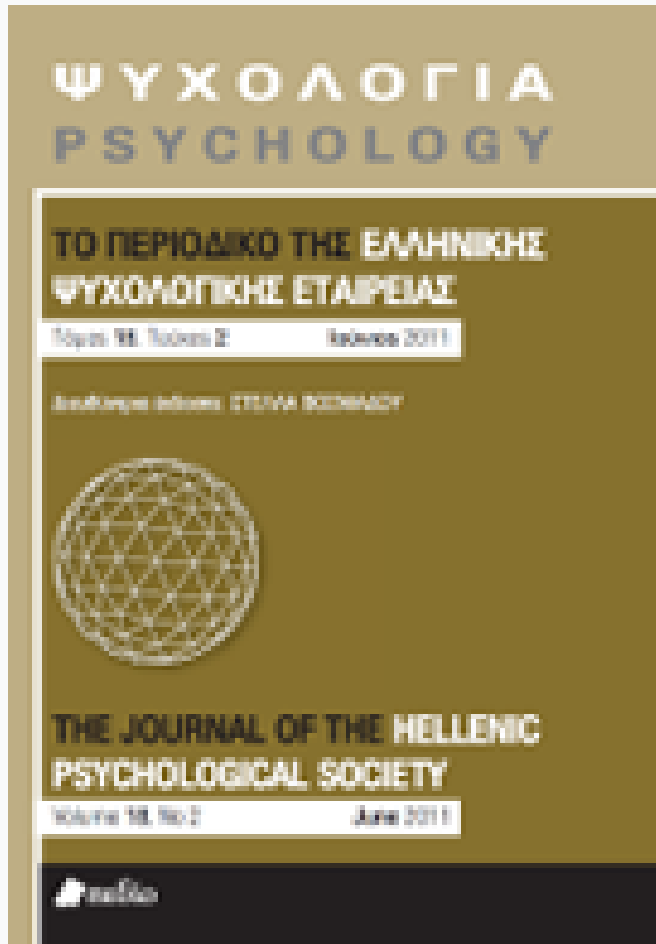


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## The imaginary audience and the personal fable in relation to the separation-individuation process during adolescence

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### ABSTRACT

Lapsley's (1993) "New Look" model for the interpretation of adolescent egocentrism, as an alternative to the classic cognitive one formulated by Elkind (1967), was tested in this study. According to the "New Look" model, the two manifestations of adolescent egocentrism – the imaginary audience and the personal fable – are adaptive coping mechanisms used by adolescents in their attempt to deal with the stressful developmental aim of separation-individuation. Two-hundred ninety seven adolescents 11-18 years' old completed the *Imaginary Audience Scale* (Elkind & Bowen, 1979), the *New Imaginary Audience Scale* (Lapsley, Fitzgerald, Rice, & Jackson, 1989), the *Personal Fable Scale* (Elkind, personal communication, August 10, 1993), the *New Personal Fable Scale* (Lapsley et al., 1989), and the *Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence* (Levine, Green, & Millon, 1986; Levine & Saintonge, 1993). The "New Look" model was generally supported by the data. The various dimensions of separation were significantly associated with the imaginary audience, whereas the dimensions of individuation had stronger links with the personal fable. In addition, some associations were found between the imaginary audience and individuation, as well as between the personal fable and separation. Consistent age and gender differences in the variables studied were found. Results are discussed in the framework of the literature on adolescent egocentrism and on parent-adolescent relations.

*Keywords:* Imaginary audience, Personal fable, Egocentrism, Separation-individuation, Adolescence.

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## 1. Introduction

This study addresses the associations between two significant issues in the lives of adolescents: egocentrism and the separation-individuation process. These issues originally belonged to different traditions in psychology: the cognitive tradition and the psychodynamic tradition, respectively. Recently, a shift occurred towards an integration of these two concepts in a new theoretical model, useful for understanding adolescent development. Positive outcomes of the separation-individuation process are associated with a mature sense of relatedness and autonomy, in other words, with a balance between communion and agency, whereas disturbances in this process are manifested in several short- and long-term mental health problems. The potential role of the imaginary audience and the personal fable ideations, which account for a large range of typical adolescent behaviors, in facilitating or impeding the separation-individuation process is clearly an underresearched area.

Below is a brief review of the theoretical and research literature on adolescent egocentrism. More specifically, the two rival theoretical models – the cognitive model and the “New Look” model – for the interpretation of egocentrism are presented, relevant research evidence is summarized, and the place of the separation-individuation process in the second model is explained.

### **The cognitive model of adolescent egocentrism**

Following the Piagetian interpretation of adolescent egocentrism as a cognitively-based phenomenon and, more specifically, as a differentiation failure (Inhelder & Piaget, 1955/1958), Elkind (1967, 1978, 1985) introduced two related, yet distinct, manifestations of this phenomenon: the imaginary audience and the personal fable. The imaginary audience is the adolescent’s tendency to believe that he or she is at the center of others’ attention, either admiring or critical. The personal fable is the adolescent’s

belief that he or she is special or unique (therefore no one can really understand him or her), omnipotent, and invulnerable. These twin ideations are regarded to account, to some extent, for a plethora of typical adolescent behaviors, such as heightened self-consciousness, attention-getting behavior, excessive preoccupation with personal appearance, conformity with peer group norms, shyness, daydreaming, short-lived romantic affairs, need for privacy, keeping of a diary, idealism, risk taking (e.g., Galanaki, 2001), etc.

According to Elkind (1967, p. 344), “this egocentrism emerges because, while the adolescent can now cognize the thoughts of others, he fails to differentiate between the objects toward which the thoughts of others are directed and those which are the focus of his own concern”. In addition, the “physiological metamorphosis” of puberty makes the adolescent turn inwards, and it is exactly here that the differentiation failure occurs: “Since he fails to differentiate between what others are thinking about him and his own mental preoccupations, he assumes that other people are as obsessed with his behavior and appearance as he is himself” (for the role of puberty in the emergence of egocentrism see Cohn et al., 1988).

### **Empirical tests of the cognitive model of adolescent egocentrism**

The cognitive developmental interpretation of adolescent egocentrism has received only partial empirical support. The expected peak of egocentrism in the first phases of the stage of formal operations and the expected decline when these abilities have been consolidated was found in few studies (Hudson & Gray, 1986, only for the imaginary audience; Rycek, Stuhr, McDermott, Benker, & Swartz, 1998, although the association was weak). In some other studies, no association between formal operations and egocentrism was found (Goossens, 1984, study 3; Jahnke & Blanchard-Fields, 1993; Kelly, Jones, & Adams, 2002; O’Connor & Nikolic, 1990; Peterson, 1982). The unexpected finding that egocentrism is high

during the concrete operational stage and declines afterwards emerged from some other investigations (Gray & Hudson, 1984; Pesce & Harding, 1986; Riley, Adams, & Nielsen, 1984). And, finally, an unexpected negative correlation between egocentrism and formal operations emerged in another research (Lapsley, Milstead, Quintana, Flannery, & Buss, 1986, study 1).

