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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the authors systemize the complex phenomenon known as pretend or make-believe play, defined as involving some transformation of the here and now in which the child is actually situated. Observations were made of three age groupings of dyads of middle class nursery school children. The activity of a pair of children, alone in a furnished room, was videotaped for approximately 15 minutes after which the composition of the dyad was changed. The authors present data on the techniques used by the children to communicate pretending and the organization of pretend episodes and their underlying plans. They also describe the types of roles employed by the children and suggest how plans, roles, and object use may interact in pretend play. Tables illustrating findings are included. (JM)

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The Organization of Pretend Play

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This paper will attempt to systematize to some small degree the complex and often ephemeral phenomenon known as pretend, or make-believe play. We propose, as an operating definition, that pretend play involves some transformation of the Here and Now in which the child is actually situated. In most, if not all cases, pretending requires a manipulation of the ways things are believed to be. A setting, a sequence of events, the identities of persons or objects, even attitudes and emotions can be created in the mind of the pretender, transforming some or most of his Here and Now. The resources or raw materials of make-believe are to a large extent those of the nonplay world, recombined or transformed within the play orientation.

Our observations begin with the third year of life. Symbolic, representational play, it is generally agreed, emerges before or at the second year of life and rapidly undergoes a number of changes (Piaget, 1962; Bloom, 1974; Nicolich & Raph, 1975; Overton & Jackson, 1973). The changes which appear to be best understood are those that have to do with the use or representation of objects in play. From an earlier stage where objects are used in a manner predictable on the basis of their perceptual or manipulative properties, the child moves on to relate objects according to processes that are less clearly perceptually determined and finally to transform present objects or even to invent objects for use in a pretend episode.

The development of the ability to create and sustain a plan for pretend play is less well understood. However, the increasing integration of behavior around a "coherent task" or a "central theme" was stressed by Lunzer (1959) and Hulme and Lunzer (1966) as an important dimension of maturity in pretend play during the period 2-6.

Finally, in the development of pretending, there is a tendency for the pretender to move from solely self-referenced action to action directed to figures such as dolls and toy animals (Fein, 1974). Later, the pretender goes on to attribute agency to such figures (Lowe, 1974). Still later, he may invent imaginary characters who act independently (Manosevitz, 1973), and he also begins to try on identities other than his own.

There are then at least three components in the organization and in the development of pretending as El'Konin (1969) has pointed out: Object use; a theme, or plan, or integration of actions into a larger plan; and identities or roles. Much of what is known about the increasing complexity of actions or themes and of use of identities comes from stories elicited from children (Singer, 1973; Pitcher & Prelinger, 1963). However, some observations in nursery school settings suggest that the earlier manifestations of sociodramatic play favor simple representation of caretaking or domestic activities, and later forms move toward a greater variety of situations (Parten, 1933).

Much of the normal preschooler's play activity at the time that pretend play is dominant takes place in a social setting with siblings, with a neighborhood friend or friends, with members of a play group or a nursery school or day care group. Even in larger groups, the younger children tend to interact with only one or two peers at a time, although the size of the interacting group tends to increase with age (Parten, 1933; Smith, 1975). It seems desirable, therefore, to examine pretending in a social setting if we wish to know how it is actually conducted.

We have begun with observation of same-age, previously acquainted pairs of children. In dyadic as opposed to solitary or experimenter-directed play, pretending requires communication. The players, in attempting to conduct a joint

pretend episode, provide a good deal of information about the nature of their pretending.

We will present some data on: a) techniques which are used to communicate pretending; and b) the organization of pretend episodes and their underlying plans. We will also briefly describe the types of roles employed in this corpus. Finally, we will suggest how plans, roles, and object use may interact in pretend play.

### Procedure

Three age groupings of dyads of middle-class nursery school children were observed. The youngest group (I) was composed of 12 dyads, four same sex and eight mixed sex; age range = 34-39 months. The younger group (II) was composed of 12 dyads, four same sex and eight mixed sex; age range = 42-52 months. The older group (III) was composed of 24 dyads, eight same sex and 16 mixed sex; age range = 55-67 months.

