

PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN
HAVING IMAGINARY COMPANIONS

by

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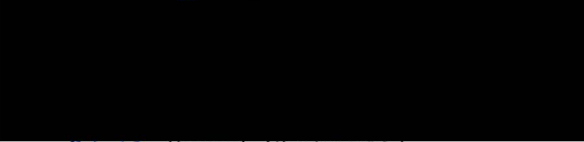
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ABSTRACT

Children's involvement in fantasy behaviors, for example the creation of imaginary companions, has received attention because of its' potential as a contribution to development as well as a source of "concern" about possible complications.

There were 2 major purposes to this study. The first purpose was to determine the attitudes held by parents about their child having imaginary companions. Both fathers and mothers were included in the sample. The second purpose was to examine the popular and professional child-rearing books to determine what trend or trends of advice is given to parents about what to do if their child has an imaginary companion.

One hundred parents of 3-5-year-old children were selected from two preschool programs and two kindergartens of public schools in the Greater Victoria area. A questionnaire instrument, Inventory of Child Behaviors, was developed for the study and administered to 30 mothers and 30 fathers. A semi-structured interview measure was also developed and administered to 20 mothers and 20 fathers.

In general, this study found the majority of parents are either neutral or slightly discouraging to situations involving children engaging in make-believe play. The results do indicate that mothers tend to show a more favorable attitude toward fantasy behavior in their

child than do fathers. The survey of the child-rearing literature led to the conclusion that parents are advised to remain neutral or to encourage this type of fantasizing behavior in children.

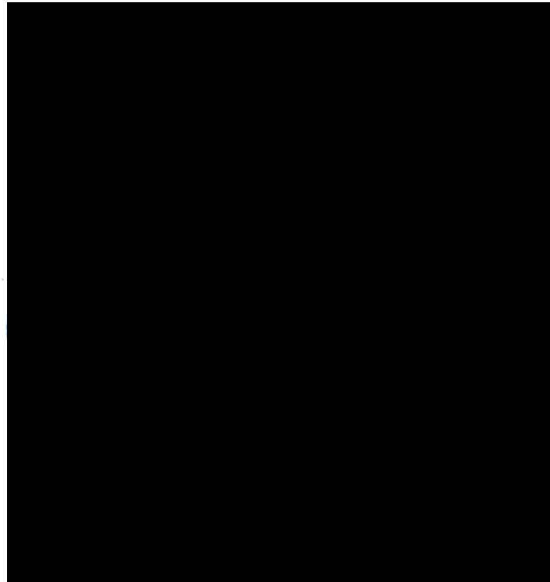


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CHAPTER 1

Statement of Problem

A universal characteristic attributed to children is their ability to engage in make-believe play. Imaginative behavior in children is often both an item of pride and concern for parents. There are related problems that occur to parents about their child's ability to appreciate the difference between reality and this form of play. Until recently there has been very little research, compared to other behavior of children, on imaginative behavior. A specific example of make-believe behavior is the imaginary companion.

Most of the literature on imaginative behavior and imaginary companions in children deals with issues such as the psychological meaning of imaginary companions, the incidence of imaginary companions, and the possible motivations for creating imaginary companions. A small number of empirical studies have been conducted. Typically, they have dealt with descriptive information such as age range when children are most likely to create an imaginary companion, the sex, age, size and type of imaginary companion created. Other studies have attempted to determine whether children with imaginary companions will be able to distinguish reality from fantasy.

Except for a few passing references, little published research has been done in the area of parental attitudes and concerns, if any, about their children creating an imaginary companion. Recent studies

by Singer (1973, 1976) have shown that fantasy is an important part of a child's life. Until recently fantasy, specifically the creation of imaginary companions, has often been ignored as an aspect of the child's normal development. Certainly, it is characteristic of young children that they do fantasize, yet the interpretation of this behavior has often been contradictory and even confusing. Consequently parents, when confronted with fantasizing behavior in their children, must wonder if this behavior should be encouraged or discouraged. Hurlock (1972) states "A question often asked by parents and teachers is: 'How much should children's imaginations be cultivated; how much repressed in favor of an acceptance of cold facts?'" (p. 300)

The present study was undertaken to establish whether or not parents are concerned about their children creating imaginary companions.

The first, and major purpose of this study is to determine the attitudes held by parents about children having imaginary companions. These attitudes toward imaginary companions were measured and examined to determine the degree to which parents are concerned about their child engaging in this form of fantasizing behavior. The questionnaire instrument was also designed to measure parental attitudes toward children engaging in deceitful behaviors in an effort to determine whether fantasy and deceit behaviors were viewed by parents as being similar.

The second purpose is to examine the popular and professional child-rearing books to determine what trend or trends of advice is given to parents about what to do if their child has an imaginary companion. That is, in terms of the development of the child, are parents advised to encourage, ignore, or discourage this imaginative behavior in their children, or are there all three points of view. It is also possible that this literature may ignore the topic.

This study was considered to be important in that it would make a contribution for counsellors and other professionals who consult with parents and children about the developmental function of make-believe in general, and imaginary companions specifically. An important initial stage in preparing for such consultation is to know what views parents generally hold about this phenomenon and also what research and popular child-rearing literature have to say about this occurrence. The study is important because it raised the possibility that parental attitudes may be in disagreement with either the child-rearing literature or the developmental research.

A particularly unique characteristic of the study was to include both fathers and mothers in studying parental attitudes. Few available studies have included the father in the study of parental behavior: "The overwhelming majority of studies on the effects of parent-child interaction on child development have focussed on only one parent, the mother" (Russell, 1978, p. 1174). Furthermore, the study served to integrate information from sources which are not usually considered

simultaneously: developmental psychology, popular parenting literature and parents' views.

In summary, this study considered the following six questions:

1. Is the attitude of parents toward children having imaginary companions, as indicated by a frequency count for each of the five ; fantasy items, one of encouragement or discouragement?

2. (a) Do parents of daughters, as indicated by the A effect of a two-way analysis of variance, have different attitudes toward fantasy than parents of sons? (b) Are the attitudes held by mothers, as indicated by the B effect of a two-way analysis of variance, different from the attitudes held by fathers? (c) Do mothers of daughters, as indicated by the AB effect of a two-way analysis of variance, have different attitudes than mothers of sons? (d) Do fathers of daughters, as indicated by the AB effect of a two-way analysis of variance, have different attitudes than fathers of sons?

3. Are there differences in parents' attitudes toward fantasy behavior and their attitudes toward lying behavior, as indicated by a correlation between the two ratings?

4. Is fantasizing behavior, specifically the phenomenon of imaginary companions dealt with in the child-rearing literature?

5. To what degree are parents advised by authors of child-rearing books to encourage their children having imaginary companions?

6. (a) What correspondence exists between the advice presented in the child-rearing literature and the current attitudes of parents in the sample toward children having imaginary companions? (b) What correspondence exists among the conclusions about imaginary companions drawn from psychological studies and the two groups already dealt with in (a) part of this question?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATUREFrequency of Imaginary Companions

The literature on the incidence of imaginary companions contains many discrepancies which are due essentially to two reasons. First, children vary in the extent they are willing to reveal their imaginary playmates (Jersild, Telford and Sawry, 1975). Only if children openly play with their imaginary playmate will the parents then know that their child has one; not all children are so willing to reveal their secret friend (Ames and Learned, 1946). Recognition of concerns of parents about imaginary companions of their children is provided by Vostrovsky and Stanford (1894) and Hurlock (1972) who reported that parental ridicule of a child playing with an imaginary companion causes the child to become secretive. Development of accurate statistics about incidence of imaginary companions is therefore impaired since parents may not be aware, or choose not to admit, that their child has an imaginary playmate.

