

The Influence of Culture on Pretend Play: The Case of Mennonite Children. *Stephanie M. Carlson; Marjorie Taylor; Gerald R. Levin.*

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Teacher attitudes about pretend play were compared in Old Order Mennonite, New Order Mennonite, and non-Mennonite Christian schools. These subcultures differ in modernity, media exposure, and encouragement of pretend play. Non-Mennonite teachers were the most positive about pretend play, but Old Order Mennonite teachers were the most positive about private fantasies (e.g., imaginary companions). Although the proportion of children's pretend play at recess did not differ across groups, Old Order Mennonite children's play themes adhered more closely to real-life family roles. Teacher attitudes about pretend play were related to the imaginativeness of children's social play. These findings suggest it is important to investigate the influence of culture on pretend play in both social and nonsocial contexts and the processes by which this influence occurs.

Although the capacity and inclination to pretend seem to appear spontaneously in all normally developing children as they acquire the ability to use symbols and engage in representational thought (Piaget, 1962), research on individual differences indicates that the sociocultural context is also crucial to the developmental course of pretense (e.g., Farver, 1992; Gaskins & Goncu, 1992; Haight & Miller, 1993). In many western middle-class families, pretend play is considered beneficial for young children and involvement in fantasy is strongly encouraged. For example, the first books read to many children are about fairies, talking animals, mermaids, and the like. Stuffed bears and dolls that are animated by parents in the context of play are among the first toys of childhood. In episodes of joint play, adults scaffold the pretense of young children, providing a supportive and instructional environment for the elaboration of pretend play themes (Haight & Miller, 1993; Kavanaugh, Whittington, & Cerbone, 1983; Smolucha, 1992). The involvement of parents in this way has been shown to raise both the level and the length of pretend play episodes (O'Reilly & Bornstein, 1993; Slade, 1987).

Not all families and all communities, however, value and facilitate children's engagement in pretend play. Religious ideology constitutes one aspect of cultural context that contributes to substantial variation in adult attitudes about pretense. Although mainstream Christianity tends to support children's involvement in fantasy activities--even toddlers are actively encouraged to participate in rituals involving fantasy characters such as Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny (Clark, 1995)--more fundamentalist sects tend to be less positive about pretend play and to espouse a child-rearing environment that is less conducive to its development. For example, our reading of the Mennonite and Amish literature(1) gave the impression that pretend play is rarely discussed or embellished in Mennonite society, and in some cases is actively discouraged (e.g., Hostetler, 1993). Acceptable reading material for Mennonite children includes stories that represent an American rural way of life and teach a moral lesson (such as the value of hard work). Stories that have a fantasy orientation are considered unacceptable. The Amish "do not

want their children to read fairy tales or myths; many object to any stories that are not true such as those in which animals talk and act like people or stories that involve magic, such as *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*" (Hostetler & Huntington, 1971, p. 46). Menno Simons, the founder of the Mennonite faith, instructed parents not to encourage frivolous activities such as pretend play--"wink not at [their] follies." Mennonites also believe that free time or idleness is detrimental to children's development, thus young children are less likely to have the unstructured time that is believed to promote pretend play (Singer & Singer, 1990).

In our research, we examined how attitudes about pretense vary as a function of religion by interviewing teachers in Mennonite communities that differed with respect to the adherence to traditional Mennonite values, as well as teachers in rural non-Mennonite Christian communities. Although it would have been desirable to have parents participate in this study, interviewing people in private homes or church settings is unacceptable to many members of orthodox Mennonite congregations. We interviewed teachers because they were much more accessible to us, they are important agents in the socialization of young children, and, especially in Mennonite communities, they uphold home-life value systems (Schwartz, 1973). In a second study, we explored the relation between teacher attitudes and child behavior by observing children from these communities at play during school recess. To provide a context for our presentation of the empirical studies, we begin with a description of the Mennonite way of life and views concerning children.

Mennonite Way of Life

The Mennonite faith is a form of Christian Protestant anabaptism founded in the sixteenth century in Switzerland. To escape religious persecution and economic difficulties, Mennonite followers began immigrating to America in the late 1600s. They settled on farms in the Northeast and maintained an agricultural lifestyle that continues to thrive. Although the greatest concentration of Mennonite communities is in Pennsylvania, large groups have congregated in many regions including New York, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, and eastern Canada.

There are five main cultural themes that distinguish Old Order (orthodox) Mennonites from other Christians (Hostetler & Huntington, 1971):

1. A conscious separation from the larger society. Purposeful resistance to modernity can be seen in the items listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Old Order Mennonite Life Style

Peasant-like dress:

- women wear long, dark printed dresses, black shoes and stockings, and a white "prayer bonnet" to show their obedience to God and submission to their husbands
- men wear black or dark blue trousers with suspenders and long-sleeved shirts (white on Sundays), a Mao-styled black jacket and black hat (blue hats for young men) dresses and shirts are always buttoned to the neck

Language:

- a Pennsylvania German dialect is spoken at home and all social functions

Homes:

- no central heating
- kitchen has a wood-burning stove
- a second gas or electric stove, sometimes painted black to avoid the "fanciness" of white enamel
- a long kitchen table lined with one or two benches
- some have a china cabinet
- some have a hand pump in the kitchen for water
- many do not have indoor plumbing
- most now have refrigerators
- some do not have electricity (particularly ministers' homes)
- none have radio or television
- phones are allowed on the porch but must only be used for business
- refuse to pay fire insurance (community will rebuild and share the cost)

Schools:

- established their own parochial school system in 1966

Machinery:

- tractors have steel-rimmed wheels instead of rubber tires
- tractors must not exceed 90 H.P. or have a tractor cab
- tractors and automobiles may not be used for transportation--only a horse and buggy

Occupations:

- over 90% are farmers
- others work in shops that make or repair shoes, harnesses, furniture, buggies, or stoves
- shops must be located in the farm community (not in urban centers)
- do not pay health care or pensions (community shares responsibility for elders)

Note: Adapted from Peters's (1987) description of Old Order Mennonites in Canada.

2. Voluntary acceptance of the faith and its stringent social obligations. In late adolescence, young people are urged to vow not to depart from the discipline and to accept the "straight and narrow" way of living.

3. Maintenance of a disciplined church community. Rules for borderline issues (such as allowing windshields on buggies) are discussed in the Ordnung, the book of conduct for each district; however, most standards are not specified in writing. As in any society, Mennonites acquire cultural norms and values by being active participants in the particular way of life established by the community in which they are raised.