The procedures for each group were as follows: Three children from the same nursery school class were brought by their teachers to our laboratory. In all, five different private schools participated. A pair of children was left alone in a room furnished as a living room with a sofa, pictures on the wall, a rug, curtained "windows" (one-way mirrors) and a number of objects, most of which would be classed as "toys." The children's activity was videotaped for approximately 15 minutes and then the composition of the dyad was changed. The third child, who had been occupied with same-different discrimination tasks, joined one member of the dyad, and the other member went to the discrimination tasks. Thus, each child was observed in dyadic interaction with two different partners. The speech was transcribed, utterances numbered, and a narrative description of nonverbal activity was prepared for each dyad. All data to be reported here, with the exception of the communication strategies, were coded or checked directly from the videotapes and all coding was subjected to test of inter-coder agreement.

The Communication of Pretending

Make-believe or pretend play was defined as any transformation of the Here and Now, You and Me, or the action potential in these features of the situation. It was sometimes impossible to categorize reliably certain brief segments in a session as make-believe or not. However, most dyads provided clear and explicit contrasts between their orientation to their Here and Now and to the transformations.

There are at least five types of communication that indicate a state of pretend or a transition to or from that state. Empirically, two or more of these types can co-occur in the same act or utterance, but it is useful to distinguish them conceptually. These types are: a) Negation of pretend; b) Enactment; c) Signals; d) Procedural or preparatory behaviors; e) Explicit mention of pretend transformations.

Negation of pretend. The most revealing discussions were those that annihilated an ongoing pretend state in favor of the Here and Now, e.g.,

a) terminated a transformed identity,

II: 0405.16 - I'm not the dragon anymore. Please don't push  
me 'cause I'm not the dragon anymore.

b) denied existence of an imaginary object,

I: 4345.97 - I have some cookies. (eating imaginary cookies)  
- I don't see any cookies.  
- Uh huh, you do.  
- You were pretending.

c) back transformed an object: imaginary cake into cake pan,

III: 3233.115 - I stealed your cake.  
- I don't care. It's not a cake anymore.

d) terminated a joint experience: mutual phone call,

I: 2324.131 - They're not really real telephones, are they?

- Un unh.

Other discussions blocked entrance to a pretend state in favor of some Here and Now, consideration, e.g.,

a) invoked a Here and Now behavior rule,

II: 2527.231 - You can't take this present at your house.

- I'm not really going.

b) rejected pretend plan,

III: 1415.57 - Pretend there's a monster coming, OK?

- No, let's don't pretend that.

- Okay, why?

- 'Cause it's too scary, that's why.

c) refused a pretend identity,

I: 4748.36 - Mommy!

- I'm not Mommy. I'm Julia.

Enactment. Enactment is any overt representation of tone of voice, content of speech, physical gestures, attitudes, acts or actions, put forth by the pretender as characteristic of an adopted identity or appropriate to a play situation resulting from a particular transformation.

Signals. Markers of a play orientation such as giggling, grinning, winking, which may cancel a possible nonplay interpretation of an act or utterance.

Procedural or preparatory behaviors. Pretending requires management and synchronization of the partners' separate contributions. This type of communication includes apportionment of objects, e.g., This is my telephone; clarification of rights, e.g., I didn't get a turn; and general references to interaction, e.g., Do you want to play with me?

Explicit mention of pretend transformation. This type of explicit verbal communication specifies a transformation. It will be discussed below, and some data on the incidence of this type will be presented.

At this point an example from the corpus would be useful to illustrate the extent of engineering and metacommunication that does occur (and that provides the observer with behavioral evidence of a pretend orientation).

I:4042.64. A girl (G) directs a boy (B) in an episode in which she moves from enacting Mother to enacting Baby and he enacts the part of a (presumably male) Caretaker. The girl's directions to the boy are indicated by a (→). The signal (→) indicates a role transformation in this example.