The second reason for discrepancies in the reported incidence of imaginary companions is that the criteria used by different authors to define imaginary companions have not been uniform. Some authors include fantasizing behaviors which are excluded by others. Svendsen (1934) defined imaginary companions in the following way:

. . . an invisible character, named and referred to in conversation with other persons or played with directly for a period of time, at least several months, having an air of reality for the child but no apparent objective basis. This excludes that type of imaginative play in which the child himself assumes the role of some person in his environment. (p. 988)

Margaret Sutherland (1971) defines imaginary companions to include the personification of objects. She says:

The companion can appear in a number of ways. Sometimes the companion has an actual physical presence as a battered and decrepit toy, possibly, or some object rejoicing in a peculiar-sounding name: but often the companion is visible only to the child. (p. 84)

Stone and Church (1968) extend a definition that would include all forms of fantasy manifestations. They define the imaginary companion in this fashion:

We use the term imaginary companion to include not only imaginary playmates, animal or human, but also imaginary realms, identities, and play-things which seem to be treated as though they have an autonomous psychological existence. (p. 280)

As can be seen in these three samples of criteria used to define imaginary companions, they do vary substantially. The result is that the reported incidence of imaginary companions fluctuates accordingly. As reported in Table 1, incidence has varied from 12% to 50% depending on the definition of imaginary companions and the sample considered. Several of the studies appeared to have relied on retrospective accounts by adults, thereby bringing the data into some question.

Table 1
Reported Incidence of Imaginary Companions

Authors	Year of Study	Incidence of I.C.	Subjects Studied
Hurlock and Burstein	1932	31% of women 23% of men	high school and college students
Jersild, A&C and Markey	1933	36%	children
Svendson	1934	13.4%	children
Ames and Learned	1946	21%	children
Schaefer	1969	12-31%	8 criterion groups of adolescents
Manosevitz, Prentice and Wilson	1973	28%	children
Stone and Church	1973	50%	female college students

For the purposes of this study, imaginary companions will refer to an imaginary character acknowledged by the child, including a person, animal or object, with which the child interacts on a recurring basis.

Breckenridge and Vincent (1965) and Singer (1973, 1976) report that since so many children engage in fantasizing behavior and create imaginary companions during the preschool years, the practice may be regarded as normal. This viewpoint of fantasy being a normal aspect in the development of the child is further supported by Kappelman (1975) who reports:

All children have fantasies, just as adults do. But children are not forced to deal with reality as directly and forcefully on a daily basis as adults are; therefore, they can daydream with greater ease and abandon. During this early period (between two and four) children have a natural tendency to create a fantasy world.
(p. 44)

Ames and Learned (1946) indicate that the imaginary companion frequently discussed in literature as a somewhat unique phenomenon, would be better considered as merely a part of a total "imagination gradient" (p. 60), any or all parts of which may quite naturally occur in any one child. Table 2 presents a summary of the outstanding fantasy behaviors of this imagination gradient. These behaviors are tabulated according to the age order of their appearance. Ages given are the ages when the behavior is strongest. Thus Ames and Learned indicate that the creation of imaginary companions is part of the

Table 2
Gradient of Kinds of Imaginative Behavior

Behavior	Typical Age Range
Imaginative play with objects	24 - 36 months 2-3yr
Animates objects	30 months 2½
Plays role of a baby	33 months 2¾
Plays with imaginary object	33 - 36 months 2¾-3
Plays with imaginary animal	30 - 42 months 2½-3½
Impersonates animal	30 - 48 months 2½-4
Has imaginary human companion	36 - 42 months 3-3½
Personalizes object	36 - 48 months 3-4
Impersonates another person	42 - 54 months 3½-4½
Imaginary companion - not divulged to adult	5 - 10 years

Note: From "Imaginary Companions and Related Phenomena" by
L. B. Ames and J. Learned, Journal of Genetic Psychology,
1946, 69, 147-167.

natural development of the child and is also only one part in the normal development of imaginary behavior.

Not all fantasy behavior is productive or innocuous; it can be unproductive and pathological. Three styles of fantasy behavior are found in young children. The first style can be described as a "Nightmare Alice" fantasy life. These individuals are characterized by a great deal of tortured self-examination and drives towards achievement and heroic accomplishment, all of which make for a negatively toned fantasy life. Examples would include a fear of separation from parents possibly manifested in a school phobia, or hearing a fire engine and being concerned that it is their house that is on fire.

The second style of fantasy behavior can be described as a "Walter Mitty" fantasy life. This style includes extremely anxious, self doubting, fearful individuals, disorganized in thoughts and lacking any clear elaborate daydreams except those that are oriented around possible failure fantasies. These individuals have little orientation toward achievement, persistence, and primarily seek to maximize the possibility of some form of external reinforcement. Mindwandering, boredom, and escapism would be manifestations of this style of imaginary behavior. Examples would include imagining an honor-roll award instead of studying or dreams of popularity and dating instead of meeting people.

The third style of fantasizing behavior can be described as a "Playful Alternatives" fantasy life. This style is characterized

by a generally positive orientation toward, and an acceptance of, one's inner experience. These individuals experience a good deal of interest in their own visual and auditory imaginary capacity and indicate a high rate of thoughtfulness and fairly elaborate fantasy activity. Examples of this type of fantasizing behavior would include imaginary companions, dressing up and imaginative word play. (Knowles, 1976) It is this third style of positive and healthy imaginary behavior that is the focus of this study.

Background and General Findings on Imaginary Companions

Age Range of Occurrence of Imaginary Companions

Authors report varying age ranges for the likelihood of imaginary companions occurring. Vostrovsky and Stanford (1894) state that "the age when these visible beings first arise varies, anytime from the first to the thirteenth year of a child's life" (p. 396). Hurlock and Burstein (1932) found that:

. . . among girls, the age at which the imaginary companion is most likely to appear is between five and seven years of age. Boys experienced the phenomenon at a considerably later age than did girls. One-third of the group fixed the age of the first appearance of the imaginary playmate at the stage between seven and nine years of age. (p. 385)

Bender and Vogel (1941) discussed fourteen case studies of children with imaginary companions who ranged in age from five to ten years. The Harriman study (1937) indicates that the imaginary companion phenomenon is not restricted to the age group so far described.

Harriman reported on the experiences of college students in psychology who kept their imaginary companions longer than has been usually noted. In one case he describes a student who reported that his imaginary companion began when he was four and stayed with him through high school.

Although the above mentioned studies indicate that imaginary companions occur at various ages, the general consensus is that this phenomenon usually makes its appearance from 2½ to 5 to 6 years; with the peak being in the preschool years, that is, between 3 and 4 years of age (Ames and Learned, 1946; Breckenridge and Vincent, 1965; Nagera, 1969).

Ames and Learned (1946) provide a summary of the general agreements found in the literature on imaginary companions. These include:

1. The usual age for occurrence is 2½ to 6 years of age. The imaginary companion is customarily dropped at the age of school entrance.

2. More girls than boys experience these phenomena. Imaginary companions occur most frequently in children of superior intelligence and with limited opportunities for companionship.

3. Companions may be animals, individual people, or whole families. Commonplace names usually predominate, though some are very imaginative. The imaginary companion is usually the same sex as the child and older than the child.