4. Excommunication and shunning. Mennonites are concerned with keeping their members from "slipping" into the secular world or into other religious groups. Thus,

anyone in the fellowship who expresses a desire for modern conveniences, aspires to additional education, or violates church standards through drunkenness or adultery risks being shunned.

5. Harmony with the soil and nature. Mennonites espouse agricultural living because it promotes the Puritan values of hard work, thrift, and mutual aid as opposed to the "restlessness, rootlessness, and anxiety" associated with urban mobility (Hostetler & Huntington, 1971, p. 9).

Mennonite Views of Children

The primary source of information about children in Amish/Mennonite communities is Hostetler's writings based on his years of study beginning in the 1960s, field visits, and recollections of his own childhood. Table 2 summarizes the assumptions and postulates that govern childrearing practices in this ethnoreligious group. Mennonite society divides individuals into age stages and there are socialization patterns characteristic of each stage. "Little children," comprised of children ages 1 to 5, are kept as far away from the outside world as possible. They must stay close to parents when shopping outside their village and they are not introduced to non-Mennonite strangers or taught about the outside world. Nevertheless, parents encourage little children to participate in the physical world of adults and to be useful on the farm and in the house. In addition, little children are taught to share and care for younger, less able siblings. Whereas initiative in the physical realm is strongly encouraged in little children, intellectual initiative (e.g., asking questions) is severely restricted. Parents caution against new ideas; they feel it is better for a child to observe and imitate adults on a behavioral level rather than to ask "how?" or "why?" (Hostetler & Huntington, 1971).

Table 2. Child-Rearing Postulates in Amish/Mennonite Society

1. Children are born with a sinful nature that must be tamed through a proper environment in which they are responsible to God and to others for their actions.
2. Parents are responsible for teaching their children right and wrong and the belief in eternal life.
3. Children are urged not to be idle; they must learn reading, writing, and useful manual skills.
4. Children must be obedient to parents and to God; they are to be well mannered, quiet, and humble in the presence of others and not self-willed.
5. Individualism is discouraged as children form vital relationships with their parents, siblings, the church, the community, and the school.
6. Religious training takes place mainly at home while schools are responsible for teaching literacy and skills that are consistent with home values.
7. Children must know and understand the scriptures before they are ceremonially baptized.

8. Children must be protected from material and spiritual worldliness in order to ensure that they will be committed to the church community.

Note: Adapted from Hostetler & Huntington (1971).

"Scholars" comprise children in school (ages 6 to 15). The family is the primary locus of socialization, but Mennonite schools work with families and churches to instill the "right attitudes" in scholars. These attitudes include humility, forgiveness, admission of error, sympathy, responsibility, and appreciation of work. The overarching goal of Mennonite education is to reinforce community values by leading children to take their places in the ethnoreligious society (Peters, 1987). The curriculum for all students contains reading and writing in English, arithmetic, German, and some history, geography, art, and health. Teachers use dated text books of the public system and simply omit questionable chapters or they use materials that are published specifically for Amish and Mennonite schools. Formal education takes place in one- or two-room schoolhouses and ends with eighth grade. Too much education is considered to be a detriment to children's enjoyment of physical labor; it is associated with individual role confusion, as well as conflict and instability in the culture as a whole. By having their own private schools, Mennonite children and their friends share the same lifestyle and there is no multimedia exposure to alternative ways of living.

Given the traditional Mennonite views of children and the restrictions in the types of activities and reading materials that are acceptable for young children in this society, we inferred that orthodox Mennonites likely would have serious concerns about pretend play, and that this pervasive cultural attitude would be manifested in the play of young Mennonite school children.

STUDY 1

Study 1 had two goals. The first was to build rapport with adults in several Mennonite communities so that later we would be able to pursue more systematic observations of Mennonite children at play. The second aim was to compare adult attitudes and practices concerning pretend play and fantasy in cultural groups representing different degrees of modernization and identification with the Mennonite faith.

Method

Background. Our initial contact was with a Mennonite school teacher in a small Old Order farming community in central Pennsylvania. The school was a traditional one-room building with no electricity, phone, or plumbing. Grades 1 through 8 were combined (19 children total). The teacher arranged for us to visit another school in the same vicinity. To build rapport before beginning the research project, the first author and a research assistant visited the schools for 6 months and assisted the teachers by reading to the children, leading recitation exercises, correcting workbooks, and participating in children's games at recess. We took great care in our appearance while conducting these

visits. Our clothing was very plain and traditional: long black skirt, high-collared blouse or sweater, black stockings and flat shoes. We kept our hair in buns and did not wear any make-up, nail polish, perfume, or jewelry.

This initial contact was very positive. The children were excited about our visits and seemed to welcome us with a degree of caution. The teachers were friendly and appreciative of our help. They were curious about our educational interests and beliefs, but generally we sensed mutual respect for our different world views. Over the course of these months, we gained their trust to the point that one of the teachers asked the first author to substitute for her one day. Unfortunately, some parents in this Old Order community did not approve and the teacher was reprimanded by the elders of the community at a church meeting. It was decided that one of their own young people would act as a substitute teacher. Although we did not return to that particular school for observations, the teacher introduced us to several other Old Order Mennonite schools in the area where we were able to conduct our studies.

We wanted to compare Mennonite cultural attitudes about pretend play with non-Mennonite attitudes, while controlling for rural surrounds and lifestyle, socioeconomic status, and Christian orientation and values. Thus, it would have been inappropriate to compare Old Order Mennonite teachers and children with modern teachers and children from a university day care or public elementary school. To examine varying degrees of social encouragement of pretense and children's exposure to fantasy in media while controlling these extraneous factors, we compared Old Order schools with private non-Mennonite Christian schools in the same rural area.

In addition, a third local group of schools, referred to here as New Order Mennonite, was investigated as an intermediate group. New Order Mennonites allow more modern conveniences than do Old Order Mennonites (e.g., automobiles) and some limited exposure to mass media (e.g., radio), but they remain separate from mainstream society in terms of religiosity and a Puritan-like work ethic. Very little has been written about New Order denominations except that they are usually formed from dissenting branches of more conservative Amish or Mennonite groups (Hostetler, 1993).(2)

These three groups were predicted to differ on a measure of attitudes toward pretend play, with Old Order adults displaying the least encouragement of pretense, non-Mennonite Christian adults displaying the most, and New Order Mennonite adults being in between.