Similarly, research data on the association between the imaginary audience/personal fable and age are contradictory. According to Piagetian theory, a decline of egocentrism is expected during the end of adolescence, as a consequence of the consolidation of formal operations in combination with the establishment of interpersonal intimacy. This decline is found in a number of studies (Enright, Lapsley, & Shukla, 1979; Enright, Shukla, & Lapsley, 1980; Galanaki, 1996b; Goossens, 1984, study 2; Goossens, Seiffge-Krenke, & Marcoen, 1992, study 2; Lapsley et al., 1986, study 2; Lapsley, Jackson, Rice, & Shadid, 1988; Lapsley, FitzGerald, Rice, & Jackson, 1989; Lechner & Rosenthal, 1983; Markstrom & Mullis, 1986; Vartanian & Powlishta, 1996). Also, Elkind and Bowen (1979) found the expected curvilinear relationship for the imaginary audience from the fourth to the twelfth grade, with a peak in the eighth grade; the peak in the eighth grade was also found by Alberts, Elkind, and Ginsberg (2007). And Hauck, Martens, and Wetzel (1986) found a peak in the 12-14 year-old group in contrast to younger and older adolescents. However, there is also the unexpected increase with age (Adams & Jones, 1981; Cohn et al., 1988; Goossens et al., 1992, study 1; Rycek et al., 1998), as well as the finding that emerging adults experience heightened egocentrism (Frankenberger, 2000; Peterson, & Roscoe, 1991; Schwartz, Maynard, & Uzelac, 2008). And, finally, no association was found with age in some other investigations (Goossens, 1984, study 1; Gray & Hudson, 1984; Hudson & Gray, 1986; Jahnke & Blanchard-Fields, 1993; Lapsley et al., 1986, study 1; Montgomery, 2005; Peterson, 1982; Richter, Reaves, Deaver, & Lacy, 1982).

Furthermore, consistent gender differences in the experience of the imaginary audience and

personal fable phenomena are incongruent with a cognitive interpretation of adolescent egocentrism. Females tend to exhibit more imaginary audience ideation than males, as has been shown in a quite large number of investigations (Elkind & Bowen, 1979; Enright et al., 1980; Goossens, 1984, study 2; Goossens et al., 1992, studies 1 and 2; Gray & Hudson, 1984; Hauck et al., 1986; Hudson & Gray, 1986; Markstrom & Mullis, 1986; Montgomery, 2005; Pesce & Harding, 1986; Richter et al., 1982; Riley et al., 1984; Ryan & Kuczkowski, 1994; Rycek et al., 1998). Fewer studies have shown that males have higher imaginary audience (Anolik, 1981; Greene, Rubin, Walters, & Hale, 1996; Lechner & Rosenthal, 1984) and personal fable scores (Goossens, Beyers, Emmen, & van Aken, 2002; Lapsley et al., 1989) than females. More recently, an attempt to discover whether there are gender differences in the dimensions of the personal fable indicated that girls experience invulnerability and omnipotence more frequently than boys, whereas boys score higher on uniqueness (Aalsma, Lapsley, & Flannery, 2006); in another investigation (Alberts et al., 2007) boys were found to experience invulnerability more frequently than girls. No gender differences were found in a few other investigations (Adams & Jones, 1982; Enright et al., 1979; Jahnke & Blanchard-Fields, 1993; Lapsley et al., 1988; Peterson, 1982; Vartanian & Powlishta, 1996).

### **The “New Look” at imaginary audience and personal fable**

The rather weak empirical support of the cognitive model led Daniel Lapsley and his colleagues to the formulation of an alternative theoretical model for the interpretation of adolescent egocentrism, namely the psychodynamic “New Look” model (Lapsley, 1985, 1993; Lapsley & Murphy, 1985; Lapsley & Rice, 1988). According to this model, the imaginary audience and the personal fable are not regarded as negative and undesirable manifestations of cognitive egocentrism (i.e., the outcomes of a differentiation failure), but healthy coping mechanisms used by

the adolescent in order to deal with the stressful developmental demand for the psychological separation from parents and for his or her individuation. This is the “second individuation process”, a term named after the psychoanalyst Peter Blos (1962, 1967), and further analyzed by Josselson (1980, 1988). Blos did not use the term “separation” but Lapsley (1993, p. 565) added it and argued that “imaginary audience is a form of object relational ideation that allows the adolescent to maintain interpersonal connectedness during the course of psychological separation, even if only in imagination”. The imaginary audience helps the adolescent cope with the anxiety arising from the de-idealization of parents, with the grief for their “loss”, and, finally, with the separation anxiety. This manifestation of adolescent egocentrism consists in quasi relationships – “trial actions” (Blos, 1962, p. 92) – that prepare the adolescent for the formation of mature interpersonal bonds and for his or her gradual reconciliation with the parental ego. According to Blos (1962, p. 97), “these relationships lack a genuine quality; they constitute experiences which are created for the purpose of disengagement from early love objects”. They are “make-believe” relationships (Blos, 1962, p. 97), express the adolescent’s “affect and object hunger” (Blos, 1962, p. 176), and have an intense emotional character, either pleasant (e.g., the adolescent fantasizes that he or she becomes a famous star), or unpleasant (e.g., the adolescent fantasizes that others make critical comments for his or her appearance), or both (e.g., the adolescent fantasizes a “crush”, or how others would react to his or her death).

In the “New Look” model, the personal fable is an internal representation of the “self-observing ego” (Blos, 1962, p. 100) as uniquely special, omnipotent, and invulnerable. The personal fable reflects the adolescent’s attempt to form, through “visions of the self” (Josselson, 1980, p. 199), stable self boundaries and to restore self-esteem, in other words to deal with the narcissistic trauma caused by the separation from parents, through denying the need to depend on them. Blos (1962, p. 93) describes a phenomenon rather identical to

the personal fable phenomenon: “The adolescent does experience the outer world with a unique sensory quality which he thinks is not shared by others: ‘Nobody ever felt the way I do’. ‘Nobody sees the world the way I do’”.

As Lapsley (1993) argued, the imaginary audience and the personal fable express, in the intrapsychic level, the two basic themes of the separation-individuation process, namely, connectedness/communion and self-assertion/agency, respectively, whereas in the interpersonal level, this process is evident in the actual changes taking place in intra-familial relationships.

### **Empirical tests of the “New Look” model**

Existing research evidence seems to support the “New Look” model, although the number of studies examining the association between imaginary audience/personal fable and separation-individuation is small.