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 . Insert Figure 1 about here  
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In the preceding example enactment occurred in whining like a baby, speaking sternly like a caretaker, refusing to go to sleep, scolding the naughty baby, insisting that baby go to sleep, taking baby's teddy bear away, etc. Giggling occurred as a signal of a play orientation. Procedural directions, e.g., Say... framed more explicit verbal mention of pretend actions, e.g., Go to sleep now. A number of pretend episodes were initiated by enactment alone. However, explicit verbal definition of the pretend situation most usually accompanied enactment. In fact, explicit verbal definition without enactment could create a pretend episode.

The last line of the segment just presented, in which the girl drops the pretend role of Baby and inquires about the partner's new plan (i.e., Are you going to pack your teddy bear?) illustrates one of the explicit verbal techniques which we can now discuss.



Seven categories of explicit verbal techniques for communicating aspects of the pretend situation were coded independently by the two authors. The seven categories, each with an example, are as follows:

Categories of Verbal Communication

Example

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Mention partner's role.                              | Are you going to be a bride?   |
| 2. Mention own role.                                    | I'm a work lady at work.   |
| 3. Mention joint roles.                                 | We can both be wives.  |
| 4. Mention partner's plan.                              | Pretend you hated baby fish.   |
| 5. Mention own plan.                                    | I gotta drive to the shopping center.  |
| 6. Mention joint plan.                                  | We have to eat. Our dinner's ready.  |
| 7. Transform object; e.g.,<br>sofa → train.             | This is the train. (puts suitcase<br>on sofa)  |
| or  |  |
| Invent object; e.g.,<br>☉ → cheese cake +<br>ice cream. | Now this is a cheese cake and this is<br>ice cream. (points to empty places<br>on plate) |

The definitions of categories, further illustrations, and coding conventions are presented in Appendix I. It can be noted here that only utterances that unambiguously referred to or mentioned some aspect of a pretend state were accepted in this count. It should also be noted that "mention" covers all types of speech acts and utterance forms: we have not distinguished here among requests for information, requests for action, assertions, suggestions, etc.

Since the sessions were not all of equal length, only the first eight minutes were coded for each dyad. A few transcripts were coded for the entire session and inspection of these suggests that somewhat less pretend activity took place in the first eight minutes as contrasted with the last half of the session. This would not be unexpected since some initial time would be required for exploration of the new environment before play could begin (Hutt, 1971). This phenomenon would

be more in evidence for the first dyad of a triad since neither child in the first dyad had seen the room before. Thus, these data represent a very conservative estimate of the frequency of the coded categories of verbal behavior. An occurrence of a category member was coded by utterance number (utterances were defined as stretches of one person's speech bounded by speech of partner or by a pause of one second or more).

Total numbers of explicit mentions in each of the seven categories produced in the first eight minutes of the sessions are presented in Table 1. We have as yet made no statistical analysis of these frequencies. It should be noted that a single utterance could contain instances of more than one category. For example, in I'm going to school, Mommy, own plan is announced (Category 5), and role of partner is mentioned (Category 1).

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 Insert Table 1 about here  
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As Table 1 clearly shows, all age groups communicated much more frequently about "plans" than about roles, i.e., they made more frequent verbally-marked transformations of the Here and Now than of their own identities. Mention of one's own plans (which includes past, present or future events or settings) was the most frequently used type of communication about pretending for all age groups. However, there was a trend toward more frequent mention of joint plans by the older group.

The point to be made about the communication of pretending is that a great deal of speech is devoted to creating, clarifying, maintaining, or negotiating the social pretend experience. You need to know who your partner is, what he thinks he's doing, where he thinks he is, and what it is he is handling or using;

he must have similar information about you. Further, since children of this age probably do not talk silently to themselves (Conrad, 1971), we suspect that they also assist themselves in pretending by verbalizing their transformations. To some extent, then, the saying is the playing at this age.

The characteristic modal verbs for all the pretenders were got to, have to, supposed to, e.g., I gotta go get some milk and roast beef, I have to iron the snake, You're supposed to be at your home. One youngest child, sensing perhaps the obligatory nature of pretend arrangements, asserted: I'm the mother and baby ought should go to sleep--and I got to sweep.