Participants. A total of 18 teachers were interviewed: 9 teachers (1 male and 8 females) from five Old Order schools, 4 female teachers from two New Order schools, and 5 teachers (1 male and 4 females) from three non-Mennonite Christian schools. Table 3 summarizes the background information on participants in each cultural group. The Old Order schools all had electricity but no telephones or plumbing. The New Order and non-Mennonite Christian schools each had electricity, telephone, and plumbing. The Mennonite schools (both Old Order and New Order) taught Grades 1 through 8 whereas the non-Mennonite Christian schools taught Grades K-12.

Table 3 Teacher Background Statistics

Category	Old Order (n = 9)	New Order (n = 4)
Median age	20	25%
Marital status: single	89%	100%
M no. years teaching	3.7	3.3
Education completed	78% Grade 8 22% GED	25% 1 year h.s. 75% GEd
M no. children in class	25	9
M no. grades in classrm.	6	2
Electricity in home	55%	100%
Drive a car	11% (n = 1)	100%
Have a radio	11% (n = 1)	0%
Have a TV/VCR	0%	0%
Go to movies	0%	0%

Category	Non-Mennonite Christian (n = 5)
Median age	40
Marital status: single	20%
M no. years teaching	9.6
Education completed	60% h.s. dipl. 40% BA
M no. children in class	15
M no. grades in classrm.	2
Electricity in home	100%
Drive a car	80%
Have a radio	100%
Have a TV/VCR	100%
Go to movies	20%

Although we did our best to equate these groups on demographic variables aside from religion, additional differences existed. First, the non-Mennonite Christian teachers were older and more likely to be married (and possibly to have children of their own) than were the Mennonite teachers. This difference might be due to the fact that female Mennonite teachers are urged to retire once they marry and begin a family. Second, in keeping with the cultural values of the groups, the non-Mennonite teachers were more highly educated than the Mennonite teachers. However, like the Mennonite teachers, the non-Mennonite teachers in this study used Christian-oriented education materials and they were not required to be certified by the state of Pennsylvania.

Measures. We administered a questionnaire designed to assess whether teachers might act as role models and a source of encouragement or discouragement of pretend play. This questionnaire was a modification of Sheaffer's (1985) Home Environment Questionnaire, which was designed to measure parental attitudes and behaviors regarding fantasy activities. Our modifications made the questionnaire appropriate for a classroom instead of a home environment, and for environments in which modern technology was limited. For example, "child" was changed to "class" and a question about television viewing was introduced with "If a child has a radio/television ...".

Our Classroom Environment Questionnaire (CEQ), included 17 forced-choice items about fantasy and pretense (see Table 4), aspects of the classroom environment teachers thought contributed to the development of imagination, how often their students played together outside of school, and their students' private fantasies, (e.g., imaginary companions). We introduced the topic of imaginary companions by saying, "Have you ever heard of a child pretending to play with a friend, or having a make-believe, imaginary friend?" Then we asked whether any of their students had an imaginary friend and, if so, we asked for details describing the imaginary companion's gender, age, physical appearance, special abilities, and activities with the child. These items were modeled after similar questions for parents in a study of imaginary companions (Taylor, Cartwright, & Carlson, 1993).

Table 4. Percent (and Number) of Teachers in Each Religious Group who Responded Positively to Fantasy/Pretense Items on the CEQ

Item (fantasy-oriented answer)	Old Order (n=9)	New Order (n=4)
1. Do you have more fiction or nonfiction books in the classroom? (Fiction)	22% (2)	50% (2)
2. I do not try to control my students' free time, such as recess. (Agree)	11% (1)	0% (0)
3. I talk to my class about Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. (Agree)	0% (0)	0% (0)
4. If a student had an imaginary friend, I would talk to it for the child's benefit. (Agree)	33% (3)	25% (1)
5. If a family has a radio, parents should monitor their child's radio listening. (Disagree)	0% (0)	0% (0)
6. (Same as #5 for television)	0% (0)	0% (0)
7. I sometimes play pretend games with my class, such as "Cowboys and Indians," "cooking," or putting on skits. (Agree)	66% (6)	0% (0)
8. I read fairy tales to my class several times a week. (Agree)	0% (0)	0% (0)
9. I have told my students my dreams and/or daydreams. (Agree)	33% (3)	25% (1)
10. If a student has an imaginary friend, I feel that it is important that he/she grow out of this soon. (Disagree)	33% (3)	0% (0)
11. I have an active imagination. (Agree)	89% (8)	75% (3)
12. I discourage my students from playing pretend games. (Disagree)	78% (7)	75% (3)

13. I encourage my class to draw pictures. (Agree)	100% (9)	100% (4)
14. I would rather my class play structured games with rules rather than an unstructured game, such as Legos or Playdoh. (Disagree)	33% (3)	50% (2)
15. I sometimes think that my students daydream too much. (Disagree)	44% (4)	0% (0)
16. My class goes to the library, zoo, or a museum at least twice a year. (Agree)	0% (0)	25% (1)
17. I sometimes think that my students ask "Why?" too much. (Disagree)	44% (4)	50% (2)

Item (fantasy-oriented answer)	Non-Mennonite Christian (n=5)	Total (n=18)
1. Do you have more fiction or nonfiction books in the classroom? (Fiction)	80% (4)	44% (8)
2. I do not try to control my students' free time, such as recess. (Agree)	80% (4)	28% (5)
3. I talk to my class about Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. (Agree)	40% (2)	11% (2)
4. If a student had an imaginary friend, I would talk to it for the child's benefit. (Agree)	40% (2)	33% (6)
5. If a family has a radio, parents should monitor their child's radio listening. (Disagree)	0% (0)	0% (0)
6. (Same as #5 for television)	0% (0)	0% (0)
7. I sometimes play pretend games with my class, such as "Cowboys and Indians," "cooking," or putting on skits. (Agree)	60% (3)	50% (9)
8. I read fairy tales to my class several times a week. (Agree)	20% (1)	6% (1)
9. I have told my students my dreams and/or daydreams. (Agree)	20% (1)	28% (5)
10. If a student has an imaginary friend, I feel that it is important that he/she grow out of this soon. (Disagree)	0% (0)	17% (3)
11. I have an active imagination. (Agree)	60% (3)	78% (14)
12. I discourage my students from	100% (5)	83% (15)

playing pretend games. (Disagree)		
13. I encourage my class to draw pictures. (Agree)	80% (4)	94% (17)
14. I would rather my class play structured games with rules rather than an unstructured game, such as Legos or Playdoh. (Disagree)	80% (4)	50% (9)
15. I sometimes think that my students daydream too much. (Disagree)	60% (3)	39% (7)
16. My class goes to the library, zoo, or a museum at least twice a year. (Agree)	40% (2)	17% (3)
17. I sometimes think that my students ask "Why?" too much. (Disagree)	100% (5)	61% (11)

Procedure. The teachers were interviewed individually for about 15 min at their school during recess or soon after students were dismissed for the day. The teachers were told that they could choose not to answer any item and that there were no "right" or "wrong" responses. Due to the sensitive nature of our contact with these groups and their lack of familiarity with psychological studies and questionnaires in particular, it was important that these interviews take place on a personal level. Therefore, the interviewer read each item aloud (explaining questions when necessary) and wrote down teachers' replies. We asked teachers to expand on their answers when appropriate.