Lapsley et al. (1989) found that, among adolescents 12-17.5 years’ old, the imaginary audience in the form of object relational ideation (as assessed by the *New Imaginary Audience Scale*; Lapsley et al., 1989), was positively correlated with engulfment anxiety, separation anxiety, nurturance-symbiosis, nurturance-succorance, and interpersonal enmeshment, in other words with all the subscales of the *Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence* (SITA; Levine, Green, & Millon, 1986; Levine & Saintonge, 1993) that assess the need for interpersonal contact. Moreover, the personal fable (as assessed by the *New Personal Fable Scale*; Lapsley et al., 1989), had positive correlations with dependency denial and self-centeredness, that is, with the subscales of the SITA that assess the need for self-assertion. The personal fable was low among those adolescents that were high in engulfment anxiety and separation anxiety. Boys had higher scores than girls on narcissistic tendencies and self-centeredness, whereas girls had higher scores than boys on interpersonal enmeshment, nurturance-symbiosis, and separation anxiety.

Similar findings were reported by Vartanian (1997) for young adolescents (12-14 years' old). The imaginary audience in the form of object relational ideation correlated positively with engulfment anxiety, separation anxiety, nurturance-symbiosis, nurturance-succorance, and interpersonal enmeshment (as measured by the SITA). In the same direction, although not so strong, were the correlations between the above dimensions of separation and the imaginary audience in the form of heightened self-consciousness (as assessed by the *Imaginary Audience Scale*; Elkind & Bowen, 1979). Healthy separation was positively correlated with object relational fantasies and negatively correlated with self-consciousness. Also, the personal fable (the dimensions of omnipotence and invulnerability) had a positive link with self-centeredness and a negative one with separation anxiety. Omnipotence was negatively associated with rejection expectancy, and invulnerability was negatively associated with dependency denial.

In another study (Goossens et al., 2002), object relational ideation was positively associated with the issues of connectedness as measured by the SITA, the *Separation Anxiety Test* (SAT; Hansburg, 1980), and the *Relationship Support Scale* (Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993), as well as with the issues of separateness as measured by the SITA, the SAT, and the *Emotional Autonomy Scale* (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Uniqueness was positively related to separation, but invulnerability and omnipotence were negatively correlated with connectedness. Also, healthy separation was more indicative of those adolescents who experienced a heightened personal fable.

More recent research data are scarce. Aalsma et al. (2006) showed that the personal fable is a "plural" concept with differential implications for adolescent mental health. Omnipotence positively predicted self-worth, coping, and adjustment and counterindicated depressive affect and suicidal ideation, whereas personal uniqueness positively predicted depression and suicidal ideation. These findings are in agreement with other research data (Lapsley & Aalsma, 2006) indicating that a

moderate degree of narcissism may be adaptive during late adolescence, as it is related with less pathology in the separation-individuation process (i.e., problems in differentiation, splitting, relational disturbances). Therefore, the various facets of the imaginary audience and the personal fable may be differentially related to separation-individuation outcomes.

### **Imaginary audience/personal fable and ego identity**

There is another body of research in which the imaginary audience and the personal fable were examined in relation to ego identity formation, a construct related to individuation. The basic hypothesis is that self-concerns and social demands may lead the adolescent to excessive preoccupation with the self and what others think of him or her, thus to heightened self-consciousness; and the novelty of the experience is likely to lead to feelings of uniqueness, omnipotence, and invulnerability.

This hypothesis received empirical support in two studies (O'Connor, 1995; O'Connor & Nikolic, 1990), where a global measure of egocentrism (i.e., the *Adolescent Egocentrism-Sociocentrism Scale*; Enright et al., 1980), as well as the *Imaginary Audience Scale*, were used. Adolescents reporting high levels of identity achievement and moratorium were more egocentric, in terms of both imaginary audience and personal fable, perhaps because of heightened self-concerns, social demands, and novel experiences. Self-consciousness was high among foreclosure adolescents, but low among identity-achieved adolescents, indicating that overconcern about the self-image was a problem only for the former adolescents. Similarly, in another investigation (Adams, Abraham, & Markstrom, 1987), self-consciousness was lower in the identity-achievement status (in the realm of ideological development) than in the diffusion, foreclosure, and moratorium status, perhaps indicating that exploration, experimentation, and commitment lead to the development of a satisfied self with lower anxiety and self-preoccupation in

potentially embarrassing situations. In another research (Protinsky & Wilkerson, 1986), there was null or no association between egocentrism and identity status, probably due to the fact that the sample was very small, and that few questions were used for the assessment of the imaginary audience and the personal fable.

### **Imaginary audience/personal fable and intra-familial relationships**

There are a small number of studies in which the imaginary audience (only) was examined in relation to several factors concerning the family and the intra-familial relationships. The findings from these investigations (Adams & Jones, 1982; Riley et al., 1984; Ryan & Kuczkowski, 1994) all support the view that the imaginary audience in the form of self-consciousness (i.e., the adolescent's reluctance to reveal himself or herself in front of a potentially critical audience) was heightened among those adolescents experiencing low parental support and low emotional security. In the same studies, physical contact and affection (i.e., paternal physical contact as experienced by girls, and maternal physical contact as experienced by boys) was positively associated with self-consciousness. This finding may be psychoanalytically interpreted as the re-emergence of oedipal conflicts; besides psychoanalysis consists the theoretical underpinnings of the separation-individuation theory. In a more recent research (Vartanian, 1997), additional supportive evidence emerged for the association of egocentrism with interpersonal support. The imaginary audience in the form of self-consciousness was high among those adolescents who experienced low support from parents, classmates, and close friends, whereas the personal fable was high among those adolescents experiencing high support from parents and classmates. It appears, then, that heightened self-consciousness may reflect the vicissitudes of the separation-individuation process, whereas the personal fable (at least some dimensions of it) may be enhanced by the support provided to the

adolescent, and, thus, is likely to serve a self-protective function during this process.

Another dimension of the association between parent-adolescent relations and egocentrism was studied with delinquent and non delinquent adolescents (Anolik, 1981). Delinquent adolescents experienced heightened imaginary audience in the form of self-consciousness; and self-consciousness was associated with low parental support and with a general negative parental image. These associations were not found for non delinquent adolescents. It appears, then, that the inappropriate intra-familial relations reinforce self-consciousness among delinquent adolescents.

### **Aims and Hypotheses**

The purpose of this investigation was to test Lapsley's (1993) "New Look" model by examining the association of the imaginary audience and the personal fable with the separation-individuation process during adolescence. The contribution of this study is that it examines the above association: (a) for a wide age range (12-18 year-old adolescents); (b) with both Lapsley's (who hypothesized the association with the separation-individuation process) and Elkind's scales for the assessment of egocentrism; (c) with the more recent version of the *Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence*; and (d) in another cultural context (i.e., Greece).

The imaginary audience is expected to have a positive correlation with those dimensions of the separation-individuation process which express the interpersonal concerns during the separation phase, that is, engulfment anxiety, separation anxiety, teacher enmeshment, peer enmeshment, nurturance seeking, rejection expectancy, and healthy separation (Hypothesis 1). The personal fable is expected to be positively correlated with those dimensions of the separation-individuation process which express self-assertion and the formation of stable self boundaries, that is, narcissistic tendencies, dependency denial, and healthy separation (Hypothesis 2).

