

**Imaginary Friends as Therapeutic Allies:**  
**A Brief Sample of Annotated Bibliography Expectations for Final Research Project**

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Ginzberg, Natalia. (1996). The Imaginary Life. *Salmagundi*, 112. 27.

Ginzberg explores her own experiences with imaginary companions, providing vivid details about her “Prince Serge” from early childhood. The details about the prince are very vivid in her mind, and she relates specific instances with the prince in the late night talks she would have with him. She reflects on why children may create imaginary companions as she did in her youth, hypothesizing that children like to be envied.

Ginzberg compares envy and pity to grass that children walk on, oftentimes a feat that is only possible in the imaginary world. Such an achievement creates a sense of strength and control in children. In the imaginary world, children are seen without indifference, they are seen as amazing and wonderful, living in the air of spotlight of their own world where they lack nothing. The imaginary world brings an air of unique beauty and freedom that cannot be obtained in the real world where relationships are used for gain. Ginzberg asserts that the more children experience the real world, they desire to be in their imaginary world.

Ginzberg’s work, while insightful, is strongly subjective, reporting on her own experiences and making assumptions about other children’s experiences without noting any performed research or data. This may be appropriate, in some ways, as the

experience of an imaginary companion is subjective in itself, and scientific inquiry is not suited for examining this phenomenon appropriately.

I enjoyed reading Ginzberg's work, as it was a welcome break from the exhaustive research I had been reading on imaginary companions and the ongoing debates about their credibility. Ginzberg's transparency about her own experiences was a welcome re-introduction to the humanity behind the necessity and creation of imaginary companions. While it may not have been as scientifically oriented as a research study, it provided first-hand accounts of the experience, which are invaluable in understanding this concept further.

Hoff, Eva V. (2005). A Friend Living Inside of Me - The Forms and Functions of Imaginary Companions. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 24. 151-189

This is a paragraph summarizing the article. Blah Blah psychology, imaginary friends. Blah Blah psychology, imaginary friends. Blah Blah psychology, imaginary friends. Blah Blah psychology, imaginary friends. Blah Blah psychology, imaginary friends. Blah Blah psychology, imaginary friends. Blah Blah psychology, imaginary friends.

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Singer and Singer, J.L. (1990). The house of make-believe; Children's play and developing  
 imagination. *Harvard University Press*.

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This is the paragraph where I reflect on the article. I think this article was a helpful and objective approach to understanding imaginary friends. The fact that it was published at Harvard increases my trust in the credibility of the research. Additionally, the language used in the article was easy for me to understand, which helped me with the overall writing process.

Ciccarelli, S. K., White, J. N., & Ciccarelli, S. K. (2017). *Psychology*. Boston, Mass: Pearson Learning Solutions.

Cicarelli and White describe Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development as contingent upon conquering or resolving internal conflicts. Without resolving these conflicts, children can continue in physical development while experiencing internal distress, resulting in atypical development.

The language that Cicarelli and White use in their textbook is at times dense and difficult to understand. They approach the subject of child development from a highly scientific and objective standpoint, allowing the reader to understand concepts without interference. Occasionally, these authors include personal anecdotes from their own lives, or use humor that can feel out of place given the seemingly stoic nature of their writing style.

I found the textbook somewhat helpful in understanding how imaginary friends may occur in childhood - if a child were to feel lonely and unwanted as they're exploring

independence, they may create a companion who is like a hero or cheerleader to them, encouraging them in whatever they do. With the section on lifespan development, as well as the rest of the book, I dislike the amount of information that Cicarelli and White present to the student. With lifespan, however, their approach was helpful though, at times, a bit overwhelming with the amount of content.

In this connection paragraph, emerging themes and learning from the articles is introduced. For example, the combination of Cicarelli and White's objective approach along with Ginzberg's subjective storytelling style allowed for a synthesis between the science and art of imaginary companions to be better understood. It seems clear that while imaginary friends can be helpful to children, it is difficult for scientists to quantify the experience, inhibiting further research or understanding. Furthermore, the application of Singer and Singer's approach from Harvard introduced a sense of credibility and legitimacy to the array of opinions and facts surrounding this interesting topic.

After you've cited all 4 sources, you'll write a reflection paragraph. It might sound something like this. This annotated bibliography experience was a mixed one for me - while it was nice to learn more about imaginary friends, I was so worried about the formatting and making sure I had all of the elements that Professor Instructor was looking for. I did learn that imaginary friends are healthy aspects of a child's development, which I did not know before. I do not recall having any imaginary friends in childhood, and wonder why my sister did. I wonder what happens for children whose imaginary friends stay with them into adulthood - does that make that person psychotic? How are imaginary friends different from schizophrenia or Dissociative Identity Disorder? I think continued research in this area could

be helpful so psychologists can know more about how imaginary friends work, and maybe help children avoid psychosis in adulthood.

### References

- Ciccarelli, S. K., White, J. N., & Ciccarelli, S. K. (2017). *Psychology*. Boston, Mass: Pearson Learning Solutions.
- Hoff, Eva V. (2005). A Friend Living Inside of Me - The Forms and Functions of Imaginary Companions. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 24. 151-189
- Ginzberg, Natalia. (1996). The Imaginary Life. *Salmagundi*, 112. 27.
- Singer and Singer, J.L. (1990). The house of make-believe; Children's play and developing imagination. *Harvard University Press*.