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**PARENTAL INSIGHTS AND
ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN'S
IMAGINARY COMPANIONS**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for a degree of
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at Massey University

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"How few would believe that from sources purely imaginary such happiness could be derived!"

Charlotte Bronte's diary.

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to determine parental attitudes and conceptualisations of the function of imaginary companions. Fourteen parents with children who have imaginary companions and sixteen parents whose children do not have imaginary companions, were given one of two questionnaires to complete. The posted questionnaires differed only in regard to those questions directly related to personal experience. Parents in both groups described their children similarly in regard to family composition, competency levels, social activities and behaviour problems. Parents of children with imaginary companions indicated that not all companion's play the same role or function in their creators life. Parental attitudes toward imaginary companions were predominantly negative regardless of whether their child had had an imaginary companion. Attitudes varied in regard to, the age of the child, the length of time they had the companion, the perceived depth of fantasy and the function that the companion served.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Between the ages of 2 1/2 and 9 many children engage in long-term interaction with one or more fictional creatures - imaginary companions. Imaginary companions have two defining characteristics. Firstly they exist only in the mind of their creator; secondly they can be distinguished from simple imaginative play in regard to their temporal and spatial qualities, which restrict imaginary companions to those that last across time and in more than one place.

Despite existing only in the imagination of their creators imaginary companions do have a basis in reality. It was Aristotle who first observed that there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses, and so it is with the imagination. That is, we draw on our previous experiences to create the images that constitute the imagination and consequently imaginary companions. Heinz Herska, a Swiss anthropologist, applies this perspective to children's play, stating that in play children's real experiences become the stimulants for what he calls the imaginative consciousness. Herska explains that "the dialogical union of both forms of consciousness prevents imaginative consciousness from being severed from reality" (cited Singer & Singer, 1992, p. 209).

The premise that imaginative behaviour is rooted in reality is illustrated by anecdotal information that demonstrates that children often draw their inspiration for their imaginary companions from television or story characters or indeed real people. For example Newson and Newson (1976) tell of a boy whose imaginary companion is "just like Peter Pan". This work is written from this perspective, at the same time

however it is understood that others view this differently and consequently their attitudes are effected.

Hilgard (1977) concurs with Herska's view stating that the substance of the imagination is made up "of fragments from the past no matter how bizarre the combinations or distortions" (p.100). However, Hilgard goes on to make the comparison between the imagination and hallucinations, such a comparison may contribute to the negativity often ascribed to imaginary companions, rather than illustrating their normality.

Imaginativeness, especially that which does not physically aid in the production of something, such as having an imaginary companion, is viewed by much of society as undesirable. Much of society, unlike Herska and Hilgard, views imaginative behaviour as representing a shift away from reality. This view has been expressed clearly in the past by such respected theorists as Maria Montessori. Montessori believed that fantasy had no basis in reality and as such only succeeded in divorcing the mind "from its normal function of developing the intellect" (cited Standing, 1984; p. 261).

Modern theorists have altered their view of imaginativeness, seeing it as a vital ingredient in healthy development, but whether this change has been reflected in public opinion has yet to be seen. Pearse (1992) puts great emphasis on the significance of the imagination in the development of the child, stating that "nature has not programmed error into the genetic system and that the child's preoccupation with fantasy and imagination is vital to development" (p. 117). Woolley and Phelps (1994) take an interesting view of children's imaginativeness, arguing that holding "magical beliefs" is not unique to childhood. They maintain that the traditional view that children become more rational and less credulous with age can be countered by the view that "children and adults both engage in seemingly magical thinking; the degree to

which they do so depends on the domain, and in part on their perception of the costs and benefits of doing so in the particular situation in which they find themselves" (1994, p. 65). Such a view is perhaps a good way to normalise having an imaginary companion.

Beyond the obvious function of a playmate, there are, it appears, other reasons for a child to create an imaginary companion. Such reasons or functions may shed some light on the question of whether imaginary companions are positive or negative additions to children's lives. From the literature there emerge three general classifications into which theories pertaining to why children create imaginary companions fit, these are psychoanalytic, ecological and developmental. Each is similar in that they view imaginary companions as fulfilling a need or function, however, they differ either by the way in which they fulfil that function or by what that function or need is.

The most widely offered explanation of why children have imaginary companions is that which states that imaginary companions aid the development of self-consciousness in the young child. This view originated from psychoanalytic theory, and in recent years has had little attention from the main theorists in this area. The egocentric child that relentlessly looks for the fulfilment of his or her most basic needs eventually according to Erikson (1963), must weather the crisis of "autonomy versus shame and doubt". The result of the child's successful solution of this crisis is the ability to distinguish between "I" and "you" - that is the first step toward self-consciousness. Similarly Piaget (1957) explains that once a child achieves the intellectual level of concrete operations it is possible to ascribe "equivalent personal value" to others, thus moving away from the egocentric social interactions of the preoperational phase. According to Erikson and Piaget, then, the young child is capable of, from a psychological and intellectual perspective, distinguishing between themselves and

others. The way in which the child achieves this transition is not made clear in Erikson's and Piaget's work. However, according to some theorists children develop self-consciousness through the use of an imaginary companion.

Psychoanalysis provides the most comprehensive investigation of this view. The most recently proposed psychoanalytic theory pertaining to imaginary companions was proposed by Bruce Klien in 1985 and is somewhat more complex than those that came before. Central to his approach is the concept of splitting. Splitting involves an individual separating personal characteristics and behaviours which they, or society, consider undesirable, from their desirable and acceptable side, thus polarising rather than integrating aspects of their personality (Klein, 1985).

The child with an imaginary companion generally intrajects the good side and projects the bad, although there are cases where the opposite happens. Thus the imaginary companion is the embodiment of either a positive or negative aspect of the child's personality. Such splitting is evident when children use their imaginary companion as a scapegoat, blaming any of their wrong doing on their naughty friend. Alternatively when the child intrajects the bad feelings and traits, they often look to their good companion to "straighten them out" (Klein, 1985).

From a developmental standpoint the psychoanalysts view splitting as a developmental stage that precedes the major developmental task of separating self from object relations. This involves the child learning to differentiate between themselves and others, before finally integrating their good self/bad self split (Klein, 1985). Repression takes over the role that splitting had previously played, by repressing unacceptable impulses, instead of allowing them into consciousness. Klein (1985) explains that this transition is not an easy one and that the imaginary companion aids this change. He considers it as "not only normal, but also necessary for ego

development to create the subjective/objective world where object constancy and narcissistic expansion are enriched" (p.281).

Selma Fraiberg's book "The Magic Years" offers some of the most insightful psychoanalytic writing on this topic. Her views are more concrete than Klein's and tend to rely more on observed behaviour rather than mental process. Fraiberg (1959) highlights four important functions of the imaginary companion, and in particular the scapegoat. Firstly, the child tries to avoid the criticism of adults by blaming his/her faults on someone else - the imaginary companion. Secondly, the child avoids accepting this naughty/bad side as a characteristic of him/herself, thus maintaining self love. Thirdly, by externalising his/her negative characteristics the child is able to remove them out of the abstract arena of his/her mind and thus creates "an objective opponent with whom he can more easily do battle." (144). The battle she talks of involves the child who takes on the role of a parent in rebuking his/her companion for its naughty behaviour, however as the companion is actually an extension of themselves, the rebuke is thus a form of self criticism. Self criticism she explains is the first major step toward impulse control and the development of a conscience. Lastly, the imaginary companion serves to aid the integration of the child's good and bad side, so that the child can accept his/her bad side and take responsibility for their actions.

From a different and perhaps unexpected quarter comes another theorist who believes imaginary companions aid the development of self-consciousness. The philosopher George Herbert Mead wrote in 1934 that all children in one form or another had an imaginary companion as they are essential to the development of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, he said, requires reflexivity so that the child is able to be an object in his or her own experience. This reflexivity relies on the child's ability to be able to structure the various roles of others into an organised structured whole. For example he explains that to attempt any co-operative task the child must have an understanding

of the role of others, their own role, and their role in relation to that of the others, so that the group can function effectively as a whole (1934). The child with an imaginary companion is calling out in themselves those responses which might be elicited in other people, thus using the companion to practice differentiating their roles and those of others. This view is similar to that of Bretherton (1989) who stated that children that engaged in pretence have to take on multiple roles learning a "surprisingly sophisticated repertoire of stage management devices" (p.10).

A number of developmentalists view imaginary companions as important in healthy childhood development, included in this is the development of self-consciousness. Singer and Singer (1990) who have worked widely in this area believe that imaginary companions and the imagination in general can be used in the absence of peers to master social skills. Newson and Newson (1976) explain "in their main role as playmate, however, they have particular virtues of patience and amiability which can ease the child very gradually into the social relationships which eventually have to be worked out on a reality level with his less tolerant peers" (p.154-155). Manosevitz, Prentice and Wilson (1973) claim that although most children will learn such skills, they will do so at a much slower rate than those who have imaginary companions. Supporting research indicates that children with imaginary companions are less competent, and may have fewer peers as only and eldest children are over represented among children with imaginary companions. Harter and Choa (1992) have also found evidence to suggest that children's imaginary companions increase a child's competence by one of two means, firstly by creating an "ego ideal" to which the child aspires, or secondly by creating an incompetent companion, which makes them feel superior and confident in comparison (p. 360). In this way the child not only learns social skills but also gains self-esteem and self confidence in that they can either enlist the help of their imaginary companion or can feel confident in the knowledge that at

least they are smarter than their companion. This creates an atmosphere that is conducive to the acquisition of cognitive skills as well.

Developmentalists essentially view imaginary companions as providing a way of ensuring normal social development which, if not accomplished via an imaginary companion, would be accomplished through some other means. In contrast those that take an ecological viewpoint stress that imaginary companions are the result of environmental deficiencies and are the child's attempt to compensate for them. Unlike the developmental view, the ecological one is that the child utilises their imaginary companion to cope with unexpected hurdles in the form of environmental deficiencies that are not common to all children. This theory thus makes it clear why not all children have such companions. Such deficiencies include a lack of social interaction causing loneliness, a lack of affection or positive attention, and insufficient mental stimulation. This view proposes that imaginary companions are "healthy reactions to an unhealthy situation" (Bettleheim, cited Pines, 1978, p. 42), thus suggesting that by manipulating the child's environment the companion may be rendered unnecessary.

This view has not received much attention, this may be due to its negative nature and tendency to blame the child's parents. This aside there is some supporting evidence. The research which attests to only and eldest children being over represented in studies of children with imaginary companions was earlier used to support the view that imaginary companions are a tool used to develop social skills. However, this may also be construed to mean that such children are deprived in that they have limited social interaction and are thus lonely. Manosevitz et al (1973) have found support for this interpretation as their study indicates that children with imaginary companions are more likely to initiate play while also participating in more activities with their families, than children without imaginary companions.

One of the more obscure theories proposed has come from Julian Jaynes who wrote "The origins of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind.". Jaynes proposed in his book that the ancient Greeks did not have consciousness as we know it today, but instead were directed by hallucinated voices of the Gods. The bicameral mind is one where behaviour is governed not by conscious thought but by the direction of the Gods via the hallucination in the wernics region of the brain. Then, over time, the conscious mind took over the role of the hallucinated Gods, rendering the bicameral mind unused in the modern mind, bar several exceptions.

One such exception according to Jaynes is the imaginary companion. Jaynes explains his theory of imaginary companions in children as "my thinking here is that by some innate or environmental predisposition to have imaginary companions, the neurological structure of the general bicameral paradigm is exercised." (1976, p.397). That is to say the child's companion is hallucinated in much the same way as the Greeks hallucinated their God's.

He also claims that hypnosis engages the bicameral mind which allows for a more absolute control over behaviour than is possible with consciousness. On the basis of this claim he suggests that people that have had imaginary companion should thus be more susceptible to hypnosis in later life. He goes on to state that research does indeed indicate that those who have had imaginary companions are easier to hypnotise. He does not cite the research which has led to this conclusion. It is accepted by other researchers that there is a link between imagination and hypnosis. However as Hilgard (1977) explains "the role of imagination in hypnosis apparently requires some ability to make use of the images that are present in some special manner if imagery ability is to lead to hypnotisability" (p. 100). Thus, it is not enough to be effective at using the imagination: to be readily hypnotised the individual must also have the ability to utilise that skill in a certain, thus far undetermined way.

Although somewhat obscure in nature Jaynes theory does go some way to explaining the mechanism which allows children to have imaginary companions. However, it does not address the question of what function they serve for those children that have them, nor does it provide an answer as to why not all children adopt imaginary companions.

Researchers and theorists alike have overwhelmingly come to the conclusion that children with imaginary companions are better off for the experience (e.g. Taylor, Cartwright & Carlson 1993; Singer & Singer 1990; Harter & Choa 1992; and Klien 1985). However, as stated earlier, this has not translated into positive attitudes in parents as indicated by the only two studies which have looked at parents attitudes. Manosevitz et al. (1973) conducted a study in which they questioned parents on all aspects of imaginary companions, only briefly touching on the subject of attitudes toward imaginary companions. In their study "the attitudes of the 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" (1973, p. 76). While 50% of parents encouraged the imaginary companion, 43% ignored it and 7% discouraged it. Although these results are not entirely negative the manner in which the questions were asked may have had some influence on parents ability to distinguish encouraging behaviour from discouraging behaviour. Secondly, a particular attitude does not necessarily translate into a corresponding behaviour.

The other more comprehensive study on parental attitudes toward imaginary companions was carried out by Brooks and Knowles (1982). They set out to find how having an imaginary companion compared to other childhood behaviours, while also establishing how parents thought the issue should be approached, that is with

encouragement, neutrality etc. They found that in comparison to other behaviours imaginary companions were seen in a neutral manner. They concluded that "provision for constructive make-believe play in the child's life seems to be restricted by the attitude held most typically by the parents in our study". They go on to say that the reasons for this concern are "worthy of exploration"(1982, p. 32) and from this grew one of the major aims of the current study.

Personal experience as a general rule tends to influence the attitudes we hold on those experiences, thus it may be that parents whose children have not had imaginary companions may well hold different views than parents that have experienced them in their own children. It is the aim of this study to make such a comparison not only in terms of attitudes but also in terms of their respective conceptualisations of the functions they perform, as no other study has made such an attempt.

The research into the function of imaginary companions has tended to assume that all imaginary companions perform the same role in their creators lives. This assumption denies all evidence that would suggest that children create imaginary companions for a variety of reasons. Thus it is another aim of this study to establish what, if anything, parents feel is the function of their child's imaginary companion is. The research done thus far has essentially focused on one of four functions, those being, a scapegoat goat as described by Selma Fraiberg (1959), a teacher as proposed by Harter and Choa (1992), a guardian angel or protector as Singer and Singer (1990) outlined, and lastly as someone to look after as Harter and Choa (1992) illustrated as an alternative to a teacher. These four functions will all be incorporated in the study, making it a deductive rather than inductive approach to the question of function.