Results and Discussion

Scoring. The 17 agree/disagree items were given a 1 if the response indicated a positive attitude or encouraging behavior and a 0 if it did not. For example, if a teacher agreed with the statement, "I sometimes play pretend games with my class," this response would receive one point; if a teacher disagreed, the item would receive a zero. Some items were reversed (i.e., a "disagree" response would indicate a positive position on fantasy). All 18 teachers received a score from 0 to 17.

Group differences. Table 4 lists the number of teachers in each group whose responses to items on the CEQ indicated a positive attitude toward fantasy and pretense. The average scores in each group were 5.9 for Old Order teachers (SD = 1.4; range = 4 to 8), 4.75 for New Order teachers (SD = 1.9; range = 2 to 6), and 8.6 for non-Mennonite Christian teachers (SD = 2.1; range = 5 to 10). A one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference among the mean scores for the three groups, $F(2, 15) = 6.6$, p [is less than] .01. Sheffe F tests revealed significant differences between Old Order and non-Mennonite teachers and New Order and non-Mennonite teachers (p s [is less than] .02 and .03, respectively). The Old Order and New Order Mennonite groups did not differ significantly on this measure. This result indicates that, overall, Mennonite teachers were less positive about pretend play than their non-Mennonite counterparts. Although only a small number of New Order Mennonite teachers were interviewed, their low scores on

the CEQ suggest that their attitudes and practices regarding children's pretend play are closer to their traditional Mennonite roots than to mainstream culture.

Although we attribute these findings to underlying differences in cultural views of children and imagination, our interpretation is limited by the fact that the non-Mennonite Christian teachers were older, had been teaching longer, and were more likely to be married and possibly to have had children than teachers in the Mennonite groups. Together, these factors suggest that the non-Mennonite teachers had the most experience with young children, which might account for the group differences. However, teachers' explanations for their responses indicated that the non-Mennonite teachers subscribed closely to the mainstream view that children should be given freedom to become creative individuals. We suspect that this philosophy--not simply experience--underlies their encouragement of pretend play.

Finally, it is notable that all of the participants agreed that parents should monitor their children's radio listening and television viewing. Old Order Mennonites did not know much about the content of radio and television programs, but they knew that some of it was "bad" and felt that it was best avoided altogether. New Order and non-Mennonite teachers were against rock music and violent and romantic content in television. We anticipated a less strict attitude regarding media exposure from New Order Mennonite and non-Mennonite groups, but the questionnaire item was not sensitive to varying degrees of control over what children see and hear. After all, almost any teacher would agree that exposure to media should be monitored. Nonetheless, this finding and the fact that only one of the non-Mennonite teachers reported going to movies underscore that even the most "modern" group in this study was very conservative.

Extracurricular play time. Teachers were asked to say whether the children play together outside of school often (2 points), sometimes (1 point), or never (0 points), and to give a brief explanation of their responses. Average scores were 0.4 for Old Order schools (SD = 0.5; range = 0 to 1), 1.5 for New Order schools (SD = 0.6; range = 1 to 2), and 1.8 for non-Mennonite schools (SD = 0.5; range = 1 to 2). A one-way ANOVA revealed that teacher perceptions of the amount of extracurricular peer play differed significantly across groups, $F(2, 15) = 12.9$, p [is less than] .01. Post hoc comparisons showed that the significant differences were between Old Order and New Order teachers and Old Order and non-Mennonite Christian teachers (p s [is less than] .01). The New Order and non-Mennonite groups were not significantly different on this measure.

Teacher estimates of after-school play suggest that Old Order Mennonite children have far less time for play at home than do New Order and non-Mennonite children. Presumably, these children are working at home while modern children are playing with peers. However, the fact that very few Old Order students play with each other after school might be linked to the lack of proximal "neighborhood" children in addition to a broader ethnoreligious priority of work over play. Without the use of a car, most farm children live too far apart for anything less than an overnight stay at a friend's house, and these visits reportedly are rare. An alternative suggestion is that the after-school play finding reflects cultural differences in family and peer relations rather than cultural

attitudes about play. Specifically, children who do not play together outside of school might have as much play time as children who do, but this time is spent with siblings instead of peers. A combination of these factors might be operating in this Old Order Mennonite group.

School environment and imagination. When teachers were asked what aspect of the classroom environment they thought had the greatest influence on children's development of imagination, they often gave more than one response. All aspects mentioned were recorded and tallied for each group. Table 5 lists the frequencies of each response given by Old Order, New Order, and non-Mennonite school teachers. Old Order Mennonites showed relatively high agreement that stories read aloud, art, and workbook lessons in the school curriculum stimulate children's imagination. Students were described as imagining (and sometimes overtly pretending) that they were characters in stories. One teacher said she asks her class to try to picture what it was like when the pilgrims came to America in social studies or what a human body would look like without skin in health lessons. Although art class was mentioned, it was usually directed by the teacher and all children drew the same picture. The "best" picture was considered to be the most realistic one as determined in open student votes.

