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ADAPTIVE AND MALADAPTIVE USES OF IMAGINARY COMPANIONS: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

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ADAPTIVE AND MALADAPTIVE USES OF IMAGINARY COMPANIONS: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

by

Jodie R. Meyer

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

ADAPTIVE AND MALADAPTIVE USES OF IMAGINARY COMPANIONS:
A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

by

Jodie R. Meyer

Advisor: Professor I.H. Paul

This study explores whether a child's having an imaginary companion is an adaptive or maladaptive phenomenon. A pilot study revealed two primary functions that the imaginary companion served: (1) to deal with aggression/superego concerns, and (2) to deal with dependency or autonomy conflicts. Developmental theory posits that dependency issues precede superego concerns. Therefore, this study hypothesized that children aged 4-5 who use their imaginary companions to negotiate superego/aggression issues would fare better on measures of internal and external adaptiveness. The Achenbach and Edelbrock Child Behavior Checklist was used to assess behavioral symptomatology. The Rorschach Test assessed intrapsychic functioning. Parents were given a questionnaire which surveyed the ways their child used their companion. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test was employed to insure that intelligence would not confound test results. The sample consisted of 18 children, 12 girls and

6 boys, ranging in age from 3 years 10 months to 5 years 2 months. Various statistical procedures failed to dichotomize the sample into two mutually exclusive, non-overlapping groups based on the primary function of the imaginary companion. Therefore, the major hypotheses of this study could not be tested. Several significant findings were derived however. The children all scored within the normal range using the Child Behavior Checklist sum score. This provides behavioral evidence that in this age child, the existence of an imaginary companion is not pathological. The normative behavior of this sample also permitted comparisons between the normative Rorschach data provided by Ames et al. and the Rorschach performance of this sample. In contrast to normative findings, these children produce a greater number of human, animal, and inanimate movement responses, as well as a larger number of pure color responses. The human and animal movement responses provide an intrapsychic correlate to the imaginativeness necessary to develop an imaginary companion. The inanimate movement and pure color responses depict the high level of anxiety that these children wrestle with, which may be a key etiological agent in the development of imaginary companions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1800's, educators, psychologists and sociologists have made reference to a particularly intriguing form of childhood fantasy known as imaginary companions. Attempts to elucidate the nature and function of imaginary companions have come in varying forms. One approach has provided demographic data regarding the imaginary companions themselves, the children who create them and the familial make-up of these children. Another approach has focused on case reports and/or vignettes describing imaginary companions. Many of these are theoretical in nature, using a psychoanalytic perspective to illustrate the possible functions of an imaginary companion.

In the following chapter I will review the literature which addresses the phenomenon of imaginary companions. First, I will look at studies which investigate the characteristics of the children who create them. Next I will address the question of the relationship between personality and imaginary companions. In this section I will also review the literature relevant to the issue of

whether having an imaginary companion is adaptive or pathological. I will look then at the theoretical contributions which address the meaning of imaginary companions and the functions which they serve. These theoretical contributions highlight the importance of understanding a child's object relations as the prime contributor to the development of the child's imaginary companion. I will therefore briefly review the use of the Rorschach test as a means of assessing object relations in children.

Definition of the Phenomenon

One of the basic difficulties in understanding imaginary companions is the lack of definitional clarity as to what constitutes an imaginary companion. In an excellent review article by Nagera (1969), he notes that "there are no uniform criteria and that a variety of fantasy manifestations in children are included by some authors and excluded by others" (p. 169).

Svendsen (1934) defined the phenomenon 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. This excludes that type of imaginative play in which an object

is personified, or in which the child himself assumes the role of some person in his environment" (p. 988). She cites the following example to illustrate her point:

> Shortly before her second birthday Mary referred to "Tagar," her first imaginary companion. She led Tagar around on an imaginary string. Food was kept for it under the radiator, where it also slept; she always fed it on the floor. It was particularly fond of ice cream, as she was. "Berrie and Auntie" followed Tagar, appearing when she was about 3 1/2 years of age. They were two persons, but lived together. Mary would set places for them at the family table. Although dishes and silver were laid and Mary would ask if they had enough, real food was never offered them. On other occasions she would seize the opportunity at meal time to tell her father all the things which they did for which she might be punished, but they never were, and never did anything wrong. Berrie and Auntie frequently accompanied her and her parents on outings and on several occasions she attempted to draw her real companion into play with them, by insisting that she talk with them on the telephone. (pp. 988-999)

Jersild (1960) underscores the vividness of these invisible companions in stating that "the label imaginary companion is an imagined creature (person or animal) or thing that is unusually vivid (it has a vitality of its own as experienced by the one who has the companion)" (p. 341). He cites as an example a 4-year-old girl whose imaginary companion was a monkey. At one point she began to scream at her father as he began to sit down on the sofa, and then explained that her imaginary companion had been

sick and had just soiled the sofa where her father nearly sat!

In their questionnaire study of preschool children, Manosevitz et al. (1973) instructed parents to employ the following definition: "a very vivid imaginary character (person, animal or object) with which their child interacts during his play and daily activities" (p. 74). This definition was designed specifically to exclude nightdream and daydream characters. In contrast to Svendsen, Manosevitz et al. include objects in their definition, and make no reference to required duration of the companion's existence.

Characteristics of Imaginary Companions

While all authors note the idiosyncratic nature of imaginary companions, there are nonetheless certain commonalities that have been observed. There are six major studies which have addressed these characteristics (Hurlock & Burstein, 1932; Jersild, Markey, & Jersild, 1933; Svendsen, 1934; Griffiths, 1935; Ames & Learned, 1946; Manosevitz, Prentice & Wilson, 1973). The following characteristics have been addressed and will be reviewed here: identity of the companions; reality of the companions; name, age, and sex of imaginary companions; age of child at, and occasion of first appearance; and age of disappearance and possible explanations.

Identity of the Companions. Imaginary companions come in a variety of forms. They can include human beings, anthropomorphized animals or dolls, mythical creatures and objects. Ames and Learned (1946) propose an "imagination gradient" which suggests that these various forms occur in a specific order which corresponds to the normal developmental stages of imaginative behavior. For example, Ames and Learned would assert that the creation of an imaginary animal companion would precede the formation of an imaginary human companion. Svendsen (1934), however, found that there was no uniform course of development. No other study has addressed this potentially meaningful and interesting progression.

All studies, including Ames and Learned (1946), found a predominance of human companions. Vostrovsky (1895) reported that 89% of their 45 subjects had human companions, 10% had animal imaginary companions, and 1% had both. Jersild et al. (1933) found that 79% of the several hundred children studied had human imaginary companions, with the remaining 21% being either imaginary animals or objects. Ames and Learned (1946) stated that 75% of their subjects (n=35) had human imaginary companions, 25% had imaginary animal companions, and that 6 children (17% of their sample) had both. More recently, Manosevitz et al. (1973) reported in 89% of their 63 cases that the imaginary

companion was a person; 11% were either imaginary objects or animals.

Reality of the Imaginary Companions. Most authors address the question of how real these invisible companions seem to be to the children who create them. Jersild (1960) states that "although it is a figment of the child's mind, it may assume for a time what seems to be an independent reality" (p. 341). Hurlock and Burstein (1932) note that they are real and vivid to nearly all of their subjects.

Imaginary companions are frequently associated with strong visual and/or auditory imagery (Harvey, 1918; Svendsen, 1934). Hurlock and Burstein (1932) stated, "this comrade can be seen and heard as if he were real" (p. 388).

Nagera (1969) points out that imaginary companions are frequently treated as if they occupy physical space. Svendsen (1934) reported that 33 of her 40 subjects "played with the imaginary companions in such a manner as to indicate that the companions were conceived of as occupying space" (p. 995). Manosevitz et al. (1973) state that 47% of the imaginary companions they studied occupied space.

There are a variety of ways in which children enact the notion of physical space with their imaginary companions. For example, frequent accounts are reported of the imaginary companion occupying a place at the table, accompanying the family in the car with a designated seat, or requiring a specific place in the child's bed.

Svendsen (1934) also made reference to the companion's place of residence. Frequently this could be at the child's home or elsewhere. This phenomenon was also found by this author in informal contacts with several children who had imaginary companions. One boy noted that his companion lived in his pocket. Another stated that his friend lived in the radiator. While one little girl could recite the exact address and apartment number of her imaginary companion.

Yet, while authors note that children treat their imaginary companions as if they really exist, they also assert that these children are well aware of the imaginary nature of their creations. Harvey (1918) wrote that,

> the imaginary playmate is a visual or auditory idea that becomes as real and vivid as a visual or auditory percept, but that the child nevertheless always recognizes its unreality. (Svendsen, p. 986)

Svendsen (1934) believed that imaginary companion children could distinguish between imagination and reality and that

if questioned they would say things such as "they're crazy things" or "in my heart I can see him" (p. 977). Dorothy Singer (Pines, 1978) has stated, "these children have a strong sense of what's real and what's fantasy, and can move back and forth between the two," and added that children would say "that's just make-believe" if asked about the reality of their imaginary companions.

Names of Imaginary Companions. The names of imaginary companions vary from ordinary to highly original ones. Vostrovsky (1895) noted that some companions had first names only, while others had two. She found that common names were more often the case (75%). Hurlock and Burstein (1932) also found that common names were predominant (83% for girls, 69% for boys). However, girls were more apt to name their companions than boys. Svendsen (1934) and Manosevitz et al. (1973) further substantiate the finding that common place names are the norm.

Several authors have studied the question of the origin of these names. Hurlock and Burstein (1932) reported that while often the reason for the choice of the names is unknown (for 33% of the girls, 55% of the boys), the most frequently stated reasons were names of someone liked or a storybook character. Svendsen (1934) analyzed the derivation of the names and concluded that,

> evidence points to the following as possible sources for the names of imaginary companions: (1) real characters, particularly those loved or admired; (2) persons or words that are surrounded with mystery or whose meaning or relationship is not fully comprehended by the child (when this is the case, the sounds may be inaccurately reproduced, as when Adam and Eve became Ave and Deve); (3) children's stories; and (4) euphonious sound effects. (p. 994)

Manosevitz et al. (1973) stated that the names tended to derive from names of friends, relatives, TV and storybook characters, or toys. And finally, extensive case studies by psychoanalytic writers often attribute to and examine the name of the imaginary companion in light of its intrapsychic function (see Sperling, 1954; Nagera, 1969; Bach, 1971; Baum, 1978).

Sex of the Imaginary Companion. The designated sex-reference of the child's imaginary companion appears to have changed over time. Early studies report that the majority of children prefer same sex companions (Vostrovsky, 1895; Hurlock and Burstein, 1932; Jersild et al. 1933; Svendsen, 1934). Vostrovsky (1895) and Svendsen (1934) also note that some children had companions of both sexes.

While Ames and Learned (1946) also found that the majority of children in their study had companions of both sexes, their findings for children with only one companion contradicted earlier reports. In their study, five girls

had girls only, while eight girls had boys only. Three boys had girls only, while one boy had a boy only. This data supported a trend noted by Jersild et al. (1933).

The most recent demographic study by Manosevitz et al. (1973) reports that males were significantly more likely to have a male companion, whereas females tended only slightly to have same sex imaginary companions. They suggest that the differences among preschool children "may reflect parental demands for stricter compliance to sex-role stereotypes in males in contrast to their greater tolerance of cross-sex preferences and behavior in females" (p. 75).

Age of Imaginary Companions. There is a general consensus among studies that imaginary companions tend either to be the same age as their creators, older, or at times to have an indefinite age. Rarely are they found to be younger (Vostrovsky, 1895; Hurlock & Burstein, 1932; Svendsen, 1934; Manosevitz et al., 1973).

Ames and Learned (1946), however, suggest that the age of the companion varies with the age of the child, and note a clear developmental pattern. They found that the youngest children (30 to 33 months) who have imaginary companions have companions older than themselves. Later

(33 to 42 months) companions tend to be their contemporaries. And still later (42 to 48 months) they have companions who are younger, often characterized as babies. No other studies have addressed the relationship between the age of the imaginary companion and the child's age.

Age and Occasion of First Appearance. The literature reflects a wide range of opinions regarding the age of the child when their imaginary companions are first observed. Vostrovsky (1895) made a general claim that their first appearance could be anywhere during the the first through thirteenth years. However, this was not based on direct observation.

Most authors tend to date their appearance at somewhere between 2 and 3 years. Nagera (1969) stated that at the Hampstead Clinic in England, the phenomenon was most frequently seen in children between 2 1/2 and 3 years. Svendsen (1934) found that 37 of her 40 subjects had their imaginary playmates before the age of 4, 39 before 5, and all 40 by 6 years. She stated that the median age of appearance was 2 years, 5 months. She added that findings by Hall (1907), Norsworthy and Whitely (1918), Terman (1926), and Kirkpatrick (1929) all substantiate her findings (p. 933).

Ames and Learned (1946) state that this phenomenon usually begins at 36 to 42 months. In addition, many case

study reports date the first appearance of imaginary companions to this same period (Munroe, 1894; Swett, 1910; Nice, 1919; Sperling, 1954; Nagera, 1969; Bach, 1971; Baum, 1978).

Yet, while there is general agreement that imaginary companions tend to appear during preschool years, there are also references in the literature to both latency-age children and adolescents who evidence the phenomenon (Brittain, 1907; Hurlock & Burstein, 1932; Harriman, 1937; Bender & Vogel, 1941; Wickes, 1966; Nagera, 1969; Bach, 1971; Benson & Pryor, 1973; Baum, 1978). In many of these cases the companions' initial appearance was clearly after the child was 5; in other cases, the companions appeared to be extensions of earlier ones.