The literature which relates to imaginary companions in regard to incidence, characteristics, characteristics of their creators, and parental response will be outlined

in the next section. The following section will address the main aspects of investigation this study will undertake, before the outline of how it was undertaken is presented, along with the respective findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Svendsen (1934) defined imaginary companions as "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" (p.988). Newson and Newson (1976) defined imaginary companions either human or animal on the basis of two criteria, firstly that it must reoccur in the child's imagination from day to day, and secondly it "must transcend any original factual basis"(153).

In comparison Brooks and Knowles (1982), were less specific in their definition "any imaginary character acknowledged by the child, including a person, an animal or object, which the child interacts with repeatedly" (p.26). Brookes and Knowles definition allows for toys or stuffed animals to be considered imaginary companions if the child interacts with them as if they were a stable personality, other researchers such as Mauro (1991, cited Taylor et al., 1993) and, Singer and Singer (1990) have taken a similar approach in defining the imaginary companion.

The very nature of the topic of imaginary companions has meant that a diverse range of techniques have been employed to analyse its many aspects. Early investigations into imaginary companions tended to be empirical in nature focusing on the demographic characteristics of children with imaginary companions and the characteristics of their companions. Those studies which have attempted to answer questions concerning the function of imaginary companions, have tended to utilise the

case study (Bach, 1971; Benson & Pryor, 1973; Klien, 1985; Myers, 1976; Nagera, 1969). Generally speaking these studies have been based on psychoanalytic theory, whereas the more recent research (Brooks & Knowles, 1985; Harter & Chao, 1992; Taylor, Cartwright & Carlson, 1992), which has employed both questionnaires and interviews, has not.

Research into various aspects of children's imaginary companions will invariably consider the prevalence of this phenomena in today's society. However, as studies generally have different subject bases their comparability is debatable, as is the question of which denotes the correct incidence. Incidence rates that are gained via the children themselves are the most common however retrospective studies of and studies involving parents are also prevalent. Nagera (1969) and, Brooks and Knowles (1982) both suggest that the variance in the incident rates of imaginary companions may be due to the varying definitions these studies have employed.

Singer and Singers (1990), study which is one of the most recent involving children as subjects found that 65% of pre-school children had imaginary companions. While more moderate estimates suggest that 30% of children between the ages of 3 and 10 engage in this form of fantasy play (Schaeffer, 1969).

The majority of studies using child subjects indicate an incidence of somewhere between 30% and 65% as found in each of these respective studies. Harriman (1937, cited Bender & Vogel, 1941) estimates that a third of all children between the ages of 3 and 9 have or have had an imaginary companion. Singer (1973), study of 141 three and four year old, found that 61% of the children had imaginary friends, while Stone and Church (1973, cited Brooks and Knowles, 1982), claimed a 50% incidence.

Hurlock and Burnstein (1932) conducted a study in which they asked adults to recall their childhood experiences involving imaginary playmates. The results of their study indicated that 31% of women recalled having imaginary playmates, while 23% of the male respondents could say the same.

Ames and Learned reported in 1946, that 45 of the 210 children (or 21%) examined in their study, "gave evidence of having imaginary companions" (p.151). However this information was gained via the children's parents indicating that this figure may be conservative.

Alternatively there are some theorist that believe that all children have an imaginary companion in some form or other during their childhood (Kirkpatrick, 1929 cited Nagera, 1969; Mead, 1934). Such a finding has not been made empirically thus far, however, the possibility is there if a very broad definition is employed.

The research which focuses on incidence rates tends to also consider other factors such as the characteristics of the children who have imaginary companions. Nagera (1969) observed that imaginary companions can most commonly appear in children's lives between the ages of two and a half and three years of age, and nine and a half to ten years of age, with the majority being found in the first age range. Evidence to date generally fits into Nagera's age ranges, however an earlier study by Hurlock and Burnstein (1932) produced vastly different results. Hurlock et al. (1932) suggests that girls and boys had different ages of onset, for girls it was usually between the ages of five and seven while for boys it was between the ages of seven and ten. Nagera notes that this discrepancy may have resulted from the different way the two studies were carried out, with Hurlock et al.'s being a retrospective study, which consequently had some errors resulting from incorrect recall information.

Newson and Newson's (1968) longitudinal study found that of the children in their study 22% had imaginary companions at age four while three years later (Newson and Newson, 1976) when the children were seven only 3% had an active imaginary companion.

Ames and Learned's (1946) study involved children aged between 2 and 10, and considered the link between age and the onset of imaginary companions. They found that children with animal imaginary companions were chiefly aged between 2 1/2 and 3 1/2 years of age when the companion first appeared, while those with imaginary human companions were aged between 3 and 3 1/2 years of age when their companion first appeared, the average duration of the companion's existence was 6 to 12 months.

Children who believe in imaginary companions are also most often first born or only children (Manosevitz, Prentice & Wilson, 1973). Indeed Ames and Learned (1946) study revealed that nearly half of the children in their study were only children, while the same number only had one sibling. Singer (1973) hypothesizes that "the child with many real playmates is less likely to invent an imaginary one" (p.62). Singers study of children's imaginative play indeed revealed that there was a trend toward a greater frequency of only children in the high-fantasy group.

There are conflicting reports as to whether girls or boys most often participate in such fantasy play, with Svendsen (1932) arguing that it was a predominantly male activity while Ames and Learned (1946) report several years later that "In general there is agreement in the literature that more girls than boys experience these phenomena" (p.149). Bender and Vogel's (1941) study would fit this latter category, with girls describing imaginary companions more often than boys.

Although there is some clinical research which links imaginary companions in childhood with neurosis in adulthood, most research indicates that it is a positive developmental phase. Mauro (1991, cited Taylor et al., 1993), found that children without imaginary companions were less sociable, shy and had fewer real friends than children who had imaginary companions. Further more evidence suggests that children who entertain imaginary companions may be more creative in later life (Schaefer, 1969; Manosevitz et al., 1977 cited Taylor et al., 1993). Nagera (1978) explains that because imaginary companions require a certain level of language skills and resourcefulness, children with imaginary companions can be considered creative and intellectually talented.

Singer's (1973) study of children with imaginary companions concluded that they were less aggressive and more co-operative; they smiled more; they showed a greater ability to concentrate; they were seldom bored; and their language was richer and more advanced, especially among the boys. Manosevitz, Prentice and Wilson, (1973) similarly found that boys with imaginary companions were better able to converse with adults, than those boys without imaginary companions.

Researchers have also considered whether there is any correlation between IQ. scores and whether or not a child has an imaginary companion. Several early studies have concluded that children with imaginary companions have higher IQ. scores than those who do not (Bender & Vogel, 1941; Jersild, Markey & Jersild, 1933 cited Manosevitz, Fling & Prentice, 1977; Svendson, 1934). However there have been several more recent studies which have found no significant difference between the two groups (Bairdain, 1959 cited Manosevitz et. al., 1977; Singer, 1990). Manosevitz et al. (1977) have criticised the above studies for having "methodological deficiencies" (p.74), which have made it impossible to determine whether or not there is a correlation between imaginary companions and intelligence. While Manosevitz et al

(1977) themselves concluded that, "The assumption often made in the literature that children who have had imaginary companions are more intelligent than those who have not was not supported by the data in this research" (p.76-77).

The characteristics of the imaginary companions themselves have also been put under the microscope in several studies. Manosevitz, Prentice, and Wilson's (1973), study found that boys more often had male imaginary companions. Pines (1978) concurred with this finding stating that "Girls imaginary companions may be either male or female while boys almost invariably choose male characters" (p.41). However she qualifies this statement by saying that younger children generally have unisex or sexless companions. However an earlier study contradicts these findings, stating that the majority of subjects had playmates of both sexes, while the males that only had one companion were more likely to have a female companion than a male (Ames & Learned, 1946). On the other hand, Bender and Vogel (1941) found that girls unlike boys were more likely to have companions of the opposite sex.

Jalonga (1984) reports that if children have human companions they generally come from different backgrounds or cultures than the child. She states that it is common for children to animate toys, animals and characters on TV. drawing them into their fantasy world. Jalanga (1984) also reports that young children who have unisex companions are likely to name their companions with untraditional, fantasy names. Taylor et al.'s, (1993) study concurs with Jalanga, as many of the children in their study had fantasy names such as Bla-Bla and Thunder.

Taylor et al.'s, (1993) study revealed that multiple companions are not uncommon with 50% of their small subject base having more than one companion. While in Ames and Learned's (1946) study, approximately 60% of subjects had more than one companion.

Ames and Learned (1946) contend that a trend appeared in their study concerning the age of companions. Young children appear to prefer older companions, while later they take on contemporary companions till at last they befriend companions younger than them selves. However this trend was not evident in Taylor et al.'s, (1993) study as the age of the subjects would have indicated that their subjects would mostly have companions younger than themselves, however this was not the case, as the majority had companions older than themselves.

The size of children's imaginary companions appears to vary both over time for each child and for different children (Taylor et al., 1993). However most children believed their companion to be either the same size as themselves or smaller.

The majority of research on imaginary companions has tended to focus on the characteristics of children that have imaginary companions and on the characteristics of the companions themselves. However, there are a growing number of studies which consider the role parents play in the utilisation of imaginary companions by their children, as well as, the role the companions themselves in the children's lives.

Taylor et al., (1993) reported a 25% incidence of parental ignorance of their children's imaginary companions. Such ignorance is to be expected according to other research which indicates about a third of parents are unaware that their children have such companions (Schmechal, 1975 cited Taylor et al., 1993). Similarly Singer (1973) found that while 65% of their child subjects reported having imaginary companions, only 55% of their parents could verify the companion's existence.

The way in which parents approach their children's imaginary companion has received very little attention despite the fact that the research which has been done indicates that

parents attitudes influence the behaviour of their children. Parental attitudes toward the imaginary companions of their children, may directly effect how much the children are willing to expose of their imaginary companions (Jalonga, 1984). It would appear that not all parents view imaginary companions as a positive influence on their children. One study revealed that 50% of parents encouraged the behaviour, 43% ignored it and the remainder discouraged it (Manosevitz, Prentice & Wilson, 1973 cited Brookes & Knowles, 1982). However it can be assumed that this number includes only those parents who know their children have companions, thus the percentage of ignored behaviour should perhaps be considerably higher.

Brooks and Knowles (1982) expressed that their study indicated "Parents ... did not hold very positive attitudes toward children's playing with imaginary companions" (p.29). With 36% of parents either wishing to strongly discourage or discourage behaviour involving an imaginary companion, and 42% being neutral to the activity. This study also indicated a difference in the pattern of ratings between mothers and fathers. For fathers there was no link between the way they would respond to an imaginary companion and deceit in their child. However mothers seemed to place deceit and imaginary companions in the same broad category, reacting in similar ways to both behaviours.

Contrary to Brooks and Knowles (1982) conclusion, Svendson (1934) found that in only 1 of 40 cases did parents express alarm at their child having an imaginary companion. However, the absence of worry does not necessarily translate into positive or encouraging behaviour on behalf parents.

Although not all parents it would appear are secure with the fact that their children have imaginary companions, an understanding of the reasons for the existence of the companion may help ease their mind. Svendson (1934) wrote "the experience (of

having an imaginary companion) is less likely to be regarded as harmful by those who have witnessed it in the case of their own children than when it is a phenomenon that has never been encountered" (p.992). Parental ambivalence toward imaginary companions has made research into the function and role of imaginary companions necessary so that parents may be equipped with the knowledge of how to respond to such companions in their children's lives. Susan Harter and Christine Chao are two researchers who have endeavoured to elucidate the mystery of why children need or create these companions. They concentrated on issues of competency, and from the results concluded that "Boys created imaginary friends that were judged to be far more competent than the friends created by girls" (1992, p.357). Several inferences derived from this finding as to the function of these companions. Firstly, the way in which boys and girls utilise imaginary companions is different, Harter and Chao's study indicates that boys create ego ideals to which they aspire, while girls create companions who need and rely on them. Secondly, children who have imaginary companions tend to be less competent in reality than their peers (Harter & Chao, 1992), suggesting that their companions help them cope with a feeling of inadequacy, thereby increasing their confidence and consequently their competence.

Manosevitz, Prentice and Wilson are another group of researchers who have tackled the question of what the function of imaginary companions is in their creators' lives. Manosevitz et. al. (1973) focused on the role family structure played in predicting whether or not a child would create an imaginary companion. As earlier indicated they found that 61% of subjects in their study had no siblings when the companion first appeared. From this result they deduced that, "One of the functions of the imaginary companion is to partially alleviate the loneliness of a child who has no siblings and generally lives in an adult-oriented social milieu during a crucial period of childhood socialisation and language development" (p.78). Earlier research has also alluded to simple companionship as being a motive for creation of an imaginary companion

(Ames & Learned, 1946; Svendsen, 1934), however Manosevitz et. al. have provided the most in-depth analysis to date.

Recent research has also considered in simple terms whether or not children with imaginary companions are aware that their companions are indeed imaginary. The majority of research conducted in this area has not specifically looked at imaginary companions but instead has taken a general approach to the issue of children's ability to distinguish between pretence and reality. Taylor and Howell (1973) concluded that the ability to distinguish fantasy from reality was directly related to age, with five year old children being much more proficient than three year old children. Another related variable is the nature of the fantasy item, if the fantasy has an emotional content then it will effect the child's ability to distinguish as unreal (Samual & Taylor, 1994). Samuel and Taylor (1994) conclude that "when the child feels afraid of the entity they will be motivated to think of the entity as fantasy" (425).

Svendson (1934) argues that imaginary companions are accompanied by strong visual imagery. Likewise Harrey (1918 cited Svendson, 1934) believes that the imaginary companion is a visual or auditory idea that becomes as vivid and as real as an entity external to the imagination, but that the child nevertheless always recognises its unreality.

Taylor, Cartwright and Carlson (1993) conducted a study that addressed the issue of children's ability to recognise their companion as imaginary. The results of their study were that firstly, that children with imaginary companions are just as able as children without imaginary companions to distinguish between real and pretend objects. They concluded that "it is possible that children who are adept at fantasy have experiences that help them master the relationship between mental life and the real world" (285).

