, with the exception of social extrinsic religiosity.

The "Secure" attachment is characterized by high average of intrinsic and personal extrinsic religiosity and low average of quest.

The "Avoidant" attachment is characterized by the minimum values of intrinsic and personal extrinsic religiosity and the maximum value for Quest.

The "Ambivalent" style has means that do not deviate much from the "Secure", but that are statistically different.

Ad hoc questionnaire: Self area

Insecure self

- I am a bit insecure as a person
- I'm afraid of risking
- I have many doubts, including those about the relationship with others

"Openness to other" self

- As a person, I'm available, ...altruistic, ... caring

Satisfied self

- I'm satisfied with everything the life gives to me, I don't look for something better
 - I'm satisfied with what I have
 - I look for a quiet life
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We subjected the items of the questionnaire created by us to factorial analysis. After several solutions, we decided to consider a maximum likelihood solution composed of 3 factors by each topic area.

In the area that concerns the person, a first factor collects the items related to insecure self: "I am a person a little insecure", "I'm afraid of risking", "I have many doubts, including in relation to other people".

A second factor collects items related to the openness to the other, like "I am a person available, ...altruistic, ... caring".

A third factor collects the items that indicate a person who is simply satisfied with what he/she have: "I would settle for what life gives me, without going in search of something better", "I shall have what I had", "I try to live a quiet life".

Ad hoc questionnaire: Religious area

Religious conviction (Intrinsic)

- I daily feel the presence of God, in what I do, in my choices, in my life
- When I have hard times, I commit myself to the Lord

Religious practice

- I attend church regularly / I don't...

Occasional religiosity (Personal extrinsic)

- I follow the religious rules because of my family education
 - I pray just in special occasions
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This area includes statements about religion.

The first factor collects the items that might indicate an intrinsic religiosity and we called it "convinced religiosity": "I hear daily the presence of God in what I do, in my choices, in my life", "In moments of difficulty, I entrust to the Lord".

The second factor includes affirmations like "I go to the church on a regular basis" and its opposite "I don't attend the Church". For this reason it was called "Religious Practice".

The third factor includes affirmations like "I follow the religious principles because instilled in myself from family education" or "I pray, but only in special occasions". For this reason we called it "Occasional religiosity".

The convinced religiosity and the religious practice are highly correlated (point seventy-nine) and could be considered as a single factor. However, we analyzed the components separately.

Ad hoc questionnaire: Sociality

Availability toward others

- I always try to help others
- I am available for helping others

Clam-up (Self closure)

- I am not interested in helping others
- Life gave me a lot of chances to overcome but I don't understand why

Insecurity

- Sometimes I feel like I could miss everything I have
 - I look for stability
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The third area under investigation, is the sociality.

The first extracted factor collects items that relate to the availability towards others in various modalities: aid, availability, troubleshooting, respect for ideas and people...

In the second factor, we find items opposed to the previous factor (such as "I am not interested in helping others") but with a nuance: the suffering. I have suffered so much and now I have no desire to help others. Metaphorically speaking, we may say the person closes on itself like a hedgehog.

The third factor collects statements of personal insecurity: "Sometimes I have the impression that I miss everything from the hands", "I am in search of stability".

The first factor in this area (Availability) correlates highly with the factor "Openness to the other" from the person area, and the factor "Insecurity" in this area correlates with that of insecure person.

Attachment to God and Factors

	Secure	Avoidant	Ambivalent	P<
Insecure self	22,86	27,00	26,60	,003
Openness to others	38,99	33,89	38,10	,000
Satisfied self	16,56	12,84	14,72	,000
	Bel+Prac	Bel. not	Unbeliever	
Openness to others	38.82	37.74	33.73	.001

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It is quite obvious that our ad hoc questionnaire does not measure the attachment to God. But there are obvious links with the types of attachment (such as factors that indicate insecurity / security) and with religiosity.

Here, we cross these factors with the Kirkpatrick's types of attachment.

In the area of the person, "Secure" people are also those with the highest average satisfaction and the lowest insecurity.

Moreover, "openness to others" is similar between the Secure and Ambivalent groups. Is there any link with practicing believers and non-practicing?

Yes, there is. Indeed, the believers (practicing and non-practicing) do not differentiate between them but have higher scores than unbelievers.