It is also hypothesized that all the dimensions of the separation-individuation process (except



healthy separation), as well as the imaginary audience and the personal fable sensitivity decline with age (Hypothesis 3). As for gender differences, girls are expected to experience the separation process and, therefore, the imaginary audience, more strongly than boys; and boys are expected to experience the individuation process and, therefore, the personal fable, more strongly than girls (Hypothesis 4).

## 2. Method

### Participants

Participants were 297 adolescents 11.7-18.4 years' old (mean age: 15.2 years). Seventy one of them were from the first grade (mean age: 12.4 years) and 66 from the third grade (mean age: 14.4 years) of the lower secondary school (from now on referred to as seventh graders and ninth graders, respectively); 84 were from the second grade (mean age: 16.4 years) and 76 were from the third grade (mean age: 17.3 years) of the upper secondary school (from now on referred to as eleventh graders and twelfth graders, respectively). One-hundred eighteen (39.7%) were males and 179 (60.3%) were females. From Athens (the capital of Greece) were 142 adolescents (47.8%) and from other large cities were 155 (52.5%). Four schools participated in the study. The schools were randomly selected, with the use of random selection process, from the catalogue of schools provided by the Ministry of Education. Participants came mainly from low-to-middle socioeconomic background.

### Measures

*Imaginary Audience Scale* (IAS; Elkind & Bowen, 1979) – Greek version (Galanaki, 1996a). This scale consists of 12 short vignettes. Six of them refer to potentially embarrassing transient situations (e.g., to go to a party with a stain in your clothes), and constitute the *Transient Self* subscale. The remaining six vignettes refer to situations in which more permanent aspects of the

adolescent's behavior and personality may be revealed (e.g., to read an essay in front of the whole class), and constitute the *Abiding Self* subscale. The IAS assesses an outcome of the imaginary audience, namely self-consciousness. Adolescents are invited to choose among three alternative answers that represent the degree to which they participate in those situations: 3 = unwillingness to participate, 2 = indifference to participation, and 1 = willingness to participate. The higher the score the more intense is the self-consciousness. The internal consistency of the Greek version of the IAS was moderate: *Cronbach's alpha* = .62 – .53 for the Abiding Self and .52 for the Transient Self subscale (of the original scale: .63; Elkind & Bowen, 1979). The moderate internal consistency of the IAS has been found in others studies too (e.g., Cohn et al., 1988; Lapsley et al., 1986; Mullis & Markstrom, 1986; Richter et al., 1982; Riley et al., 1984).

*New Imaginary Audience Scale* (NIAS; Lapsley et al., 1989) – Greek version (Galanaki, 1996a). It consists of 33 items assessing relational ideation and interpersonal fantasies. Adolescents are called to reply how often they experience such phenomena on a four-point scale (1 = Never, 2 = Hardly ever, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often). For example, they are asked to state how often they daydream or imagine themselves to be a movie or TV star, to be admired for their appearance, to rescue a friend from danger, how others would react to the adolescent's death, etc. The higher the score the more intense is the imaginary audience ideation. The internal consistency of the Greek version of the NIAS is satisfactory: *Cronbach's alpha* = .83 (of the original scale: .92; Lapsley et al., 1989).

*Personal Fable Scale* (PFS; Elkind, personal communication, August 10, 1993) – Greek version (Galanaki, 1996a). This scale consists of 18 items assessing three dimensions of the personal fable phenomenon, that is, *speciality* (6 items, e.g., "I believe that one of my teachers thinks of me as special and different from other kids"), *invulnerability* (6 items, e.g., "It seems to me that I get away with a lot of stuff, other kids get in trouble



for”), and *risk taking* (6 items, e.g., “A lot of times I don’t study for exams because I feel confident I will do well anyway”). Adolescents are asked to state how often they feel like that on a three-point scale (1 = I rarely feel this way, 2 = I sometimes feel this way, 3 = I feel this way a lot). The higher the score the more intense is the personal fable phenomenon. The internal consistency of the Greek version of the PFS was rather unsatisfactory: *Cronbach’s alpha* = .51 – .49 for speciality, .44 for invulnerability, and .48 for risk taking (of a briefer form of the original scale .60; Elkind, Fallon, Maynard, Pisano, Schwartz, & Murray-Cohen, 2005 in Alberts et al., 2007; the PFS was also used by Schwartz et al., 2008, but no reliability data were reported). The rather low internal consistency of the PFS should be taken into account when interpreting the results of this study.

*New Personal Fable Scale* (NPFS; Lapsley et al., 1989) – Greek version (Galanaki, 1996a). It consists of 31 items assessing three dimensions of the personal fable phenomenon, that is, *uniqueness* (10 items), *omnipotence* (10 items), and *invulnerability* (11 items). A typical item for uniqueness is: “I believe that I am unique”; for omnipotence, “I believe I can do anything I set my mind to”; and for invulnerability, “Special problems, like using drugs or becoming pregnant, could never happen to me”. Adolescents are asked to state how much they agree or disagree with the content of the items on a four-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree). The higher the score the more intense is the personal fable phenomenon. The internal consistency of the Greek version of the NPFS was satisfactory: *Cronbach’s alpha* = .78 – .77 for uniqueness, .69 for omnipotence, and .65 for invulnerability (of the original scale: .65; Lapsley et al., 1989).

*Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence* (SITA; Levine et al., 1986; Levine & Saintonge, 1993) – Greek version (adapted by Galanaki & Christopoulos, unpublished manuscript). This scale is based on Mahler’s theory of separation-individuation (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). It consists of 89 items, 86 of them (categorized in

nine subscales) assessing various facets of the separation-individuation process, while the remaining three items constitute a lie scale. The nine subscales are the following (four items belong to two subscales simultaneously): *Engulfment anxiety* (i.e., intimacy experienced as envelopment; 8 items, e.g., “Sometimes my parents are so overprotective I feel smothered”); *practicing-mirroring* (i.e., narcissistic strivings; 16 items, e.g., “Knowing that other people find my physical appearance attractive is very pleasing to me”); *dependency denial* (i.e., attachment needs denied; 14 items, e.g., “I don’t see the point of most warm, affectionate relationships”); *separation anxiety* (i.e., significant others experienced as abandoning; 12 items, e.g., “Being alone is a very scary idea for me”); *teacher enmeshment* (i.e., strivings for intense, intimate attachments to teachers; 8 items, e.g., “One of my favorite teachers is amazingly similar to me in personality”); *peer enmeshment* (i.e., strivings for intense peer intimacy; 6 items, e.g., “I know some of my friends so well, it seems like I can read their minds”); *nurturance seeking* (i.e., strong caretaker attachment; 8 items, e.g., “Sometimes I think how nice it was to be a young child when someone else took care of my needs”); *healthy separation* (i.e., flexible balance of dependence and independence strivings; 8 items, e.g., “I enjoy being by myself and with others approximately the same”); and *rejection expectancy* (i.e., significant others experienced as callous and hostile; 10 items, e.g., “Sometimes it seems that people really want to hurt me”). Rejection expectancy was derived theoretically from Kernberg’s (1975) theory.