Table 5. Ideas about Classroom Environment Influences on Imagination: Percent (and Number) of Teachers in Each Religious Group

Old Order (n = 9)	New Order (n = 4)	Non-Mennonite Christian (n = 5)
78% (7) Storytime after recess	50% (2) Composition (creative writing)	40% (2) Creative writing
33% (3) Art	25% (1) Storytime after recess	40% (2) Exposure to a lot of different things
22% (2) Composition (creative writing)	25% (1) Drawing on the chalkboard	20% (1) Freehand drawing
22% (2) Recess	25% (1) Recess	20% (1) Giving them freedom to explore and satisfy their curiosity
22% (2) Reading books	25% (1) Reading books	20% (1) Reading fantasy
11% (1) Singing songs	25% (1) Singing & devotional time	20% (1) Asking them to "picture" stories in their minds
11% (1) Social studies	25% (1) Social studies	20% (1) Following a child's pace and interests
11% (1) Health	25% (1) Science lessons	20% (1) Open conversation, saying your thoughts aloud

11% (1) Telling class things that I imagine	25% (1) Playing "school"	20% (1) Television/ Audiovisual aids
		20% (1) Computer games (e.g., Nintendo)

New Order Mennonite teachers rated creative writing as having the greatest influence on children's imagination. In these exercises, students are asked to write about real-life events (such as going to visit a relative) or to complete a story started by the teacher. Interestingly, all of the teachers who mentioned creative writing also said that the children disliked this activity. Like Old Order teachers, New Order teachers thought that school lessons stimulate imagination, but they also mentioned science class because it "helps give them new ideas." Old Order schools do not formally teach science. New Order teachers also mentioned freehand (unstructured) drawing on the chalkboard instead of structured art class. This was the only group rating recess time and sociodramatic role-play (e.g., playing "school") as contributing to children's imagination. One New Order teacher exclaimed, "Sometimes I think my kids don't have a spark of imagination!" Nevertheless, these teachers' responses varied greatly and they had the lowest mean score on the CEQ.

Several non-Mennonite Christian teachers also thought that creative writing exercises stimulate children's imagination. However, an equal number of teachers said that "exposure to lots of different things" is an important factor. This idea stands in marked contrast with the Old Order Mennonite inclination to shelter children from diverse ideas and lifestyles. It is clear from teachers' responses to this item that the non-Mennonite Christian school environments were child-centered. For example, teachers emphasized "freedom to explore," "following a child's pace and interests," and encouraging students to "say their thoughts out loud" as positive influences on the development of imagination. Freedom from social expectations and the encouragement of open conversation with adults have been found to be positive correlates of fantasy play in other research (e.g., Fein, 1981; Lieberman, 1977). Furthermore, this group was the only one who mentioned fantasy books, television, and computer games in relation to imagination. In fact, one first grade class was watching a children's music video about "Toby the Talking Computer" while we interviewed the teacher.

Imaginary companions. All of the teachers had previously heard of imaginary companions, except for one Old Order Mennonite teacher. Interestingly, the five imaginary companions reported were all in the Old Order group. The most detailed account was a young teacher's description of her own make-believe friend "Rachel" whom she kept until age 15 (Carlson, 1991). Another Old Order teacher suspected that three or four children in her class had imaginary companions. Although she did not know many details, she had observed a third grade boy talking to a same-age invisible playmate and a fourth grade boy talking to an imaginary dog. Although none of the non-Mennonite Christian school teachers knew of any imaginary friends among their students, a boy in one of these classes told the first author that he often imagined the Seven Dwarfs because he loved the story of Snow White. It is possible that many children had private fantasies unknown to teachers.

Certain items on the CEQ directly inquired about teacher attitudes regarding imaginary companions. These items were "If a student had an imaginary friend, I would talk to it for the child's benefit" and "If a student has (or had) an imaginary friend, I feel that it is important that he/she grow out of this soon" (see Table 4). Although some teachers in each group confessed that they would talk to the imaginary companion, the only teachers who disagreed with the statement that children should grow out of their imaginary companions soon were three Old Order Mennonites. In response to these items, some Old Order Mennonites said they did not know why a child would have an imaginary companion. Others said they thought a make-believe friend might be invented if a child had few real playmates, a very active imagination, or a lot of idle time. A few teachers said that it would not be normal to have an imaginary friend if a child had many real friends. In the New Order group, the only teacher who said that she would talk to an imaginary companion for the child's benefit added, "although I probably shouldn't," and she agreed that it is important for children to grow out of their imaginary friends quickly because other children might think it was not "normal."

One non-Mennonite Christian teacher showed a similar concern, stating that although she encourages her class to be creative (e.g., imagining their favorite place to be and writing about it), she likes them to be realistic too: "I'd watch out for an imaginary friend. Children should have real friends." She added that a broken home life can lead to the "wrong kind" of imagination. Another teacher from a non-Mennonite school reported that imaginary companions could lead a child into "demon occultist activity." This teacher believed that manipulating make-believe entities in the mind is like witchcraft and thus contrary to a true God.

STUDY 2

The results of Study 1 suggest that pretend play and fantasy are viewed differently by Mennonites than by more mainstream Christian teachers. In Study 2, we observed children's recess play and examined both the quantity and content of pretend play in Mennonite and non-Mennonite groups, to assess the extent that cultural differences in attitudes are related to children's play behaviors.

Method

Participants. To increase the likelihood of witnessing pretend play episodes, we wanted to observe very young children. However, in Old Order Mennonite society, the "little children" (age 5 and below) are shielded from outsiders. In the schools where we had established relationships with the teachers, the youngest children available for observation were the first graders.

The participants in this study were 61 first-grade children from five Old Order Mennonite schools, two New Order Mennonite schools, and three non-Mennonite Christian schools: 30 Old Order children (age range(3) = 6 to 7, 13 boys and 17 girls), 12 New Order children (mean age = 6;6, range = 6;0 to 7;0, 11 boys and 1 girl), and 19 modern Christian children (mean age = 6;4, range = 5;0 to 7;0, 5 boys and 14 girls). All of the

first graders in the Old Order, New Order, and two of the non-Mennonite schools participated in the study. In the third non-Mennonite school, eight of 24 children were randomly selected for participation in the study. All of the children lived in rural settings. Most of the parents of Old Order children worked on farms. New Order parents' occupations included farming, farm equipment sales and repair, shop-keeping, school administration, and preaching. The non-Mennonite parents were farmers, teachers, school administrators, pastors, and factory or hospital workers. All of the children spoke English in school (except during German lessons) and at home with siblings or other children, although the Mennonites also heard a dialect of German spoken at home by older relatives and at religious services. Table 6 summarizes the demographic characteristics of each of the schools visited.