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRESENT STUDY

The focus of this study is parental attitudes and personal theories as to why children have imaginary companions. The lack of research in this area means that often it is difficult to know the right questions to ask, in this regard building on the work which has already been done, as well as doing some pre-study interviewing of both parents of children with imaginary companions and adults who have had companions in their childhood, has proved invaluable. From these sources we have established a set of constructs and their related variables from which to build hypotheses and in turn a questionnaire. The use of two subject groups, respondents whose children have had imaginary companions (IC group) and respondents whose children have not had imaginary companions (NIC group), means the type of investigation employed can be varied, from between groups, to between subjects in each group, to within subjects.

AGE

Studies indicate that children with imaginary companions are usually aged between 2 1/2 and 3 years of age when their imaginary companion first appears (Nagera, 1967; Ames & Learned, 1946).

Age may also be a variable that effects attitudes to imaginary companions.

Questions

Do respondents children fit into the expected age range of children with imaginary companions?

Do parental attitudes toward imaginary companions change in relation to the age of the child involved?

Do parental attitudes differ in relation to the age of their own child?

Hypotheses

Children in this study will fit into the expected age range of children with imaginary companions.

Parents in both groups will perceive imaginary companions as more acceptable the younger the child.

SEX

Research thus far indicates that there are several differences in the way in which males and females experience imaginary companions, namely that there is a higher incidence among females(Manosevitz et al, 1973), females create more opposite sex companions (Manosevitz et al, 1973; Bender & Vogel, 1941) and that males and females create companions for different purposes (Harter & Chao, 1992).

Questions

Do the companions created by the males and females differ in any way?

Can the attitudes of parents of children with imaginary companions be distinguished on the basis of the sex of their child?

In hypothetical situations are parents more accepting of imaginary companions in one sex than the other?

Hypotheses

Respondents in the IC group will be more likely to have female children than male.

Female children will more often adopt imaginary companions of the opposite sex, than male children.

Parents of male children will view imaginary companions as less acceptable than parents of female children.

ETHNICITY

There have been no studies which have looked at the ethnicity of children that have had imaginary companions and the corresponding attitudes of their parents. However, some cultures do hold spirit mediumship in high regard and thus may view imaginary companions in a similar light.

Questions

Do attitudes to imaginary companions vary in relation to the respondents ethnicity?

Hypotheses

Respondents from indigenous cultures will view imaginary companions in a more positive light than European respondents.

COMPETENCY

A study by Harter and Chao (1992) found that teachers rated children with imaginary companions as less competent than their peers, particularly in the physical and social realms.

Questions

Do Harter and Chao's findings for teachers also apply to parental ratings of their children?

Is there a difference in the ratings of respondents in each group of their child's competency in social and physical activities?

Hypotheses

Respondents in the I.C group will rate their children's behaviour as less competent than respondents in the Non-I.C group

CHARACTERISTICS OF IMAGINARY COMPANION

The bulk of research into imaginary companions has focused on the characteristics of the imaginary companion, consequently there are a number of results to expect from the current study. Firstly children often draw inspiration for their companions from experiences in their environments, for example television (Jalonga, 1984). Secondly young children often create unisex or sexless companions with untraditional names (Jalonga, 1984). Lastly between 50 and 60 % of children with imaginary companions have multiple companions (Taylor et al, 1991; and Ames & Learned, 1946).

Questions

Do children create companions inspired from television?

Do younger children create companions which are unisex or sexless?

Do children's companions have untraditional or made up names?

Do children with imaginary companions ever have more than one?

Hypotheses

Children's imaginary companions will often be inspired by television characters.

Younger children will be less likely than older children to categorise their companions as either male or female.

Children with imaginary companions will be more likely than not to have made up nonsensical names for their companions.

The majority of children with imaginary companions will have had more than one.

PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE

Children have been found to hide their companion from a negative or disapproving parent, thus the extent of the knowledge that parents have of their child's companion may reveal something of their attitudes.

Questions

Do children ever hide the existence of their companion from their parents?

Does the extent of parental knowledge about their child's companion reflect their attitudes toward imaginary companions?

Hypotheses

Children often hide the existence of a companion from their parents.

Parents of children who share little of their imaginary companions will have negative attitudes toward imaginary companions in comparison to parents whose children haven't hidden their companion from them.

Parents who have difficulty answering questions about their child's imaginary companion will consider imaginary companions to be less acceptable than parents who can answer questions pertaining to their child's imaginary companion.

PARENTAL THEORIES/INSIGHTS

It has been documented that parents often create theories to explain the otherwise unexplainable behaviour of their children, in an attempt to ease their minds about the normality of their children.

Questions

Do parents of children with imaginary companions create theories as to why children have imaginary companions?

Do those parents who have theories pertaining to why children have imaginary companions, have different attitudes toward them than those parents that do not?

Hypotheses

Respondents in the IC group will be more likely to have theories pertaining to imaginary companions than respondents in the NIC group.

Parents who have theories of why children have imaginary companions will have more positive attitudes to them than those parents that do not have theories.

GENERAL ATTITUDES

Attitudes toward imaginary companions in general, need to be distinguished from attitudes which are related to specific characteristics of imaginary companions. Previous research has looked at attitudes in relation to expressed beliefs, other approaches would include considering behaviour toward imaginary companions and the effect of personal experience on attitudes.

Questions

Do parents of children with imaginary companions have different attitudes to them than parents of children without imaginary companions?

Are parents feelings about imaginary companions reflected in their actions toward them?

Hypotheses

Parents who have had personal experience of imaginary companions through their children will hold more positive views toward them than will parents who have not.

Parental attitudes toward imaginary companions will be stronger than their behaviour would suggest.

DURATION

Both the length of time that a child spends with their imaginary companion on a daily basis and the total length of time they have an imaginary companion, are identified variables that may affect the attitude of parents toward imaginary companions.

Questions

Does the amount of time that a child spends with his/her companion effect the attitudes of respondents toward the imaginary companion?

Are short-term companions more or less acceptable than long-term companions?

Hypotheses

The more time a child spends in interaction with his/her companion throughout the course of a day the less acceptable it will be to respondents.

Short-term companions will be more acceptable than long-term companions.

FUNCTION

The role or function that the imaginary companion has in its creators life varies (e.g. scapegoat, protector, teacher). Different functions may mean different parental attitudes.

Scapegoating, which involves a child using their imaginary companion as a way of avoiding punishment, has been found in past research to be particularly worrying to parents who consider it to be a form of lying (Newson and Newson, 1976).

Questions

Are some functions of imaginary companions more acceptable to respondents than others?

Are parents who have a personal theory as to why children have imaginary companions (as examined above) more accepting of that function in a hypothetical situation, than parents who can not identify with the situation through personal experience.

Do parents view scapegoating as a form of lying and consequently do they hold correspondingly negative views of imaginary companions with this function?

Hypotheses

Functions of imaginary companions will vary in their acceptability with loneliness being the most acceptable and scapegoating being the least.

Parents who have personal experience of a particular type of imaginary companion will be more accepting of it than those respondents that have not.

INFLUENCE OR EFFECT ON CHILD

Parents may be influenced in their attitudes by the amount of influence or control a child's imaginary companion has over their lives, or alternatively how much control the child has over the imaginary companion.

Questions

Does the behaviour of the imaginary companion (good or bad) effect attitudes toward them?

Does the extent to which a child's behaviour is influenced or changed by the presence of an imaginary companion effect respondents attitudes?

Is it more acceptable for the child to be the dominant participant in the relationship or the imaginary companion?

Hypotheses

Any change in the child's behaviour as the result of interaction with his/her imaginary companion will be viewed negatively by respondents.

Respondents will consider it more acceptable for the child to be in control of their relationship with their imaginary companion than if the companion were.

DEPTH OF INVOLVEMENT

Some research indicates that the deeper or more involved a child is in his/her fantasy the more worried parents become, fearing their child does not understand the difference between reality and fantasy (Newson and Newson, 1976).

Questions

Do parents attitudes toward imaginary companions alter in relation to the extent a child is caught up in play with their imaginary companion?

Do children with imaginary companions become less responsive to external stimuli when they are interacting with their imaginary companions than when they are involved in non-fantasy play?

Hypotheses

Respondents will hold negative views toward imaginary companions when a child is unresponsive to external stimuli

Children with imaginary companions do not usually become so involved in their fantasy play that they become unresponsive to external cues.

BEHAVIOUR COMPARISON

Brookes and Knowles (1982) study which compared various childhood behaviours to that of having an imaginary companion found that, behaviours involving imaginary companions were treated as neutral.

Questions

What are respondents attitudes toward imaginary companions in relation to their views of other childhood behaviours?

Hypotheses

Respondents attitudes toward imaginary companions will be neutral in relation to deceitful, helpful and destructive behaviours.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHOD

DESIGN

This study involved gauging the attitudes and insights of two groups toward imaginary companions, through the use of a questionnaire. Group one was made up of parents who had not encountered imaginary companions in their own children (NIC), while group two had encountered imaginary companions in their children (IC).

Both groups received questionnaires which were designed to measure their attitudes and related actions in regard to hypothetical situations, while the questions differed in regard to personal experiences and their attitudes towards those experiences.

SUBJECTS

The subjects who participated in this study comprised of 48 parents contacted through two Palmerston North city primary schools. The subjects volunteered by returning a signed consent form which they received along with an information sheet which was given out through their child's school. The total number of parents contacted through the two schools was 420, of this number 24 parents replied that their child had had an imaginary companion and 14 returned their questionnaires, while 23 believed that none of their children had had an imaginary companion and 15 of those returned a completed questionnaire. The relatively even number of respondents for each group indicates that this is not a representative sample, as research indicates that approximately one in every five children has had an imaginary companion.

Group classification was done via self selection. Parents were given no definition or description of imaginary companions so that only those parents that believed their child had had an imaginary companion would place themselves in the IC group, thereby ensuring that their attitudes were consistent with those of the group they were in.

INSTRUMENTS

The lack of research in this area is particularly evident when compiling questions for a study of this nature. The absence of attitudinal research means that establishing a clear set of boundaries from which to work, as well as creating a format that accurately taps into the subjects identified knowledge or beliefs is all the more crucial. One consequence of the lack of precedence in this area is that the final questionnaire is a combination of different question formats, with only two sections being sourced from existing questionnaires.

Although the questions were not presented in content related sections, but rather were grouped according to their respective formats, the content of the questionnaire can be separated into three distinct parts. Firstly demographic details of the respondents child, secondly the parents attitudes and conceptualisations about imaginary companions, and thirdly their perceptions of their child, both in relation to their status as a child with or without an imaginary companion and in regard to their abilities in other spheres of their life.

As the study involved two subject groups it was necessary to vary the questionnaire given to each of the two groups accordingly. This was done by preparing a separate Part I for both groups while leaving Part II the same for comparative purposes. A

brief description of each part is included below, with the final questionnaire reproduced in Appendix 3 and 4.

Part I: For NIC Group.

Part I for parents whose children have not had imaginary companions composed of two sections. The first section was devoted to establishing some demographic information about the child, in an open ended question format. The second section was made up of multi-choice questions pertaining to the respondents conceptualisation of imaginary companions from the perspective of a parent who has not experienced them in her/his own children.

Part I: For IC Group.

Part I for parents of children who have had imaginary companions was split into three sections. The first section, like that in the alternative part I, was comprised of demographic questions about the respondents child and was entitled "background of child who has had an imaginary companion". The second section consisted of open ended questions regarding the characteristics of the child's imaginary companion. Lastly parents were asked about their experiences of and beliefs about imaginary companions from the perspective of a parent who has experienced imaginary companions in their own child, in a multi-choice format.

Part II: For Both Groups.

Section 'A' of Part II was taken straight from the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL), using both competence and problem scales. The competence scales used were

activities and social scales, while the problem scales employed were withdrawal, social and attention problems, all of which are internalising .

Section 'B' in Part II of the questionnaire comprised four multi-choice questions which were essentially to gather further information about both parental knowledge and preferences, similar to those asked in both of the Part I's.

Section 'C' of Part II included 16 two part questions which were created to elicit responses from the participant pertaining specifically to their attitudes toward imaginary companions. The participant's were first given a short anecdote or hypothetical situation about a child with an imaginary companion, and were then asked to respond as if the child concerned were their own. The two part question used was;

- a) How would you feel about this relationship?
- b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

Feelings and actions were differentiated as a way of acknowledging that attitudes need not translate into a corresponding behaviour. After establishing a base response the hypothetical situation was either altered or the participant was given more information, thereby establishing the effects of different identified variables on attitudes.

The last Section of Part II, was of a more global nature, in that it was designed to place attitudes toward imaginary companions within the wider context of all childhood behaviours. This type of comparative study was undertaken by Brooks and Knowles (1982), who used destructive, helpful and deceitful as comparative behaviours. Respondents were provided with 12 anecdotes of a child's behaviour, three involved an imaginary companion while the remainder where made up of the comparison behaviours. In response to the anecdote participants are asked how they would respond to such behaviour on a five point scale from strongly discourage to strongly encourage.

To obtain variance in answers two of the deceit anecdotes were given a good cause as the excuse for the deceit for example instead of simply saying the child lied about doing homework, the excuse of wanting to help his/her sister with her homework was given.

PROCEDURE

The procedure used to contact and later interact with subjects was dictated largely by ethical requirements. A consent form and information sheet were distributed at two Palmerston North primary schools, one per family which equated to 420 being distributed. Children took an envelope with the forms in it home and were instructed to give the forms to their parents. Parents were asked to return the form regardless of whether they wished to participate, in the envelope provided. Those that wished to participate were asked to sign the form, provide their postal address and answer the question "Has a child of yours ever had an imaginary companion?". The consent form was not the subjects consent to participate, but merely their consent to be sent a questionnaire.

Those parents who returned the form signed were subsequently sent one of the two questionnaires, depending on whether their child had an imaginary companion, and a return envelope. Those subjects who had not returned their questionnaires after six weeks were sent a reminder notice, see Appendix 5. On completion of the questionnaire the subjects returned it in the prepaid postal envelope provided. Subjects essentially gave their informed consent by completing the questionnaire. The subjects were not asked for their name or address in the questionnaire itself, however

those who wished to receive a feedback sheet were requested to. Feedback sheets were sent to those who requested them at the completion of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

Age

The hypothesis that children with an imaginary companion would fit into the age range expected from previous studies was true only in 57% of cases, with the remainder of children adopting companions at an older age than expected. The average age that the companions appeared was 2.85 years, while the average age at which the companions disappeared was 4.9 years. However, as many as 23% of children still had their companion(s).

Sex

As predicted respondents in the IC group were more likely to be female children than male, with 64% in the IC group being female and only 31% in the NIC group being female. However a Chi squared test revealed that this difference may be due to chance rather than any difference in the two populations ($\chi^2 = 3.3$, $d.f=1$, $p>.05$) .

It was also proposed that female children would more often adopt imaginary companions of the opposite sex, this was established only in so far as female children were more likely to adopt companions which were unisex or of indeterminable sex than male children, with 80% of companions which were unisex or of indeterminable sex belonging to females.