4. The companions role is usually that of friend, subordinate, scapegoat or ideal self. Some children are secretive about their companions; others share them openly.

More recent studies have found that some of the above have been over generalizations; yet they basically still hold true. Children with siblings, as well as only children have imaginary companions. However, as Singer (1968) points out, "children in the middle of large families are less inclined toward fantasy play. They are caught up in direct imitation of other children. It takes time and solitude to develop a rich imaginative life" (p. 24). Ames and Learned (1946) and Jersild, Telford and Sawry (1975) report that children who have ample opportunity for companionship as well as those who do not, have imaginary companions. Jersild et al. further suggest that more girls having imaginary companions than boys reflects a cultural rather than a genuine developmental difference.

A question that may be of concern to parents is, "What are the long term effects, if any, of children who have imaginary companions?" Schaefer (1969) conducted a study on the long range impact of the phenomenon of imaginary companions. His subjects were eight hundred adolescent boys and girls from ten high schools in greater New York. He selected these schools, first, because they offered courses providing opportunity for creative activities and, second, because they had an outstanding record of awards, prizes and other indications of creative student achievement in the artistic or scientific fields. The

artistic field covered both art and writing, while the scientific field included the natural sciences and mathematics. During an extensive biographical inventory Schaefer asked students if they had ever had an imaginary companion. Thus, it was retrospective self-reports provided by the adolescents from which Schaefer drew his conclusions. His hypothesis that the imaginary companion phenomenon is related to the creative impulses received partial support. For both sexes, students who produced creative works of a literary nature had a greater incidence of the imaginary companion phenomenon in their childhood than control groups of non-creative students. There was a lack of support for his hypothesis in the scientific field.

Psychological Meaning of Imaginary Companions

"We can begin by saying that happy people never make phantasies, only unsatisfied ones" (1925, p. 176), encapsulates Freud's position on fantasizing behavior. Freud theorized that fantasy processes grew out of early hallucinatory experiences of childhood during periods of drive arousal when gratification was delayed. Fantasy operates mainly as a neurotic defense providing an outlet for unfulfilled wishes and is, in the long run, unhealthy.

Maria Montessori (1973) presents the theoretical position that an active imagination is healthy, as long as it is controlled and regulated. Thus, it is important to take the young child and teach him sciences, mathematics, geography, etc., so that he can use

his imagination usefully and productively in structured areas. This structure is especially important until the child reaches the age of eleven or twelve. Otherwise, Montessori frowned upon fantasy as a pathological tendency of early childhood.

Reports of a recent series of research studies have been presented by Singer (1961, 1973, 1976, 1977a), a clinical psychologist at Yale University. Singer has reported support for the hypothesis that the ability to fantasize and engage in make-believe play is not only enjoyable for the child but also contributes to the child's acquisition of varied vocabulary, imaginary skill development, plus the ability to tolerate waiting periods.

A natural question for parents and educators to ask is whether imaginative children who have been encouraged to develop make-believe play, may also be inclined to become so absorbed in it that they lose touch with reality and are not able to make adequate discriminations between their fantasies and their play experiences in reality. Singer (1966, 1973) has suggested that there is little risk of overinvolvement in fantasy experiences, and that the experience of engaging in make-believe play might actually help the child to more effectively discriminate fantasy from reality. Sutton-Smith (1974) added further support when he suggested that the child who is engaging in fantasy activity is learning to acquire a sense of power over play activities and is able to recognize more completely what can and cannot be controlled through such activities. He adds "make believe play is

symbolic play. Children play with representations of things rather than with things themselves, and that is what so much of the modern world is like. We manage our lives with words, pictures or numbers, all of which are symbols" (1974, p. 111). Tucker's study (as cited in Singer, 1977a) approaches the question about the possible risks of imaginative play in her investigation of the role of fantasy in cognitive-affective functioning. The sample in her study consisted of 134 children who had relatively normal IQ's (90-125) and ranged in age from 9-11 years. Her hypothesis consisted of two parts; however, it was the second part that is germane to this question. In the second part of her hypothesis she proposed that subjects who were considered to be high fantasizers, as indicated by the Singer "Predisposition Interview," would recall an adventure story more completely, accurately and with more embellishments than subjects who showed very little fantasy predisposition. The results indicated consistent support for this part of her hypothesis. The high fantasy group yielded superior performance on completeness and accuracy of story response and on embellishment of story. These results indicate that a group of 11-year-olds who are predisposed to make-believe are more accurate in story material recall and less prone to introduce distortions in the story than children who lack comparable imaginative predisposition.

Freud, Montessori and such recent researchers as Singer, Sutton-Smith and Tucker provide alternative and somewhat opposing viewpoints on fantasy and imaginative behavior in children. The existence

of such disagreement among child development specialists would appear to have implications for parents who are looking for guidelines concerning the imaginative behavior of their own children. For this researcher this disagreement raised the question about what attitudes parents have when their children engage in imaginative behavior, specifically creating an imaginary companion. Many popular books on child-rearing have been developed to provide parents with interpretations of contributions from child development studies. Parents often turn to this child-rearing literature to gain information on how to deal with their child's behavior. Since such disagreement exists among child development specialists a sample of the most popular child-rearing literature was examined as part of this study to ascertain whether the advice given in these books reflected this disagreement (see Table 11).

Manosevitz, Prentice and Wilson (1973) in the second part of a questionnaire study, measured parental attitudes toward their children having imaginary companions. It is important to note that in most cases the questionnaire was completed by the mother even though questionnaires were sent home to both parents. The parents in this study had children who currently or in the recent past had an imaginary companion. These parents described the family structure, play activities, personal characteristics of the children as well as characteristics of their imaginary companions, plus attitudes and treatment of the child and the imaginary companion. The following conclusion was made:

The attitudes of parents toward their child's imaginary companion were described as "good for the child" by 62%, and as "having no effect" on the child by 42%, although 4% of the parents felt the imaginary companion had a "harmful effect" on the child Parents encouraged the imaginary companion in 50% of the cases, ignored it in 45% of the cases, while only 7% discouraged the child's imaginary companion. (p. 76)

Differential Attitudes of Mothers and Fathers

The focus of this review is on psychological studies which include both parents in the sample in an attempt to document any different behaviors which fathers as compared to mothers engage in with their child. In one study (Lamb, 1976a), 7-8-month-old infants were observed interacting with both parents in their homes. Lamb's premise was that much of the interaction between infants and their parents takes place in the context of social play so he attempted to determine not only the response of the infants to play initiated by their parents but also the character of mother- and father-infant play. He found that overall there was neither a greater number of play episodes nor a greater amount of time spent in play with fathers than with mothers. However, the average response to play with fathers was significantly more positive than play with mothers. Mothers showed a tendency to initiate more play with daughters than with sons, and fathers engaged in the same amount of play with sons and daughters. There were no sex differences in the responses to play bids by the adults. Although fathers did not play more often with the infants

than the mothers did, the type of play in which they engaged differed. Mothers engaged in more conventional and toy-mediated types of play, while fathers initiated a more physical, rough-and-tumble type of play. Traditionally, mothers are more involved in day-to-day caretaking activities which means that most often mothers would pick up their child to engage in caretaking activities. Fathers, on the other hand, are far more likely to pick up their children to play with them, which would account for the child preferring to be held by the father. Further support for this hypothesis is provided in another study conducted by Lamb (1976b) which found that 2-year-old infants (particularly boys) were most likely to initiate play with their fathers than with their mothers when both parents were present. Likewise, Lynn and Cross (1974) reported that, when given the choice between playing with their mothers or their fathers, boys of 2-years and older chose their fathers; girls shifted from wanting their fathers to wanting their mothers between 2 and 4 years of age. These results are congruent with the findings of an earlier study of parental preferences (Ammons and Ammons, 1949).

