



An Object Relational Approach to Imaginary Audience Ideation: Scale Development

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ABSTRACT

Elkind (1967) famously argued that adolescents construct “imaginary audiences” (IA) as a result of cognitive egocentrism that accompanies the transition to formal operations, yet Lapsley (1993) argued that IA is a form of object-relational ideation, trial identifications or“visions of the self” that adolescents engage during the second phase of individuation. To measure these object relational visions of the self, the New Imaginary Audience Scale was developed as a 42-item scale that assesses a participant’s thoughts on various social scenarios. This project examines the structural properties of the NIAS and further evidence of construct validity. A random sample of 219 emerging adults also completed the Self-Consciousness Scale, Healthy Separation Subscale, Self-Centeredness Subscale, and Interpersonal Problems Scale. Results allowed for scale reduction and subscale creation. This will allow for improved ease of administered to adolescents due to reduced time of survey, lower respondent fatigue, and the subscale creation will increase precision of measurement

PURPOSE

The New Imaginary Audience Scale (NIAS) was constructed to assess the extent to which participants engage in object relational "visions of the self." It is a 42-items scale that asks respondents to indicate along a 4-stem continuum (never to often) how often they think about, e.g., imagining how others will think if you were gone, being rejected by a boy/girl-friend, or how people will react when you are famous. But the factor structure of this scale has never been examined, and new evidence of construct validity would be welcome, particularly given the renewed interest in the IA as result of the COVID-19 pandemic.This study provides the first psychometric examination of the New Imaginary Audience Scale (NIAS) that operationalized the object relational understanding of IA.

METHOD

Participants: 219 emerging adults (152 females, $M_{age} = 19.4$ SD = 1.21) were randomly selected from a private midwestern university.

- Measures**
- **New Imaginary Audience Scale** is a 42 item scale constructed to assess the extent to which participants engage in object relational “visions of the self.”
 - **Dysfunctional individuation** was measured using the Dysfunctional Individuation Scale ($\alpha = .71$). This one factor 10-item scale includes items that tap poor self-other differentiation, a tendency towards coercion in relationships and difficulty in aloneness tolerance and object constancy.
 - **Self Consciousness Scale** is a 22 item scale that measures individual differences in Public and Private Self-Consciousness ($\alpha = .83$).
 - **Interpersonal Problems Scale** is a 7 item subscale of the College Adjustment Scale which measures psychological and adjustment problems experienced by college students ($\alpha = .75$).
 - **Individuation** was measured by the Separation Individuation Test for Adolescence subscales of Healthy Separation ($\alpha = .74$) and Self-Centeredness ($\alpha = .64$)