Table 6. School Background Information: Study 2

School	Group	No. of children	No. of teachers	Grades taught	No. of classrooms
1	OOM	29	1	1-8	1
2	OOM	25	2	1-8	1
3	OOM	29	1 (a)	1-8	1
4	OOM	33	2	1-8	2
5	OOM	61	2	1-8	2
6	NOM	28	4	1-8	4
7	NOM	85	5	1-8	4
8	CHR	66	5 (b)	k-12	3
9	CHR	23	4	pre-k-12	3
10	CHR	244	21	pre-k-12	13

School	Group	Modernity
1	OOM	E
2	OOM	E
3	OOM	E
4	OOM	E
5	OOM	E, PH
6	NOM	E, PH, PL
7	NOM	E, PH
8	CHR	E, PH, PL
9	CHR	E, PH, PL
10	CHR	E, PH, PL

Note: OOM = Old Order Mennonite, NOM = New Order Mennonite, and CHR = non-Mennonite Christian. E = electricity, PH = phone, PL = plumbing.

(a) plus 1 helper.

(b) plus 4 helpers.

Materials and procedure. As in Study 1, the researchers took great care in their dress while conducting this study. Observation materials included a notebook, clipboard, writing utensil, data sheets, and a stopwatch. Two researchers assisted teachers in the classroom for several months in exchange for permission to observe the children during recess. Each first grader was randomly selected and observed individually for a 5-min period. For each minute, the setting (inside or outside), action (the behavior of the focal

child), props (all artifacts involved in the play), participants (any other people who interacted with the child), and affect (positive, neutral, and negative facial expression) were noted. In addition, the observer categorized the play as primarily reality oriented or fantasy oriented. Following Field, DeStefano, and Koewler (1982), reality-oriented play was defined as the use of objects for their intended function (e.g., using blocks to construct a tower) or involvement in a realistic activity (e.g., reading a book or climbing a structure). Fantasy-oriented play included: familiar activities performed in the absence of the necessary materials or customary social context; activities that are not carried out to their usual outcome; inanimate objects treated as animate; one object (or a gesture) substituted for another; and performing an activity usually done by someone or something else (Fein, 1981). For all instances of fantasy-oriented play, the observer categorized the play as (a) object fantasy, play that involves the attribution of an entirely new identity to an object (e.g., pretending that pebbles are soldiers; Field et al., 1982); (b) imaginary object, making gestures as if handling an object that is not really present (Hutt, 1979); or (c) person fantasy, the portrayal of the qualities of a character by active representation (or the assignment of such qualities to others; Field et al., 1982). In addition, it was noted whether each pretense episode was verbally announced prior to or during the play episode (e.g., "Let's pretend" or "Now I'm the ghost"). Finally, the observer rated the play on Singer and Singer's (1981) Imaginativeness of Play scale. Episodes were scored high in imaginativeness if children showed a good deal of "make believe," introduced settings, characters, or sound effects not immediately present in the physical environment; episodes were scored low in imaginativeness if children showed a good deal of realism and behaved within the limits of the immediate environment.

Reliability of coding. One third of the children were observed by both researchers at the same time. Reliability was high for the type of play (100%), pretend categories (100%), and Imaginativeness of Play scores (82%). None of the Imaginativeness of Play ratings for the same episode differed by more than 1 point on the 5-point scale. Disagreements were resolved by discussion.

Results and Discussion

One of the limitations of this study is that children were observed for only one 5-min period. Although additional observations were possible at the New Order and non-Mennonite schools, this was not acceptable at the Old Order schools.

Pretend play. The number of pretense episodes was uniformly low across groups: 17% (5/30) of Old Order children, 25% (3/12) of New Order children, and 21% (4/19) of Christian children displayed pretend play in the course of our observations. When they were not pretending, Old Order children engaged in large group physical games such as tag, whereas New Order and non-Mennonite children played on playground equipment or engaged in constructive play with art materials.

Table 7 contains descriptions of all 12 pretense episodes. One feature that stands out is the lack of imaginary object use in the Old Order group. That is, New Order Mennonite and non-Mennonite children tended to use completely imaginary objects more often than

did Old Order children, likelihood ratio [chi square] (2, 9) = 5.9, p = .05. The Old Order Mennonites instead tended to use real objects in unconventional ways in their pretense, although the number of observations was too small to reach statistical significance on this comparison.

Table 7. Descriptions of Pretense Episodes and Types of Fantasies

Group	Sex	Description	Object Fant.	Imag. Object
OOM	M	Points stick at another boy as if to shoot a weapon	Y	N
OOM	F	Pretends outhouse is a jail; she is the "bailman"	Y	N
OOM	F	Changing doll clothes; playing caregiver	Y	N
OOM	F	Hops like a bunny; jumps on other child's back	N	N
OOM	M	Hides under hat; says "I'm a monster"	N	N
NOM	M	Rides playground caterpillar toy and says "I'm a cowboy!"; neighs like horse; "Gitty up!"; moves to monkey bars and says "I'm a big bad baboon!"; pretends to be captured and handcuffed	Y	Y
NOM	M	Points to jungle gym and says "We're stealing gold under there"; tells other boys to steal some gold; runs around with arms in air and says "I'm flying!"	N	Y
NOM	M	Jumps and yelps like a dog	N	N
CHR	F	Playing "fort"; pretends to knock on neighbors' imaginary door; pretends dirt and branches are food	Y	Y
CHR	F	Pretends to be a baby when friend picks her up	N	N
CHR	F	Jumps up to catch an imaginary ball	N	Y
CHR	F	Forms a human train with friends to go down slide; says "Let's go like a choo choo train!"	N	N
Group	Sex	Description	Person. Fant.	Verb. Ann.

OOM	M	Points stick at another boy as if to shoot a weapon	N	N
OOM	F	Pretends outhouse is a jail; she is the "bailman"	Y	Y
OOM	F	Changing doll clothes; playing caregiver	Y	N
OOM	F	Hops like a bunny; jumps on other child's back	Y	N
OOM	M	Hides under hat; says "I'm a monster"	Y	Y
NOM	M	Rides playground caterpillar toy and says "I'm a cowboy>"; neighs like horse; "Gitty up!"; moves to monkey bars and says "I'm a big bad baboon!"; pretends to be captured and handcuffed	Y	Y
NOM	M	Points to jungle gym and says "We're stealing gold under there"; tells other boys to steal some gold; runs around with arms in air and says "I'm flying!"	Y	Y
NOM	M	Jumps and yelps like a dog	Y	N
CHR	F	Playing "fort"; pretends to knock on neighbors' imaginary door; pretends dirt and branches are food	N	N
CHR	F	Pretends to be a baby when friend picks her up	Y	N
CHR	F	Jumps up to catch an imaginary ball	N	N
CHR	F	Forms a human train with friends to go down slide; says "Let's go like a choo choo train!"	Y	Y

Note: OOM = Old Order Mennonite; NOM = New Order Mennonite; CHR = non-Mennonite Christian; Y = Yes; N = No.