Ethnicity

Nearly 19% of respondents in the NIC group were of an ethnicity other than European New Zealander while all respondents in the imaginary companions group were European New Zealanders. The small sample used in this study meant that the hypothesis that respondents from indigenous cultures would view imaginary companion's in a more positive light than would European respondents could not be tested.

Table 1: Number of and hours spent with friends (Rated out 4) and Social Behaviour of Children (Rated 1= Worse, 2= About average, 3= Better, than children of same age), With (IC) and Without Imaginary Companions (NIC) as rated by their Parents .

	IC		NIC	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Number of Close Friends	3.3	3.6	3.4	3.5
Hours Spent with Friends	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.7
Get along with Siblings	2.1	1.7	2.3	2.2
Get along with other Kids	2.2	2.4	2.6	1.97
Behave with Parents	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.2
Play/Work by Self	2.7	1.4	2.6	2.4

Social Activities

The hypothesis that children with imaginary companions would be rated by their parents as less socially active, as having fewer friends and as not getting along with

others as well as children of similar age, was not supported by parental responses as shown in Table 1. Parents in both groups rated their children similarly both in regard to the amount and number of friends as well as their behaviour toward others.

Competency

Parents in both groups rated their children at several different activities, the maximum score they could give their child was 36. Parents in both groups rated their children's competency in much the same way (IC M= 22.8, NIC M=20.5), thus the hypothesis that children with imaginary companions would be rated as less competent by their parents was not upheld.

Behaviour Problems

It was predicted that children with imaginary companions would be rated by their parents as being more withdrawn, having more social and attention problems, this however was not the case. Both questionnaires included a list of behaviour problems which parents could rate as being "Not True" rated 0, "Somewhat or Sometimes True" rated 1 or "Very True or Often True" rated 2, of their child. Among the 24 problems listed were nervousness, restlessness, impulsiveness, unhappiness, and so forth. Although there was a difference in the mean number of problems reported by the parents of the two groups across the 24 problems (NIC, M= 6.6, S.D= 5.7; NIC, M= 7.1, S.D= 2) it was not statistically significant. However on individual items there were some significant differences between the two groups.

Parents in the imaginary companion group rated their children as significantly more "impulsive or acts without thinking" than parents in the no imaginary companion group, as shown by a Chi square test ($\chi^2 = 5.19$, d.f.= 1, $p < .05$), as they did for "day dreams or seems to get lost in his/her own thoughts" ($\chi^2 = 4.5$, d.f.= 1, $p < .05$).

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation and Chi Square scores for problem behaviours as rated by parents of children with (IC) and without imaginary companions (NIC).

Behaviour	Mean		S.D		χ^2 Score
	IC	NIC	IC	NIC	
Acts too young	0.29	0.50	1.42	3.16	0.38
Can't Concentrate	0.20	0.69	1.54	3.38	2.13
Restless, Hyperactive	0.36	0.69	1.79	3.07	0.63
Clings to Adults	0.50	0.63	2.14	2.78	0.13
Confused, in a fog	0.29	0.31	3.12	2.33	0.05
Day Dreams	1.07	0.69	2.22	2.91	4.50
Doesn't get on with other Kids	0.20	0.50	1.54	2.40	0.92
Gets teased a lot	0.20	0.44	2.09	2.43	2.15
Impulsive	0.90	0.63	1.72	3.12	5.19
Nervous, High strung, Tense	0.37	0.69	2.23	3.25	0.33
Nervous Movement	0	0.06	0	0.97	1.04
Not liked by other kids	0.30	0.13	1.69	1.32	1.19
Overweight	0.14	0.06	1.31	0.97	1.46
Poor School work	0.21	0.40	1.54	1.94	0.92
Poorly Co-ordinated	0.3	0.20	1.69	1.56	0.73
Prefers younger Kids Company	0.36	0.30	2.28	2.73	0.73
Refuses to Talk	0.14	0.40	1.31	2.82	2.49
Secretive	0.60	0.40	2.69	1.83	2.07
Shy, Timid	0.40	0.40	1.90	2.76	0.84
Stares Blankly	0.14	0.27	1.32	2.63	2.72
Sulks a lot	0.13	0.53	1.98	3.12	0.05
Underactive	0.14	0.13	1.40	1.32	2.71
Unhappy, Sad, Depressed	0.29	0.20	2.18	1.55	0.03
Withdrawn	0.29	0.06	1.69	0.96	3.05

Characteristics of Imaginary Companions

The hypothesis that children with imaginary companions will often be inspired by people and characters in their environment was definitely true for 21% of children, while the remainder were influenced to a lesser degree.

The hypothesis that younger children would be less likely than older children to categorise their companions as either male or female was difficult to test, firstly because, parents did the categorising, not the children, and secondly because at the time of this study most children were either in the latter stages of their friendship or had abandoned their companion completely. Thus children had moved into the older age group where ascribing a sex to an imaginary companion is expected.

Seventy one percent of children had at least one companion with a made up or non-sensical name, as listed in Table 3, thus supporting the hypothesis that children will more often than not prescribe made up names to their companions.

It was also hypothesised that the majority of children with imaginary companions would have more than one, this however was not specifically tested for. Despite this 43% of parents voluntarily reported such information. With one child having as many as seven companions which could each be identified by name, as listed in Table 3.

Two thirds of the children's companions were described as human while the remainder were identified as being animals. While where parents could determine the age of their child's companion 20% were older than their creator at some stage of their existence while the remainder were all the same age as their creator.

Table 3: Descriptions of imaginary companions.

Name	Sex	Age	Type of Being
Boy	Male	Same*	Human
Scarecrow	Male		Human
Wow Wow & Digger	Male	Same*	Human, Dog
Lisa Missell	Female	Same*	Human
Dean	?**	Same*	Human
Eagle Eye	Male	Same* or Adult	Human
Flossie	Female		Sheep
Blue Horse	?**		Horse
Batman & My Friend	Male		Human
Lena Dog	?**		Dog
Stephanie, Emily, Nermy, Sleeping	Male & Female	Same*	Human
Beauty, Katie & Amber			
Bunny	Male	Same*	Animal
Mr & Mrs Owl	Male & Female	Adults	Birds
Names change	Male & Female	Same*	Human

* The Companion is the same age as child.

** Companion is unisex or of indeterminable sex

Parental Knowledge

It was predicted that parents who had little knowledge of their child's companion would have negative attitudes toward imaginary companions in comparison to parents whose children haven't hidden their companion from them. However parents in general had a very good knowledge of their child's companion, making such a prediction irrelevant. Furthermore, it was found that over 80% of parents became aware of their child's imaginary companion directly from their child, which contradicts the hypothesis that children hide the existence of their companions from disapproving parents.

Parental Theories/ Insights

It was predicted that direct personal experience of imaginary companions would correspond to more personal theories of imaginary companions and their creation. As the NIC group was made of parents that had almost no experience of imaginary companions in their own children (94%), the two groups are thus clearly differentiated by whether they have personal experience of imaginary companions or not. However parents in both groups were willing to indicate to the extent they were able to within the confounds of the questionnaire, to provide their views on imaginary companions and their origins.

It was also predicted that parents who held theories as to why children have imaginary companions would be more likely to have positive attitudes toward children having them. This did not prove to be so, as not all theories placed imaginary companions in a very positive light.

Loneliness, which is often used to explain why children have imaginary companions, was considered a factor contributing to their child having an imaginary companion by

50% of parents in the IC group. By contrast, 56.3% of respondents in the NIC group felt their child didn't have an imaginary companion because she/he had enough real friends. However parents in both groups rated their children as having approximately the same number of close friends, with 50% of IC and 56% NIC parents rating their child as having 4 or more. Parents in both groups also rated how often their child spent time with friends outside of regular school hours, 70.6% of IC parents indicated 2 or more times a week while 68.5% of NIC parents responded in the same way.

Imaginativeness was considered as a factor predisposing a child to having an imaginary companion. Parents in the IC group were asked whether they believed their child to be more imaginative than children without imaginary companions, 78.6% replied they were to some extent, while only 12.5% of parents in the NIC group thought that children with imaginary companions were more imaginative than their children.

General Attitudes

Results indicated that parents in this study did not hold very positive views of children playing with imaginary companions, regardless of their own personal experience. Many opted for neutrality, however a substantial proportion indicated that they held strong negative views.

General attitudes to imaginary companions were measured by assessing parental preferences, most indicated neutrality however significantly more parents in the IC group would prefer that their child had an imaginary companion, than parents in the NIC group as indicated by Chi squared test ($\chi^2 = 4.3$, *d.f.* = 1, $p < .05$). These preferences were reflected in parental views on whether or not they believed children to be aided by the experience of having imaginary companions, with 64% of parents in

the IC group believing children to be aided by the experience while only 25% in the NIC group held similar beliefs.

A Mann Whitney U test was carried out on the attitudinal questions in Part II of the questionnaire, to test for differences between the IC and NIC parent groups. The results indicate that in all questions on attitude there were no significant differences between the attitudes of parents with imaginary companions and those of parents without, in fact parents in the IC group held more negative views than those in the NIC group in over 40% of questions.

A distinction was made between the way in which parents may 'feel' about the different scenarios involving imaginary companions and how they would 'act' in such a situation. It was hypothesised that parents would feel more negatively about the relationship than they would act in regard to it. This was not the case however as parents responded to 56% of the hypothetical situations by stating that they would more strongly discourage the relationship than their corresponding feelings about it would suggest.

Attitudes in Relation to Age

The first variable considered in relation to its effect on attitudes was age. The most negative attitudes expressed in this study were those toward older children having imaginary companions. As can be seen from Figure 1 attitudinal ratings increase as the described child's age increases, as was hypothesised.

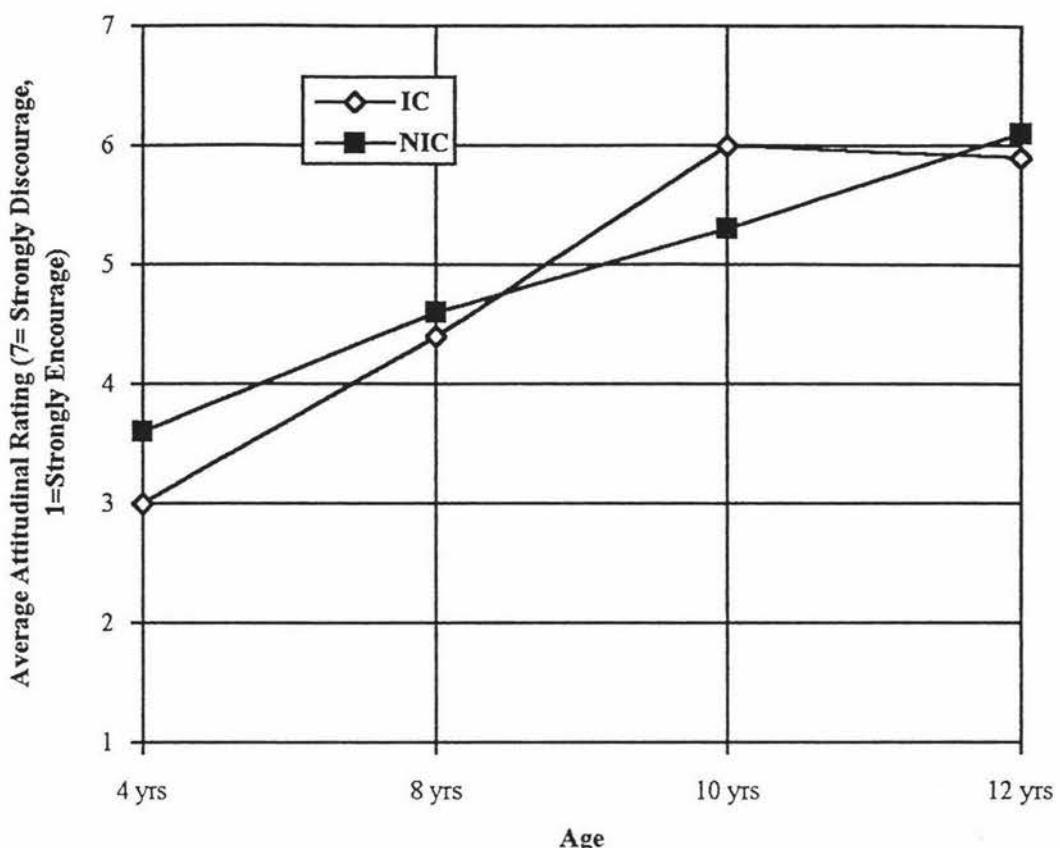


Figure 1: Attitudes toward children having imaginary companions at four different ages (4, 8, 10 and 12 years).

Attitudes in Regard to Child's Sex

The results indicate that parents did not respond differently when the child described in the hypothetical situations was a female as opposed to a male. However parents of male children did have more negative attitudes in general than did parents of female children, although a Mann Whitney U test indicated this difference is not significant ($z > 1.35$, $p < .0885$).

Attitudes toward Duration

IC group parents responses to questions about their attitudes toward long term imaginary companions were analysed in relation to how long their own child had had

an imaginary companion. There was no significant difference between the average attitudes of parents of children with long term companions and parents of children with short term companions.

Parents in both groups held more negative attitudes toward imaginary companions which had a long term duration (IC M=5.6, NIC M=5.8). The questions regarding the length of time the child spent with their imaginary companions on a daily basis evoked slightly more neutral responses from both groups (IC M=4.8, NIC M=5.4).

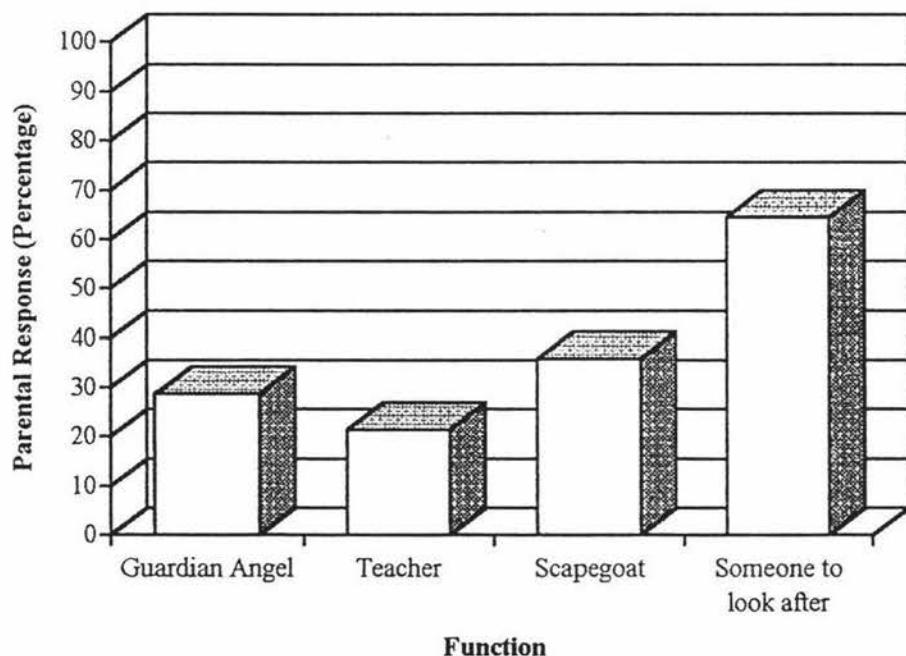


Figure 2: Parental Ratings of the Function of their child's Imaginary Companions

Parental Insights and Theories Regarding Function

The results indicate that the functions in which the companion played the negative role and the child the played the positive role ("Scapegoat" and "Someone to Look after")

in the relationship, were more often rated as the function parents saw their child's companion playing.