Lamb further reported another area in which mothers and fathers interact differently with their children as described in an informal study by Biller (Lamb, 1976b). Whereas mothers were more likely to inhibit the child's exploration, Biller notes that fathers encouraged their child's curiosity and urged them to attempt to solve cognitive and motoric challenges. These findings further support the hypothesis

that mothers tend to encourage their child to engage in activities which facilitate their caretaking role, in this case, discouraging the child from exploring the house and its contents.

It appears from these studies with infants and young children that mothers, due to their caretaking role, gear activities with their child in a direction that would make the job of caretaking easier. Thus, even though mothers physically have more contact with their infants than fathers, mothers tend to encourage their child to engage in activities (i.e. toy-mediated play) which allow the mother the opportunity to attend to other matters. Fathers, on the other hand, despite spending less time with their children tend to engage in more activities which require the father's full involvement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODSubjects

Parents who had at least one child between the ages of 3-5-years were selected for this study. The population consisted of parents who sent their child to either a playschool or a kindergarten in an elementary school in the Greater Victoria area. The sample consisted of 100 parents who were selected to provide equal numbers of fathers and mothers for each of sons and daughters. Thus, the sample consisted of 25 mothers of sons, 25 mothers of daughters, 25 fathers of sons, and 25 fathers of daughters. Intact families with both partners present were preferred; 94 of the parents were intact families. Parents of children between the ages of 3-5-years were the target sample since research indicates that fantasy behavior peaks in children during these ages.

Gaining access to parents, especially fathers is a difficult task. For this reason, it was decided that through contacting the schools and gaining permission to send form letters home with the children, parents of both sexes would be reached.

The sample reported in Table 3 was derived from the kindergartens of Fairburn and Hillcrest Elementary Schools plus the preschool classes of Gingerbread and Jack Horner Playschools. An attempt was made to sample both fathers of sons and of daughters from both types of programs.

Table 3
 Number of Parents Selected from
 Each School or Program Location

Sex of Parents	Sex of Child	School or Program				Total
		Gingerbread	Jack Horner	Fairburn	Hillcrest	
Questionnaire Sample						
Mother	Son	4	3	3	5	15
	Daughter	5	5	2	3	15
Father	Son	4	4	3	4	15
	Daughter	5	5	2	3	15
Interview Sample						
Mother	Son	2	3	2	3	10
	Daughter	4	3	1	2	10
Father	Son	2	3	2	3	10
	Daughter	4	3	1	2	10
Total		30	29	16	25	100

Occupations of the parents of the Fairburn group of children included skilled trades people and some professionals. At Hillcrest, most parents were in professional occupations. At Jack Horner a greater proportion of mothers seemed to work, primarily at clerical jobs. Fathers of the Jack Horner group worked primarily at skilled trades. There was a wider range of occupational backgrounds for parents of the Gingerbread group. Fathers included equal proportions of skilled trades and professionals. Almost half the mothers were housewives; others worked as waitresses, hairdressers, teachers and clerical workers.

Instruments

Two measures were developed for use in this present study. The Inventory of Child Behaviors Measure provided a self report by the parent and the Semi-Structured Interview approach provided an opportunity for the researcher to ask follow-up questions.

Inventory of Child Behaviors Measure

Development. An Inventory of Child Behaviors Measure was developed because no available research instruments appear to exist. The Inventory used a self report questionnaire format to measure parental attitudes on a Likert-type scale. Questions were generated to ascertain the parents' opinions on children involving themselves in fantasy and deceitful behaviors, as well as in helpful and disruptive behaviors. An equal number of behavior activities were

included in each of these four categories. It was decided that this measure would consist of 20 specific behaviors appropriate for 3-5-year-old children, with each of the four categories consisting of five examples of appropriate behavior activities. The parents' response to each item was reported on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly encourage" to "strongly discourage."

Appropriate examples of behaviors were collected by talking with parents of 3-5-year-old children. The parents were asked to provide examples of behaviors they had seen in their children which fitted into each of the categories. Twenty of the clearest and most representative of the behavior descriptions were chosen to be included in the questionnaire. An effort was made to include positive as well as negative items in the hopes that the subjects completing the questionnaire would find the task a pleasant experience.

Written instructions (see Appendix 1) asked the parents to consider how they would feel toward their children demonstrating this behavior. Space was provided preceding the instructions for the parent to report occupation, sex of parent, plus sex and age of child.

Pilot work. Pilot work was carried out in an effort to assess the appropriateness of the behavior descriptions and the clarity of the wording. The 20-item questionnaire was administered to eight graduate students and four parents of 3-5-year-old children. All 12 pilot subjects stated afterwards that they enjoyed completing the questionnaire and that all but two of the behavior descriptions were

clear. The questionnaire used in the study was essentially the same as that in the pilot study except for some changes in the wording and replacing two of the deceit behaviors which were not obvious examples. Details of the changes are included in Appendix B.

Test-retest reliability pilot work. Reliability of fantasy and lying sub scores on the questionnaire was assessed by comparing the ratings given by 12 people at two different times, one month apart. For the fantasy items, 70% agreement occurred between ratings given at the two times (Appendix C). Ratings were considered on the basis of discourage (scores 1 and 2), neutral (score 3) and encourage (scores 4 and 5). For the lying items 85% agreement occurred between ratings given at the two times (Appendix D). In no case did the rating move from encourage to discourage or from discourage to encourage. Test-retest reliability for the fantasy items was found to be modest ($r = 0.54$, $p = .03$, $n = 12$). For the deceit scale a strong correlation between the two test administrations was found ($r = .83$, $p = .001$, $n = 12$).

Semi-Structured Interview Measure

Development. This measure consisted of three brief anecdotes which portray imaginative behavior appropriate for children between the ages of 3-5-years (Appendix E). These anecdotes were obtained through talking to parents of 3-5-year-old children. These parents were asked to describe times when their child had demonstrated

imaginative behavior, specifically the appearance of an imaginary companion, and provide the details surrounding these incidences. Three anecdotes that seemed most representative were chosen from all the anecdotes related by parents.

After each anecdote had been read aloud by the interviewer the parent was asked to provide a description of his or her reaction to the anecdote. The interview was taped. The data from this measure were analysed by three raters who were asked to judge, using the 5-point Likert-type scale, whether the parents encouraged or discouraged the behavior of the child in the anecdote. If the three scores given for each anecdote by the raters were identical then this was the attitudinal rating given for that parent. If the judges rated differing scores for the same anecdote then the median score was used as the attitudinal rating of the parent for that anecdote.

Pilot work. Ten parents of 3-5-year-old children were interviewed in an effort to determine the parents' reactions to the interview setting, to test for interjudge agreement and to determine whether usable ratings could be acquired. *

All 10 of the parents preferred the interview to take place in their home. In most cases the only time when both parents were at home was during the evening and to have the interview at any other location would have meant that they would need a baby-sitter. When the three judges had rated all 10 of the interviews it was found that 70% of the times the judges agreed, 20% of the times the judges

were within one point of each other and 10% of the times the judges were within two points of each other. In all cases, the parents found the anecdotes to be clear and no changes were made.