Hurlock and Burstein (1932), in their large study, found that the most likely time for girls' imaginary companions to appear is between 5 to 7 years, while boys, according to them, develop them even later. They believe that children can often create them after 10 years of age. However, as their study was based on adult recall, it is possible that in recollecting, their subjects placed its emergence at a later time.

Nagera (1969) devotes some discussion to the differences between imaginary companions of preschool children and those of later childhood. He believes that in

later childhood, imaginary companions are more indicative of neurotic conflicts, whereas they represent a normal, developmental phenomenon in preschool children.

Age of Disappearance: Possible Explanations. Harvey (1918) stated that there were two periods during which imaginary companions tended to disappear: ages 7 to 8 or 11 to 12. However, most authors would agree with Svendsen (1934) who said that,

> anything approximating accurate information in regard to the time at which the imaginary companions disappear is difficult to obtain, owing to the gradual character of the process. (p. 966)

She also believed, as do others, that beyond a certain age the child may continue to play with their companions but more secretly.

Hurlock and Burstein (1932) and Svendsen (1934) suggest that the occasion for the disappearance of imaginary companions of pre-school children might be related to the opportunity for more companionship with other children, which frequently coincides with enrollment in school. In the cases of latency-age children and adolescents, there is no discussion in the literature of a probable age at which they disappear.

Nagera (1969) raised the question of the fate of imaginary companions. He suggested that the companion serves a particular developmental function, and that once its purpose is fulfilled, the imaginary companion disappears via infantile amnesia. Nagera does discuss the fact that this explanation has its limitations, as it does not account for imaginary companions rarely being recovered in the course of an analysis, or analysands who are known to have had imaginary companions yet never refer to them, or the fate of these companions in latency-age children.

Characteristics of Children who have Imaginary Companions

The following section will address observations made about children who create imaginary companions. This will include incidence of companions among children and between sexes, intelligence and creativity of these children, familial makeup, and the attitude of parents towards these children and their companions.

Incidence. Authors vary in their reports of the frequency of imaginary companions among children. Kirkpatrick (1929) believed that nearly all children have them in one form or another. However, the estimates reported in most studies range from 15 to 30%.

In a study which asked 701 adults to recall childhood experiences, Hurlock and Burstein (1932) report that 31% of women and 23% of men remembered having imaginary companions. Svendsen (1934), in her study of 119 children, found that 13% had imaginary companions. In addition, she reported that 75% of the children who had imaginary companions were girls. In a study which included several hundred children, Jersild et al. (1933) found that,

> almost a third of the youngsters described imaginary creations that seemed to have fairly definite and stable characteristics, but more direct and intimate observation would be needed to establish an exact figure. (p. 343)

Ames and Learned (1946) investigated 210 nursery school children and reported that 17% had either imaginary human or animal companions. Again, girls were more likely than boys to exhibit this phenomenon. More recently, Manosevitz et al. (1973) studied 222 preschool children. They found that 28% of children had imaginary companions, and that once again, girls had significantly more imaginary companions than boys. These sex difference findings support early observations by Vostrovsky (1895), as well as the aforementioned findings by Ames and Learned (1946). It has been suggested by several authors that this sex difference may be more reflective of a cultural bias

rather than a developmental sex difference (see especially Jersild, 1960 for further discussion).

There are several factors which might account for the wide range reported for the incidence of imaginary companions among children. Nagera (1969) has suggested that this is a function of the various definitions and criteria used to establish their presence. Another possible factor is offered by Jersild (1960). He speaks of the difference in the extent to which children openly reveal their companions. In addition, Ames and Learned (1946) suggest that the incidence of imaginary companions might in fact be greater than typically reported as parents are frequently unaware of their existence. For example, a recent study by Singer, Singer and Caldeira (Pines, 1978) revealed that of 141 three and four year olds, 65%, according to the children themselves, reported having imaginary companions, while according to parents, 55% evidenced this phenomenon.

Finally, it is noteworthy that along with varying definitions and criteria, the studies reported in the literature vary greatly in their methods of data collection -- ranging from adult retrospective research to the prospective interviews of children. Considering all of these factors, it is not surprising that such discrepant incidence rates are reported.

Intelligence and Creativity of Children with Imaginary Companions. Throughout the literature it is assumed and generally substantiated that there is a relationship between the child's level of intelligence and their creation of an imaginary companion. Terman (1926) stated that "a good many gifted children have had imaginary playmates. . . ." Jersild et al. (1933) believed that imaginary companions were more likely to be found in children with higher IQs. Svendsen (1934) found that, while imaginary companions were not limited to highly intelligent children, they were more prevalent among them. The data of Hurlock and Burstein (1932) and Bender and Vogel (1941) also support these findings. Nagera (1969) supported this notion and elaborated on it in stating, "the better endowed children produce the most distinct and vivid imaginary companions as well as the most complex and better elaborated stories around them" (p. 173).

Along these lines, it has also been suggested that there exists a relationship between creativity and the production of the imaginary companion. Harriman (1937) connected the phenomenon to creative writing ability. Schaefer (1969), in a study of 800 high school students, found a significant relationship between boys and girls with creative literary abilities and the reported incidence of childhood imaginary companions. While he does

not elaborate his findings, Schaefer suggests that "this phenomenon appears to favor brighter children and, more specifically, those bright children who have leanings toward literary creativity" (p. 748).

Relationship of Family Structure to Imaginary Companions. It has been suggested by many authors that family structure plays an important role in the development of an imaginary companion. Many purport that this phenomenon is more prevalent among either only children or first-borns.

Svendsen (1934) found that 55% of her subjects who had imaginary companions were only children at the time of the creation of their companion. She also felt that proximity to siblings was an important factor, and suggested that imaginary companion children were further in age from their next siblings than non-imaginary companion children. Manosevitz et al. (1973) found that 61% of the imaginary companion children had no siblings when their imaginary companion came into existence. They also found a significant difference in the frequency of first-born children between their two groups (children with and without imaginary companions). In support of Svendsen's notion, they also found that imaginary companion children

had a greater age span between themselves and their next youngest sibling than non-imaginary companion children.

In contrast to the above findings, Hurlock and Burstein (1932) reported that family size was not an important factor. They also stated that imaginary companions were not necessarily found in only children. However, they omitted the possibility that it is a primarily first-born phenomenon.

It is also interesting to note that while Manosevitz et al. (1973) do implicate family structure as an important factor in the presence of an imaginary companion, they also found that nuclear family disruption did not appear to be a signficant factor. That is, there was no significant difference between groups in the frequency of divorce or separation.

With further regards to family structure, Nagera (1969) cites three case examples of children whose imaginary companions appeared shortly after the birth of a sibling. This will be addressed further in a later discussion of possible reasons for the existence of these invisible companions.

Parental Attitude Towards the Imaginary Companions. It is frequently noted by clinicians that parents appear overly worried about the presence of imaginary companions. Ames and Learned (1946) concluded that "in our group of

cases, friends and relatives of the children often consider their imaginative behavior to be harmful" (p. 166).

However, Svendsen (1934) reported that in 36 of her 40 cases, parents accepted or even encouraged the phenomenon. She also felt that people who had had previous exposure to imaginary companions were more likely to be accepting of the notion. More recently Manosevitz et al. (1973) found that 62% of parents felt that the imaginary companion was good for the child, 42% felt it had no effect, and only 4% believed it was harmful. Furthermore, 50% of the parents encouraged the companion, 43% ignored it, and 7% discouraged its existence.

The Relationship of Imaginary Companions to Personality and Psychopathology.

In reviewing the literature on the children who create imaginary companions, one area deserves special attention. This is the question of the relationship between personality organization and the creation of an imaginary companion. This question, in turn, leads to another important question: Is having an imaginary companion adaptive or maladaptive? That is, is an imaginary companion an indication of psychopathology or of healthy

creativity? These issues will be addressed in the following section.

Personality of the Child. Several authors address the question of whether there is a specific type of child who experiences this phenomenon. Vostrovsky (1895) was the first to suggest general temperament differences. She stated that these were children with "nervous temperaments." In a direct attempt to follow up on this notion, Svendsen (1934) obtained reports from mothers and other important adults in the lives of children with imaginary companions. She reported that 35 of the 40 children evidenced personality difficulties, noting that timidity was at the top of the list. She also stated that mothers reported on siblings, and in cases where one had and one did not have an imaginary companion, possible constitutional differences were implicated in explaining the presence or absence of an imaginary companion. Again, children with imaginary companions were seen as being more timid than their non-imaginary companion siblings.

Data on the family structure of imaginary companion children suggest that these children are lonely (Svendsen, 1934; Ames & Learned, 1946; Manosevitz et al., 1973). This notion is perhaps one of the most commonly held views of both professionals and lay people in explaining the phenomenon of imaginary companions.

Hurlock and Burstein (1932), however, found that there were no distinct differences between adults who had had imaginary companions and those who had not. Ames and Learned (1946) designed a study specifically intended to assess whether the phenomenon of imaginary companions was related to temperament. They developed an imagination gradient -- which included various kinds of imaginative play (i.e., imaginary human beings and animals, impersonation of animals or persons, animating and personalizing objects, imaginative and dramatic play and creative writing). They concluded that while "specific personality types seem to determine which particular type of imaginative phenomena he will experience . . . we definitely do not find imaginary companions only in timid or lonely children or in those exhibiting personality disorders" (p. 166).

Thus, contrasting findings in this area reveal more directly the uncertainty of the nature of the phenomenon. While the question of the relationship between having an imaginary companion and personality organization has been studied both prospectively and retrospectively, even methodological differences cannot account for differences in the types of children who create these companions.

Is an Imaginary Companion a Psychopathological Indicator? In a final note in his study of creative adolescents and imaginary companions, Schaefer (1969) states, "perhaps the main implication of this study is that parents and educators should not become unduly concerned when children report the existence of imaginary companions" (p. 748). This attempt at reassurance addresses a commonly held concern of teachers, parents, and some clinicians that imaginary companions are evidence of a psychological disturbance.

Bruno Bettleheim supports this more pessimistic, cautious viewpoint. As reported by Maya Pines (1978),

> Bruno Bettelheim believes that an imaginary companion is a symptom, and that the question to be answered is 'of what it is a symptom?' . . . 'One has to form a diagnosis in each case . . . taking into account the intensity, the time, and the purpose the companion serves. If one-third of the children in a nursery have imaginary playmates, then maybe they're lonely . . . If you are lonely it's a healthy reaction. But is it healthy to be lonely?' (p. 42)

While Svendsen (1934), Ames and Learned (1946), and Manosevitz et al. (1973) all present data in support of this particular notion (i.e., that imaginary companion children are lonely), Manosevitz et al. differ from Bettelheim in their interpretation of these findings. They also give evidence that these children are more

likely to be "self-starters or self-initiators of activities" (p. 75). With this data, they go on to suggest that while imaginary companions may ameliorate loneliness, that this may be a basic function in normal (my emphasis) children.

Various clinicians have taken positions which are clearly in defense of imaginary companions. However, it seems that by taking a defensive stance, they imply an underlying assumption that the phenomenon is problematic.

In his introduction, Nagera (1969) was careful to state that "in no case was the imaginary companion the cause for referral" (p. 165). He distinguishes imaginary companions from other forms of fantasy, noting particularly,

> that an intense fantasy life frequently implies a withdrawal from the unpleasant real world into a more satisfactory inner world. This use of fantasying usually also involves a certain withdrawal from the world of real objects. In the imaginary companion fantasy, however, the initial withdrawal from the real world of objects is quickly followed by a return to reality and to the object world. Having found a new solution, the child brings his imaginary companion back into his real life and tries to have it integrated with and accepted by his object world. (p. 195)

Selma Fraiberg (1959), another defender of the phenomenon, views them as facilitating the child's development. She writes:

> There is a great misunderstanding today about the place of fantasy in the small child's life. Imaginary companions have fallen into ill repute among many educators and parents. Jan's "Laughing Tiger" could be hastily exiled in many households. The notion has got around that imaginary companions are evidence of 'insecurity,' 'withdrawal' and a latent neurosis. The imaginary companion is supposed to be a poor substitute for real companions and it is felt that the unfortunate child who possesses them should be strongly encouraged to abandon them in favor of real friends. Now, of course, if a child of any age abandons the real world and cannot form human ties, if a child is unable to establish meaningful relationships with persons and prefers his imaginary people, we have some cause for concern. But we must not confuse the neurotic uses of imagination with the healthy, and the child who employs his imagination and the people of his imagination to solve his problems is a child who is working for his own mental health. He can maintain his human ties and his good contact with reality while he maintains his imaginary world. Moreover, it can be demonstrated that the child's contact with the real world is strengthened by his periodic excursions into fantasy. It becomes easier to tolerate the frustrations of the real world and to accede to the demands of reality if one can restore himself at intervals in a world where the deepest wishes can achieve imaginary gratification. (pp. 22-24)

Eric Baum (1978) employs two clinical vignettes to illustrate his view that imaginary companions may "represent healthy maturational pauses or even progressive and creative tendencies" (p. 234). In concluding his article, he states:

> It would be a mistake to think of a child's construction of imaginary companions as an index of his abandonment of the real world or

> as a measure of his ability to form bonds with real people. To elaborate creatively a system which gives a child a respite from an all-too-intense reality is not a bad solution. Withdrawal and inwardness are not hallmarks of these children. After all, imaginary companions are thematically linked to the child who originates them and to the significant people in the child's life. It may be said that such a child maintains and even works out meaningful interactions with the important people in his life by proxy. (p. 330)

Only two studies to date have systematically addressed the issue of the relative functioning of imaginary companion children. Manosevitz et al. (1973) surveyed behavioral problems and found that there were no significant group differences in either the mean number of problems reported or in the types of problems reported. In the Singer, Singer and Caldeira study (Pines, 1978), children with imaginary companions differed in several ways from those who did not have them. They were less aggressive and more cooperative, smiled more, showed a greater ability to concentrate, were seldom bored, and their language was richer and more advanced, especially among the boys. In response to these findings, D. Singer noted "although the emphasis used to be on pathology, we see these imaginary companions as a sign of health" (Pines, p. 38).