Plans and the Structure of Pretending

Despite the extensive verbal support for pretending, most dyads engaged in sequences of behaviors that appeared to unfold or be run off with little discussion concerning what to do next. Most of these relatively fluent sequences appeared to be built around a small number of "themes." We will discuss only those that were observed in several, if not a majority, of the dyads. All videotapes were reviewed by the authors who identified a list of recurrent sequences. These had the property of being "played out" in such a way that in the recurrent sequence the same steps were carried out by the members.

Let us postulate that the children share an abstract plan or representation of an event sequence. The abstract representation may be called a schema. Our notion of the term is somewhat similar to that discussed by Kelley when, quoting Bartlett, he defined causal schema as "an active organization of past reactions or of past experiences" (Kelley, 1971, pp. 153-154). The schema must be sufficiently abstract to subsume variant and specific guides to performances. These variants, which we will call action formats, direct the actual performance. It seems unlikely that the event sequences in this corpus were copied directly from



any single adult model. Rather, bits and pieces of experience may have been grasped and conjoined in the process of the child's construction of the schema. Once the schema is formed, it is productive, i.e., it generates specific variants of the schema which control the performances we observe.

Since objects in the Here and Now sometimes trigger the choice of a schema but do not determine its course, it seems appropriate to name the schema as if they were processes (or predicates), i.e., as if they were essentially verb-like. A linguistic analogy, that of case grammar (Fillmore, 1968) is useful in describing the relation of variants to the schema. For example, we postulate that many of the children have constructed a TREAT/HEAL schema. The observed variants (the action formats) included "healing a dead pet," "treating a wounded snake," "treating a sick child." Some agent (e.g., one child or child transformed to Doctor or Caretaker) carried out the action on the patient, i.e., the pet, snake, or sick child. The schema TREAT/HEAL also permits an instrumental case. Thus, under the action format, "treating the snake" a lunch box was transformed into a doctor's bag and some small objects in it were transformed into medicine and instruments by means of which the snake was treated. This schema can occur alone or it can be combined with certain other schemata.

A very simple schema is MAKING A CALL. The action formats derived from it included "telephoning each other," "telephoning a store," "telephoning (imaginary) friends," "telephoning a parent." The sight of the two telephones in the room often appeared to trigger the selection of this schema. The performances of the formats could not have been verbatim repetitions of any overheard adult call. However, the maximal structure of the formats as observed in some of the older dyads conforms very closely to the structure of telephoning as described by Schegloff (1968) and by Schegloff and Sachs (1973). We want to suggest that performance of an action format of the schema MAKING A CALL is not imitative

but involves processes of active reconstruction of a unit of adult daily activity. The action format of the schema MAKING A CALL is represented in Figure 2 in its maximally extended form. There are examples of observed behaviors in the sequenced component steps. The final three columns provide further information on how the format was integrated into the pretend situation and what roles, if any, were adopted, and the first two provide information on how the format was initiated.

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 Insert Figure 2 about here  
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The example is from a Group II dyad, a boy and a girl who engaged in a mutual call without adopting specific imaginary identities. It displays a fairly extensive body, which is defined as conversation not devoted to opening or closing the call. No pre-closing occurs in this example, but a pre-closing from another call was, for example, the announcement, Well, I have to do some work for the baby, before saying, Well, goodbye.

Definitions of each component were used by a coder (other than the authors) who examined each videotaped session. The initiating component for the action formats was defined as raising the telephone to the ear. One of the authors then coded the same data for a reliability check. Intercoder agreement was computed for each category and was highly satisfactory. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

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 Insert Table 2 about here  
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As Table 2 indicates, "making a call" was a popular activity. Approximately two-thirds of all dyads in each age group performed the rudimentary activity of raising the receiver to the ear. A large proportion of the calls were interrupted

and curtailed, but even the youngest children produced several complete calls consisting of greeting, "body" and closing. Many other calls consisted of some combination of two of these three elements. Only three pre-closings occurred and these only in the oldest age group.

Two distinct types of pretend calls were identified: "mutual" calls, in which the two children conversed with each other, with or without assuming "pretend" identities; and "third party calls," in which one child telephoned an absent friend, parent or imaginary character or office. The latter variety was often social, to the extent that the non-calling child watched his partner intently, listened to the often-lively "conversation" and then received or requested an explanation of what had transpired. While these third party calls were often social and imaginative, the "mutual" calls should be more difficult to execute in that they demand alternation and synchronization of behavior. Table 2 indicates that the youngest children most often chose to call a third party. However, even these very young children produced two calls which adequately ordered and alternated the basic elements of a telephone call.