Procedure

Parents were approached through the schools after the cooperation of the principal and teacher was granted. A form letter (Appendix F) and two questionnaires were given to 3/5 of the girls and 3/5 of the boys in each class to take home with them. The remaining students were sent home with interview form letters (Appendix G). Parents who were willing to be interviewed were requested to return the form letter with their names and phone numbers. Full confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Returned questionnaires were collected one week later by the researcher. Parents were asked in the form letters to complete the questionnaires independently of each other but no means of monitoring the completion of the questionnaire was employed. This same procedure used in the elementary schools was also used in the play-schools.

The researcher then contacted, by telephone, the parents who had agreed to be interviewed. All parents expressed the desire to be interviewed in the home rather than at the school. Dates and times were arranged so that both parents would be interviewed during one visit. The parents were interviewed separately by having one parent leave the room while the other parent was being interviewed. The

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interviews lasted from between 10-15 minutes each. In most cases the atmosphere during the interview was informal and friendly. The parents were encouraged to ask questions both before and after the interviews. Instructions for the interview were as follows:

I will read to you three anecdotes describing certain behaviors of a 3-5-year-old child. After each anecdote I will ask you one or two questions. When you respond to these questions I would appreciate it if you would answer as if the parent and child in the anecdote are you and your child.

Data from each questionnaire and interview were coded on the basis of school or program, sex of parent, and sex of child. The subjects for both measures were told that the research was being undertaken in an effort to determine parental attitudes toward behaviors of children between the ages of 3-5-years. They were not told that the specific focus of the research was their attitude toward fantasy behavior. The subjects were informed that if they wished to know the results of the study they should let their child's teacher know and the researcher would come in and share the results at a parents' meeting.

Review of the Child-Rearing Literature

A third source of data was obtained by reviewing 10 of the most popular child-rearing books. The sources of this sample include a child psychologist, a public health nurse, a family physician, and the public library (see Table 11).

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussions

The first research question posed the problem of whether the attitudes of parents toward children having imaginary companions are those of encouragement or discouragement. Table 4 shows that for the questionnaire data, the general pattern is for parents to take a neutral position; the majority of parents chose a neutral response in 4 of the 5 items. In 3 of the 5 items a substantial number of parents indicated an attitude of "slightly discourage." Only for item 3 was there a sizeable number that reported they would encourage the behavior. Item 3 portrayed a parent who was doing the grocery shopping being reminded by the child not to forget to buy carrots for an imaginary pet rabbit. There were two aspects of this item that appears to set it apart from the other four items. The first is that the behavior occurs in a public place while the other items occur in the home. Parents may anticipate social pressure here. The second aspect is that the child asks for a vegetable, a food which parents encourage their children to eat. The parents' responses may have been different if the example had described the child asking for candy.

In response to the interview, parents showed a greater range of attitudes (see Table 5). Approximately 10% of the parents were strongly encouraging and 10% were strongly discouraging. On the first anecdote there was some tendency for parents to slightly encourage fantasy behavior but on the third anecdote the trend was for them to show a neutral attitude.

Table 4
 Distribution of Number of Persons in Questionnaire Sample
 on the Basis of Attitude Toward Imaginary Companions

Group	N	Question number	Rating ^a				
			1	2	3	4	5
Total	60	1	1	22	26	10	1
		2	5	28	23	4	0
		3	0	13	29	17	1
		4	0	3	32	14	11
		5	8	28	18	5	1
Fathers	30	1	0	13	12	5	0
		2	2	16	10	2	0
		3	0	8	14	8	0
		4	0	3	15	7	5
		5	5	16	8	1	0
Mothers	30	1	1	9	14	5	1
		2	3	12	13	2	0
		3	0	5	15	9	1
		4	0	0	17	7	6
		5	3	12	10	4	1

(Continued)

Table 4 - Continued

	N	Question number	Rating ^a				
			1	2	3	4	5
Parents of sons	30	1	1	9	13	7	0
		2	2	17	8	3	0
		3	0	4	16	10	0
		4	0	5	15	6	7
		5	5	15	6	3	1
Parents of daughters	30	1	0	13	13	3	1
		2	3	11	15	1	0
		3	0	9	13	7	1
		4	0	1	17	8	4
		5	3	13	12	2	0

^aRating of 1 = strongly discourage 3 = neutral 5 = strongly encourage

Table 5
 Distribution of Number of Persons in Interview Sample
 on the Basis of Attitude Toward Imaginary Companions

Group	N	Interview Question Number	Rating ^a				
			1	2	3	4	5
Total	40	1	4	9	9	14	4
		2	3	9	11	13	4
		3	5	4	19	11	1
Fathers	20	1	4	7	4	4	1
		2	3	6	5	5	1
		3	4	2	9	4	1
Mothers	20	1	0	2	5	10	3
		2	0	3	6	8	3
		3	1	2	10	7	0
Parents of sons	20	1	2	5	7	5	1
		2	1	5	8	5	1
		3	3	1	12	4	0

(Continued)

Table 5 - Continued

Group	N	Interview Question Number	Rating ^a				
			1	2	3	4	5
Parents of daughters	20	1	2	4	2	9	3
		2	2	4	3	8	3
		3	2	3	7	7	1

^aRating of 1 = strongly discourage 3 = neutral 5 = strongly encourage

The results from the two measures were not identical. However, for neither instrument did parents show a strong attitude, either of encouragement or discouragement; the tendency was to be neutral. For the self report instrument, parents tended to be neutral or slightly discouraging whereas in the interview instrument greater numbers said they would be slightly encouraging.

The second question dealt with the possibility that the gender of parents and the gender of the child make a difference in the attitudes toward imaginary playmates. Table 6 shows that, based on mean scores for both the questionnaire and the interview, there is no difference in attitude according to the sex of the child.

The average scores shown in Table 6 support the conclusion that mothers show a more favourable attitude toward fantasy behavior in their child than do fathers. However, only for the interview data (see Table 7) did the difference reach statistical significance ($p = .015$). A second approach to investigating the role of sex of parent was conducted by Chi Square analysis of the frequencies reported in Tables 4 and 5. Only for the first anecdote of the interview was there a significant association between the gender of parent and attitude toward fantasy behavior in children. The first anecdote in which the difference was found portrayed a 3-year-old boy refusing to sit down for a large family Thanksgiving dinner unless a place was set for his imaginary friend. The second anecdote described a 4-year-old son wanting to sit on the big swing so that there would be room for

Table 6
 Attitude Scores of Mothers and Fathers from
 Interview and Questionnaire Data

Group	Referent	Total Fantasy Score			
		Interview		Questionnaire	
		M	S	M	S
Fathers	Sons	7.50	2.51	13.93	2.81
	Daughters	8.70	3.97	13.67	1.35
Mothers	Sons	10.00	2.21	14.87	2.88
	Daughters	10.80	2.35	14.67	2.66

his imaginary playmate while his father wanted him to play on the smaller and safer swing. The third anecdote portrayed a 4-year-old girl going outside and playing with her imaginary friend after her mother telling her that she was too busy to play. At least on the surface the first anecdote seems similar to the second anecdote but it could be that this anecdote was unique in that the parents were anticipating company.

The other parts of the second research question involved the possibility of the difference in attitudes between mothers or fathers depending on the gender of the child. The interaction term, reported in Table 7, for both the questionnaire and the interview data did not reach statistical significance. Therefore, there is no support for the conclusion that parental attitudes toward imaginary companions is different toward sons and daughters for fathers than it is for mothers.