Participants are called to state how much they agree or disagree with the item content on a four-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree). The higher the score the more intense is the separation-individuation concerns.

The internal consistency of the Greek version of the SITA was satisfactory: *Cronbach’s alpha* = .82 – .71 for engulfment anxiety, .80 for practicing-mirroring, .62 for dependency denial, .69 for separation anxiety, .73 for teacher enmeshment,

.64 for peer enmeshment, .67 for nurturance seeking, .62 for healthy separation, and .72 for rejection expectancy. (The reliability and validity of the original scale were documented in several studies: Holmbeck & McClanahan, 1994; Kroger & Green, 1994; Levine, 1994; McClanahan & Holmbeck, 1992). The lie subscale did not correlate significantly with any of the SITA subscales (correlations ranged from  $\pm .02$  to  $\pm .13$ ).

### Procedure

Participants completed the measures in group sessions in their classrooms, as part of a larger research program on adolescent egocentrism (for other parts of the program see Galanaki, 1996a, 1996b, 2001). The measures were administered by the first author and two research assistants. To reduce order effects, measures were randomized across portions of the sample. Participants were given the following general instructions: They were going to participate in a research examining what people of their age think and feel about themselves and others; the research had nothing to do with the school and their achievement; there were no right or wrong answers; their answers would help the investigators gain a good understanding on how young people think and feel about important issues in their lives. The procedure lasted about 45 minutes.

## 3. Results

### Preliminary analyses: age and gender differences

Multivariate and univariate analyses were conducted to examine the association of age (grade) and gender with the variables studied.

Multivariate analysis of variance for the two dimensions of the IAS (Transient Self and Abiding Self) showed a statistically significant effect of Grade,  $Pillai's = .07$ ,  $F(6, 578) = 3.72$ ,  $p < .001$ . The univariate analyses indicated a statistically significant effect only for Abiding Self,  $F(3, 289) = 6.33$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Scheffé comparisons showed

that eleventh and twelfth graders had significantly higher means in the Abiding Self subscale than seventh and ninth graders (see Table 1). Also, there was a statistically significant multivariate effect of Gender,  $Pillai's = .04$ ,  $F(2, 288) = 5.30$ ,  $p < .01$ . The univariate analyses indicated a statistically significant effect for Abiding Self,  $F(1, 289) = 8.05$ ,  $p < .01$ , and for Transient Self,  $F(1, 289) = 5.73$ ,  $p < .05$ . Girls had significantly higher means in the imaginary audience, in the form of self-consciousness, than boys (see Table 1). The Grade x Gender interaction was not significant.

Next, a Grade x Gender analysis of variance for the NIAS showed a marginally significant main effect of Gender,  $F(1, 289) = 3.17$ ,  $p = .08$ . Boys had marginally higher means in the interpersonal ideation facet of the imaginary audience than girls (see Table 1). The main effect of Grade and the Grade x Gender interaction were not significant.

The multivariate analysis of variance for the three dimensions of the *Personal Fable Scale* (speciality, invulnerability, and risk taking) showed a statistically significant multivariate effect of Gender,  $Pillai's = .12$ ,  $F(3, 287) = 12.41$ ,  $p < .001$ . The only statistically significant univariate effect was for risk taking,  $F(1, 289) = 37.18$ ,  $p < .001$ . Boys had significantly higher risk taking means than girls (see Table 1). The multivariate and the univariate effects of Grade and the Grade x Gender interaction were not significant.

For the three dimensions of the NPFS (uniqueness, omnipotence, and invulnerability) the multivariate analysis of variance showed a statistically significant multivariate effect of Gender,  $Pillai's = .07$ ,  $F(3, 287) = 6.96$ ,  $p < .001$ . Statistically significant were the univariate effects for omnipotence,  $F(1, 289) = 5.81$ ,  $p < .05$ , and for invulnerability,  $F(1, 289) = 12.75$ ,  $p < .001$ . Boys had significantly higher omnipotence and invulnerability means than girls (see Table 1). The multivariate and the univariate effects of Grade and the Grade x Gender interaction were not significant.

Finally, the multivariate analysis of variance for the nine dimensions of the separation-individuation

**Table 1**  
**Means and standard deviations for the imaginary audience, personal fable, and separation-individuation as a function of gender and grade and for the total sample**

Scales - Variables	Boys <i>n</i> = 118		Girls <i>n</i> = 179		7th grade <i>n</i> = 71		9th grade <i>n</i> = 66		11th grade <i>n</i> = 84		12th grade <i>n</i> = 76		Total <i>N</i> = 297	
	<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>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Imaginary Audience Scale</i>	1.71	.32	1.83	.28	1.71	.27	1.77	.31	1.82	.31	1.83	.31	1.78	.31
Abiding Self	1.68	.37	1.82	.37	1.62	.32	1.71	.35	1.84	.41	1.88	.37	1.77	.38
Transient Self	1.74	.41	1.84	.35	1.80	.38	1.82	.38	1.80	.38	1.79	.37	1.80	.38
<i>New Imaginary Audience Scale</i>	2.27	.35	2.19	.35	2.26	.39	2.23	.36	2.15	.29	2.25	.37	2.22	.35
<i>Personal Fable Scale</i>	1.83	.27	1.71	.22	1.76	.28	1.78	.24	1.73	.23	1.77	.25	1.76	.25
Speciality	1.91	.37	1.89	.33	1.87	.33	1.97	.37	1.85	.34	1.92	.35	1.90	.35
Invulnerability	1.70	.33	1.67	.30	1.69	.36	1.68	.29	1.69	.30	1.66	.31	1.68	.31
Risk Taking	1.87	.41	1.58	.38	1.70	.43	1.69	.42	1.67	.41	1.72	.43	1.70	.42
<i>New Personal Fable Scale</i>	2.54	.34	2.46	.36	2.47	.38	2.52	.35	2.52	.34	2.45	.36	2.49	.36
Uniqueness	2.62	.59	2.70	.57	2.62	.61	2.68	.57	2.70	.56	2.68	.59	2.67	.58
Omnipotence	2.69	.51	2.56	.44	2.52	.50	2.62	.49	2.69	.44	2.60	.46	2.61	.47
Invulnerability	2.32	.34	2.14	.41	2.28	.36	2.28	.36	2.19	.45	2.11	.37	2.21	.39
<i>Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence</i>	2.52	.26	2.52	.23	2.54	.30	2.56	.21	2.50	.21	2.48	.24	2.52	.24
Engulfment Anxiety	2.51	.58	2.67	.65	2.32	.63	2.57	.58	2.79	.60	2.72	.60	2.61	.63
Practicing-Mirroring	2.64	.51	2.50	.45	2.42	.52	2.63	.48	2.56	.47	2.62	.42	2.56	.48
Dependency Denial	2.02	.40	1.85	.37	2.04	.41	1.98	.41	1.83	.34	1.85	.39	1.92	.39
Separation Anxiety	2.56	.47	2.75	.45	2.80	.51	2.69	.43	2.64	.43	2.59	.47	2.68	.47
Teacher Enmeshment	2.58	.67	2.53	.60	2.95	.54	2.63	.53	2.41	.60	2.26	.61	2.55	.62
Peer Enmeshment	3.06	.48	3.24	.48	3.09	.48	3.24	.43	3.20	.47	3.15	.55	3.17	.49
Nurturance Seeking	2.81	.57	2.80	.59	3.14	.54	2.94	.47	2.59	.59	2.61	.52	2.81	.58
Healthy Separation	3.21	.39	3.23	.42	3.02	.47	3.20	.38	3.36	.34	3.27	.36	3.22	.41
Rejection Expectancy	1.98	.45	2.02	.48	2.03	.43	1.98	.46	1.99	.47	2.00	.51	2.00	.47
Lie Subscale	1.25	.35	1.28	.36	1.37	.44	1.24	.35	1.23	.32	1.23	.31	1.27	.36