Other schemata which we have tentatively identified include COOKING/BAKING, DINING, PACKING, TRAVELLING, PROVISIONING/SHOPPING, BUILDING/REPAIRING. A particularly interesting schema is AVERTING THREAT/DANGER. It generates a number of different action formats and exhibits a rather complex inventory of functional roles. Functional roles are those participants in action formats defined by the requirements of the action itself, e.g., driver-passenger, cook-server-diner. A common action format of the AVERTING THREAT/DANGER schema is often called "monsters" by the children themselves, but many entities other than monsters can occupy the functional role of source of threat. The functional role structure is composed of source of threat, victim, defender. The temporally sequenced components of the schema are illustrated in Figure 3. There are three major parts:

I. Identification of threat or danger, in which the source is pointed out, its magnitude noted, and the victim and defender roles identified. At this point the threat can be denied, e.g., It won't bite.

II. Defense, in which counteraction is taken with or without the use of some instrument, or in which help or reinforcements are summoned.

III. Outcome, in which the threat either succeeds, e.g., He ate me. I'm dead; the threat is destroyed or averted; or the victims escape the danger.

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 Insert Figure 3 about here  
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If the threat is destroyed, it can mysteriously revive. If it does so, the format usually cycles back to the defense component and proceeds as indicated above.

Figure 3 shows an example from a Group III dyad, in which a wife (victim) was endangered by a fire (source of threat) in the home. The Husband (defender) countered by trying to extinguish the fire with an imaginary hose and vocal water noises. He succeeded in putting out the fire, but it broke out again in a different room and the format was recycled. (In this episode, as a matter of fact, it recycled seven times).

An examination of all pretend episodes utilizing this schema revealed the following results: As can be seen in Table 3, the AVERTING THREAT/DANGER schema was especially popular with the oldest group of children. In addition,

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 Insert Table 3 about here  
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this group most often carried the sequence through to its logical conclusion, i.e., the successful destruction or aversion of the threat. While the youngest children often pretended fear of the danger (screams, cries for help), they did not as often mount a counteraction. Hence the younger children more often assumed the functional role of victim than of defender, and when they did defend they most often did so without an instrument. Further they never called up reinforcements. On the other hand, the older children often played contrasting roles of victim and defender with one child fleeing or cowering in fear while the other fought off the threat in various imaginative ways. Table 3 gives a picture of increasing complexity and differentiation of action formats with age, suggesting that elaboration of a schema may be a means whereby pretend play develops during the period 3-5 years.

Object Transformations

A consideration of the instruments that can be used in defense against a threat or danger suggests that object transformations are in many cases under direct control of an action format. In other words, we can specify a particular action format as the context of an object transformation or object invention. Thus, we see in specific variant formats of the AVERTING THREAT/DANGER schema the following transformations of objects into functional roles and into other objects, e.g.,

a) Object animated as defender:

stuffed bear → defender/AF = big worm invades home #

b) Object animated as source of threat:

stuffed snake → source of threat/AF = monster threatens victims #



c) Object as instrument for counteraction:

- hand → fire hose /AF = fire endangers home #
- stuffed snake → fire hose /AF = fire endangers home #
- flashlight → dynamite /AF = monster threatens victims #
- hand → gun /AF = bandit threatens victim #

Using a different approach, we have begun to trace the transformations of a single object throughout the corpus to determine how the various action formats of the postulated schemata exert control over the specific transformations. We also plan to examine the way in which action formats call into existence invented or imagined objects. At this point we will only illustrate a few of the transformations undergone by a three-legged stool that contained a magnifying glass in its center:

Age Group

- III a) stool → spy glass or telescope (to spot fire)/AF fire endangers sky and God #
- I, III b) stool → toilet/AF taking care of baby #
- III c) stool → workchair/AF performing household task #
- II, III d) stool → part of car (trailer)/AF packing for trip #
- II e) stool → milk carton/AF shopping for provisions #

These examples as ordered show progression from transformations influenced by the perceptual or physical properties of the object to transformations apparently less determined by such properties. The order of these examples, however, is not closely correlated with the age groups. We postulate that once the child reaches a level of cognitive maturity that permits him to make transformations independent of perceptual or physical properties, his pretend treatment of objects comes under the control of the action format he is employing.