Attachment to God and Factors

	Secure	Avoidant	Ambivalent	p<
Religious conviction	58,32	27,13	48,16	,000
Religious practice	24,42	10,05	17,70	,000
Occasional religiosity	12,66	13,11	15,04	,007
Availability to other	44,73	39,59	43,56	,001
Clam-up	10,42	15,97	12,30	,000
Insecurity	11,16	14,38	13,56	,000

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In the religious area, the group that described himself as "Secure" in his relationship with God, has the highest average of religious belief and religious practice and the lowest average of occasional religiosity.

As we could expect, people who defined themselves as "Avoidant" in their relationships with God, have the lowest average of religious belief and religious practice. The ambivalents (which in our sample are largely non-practicing believers) are different from "Secures" because they have a lower score on convictions and practice religion, but the highest average of occasional religiosity.

In the context of social relations, the "availability to others" is common to "secure" and "ambivalent", while the "clam-up" is lower than the "Secure".

We can say that these data are in agreement with the behaviors predicted on the basis of Kirkpatrick's types.

Attachment to God and ASQ

	Secure	Avoidant	Ambivalent	p<
Confidence in self & others	36,32	30,19	34,59	,000
Discomfort with closeness	32,10	40,22	33,96	,000
Relationships as secondary	14,43	18,51	14,58	,000
Need for approval	21,41	21,70	21,48	n.s.
Preoccupation with relationships	27,91	27,81	27,92	n.s.

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The first scale of the Attachment Style Questionnaire is generally considered to be a measure of secure attachment; indeed, the "Secure" attachment presents the highest average.

"Discomfort with closeness" corresponds to the attachment "Avoidant" while "Relationships as secondary" corresponds to the attachment "Dismissing" by Bartholomew; correctly, both present their highest average on the "Avoidant" type.

Factors and ASQ

Correlation (N=212)	Insecure	Open to other	Satisfied
Confidence in self & others	-.306	.510	.331
Discomfort with closeness	.382	-.475	
Relationships as secondary		-.393	
Need for approval	.566		
Preoccupation with relationships	.407		

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The factors extracted from our questionnaire have also significant correlation with the scale of the Attachment Style Questionnaire.

“Confidence in self & others” (Secure) is negatively correlated with the insecurity and positively correlated with openness to others and satisfaction.

“Discomfort with closeness” (Avoidant attachment) is positively correlated with the insecurity and negatively correlated with openness to others.

“Relationships as secondary” (Dismissing) correlates negatively with openness to others.

“Need for approval” (which corresponds to the preoccupied attachment of Bartholomew) and “Preoccupation with relationship” (which corresponds to the “Anxious-Ambivalent” attachment by Hazan and Shaver) are both correlated with the insecurity.

Factors and ASQ

Correlation (N=212)	Relig. convictions	Relig. practice	Occasional rel.
Confidence in self & others	.470		
Discomfort with closeness	-.420	-.420	
Relationships as secondary	-.363	-.228	
Need for approval			
Preoccupation with relationships			

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In the religious area, we find again that the secure attachment correlate positively with religious convictions; the “Avoidant” attachment correlate negatively with both religious convictions and practice.

Factors and ASQ

Correlation (N=212)	Avalai- bility to other	Closed on themsel- ves	Insecu- rity
Confidence in self & others	.564		-.332
Discomfort with closeness		.486	.363
Relationships as secondary		.485	
Need for approval			.329
Preoccupation with relationships			.358

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At last, “secure attachment” correlate positively with “openness to others”, while “Avoidant attachment” correlate with closure and insecurity, and so forth.

Conclusions

- Believers and practicing -> Secure
 - Believers non-practicing -> Ambivalent
 - Unbelievers -> Avoidant