*Note.* *Imaginary Audience Scale, Personal Fable Scale:* 1-3; *New Imaginary Audience Scale, New Personal Fable Scale:* 1-4; *Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence:* 1-4.

process (i.e., engulfment anxiety, practicing-mirroring, dependency denial, separation anxiety, teacher enmeshment, peer enmeshment, nurturance seeking, healthy separation, and rejection expectancy) indicated a statistically significant multivariate effect of Grade,  $Pillai's = .40$ ,  $F(27, 849) = 4.91$ ,  $p < .001$ . The univariate analyses showed a statistically significant main effect for engulfment anxiety,  $F(3, 289) = 7.98$ ,  $p < .001$ , for practicing-mirroring (marginal),  $F(3, 289) = 2.52$ ,  $p = .06$ , for dependency denial,  $F(3, 289) = 4.99$ ,  $p < .01$ , for separation anxiety,  $F(3, 289) = 20.70$ ,  $p < .001$ , for nurturance seeking,  $F(3, 289) = 17.75$ ,  $p < .001$ , and for healthy separation,  $F(3, 289) = 9.79$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Scheffé comparisons showed that eleventh and twelfth graders had significantly higher means in engulfment anxiety than seventh graders. Seventh graders had significantly higher means in dependency denial than eleventh and twelfth graders; they also had significantly higher means in separation anxiety than twelfth graders, and significantly higher means in teacher enmeshment than ninth, eleventh, and twelfth graders; and ninth graders had significantly higher means in this dimension than twelfth graders. Seventh and ninth graders had significantly higher means in nurturance seeking than eleventh and twelfth graders. Ninth, eleventh and twelfth graders had significantly higher means in healthy separation than seventh graders. For practicing-mirroring, although the Scheffé comparisons did not show any statistically significant difference, there was a tendency to increase with age (see Table 1).

Also, the same multivariate analysis of variance showed a statistically significant effect of Gender,  $Pillai's = .14$ ,  $F(9, 281) = 5.05$ ,  $p < .001$ . Univariate analyses showed a statistically significant effect for engulfment anxiety (marginal),  $F(1, 289) = 3.66$ ,  $p = .06$ , for practicing-mirroring,  $F(1, 289) = 6.91$ ,  $p < .01$ , for dependency denial,  $F(1, 289) = 11.96$ ,  $p < .001$ , for separation anxiety,  $F(1, 289) = 13.46$ ,  $p < .001$ , and for peer enmeshment,  $F(1, 289) = 10.19$ ,  $p < .01$ . Boys had significantly higher means in practicing-mirroring and dependency denial than girls, whereas girls had significantly higher means

in separation anxiety and peer enmeshment than boys (see Table 1). The Grade x Gender interaction for the nine dimensions of the separation-individuation process was not significant.

### **The imaginary audience and the personal fable in relation to the separation-individuation process**

Pearson  $r$  correlation coefficients were computed between the various dimensions of the imaginary audience/personal fable and the separation-individuation process. As shown in Table 2, the imaginary audience and the personal fable, as assessed by Lapsley's measures, had significant low to moderate links with the dimensions of the separation-individuation process. On the contrary, the imaginary audience, as conceptualized by Elkind (in the form of self-consciousness), was found not to be associated with the separation-individuation process; and the personal fable, as assessed by Elkind, had a lower, although significant, correlation with this process.

When the imaginary audience/personal fable ideations were examined in relation to the nine dimensions of the separation-individuation, the expected associations were found. More specifically, the imaginary audience in the form of object relational ideation had a significant positive correlation with those dimensions of the separation-individuation process that express the interpersonal concerns, namely: engulfment anxiety, separation anxiety, teacher enmeshment, peer enmeshment, nurturance seeking, and rejection expectancy. However, the imaginary audience in the form of object relational ideation was also positively associated with practicing-mirroring and dependency denial, and had no relation to healthy separation. The personal fable, as assessed both by Lapsley and Elkind, had a significant positive correlation with the dimensions of the separation-individuation process that express self-assertion, namely: practicing-mirroring, dependency denial, and healthy separation. However, the personal fable had also some positive correlations with engulfment anxiety, separation anxiety, and rejection expectancy.

**Table 2**  
**Pearson *r* correlation coefficients between imaginary audience/personal fable and separation-individuation**

Scales - Variables	SITA	Eng. Anx.	Prac-Mir.	Dep. Den.	Sep. Anx.	Teac. Enm.	Peer Enm.	Nur. S.	Heal. Sep.	Rej. Exp.
<i>Imaginary Audience Scale</i>	.05	.14*	-.12*	-.07	.20***	-.10	-.04	.02	-.02	.18**
Abiding Self	-.01	.20***	-.15**	-.08	.12*	-.22***	-.02	-.08	.05	.18**
Transient self	.10	.03	-.04	-.02	.21***	.06	-.03	.12*	-.09	.12*
<i>New Imaginary Audience Scale</i>	.42***	.19**	.38***	.12*	.24***	.25***	.23***	.13*	.01	.12*
<i>Personal Fable Scale</i>	.27***	.14*	.27***	.18**	.00	.05	.11	-.02	.19**	.17**
Speciality	.24***	.09	.23***	.15**	.00	.01	.12*	.00	.17**	.18**
Invulnerability	.21***	.10	.17**	.11	.04	.04	.06	.06	.12*	.17**
Risk Taking	.12*	.11	.16**	.11	-.04	.04	.04	-.08	.12*	.02
<i>New Personal Fable Scale</i>	.42***	.17**	.43***	.33***	.04	.11	-.01	.10	.20**	.29***
Uniqueness	.42***	.22***	.27***	.25***	.20***	.07	.01	.14*	.17**	.41***
Omnipotence	.32***	.12*	.48***	.22***	-.07	.09	.07	.00	.22***	.13*
Invulnerability	.14*	.01	.22***	.27***	-.09	.08	-.12*	.07	.04	.04

Note. SITA = *Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence*; Eng. Anx. = *Engulfment Anxiety*; Prac-Mir. = *Practicing-Mirroring*; Dep. Den. = *Dependency Denial*; Sep. Anx. = *Separation Anxiety*; Teac. Enm. = *Teacher Enmeshment*; Peer Enm. = *Peer Enmeshment*; Nur. S. = *Nurturance Seeking*; Heal. Sep. = *Healthy Separation*; Rej. Exp. = *Rejection Expectancy*.  
 \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

The only dimensions of the separation-individuation process that were found to be associated with the imaginary audience in the form of self-consciousness were engulfment anxiety, separation anxiety, and rejection expectancy, although there were also some rather low negative correlations with practicing-mirroring and teacher enmeshment.