Identities and Roles

The pretend space is peopled with various animate, animated or human individuals. Children can take on the identity of many of these entities or can relate to them as to individuals. We will distinguish functional, character, relational, and peripheral types. We shall be most concerned with human roles, but the question of animation deserves a brief comment.

Animation. The presence of several large stuffed animals (snake, bear, fish, and a smaller tiger) in the room naturally led to animation of these objects. Most dyads made the fish swim and the snake wiggle. But more complex than the indication that the snake might slither or bite are those cases in which a child assumed the identity of the animal by speaking for it, e.g., Hello, I'm a baby fish (in a high squeaky voice). In another type of transformation the animal was clearly attributed a relational role (see below) such as Child or Pet, who might also speak or misbehave or require punishment. We have already noted the fact that the stuffed animals could be attributed the functional role of threat or defender in the AVERTING THREAT/DANGER schema or of patient in the TREAT/HEAL schema.

The small baby doll and a small hand puppet could remain just "toys" and could be talked about as such or could be transformed into Baby (a relational role), receive appropriate care, have distinct needs and feelings and perform baby-characteristic actions.

Functional roles. One type of role--the functional role--was rarely named by the children but did appear to be conceptualized in some way by the children. Functional roles are the agent, patient, beneficiary roles in action formats. They are those animate but not necessarily human "arguments" that are related by a specific predicate. In the action format DINING, for example, the functional

roles are the one who eats and the one who serves. Some action formats such as WORKING ON/REPAIRING require only one animate functional role, that of worker or builder or repairer. The action format MAKING A CALL requires two functional roles, those of caller and called, even though the called may also be completely imaginary such as an imaginary friend or some doctors such as Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Hines. The functional roles of the AVERTING THREAT/DANGER schema were discussed above. Functional roles were subject to negotiation, and apportionment of them, if it occurred explicitly, formed part of the preparation for performance of an action format.

Characters. Human role categories (other than relational) were of two kinds --stereotypic and fictional. Stereotypic roles are types that are distinguished primarily on the basis of occupation, habitual action, habitual attitude or personality attribute. Examples from the corpus are cowboy, fireman, policeman, explorer, Indian chief, bride, wicked witch, doctor, nurse. These types were generally flat in terms of personality, their actions and attributes were highly predictable, and their scope of action was highly restricted. In speaking about them, the child could use either an indefinite or definite article, e.g., You be the doctor, or I'm a fireman.

Fictional roles were those individuals who have proper names and whose source appeared to be stories, television, or oral tradition. They each have a single unique history. Examples from the corpus are St. George, (and) the Dragon; Santa Claus; Hansel and Gretel; Friedmore Caveters; Hooley, the Cookie Monster; Mr. Donkey. Purely fictive but perhaps only nonce characters were Mrs. Fingernail, Uncle Poop, Mr. Poop, who have little to offer other than their names, which were considered funny by the children.

Relational roles. Of great importance in the corpus were those roles which derive from the family. Presence of one usually imported at least one other. These roles were treated by the children as if they were somehow always potentially available. They were "there" and needed only to be matched to self or partner or be invoked by mention to be effectively present. These are, of course, Mommy, Wife, Daddy, Husband, Baby, Child, Brother, Sister, and much more rarely, Grandmother and Grandfather; only one Uncle was mentioned. A Caretaker, not specifically marked for sex, was often enacted. To be included here is Pet, who was often treated as Child. Family members, including Pet, were referred to by personal possessive pronouns, e.g., my, your, our; but were also often referred to using a definite article, e.g., You be the Daddy. Only rarely was an indefinite article used.