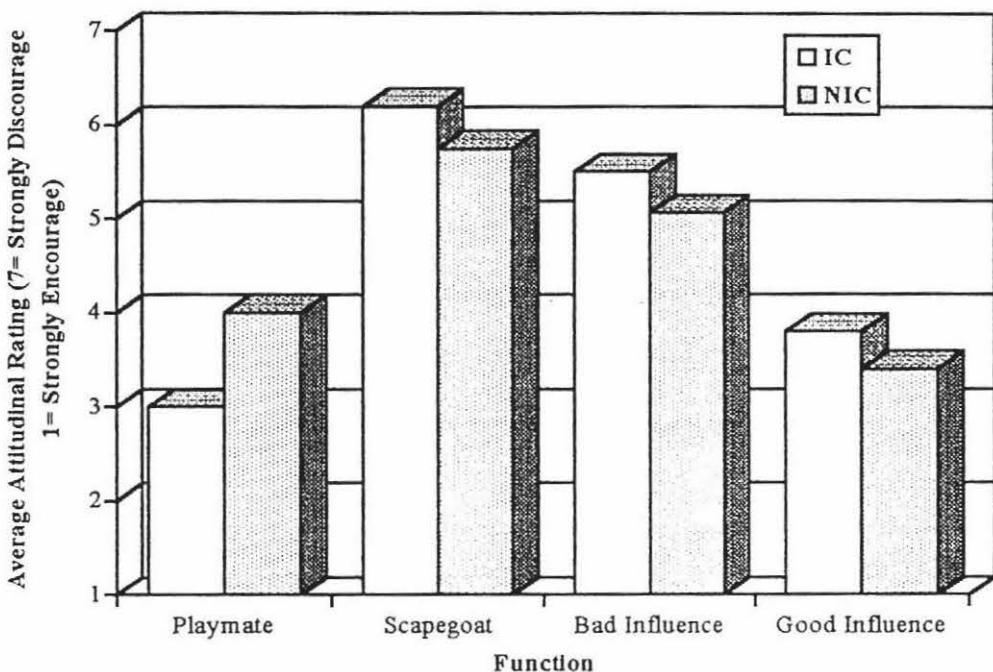


Figure 3: Attitudes ratings for four different functions of imaginary companions by parents whose children have had imaginary companions (IC) and whose have not (NIC).

Where parents selected a function which described their child's imaginary companion there were no differences in the types of functions chosen by parents of female children and parents of males. However significantly no parents of male children had any difficulty in rating at least one of the four alternatives as playing a role their child's life, while 56% of parents of females didn't rate any of the functions as being adequate descriptions of their child's imaginary companion.

Attitudes in Regard to Influence or Effect on Child

Attitudes were considered as being potentially effected by the roles played by the child and imaginary companion. The roles presented to parents to rate their attitude towards were couched in terms of the imaginary companion being a good or bad influence on the child. When the same scenario was presented with the only difference being the direction of the influence (i.e. child influences companion, companion influences child), the results indicated that parents felt significantly more positive when the child played the good role and the companion the bad, than when the roles were reversed, however this difference may have more to do with parental attitudes toward well behaved children than it does badly behaved imaginary companions.

Attitudes in Regard to Function

As can be seen from Figure 3 parents in both groups stated they would discourage those functions in which the imaginary companion played the negative role ("Scapegoat" and "Bad influence") more than they would the other functions of "Playmate" and "Good influence". Parents in the IC group were the most discouraging of all functions, except that of "Playmate", which they considered to be the most acceptable function. Conversely parents in the NIC group rated the imaginary companion that was a Good Influence on the child as being the most acceptable.

Attitudes in Regard to Depth of Child's Involvement

Parental attitudes toward imaginary companions in relation to how removed from reality the child became when playing with his/her imaginary companion were measured by firstly presenting a skeleton question then building on with information about the child's depth of fantasy involvement. Figure 4 illustrates that when the level of fantasy involved was low parents in both groups rated the behaviour in a positive to neutral manner, whereas when they were informed that the child needed to be

physically touched stir them from their play with their imaginary companion their attitudes became more negative.

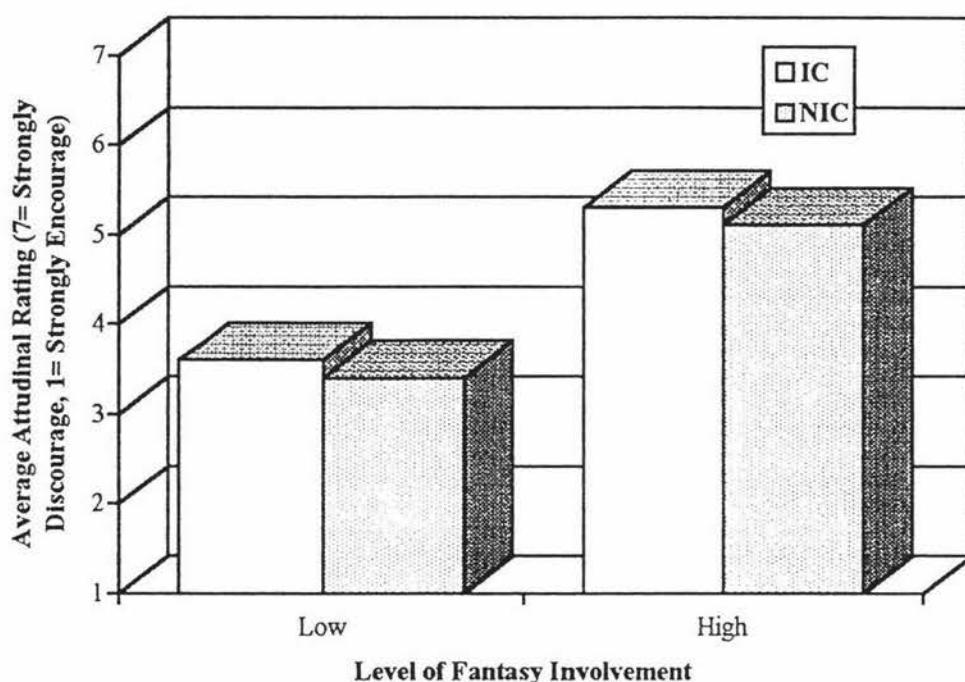


Figure 4: Parental attitudes toward children's level of fantasy involvement with their imaginary companion, by whether or not their own child has an imaginary companion.

Parents in the IC group where asked whether their child's imaginary companion ever made getting their child's attention difficult, thus making their level of fantasy involvement high. Parents indicated that it was actually more difficult to get their child to do things around the home when their child was playing non-fantasy games as opposed to those involving imaginary companions, thus indicating that concerns about fantasy involvement are irrelevant.

Table 4: Average parental responses to how they "Feel" and would "Act" in regard to four characteristics of a hypothetical imaginary companion's interaction with their child (7= Strongly Discourage, 1= Strongly Encourage).

Characteristic	Feelings Toward	Actions Toward
Long Duration	5.7	5.4
Older Child	5.9	6
Deep Fantasy	5.1	5.2
Bad Influence	5.3	5.2

Comparison of Attitudes to Different Imaginary Companion Variables

The scores of both groups are combined in Table 4 for the four most negatively rated imaginary companion characteristics. As has been noted already older children with imaginary companions inspired the most negative responses, while having a companion for an extended period of time also elicited strong negative responses.

Attitudes Toward Imaginary Companions in Comparison to Other Behaviours

To place attitudes toward imaginary companions in the context of attitudes toward other behaviours, parents were presented with a list of behaviours and asked how they would respond to such behaviour in their own child, the response options were "strongly encourage" through to "strongly discourage". The resulting attitudes ratings are presented in Figure 5. Very positive attitudes were reported toward such helpful behaviour as putting toys away without being asked, and very negative attitudes towards such deceitful behaviour as lying about using sister's colouring book. Behaviours involving imaginary companions were treated in a neutral, if not slightly

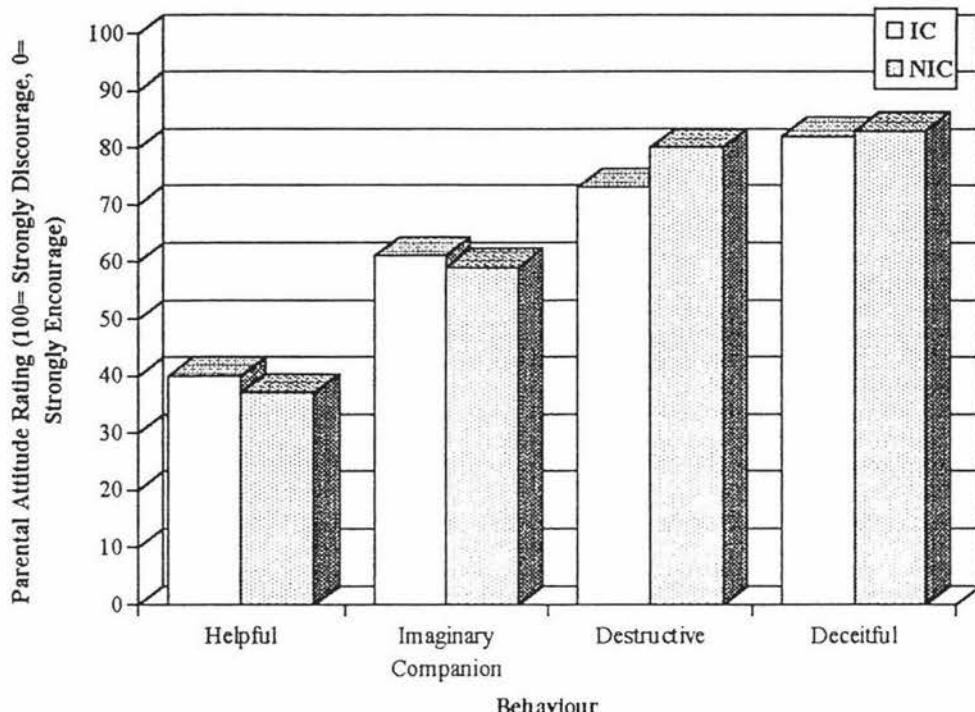


Figure 5: Parental ratings of Four Types of Children's Behaviour by Whether their Child has had an Imaginary Companion .

discouraging manner by comparison. The deceitful items were ranked as the most worthy of discouragement despite two of the lies being tempered with an altruistic purpose, for example "Child lies about having finished homework, so she can help sister with hers". The differences between the two groups ratings of each behaviour are not significant.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

The children identified as having imaginary companions in this study were essentially the same as those without companions, where differences did occur they were either inconclusive or directly related to the experience of having an imaginary companion. This finding has significant implications for attitudes and perceptions of imaginary companions in general.

This study differed from those that preceded it, regarding the characteristics of children with imaginary companions. The two main differences were, children acquired their companions at an older age in this study, and kept them for longer. These differences may be due to parental recall, the function the companion served, the high number of follow on companions or differences in the way information was gathered in this study. Parental attitudes may also have influenced the length of time children kept their companions, as children in this study kept their companions longer, their parents were perhaps more accepting than those in other studies. This hypothesis cannot be tested however as no attitudinal information exists from those studies concerned.

The imaginary companions themselves were characteristic of those reported in other studies. The characteristics of the companions indicated that their creators drew their inspiration for their companions from their environment, such as TV characters, story book characters, and friends and family. This lends support to the view that the

imagination is not external to reality but instead draws from it and conversely contributes to it, as both Herska (cited Singer & Singer, 1992) and Hilgard (1977) maintained.

The incongruities between the findings concerning children with imaginary companions, the imaginary companions that the children adopted and the nature of their relationships, and those of previous studies, can be understood in terms of two factors. Firstly, the number of subjects used in this study was not enough to confidently draw conclusions generalisable to the larger population, thus, it may be that the findings of this study are due to an unrepresentative sample. Secondly, it may be that the way in which questions were asked contributed to the different conclusions found.

Previous research concurs with this studies finding that females tend to have companions more often than males (Ames & Learned, 1946; Bender & Vogel, 1941). Other sex differences which were established in this study, such as, different imaginary companion functions, and differences in the sexual classification of imaginary companions, have also been reported in the literature before (Harter & Chao, 1992; Singer 1973). Despite the compelling evidence that illustrates that males and females experience imaginary companions differently, a thorough investigation has yet to be done, and consequently an adequate explanation has yet to be offered.

The most significant difference between parental ratings of children with imaginary companions and those without, were the elevated day dreaming and impulsiveness scores of children with imaginary companions. Day dreaming can be seen as part of an imaginative disposition and as the direct result of interacting with imaginary companions, however, impulsiveness in a child with an imaginary companion is more difficult to explain. Singer (1961) found that children with imaginary companion's day

dream more than children without companions, and that perhaps as a consequence, they have better waiting ability. Waiting ability and impulsiveness are not complementary dimensions within a person, illustrating that these results are contradictory and may be the result of a small sample size.

Despite these two behavioural differences, children's ratings were very similar regarding their social activities, abilities and behaviours. Whether these similarities were due to the rater (the parents) or the actual skill level of the child is difficult to say, however since any subjective distortions would apply to both groups it is perhaps an indication that amongst this group anyway, there is little difference between children with and without companions in relation to these aspects of their lives.

It is significant that children with imaginary companions were similar in their social interactions, spending the same amount of time with friends as children without companions. This contradicts the view that children with imaginary companions are lonely, which, despite a consistent lack of support remains a popular misconception. This is illustrated by the results of the present study which show that parents in both groups considered loneliness to be a factor contributing to children's interaction with imaginary companions.