It seems clear that the literature reflects varied positions regarding the psychological significance of

imaginary companions. Perhaps an important question has not been considered: Why is an imaginary companion for some children a sign of healthy adaptation, while for others, an indicator of psychopathology? And if in fact this is the case, how do we differentiate between these two groups? This will be the focus of this study, and will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

Theoretical Views on Imaginary Companions

Researchers and theorists in this area have questioned the significance of imaginary companions, and pondered their function. As stated previously, the most common viewpoint (and one which might appear to be supported by studies which address familial structure and prevalence of imaginary companions among first-borns and only children), is that these invisible playmates are created in response to loneliness. In her dissertation, "The Imaginary Companion and the Sounds of Mothering," (CUNY, 1981), Barbara Thacher states,

> psychoanalytic writers have attended to the intrapsychic rather than the social significance of the imaginary companion in a child's development, and thus where loneliness is apparent, have considered loneliness and the creation of an imaginary companion both as consequences of intrapsychic conflict rather than one as the cause of the other. (p. 17)

Sperling (1954) describes the function of imaginary companions as a means of communication whereby children can project their wishes and fears and without taking responsibility for them, can communicate them. He writes that they "can be used for scapegoats (devil), playmates, or protectors (Superman)" (p. 252). Fraiberg (1959) discusses "Laughing Tiger," the imaginary companion of her niece, who is used as an aid in mastering anxiety and conflicts. She believes that an imaginary companion permits the ego to operate freely, without being restricted by avoidance and phobic symptoms. Thus both Fraiberg and Sperling view the phenomenon as a progressive-defensive mechanism, which aids in the child's development.

Nagera (1969), in agreeing with this concept, compares the imaginary companion to other forms of fantasy, and states that "both are used in the attempt to solve conflicts and to restore, at least transitionally, the inner equilibrium before excessive stress forces a path into symptom formation, regression, or other disturbances" (p. 182). Furthermore, Nagera (1969) believes that an imaginary companion "serves a variety of functions depending upon the special needs of the child who creates it" (p. 175). He proceeds to elaborate the various functions which the companion may serve, with detailed case material to illustrate his points.

Nagera states that one way in which imaginary companions are frequently used is as a superego auxiliary or prop. He delineates how the projections aid in the development of the superego, by providing an intermediate step between the reliance on external controls and the internalization of one's own superego structure. As an example, he refers to children who consult their imaginary companions, who in turn instruct the child to control their behavior.

Next, he discusses the phenomenon as a "vehicle for the discharge of impulses that are no longer acceptable to the child either because he has internalized the parental prohibitions or because he fears the parental attitude to such impulses (before internalization has taken place)" (p. 177). In this case children might justify unacceptable behavior by saying that the companion told them to do it and therefore not take responsibility.

Nagera states that imaginary companions are also commonly used as scapegoats. In this form of projection, the companion is most frequently the recipient of the child's badness and negative impulses. That is, the companion is directly blamed or accused by the child for his or her wrongdoing. Selma Fraiberg (1959) notes the example "when Daddy's pipes are broken, no one is more indignant than the two-year-old son who is under suspicion:

'Gerald, did you break daddy's pipes?' he demands to know" (p. 141). Fraiberg (Nagera, 1969) elaborates upon this use of imaginary companions demonstrating how it permits the child to avoid parental criticism and maintain self-love, in the progression toward the control of impulses.

Nagera (1969) delineates three other functions which imaginary companions may serve. They can be used by children to prolong their sense of control and omnipotence. In essence, this represents an intermediate step between the child's grandiose feelings of omnipotence and a realistic appraisal of parental authority. Or, the companion can be a representation of the child's primitive ego ideals -- another aspect of superego development. In these cases, the imaginary companion is usually imbued with characteristics in which the child feels lacking, such as being good, strong, smart, lovable, etc. Lastly, children may use their companions to subserve feelings of loneliness and neglect. This, in fact, may be the case with only children, as well as with children whose companions emerge around the birth of a sibling. Needless to say, the function of an imaginary companion can be multi-determined, fulfilling more than one need of its creator.

Several authors who address the phenomenon view its purpose as aiding in the development of the child's superego. Munroe (1894) viewed "the fancy to be of immense

benefit to the child's moral growth" (p. 184). Likewise, Swett (1910) related it to the child's moral development. And Wickes (1927) writes of the imaginary companion as embodying both the ego ideal and the conscience.

Other authors have addressed the imaginary companion's function in terms of issues of dependency and separation. Griffiths (1935) referred to its use in aiding children in their "sense of loss or deprivation of love by searching some imaginary avenue to regaining of the lost object" (p. 273). Murphy (1962) views the imaginary companion as a support for the child in the process of separating from mother.

The need to understand the developmental implications and metaphysical meaning of imaginary companions has been the intensive focus of a number of psychoanalytic thinkers. Their contributions will be reviewed in this final section.

Otto Sperling, in his article "The Imaginary Companion as a Prestage of the Superego" (1954), writes about Rudy, a three-year-old boy whose companion, Rudyman, was named by combining his name with part of his father's name (Herman), thus allowing him to incorporate his father's glory, omniscience, and omnipotence. Sperling describes how Rudy was always sensitive to his father's commands and that following the creation of Rudyman, he

would not obey his parents directly, but needed Rudyman's sanction. Sperling describes, through various incidents, ways in which Rudyman represented a second authority, and one who often displayed similar values to, or used expressions of, Rudy's mother. He points out, however, that Rudyman was distinctly male.

Sperling notes that Rudy often used identification with the agressor to overcome his fears and views his creation of Rudyman as another variation on this defense. He suggests that via Rudyman, this child was able to begin introjecting aspects of his father towards the formation of a male superego; the imaginary companion thus represented a prestage in formation of the child's superego.

In "Notes on Some Imaginary Companions," Bach (1971) addresses the developmental purpose served by imaginary companions. He describes two adult females who revealed their companions during the course of their analyses, and two toddlers who had developed a shared companion. In highlighting the case material, Bach formulates that imaginary companions are used to cope with difficulties during the anal phase of development and implicates them in the formation of gender identity.

According to Bach, "in both normal and pathological development the fantasy companion appeared as an element in the displacement series of nipple-feces-penis-child,

and its survival or disappearance seemed related to how successfully this series was integrated" (p. 160). He begins with an account of Doodoo, the imaginary companion of a brother and sister. Doodoo first emerged during the toilet training of the younger child. He characteristically defied authority, righted wrongs, and was blamed for infractions of rules. Both children admired Doodoo for his wrongdoings; they also punished him harshly in an identification with their parents. Eventually Doodoo became transformed into Good Doodoo, with slightly different attributes ascribed to the ego ideal of the brother and sister. Bach discusses Doodoo's creation during the anal phase as representing forbidden and prohibited impulses which are transformed through reaction formation to an idealized representation to which the children can aspire. Bach also notes that the fate of the companion is significant, and believes that the transformation and reintegration of the anal-phallic impulses allowed for the companion's role to be absolved, and hence, forgotten.

In the cases of his two adult female patients, Bach describes their imaginary creations: one was an imaginary alter ego, the other a male twin. According to Bach, in both cases,

> [o]ne of the major problems for these women was how to be actively feminine. Because unresolved conflicts with the preoedipal mother had been

> displaced onto the father, they experienced unusual difficulties in resolving the Oedipus Complex with the father and in accepting feminine identity. These issues presented themselves on one level as a conflict around the fantasy of introjecting the paternal phallus. In both cases the imaginary companion came to represent an envied and idealized phallus, and was used defensively to perpetuate a regressive, narcissistic solution of the Oedipus conflict. (p. 160)

In neither case was the companion forgotten, for to abandon it would lead to loss of an important aspect of self, while integrating it was beyond the synthetic capacity of the child at that time.

Bach maintains that each of these companions arose in response to a narcissistic blow, became a type of transitional phenomenon, which aided in the child's development, and whose fate was determined by the course of development.

Baum (1978) describes the imaginary companions of two children to illustrate his belief that they represent "an expression of a defense against conflict" (p. 324). He relates a vignette of a 4-year-old girl who created her companions "in response to perceived threat of abandonment by her mother" (p. 329). Baum speculates that her companions, Baby-Spider (malevolent in nature) and Baby Angel (omnipotent) defended her against her fears via identification and counteridentification with the aggressor, and averted symptom formation and aggression on the child's

part. He also describes a seven-year-old boy who used his companions (Tough Cat and Sneaky Cat) to externalize his conflict over peering at his nude mother and to hence gain some distance and control over his impulses. Baum used these examples to demonstrate that imaginary companions can represent "healthy maturational pauses or even progressive and creative tendencies" (p. 324).

In the past decade, a few authors have linked imaginary companions to the child's narcissistic development. Benson and Pryor (1973) address the phenomenon as an aspect in the developmental line of narcissism as theorized by Kohut. They view the imaginary companion as a self-object (i.e., an object invested with narcissistic cathexis and subjectively experienced as part of the self), which provides a form of "self-mirroring with approval" (p. 469), and serves to protect the child's self-regard, self-esteem, and cohesive self-image. This aids in the development of object relationships, whereby this projected aspect of the self becomes part of the child's internal structure through transmuting internalization. Two case studies are presented which elucidate their notion. In each example, the child had created an imaginary companion. At some point, an external observer (in one case a grandfather; in the other, a psychiatrist) responds

to the imaginary companion as if it were real. For example, they relate an incident in which Lynn, accompanied by her imaginary companion Nosey, was visiting her grandparents. They state:

> One day during this particular visit, Lynn was about to go for a ride with her grandfather. As they backed out of the garage, Grandfather suggested to Lynn that she have Nosey close the garage door. She agreeably did as he asked. Unbeknownst to her, Grandfather activated the remote-control mechanism in his car. Lynn's eyes widened in amazement as she watched the door really close. About two weeks later, after the family had returned home, mother became aware that Lynn no longer was playing with Nosey. When she inquired about this, Lynn told her that Nosey was gone. He had remained at her grandparents to 'open and close the door'! Grandfather and Grandmother needed Nosey for the garage. From this point onward, Nosey was never again Lynn's companion. (p. 459)

According to Benson and Pryor, treating the companion as if it were real took the companion out of the narcissistic world as created by the child, where it was completely under the child's control and functioned as a self-object. By making it real, the capacity of the imaginary companion to solely serve the function for which it was intended was taken away. The authors note that shortly after both companions were responded to as if they were real, their existence ceased. They attribute this to the loss of their ability to protect the development of the

child's self-representation. Benson and Pryor place imaginary companions in the category of "narcissitic guardians" (along with the latency peer group, adolescent gang, adult fantasy, and adult work) which represents a "healthy detour through fantasy, promoting growth" (p. 472).

Finally, Wayne Myers has written two papers which address the phenomenon of imaginary companions. In the first, "Imaginary Companions, Fantasy Twins, Mirror Dreams and Depersonalization" (1976), he attempts to demonstrate the links between imaginary companions and extensive childhood mirror play, and the later appearance of mirror dreams and depersonalization. In relating four case histories, Myers views the imaginary companion as a split off self-representation which is created in response to a narcissistic wound. He believes that the companion serves either as a displacement for unacceptable impulses and feelings or to represent an idealized phallic self-representation. According to Myers, this then allows the child to feel acceptable to the parents, thereby maintaining the object tie. In addition, he sees the defensive splitting as a means of warding off anxieties around issues of castration and object loss, i.e., anal and oedipal traumas, and not involving more primitive fears such as loss of self.

In "Imaginary Companions in Childhood and Adult Creativity" (1979), Myers shows the relationship between fantasies

which underlie the creation of an imaginary companion and those which lead to specific creativity in adults. In this article, Myers elaborates on his earlier writings, and develops the notion of the imaginary companion as an expression of a special ego aptitude found in creative adults. He states that "imaginary companion fantasies serve as an organizing schema in memory in which the earlier traumata are subsumed" (p. 305), and believes that this contributes to creativity in adults. He adds that this connection -- between imaginary companions and adult creativity -- is most apparent in his patients who were creative writers. It is interesting in this context that Schaefer (1969), in his study of creative adolescents, found a significant relationship between creative adolescents in the literary field and the presence of childhood imaginary companions. Thus, Myers' theoretical paper is the first to be born out in the research literature.

On reviewing the theoretical contributions which address the developmental functions and metapsychological significance of imaginary companions, certain notions become clear. Authors tend to agree that the phenomenon is a form of projection which aids the child in dealing with conflict. The specific function which the companion serves depends upon the child's phase in development and concomitant issues which arise. Consequently, authors present a diverse range

of theoretical explanations for the companions' functions. Among these are: aiding in the development of the superego and ego ideal, promoting gender identity formation, as a means of prolonging a sense of omnipotence and control, disavowal of unacceptable negative impulses and dependency needs, and to enhance one's self-esteem. While the authors represent a range of theoretical positions, it seems that all would agree that imaginary companions serve as a defensive means of dealing with unacceptable feelings, impulses or conflicts in the child.