Relational roles can, of course, coincide with functional roles, e.g., Mother is usually the server in action formats of the DINING schema. Relational roles did not coincide with character roles, though they were transformed (reversably) from them. Relational roles appeared to be stronger than character roles. They were occupied over longer periods of time, and under conditions of transformation seemed to be primary, e.g., Husband temporarily became a fireman and the fireman was then transformed back into Husband. Further, relational roles occurred in more different variants of the schemata than did character roles.

Transformations across generations but along sex-appropriate lines were frequent, e.g., Mother → female-Baby, Daughter → Sister, or Mother → Wife. Thus, we were sometimes unable to specify at a given point which relational role was being used. Relational roles were always subject to sex-appropriate assignment in the dyad. The relational roles tended to come in pairs. If one member

of the dyad assumed the role of Mother, the other would generally be expected to adopt some other relational role. However, the family roles being potentially present, an absent Mother or Father could be invoked, and Brother and Sister as well. Relational roles were discussed extensively preceding enactment.

Peripheral roles. At the fringes of the pretend space were individuals who were discussed or addressed, but whose identity the child never assumed. These were the imaginary friends. We do not know whether they were old acquaintances or were invented just for the occasion. In this corpus they were usually named, but sometimes just referred to as friends. Expected guests for whom the house was readied were also counted as peripheral roles.

References were also made to real but absent people such as the nursery school teacher, the third child of the dyad, or one of the investigators. Their existence was only in the nonplay world and they did not enter the dyadic-play space.

### Conclusion

We have attempted to explore the various components of pretending, examining briefly the structure of plans, the transformation or invention of objects, and the types of identities or roles which occurred in a corpus of spontaneous dyadic interactions of nursery school children. The three major components are interdependent and their mutual influence is to some extent amenable to systematic analysis.

We postulated the existence of schemata, a schema being an abstract representation of dynamic relations and events from which more detailed plans, or action formats, can be derived. The action format is a more fully specified variant of the schema, adapted for use in a particular situation.

A schema may be selected by some object or event in the Here and Now, e.g., a telephone, a loud voice. Once cued, the action format is available to guide the joint make-believe performance. Depending on the potential of the schema, the action formats provide certain roles that specify the animate and inanimate components organized under the format. Once a format is being played out, object and identity transformations are highly subject to the controlling plan. Two rather popular schemata were examined and some evidence of increasing complexity or elaboration of the formats across the age range sampled was presented. Some contingent object transformations occurring in the action formats were also described.

Although the study of play with objects is most useful in the period before the emergence of fluent social speech (and for various experimental objectives at other periods as well), the interdependence of plan with role and object transformations requires further study if the dynamics of make-believe play are to be understood. Listing of preferred roles or of favorite themes cannot alone provide an adequate picture of the internal complexity of pretending.

The approach described here assumes that the resources for pretend play are social constructs. Pretend play reveals the construction of typifications (Schutz, 1962) in progress, i.e., it reveals not only current concerns, individual predispositions, or affect states, but shows also how the child grasps the way the world fits together. What we see "going together" are not just wagons and horses, tea cups and saucers, a spoon and feeding, but attitudes with sex-typing, typical desires and behaviors with age and sex distinctions, steps in action or event sequences, and certain action sequences with other action sequences. The first example provided a glimpse of the kind of role-attitude-expressive behavior and appropriate action sequence packaging that

can be generated at three years of age.

Some independent experimental confirmation of three year old children's competence in distinguishing relevant dimensions of sex is provided by Thompson (1975). The ability to assign gender labels correctly at 36 months must of course underlie the behaviors we have observed in episodes involving role play.

The social conduct of pretending was shown to rest on extensive and diversified communicative behaviors. A considerable effort is devoted to getting one's ludic signals together. The communication is often highly redundant, including vocal, gestural and verbal enactment as well as explicit discussion of pretend components. The communication of pretend provides a rich source of information for students of play as well as for the pretenders themselves.