The third question concerned the possibility of whether there were differences in parents' attitudes toward fantasy behavior and their attitude toward lying behavior. Data reported in Tables 8 and 9 show that, based on mean scores for the questionnaire, both fathers and mothers have less negative attitudes toward fantasy behavior than toward lying behavior ($p < .001$). This difference existed for all combinations of fathers and mothers reporting on sons and daughters.

A second approach to studying the relationship between the attitude toward fantasy and deceit (see Table 10) was to study the

Table 7
 Analysis of Variance of Fantasy Scores

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Interview data					
Child's gender	10.00	1	10.00	1.23	0.274
Parent's gender	52.900	1	52.900	6.52	0.0151
Interaction	0.400	1	0.400	0.05	0.826
Error	292.200	36	8.117		
Questionnaire data					
Child's gender	0.811	1	0.811	0.13	0.720
Parent's gender	14.015	1	14.015	2.23	0.141
Interaction	0.017	1	0.017	0.00	0.959
Error	351.340	56	6.274		

Table 8
 Attitude Toward Fantasy and Deceit Behavior
 from Questionnaire Data

Topic	Group	Fathers		Mothers	
		M	S	M	S
Fantasy	Sons	14.87	2.88	13.93	2.81
	Daughters	14.67	2.66	13.67	1.34
Deceit	Sons	9.40	2.23	9.00	1.89
	Daughters	9.53	1.85	9.20	2.81

Table 9
 Analysis of Variance of Fantasy and
 Deceit Behaviors

Source	MS	F	p
Between			
Parent	13.33	1.97	0.177
Child	0.33	0.00	0.946
Parent x child	0.00	0.00	1.000
Error	7.14		
Within			
Measure	749.99	183.35	0.000
Measure x parent	2.70	0.66	0.420
Measure x child	1.20	0.29	0.590
Measure x parent x child	0.033	0.01	0.928
Error	4.090		

Table 10
 Correlations between Fantasy and Lying Scores
 on Questionnaire Data

Group	Referent	n	r	Significance
Total		60	0.282	0.029
Fathers		30	0.139	0.464
	Sons	15	0.067	0.812
	Daughters	15	0.303	0.273
Mothers		30	0.404	0.027
	Sons	15	0.299	0.280
	Daughters	15	0.547	0.035
Parents of sons		30	0.026	0.274
Parents of daughters		30	0.386	0.034

correlation between the two ratings. There is a modest but significant correlation ($r = .282$) between attitudes toward fantasy and lying behavior. The correlation is fairly strong for mothers ($r = .40$) but not significant for fathers ($r = .14$). Fathers of sons tend to rate the behaviors more independently than do mothers of daughters. The existence of this correlation among mothers supports the view that mothers see fantasy and deceit as if they are part of the same global category of children's behavior. This equivalence may be based on the fact that both are awkward behaviors for parents. Mothers more typically are dealing with their children on a day-to-day basis and if the child tells stories that lead to embarrassment or difficulties then mothers may have in mind the actual problems created from these two types of activity and rate it differently than fathers.

The fourth and fifth research questions dealt with whether fantasizing behavior, specifically the creation of imaginary companions, is present in the child-rearing literature (see Table 11). Reference to fantasizing behavior in young children was made by 8 of the 10 authors selected for study. Parents were advised by 7 of these 8 authors that imaginative behavior in young children is a part of the normal developmental process and not to be unduly alarmed by its appearance. Authors of these seven books ranged in their advice from advocating bare tolerance to suggesting encouragement of fantasy behavior. For example, Baker and Fane (1971) state that, "We do not encourage this fantasy, but there is no need to deny it. We can remain neutral"

Table 11
Review of Child Rearing Literature

Authors	Title and Year	Fantasy Mentioned?	Imaginary Companions
		Comments	Mentioned? Comments
Arlitt, A. H.	The Child from One to Twelve, 1931.	Yes; aim is to help child use his imagination to his advantage. Makes a distinction between fantasy and deceit.	Yes; normal occurrence. Makes suggestions on how to check your child's too vivid imagination.
Ilg, F. and Ames, L.	Child Behavior, 1955.	Yes; tall tales may appear to adult as deceit, and are not well accepted. Cautions that child may not be trying to lie, just more interesting that way.	Yes; evidence of creative imagination. Advises that parents accept without undue concern.

(Continued)

Table 11 - Continued

Authors	Title and Year	Fantasy Mentioned?	Imaginary Companions
		Comments	Mentioned? Comments
Spock, B.	Baby and Child Care, 1957.	A little imagination is a good thing. If child living largely in imagination and not adjusting well with other children, especially by four, a psychiatrist should be able to find out what is lacking.	No reference
Ginott, H. G.	Between Parent and Child, 1969.	No reference	No reference
Gordon, T.	Parent Effectiveness Training, 1970.	No reference	No reference

(Continued)

Table 11 - Continued

Authors	Title and Year	Fantasy Mentioned?	Imaginary Companions
		Comments	Mentioned? Comments
Dodson, F.	How to Parent, 1970.	Yes; part of normal develop- ment.	Yes; strong need for com- panionship and a child alone much of the time more likely to create one. Nothing for parents to worry about.
Baker, K. and Fane, X.	Understanding and Guiding Young Child- ren, 1971.	Yes; active imagination leads to fears. Make clear to child what is pretend and what is real. It is fun to pretend and imagination is a precious quality to be guarded carefully.	Yes; some children have them, but do not encourage this fantasy, but do not deny, remain neutral. Treat imaginary companion with respect and wait till "it" fades from the picture.

(Continued)

Table 11 - Continued

Authors	Title and Year	Fantasy Mentioned?	Imaginary Companions	
		Comments	Mentioned?	Comments
Brazelton, T. B.	Toddlers and Parents, 1974.	Yes; part of the developmental process where child struggles with issues such as sexual identification. Exploration of imaginary side of self is an important process in growing up, as the child learns the differences between the real world and a wished for world of fantasies which he owns and controls makes distinction between fantasy and deceit.	Yes; especially important in first or only child. Imaginary friends important as a way of dealing with reality but not being too overwhelmed by it. With imaginary friend child can explore parts of his personality, parts of himself which he could never learn about otherwise. Child learns the difference between real world and wished for world of fantasies.	

(Continued)

Table 11 - Continued

Authors	Title and Year	Fantasy Mentioned? Comments	Imaginary Companions Mentioned? Comments
Kappelman, M.	Raising the Only Child, 1975.	Yes; a way for the child to learn.	Yes; child alone and to fill gap creates one. Parents not to confuse child's reality and fantasy by res- ponding to imaginary companion.
Jolly, H.	Book of Child Care, 1975.	Yes; important part of play and of learning about self and world.	Yes; child may show con- siderable ingenuity, humour and imaginations in his dealings with his imaginary friend. Be pleased that he is showing these qualities; will integrate into real life.