Singer (1973) believes that children's interactions with imaginary companions "fill up empty space" that is, children interact with them when they would otherwise be alone, rather than opting for the companionship of an imaginary companion over a real friend. This would explain why the children in the imaginary companion group were not without real friends.

The loneliness theory is perhaps popular because on the surface it appears to be a logical explanation, however, when the other characteristics of imaginary companions

are considered in the context of a growing child this explanation seems simplistic at best. The results of this study and many others indicate that children gain so much more out of their interaction with an imaginary companion than just companionship.

This is not to say that there are not any predisposing factors that trigger the creation of an imaginary companion, as suggested by ecological theorists, indeed parents in the IC group although not overwhelmingly so, did indicate that environmental conditions did play a part. This may however be the result of a desire to have some form of explanation or way of conceptualising the companion rather than a true representation of what took place. Studies of imaginative play, in fact, indicate that when under psychological stress or when a child's environmental needs are not being met they are less likely to engage in any form of play (Freyberg, 1973).

One of the most important predisposing factors to children having imaginary companions must surely be their ability to utilise the imagination. Parents of children with imaginary companions in this study believed their children to be more imaginative than children that do not have companions, however, parents in the NIC group did not believe their children to be less imaginative. The subjectivity of parents and their lack of comparison make their ratings of their children's imaginative ability unreliable. An accurate measure of imaginativeness and imaginary ability would clarify the role of such factors in the creation of imaginary companions.

Research that looks specifically at the environmental conditions of children pre-companion and then post-companion, would reveal the part, if any, that environmental conditions play in children adopting imaginary companions. Such factors have implications for understanding the functions which companions serve, and consequently attitudes toward companions.

The view that children use imaginary companions to practise or acquire social skills was the most acceptable to parents, however, as loneliness was not a factor in these children's lives they need not invent friends for this purpose. The evidence which suggests that children use imaginary companions to gain social skills is too weighty to dismiss, making it unlikely that the advantage of having an imaginary companion is greater than having a real friend, in terms of practising social skills. These advantages would include the fact that imaginary companions don't talk back and they will always do what you want them to do, in short their creator has complete control in the relationship. It may also be that children learn more than social skills in their interactions with their imaginary companions, they may utilise skills that they do not necessarily use when interacting with real friends. Jalonga (1984, p. 170) writes "the skills that enable children to participate in fantasy play with invisible friends are intellectual, interpersonal, and imaginative".

Parental knowledge of imaginary companions was linked in that those in the NIC group underestimated the incidence of imaginary companions while those in the IC group were more accurate, however, they did tend to overestimate their incidence, perhaps as a way of normalising the phenomena.

Research indicates that in general children are aided by the experience of having an imaginary companion, however parents in neither group held such a view. Instead parents indicated that they believed children to be unaffected by the experience, despite having negative attitudes toward some characteristics of imaginary companions. Thus, indicating that increasing parental knowledge about imaginary companions and their role in child's lives may be necessary to curb negative attitudes.

Within subject attitudes were at times' contradictory, with some parents indicating on the one hand that they believed children to be unaffected by the experience of having

an imaginary companion, while on the other, they responded that they would prefer their child not to have a companion given the option. Such conflicting attitudes were most evident when the response options were limited. Where questions made it impossible for parents to temper their views they either opted for neutrality or for positive answers whereas when given more choices they were much more likely to opt for more negative responses. Future investigations therefore, would benefit from presenting respondents with a wide spectrum of responses such as a seven point Likert scale as used in the attitudinal questions of Part II of this questionnaire, rather than forcing them to choose between a single positive or negative response that could lead to inaccuracies.

Parents in this study believed their children's companions to be multi functional serving different roles, to different degrees, in their children's lives. Those that rated the available choices considered "Someone to Look after" as being slightly more characteristic of their child's companion than "Scapegoat" and much more appropriate than a "Guardian Angel" or "Teacher".

In the past there has been a tendency to try and explain all imaginary companions in terms of a single factor. Given a choice of different functions, parents choose a range of responses, rather than a single function. However, a significant number of parents of females did not favour any of the available choices. Such a finding is significant, in that, it indicates there is at least one function relevant especially to females that has been overlooked. Alternatively, it could be that parents of female children have put less thought into why their child has a companion and are thus reluctant to commit themselves to a response. Parents answered similar questions in the questionnaire without hesitation, it thus seems more likely that an appropriate response option was simply not offered.

Parents preference for the role of "Someone to look after" is difficult to explain, such a nurturing role was expected to be most prevalent among females as Harter and Chao (1992) found; the only study to isolate such a function. It can be speculated that such a role is the result of children either seeking to nurture themselves through their companion or they are simply mimicking the role they see their parents play.

Scapegoating, the practice whereby children blame misbehaviour on their imaginary companions has received much attention especially from psychoanalyst's. However, despite a preponderance of theories that include, the belief that imaginary companions aid the development of a conscience and that scapegoating is a form of self-criticism, there is little evidence to suggest why scapegoating although always present among the imaginary companion population is not a universal facet of such companions.

Klein's (1985) explanation of scapegoats as being the result of splitting and an aid to the development of a conscience in children however given the age of children in this study this explanation is inadequate as many of the children have had their companions for five or more years. Instead it is likely that such a practice by children goes further than self criticism, as in the role of "Someone to look after" it is possible that the child is engaging in behaviour they see their parents perform and thus believe it to be valued.

The nature of scapegoating is such that it can perhaps be better understood as a characteristic of imaginary companions, rather than a function. Research that took such a stance may be more successful in elucidating this aspect of imaginary companions.

The role of "Guardian Angel or Protector" has been proposed as common to child who have difficulties stemming from their environment. Such a link was not established here, nor was this a very popular option among parents indicating its

validity and its related ecological theory are questionable. The least popular option was that of "Teacher", which was predicted to be most common among male children, due to the results of Harter and Chao's (1992) study. The unpopularity of this option may be due to a lack of understanding about what was meant by teacher rather than its inappropriateness.

One of the main goals of this research was to investigate how personal experience of imaginary companions translated into theories of and attitudes toward imaginary companions as opposed to no personal experience. The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that personal experience has little or no effect on attitudes toward imaginary companions, or for that matter personal theories of why children create imaginary companions. Parents in both groups held similar views on everything from older children having companions, long duration companions, high fantasy involvement and both had similar ratings on the acceptability of different imaginary companion functions. Lastly, both rated four different childhood behaviours similarly, including deceitfulness, good behaviour, destructiveness and having an imaginary companion.

Where they differed parents in the IC group and NIC did so on the more generic questions regarding attitudes, such as, whether they believed imaginativeness was a factor contributing to children creating imaginary companions, whether they would prefer their child to have an imaginary companion or not and whether they believe children to be aided by the experience. Parents in the IC group had more invested in their answers than those in the NIC group, stating they wished their child didn't have an imaginary companion would only serve to make them recent their child.

Parents tendency to report that they would act more discouragingly toward imaginary companions in their children than their feelings indicated they would, was unexpected. This finding can be explained in terms of societal expectations and pressures that affect

parental attitudes, behaviour more than their personal experience of imaginary companions. Parents it would seem are more concerned about appearing to be discouraging than they are about the imaginary companions themselves, such are the societal pressures to have a "normal" child.

Parents in the IC group were not dissuaded from their negative views by a happy healthy child (as the results indicate they were), this suggests that parental attitudes toward imaginary companions have more to do with the larger picture, that is, society's views than they do personal experience. It may indeed be that the only thing preventing parents from expressing complete negativity toward imaginary companions is lack of evidence that such companions are in any way detrimental to children. The parallels between imaginary companions and hallucinations, and the belief that the utilisation of the imagination represents a shift away from reality are at least to some extent responsible for society's unwillingness to encourage, accept and embrace imaginary companions as a normal part of childhood experience.

Pines (1978, p. 41) writes that "too many parents and educators worry that imaginary companions are evidence of insecurity, withdrawal, and latent neurosis", this, all evidence suggests is incorrect and can only be put right by educating the public to what the academic community has known for some time. The education of society as a whole not only in regard to imaginary companions and the positive role they can potentially play in children's lives, but also about one of the most under-utilised resources we have; the imagination, is very much overdue. If the negative attitudes of parents are based on misinformation, then education should produce more appropriate attitudes. Research that considers, firstly whether education has such an effect and secondly, whether some forms of providing such information result in more positive results than others, would contribute significantly to the task of abating negative attitudes.

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APPENDIX 1: Information Sheet.

PARENTAL INSIGHTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN'S IMAGINARY COMPANIONS.

Information Sheet

Hello, my name is Sarah Morris and currently I am undertaking a degree of Master of Arts in Psychology, at Massey University. This study represents the basis for my thesis which is entitled "Parental insights and attitudes toward children's imaginary companions".

The concept of childhood companions who exist only for their creator, is not foreign to most people, either because they know someone that has had one or they have had one themselves. However, despite the prominence of these invisible friends very little research has been conducted to establish why children create these friends. This is therefore an area of human experience where the experts are people in the real world-parents such as yourself. It is the aim of this study to correct this imbalance of insight by tapping into your experiences of your child's imaginary friend, as well as, establishing your attitude toward and feelings about children who create such companions. To gain such insights we need your help, even if you have no personal experiences of imaginary friends we would still value your opinions on the subject.

Participation in this study will involve filling in a simple questionnaire on your attitudes and experiences. From start to finish the questionnaire will take approximately half an

hour to complete. Please note that the results of the information gathered may be used in future publications.

If you take part in this study, you have the right to:

- * refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time.
 - * ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation.
 - * provide information on the understanding that it is confidential to the researchers.
- All information is collected anonymously, and it will not be possible to identify you in any reports that are prepared from the study.
- * be given access to summary of the findings from the study when it concludes

If you have any concerns regarding imaginary companions, or if you would like any further information about what your participation in this study would involve please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone listed number below.

Please sign the attached "Consent Form" and return it in the envelope provided to your child's school, if you would like to participate, if you would prefer not to participate please return your unsigned form anyway.

Thanks,

Sarah Morris

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

APPENDIX 2: Consent Form.

**PARENTAL INSIGHTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD
CHILDREN'S IMAGINARY COMPANIONS.**

Consent form

I have read the information sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers on the understanding that it completely confidential.

I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out on the information sheet.
(Either or both parents may sign this form).

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Please write your postal address below so that a questionnaire can be posted to you,

Postal Address _____

Please answer the following question by circling the appropriate answer:

Has a child of yours ever had an imaginary companion? Yes No

**APPENDIX 3: Questionnaire for Parents who have encountered Imaginary
Companions in their own children.**

PARENTAL INSIGHTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN'S IMAGINARY COMPANIONS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS WHO HAVE ENCOUNTERED IMAGINARY COMPANIONS IN THEIR CHILDREN

Please remember that, you have the right to:

- * refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time.
- * ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation.
- * provide information on the understanding that it is confidential to the researchers. All information is collected anonymously, and it will not be possible to identify you in any reports that are prepared from the study.
- * be given access to summary of the findings from the study when it concludes

Once you have completed the questionnaire please mail it in the free post envelope provided. Please feel free to call me if you have any difficulties filling in your questionnaire, my number is listed below. If you would like a summary of this studies findings please fill in your details below.

Name _____

Postal Address _____

Thank-you for your time,
Sarah Morris

[REDACTED]

PARENTAL INSIGHTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN'S IMAGINARY COMPANIONS.

PART ONE

To be completed by parents who have encountered imaginary companions in their own children.

A) Background of child that had (has) the imaginary companion(s). Please complete the following by filling in the details of your child who has/had an imaginary companion.

Age:

Sex:

Ethnicity:

Number of Siblings:

Place in Family (e.g. oldest):

Age when Imaginary Companion first appeared:
.....

Age when Imaginary Companion disappeared:
.....

B) Characteristics of Imaginary Companion(s). Please complete the following by supplying as many details as you know about your child's imaginary companion(s).

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Type of Being (e.g. human, animal, etc.):
.....

Clothing:

C) Personal Experiences. For each question please tick or circle the best answer for you and your child.

1. How did you first become aware that your child had an imaginary companion?

- a) My child told me she/he had one
- b) Her/his behaviour made it obvious
- c) Other
- d) Don't know

2. Was the appearance of your child's imaginary companion preceded by any life changes or significant events in his/her life?

- a) No
- b) Yes
- c) Don't know

3. Do you think that your child's imaginary companion may be due to loneliness?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

4. Do you think that your child is more imaginative than children who don't have imaginary companions?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

5. Have you ever treated your child's imaginary companion like a real child (e.g. talked to it)?

- a) Rarely
- b) Sometimes
- c) Often
- d) Very often

6. Do you feel your child's companion plays any of the following roles in your child's life?

*Guardian Angel or protector?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

*A teacher?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

*A scapegoat (i.e. someone to blame for misbehaviour)?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

*Someone to look after?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

None of the above (tick if appropriate).

7. Is it ever difficult to get your child to do things around the home when she/he is playing with his/her imaginary companion?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

8. Is it ever difficult to get your child to do things around the home when she/he is playing non-fantasy games?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

9. Was there ever a time when your child's interaction with her/his imaginary companion concerned you in any way?

- a) Rarely
- b) Sometimes
- c) Often
- d) Very often

10. Have you ever felt embarrassed as a result of your child's imaginary companion?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

PART TWO

A) General information about child. Please complete the following to the best of your knowledge, by first filling in the appropriate spaces in column a, then in column b and c by ticking the most appropriate box on each line corresponding to your answer in column a.

1a. Please list the sports your child most likes to take part in. For example: swimming, skating, netball, fishing, etc.

None

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

b. Compared to others of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

c. Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do in each one?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

2a. Please list your child's favourite hobbies, activities and games, other than sports. For example, stamps, dolls, books, piano, crafts, cars, etc.

None

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

b. Compared to others of the same age, about how much does he/she spend in each?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

c. Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

3a. Please list any organisations, clubs, or groups your child belongs to.

None

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

b. Compared to others of the same age, how active is he/she in each?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

4a. Please list any jobs or chores your child has. For example: paper route, baby-sitting, making bed doing dishes, etc.

None

b. Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she carry them out?

	Don't Know	Less Than Average	Average	More Than Average
--	---------------	-------------------------	---------	-------------------------

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

For each question please tick or circle the best answer for you and your child.

5. About how many close friends does your child have? (Do not include brothers and sisters)

None 1 2 or 3 4 or more

6. About how many times a week does your child do things with any friends outside of regular school hours? (do not include brothers and sisters.)

None 1 2 or 3 4 or more

7. Compared to others of his/her age, how well does your child:

	Worse	About average	Better
--	-------	------------------	--------

a. Get along with his/her brothers and sisters

_____ _____ _____

Has no
brothers or
sisters

b. Get along with other kids?

_____ _____ _____

c. Behave with his/her parents?