Imaginativeness of play. Each play episode received an Imaginativeness of Play score ranging from 1 to 5. The mean scores were 1.6 for the Old Order Mennonites (SD = 0.7; range = 1 to 3), 2.2 for the New Order Mennonites (SD = 1.2; range = 1 to 5), and 2.3 for the non-Mennonite children (SD = 0.95, range = 1 to 5). A one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference in imaginativeness scores across groups, $F(2, 60) = 4.6$, p [is less than] .02. Post hoc analyses revealed that the mean rating in the Old Order group was

significantly lower than in both the New Order and non-Mennonite Christian groups (p [is less than] .05 and .01, respectively). The New Order and non-Mennonite groups did not differ on this measure.

Group differences in the imaginativeness of play were more striking than absolute levels of pretense. Unlike the New Order Mennonites and non-Mennonite Christian children, the Old Order Mennonite children tended to stay close to reality in their play themes, such as pretending to drive a horse and buggy or care for a baby. Their play reflected preparation for the adult roles they would assume (Carlson, 1991). Although we observed some of this kind of play in the more modern groups, the New Order and non-Mennonite children also created wild play themes and enacted roles that were far removed from their daily lives (e.g., stealing gold and being captured and handcuffed).

Similarities and differences. There were many similarities in the pretend play of all three groups. For example, in each group, pretense occurred most frequently during outdoor play and within mixed age groups. Highly imaginative play was also accompanied by expressions of joy. Affect ratings were similar and largely positive across Old Order, New Order, and non-Mennonite Christian groups. In addition, the use of encapsulating structures in pretend play (like outhouses and forts) and impersonation (e.g., pretending to be a bunny, dog, or baby) occurred in all schools.

However, there were also group differences in imaginative play. Old Order Mennonites used realistic dolls and classroom materials in sociodramatic play (e.g., pretending to be the teacher). They did not use outdoor props like swings and seesaws for pretending. New Order Mennonite and non-Mennonite children used riding toys, monkey bars, and slides in their play (e.g., pretending to be cowboys and baboons). As we noted earlier, some New Order Mennonite and non-Mennonite Christian school children used entirely imagined props in their play (e.g., knocking on an imaginary door of an imaginary house and serving imaginary food), whereas Old Order Mennonite children never used imaginary objects during our visits.

Relation between attitudes and observed play. Next, we compared these observations with the results of Study 1 to determine whether teachers' attitudes and practices were related to the actual play observed at recess. The main variables of interest were type of play (reality vs. pretend) and imaginativeness of play (scale of 1 to 5). Teacher scores were not related to the amount of pretend play observed. However, a simple regression analysis indicated that teacher attitude scores were a significant predictor of children's imaginativeness of play scores, $r = .65$, p [is less than] .01; $F(1, 15) = 10.7$, p [is less than] .01. At schools where teachers tended to encourage pretense, the children were rated as more imaginative in their recess play.

One exception to this pattern was that the New Order Mennonite teachers had low mean scores on the CEQ, yet the imaginativeness scores for first graders in this group did not differ from the scores of the non-Mennonite Christian children. This result might be due to the small number of New Order Mennonite teachers in our study, as well as the wide range of attitudes represented by the teachers in this group. It would be interesting to

learn more about New Order Mennonites because of the inherent conflict in their attempt to balance aspects of traditional and modern societies. Perhaps adults in this group are more concerned about pretense than either Old Order or non-Mennonite Christian adults because they are struggling to maintain strict religious values while still permitting some limited exposure to the secular world. For them, monitoring children's exposure to media and their own modeling of fantasy activities are immediate issues that affect everyday childrearing decisions. In contrast, neither Old Order Mennonites nor non-Mennonite Christian have to deal with the problem of just how separate they should be from modern culture.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this research we investigated the possibility that differences in attitudes toward fantasy activities as a function of culture might be reflected in children's pretend play. We expected to find that Mennonite adults have less positive attitudes about pretend play than do non-Mennonites because a general rule in Mennonite communities is that personal development must not intrude upon the concerns of the group (Redekop, 1989). Adults in Mennonite society discourage individual incentive for nonphysical activities because it is viewed as harmful to the group and might lead to personal pride and pompousness (Peters, 1987). This attitude reflects a concern for not only book learning, but also any activity that makes one stand out from the crowd, including fantasy and pretend play.

Our comparison of the attitudes and practices regarding pretend play reported by Old Order Mennonite, New Order Mennonite, and non-Mennonite Christian school teachers only partially supported our predictions. Although, overall, Mennonite teachers were not as positive about pretense as non-Mennonite teachers, the Old Order Mennonite teachers were surprising in two ways. First, the majority (66%) of Old Order Mennonite teachers said that they sometimes played pretend games with their classes at recess. Only one of the New Order schools and none of the non-Mennonite schools had teachers participating in recess play. In addition, the Old Order Mennonite teachers were quite positive about certain types of fantasy. More specifically, they were more likely than the other teachers to say that they shared their dreams and/or daydreams with their class and that they themselves had an active imagination. Old Order Mennonite teachers also were more positive about imaginary companions and were the only ones to report concrete examples of this type of fantasy. It is interesting that imaginary companions are mentioned in one of the very few published firsthand reports of Mennonite childhood experiences. Weaver (1983) described how as a child she invented an imaginary companion who was, unlike herself, able to wear fancy clothes and wear her hair in curls. Although we had only limited information about the small number of imaginary companions described by teachers in this study, the imaginary companions seemed to be "buddies" who filled a social void, rather than antidotes to the restrictions in their lives (Taylor, in press).

In contrast, at least some of the New Order teachers and non-Mennonite teachers were suspicious of imaginary companions, fearing that they might indicate psychopathology or even demonic possession. We have encountered this attitude previously when a parent

who was a fundamentalist non-Mennonite Christian told us that she prayed every day for the Devil to leave her child (Taylor & Carlson, in press). A more benign type of spiritual interpretation of what we are calling "having an imaginary companion" has been documented by Mills (1992). She found that when East Indian children talk to entities that adults cannot perceive, the entity is referred to as invisible rather than imaginary. The assumption is that the child is communicating with a very real being who exists on a spiritual realm and/or is part of the child's past life. Perhaps the phenomenon of a child talking to an invisible being is an ambiguous event, and thus particularly sensitive to cultural differences in adult interpretation (Taylor, 1997; Taylor & Carlson, in press).