Rorschach Assessments of Object Relations

The emphasis various authors have given to early object experience as the determinant of imaginary companions suggests that the assessment of object ties in children would further our understanding of their etiology. An important and useful means for studying object experience has been through the Rorschach test.

Various authors have constructed a number of scales to assess aspects of object relations via the Rorschach. Spear (1980) has stated that,

> [w]ith the increasing emphasis among psychoanalytic theorists on the effort to develop an explanatory metatheory based on the day to day reality of an individual's interpersonal relations has come a new object relations perspective on the evaluation of psychological test data. (p. 321)

The significance of human movement or "M" responses as an indicator of the capacity for empathy and object attachment has been well documented in the literature. Both Schachtel (1966) and Hertzman and Pearce (1947) have used such "M" responses to assess mental representations of self and others. A more recent attempt to quantify object-relatedness by Pruitt and Spilka (1964) has been somewhat limited by methodological difficulties.

Research utilizing only the quantity of "M" responses has been problematic, however (Urist, 1976). Urist, for example, noted that while "M" responses suggest "an awareness that others experience self-hood too," they do not "imply the ability to correctly perceive others or to differentiate one's inner state from another" (Tuber, 1981, p. 39). Urist proposed a scale to qualitatively rate object relations as perceived on the Rorschach, thereby differentiating "good" and "bad" object representations.

Mayman's (1967) measure of object relations applies complex ego-psychoanalytic principles to certain Rorschach configurations. His work laid an important theoretical foundation for the focus on the "thematic content" of Rorschach responses as indicative of the subject's level of object relations.

In a recent review of the clinical usefulness of the Rorschach Test with children, Tuber (1981) stated that:

> recent Rorschach studies have contributed greatly to our understanding of the manner in which object representations may affect personality development. The thematic object relations scales in particular have been found to successfully aid in the differential diagnosis of disturbed populations, in predicting response to analytic psychotherapy and in predicting follow-up adjustment after hospitalization. They have also been shown to meaningfully correspond with independent criteria of health/sickness and interpersonal relations. The use of a scale that represents stages in the development of object relations appears quite congruent with stage specific theories of both developmental psychology (Piaget, Werner, etc.) and psychopathology (Mahler, Kernberg, etc.). These studies have focused almost exclusively, however, on Rorschach human movement responses or dream imagery as indicators of object experience. This would appear to limit the utility of these thematic scales in work with preadolescent children, considering the relatively small number of "M" responses such children typically produce. (p. 43)

A scoring system developed by Urist (1977), however, rates Rorschach human, animal and inanimate movement responses along a continuum of object-relatedness from primary narcissism to empathic object-relatedness. This system has been shown to be particularly useful in assessing the object representations of children and adolescents (Tuber, 1983; Tuber & Coates, 1985; Ryan et al., 1985). It therefore seems plausible to use this Rorschach scale to assess the object representations of the present sample of children with imaginary companions.

Summary and Present Hypotheses

In the attempts by researchers and theorists to elucidate the nature and function of imaginary companions, two key, as yet unresolved, phenomenon have emerged:

1) the literature is equivocal regarding the functions which imaginary companions serve, and

2) positions vary regarding the significance of the phenomenon, i.e., basically if and when it is psychopathological or healthy.

As stated previously, perhaps an important question which has not yet been addressed is whether an imaginary companion is adaptive for some children, but not for others. And if this is the case, how do we differentiate between these two groups of children? To date, no study has attempted to look at systematic differences between these two groups.

The question of whether systematic differences exist can best be looked at in a developmental context. It is generally agreed upon that children progress through certain epigenetic stages in the course of their development. As the child moves, for example, through separation/individuation, certain issues are encountered (Mahler). Key interactional issues are also addressed in the phallic and

oedipal stages (Freud, Erikson). All would agree that one of the earliest major tasks of development is based upon the development of a relationship between the infant and its mother/primary caretaker, on whom the child is dependent. During the second 18 months of life, the focus shifts to the child's attempts at separation and towards the beginning of the resolution of dependency issues. As this stage is negotiated, the child begins to move away from its primary object ties and starts to develop a sense of autonomy. Also at this time, the expression and control of aggressive feelings becomes critical. The development of the child's superego (both the prohibitive aspects and the ego ideal) emerges as a means of handling one's aggression. The negotiation of these issues provides the means by which an integrated, autonomous sense of self is achieved.

Results of a pilot study conducted by the author suggest that the distinction between the two developmental issues of aggression/superego formation and dependency/autonomy can be thought of as two central underlying phenomenon in the elucidation of the functions of imaginary companions.

One can then hypothesize that the consideration of age-appropriate developmental concerns could be a key criterion in determining whether an imaginary companion is

used adaptively or maladaptively. That is, if between the ages of 3 - 5 the child is thought to be struggling primarily with issues of aggression and superego formation, then children who are using their imaginary companions to deal with these issues are using the phenomenon in an adaptive, age-appropriate way. Conversely, if a child between the ages of 3 - 5 uses an imaginary companion to deal primarily with issues of dependency, which by this time can be considered a regressive phenomenon, then the imaginary companion is more indicative of potential pathology.

This study proposes to investigate adaptive versus pathological functions of imaginary companions by investigating both internal and external measures of functioning. Internal measures will focus on the quality of the child's object representations, as measured by the Rorschach Test. External indicators will be measured by the absence or presence of behavioral symptoms on the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock).

The study will test the following hypotheses:

I. Children who use their imaginary companions to deal primarily with issues of aggression and superego formation, will have a higher level of object relations on the Rorschach Test, as measured by the Mutuality of Autonomy Scale, and will have fewer behavioral symptoms on Achenbach and Edelbrock's Child Behavior Checklist.

II. Conversely, children who use their imaginary companions to deal primarily with issues of dependency/autonomy, will have a poorer quality of object relations on the Rorschach Test, as measured by the Mutuality of Autonomy Scale and more behavioral symptoms on the Child Behavior Checklist.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to provide an initial means of understanding the function and etiology of imaginary companions. This study involved a review and evaluation of data collected by Barbara Thacher for her study of imaginary companions, "The Imaginary Companion and the Sounds of Mothering," CUNY Doctoral Dissertation, 1981. This data consisted of 18 exploratory interviews with parents of children who had imaginary companions and included an extensive investigation of the degree to which imaginary companions represent transitional phenomena which have their roots in the auditory experience of being mothered. Thacher's study explored the imaginary companion phenomena in depth.

A preliminary analysis of her data revealed that these children could easily be divided into two groups, according to the primary function that the imaginary companion served. One group of children appeared to use their companions to deal primarily with issues of aggression and superego concerns. For the other group, the

companions served primarily as a defense against loneliness and as a means of resolving issues of dependency and autonomy.

Following the hypothesis that children's use of imaginary companions could serve two functions, the present investigation attempted to derive a sample of children with imaginary companions for further study.

Sample

The present study employed a sample of 18 children (12 girls and 6 boys), who ranged in age from 3 years, 10 months to 5 years, 2 months. At the time of the study, all of these children had at least one imaginary companion which, for the purposes of this study, met the definition given by Svendsen (1934):

> an invisible character named and referred to in conversation with other persons or played with directly for a period of time, at least several months, having an air of reality for the child but no apparent objective basis. This excludes that type of imaginative play in which an object is personified, or in which the child himself assumes the role of some person in his environment. (p. 169)

Subjects were recruited primarily in two ways. First, a major effort was made to contact directors of pre-school programs in Manhattan. Names of schools and

current directors were obtained from the Independent School Directory. In addition, several schools which are connected with the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services and are housed in public schools were contacted. A total of 47 directors were contacted, and of those, 30 agreed to participate.

The directors were given a brief description of the study and upon their agreement to cooperate in the recruitment of subjects, they were given a standard letter (see Appendix A), which was then sent home with all 4-year-old children. Upon receipt of the letter, if a parent chose to respond, they were then asked to contact the author directly. Letters were distributed to preschools which served children across a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 2000 letters were distributed. Of these, 12 people responded. Of those who responded, 5 were not appropriate for this study; either their child's imaginary companion no longer existed or it did not fit the working imaginary companion definition.

The remaining subjects were obtained through various friends and colleagues who knew of children with imaginary companions that met the above criteria. In these cases, parents were asked permission for the author to contact them.

In the initial contact with parents, a brief description of the study was presented, including both the purpose of the study and an explanation of what their participation would involve. Upon their agreement, a meeting was scheduled for both parent and child interviews. On three occasions, the parent interview was conducted over the phone, and children were seen at a later date.

Imaginary Companion Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed to assess the various ways in which children use imaginary companions (see Appendix B). A survey of the literature describing the nature of the children's interactions with their imaginary companions, along with a review of the interview used by Thacher (1981), provided the primary source of data for the questionnaire. Questions were devised to tap the two primary functions of imaginary companions being utilized for the present study. Questions tapping aggression or dependency functions were distributed randomly throughout the questionnaire. Answers to the questions were presented via a 5-point Likert scale. Four additional questions addressed ways in which children described their imaginary companion (see Appendix B, questions 92-95).

Questions were also included which surveyed the attitude of the parent(s) towards their child's imaginary companion. A detailed vignette describing the typical way in which the child described and/or interacted with his/her companion was also ascertained. Finally, relevant demographic data regarding the child and the family were gathered.

This questionnaire was administered during a 45-minute interview with the parent(s). During the interview with the child, the parent(s) was also asked to complete the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983), which will be described below.

Child Behavior Checklist

The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) is a questionnaire designed to obtain parents' descriptions of their children's behavior in a standardized format.

In their attempt to identify syndromes of behavior problems for children of each sex at ages 4 to 5, 6 to 11, and 12 to 16, Achenbach and Edelbrock performed principal component analyses of CBCL behavior problems as rated by parents of children who had been referred to a wide range of mental health agencies. Any item that was reported for at least 5% of the sample was analyzed. Orthogonal (varimax) and oblique (direct quartimin) rotations were per-

formed on varying numbers of factors to identify the most robust factors. The most representative versions of factors that repeatedly recurred for a particular sample were then chosen to comprise a multi-factor matrix. For the purposes of this study, the 8-factor matrix for 4 - 5 year old boys and girls will be used. Achenbach and Edelbrock (1983) have described in detail their development and standardization of the CBCL.

The CBGL is composed of 112 items which describe various behaviors. The parent is asked to circle the correct response: 0 = not true, 1 = somewhat or sometimes true, or 2 = very true or often true. The items then collapse into subscales (the 8 matrices mentioned above). Each subscale has been standardized and named for the behavioral syndrome that it measures. In addition, a total sum score is computed. The subscale scores and total sum score for each subject are then compared against the established norms.

Child Interview

The Rorschach Test and Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test were administered in the context of an approximately 45-minute interview with the child. The child was always

seen in his/her room at a time of day when the child was alert and cooperative.

Each child was seen first in a free play period to establish rapport. Once rapport was established, he or she was then given the Rorschach Test. After the completion of the Rorschach, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test was administered. Following these two tests a brief play period, used as a means of pleasantly ending the interview, was conducted.

Rorschach Test

The Rorschach Test was administered according to the manner described by Ames et al. (1974). In addition, particular attention was paid to the inquiry, as suggested by Tuber (1985) in his manual which specifically applies the Mutuality of Autonomy Scale to children's Rorschachs. Tuber (1985) instructs, "the inquiry used here is geared not surprisingly toward deriving an adequate description from the subject of the nature of his object representation percepts. Thus, any response depicting a figure(s) in interaction is given particular scrutiny" (p. 5).

After the subject has given the location of the percept, he or she is then asked "what made it look like" the percept. If, at that point, enough information is provided to yield a score on the Mutuality of Autonomy

scale, no further inquiry is required. If such information is not yet "scoreable," the child is asked "you see X, as if . . ." This exploratory mode of inquiry often provides useful data on the child's object representations in a relatively non-directive manner.

Procedure for Scoring the Rorschach Protocols. Each subject was randomly assigned a code number before any protocols were scored. This was done to insure that the identity of each subject remained obscured. The protocols were then scored by two independent raters. Neither rater knew which subgroup a particular subject was hypothesized to be in.

The Rorschachs were first scored using the Klopfer et al. (1954) scoring system. They were then scored using the Mutuality of Autonomy Scale (Urist, 1977). After the per cent agreement between the raters was calculated, differences in scoring were reconciled by discussion between the raters. Non-parametric statistical procedures were then employed to assess Rorschach performance along a number of salient dimensions.

Rorschach Scales. The Klopfer et al. (1954) method for scoring the Rorschach has been described elsewhere in detail and will not be described here. The present study employs all the typical features of the Klopfer system.

In addition, particular attention was given to the scoring of human and animal movement responses.