As shown in Table 2, the strongest correlations were found for practicing-mirroring, dependency denial, and rejection expectancy. More specifically, practicing-mirroring (i.e., narcissistic tendencies) was the dimension of the separation-individuation process which seemed to be mostly associated with egocentrism, and especially with the personal fable as assessed by Lapsley, with the highest correlation being  $r = .43$ , as well as with object relational ideation ( $r = .38$ ). Next, was dependency denial, which was associated with the same dimension of egocentrism, with the highest correlation being  $r = .33$ . Also, rejection expectancy had a moderate correlation with uniqueness ( $r = .41$ ).

When correlation coefficients were computed for each grade separately, some other significant associations emerged for certain grades. More specifically, practicing-mirroring was negatively associated with the Abiding Self subscale, only for eleventh and twelfth graders,  $r = -.22, p < .05$ , and  $r = -.21, p = .07$ , respectively. Teacher enmeshment had a significant negative correlation with Abiding Self. Although the correlations between the manifestations of egocentrism and healthy separation seemed to be rather low, data were to the expected direction when the correlation coefficients were computed for each grade separately. For eleventh and twelfth graders a significant negative correlation between healthy separation and Abiding and Transient Self subscales was found,  $r = -.22, p < .05$ , and  $r = -.24, p < .05$ , respectively. Besides, in these age levels, healthy separation is at its peak, as the preliminary analyses showed.

Finally, nurturance seeking, although not significantly linked with any manifestation of egocentrism, showed some significant positive

correlations for seventh graders only:  $r = .24, p < .05$  with the imaginary audience in the form of object relational ideation;  $r = .24, p < .05$  with speciality as a dimension of the PFS;  $r = .29, p < .05$  with the NPFS;  $r = .26, p < .05$  with uniqueness as a dimension of the NPFS; and  $r = .29, p < .05$  with omnipotence. Besides, nurturance seeking is a dimension of the separation-individuation process that peaks during seventh grade and decreases significantly with age, as the preliminary analyses showed.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of this cross-sectional correlational investigation offer additional support to Lapsley's (1993) psychodynamic "New Look" model for the interpretation of the imaginary audience and the personal fable phenomena during adolescence. Greek adolescents who experience separation-individuation concerns more strongly were more likely to exhibit imaginary audience and personal fable ideations. Furthermore, several findings seem to challenge the cognitive developmental model of egocentrism, as formulated by Elkind (1967, 1978, 1985).

More specifically, object relational ideation and interpersonal fantasies are more likely among adolescents who experience separation concerns (thus confirming Hypothesis 1), such as separation anxiety, anxiety associated to intimacy, either in the form of dysphoria in close relationships (engulfment anxiety) or in the form of strivings for intimate relationships (teacher enmeshment and peer enmeshment), and, less strongly though, nurturance seeking and rejection expectancy. However, this form of the imaginary audience is also relevant with narcissistic tendencies, that is, practicing-mirroring, and, less strongly though, dependency denial. This can be explained by the fact that object relational fantasies have a clear narcissistic character. Healthy separation seems to be unrelated to the imaginary audience, and more strongly related to the personal fable.

As expected (Hypothesis 2), the personal



fable, as assessed by Lapsley, is more likely among adolescents who experience individuation concerns, that is, narcissistic tendencies, dependency denial, and healthy separation, the latter as manifested in a balance of dependence and independence. Moreover, the personal fable is relevant with engulfment anxiety, separation anxiety, and rejection expectancy. Similar findings emerged for the personal fable as assessed by Elkind, although the correlations were less strong, and we must take into account the low internal consistency of Elkind's *Personal Fable Scale*.

Therefore, it is evident that the imaginary audience is associated with separation and the personal fable is associated with individuation in Greek adolescents, as Lapsley's (1993) model predicts and as found in the studies reviewed above (Goossens et al., 2002; Lapsley et al., 1989; Vartanian, 1997). However, some associations were found between the imaginary audience and individuation, as well as between the personal fable and separation. These findings support Lapsley's (1993) view that separation and individuation, the imaginary audience and the personal fable, are complementary and related phenomena, the two sides of the same coin. Blos (1967) himself argued that healthy separation is not a total detachment from, debasement, or rejection of parents, but the classic psychoanalytic orientation of his theory, in combination with its clinical nature, did not allow him to go further in examining the association between the maintenance of interpersonal ties and the formation of individuality. More recent theoretical formulations and research evidence (e.g., Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Josselson, 1988; Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; Youniss & Smollar, 1985) have documented that individuation in adolescence is facilitated when it occurs in the context of maintaining emotional contact with parents, in other words, in a context of *rapprochement*, according to the separation-individuation theory.

The imaginary audience in the form of self-consciousness is somewhat high among adolescents experiencing engulfment anxiety, separation anxiety, and rejection expectancy. This

is an expected finding, if one also takes into account the research evidence showing the links between self-consciousness and low perceived parental support and security (Adams & Jones, 1982; Anolik, 1981; Riley et al., 1984; Ryan & Kuczowski, 1994; Vartanian, 1997), as well as the links with low levels of identity achievement (Adams et al., 1987; O'Connor, 1990; O'Connor & Nikolic, 1995). Self-consciousness, then, seems to be something different from narcissistic tendencies and from teacher enmeshment, as the negative correlations imply. Heightened self-consciousness is regarded to be an outcome of the imaginary audience as a differentiation failure and refers to the adolescent's reluctance to reveal facets of oneself in front of others, whereas the other form of the imaginary audience, that is, the object relational fantasies, refer to the adolescent's tendency to daydream, and has nothing to do with the differentiation failure. For this reason, the object relational ideation is associated in the expected direction, as we saw above, with separation and individuation.

As for age-related patterns, it was found that some dimensions of the separation-individuation process increase and some others decrease with age, thus partly confirming Hypothesis 3. Engulfment anxiety, narcissistic tendencies, and healthy separation increase, whereas dependency denial, separation anxiety, teacher enmeshment, and nurturance seeking, decrease. These findings are similar to those reported by other studies (Aalsma et al., 2006; Lapsley et al., 1989; Lapsley & Aalsma, 2006), and imply the adaptive role of some degree of narcissism towards the end of adolescence, whereas relational concerns may be more prevalent, perhaps normative, among younger adolescents. This study examined the links between imaginary audience/personal fable and the separation-individuation process, but not the quality of these links, in other words, whether some facets of the egocentric ideations are more or less adaptive mechanisms for dealing with the separation-individuation process. This issue warrants further investigation with the use of mental health indices.