Our findings suggest that in future research it would be desirable to more carefully distinguish between social and nonsocial types of pretense. Although Old Order Mennonites do not overtly encourage pretend play, our findings hint that they might have relatively high levels of private, nonsocial fantasy. Perhaps the non-Mennonite teachers are more likely to suppress nonsocial fantasy and prefer to encourage social make-believe play, but there are far too few data in this research to address this possibility. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that our data do not necessarily measure the incidence of imaginary playmates in children belonging to each school, but rather the way that each cultural group perceives the phenomenon (i.e., its source and consequences).

In Study 2, we observed Mennonite and non-Mennonite children during school recess to investigate the possibility that cultural differences in adult attitudes about pretend play might be reflected in children's behavior. The results of Study 2 showed that Old Order Mennonite children displayed differences in pretend play rather than deficits. Where they differed was in the degrees of separation from reality in their play themes. This finding is consistent with the results of a study comparing the drawings of Amish and non-Amish children (Hostetler & Huntington, 1971). The Amish children drew pictures of work-related activities (baby-sitting, raking leaves, etc.) and groups of people, whereas non-Amish children depicted more play-related and individualistic activities. Similarly, Bernstein (1977) found that the New Year's resolutions of Mennonite and Amish sixth-graders were less "exotic" than those of mainstream middle-class youth.

There are several possible explanations for why the Mennonite children tended to act out roles and activities closely related to their everyday lives rather than the more fantastical scenarios enacted by their non-Mennonite counterparts. Mennonite writings indicate that adults have more positive attitudes about pretense that is seen as related to the children's future lives (e.g., pretending to be a mother or a farmer) as opposed to more esoteric play themes (Carlson, 1991). This difference might also reflect the relatively narrow range of experiences that orthodox Mennonite children can draw upon in their play. These children do not know about a host of fantasy themes that more mainstream children see modeled in books, movies, and television (e.g., they did not know the names of cartoon characters depicted on lunch boxes their parents obtained at garage sales). They even seem to have some difficulty with the language of pretense. For example, an Old Order Mennonite first grader in our study did not know the word "pretend" when he came across it in a story about a bird who feigned death to deceive a predator. He asked the first author to explain what was meant by "pretend." On another occasion, the first author

noted the comments of an Old Order girl who was observing another girl dress a doll. She kept repeating in a dismissive tone, "It's not a right baby." We questioned her and learned that she was trying to express that the doll was not a real baby.

A related possibility is that there are not as many "triggers" to pretense and fantasy play in the school environment of Old Order Mennonite children. Although all classrooms we visited were academically oriented (e.g., no "dress-up" items), some of the New Order Mennonite and non-Mennonite Christian schools had posters depicting holiday themes (e.g., Easter Bunnies), which might have served to stimulate fantasy play. Similarly, the more modern schools had elaborate playground equipment, which has been found to promote sociodramatic play themes as compared with relatively stark traditional swings and seesaws (Campbell & Frost, 1978).

Mennonite children's choice of reality-oriented play themes might also reflect their cultural value of harmony within the group. According to Black (1989), play themes centered on familiar everyday situations facilitate social play because children are likely to share relevant knowledge about roles and scripts. In contrast, children who have a more individualistic orientation are more likely to pursue more imaginative themes, which require negotiation and often result in conflict among play partners. Farver and Shin (1997) have found that the social pretend play of Korean American preschoolers tended to focus on family roles and everyday themes, whereas the play of Anglo American children often had themes involving fantasy and danger. They interpreted this finding as possibly due to differences in the social goals of Korean American and Anglo American children. The emphasis in Korean culture on social cohesiveness might underlie children's preference for play themes that minimize social conflict, whereas the emphasis on self-reliant and independent thinking in mainstream American culture might have resulted in the Anglo American children being more open to exploring their individual creative interests via social play. This interpretation reflects an important theme in cultural psychology more broadly, the differences between "collective" and "individualistic" societies (e.g., Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Mennonites, like Korean Americans, would seem to have characteristics associated with collectivistic societies (e.g., valuing the group above individual pursuits). Interestingly, Gaskins (1996) reported that Mayan children, who also live in a relatively collectivistic society, exhibited pretend play that was limited to real-life themes. In Mayan culture, however, the restrictions on play have to do with concern about children's safety, rather than individualism per se. Although this interpretation is very interesting, it should be noted that Farver and Shin (1997) do not rule out the possibility that differential exposure to television might also account for their results, a factor that also is relevant to explaining differences in the play of Mennonite and non-Mennonite children in the present investigation.

This research provides evidence for a relation between cultural attitudes and pretend play in Old Order Mennonite, New Order Mennonite, and non-Mennonite Christian groups. Our research was limited in scope, however, investigating only a small sample of the myriad opportunities and contexts children have for pretend play. For example, we were not able to assess children's solitary pretend play, their play with siblings, or with parents,

in part due to the difficulties associated with observing a private community that is suspicious of outsiders. We also do not provide information about the specific processes by which ethnoreligious culture might directly or indirectly influence children's pretend play. Nevertheless, the results are consistent with the view that the play activities of young children are shaped by the broader cultural context (Millar, 1968; Schwartzman, 1976). According to this sociocultural perspective, all children develop the capacity for pretense, but the ways in which pretense is manifested are heavily influenced by a child's environment. Our findings suggest that a particularly interesting direction for future research is to examine the influences of culture (including broad attitudes as well as specific contextual factors) on both social and nonsocial forms of pretense.

(1) The Amish sect, originally led by Jacob Amman, is a dissenting branch of the Mennonite faith. Amish people differ from Mennonites mainly in terms of more stringent conformity to particular social and ritualistic practices concerning "shunning" individual dissenters, refusing to bear arms and take oaths, and the rejection of worldly goods. There is more information written about the Amish than Mennonites as a whole because the Amish are even more removed from mainstream society. However, the Old Order Mennonite way of life is very similar to that of the Amish, and so the information available about Amish children will be referred to in some cases to provide a sense of what Old Order Mennonite childhood is like.

(2) Through contact with teachers from this group, we also learned that the main source of contention between Old Order and New Order Mennonites is assimilation to modern society and its effect on their religion. Specifically, New Order people believe that salvation comes with a lifetime of inner devotion to God. They feel that Old Order groups are "spiritually shallow" because they place an emphasis on things (i.e., the avoidance of worldly things) as being central to a religious life rather than salvation and intrinsic faith.

(3) The exact ages of the children in the Old Order Mennonite schools were not available. Birthdays are not celebrated lavishly in Mennonite society.

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