(p. 121). This attitude is also held by Kappelman (1975) who states "However, at no time must they [parents] allow the fantasy friend to become part of their own or the family's reality. The imaginary friend must remain part of the child's internal world" (p. 151). The rest of the authors indicate that imaginative behavior in children is normal and should be encouraged to varying degrees. Dodson (1970) asserts that, "This [imaginary companions] is nothing for parents to worry about. The playmate may be around for several years. Then he will vanish. Meanwhile, he is sort of a security device for the child who has created him" (p. 157). Jolly (1975) is somewhat more encouraging when he states, "Your child may show considerable ingenuity, humour and imagination in his dealings with his imaginary friend. Be pleased that he is showing these qualities, which will later be integrated into his 'real' life" (p. 303). Brazelton (1974) is even more encouraging when he states:

These imaginary friends become important as ways of dealing with reality but not being too overwhelmed by it With them he can explore parts of his personality, parts of himself which he could never learn about otherwise The exploration of this imaginary side of himself is an important process in growing up, as the child learns the differences between the real world and a wished-for world of fantasies which he learns to control. (p. 229)

The relationships between three sources of information; psychological studies, child rearing advice literature and parents in this study, were examined in the sixth research question. The results of

this study indicate that parents in Victoria tend to be neutral or slightly discouraging of fantasy behavior in their children. For the parenting literature Baker and Fane (1971), plus Kappelman (1975) tell parents to remain neutral to their child's imaginary companions. The attitudes held by the parents in this study while fairly close to this stance are probably somewhat more negative. Parental attitudes are even more distant from the attitudes held by authors such as Dodson (1970) and even further distant from authors such as Jolly (1975) and Brazelton (1974) who tell parents to somewhat encourage the fantasy behavior in their children. Recent research done by Singer and Singer (1977) has led them to conclude that fantasy behavior in children should be very much encouraged. They further add that fantasizing is a part of most children's lives and that there are many advantages for a child who is so encouraged. The biggest distinction in attitudes towards children having imaginary companions occurs between the parents in this study who tend to feel neutral or slightly discouraging and the findings of the psychological studies which show that this behavior should be strongly encouraged.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and ImplicationsConclusions

In summary, data from the questionnaire survey of parental attitudes toward fantasy behavior supported the conclusion that the majority of parents chose either neutral or slightly discouraging positions to situations involving children having imaginary companions. The interview survey showed a wider range of attitudes with the majority of parents choosing a neutral response. Whereas, no difference in attitudes was found according to sex of the child, the results do indicate that mothers tend to show a more favorable attitude toward fantasy behavior in their child than do fathers.

The survey of parenting advice literature led to the conclusions that parents are advised to remain neutral or to encourage this type of fantasizing behavior in children. Compared to this rather cautious advice, consistent evidence is being collected in psychological studies to support the contribution of make-believe activities to the child's development. The position held by the authors of parenting books is closer to the findings in psychological research than the attitude held by parents. The parents in this study were not unduly concerned by their child having an imaginary companion. Nevertheless, imaginary companions are treated by these parents as somewhat undesirable, and this seems significant when recent research is indicating that imaginary playmates are associated with normal development (Singer, 1976).

In effect, the group of studies that deal with emotional responses of imaginative children during make-believe play and the correlational studies of children who have been observed to be relatively high in incidents of make-believe play, appear to suggest that such play is:

. . . indeed associated with more positive affect, greater restraint and self control, at least in the experimental conditions employed. They show less likelihood of disruptive behavior in the schoolroom. In view of the kinds of concentration and self-regulatory behaviors required to establish an attitude conducive to traditional learning skills, the child who independently or with help, develops a greater capacity for imagination seems to be taking a step in the right direction. (Singer, 1976, p. 133)

It seems likely, therefore, that make-believe play should be viewed as a basic ability of all children but as recommended by Singer (1976), "one which needs some degree of additional stimulation or nurturance from the adult world in order for it to be maintained through childhood and perhaps to serve a valuable function as part of the learning process" (p. 131).

Implications

The attitudes of the parents in this study tended to range from neutral to slightly discouraging. A possible area for future research would be the effect on attitudes of parents who participated in an educational program which provided recent findings on make-believe play or allowed parents to be involved with children who were constructively using imaginative play. Further study seems needed into the types of concerns experienced by the parents who were slightly

discouraging of make-believe behavior in their children.

A further implication regarding research endeavors concerns the research measures developed in the present study.

In this study three anecdotes were used in the semi-structured interview measure. All three of the anecdotes provided examples of children playing with imaginary companions which they had played with previously. It now seems that the measure should be expanded to include an example of a child playing with an imaginary companion for the first time.

Both Singer (1976) and Sutton-Smith (1974) propose that make-believe play in children needs to be stimulated and encouraged. An area for future research would be designing such a program and determining if imaginative behavior can be stimulated and, if so, what activities are effective.

Recommendations

If make-believe play is to be encouraged in children then there is a need for programs geared toward parents, school and child care counsellors, public health nurses, plus pre- and primary school teachers where resources and opportunities to encourage fantasy play are made available. Both Singer (1977) and Sutton-Smith (1974) provide specific examples of make-believe play activities according to the age of the child which could be used in such programs. In addition, there are childrens' books available in libraries and book stores which are highly conducive to encouraging a child's imagination.

A review of children's literature with the aim of providing a list of these books seems warranted.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Are you a: mother father

Child in this school: daughter age ____
son age ____

Your occupation: _____

Marital status: _____

Directions

There are 20 statements in this questionnaire, all describing the behavior of a three- to five-year-old child. Please indicate your own personal reaction to each behavior by marking the appropriate space after each item as follows:

<i>strongly encourage</i>	<i>slightly encourage</i>	<i>no reaction</i>	<i>slightly discourage</i>	<i>strongly discourage</i>
A	B	C	D	E

Please imagine your own child behaving as described in each of the statements. If you think that you would:

strongly encourage the behavior in your child, make a check mark above the letter A

slightly encourage the behavior in your child, make a check mark above the letter B

have little or no reaction to the behavior in your child, make a check mark above the letter C

slightly discourage the behavior in your child, make a check mark above the letter D

strongly discourage the behavior in your child, make a check mark above the letter E

We ask that you use your own judgement in reacting to these behaviors. Try to indicate how you would really respond to each behavior. Do not puzzle too long over any one behavior. Follow your first impulse. Do not omit any items. Place your check mark above the letter which is closest to your reaction.

How would you react if your child. . .

- set the table for dinner without being asked by you
- rushed from the kitchen saying there is a lion in the oven
- said he or she needed to go to the bathroom while visiting your friend's, but really wanted to investigate the house
- did not try to stop his or her tricycle from rolling down the driveway onto the street
- usually carries a teddy bear and will only do something if the teddy bear agrees
- called a brother or sister a nasty name then claimed to be talking to the couch
- agreed to miss a favorite t.v. show because a brother or sister wanted to watch something else

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

.../2

Questionnaire, cont.

-2-

8. threw a ball in the living room and knocked over a plant
9. reminded you while grocery shopping not to forget carrots for an imaginary pet rabbit
10. after playing with toys in the living room remembered to put them away in the toy box
11. demanded to know who broke all the crayons, when he or she is the only one to use them
12. shoved forks down the heating ducts
13. ate all the cookies on the table, then asked for more because he or she did not get any
14. played quietly in bedroom after being told that you were not feeling well
15. put blue food coloring in the aquarium
16. carried on a conversation with an imaginary friend over a toy telephone
17. told you a toy which had actually been taken, had been given to him or her
18. remembered to change from good shoes to play boots before going outside
19. gave friends a whole bag of your favorite cookies
20. refused to sit at the table for dinner unless a place is set for imaginary friend

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

A	B	C	D	E
---	---	---	---	---

APPENDIX B

CHANGES MADE ON PILOT STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic data: "Number of parents at home" was changed to read "Marital status," to avoid confusion as to whether the question meant the child's grandparents or parents

Instructions: "your own personal reaction" was underlined for more emphasis

"correct space" was changed to read "appropriate space" to improve the wording

"when making your response please be as frank as possible in using your own judgement to react to these behaviors" was changed to read "we ask that you use your own judgement in reacting to these behaviors," to improve clarity