RESULTS

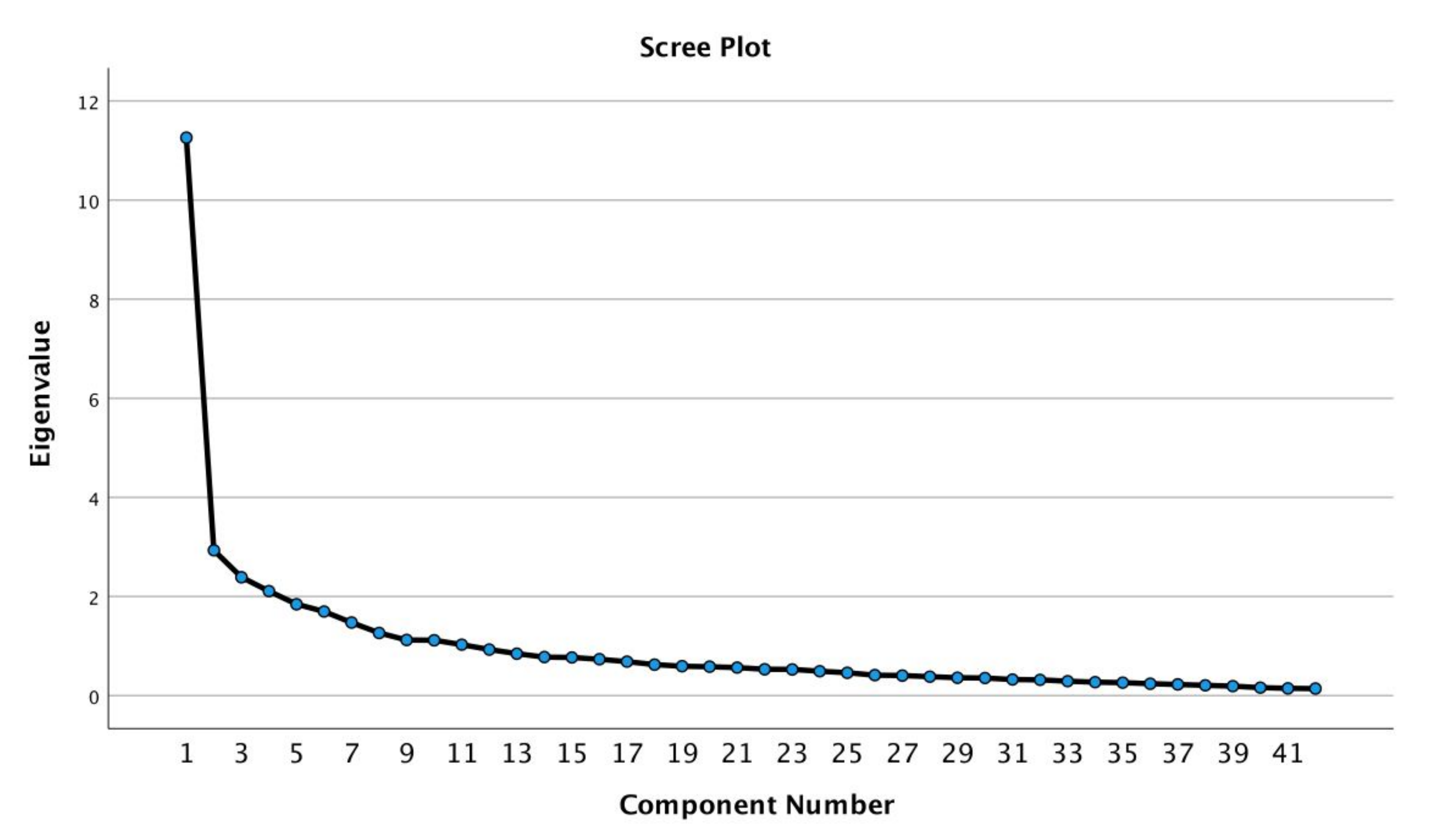


Table 1: Rotated Factor Analysis: 3 Factor Model			
Factor Component	F1	F2	F3
Q1	.750	.189	.015
Q2	.686	.135	.026
Q3	.679	.094	.235
Q4	.659	.239	.168
Q5	.631	.150	.127
Q6	.626	.088	.191
Q7	.592	.003	.367
Q8	.441	.374	.250
Q9	.417	.086	.362
Q10	.410	.166	.050
Q11	.403	.136	.195
Q12	-.056	.709	.105
Q13	.019	.630	.149
Q14	.092	.560	.150
Q15	.054	.515	.173
Q16	.398	.512	.172
Q17	.287	.502	.064
Q18	.014	.501	.149
Q19	.324	.470	.053
Q20	.354	.444	.088
Q21	.325	.188	.614
Q22	.275	.197	.603
Q23	.043	.292	.595
Q24	.169	-.083	.562
Q25	.351	-.020	.554
Q26	.188	.144	.535
Q27	.212	.311	.433

Table 2 Alpha Reliabilities and Correlation Matrix for Important Study Variables								
Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. NIAS1	.85**							
2. NIAS2	.52**	.78**						
3. NIAS3	.56**	.45**	.78**					
4. DIS	.38**	.38**	.23**	.71**				
5. SITASC	.05	.12	-.02	.12	.64**			
6. SITAHS	.09	-.6	.02	-.22**	.22**	.74**		
7. IPS	.21**	.31**	.02	.55**	.16**	-.3**	.75**	
8. SCS	.35**	.31**	.19**	.43**	.19**	.07	.32**	.88*

Note. ** indicates $p < .01$ Internal consistency is reported along the main diagonal. The object relational factors are: NIAS1 (Admiration and Popularity), NIAS2 (Object of Attention), NIAS3 (Leadership and Influence). DIS: Dysfunctional Individuation Scale; SITA: Self-Centeredness Subscale; SITA: Healthy Separation Subscale IPS: Interpersonal Problems Scale; SCS: Self-Consciousness Scale

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed three factors with minimum factor loadings of .40. Items that loaded onto more than one factor were eliminated. The final scale included 27 items.
- The three factors were labeled: object-relational fantasies of Admiration and Popularity (11 items; $\alpha = .85$), Object of Attention (9 items; $\alpha = .78$) and Leadership and Influence (7 items; $\alpha = .78$).
- All three NIAS factors were significantly correlated with each other ($M_r = .52$); and showed significant positive association with dysfunctional individuation ($M_r = .33$) but are unrelated to healthy separation
- Two object relational NIAS factors (except Leadership/Influence) were positively associated with interpersonal problems ($M_r = .26$).
- All three object relational NIAS factors were correlated with self-consciousness ($M_r = .33$).

CONCLUSIONS

- Imaginary audience cognition resolves into 3 object relational factors
- These forms of object relational ideation are positively correlated with interpersonal problems, self-centeredness, and dysfunctional individuation
- Heightened IA, as forms of object relational ideation, is a symptom of problematic individuation and not a way of coping or compensating for it.

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This poster and the DIS are available at: www.maplab.nd.edu