

Spiritual seekers not belonging to religious groups : compensation needs or positive psychology-related motives ?

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Spiritual seekers do not necessarily join (religious) groups. What are their characteristics ? Do they need spirituality for emotional and cognitive compensation reasons or for positive psychology-related motives? We tested these questions on people who attend conferences on spirituality-related themes. Participants provided information on parental attachment (retrospectively ; Hazan & Shaver, 1987), need for closure (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), adult attachment (Fraley et al., 2000), openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and quest religious orientation (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). In comparison with normative data, participants reported higher insecurity in attachment with parents in childhood and with the romantic partner today, and higher need for cognitive closure. However, they also reported higher openness to experience, as well as more doubts and critical thinking about religion and existential issues in comparison with members of new religious movements (data from Buxant et al., in press). Apparently, both compensation- and growth-related motives seem to predict “free-lance” spiritual seeking.

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