 - Secure -> (high) Intrinsic and Extrinsic personal religiosity; (low) Quest
 - Ambivalent - > similar to Secure but smaller
 - Avoidant -> opposite than Secure
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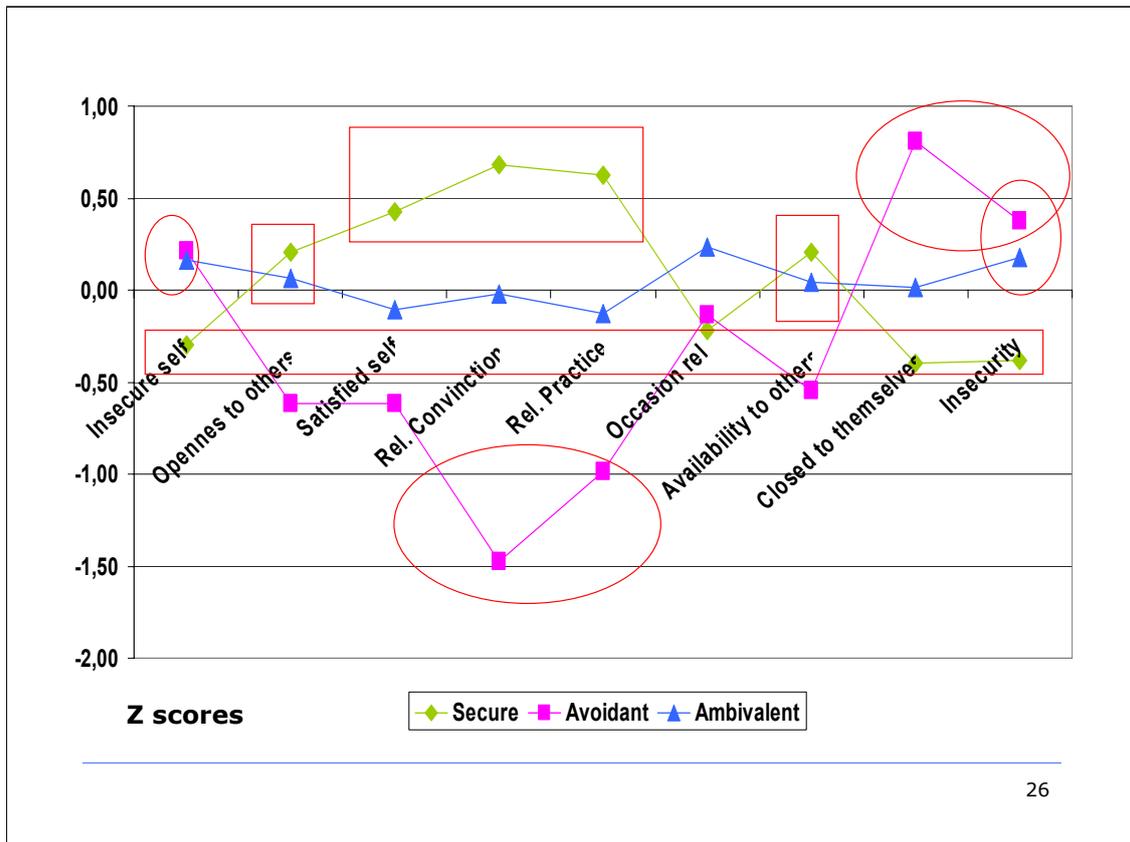
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In conclusion.

The "believers and practicing" of our sample have a predominantly "Secure" attachment and the "believers non-practicing" an "Ambivalent" attachment, while the "Unbelievers" are "Avoidant."

The "Secure" attachment as described by Kirkpatrick is linked to high values of Intrinsic and Extrinsic personal religiosity and to low values of Quest, while the "ambivalent" has quite similar values to the "Secure", but smaller.

There is an opposite configuration for the Avoidant attachment.



The factors of our questionnaire don't measure directly the attachment to God, but present patterns of behavior that are correlated with the types of relationship to God and also with the types of adult attachment.

The "Secure" style is associated with high values of "Satisfied self", "Religious conviction" and "Religious practice"; and with low values of "Insecure Self", "Closed to themselves" and "Insecurity."

The Avoidant style is associated with low values of "Religious convictions" and "Religious practice"; and with high values of "Closed to themselves".

The Ambivalent style sometimes is similar to the "Secure" attachment and sometimes to the "Avoidant".

Future perspectives

- expanding the sample
 - evaluating the possibility to merge the factors with similar contents (Insecure self and Insecurity; Openness to other and Availability to others)
 - translating the “Attachment to God Inventory” by Beck and MacDonald (2004) (in Italian)
 - attempting to validate this self-report questionnaire by means of some *Implicit Association Test* techniques
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In the future, we think to

- expanding the sample;
- evaluating the possibility to merge the factors with similar contents, like Insecure self and Insecurity; or Openness to other and Availability to others
- translating the “Attachment to God Inventory” by Beck and MacDonald (2004)
- attempting to validate this self-report questionnaire by means of some *Implicit Association Test* techniques