The object relations scale as developed by Urist (1977), and later applied to children's Rorschach by Tuber (1981, 1983 & 1985), was utilized in the present study. The scale "focuses on the developmental progression towards separation-individuation, with particular emphasis given to the issue of the autonomy of others vis-a-vis the self, and conversely, the autonomy of the self vis-a-vis others" (Urist, 1977, p. 4). Thus, each of the scale points refers to gradations in "the individual's capacity to experience self and others as mutually autonomous within relationships" (Urist, 1977, p. 4). Scale point one, the highest level of object relatedness in the scale, reflects the depiction of a figure(s) in a relationship that is separate, autonomous, but aware of, and interacting with another autonomous figure(s). Point two refers to Rorschach imagery depicting two separate figures engaging in parallel activity. These two points are clearly given a "positive" valence; they are the only scale points in which the autonomy of the figures are not distorted. They may therefore be viewed as representing "neurotic" or higher-level object representations. Points three and four reveal an emerging loss of autonomy in interaction. Both points imply a need for another figure to permit a

sense of structural cohesion to exist. To receive a score of 3, the figure(s) must be seen as leaning on each other, or one figure is seen as leaning or hanging on another; they require some external support or direction. A scale point of 4 is scored when one figure is seen as the reflection or imprint of another. Points 3 and 4 do share a depiction of self in which narcissistic issues are pivotal. The difference between them lies in the extent to which the mirroring, cohesion-building "other" can maintain a degree of physical viability. Points 5, 6 and 7 reflect not only the loss of the capacity for separateness, but increasing malevolence of one figure towards another. These low scores reflect an experience of object relations where the autonomy of the self is under siege. A scale score of 5 is scored when the nature of the relationship between figures is characterized by malevolent control of one figure by another. Also scoreable are responses in which fighting between figures becomes a clear violation of both figures' intactness. A scaled score of 6 denotes an imbalance in the relationship in decidedly destructive terms. Also included are relationships that are portrayed as parasitic. Finally, a score of 7 is given when relationships are characterized by an overpowering, enveloping force. The force is described as "larger than life," malevolent, and perhaps even psychotic.

While points 3 and 4 may be tentatively linked to "narcissistic" disturbances in Kohut's terms, the final three points of the scale refer to "borderline" or "psychotic" modes of experiencing others (see Urist, 1977 and Tuber, 1985 for further explanation and examples).

Urist used Spearman product moment correlation coefficients to compare his object relations scale with independent criteria. He notes that the use of the product moment correlation assumes equal interval data. He employs the Lingoes and Rookman (1971) transformation of raw scores method to the data, thus statistically creating an equal interval scale. However, an important distinction was made by Tuber (1981) who agreed with Urist's argument that "for all statistical purposes" (Urist, 1977, p. 7), his scale could be considered to have equal intervals. He added, however, that "Urist's scale does not have clinically equal intervals. The "interval" between points two and three, for example, (that of a "neurotic" versus a "narcissistic" object relationship paradigm) appears a good deal "larger" than any of the intervals between points five, six, and seven (the "borderline" or "psychotic" scale points). Indeed, the state of our knowledge of the range and vicissitudes of object experience is considered too tentative to assume equal intervals along a relationship continuum" (p. 69). As suggested by

Tuber (1981), it would therefore be more appropriate to apply non-parametric statistics to the data as scored by the Urist scale. The Mann-Whitney U Test was therefore used to look at differences between the children in terms of the quality of their object representations.

Urist calculated five object relations "scores" from his scale. A mean score was computed, the average of the eight highest and eight lowest scores was calculated and the single highest and lowest scores were also gathered. Inasmuch as non-parametric statistics will be used in the present study, the median and the mode, rather than the mean score, were calculated for this sample. In previous work with child populations using this scale, children have not been found to give a sufficient number of Urist scores to warrant averaging their eight highest and eight lowest scores separately (Tuber, 1981). Consequently, a total of five object relations scores were obtained for each child: the total number of object relations scores (Total O-R), the single highest score (H-O-R), the single lowest score (L-O-R), a median and a mode score.

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test -- Revised

Research on the Rorschach Test has shown that substantially below normal intelligence can play a confounding role in both the quality and quantity of Rorschach

responses (Friedman, 1953; Allison & Blatt, 1964). Vocabulary scores have been shown to be an effective general predictor of children's overall intelligence (Wechsler, 1974; Kaufman, 1979). Therefore, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - Revised (PPVT-R) was administered as a brief, but concise way to ensure that below normal intelligence would not be a confounding variable.

The PPVT-R consists of 5 training items followed by 175 items arranged in order of increasing difficulty. The child is shown a page with four simple black and white illustrations arranged in multiple choice format. The child's task is to select the picture considered to best illustrate the meaning of a stimulus word presented orally by the tester.

The PPVT-R was administered to 17 of the 18 subjects. One subject refused to cooperate with this task.

In summary, questions ascertaining the functions of imaginary companions served as the independent variables in this study, while Rorschach determinants and CBCL responses were the dependent variables. It was hoped that the narrow range of the IQ variable would permit its inclusion as a controlled factor in the study.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The following chapter will first summarize attempts to partition questionnaire items into two mutually exclusive, non-overlapping aggression and dependency subsets. Next it will describe attempts to subdivide the sample according to the predominant function the imaginary companion served. Further attempts to subdivide the sample on the basis of Rorschach and demographic variables, as well as by anecdotal vignettes, will then be reported. A summary of the demographic characteristics of the sample will subsequently be presented. Finally, results of the performance of subjects on the Child Behavior Checklist, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and the Rorschach Test will be reviewed.

Attempts to Define the Aggression/Dependency Subsets

The hypotheses which this study proposed to test were based on the assumption that children use their imaginary companions in their attempts to resolve specific developmental conflicts. Furthermore, prior clinical and research findings have demonstrated that there are two primary functions which the imaginary companions serve:

1. To deal with issues related to dependency and autonomy, and,
2. To deal with issues of aggression and superego formation and development.

Clinical findings have also repeatedly documented that by the age of 4, issues of aggression and superego concerns become primary, as issues regarding dependency recede more to the background. It was then hypothesized that one would expect children in the present study, who were aged 3 years, 10 months to 5 years, 2 months, to use their companions to deal primarily with conflicts regarding the integration of aggression with superego formation. The study therefore proposed to show that children who were struggling with these age-appropriate concerns would fare better on both the measures of the quality of their internalized object representations and of their behavioral symptomatology than children whose primary concerns were not age-appropriate.

In order to test this hypothesis, it was necessary to divide the sample into two groups: children who used their imaginary companions to deal primarily with dependency concerns and those whose companions served to resolve primarily issues of aggression and superego concerns. Several statistical attempts were made towards sorting subjects into these two groups.

A questionnaire for parents was constructed which included 42 questions designed to tap the aggressive and dependency uses of imaginary companions. Initially 19 items were considered to reflect dependency concerns. These are indicated in Appendix B by the symbol D. Twenty-three items were considered to measure aggressive uses of the imaginary companion. These are indicated in Appendix B by the symbol A.

Questions were answered along a 5 point Likert scale ranging from always (1 point) to often (2 points) to sometimes (3 points) to rarely (4 points) to never (5 points). To insure that questions measured one variable (either aggression or dependency), to the exclusion of the other, several steps were taken.

First, each subject's total dependency and aggression scores were separately tallied. Since an ordinal scale was used, non-parametric statistics were employed. Rank difference correlations were computed both between individual items, as well as between each item and the summed aggressive or dependency subset score. A large number of questions were then discarded as they did not correlate significantly with their summed subset socre.

Tukey (1977) has shown that it is possible to proceed to interval scales from the summation of ordinal scales.

Therefore, Pearson product moment correlations could be performed. Using this more robust statistical procedure, a final correlation of nine aggression and nine dependency questions were culled, representing non-overlapping and relatively exclusive dependency and aggression items. These questions are listed in Table 1.

To ensure that each subset was indeed a true measure of either aggression or dependency, each of the original 42 questions was then correlated with the mean value of each subset. Only the 9 aggression and 9 dependency final subset questions significantly correlated with the mean value of their respective subset. A summary of these findings is reported in Table 1.

A final step was then taken to cross validate these aggression and dependency subsets. Each item of the dependency subset was correlated with the mean value of the aggression subset. And conversely, each item of the aggression subset was correlated with the mean value of the dependency subset. The mean value of the aggression subset did not correlate significantly with any dependency items; conversely, no aggression items were significantly correlated with the dependency mean value. (See Table 1)

Table 1

Correlations Between Dependency/Aggression Subset Questions and Mean Subset Scores

Imaginary Companion (IC) Questions	Dependency Mean Value	Aggression Mean Value
Dependency Questions:		
Teach IC?	.6234[1]**	.0428
Take Care of IC?	.8191***	.0840
Feed IC?	.7166***	-.1625
IC Less Capable?	.7344***	.2188
Hold IC?	.7318***	.2327
Uses IC when lonely?	.5454**	.1722
Insists IC be cared for?	.5725**	.1722
IC as caretaker?	.7328***	.4999
Shares with IC?	.7785***	.1564
Aggression Questions:		
Scold IC?	-.0850	.5221*
Concerned IC is reckless?	.1515	.5474**
Worry about IC?	.1510	.8445***
Blame IC?	.1062	.7554***
IC as Coercer?	-.0677	.5938***
Compares to own Parents?	.3016	.6626***
IC Uses Taboo Words?	.2964	.7570***
IC Worries about Child?	.2896	.6145**
IC Gets Hurts?	.1721	.5808**

Note: [1]Values listed are Pearson Product-Moment correlation r values.

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

In addition, the correlation between the mean values of the dependency and aggression subsets was not significant ($p = .211$).

In summary, a final collection of nine dependency questions (Group 1) and nine aggression questions (Group 2) were derived. (See Appendix C) Each group represented a pure, non-overlapping, exclusive set of questions which it was hoped would provide an optimally discriminating measure of the two disparate uses of imaginary companions.

Attempts to Define an Aggression vs. Dependency Subgroup

Once the two final subsets were established, it was then possible to tabulate a sum aggression and dependency score for each subject. It was hoped, and indeed necessary, to test the hypotheses of the present study, that a subject's sum score on each subset would be inversely related. That is, a subject high on aggression would be low on dependency, and the converse. The results of this tabulation are reported in Table 2.

As the subjects in this study could not be exclusively partitioned into either a solely aggressive or a solely dependent use of their imaginary companion, a scattergram was employed to represent each subject and their respective aggressive/dependency scores. (See Appendix D).

Table 2

Dependency and Aggression Subset Scores by Subject

Subject	Dependency[1] Sum Score	Aggression[2] Sum Score
1	27[2]	36
2	45	42
3	36	45
4	32	45
5	24	24
6	17	43
7	40	45
8	30	33
9	44	40
10	40	44
11	43	45
12	29	39
13	42	32
14	45	36
15	38	38
16	34	43
17	44	34
18	33	28

Note: [1] Dependency and aggression sum scores derived from questions found in Appendix C.

[2] A lower sum score equals a greater frequency of dependency/aggression use.

The results of the scattergram were that subjects fell into four basic groups:

1. One subject had a high score on dependency, but not on aggression (#6),
2. One subject had high scores on aggression and dependency (#5),
3. Six subjects had low scores on dependency and aggression (#2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11), and
4. Ten subjects had an average score on either dependency or aggression (#1, 4, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18).

The scattergram thus also failed to provide the two mutually exclusive subgroups (Group 1: high sum aggression scores and low sum dependency scores; Group 2: low sum aggression scores and high sum dependency scores) which were needed to test the hypotheses of this study. In fact, only one subject (#6) met the criteria for the requisite subgroups.

In summary, a question by question analysis designed to differentiate the primary functions of imaginary companions could not successfully create two groups of children: one group who used their imaginary companions to work through issues primarily related to aggression and superego concerns and the other to deal primarily with

issues of dependency and autonomy. Therefore, the basic assumption of the study, that children with imaginary companions could be easily subdivided by the function which their imaginary companion serves, could not be supported.

Further Attempts to Delineate Subgroups

In a further effort to divide the sample into two groups, five additional steps were taken. Two approaches involved the use of Rorschach scores; a third approach drew from the clinical vignettes which had been obtained from the parents. Finally, the subject's age and sex were employed separately as independent variables.

One approach attempted to see if Rorschach variables could meaningfully create two groups of subjects. Each of the following Rorschach variables and ratios (M, FM, M+ & $M^{\pm}$, $M^{\mp}$ & M-, FM+ & $FM^{\pm}$, $FM^{\mp}$ & FM-, m, M: FM + m) were rank-ordered for each subject. Median values were computed for all of these variables and used to create two separate subgroups of subjects per Rorschach variable ("high" vs. "low").

The Mann Whitney U Test and Wilcoxon Rank Sum W Test were then employed to determine whether there were significant differences between the groups with respect to (i) a number of demographic variables (age, sex), (ii) all the

parent questionnaire items that describe interactions between the child and the imaginary companions, and (iii) with all other Rorschach variables (color, shading, content). Of the eight major Rorschach variables and/or ratios used, only the three variables involving animal movement (total FM, FM+ & FM$\pm$, FM- & FM$\mp$) significantly correlated with any of the demographic or imaginary companion questions. A positive correlation was reported across all three FM variables with two of the dependency subset questions (Does the child seem to play with IC when lonely? $p < .05$; Does IC take care of younger imagined children? $p < .02$). No other significant correlations were found using these major Rorschach variables.

Similarly, subjects were subdivided based on their scores on Urist's Mutuality of Autonomy Scale. These groupings were based on the total number of object relations scores and the median object relations scores. By inspection, subjects were assigned to one of two groups ("high" vs. "low"). The Mann Whitney U Test and the Wilcoxon Rank Sum W Test were again employed to test the degree of association between the demographic and imaginary companion variables and the Rorschach object relations scores.

The median object relations score did not correlate significantly with any of the variables. The total number

of object relations scores were significantly associated with responses to one aggression subset question and one dependency subset question (Does child worry about the IC being naughty? $p < .05$; Does IC take care of younger imagined children? $p < .02$).