_____ _____ _____

d. Play and work by himself/herself?

_____ _____ _____

Below is a list of items that describe children and youth. For each item that describes your child **now or within the last six months**, please circle the 2 if the item is **very true or often true** of your child. Circle the 1 if the item is **somewhat or sometimes true** of your child. If the item is **not true** of your child, circle the 0. Please answer all items as well as you can, even if some do not apply to your child.

0= Not True (as far as you know) 1= Somewhat or sometimes true
 2= Very True or often true

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 0 1 2 | 1 Acts too young for his/her age |
| 0 1 2 | 2 Can't concentrate, can't pay attention for long |
| 0 1 2 | 3 Can't sit still, restless, or hyperactive |
| 0 1 2 | 4 Clings to adults or is too dependent |
| 0 1 2 | 5 Confused or seems to be in a fog |
| 0 1 2 | 6 Day-dreams or seems to get lost in his/her own thoughts |
| 0 1 2 | 7 Doesn't get along with other kids |
| 0 1 2 | 8 Gets teased a lot |
| 0 1 2 | 9 Impulsive or acts without thinking |
| 0 1 2 | 10 Nervous, high-strung, or tense |
| 0 1 2 | 11 Nervous movement or twitching |
| 0 1 2 | 12 Not liked by other kids |
| 0 1 2 | 13 Overweight |
| 0 1 2 | 14 Poor school work |
| 0 1 2 | 15 Poorly co-ordinated or clumsy |
| 0 1 2 | 16 Prefers being with younger kids |
| 0 1 2 | 17 Refuses to talk |
| 0 1 2 | 18 Secretive, keeps things to self |

0 1 2

- 19 Shy or timid
20 Stares blankly

0 1 2

- 21 Sulks a lot
22 Underactive, slow moving or lacks energy

0 1 2

- 23 Unhappy, sad or depressed
24 Withdrawn, doesn't get involved with others

B) Your views on imaginary companions. For each question please tick or circle the best answer for you and your child.

1. If you could choose whether or not your child had an imaginary companion, would you prefer that she/he

- a) Didn't have an imaginary companion
 b) Had an imaginary companion
 c) Don't care either way

2. Do you feel that children with imaginary companions are overall...

- a) Aided by the experience
 b) Disadvantaged by the experience
 c) Unaffected by the experience

3. What would you estimate the percentage of children that have imaginary companions at some time in their lives to be?

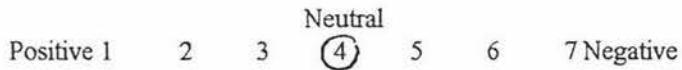
- a) Greater than 80%
 b) Greater than 60%
 c) Greater than 40%
 d) Greater than 10%

4. Would you like to know more about imaginary companions and the role they play in children's lives?

- a) No
 b) Yes

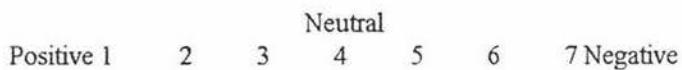
Below there are some situations faced by parents, please read them and respond as if the child were your own, by circling the answer that best represents your point of view. For example;

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

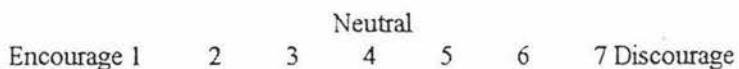


1. *Mark likes to hang out with his imaginary friend Roger and his dog Flip. Mark explains that Roger is a policeman and although Flip isn't he still wears police clothes and drives a police car. Mark is four years old.*

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

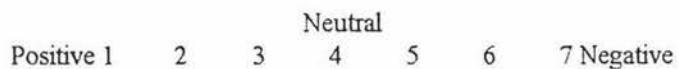


b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

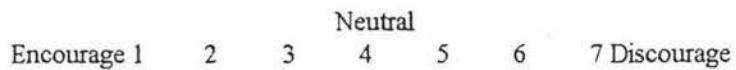


If Mark was eight years old...

c) How would you feel about this relationship?

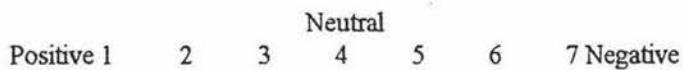


d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

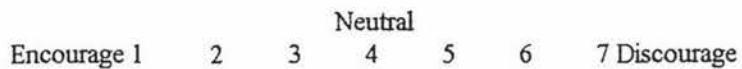


If Mark was ten years old...

e) How would you feel about this relationship?

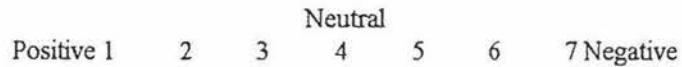


f) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

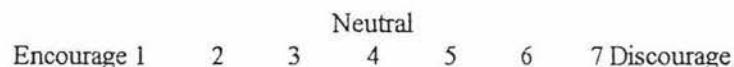


If Mark was twelve years old...

g) How would you feel about this relationship?

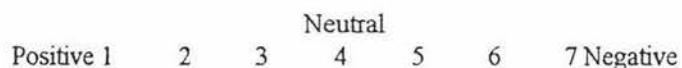


h) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

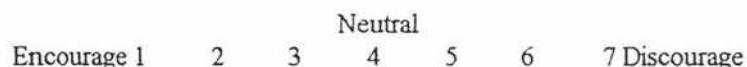


2. Mark plays with Roger and Flip after school most days until about dinner time when the rest of the family is home and he has someone else to play with.

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

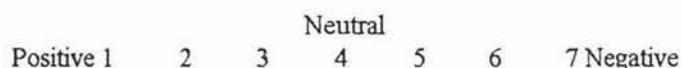


b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

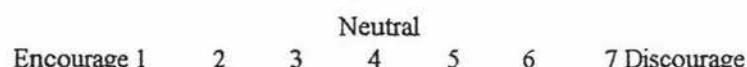


If instead Roger and Flip accompanied Mark in everything he did during the day and night.

c) How would you feel about this relationship?

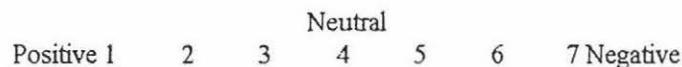


d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

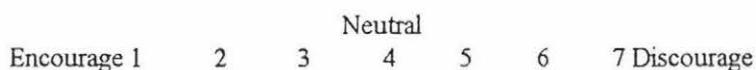


3. Charlotte has an imaginary brother and sister, John and Mary. Charlotte enjoys John and Mary's company because in real life she has no brothers or sisters to play with and often gets lonely.

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

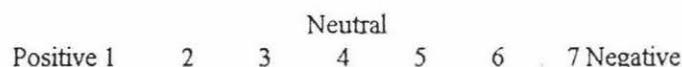


b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

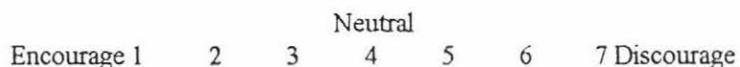


If Charlotte started playing with John and Mary when real people were available to play with.

c) How would you feel about this relationship?

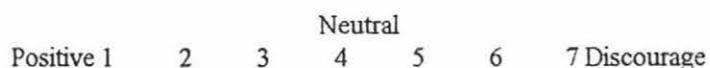


d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

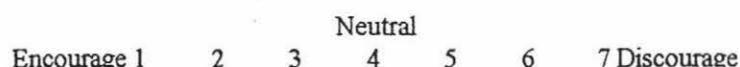


If two years later Charlotte was still playing with John and Mary, how would you respond?

e) How would you feel about this relationship?

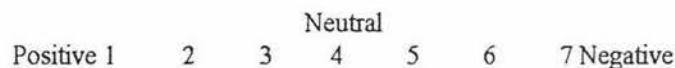


f) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

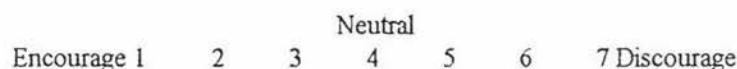


4. Stevie has an imaginary friend named Gerald, Gerald has a bad temper and quite often breaks things around Stevie's house, upsetting everyone. Stevie wishes Gerald was better behaved and often explains to Gerald that he can't keep breaking things, especially things that aren't his. Stevie gets especially angry with Gerald when his parents blame him for things that Gerald has done.

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

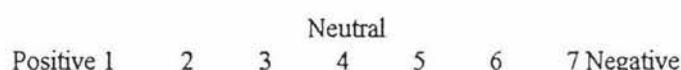


b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

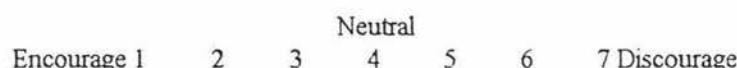


If however it was Gerald Stevie's imaginary companion that attempted to get Stevie to behave better and Stevie that had the bad temper how would you respond?

c) How would you feel about this relationship?

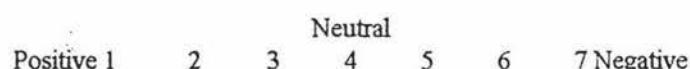


d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

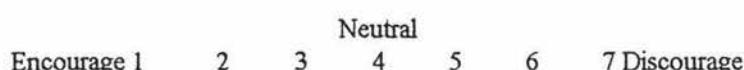


If Stevie began using Gerald as a scapegoat, that is, blaming all his bad behaviour on Gerald offering no other explanation for his actions how would you respond?

e) How would you feel about this relationship?

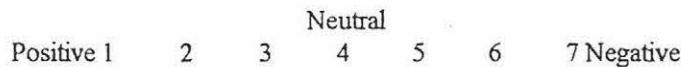


f) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

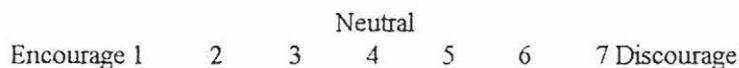


5. Allen has an imaginary friend named Ben who is the same age. Allen enjoys playing with Ben who is a fighter pilot, and who sometimes lets Allen fly his plane. Allen usually spends about an hour a day playing with Ben.

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

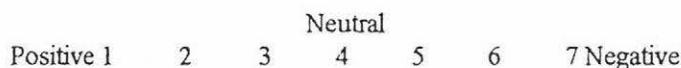


b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

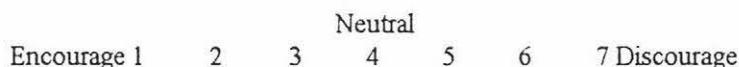


Allen goes into a world of his own when playing with Ben, meaning that he does not usually respond to anything or anyone in the 'real' world. To get his attention people usually have to physically touch him.

c) How would you feel about this relationship?

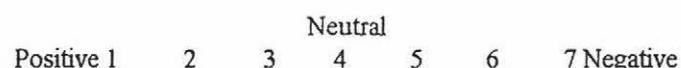


d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

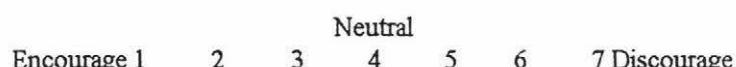


6. Caroline has an imaginary friend named Dooley, who is also a little girl. When Dooley first appeared she spent only a short time in Caroline's company, and Caroline described her as just someone to play with.

a) How would you feel about his relationship now?

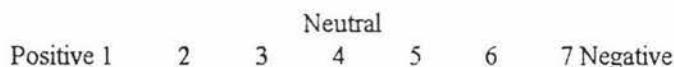


b) How would you act in regard to his relationship?

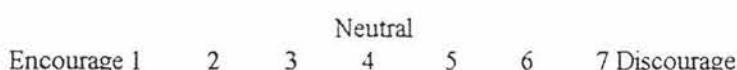


However as time went by Caroline began spending more and more time with Dooley. Caroline began to attribute many of her actions to Dooley's suggestions, such as her belief that eating her dinner with a spoon and fork was quicker.

c) How would you feel about this relationship?



d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?



Below is a list of behaviours, please indicate how you would respond to such behaviour in your own child by writing the letter of the answer you think most appropriate. The response options are;

- A) Strongly Discourage
- B) Discourage
- C) Remain neutral to
- D) Encourage
- E) Strongly encourage

A B C D E 1. Child puts toys away without being asked.
A B C D E 2. Child knocks plant over with ball.

A B C D E 3. Child insists that a place be set at Christmas dinner for imaginary friend.

A B C D E 4. Child lies about using sisters colouring book, to protect brother who used it.

A B C D E 5. Child takes sofa cushions outside to play with.
A B C D E 6. Child asks for extra pillow for imaginary companion to sleep on.

A B C D E 7. Child claims to have had a bath but is still dirty
A B C D E 8. Child volunteers to get sister from neighbours house.

A B C D E 9. Child wears new shoes to park and returns covered in mud.

A B C D E 10. Child lies about having finished homework, so she can help sister with hers.

A B C D E 11. Child helps out with dinner preparation.
A B C D E 12. Child insists on consulting imaginary companion about homework.

**APPENDIX 4: Questionnaire for Parents who have not encountered Imaginary
companions in their own children.**

PARENTAL INSIGHTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN'S IMAGINARY COMPANIONS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS WHO HAVE NOT ENCOUNTERED IMAGINARY COMPANIONS IN THEIR CHILDREN

Please remember that, you have the right to:

- * refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time.
- * ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation.
- * provide information on the understanding that it is confidential to the researchers. All information is collected anonymously, and it will not be possible to identify you in any reports that are prepared from the study.
- * be given access to summary of the findings from the study when it concludes

Once you have completed the questionnaire please mail it in the free post envelope provided. Please feel free to call me if you have any difficulties filling in your questionnaire, my number is listed below. If you would like a summary of this studies findings please fill in your details below.

Name _____

Postal Address _____

Thank-you for your time,
Sarah Morris
P. [REDACTED]

PARENTAL INSIGHTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN'S IMAGINARY COMPANIONS.

PART ONE

To be completed by parents who have not encountered imaginary companions in their children.

A) Background of child that has not had an imaginary companion. Please complete the following by filling in the details of one of your children that has not had an imaginary companion.

Age: Sex: Ethnicity:

Number of siblings: Place in Family (e.g. oldest):

B) Your personal experiences. For each question please tick or circle the best answer for you and your child.

1. Have you ever encountered any imaginary companions in your own childhood or in children other than your own?

- a) No
- b) Yes, but only limited
- c) Yes

2. Do you feel your child has missed out by not having an imaginary companion?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

3. Do you feel your child is as imaginative as children who have imaginary companions?

- a) Not at all
- b) Somewhat
- c) Moderately so
- d) Very much so

4. Do you think that your child doesn't have an imaginary companion because she/he has enough real friends?

Yes, Definitely. 1 2 3 4 5 No, Definitely not.