The absence of the expected curvilinear association of the imaginary audience/personal fable and age (i.e., increase from the beginning till the middle of adolescence and decline afterwards), or of a linear decrease with age is contrary to our hypothesis (Hypothesis 3). The imaginary audience in the form of self-consciousness was found to increase linearly from the beginning till the end of adolescence. This finding is similar to other research data indicating an increase in imaginary audience with age (Adams & Jones, 1981; Cohn et al., 1988; Goossens et al., 1992, study 1; Rycek et al., 1998), as well as that emerging adults experience heightened self-consciousness (Frankenberger, 2000; Peterson, & Roscoe, 1991; Schwartz et al., 2008). Therefore, these findings may be added to the already contradictory findings of other investigators (for a review see Vartanian, 2000) for the association of egocentrism with age, and may be regarded as challenging the cognitive interpretation of egocentrism and as supporting the view that imaginary audience may be an adaptive coping mechanism used by individuals who experience major life transitions (e.g., first year in the University).

In general, gender differences seem to confirm Hypothesis 4. Gender-related patterns as to the dimensions of the separation-individuation process support the view that males are usually preoccupied with establishing firm self boundaries and forming their individuality (i.e., narcissistic tendencies and dependency denial), whereas females have a stronger concern for interpersonal relationships and separation (i.e., separation anxiety and peer enmeshment). Furthermore, gender differences were found for the imaginary audience and the personal fable (risk taking, omnipotence, and invulnerability). Girls experience self-consciousness more strongly than boys, and boys experience personal fable, as well as object relational ideation, more strongly than girls. These gender differences are in agreement with other research studies (Alberts et al., 2007; Elkind & Bowen, 1979; Enright et al., 1980; Goossens, 1984, study 2; Goossens et al., 1992, studies 1

and 2; Gray & Hudson, 1984; Hauck et al., 1986; Hudson & Gray, 1986; Lapsley et al., 1989; Markstrom & Mullis, 1986; Pesce & Harding, 1986; Richter et al., 1982; Riley et al., 1984; Ryan & Kuczowski, 1994; Rycek et al., 1998). They are also in agreement with Lapsley's (1993) alternative theoretical model, whereas in the context of Elkind's cognitive model remain unexplained.

Furthermore, this study provides evidence for the differential role of the various dimensions of the personal fable in the separation-individuation process. Omnipotence was found to be associated mainly with narcissistic tendencies (practicing-mirroring, dependency denial, and object relational ideation), whereas rejection expectancy with uniqueness. These findings are quite similar with those of Lapsley's (Aalsma et al., 1996; Lapsley & Aalsma, 2006) who found that omnipotence was a positive predictor of self-worth, coping, and adjustment and a negative one of depression and suicidal ideation, whereas uniqueness was a positive predictor of depression and suicidal ideation, thus supporting the view that adolescent narcissism has "two faces" with different implications for mental health.

In concluding, the various facets of the imaginary audience and the personal fable appeared in this study to be associated with different separation-individuation concerns, thus confirming the basic premises of the psychodynamically-oriented "New Look" model (Lapsley, 1993) for the interpretation of adolescent egocentrism. Recently, as was seen in the literature review, an attempt has been made to approach the personal fable as a "plural concept" (Aalsma et al., 2006; Lapsley & Aalsma, 2006), and examine its links with adjustment and mental health. However, this plurality has not been systematically examined in relation to separation-individuation, to other aspects of parent-adolescent relations, or to ego identity formation. Therefore, future research should concentrate more on uncovering the differential links between separation-individuation and the various dimensions not only of the personal fable but also of the imaginary audience, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the

mechanisms adolescents use to cope with the vicissitudes of this process.

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## Το φανταστικό ακροατήριο και ο προσωπικός μύθος των εφήβων σε σχέση με τη διαδικασία αποχωρισμού-εξατομίκευσης

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### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Στόχος αυτής της έρευνας ήταν ο εμπειρικός έλεγχος του εναλλακτικού θεωρητικού μοντέλου για την ερμηνεία του εφηβικού εγωκεντρισμού, το οποίο έχει προταθεί από τον Lapsley (1993), σε αντιδιαστολή με το κλασικό γνωστικό μοντέλο που εισήγαγε ο Elkind (1967). Σύμφωνα με το εναλλακτικό μοντέλο, οι δύο εκδηλώσεις του εφηβικού εγωκεντρισμού –το φανταστικό ακροατήριο και ο προσωπικός μύθος– είναι υγιείς προσαρμοστικοί μηχανισμοί που χρησιμοποιεί ο έφηβος για να αντιμετωπίσει την αγχογόνο αναπτυξιακή απαίτηση του ψυχολογικού αποχωρισμού από τους γονείς και της εξατομίκευσής του. Συμμετείχαν 297 έφηβοι 11-18 ετών περίπου. Συμπλήρωσαν την *Κλίμακα Φανταστικού Ακροατηρίου* (Elkind & Bowen, 1979), τη *Νέα Κλίμακα Φανταστικού Ακροατηρίου* (Lapsley, Fitzgerald, Rice, & Jackson, 1989), την *Κλίμακα Προσωπικού Μύθου* (Elkind, personal communication, August 10, 1993), τη *Νέα Κλίμακα Προσωπικού Μύθου* (Lapsley et al., 1989) και την *Κλίμακα Αποχωρισμού-Εξατομίκευσης των Εφήβων* (Levine, Green, & Millon, 1986. Levine & Saintonge, 1993). Το εναλλακτικό μοντέλο του εγωκεντρισμού επαληθεύτηκε σε γενικές γραμμές. Οι διαστάσεις του αποχωρισμού είχαν θετική συνάφεια με το φανταστικό ακροατήριο, ενώ οι διαστάσεις της εξατομίκευσης είχαν θετική συνάφεια με τον προσωπικό μύθο. Επίσης, διαπιστώθηκαν και κάποιες σχέσεις λιγότερο ισχυρές μεταξύ του αποχωρισμού και του προσωπικού μύθου, καθώς και μεταξύ της εξατομίκευσης και του φανταστικού ακροατηρίου. Προέκυψαν στοιχεία για το διαφορετικό ρόλο που παίζουν οι επιμέρους διαστάσεις του εγωκεντρισμού στη διαδικασία αποχωρισμού-εξατομίκευσης. Βρέθηκαν, ακόμη, συστηματικές διαφορές ηλικίας και φύλου. Τα ευρήματα συζητούνται στα πλαίσια της διεθνούς βιβλιογραφίας για τον εφηβικό εγωκεντρισμό και τις σχέσεις γονέων-εφήβων.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Φανταστικό ακροατήριο, Προσωπικός μύθος, Εγωκεντρισμός, Αποχωρισμός-εξατομίκευση, Εφηβεία.

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