Clinical vignettes which described the child's interaction with their imaginary companion had been obtained from the parents during the interview. These vignettes were sorted by two independent raters into two groups: one in which the imaginary companion was described as serving dependency needs and the other, where aggression and superego concerns prevailed. For example, the first group included descriptions of companions who appeared when the child was lonely, those who were playmates, or would be fed, comforted, etc. The "aggressive" imaginary companions were those who, for example, did misdeeds, were blamed for the child's own misdeeds, would do things which the child was not permitted to do, or who were described in good/bad terms.

Once again, the Mann Whitney U and the Wilcoxon Rank Sum W Tests were used to test for significant differences between the groups on the demographic, imaginary companion and Rorschach variables. Only random and/or insignificant correlations were found when both the demographic variables and the imaginary companion questionnaire items were

compared with the "vignette" subgroups. Similarly, Mann Whitney U Tests comparing the "vignette" subgroups on both standard Rorschach determinants and Rorschach Mutuality of Autonomy object relations scores also proved insignificant. However, a statistically significant relationship ($p < .05$) between higher quality (M+) human movement responses and placement in the "aggressive" subgroup was found. While both "aggressive" and "dependency" subgroups each had a total of 16 "M" responses, the "aggressive" subgroups had 15 of 16 high quality form level responses, while the "dependency" subgroup group had only 9 such high level human movement responses.

Finally, similar statistical tests were performed using the subjects' age and then sex to split them into two groups. The age of the child was positively correlated with two dependency subset questions (Does child teach IC things? $p < .01$; Does child express a desire to share things [food, toys, etc.] with IC? $p < .01$) and with the overall mean dependency subset score ($p < .05$). When using sex as an independent variable, girls scored higher than boys on the same two dependency subset questions ($p < .05$ for both questions). No other significant sex-split differences were found.

In summary, initial attempts to subdivide the present sample along the dimension of the primary function of

their imaginary companions were unsuccessful. Attempts to partition the subjects into two groups on the basis of Rorschach and demographic variables were then made. These partitions sought to work backwards, utilizing median splits as a potentially useful method of understanding the meaning of the subjects' use of their imaginary companions. Several Rorschach and demographic variables did correlate with a few dependency and/or aggression subset questions. However, no consistent linkage of any of the Rorschach and demographic variables with any cluster of aggression or dependency subset questions were found. Thus, whether one began with the uses of the imaginary companions as the independent variable or, working backwards, viewed them as the dependent variable, no useful means of partitioning the sample into two distinct subgroups could be discerned.

Description of the Sample

The present sample of children with imaginary companions shared a number of demographic characteristics with those reported in previous research in this area. Two-thirds (67%) of the subjects were girls. This follows reports throughout the literature of the phenomenon being more prevalent among girls. Svendsen (1934), for example,

reported 75% of his subjects were girls. Ames and Learned (1946) stated that girls were more likely to have imaginary companions, as did Manosevitz et al. (1973).

Several authors (Vostrovsky, Jersild et al., Ames & Learned, Manosevitz et al.) report the consistent finding that while the imaginary companions can be human, animal or personified objects, most children tend to have human imaginary companions. In this sample, 83% of the children had imaginary companions which were human while 11% had both animal and human imaginary companions. One child (6%) had an imaginary companion that was first an animal and then changed into a human.

Frequently, authors describe the sense of reality and vividness the imaginary companions have to their creators. According to the informants in the present study, all of the companions were real, but they (the children) knew them to be imaginary. This blend of "imaginary realness" supports Harvey (1918) who stated that:

> The imaginary playmate is a visual or auditory idea that becomes as real and vivid as a visual or auditory percept, but that the child nevertheless always recognizes its unreality. (Svendsen, p. 986)

This finding also supports the idea proposed by Dorothy Singer that "these children have a strong sense of what's real and what's fantasy, and can move back and forth

between the two" and that if asked about their imaginary companion's reality, would say "that's just make-believe" (Pines, 1978).

The findings in the sample regarding the age of the child when the imaginary companion first appeared are also similar to previous reports. Most authors date their first appearance somewhere between two and three years. All of the present sample had their companions by the age of four; the youngest age of first appearance was two years. Thirteen children (72%) had their imaginary companions appear between the ages of two and three.

It is also reported that imaginary companions are more prevalent among first-borns and only children. In the present sample, 38% were only children, while 78% were only and/or first-born. It did seem that frequently the appearance of the imaginary companions coincided with the mother's pregnancy.

It has generally been found that imaginary companions tend to be either the same age as their creators, older, or to have an indefinite age. Similarly, in this sample only one child (6%) had a companion who was younger.

Finally, the attitude of parents towards their child's imaginary companion was similar to reports in the literature. In 12 cases (67%), parents were either pleased and/or encouraging of the phenomenon. One parent

(6%) was both concerned and pleased. Another reported only concern. Four (22%) reported either no response or general lack of involvement.

The present study did, however, differ from previous research in two ways. According to earlier studies, children preferred imaginary companions of the same sex. Over time, this trend seemed to change and later reports note children frequently had companions of both sexes. Most recently, it was reported that males were significantly more likely to have a male companion, whereas females tended only slightly to have same-sex companions (Manosevitz et al.). The present study found that 50% of the girls had same-sex companions and 50% of the girls had companions of both sexes. In addition, 50% of the boys has same-sex companions and 33% of the boys had both. One boy (17%) had a female imaginary companion. While it may not be clear how to interpret these findings, it is notable that they appear in sharp contrast to recent reports.

Secondly, with regards to the names of the imaginary companions, it has been reported that commonplace names are the norm for imaginary companions. While all of the companions had a name, only 50% of this sample reported common or popular names; 50% were original.

Several interesting demographic characteristics emerged that have not been previously reported in detail.

Many children were reported to have more than one companion. Only four children (22%) reportedly had one imaginary playmate. Five (28%) had two, while nine (50%) were reported to have more than two imaginary companions. Of the 14 children who had more than one, parents of eight children reported that the companions either appear separately, or that one particular companion always predominates.

Parents reported that in eight cases, the imaginary companion remained stable over time while eight others reportedly changed over time. In these cases, the companions may have changed sex, age, from animal to person, or in terms of particular function being served (e.g., from a companion to one to be blamed for misdeeds). In two of the cases, the parents didn't know whether they had changed.

Regarding the frequency of the presence of the imaginary companion, it did appear that the companions were present on a daily basis during the height of their existence. They almost always (in 89% of the cases) appear in play both with and without the parents present. The imaginary companions always appeared inside, and in 89% of the cases also appeared outside of the home. In 67% of cases, parents report that the companions appear in the presence of people other than immediate family members.

For two-thirds of the subjects, the companions are present at mealtimes; 50% report their presence at bathtime. The imaginary companions frequently accompany the child in the car (61%), but are only infrequently taken to school (16%). Only one parent reported that their child did not use their imaginary companion in solitary play (6%), yet only four children (22%) involved their presence while playing with other children.

Finally, some of the demographic data regarding the parents and family life of the children in this sample were noteworthy. Mothers ranged in age from 31-44 years at the time of the interview. Fifty percent of the mothers were 37 years or older. The fathers ranged in age from 33-61 years. Two fathers' ages were not available. One half of the fathers were 38 years and older.

In the 18 families, 15 parents (83%) were married, 2 (11%) were separated, and 1 (6%) never married. Of the 15 married parents, 11 were first marriages; 2 fathers and 1 mother (all separate families) were in second marriages; and one father was in his third marriage. Two of the remarried fathers had children from previous marriages. Interestingly, 67% of the families were Jewish and 22% were Protestant. One family (6%) reported to be mixed, Protestant-Jewish religion, and for one family, the

information was not available. No Catholic families were among the sample.

All of the families were in the top three (of nine) social class divisions as determined by the Hollingshead (1957) scale. Two-thirds were in the highest grouping. In 15 of the families, the mothers worked. Four mothers (22%) worked full-time, while eleven (61%) worked part-time. Thirteen of the families (72%) reported that there were significant other people (housekeepers or grandparents) with whom the child spent a considerable amount of time.

Finally, parents were asked whether they had had imaginary companions. In nine cases, parents reported not having imaginary companions while 28% (four families) stated that they did not remember. Four of the mothers (27%) reportedly had an imaginary companion, as did one father (6%).

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R)

As described in Chapter II, the PPVT-R was given to insure that major variations in the distribution of IQ scores would not confound either the data derived in the questionnaire, the CBCL, or on the Rorschach Test. The PPVT-R IQ scores for this sample ranged from 99 - 134. The mean IQ score was 118. This finding is consistent

with prior research emphasizing the above-average intelligence of children with imaginary companions. Both the range and mean value for the sample were sufficiently high to preclude intelligence level as a confounding variable in this study.

Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)

The CBCL was administered as a measure of behavioral symptomatology. This instrument was used as a dependent variable that would hopefully differentiate the present sample's normal versus pathological behavior.

CBCL scores are reported both as an overall normality score, as well as a series of eight subset scales. For this sample, all of the children were found to fall within the normal range of behavior on the total sum score. Seventeen of the 18 children also scored within the normal range across all eight subscale categories. One subject scored in the pathological range on the sex problems subscale, but within the normal range on the other seven subscale categories. These results are reported in Table 3.

Given the comprehensive nature of the behaviors included in Achenbach and Edelbrock's checklist, the normative nature of the behaviors of the children in the present sample is noteworthy.

Table 3

Child Behavior Checklist Subscale and Total Scores by Subject

Subjects	CBCL Subscales: Somatic Complaints	Depressed	Schizoid or Anxious	Social Withdrawal	Obese	Aggressive	Sex Problems	Hyperactive	Total Sum Score
Girls									
1	4	3	3	2	1	13	1	2	33
2	1	1	3	2	1	3	0	2	15
3	5	4	5	5	0	2	0	0	26
4	3	1	4	2	1	2	0	0	16
6	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	12
8	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	9
11	2	2	6	6	3	10	0	8	36
12	3	6	8	3	0	6	0	3	28
14	5	6	8	6	3	7	0	2	38
15	4	4	2	1	1	5	0	0	17
16	5	6	9	3	0	5	0	2	38
18	5	8	9	6	2	7	0	6	40
"Normal Cutoff"	10	13	12	8	5	17-18	3	8	70

Subjects	Social Withdrawal	Depressed	Immature	Somatic Complaints	Sex Problems	Schizoid	Aggressive	Delinguent	Total Sum Score
Boys									
5	4	9	4	0	0	0	18	4	37
7	4	7	2	0	0	3	19	2	40
9	2	3	0	0	0	0	4	0	15
10	5	6	1	1	1	1	8	0	27
13	3	11	4	0	4	1	15	1	42
17	2	5	2	1	0	0	10	1	25
"Normal Cutoff"	6	13	8	2	1	4	19	4	70

Note: [1] Normal Cutoff = This number or less is within normal range.

[2] Total Sum Score Scale may be greater than sum of subscales, as certain items are scored on more than one subscale.

The Rorschach Test

As described in Chapter II, Rorschach protocols were independently rated by both the author and a Ph.D. psychologist. Percent agreement levels between the raters were obtained for the standard Rorschach determinants as scored by Klopfer et al. (1954) and for Urist's Mutuality of Autonomy Scale measure. These findings are presented in Table 4. These results suggest a solid degree of inter-rater reliability.

Table 4

Inter-rater Agreement on Rorschach Measures

Rorschach System	Percent Agreement "Exact Hit"	Within 1 Point
Klopfer	87%	--
Urist	85%	89%

Standard Rorschach Determinants. The Rorschach protocols for each subject were first scored for movement, color, shading and content using the method defined by Klopfer et al. (1954). These findings are presented below in Table 5.

Table 5

Rorschach Determinants by Subject

	Rorschach Determinants														
Subjects	R	F%	F+%	M	FM	m	M:FM+m	FC	CF	C	Sum C	M:Sum C	H%	A%	P%
1	18	56	70	1	3	1	1:4	0	2	0	2	1:2	6	17	17
2	20	60	25	2	6	0	2:6	0	0	0	0	2:0	10	60	20
3	27	30	63	4	4	1	4:5	0	1	7	8	4:8	4	15	19
4	15	13	100	0	8	3	0:11	0	1	1	2	0:2	0	53	27
5	12	75	44	1	2	0	1:2	0	0	0	0	1:0	25	33	33
6	17	59	40	4	3	0	4:3	0	0	0	0	4:0	12	18	18
7	25	40	40	5	4	2	5:6	0	1	1	2	5:2	12	16	8
8	20	25	80	0	9	2	0:11	2	1	0	3	0:3	0	65	30
9	19	53	50	1	8	0	1:8	0	0	0	0	1:0	5	53	16
10	06	50	100	0	0	2	0:2	0	0	1	1	0:1	0	50	17
11	17	41	43	3	3	0	3:3	0	0	4	4	3:4	12	41	18
12	27	41	64	5	6	1	5:7	1	2	1	4	5:4	7	37	30
13	15	53	38	1	3	3	1:6	0	0	0	0	1:0	7	20	7
14	14	36	60	3	4	1	3:5	0	1	0	1	3:1	8	36	29
15	19	32	57	2	6	2	2:8	0	1	0	1	2:1	5	32	32
16	17	24	0	1	4	6	1:10	1	4	0	5	1:5	6	24	29
17	18	28	40	6	5	2	6:7	0	0	0	0	6:0	6	17	17
18	10	70	43	1	2	0	1:2	0	0	0	0	1:0	10	30	30

Mutuality of Autonomy Scale Scores. To further assess the internalized object relations of the present sample, Urist's (1977) Mutuality of Autonomy Scale was employed. The findings are reported in Table 6.