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Table 1,

Total number of explicit mentions of pretend transformations per age group

<u>Groups</u>	<u>Age (mos.)</u>	<u>Mention Role:</u>		<u>Mention Plans:</u>		<u>Mention Object:</u>
		<u>of Partner</u>	<u>of Self</u>	<u>of Partner</u>	<u>of Both</u>	
I <sup>a</sup>	32-39	32	13	54	89	42
II <sup>a</sup>	42-52	18	25	37	78	34✓
III <sup>b</sup>	55-67	59	29	79	198	57

a) N = 12 dyads

b) N = 24 dyads

Table 2

Frequencies of the occurrence of several of the components  
and types of telephone calls for each age group

Groups	Age (mos.)	handlings + greeting	greeting + closing	greeting, body, + closing	mutual	third party	pretend role
I <sup>a</sup>	32-39	23 (7 dyads)	5	5	2	8	2
II <sup>a</sup>	42-52	22 (8 dyads)	10	8	9	7	1
III <sup>b</sup>	55-67	38 (16 dyads)	14	11	9	14	6
Total		83	29	24	20	29	9

a) N = 12

b) N = 24

Table 3

Total number of occurrences of components of AVERTING THREAT/DANGER schema  
for each age group

Group	Age (mos.)	Total Threats	I. IDENTIFICATION			II. DEFENSE		III. OUTCOME			Revives	
			Functional Roles Victim	Defender	Pretend Role	Action	Instru-ment	Reinforce-ments	Succeeds	Destroyed		Other
I <sup>a</sup>	32-39	10	9	3	5	6	2	---	2	---	9	---
II <sup>a</sup>	42-52	8	8	6	4	10	10	---	---	5	3	---
III <sup>b</sup>	55-67	33	27	33	4	28	20	3	---	19	12	13

a) N = 12

b) N = 24

Girl (38 months)

Boy (35 months)

(G+B orient toward doll  
G+B → Caretaker)

(G → Baby;  
Baby and Caretaker  
converse)

(G drops baby role):

✓1. Say, 'Go to sleep now.'

3. Why? (whining)

5. Why?

✓7. No, say 'Because.'  
(emphatically)

9. Why? Because why?

11. Why?

✓13. No, 'cause I bit  
somebody.

✓15. Say, 'Go to sleep. Put  
your head down.'  
(sternly)

17. No.

19. No.

21. My head's up. (giggles)  
I want my teddy bear.  
(petulant voice)

23. Why?

25. Are you going to pack  
your teddy bear?

2. Go sleep now.

4. Baby...

6. Because. →

8. Because.  
(emphatically)

10. Not good. You bad.

12. 'Cause you spill  
your milk.

14. Yes, you did.

16. Put head down.  
(sternly)

18. Yes.

20. Yes, Okay, I will  
spank you. Bad boy.  
(spanks her)

22. No, your teddy bear  
go away. (sternly)

24. 'Cause he does.  
(walks off with teddy  
bear)

Figure 1. Text of pretend play episode from a Group I dyad. (✓ indicates metacommunication; → indicates role transformation; material in parentheses indicates paralinguistic features and actions)

I. INITIATION

II. CALL

III. INTEGRATIVE AND ROLE FACTORS

	Handling	Preparatory	Greeting	Body	Pre-closing	Closing	Evaluation	Addressee	Role Ego
Boy	Puts phone to ear	a) "It's ringing." b) "What's your name?"	"Hey, Becky!"	"Do you got any milk....."		"Bye."	"Un unh."	Becky	Self
Girl	Puts phone to ear	a) Rings phone b) "My name is Becky."	"What?"	"I don't know where it is....."		"Bye."	"They're not réally real tele-phones."	Dréw	Self

Figure 2. Example of an action-format of the schema MAKING A CALL by a Group II Dyad.

I. IDENTIFICATION

	Source of Threat	Other Functional Roles	Pretend Role	Danger	Denial
Boy		defender	husband		
Girl	imaginary fire in house	victim	wife	Burn up house	

II. DEFENSE

	Counter-action	Instrument +/-	Reinforcements
Boy	extinguishes fire	imaginary hose with water noises	
Girl	enacts fright		

III. OUTCOME

	Threat succeeds	or Threat destroyed	or Other finale	Threat revives
Boy		fire put out		
Girl				fire breaks out in another room

→ Recyclé to II

Figure 3. Components of the schema AVERTING THREAT/DANGER with example from a group III dyad.