Pilot Study: Inventory of Child Behaviors Measure

"work fast" was deleted as it seemed redundant

"do not leave any out" was changed to read "do not omit any items," to improve clarity

"closest" was underlined to emphasize that they may not be completely certain about their response

Pilot Study Item 2:

"rushes" was changed to read "rushed" to put in the past tense

Pilot Study Item 3:

"told all the neighbours that his father turned into a werewolf during the full moon" was replaced with "said he or she needed to go to the bathroom while visiting your friend's but really wanted to investigate the house," as not a clear example of deceitful behavior and was confused with fantasy behavior

Pilot Study Item 4:

"or her" was added to maintain equality of the sexes

Pilot Study Item 6:

"told you his clothes were all ripped and dirty because he had been attacked by a ferocious tiger" was replaced with "called a brother or sister a nasty name then claimed to be talking to the couch" as not a clear example of deceitful behavior and was confused with fantasy behavior

Pilot Study Item 9:

"Remains" changed to read "remained" to put in past tense

Pilot Study Item 11:

"His" changed to read "all the" and "or she" added to maintain equality of the sexes

Pilot Study Item 13:

"his and his sister's" changed to read "all the" and "or she" added to maintain equality of the sexes

Pilot Study Item 14:

"His bedroom" changed to read "bedroom" and "you told him" changed to read "being told that" to maintain equality of the sexes

Pilot Study Item 16:

"Carries" was changed to read "carried" to put in past tense

"over a toy telephone with an imaginary friend" changed to read "with an imaginary friend over a toy telephone" to improve clarity

Pilot Study Item 17:

"he had actually found" changed to read "which had actually been taken" to strengthen evidence of deceitful behavior

Pilot Study Item 19:

"gave his friends a whole box of your favorite sweets" changed to read "gave friends a whole bag of your favorite cookies," to maintain equality of the sexes

APPENDIX C

Responses of Pilot Group Subjects to Fantasy Items on Test
and Retest Administrations One Month Apart

Subjects	Fantasy Items									
	Item 1		Item 2		Item 3		Item 4		Item 5	
	Time		Time		Time		Time		Time	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
1	e ^a	e	d	d	n	n	e	e	d	d
2	e	e	d	d	n	n	n	n	d	d
3	n	n	n	d	n	n	n	d	n	e
4	d	n	d	d	d	d	n	n	d	d
5	d	n	d	d	e	e	e	e	d	d
6	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	d
7	n	n	n	n	n	d	n	e	d	d
8	d	d	n	d	e	n	e	e	n	d
9	n	n	n	n	n	e	n	e	n	n
10	d	d	d	d	e	e	e	e	d	n
11	d	n	d	n	n	n	e	e	n	n
12	e	e	d	n	n	d	n	n	n	n

^a e = encourage n = neutral d = discourage

APPENDIX D

Responses of Pilot Group Subjects to Deceit Items on
Test and Retest Administrations One Month Apart

Subjects	Deceit Items									
	Item 1		Item 2		Item 3		Item 4		Item 5	
	Time		Time		Time		Time		Time	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
1	d ^a	d	d	d	n	n	n	n	d	d
2	d	d	d	d	n	n	n	n	d	d
3	d	d	d	d	n	d	d	d	d	d
4	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d
5	n	n	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d
6	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d
7	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	n	d	d
8	e	d	d	n	d	n	d	d	e	e
9	n	e	d	d	n	d	d	d	d	d
10	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d
11	n	n	d	d	d	n	d	d	d	d
12	n	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d

^a e = encourage n = neutral d = discourage

APPENDIX E

THREE ANECDOTES USED IN SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW MEASURE

Anecdote No. 1

Three-year-old Rupert refuses to sit down and eat Thanksgiving dinner unless a place is set for him imaginary friend "Tarnop." Rupert does not understand why mother does not set Tarnop's place like she does at the other meals. Mother tries to explain that with all the relatives coming to dinner there just is not enough room at the table. Rupert keeps saying that Tarnop is feeling left out and hurt. Finally, Rupert flatly states that he will not eat at the table unless Tarnop is going to be given a place.

Questions:

1. Imagine that this is your child and describe what you would say or do.
2. How would you feel if your child played with an imaginary friend?

Anecdote No. 2

Father and his 4-year-old son David are at the playground. After playing on the slide and teeter-totter father offers to push David on the swing. Father wants David to sit on the child's swing so David is safe. David refuses and says that he wants to play on the bigger swings so there is room for his imaginary friend to sit beside him.

Question:

Imagine that this is your child and describe what you would say or do.

Anecdote No. 3

Four-year-old Meagan asks her mother to play house. Mother is doing the ironing and tells Meagan to go and play with her dolls. Meagan runs outside into her backyard. A little later mother opens the window to check on Meagan. Mother sees that Meagan is once again playing and singing with her imaginary playmate.

Questions:

1. Imagine that this is your child and describe what you would say or do.
2. What do you think is the purpose served by a child having an imaginary companion?

APPENDIX F

April, 1978

Dear Mother and/or Father:

Thanks to the cooperation of Mrs. Burnham, I am able to ask for your assistance in a study that I am carrying out. This is a study to determine how parents feel about some of the behaviors of children that are between the ages of three to five years old. I am doing this study as part of my Master's degree at the University of Victoria in the Faculty of Education.

Attached to this letter are two questionnaires; one for mother and one for father. It should take less than ten minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire. It is important that you complete it independently of one another since each of you probably have your own views. Instructions are provided on the first page.

I am not asking for names and all submissions will be treated in a confidential way. Although receiving as many completed questionnaires as possible is essential for the success of my study, I understand that you may feel uncomfortable in sharing this information with me. If this is true in your case, I will understand if you should choose not to complete it.

Please have your child return the completed questionnaire within one week of bringing it home. I thank you for your cooperation and your assistance. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 384-8450.

Ms. Mackenzie Brooks

Ms. Mackenzie Brooks

APPENDIX G

April, 1978

Dear Mother and Father:

Thanks to the cooperation of Mrs. Burnham, I am able to ask for your assistance in a study that I am carrying out. This is a study to determine how parents feel about some of the behaviors of children that are between the ages of three to five years old. I am doing this study as part of my Master's Degree at the University of Victoria in the Faculty of Education.

I would like to meet with both mother and father, separately, for an interview that will take less than ten minutes each. I will contact you and arrange a time that is convenient for both of you. It is important that I have an interview with each of you independently of one another since each of you probably have your own views. Both interviews, however, can be done consecutively.

I will treat all your responses in a confidential manner. While this study is important to me, I am aware that some people may not feel comfortable being interviewed. If this is how you feel, I will understand if you should choose not to be interviewed.

Please have your child return this form letter within two days of bringing it home. Please write clearly your name and phone number in the space provided below. I will contact you to set up a time.

I thank you for your cooperation and your assistance.

Ms. Mackenzie Brooks

Ms. Mackenzie Brooks

Name _____

Phone _____

VITA

Surname: BROOKS

Given Names: MACKENZIE

Place of Birth: ORILLIA, ONTARIO, CANADA

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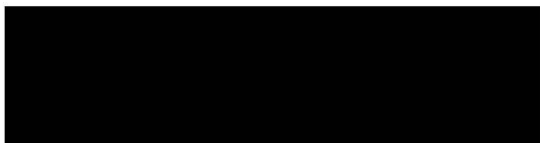
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Title of Thesis:

PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN
HAVING IMAGINARY COMPANIONS

Author



Mackenzie Brooks

April, 1979