In summary, empirical analysis of the parent questionnaire was successful in discerning two mutually exclusive categories describing the functions of the child's imaginary companions. Attempts to partition the sample into two groups on the basis of these questions proved unsuccessful. Similarly, attempts to equate clusters of subjects dichotomized by Rorschach and/or demographic characteristics were also relatively unsuccessful. Demographic, CBCL, PPVT-R, Rorschach determinants and Rorschach object relations scores were then presented. These results will be discussed in Chapter IV.

Table 6

Mutuality of Autonomy Object Relations Scores by Subject

Subject	Total Number	H-O-R[1]	L-O-R[2]	MED-O-R[3]	M-O-R[4]
1	3	1	5	3	0
2	7	2	5	5	5
3	5	1	5	2	1
4	7	2	6	5	5
5	2	5	5	5	5
6	2	1	2	1.5	0
7	8	1	5	5	5
8	2	2	5	3.5	0
9	8	2	5	2	2
10	1	6	6	6	0
11	2	5	5	5	5
12	12	2	6	3	2
13	2	5	6	5.5	0
14	6	2	5	2	2
15	7	1	6	5	5
16	4	5	7	6	6
17	8	2	6	5	5
18	1	5	5	5	0

Note: 1 H-O-R = Highest single object relations score
2 L-O-R = Lowest single object relations score
3 Med-O-R = Median object relation score
4 M-O-R = Mode object relations score

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This chapter will begin with a review of the basic hypotheses of this study. It will then explain the various steps undertaken to establish two subgroups of the present sample. It will describe the findings of a) the use of the dependent variables and anecdotal vignettes to discriminate two subgroups, b) the demographic characteristics, and c) the Child Behavior Checklist. A comparison between the Rorschach data of imaginary companion children and normative Rorschach data will be discussed. Finally, the limitations of the present study and implications for future research will be presented.

Present Findings and the Original Hypotheses

The central hypothesis of this study was that children who use their imaginary companions to negotiate age-appropriate concerns would fare better on both internal measures of their object representations and external measures of behavior, than children whose companions serve more regressive concerns. This hypothesis was not confirmed.

In reviewing the clinical and research literature it was clear that imaginary companions are not a serendipitous event in a child's life. Rather, they seem to have important meanings to the child. Several authors have described in detail the function(s) which the imaginary companion serves. Nagera's (1969) review is the only attempt in the literature to summarize both the demographic variables as well as the intrapsychic ramifications of the phenomenon. He believes that an imaginary companion "serves a variety of functions depending on the special needs of the child who creates it" (p. 175).

Clinical and research findings have converged on the idea that the functions of imaginary companions can be subsumed within one of two broad developmental issues: issues of dependency/autonomy or concerns with aggression/superego development. In addition, some studies have also addressed the issue of the relative functioning of children who have imaginary companions. Both Manosevitz et al. (1974) and Singer, Singer and Caldeira (Pines, 1978) found that children with imaginary companions function at least as well as children who do not have imaginary companions. However, the nature of the phenomenon itself, that is, whether or not it is a psychopathological indicator, has not been studied. Nor has the possibility that for some

children, an imaginary companion is a healthy adaptive mechanism, while for others, an indicator of psychopathology.

The clinical literature describing both normal and psychopathological development has shown that during the first 5 years of life, the child passes through different developmental phases. It has been repeatedly stressed that issues of aggression and superego development follow issues of dependency and separation concerns. Assuming this to be the case, and if indeed imaginary companions are not serendipitous, it was hypothesized that children would differ on the underlying reasons for their creation of their imaginary companion. In addition, the functions that the imaginary companion served would parallel the important developmental issues of dependency and aggression.

Given that parents were able to answer affirmatively on questions that tapped both dependency and aggessive functions, and that their anecdotal comments were fully subsumed within these two concerns, it is clear that these two functions do indeed underlie the creation of the imaginary companion. However, the fact that the present sample could not be differentiated along the dependency/aggressive dimension suggests that the imaginary companion appears to most often serve both functions, rather than one to the exclusion of the other.

Subset Question Findings

Prior to testing the hypotheses, it was necessary to divide the subjects into two groups. Towards this end, various statistical procedures were employed to derive two mutually exclusive subsets of questions which could measure the dependency and aggressive uses of the imaginary companions. Use of non-parametric tests resulted in both a dependency and aggression subset, each of which were valid measures of their particular function. Thus, the existence of these two mutually exclusive yet encompassing depictions of the underlying functions of the imaginary companion confirm the writings of Nagera (1969) and others that the phenomenon of the imaginary companion serves important intrapsychic needs.

Subgroup Differentiation Findings

Once these two subsets were determined, it was then possible to compute a total dependency and aggression score for each subject. It was hoped that subjects high on aggression would be low on dependency, and vice versa. However, as reported both in Table 2 and Appendix D, this was not the case. The results of the scattergram (as reported on page 64) strongly indicate that subjects could not be divided into two separate and distinct groups. Only

one out of the 18 subjects scored high on one function and low on the other. Thus, the findings did not support the basic assumption of this study that two groups could be differentiated using the two primary imaginary companion functions.

This was perhaps the most telling finding regarding the failure to confirm the original hypotheses. This precluded the possibility of further correlational analyses.

Thus, while it was possible to operationalize the functions of imaginary companions, it was an oversimplification of the notion of developmental progression to assume that intrapsychic development proceeds in a linear fashion. That is, to assume that dependency issues recede as aggression and superego concerns come to the fore, in a simple, non-overlapping progression, belies the multidimensional nature of early experience.

Interestingly enough, there was a significant positive correlation ($p < .05$) between the age of the child and the overall mean value of the dependency subset questions. That is, the younger the child, the more the dependency fucntions were important, while the older children resorted to using the imaginary companion for dependency purposes to a lesser degree. Clearly, this lends credence to the idea that dependency issues are indeed an earlier developmental phenomena than aggression. However, while dependency

concerns become less important as the child gets older, it also seems evident that aggressive concerns are present at an early age. This would preclude the possibility of finding subjects who were either high aggression-low dependency or high dependency-low aggression, as the scattergram demonstrated. Rather, the child's imaginary companion was multi-determined, and served to resolve varying degrees of both dependency and aggression issues depending on the particular child.

Dependent Variables and Anecdotal Vignettes: Present Findings

Although it was not possible to create two non-overlapping "function" subgroups, it was still considered possible that either the Rorschach or demographic data, or the anecdotal vignettes, could meaningfully discriminate two or more subgroups of children. The CBCL could not be used in this regard, because all of the subjects scored in the same normative range. Thus, the major dependent variables (Rorschach and demographic data), as well as the vignettes describing the child's interaction with the imaginary companions, were each divided into "high" versus "low" groups. Attempts were then made to correlate these "high" and "low" scores with the aggression and dependency questionnaire

items. With regard to correlations between the Rorschach variables and the questionnaire items, most correlations proved random and/or insignificant. Both the quantity (Total FM) and the quality (FM+ vs. FM-) of animal movement responses, however, were significantly associated with more frequent use of the imaginary companion to serve dependent needs. In particular, use of the imaginary companion when the child was lonely and a description of the imaginary companion as often caring for younger imaginary children, were correlated with both greater number of animal movement responses and poorer form level of these responses. Both of these questions operationalize the child's direct use of the imaginary companion as a comforting agent, as well as the use of the imaginary companion in an identification with a comforting agent.

Prior Rorschach research with both adult (Klopfer et al., 1954) and child (Ames et al., 1974) populations has repeatedly depicted animal movement responses as relatively regressive phenomenon vis-a-vis more human movement responses. In addition, poorer form level has also been linked with regressive, immature attempts at organizing reality (Mayman, 1960). Thus, the fact that these more regressive Rorschach phenomena are significantly associated with dependency uses of the imaginary companion supports the notion that dependency uses of the imaginary companion

imply a relatively more regressed, immature internal state. In this regard, a telling finding was reported when anecdotal vignettes, used to partition the sample, were correlated with individual Rorschach determinants. The group described by vignette to be more "aggressive" had significantly better quality human movement responses than the "dependency" group. Human movement responses are relatively rare in children of this age (Levitt & Truumaa, 1972), and high quality human movement responses are rarer still. It is thus striking that while the "aggression" and "dependency" groups did not differ in the total number of human movement responses, the "aggression" group had almost uniformly superior "M+" scores. Given the relatively mature and sophisticated imaginal capacity implied in such M+ scores, its correlation with the "aggression" subgroup lend even further support to the linkage of "aggressive" use of the imaginary companion with developmentally more adaptive and mature levels of functioning.

The finding that the relatively younger subgroup scored significantly higher on two of the dependency questions as well as on the overall mean dependency subset score, provides further credence to the idea that dependency uses of the imaginary companion are relatively regressive phenomena compared to aggressive uses of the imaginary companion. Because age and sex were positively

correlated the findings relating sex of the subject to particular dependency questions are redundant.

Thus, a number of findings converge in support of the argument that dependency uses of the imaginary companion are a more regressive phenomena, and that aggressive uses of the imaginary companion are more developmentally mature. Hence, while differences between the subjects in the use of the imaginary companion were not mutually exclusive, nonetheless compelling data exist which lend relative support to the original hypotheses.

Present Findings and the Demographic Literature

The demographic data reported in the previous chapter are strikingly consistent with data reported in earlier studies on the imaginary companion (Ames & Learned, 1946; Griffiths, 1935; Hurlock & Burstein, 1932; Jersild, Markey, & Jersild, 1933; Manosevitz, Prentice, & Wilson, 1973; Schaefer, 1969; Svendsen, 1934). The similarity of the present data to prior research serves to enhance the generalizability of the present work to those previous research efforts. It also suggests a rather striking uniformity of demographic characteristics of these children across a wide variety of samples.

Child Behavior Checklist Findings

It was reported that on the CBCL all of the subjects, except for one subject on one subscale, scored well within the normal range. Even the one subject with one discrepant score, scored solidly within the normal range on the other seven subscales as well as on the total sum score. These results provide an important statement regarding the adaptive or maladaptive nature of having an imaginary companion. The findings of the CBCL strongly suggest that the existence of an imaginary companion is not to be equated with pathological behavioral symptomatology. Given the comprehensive depiction of behaviors present in the CBCL, as well as its well-standardized normative values, the present results provide the most compelling data yet gathered as to the nonpathological nature of having an imaginary companion.

Furthermore, the fact that having an imaginary companion, at least in this sample of children, did not preclude "normal" or "healthy" functioning, allowed the author to then compare the Rorschach results of this sample with that of the extensive normative data gathered by Ames and her colleagues (1974).

Imaginary Companion Rorschachs vs. Normative Rorschach Data

The comparison between the Ames et al. (1974) normative data on children ages 4 - 5 1/2 and the Rorschach data gathered from the present sample revealed several noteworthy findings. A summary of this comparison is given in Table 7.

Regrettably, Ames et al. do not provide either standard deviation values or subject by subject data in their summary of Rorschach determinants for each age category. This therefore precludes the use of either parametric or non-parametric statistical procedures in the analysis of this data with the present sample.

However, by inspection, certain dramatic differences were repeatedly demonstrated between the two samples. The data regarding Rorschach productivity revealed that the imaginary companion sample was slightly more productive than the normative sample. Differences in Rorschach productivity, however, were trivial compared to the remarkable differences between the two groups on the human, animal and inanimate movement response categories. Human movement responses were nearly 5 times greater on the average than those reported by Ames et al. Similarly, animal movement responses were almost 4 1/2 times greater for the present sample. Lastly, inanimate movement responses were over 8

Table 7

Imaginary Companion Rorschach Data vs. Normative Rorschach Data

Rorschach Determinants	Imaginary Companion Mean Values	Ames[1] Mean Values
R	17.60	14.30
F%	41.70	72.50
F+%	51.50	73.30
M	2.22	0.47
FM	4.44	1.00
m	1.44	0.17
M:FM+m	0.38	0.40
FC	0.28	0.23
CF	0.78	1.03
C	0.83	0.23
Sum C	1.89	1.46
M:Sum C	1.21	0.32
H%	7.00	9.00
A%	33.00	48.00
P%	22.00	18.70

Note: [1] Mean Ames' values determined by summation of mean values of ages 4, 4 1/2, and 5, divided by 3.

times greater than that reported by Ames et al. for her sample of similarly aged children. Movement responses have long been heralded as the preeminent reflection of the subject's imaginal capacity and his/her reservoir of interpersonal viability (Klopfer et al., 1954; Mayman, 1977; Urist, 1976).

This depiction of the salience of movement responses in capturing a subject's inner life has one important caveat. This caveat refers to the degree to which movement responses are accompanied in a given Rorschach protocol by the presence of color responses. Inasmuch as color responses have been linked to the capacity to retain, integrate and/or express emotional reactivity, the failure to produce such responses limits the degree to which movement responses can be viewed as reflecting a rich inner life. Importantly, the present sample's mean "sum C" value was actually slightly higher than the normative values reported by Ames et al. This substantiates the degree to which movement responses in the present sample may connote a strikingly greater propensity for the creation of multiple and viable animate representations. Imaginary companions have long been viewed as striking examples of certain children's imaginativeness. The present Rorschach data suggests that this imaginativeness has important and plentiful internal correlates. Indeed, the data suggest

that the behavioral presentation of these companions is the striking operationalization of a markedly well-developed inner productivity of human and animal forms.