PART TWO

A) General information about child. Please complete the following to the best of your knowledge, by first filling in the appropriate spaces in column a, then in column b and c by ticking the most appropriate box on each line corresponding to your answer in column a.

1a. Please list the sports your child most likes to take part in. For example: swimming, skating, netball, fishing, etc.

— None

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

b. Compared to others of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

c. Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do in each one?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

2a. Please list your child's favourite hobbies, activities and games, other than sports. For example, stamps, dolls, books, piano, crafts, cars, etc.

— None

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

b. Compared to others of the same age, about how much does he/she spend in each?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

c. Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

3a. Please list any organisations, clubs, or groups your child belongs to.

— None

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

b. Compared to others of the same age, how active is he/she in each?

Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

4a. Please list any jobs or chores your child has. For example: paper route, baby-sitting, making bed doing dishes, etc.

None

b. Compared to others of the same age, how well does he she carry them out?

	Don't Know	Less Than Average	More Than Average
--	---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

For each question please tick or circle the best answer for you and your child.

5. About how many close friends does your child have? (Do not include brothers and sisters)

None 1 2 or 3 4 or more

6. About how many times a week does your child do things with any friends outside of regular school hours? (do not include brothers and sisters.)

None 1 2 or 3 4 or more

7. Compared to others of his/her age, how well does your child:

	Worse	About average	Better
--	-------	------------------	--------

a. Get along with his/her brothers and sisters

 Has no

brothers or
sisters

b. Get along with other kids?

c. Behave with his/her parents?

d. Play and work by himself/herself?

Below is a list of items that describe children and youth. For each item that describes your child **now or within the last six months**, please circle the 2 if the item is **very true** or **often true** of your child. Circle the 1 if the item is **somewhat** or **sometimes** true of your child. If the item is **not true** of your child, circle the 0. Please answer all items as well as you can, even if some do not apply to your child.

0	1	2	1	Acts too young for his/her age
0	1	2	2	Can't concentrate, can't pay attention for long
0	1	2	3	Can't sit still, restless, or hyperactive
0	1	2	4	Clings to adults or is too dependent
0	1	2	5	Confused or seems to be in a fog
0	1	2	6	Day-dreams or seems to get lost in his/her own thoughts
0	1	2	7	Doesn't get along with other kids
0	1	2	8	Gets teased a lot
0	1	2	9	Impulsive or acts without thinking
0	1	2	10	Nervous, high-strung, or tense
0	1	2	11	Nervous movement or twitching
0	1	2	12	Not liked by other kids
0	1	2	13	Overweight
0	1	2	14	Poor school work
0	1	2	15	Poorly co-ordinated or clumsy
0	1	2	16	Prefers being with younger kids
0	1	2	17	Refuses to talk
0	1	2	18	Secretive, keeps things to self

0	1	2	19	Shy or timid
0	1	2	20	Stares blankly
0	1	2	21	Sulks a lot
0	1	2	22	Underactive, slow moving or lacks energy
0	1	2	23	Unhappy, sad or depressed
0	1	2	24	Withdrawn, doesn't get involved with others

B) Your views on imaginary companions. For each question please tick or circle the best answer for you and your child.

1. If you could choose whether or not your child had an imaginary companion, would you prefer that she/he

- a) Didn't have an imaginary companion
- b) Had an imaginary companion
- c) Don't care either way

2. Do you feel that children with imaginary companions are overall...

- a) Aided by the experience
- b) Disadvantaged by the experience
- c) Unaffected by the experience

3. What would you estimate the percentage of children that have imaginary companions at some time in their lives to be?

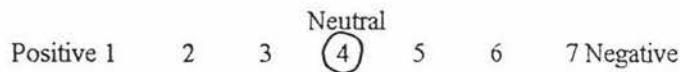
- a) Greater than 80%
- b) Greater than 60%
- c) Greater than 40%
- d) Greater than 10%

4. Would you like to know more about imaginary companions and the role they play in children's lives?

- a) No
- b) Yes

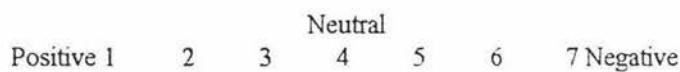
Below there are some situations faced by parents, please read them and respond as if the child were your own, by circling the answer that best represents your point of view. For example;

- a) How would you feel about this relationship?

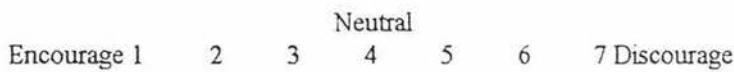


1. *Mark likes to hang out with his imaginary friend Roger and his dog Flip. Mark explains that Roger is a policeman and although Flip isn't he still wears police clothes and drives a police car. Mark is four years old.*

- a) How would you feel about this relationship?

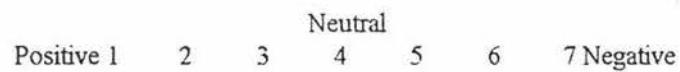


- b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

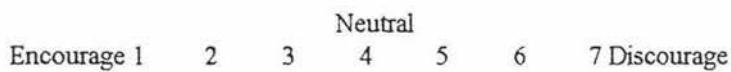


If Mark was eight years old...

- c) How would you feel about this relationship?

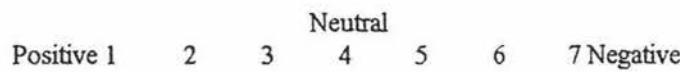


- d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

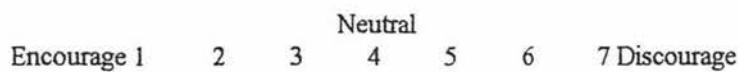


If Mark was ten years old...

- e) How would you feel about this relationship?

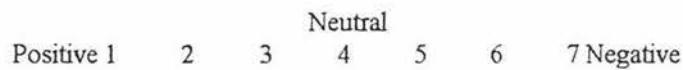


- f) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

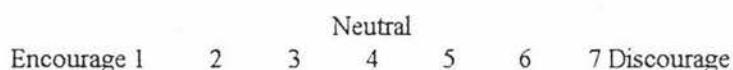


If Mark was twelve years old...

g) How would you feel about this relationship?

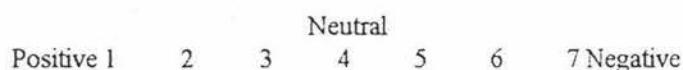


h) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

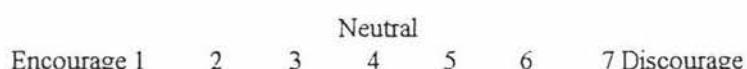


2. *Mark plays with Roger and Flip after school most days until about dinner time when the rest of the family is home and he has someone else to play with.*

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

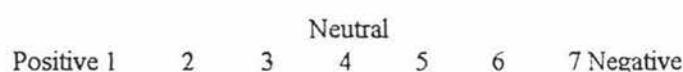


b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

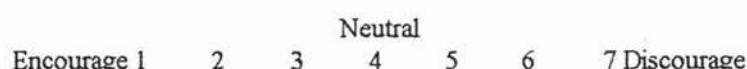


If instead Roger and Flip accompanied Mark in everything he did during the day and night.

c) How would you feel about this relationship?

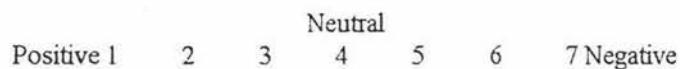


d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

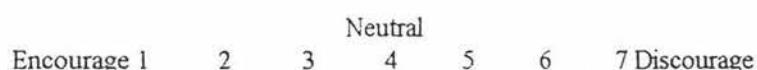


3. Charlotte has an imaginary brother and sister, John and Mary. Charlotte enjoys John and Mary's company because in real life she has no brothers or sisters to play with and often gets lonely.

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

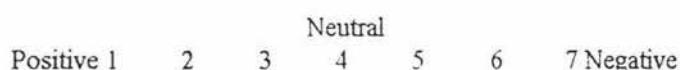


b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

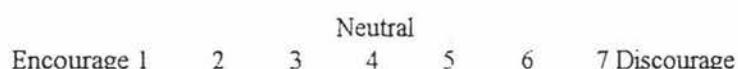


If Charlotte started playing with John and Mary when real people were available to play with.

c) How would you feel about this relationship?

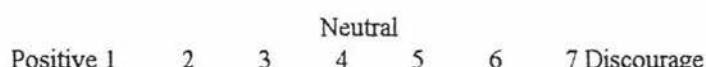


d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

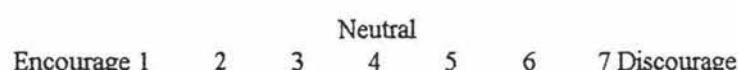


If two years later Charlotte was still playing with John and Mary, how would you respond?

e) How would you feel about this relationship?

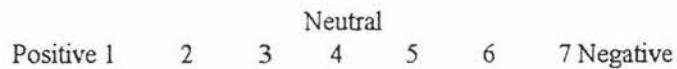


f) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

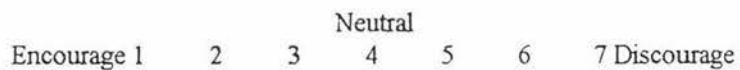


4. Stevie has an imaginary friend named Gerald, Gerald has a bad temper and quite often breaks things around Stevie's house, upsetting everyone. Stevie wishes Gerald was better behaved and often explains to Gerald that he can't keep breaking things, especially things that aren't his. Stevie gets especially angry with Gerald when his parents blame him for things that Gerald has done.

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

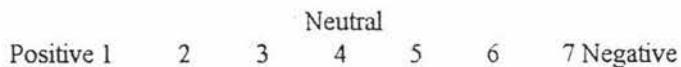


b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

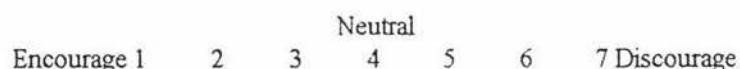


If however it was Gerald Stevie's imaginary companion that attempted to get Stevie to behave better and Stevie that had the bad temper how would you respond?

c) How would you feel about this relationship?

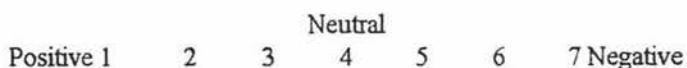


d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

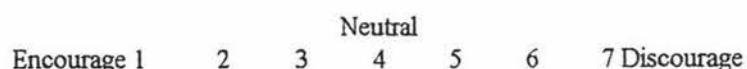


If Stevie began using Gerald as a scapegoat, that is, blaming all his bad behaviour on Gerald offering no other explanation for his actions how would you respond?

e) How would you feel about this relationship?

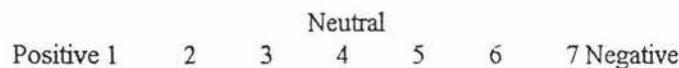


f) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

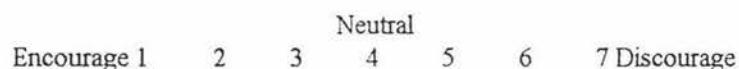


5. Allen has an imaginary friend named Ben who is the same age. Allen enjoys playing with Ben who is a fighter pilot, and who sometimes lets Allen fly his plane. Allen usually spends about an hour a day playing with Ben.

a) How would you feel about this relationship?

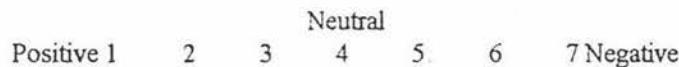


b) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

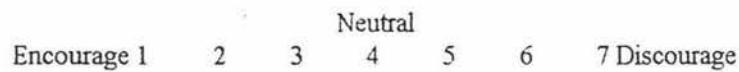


Allen goes into a world of his own when playing with Ben, meaning that he does not usually respond to anything or anyone in the 'real' world. To get his attention people usually have to physically touch him.

c) How would you feel about this relationship?

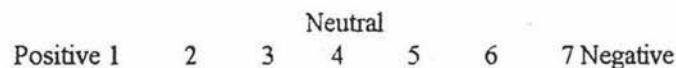


d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?

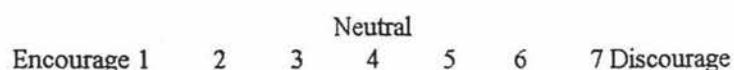


6. Caroline has an imaginary friend named Dooley, who is also a little girl. When Dooley first appeared she spent only a short time in Caroline's company, and Caroline described her as just someone to play with.

a) How would you feel about his relationship now?

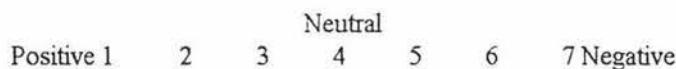


b) How would you act in regard to his relationship?

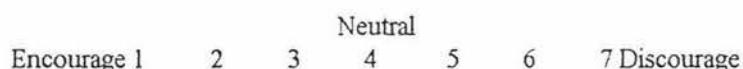


However as time went by Caroline began spending more and more time with Dooley. Caroline began to attribute many of her actions to Dooley's suggestions, such as her belief that eating her dinner with a spoon and fork was quicker.

c) How would you feel about this relationship?



d) How would you act in regard to this relationship?



Below is a list of behaviours, please indicate how you would respond to such behaviour in your own child by writing the letter of the answer you think most appropriate. The response options are;

- A) Strongly Discourage
- B) Discourage
- C) Remain neutral to
- D) Encourage
- E) Strongly encourage

A B C D E 1. Child puts toys away without being asked.

A B C D E 2. Child knocks plant over with ball.

A B C D E 3. Child insists that a place be set at Christmas dinner for imaginary friend.

A B C D E 4. Child lies about using sisters colouring book, to protect brother who used it.

A B C D E 5. Child takes sofa cushions outside to play with.

A B C D E 6. Child asks for extra pillow for imaginary companion to sleep on.

A B C D E 7. Child claims to have had a bath but is still dirty

A B C D E 8. Child volunteers to get sister from neighbours house.

A B C D E 9. Child wears new shoes to park and returns covered in mud.

A B C D E 10. Child lies about having finished homework, so she can help sister with hers.

A B C D E 11. Child helps out with dinner preparation.

A B C D E 12. Child insists on consulting imaginary companion about homework.

APPENDIX 5: Reminder letter.

Department of Psychology
Massey University
Palmerston North

30 November 1995

Dear Parent or Caregiver

RE: Questionnaire entitled "Parental insights and attitudes toward children's imaginary companions"

This is just a quick reminder to those of you that have not yet completed or returned your questionnaires, to please, do so soon. The results so far have been very encouraging and I look forward to receiving the remaining questionnaires so that the analysis can be completed.

If you have already returned your questionnaire, thank you for your time. Feedback sheets will be sent out, to those that have requested them, when the analysis of the questionnaires is completed.

Yours sincerely

Sarah M Morris.