In this regard, it is striking that human and animal movement productivity for the present sample are greater than even that of the "normal" 10-year-old (1.7M, 1.7FM, Ames et al., 1974, p. 250). In addition, the human movement responses for the present sample are actually roughly equivalent to the normal expectancy of an adult Rorschach record (2-3 M; Ames et al., 1974; p. 265).

Also noteworthy were the heightened presence in the present sample of two Rorschach determinants often linked to the presence of significant ego-alien anxiety, that is, inanimate movement responses ("m") and pure color responses ("C"). Both these type of responses suggest inner tension and may speak to the presence of significant conflict in these children regarding their powerfully animated inner worlds. One can speculate, then, that the imaginary companion does indeed serve as a mediator of conflict and that the great number of human and animal movement responses, in turn, suggest that the best avenue for the working through of these conflicts lies in the creation of external manifestations of the rich inner lives of these children. The finding once again that these children's behavioral performance, as measured by the CBCL, is

entirely within the normal range, strongly suggests that the creation of imaginary companions for the present sample of children was a highly adaptive, symptom-free means of negotiating their intense inner struggles. These present findings, then, provide new empirical data amply confirming Nagera's (1969) clinical findings that the imaginary companion is used "to solve conflicts and to restore . . . [an] inner equilibrium" (p. 182).

Limitations of the Present Study

The major limitation of the present study was that while it was possible to delineate two mutually exclusive subsets of questions to measure the relative degree of dependency/aggressive uses of imaginary companions, it was not possible to divide the subjects into two groups which differed inversely on the dependency/aggression dimensions (i.e., high aggression-low dependency and low aggression-high dependency). This limitation made it impossible to test the original hypotheses.

As stated earlier, another limitation to this study was the oversimplification of the developmental process regarding the notion that dependency and aggression represent two separate, linear phenomena. This linear depiction of development implied the consequent assumption that ima-

ginary companions serve primarily to negotiate either dependency or aggression issues, rather than serving multiple functions for each child.

Another area which may limit the generalizability of the present findings is the actual sample of subjects. While attempts were made to obtain a random sample of children with imaginary companions, the present sample is fairly homogeneous in terms of race and socio-economic background. It is difficult to know whether the present sample is indeed a true reflection of the subsample of the population who have imaginary companions, or whether race and/or socio-economic factors may have influenced those who chose to respond to the original request for subjects. Similarly, as the majority of parents in the present sample were pleased about and often encouraged their child's use of their imaginary companion, this may also point to a bias in the sample. That is, it is possible that parents who were less positive and perhaps more concerned about their child having an imaginary companion were less likely to respond to the letter they received.

The data describing the nature and functions of the child's imaginary companion were obtained almost entirely from parental reports. To the extent that these reports were based on subjective and/or overdetermined parental

needs, a significant degree of error variance may be unaccounted for.

Given the relatively advanced age of the mothers in the sample (31-44 years, 1/2 over 37), and the fact that 15 of the 18 mothers worked at least part-time, it is possible that this sample differs from those of prior research efforts, as such characteristics have not always been the cultural norm. It is uncertain to what extent the present sample's differing along these dimensions limits the generalizability of the findings reported above.

Finally, as the Rorschach analysis between the present sample and the Ames et al.'s normative data could not be based on actual statistical procedures, it is difficult to know whether Rorschach productivity was a confounding variable and whether some of the Rorschach differences between groups would indeed be statistically significant.

Implications for Future Research

The present study was not able to find two mutually exclusive groups which differed in the use of their imaginary companions. Future research should therefore more adequately assess the relative proportion of aggression and/or dependency concerns so that a more productive means of assessing the underlying reasons for the development of an imaginary companion could be engendered.

In addition, a follow-up study which could trace the fate of the imaginary companion might prove useful in further understanding the intrapsychic meaning of the phenomenon. This follow-up study should ideally link longitudinal Rorschach comparisons with follow-up data. For, if indeed the imaginary companion serves to resolve conflict, one could speculate that if the conflicts were adequately resolved, then human and animal movement productivity would decline back to normative expectations. Therefore, longitudinal research which could measure both the relative degree of conflict resolution and its relationship to Rorschach configurations would be extremely useful in helping us to more fully elucidate the meaning of the imaginary companion.

APPENDIX A

Dear Parents,

The director of your child's school has given me permission to send this letter home with your child. I am a doctoral candidate in Clinical Psychology at City University and am in the process of writing my dissertation. I am studying children who create imaginary companions - an important aspect of normal childhood fantasy whose importance has been overlooked. By an imaginary companion, I mean an invisible, make-believe person, animal, or creature of some kind whom the child may talk about or play with in a variety of ways.

If you have a child who has an imaginary companion and would be willing to talk with me about it, I would greatly appreciate your help. Certainly anything we discuss about your child will be kept completely confidential. Or, if you know other children who have imaginary companions, I would be grateful if you could put me in touch with their parents.

If you are interested, please call me at 663-3583. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Jodie Meyer

APPENDIX B

Parent Interview

Child's name_____Sex____Age____DOB_____

Parent's name(M)_____(F)_____

Occupation(M)_____(F)_____

Age(M)_____(F)_____

Marital Status:_____Religion:_____

Siblings: Name _____Age_____ Sex_____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

Other persons with whom child spends time: _____

Pets _____

Child's health _____Parent's health_____

Child's school _____Grade _____

Did either parent have an IC? _____

_____

I. I do have some questions I would like to ask you, but first it would be most helpful to me if you would tell me about your child's IC(s) in whatever way occurs to you.

*Person interviewed

II. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the IC.

1. The IC's characteristics: person, animal, other?_____

age _____
(younger, older, same?)

sex _____

appearance or other special features_____

IC's name _____

Do you have any thoughts about where the IC's name comes from?

If more than one IC, how much are the different IC's distinct or interchangeable? Do they turn up together or separately? Is one more popular than another?

When did the IC(s) first appear? Child's age? _____

Has the IC changed since then?

How often does the IC appear?

daily _____

several times/week _____

once/week _____

infrequently _____

How real would you say it is to your child?

Does the IC figure mainly in the child's play alone_____

in interaction with you

_____

equally in both situations

_____

Are there limitations as to where and/or when the IC turns up?

Inside and outside _____
With people other than family_____
At meals _____
At bedtime _____
At bathtime _____
In the car _____
In solitary play _____
At school _____
In play with other children _____
Other _____

Different children use their companions in different ways. I'd like to go over this list with you to see the variety of ways in which your child uses his/her companion(s).

* D 50. Does child teach IC things?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* D 51. Does child take care of IC?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* A 52. Does child scold IC?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 53. Does child punish IC?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* A 54. Does child worry about the IC doing things which are dangerous?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* A 55. Does child worry about the IC being naughty?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* D 56. Does child feed IC?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 57. Does child comfort IC?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 58. Does child take IC places which might be frightening? (e.g. to the doctor, to the barbershop for the first time, etc.)
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* A 59. Does child blame IC for his/her own misdeeds?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* A 60. Does child say that IC "made her" or "told him to do it" when she/he gets into trouble?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 61. Does child consult IC?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 62. Does child consult IC for permission before obeying you?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 63. Does child talk admiringly of the IC as able to do things or to have things which child can't - either because (s)he's too small or it isn't permitted?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* D 64. Does child talk of IC as being less capable and/or more of a baby than (s)he?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* A 65. Does child talk about the IC or IC's parents in ways which are recognizable as "much better" or "much worse" or "just like" you?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* D 66. Does child hold IC?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* D 67. Does child seem to play with IC when lonely?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 68. Does child ask for things for the IC which are really for her/him?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* D 69. Does child insist that you do things for IC? (e.g. comb hair, take places, etc.)
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 70. Does the IC ever do things to you or for you?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____
what? _____

A 71. Does your child boss or order the IC around?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D = original dependency question
A = original aggression question
* = final subset question (see Appendix C, Table 1)

* A 72. Does IC say things which child is not permitted to say? (e.g. curses)
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 73. Does IC fight with child?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 74. Does IC pinch, bite, hit, etc? (hurt child)
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 75. Does IC teach your child things?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 76. Does IC take care of child?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 77. Does IC scold child?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 78. Does IC punish child?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* D 79. Does IC take care of younger imagined children?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 80. Does IC accompany child on naps?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 81. Does IC grow up, leave home, etc.?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 82. Does IC ever go to California?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

D 83. Is IC described as being a marital partner?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 84. Does IC blame child for things?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* A 85. Does IC worry about child?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 86. Does IC tell child not to do things which are dangerous?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 87. Does IC tell child not to do things which are naughty?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* D 88. Does child express a desire to share things (food, toys, etc.) with IC?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 89. Does IC get into accidents?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

* A 90. Does child talk of IC getting hurt?
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

A 91. Does IC do specific things that parent does? (e.g. go to college, go to plays, etc.)
always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ rarely _____ never _____

92. Does child describe IC as being strong or powerful?
Yes _____ No _____ Somewhat _____

93. Does child describe IC as being particularly attractive?
Yes _____ No _____ Somewhat _____

94. Does child describe IC as being very smart?
Yes _____ No _____ Somewhat _____

95. Does child describe IC as being very lovable?
Yes _____ No _____ Somewhat _____

D = original dependency question
A = original aggression question
* = final subset question (see Appendix C, Table 1)

What purpose do you think the IC serves for your child?

96. How did you react to your child having an IC?

concerned _____ encouraging _____ mixed _____

pleased _____ uninvolved _____ not relevant _____

97. How involved do you get?

very _____ somewhat _____ no response _____

at child's request _____ not at all _____

98. Do you think you are aware of all that goes on between your child and IC?

aware of all _____ not aware of all _____

99. How insistent is your child re: IC's presence?

very _____ not at all _____

insists, but not persistent _____

What adjectives would you use to describe your child?

APPENDIX C

FINAL DEPENDENCY AND AGGRESSION SUBSET QUESTIONS

Dependency Questions:

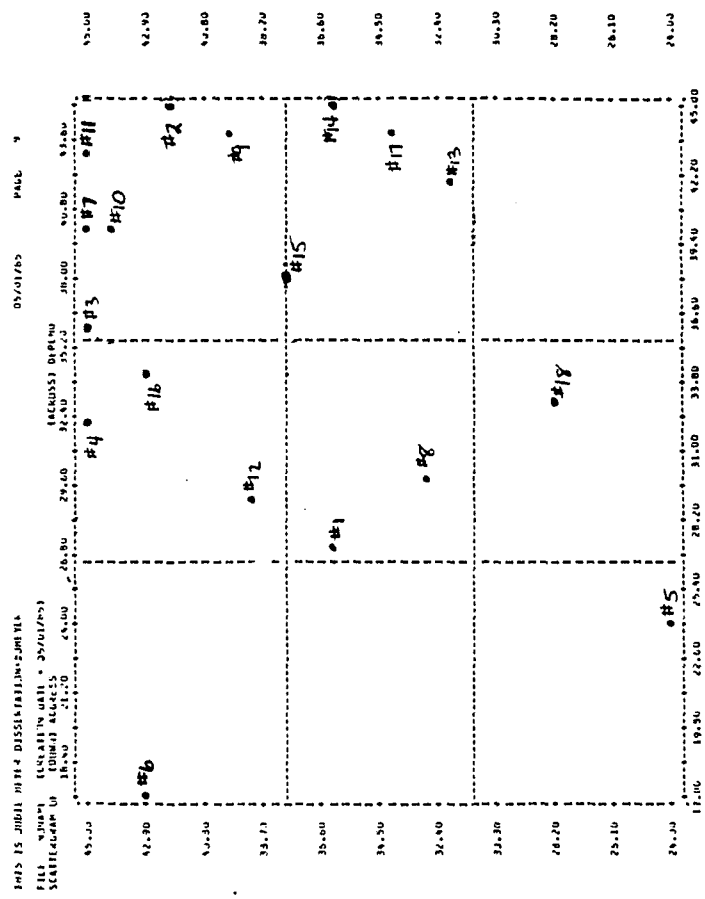
Does child teach IC things?
Does child take care of IC?
Does child feed IC?
Does child talk of IC as being less capable and/or more of a baby than s(he)?
Does child hold IC?
Does child seem to play with IC when lonely?
Does child insist that you do things for IC?
Does IC take care of younger imagined children?
Does child express a desire to share things (food, toys, etc.) with IC?

Aggressive Questions

Does child scold IC?
Does child worry about the IC doing things which are dangerous?
Does child worry about the IC being naughty?
Does child blame IC for his/her own misdeeds?
Does child say that IC "made her" or "told him to do it" when she/he gets into trouble?
Does child talk about the IC or IC's parents in ways which are recognizable as "much better" or "much worse" or "just like" you?
Does IC say things which child is not permitted to say? (e.g., curses)
Does IC worry about child?
Does child talk of IC getting hurt?

APPENDIX D

SCATTERGRAM FOR AGGRESSION X DEPENDENCY SUMMED SCORES BY SUBJECT



APPENDIX E

THE CITY COLLEGE
OF
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10031

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CENTER
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

(212) 690-6602, 3, 4

INFORMED CONSENT

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

I would like your permission to participate in a study of imaginary companions. The study will involve your being interviewed by the experimenter and then completing a questionnaire about your child. It will also involve an interview of your child by the experimenter, including some psychological tests. In addition, I will speak briefly with your child's teacher.

The experimenter will answer any questions you may have about the study, but she can only explain it fully once it is completed. Your results will be recorded by number only to insure anonymity and complete confidentiality.

Your signature at the bottom of this page indicates that you agree to participate in the study and that you have an understanding of what it will involve.

_____ _____

Subject's signature Experimenter's signature

_____ _____

Date Date

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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