

## RECONCEPTUALISING FEAR IN YOUNG CHILDREN

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is based on research with preschool-aged children, their parents and their caregivers about the fears they experience and how these fears are addressed, both in the home and in the preschool. Participants were asked to identify the fears experienced by the children in the study, based on Ollendick's (1983) Fear Survey Schedule for Children and Spence's (1997) Measure of Anxiety Symptoms in Preschoolers. From their responses and the researcher's observations, current fear categories are challenged. Early childhood fear has been reconceptualised into the following categories: Fear of Separation from the Attachment Figure; Fear of the Unknown; Fear of Being Harmed; Fear of Failure; Criticism and Embarrassment; Fear of Insects or Animals; and Fear of the Intangible.

**Keywords:** Social, emotional, fear, preschool, research, young children

### INTRODUCTION

Young children, whether they can articulate it or not, experience a wide range of fears. While early childhood educators may be aware of some fears, such as a fear of attending preschool, and parents may be aware of other fears, such as fear of the dark, there are a number of other fears that are experienced by preschool-aged children. In the past these fears have been categorised as either inherited fear (Darwin, 1872), modelled fear (Izard, 1991), separation fear (Bowlby, 1971, 1973) and developmental fear (Stevenson-Hinde and Souldice, 1995).

This paper reports on an investigation into the types of fears experienced by preschool-aged children. It used the Fear Survey Schedule for Children, a survey created in 1983 by Ollendick, and a more recent survey, Spence (1997) Measure of Anxiety Symptoms in Preschoolers to inform items on surveys for caregivers, parents and preschool-aged children about the children's fears. From the data collected, fear as inherited, modelled, separation fear and developmental and Ollendick's fear categories are challenged and new fear categories are suggested.

### HISTORIC CONCEPTIONS OF FEAR

Throughout the past two centuries, various theorists have attempted to define and categorise fear. Their attempts have often drawn upon various aspects of fear, using a few examples to make generalisations about the emotion, or about emotions in general. The major conceptualisations of fear have been: inherited fear, modelled fear, separation fear and developmental fear.

The idea that fear is inherited and instinctual had its beginnings in 1872 with Charles Darwin's publication, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*. Darwin professed that emotions began as survival or communication behaviours and over time became habitual. According to this theory, when we cower and become motionless with fear, it stems from the days when people acted in this way to protect themselves from imminent danger (Darwin, 1872). The visual cliff studies in the 1960s and 1970s supported the notion that infants have a natural fear of heights (Campos et al, 1978 in Izard, 1991; Walk and Gibson, 1961 in Bowlby, 1973).

Other theorists conceptualised fear in young children as the result of modelling by others (Charlesworth, 1974 in Izard, 1977; Kindt, Bierman and Brosschot, 1997). Izard (1991) noted that when a young child observes fear in a parent, a sibling or even a stranger, the object, event or surrounding situation may become a source of fear (p.291).

John Bowlby (1971, 1973) named Separation Anxiety as the state of fear created in young children when there is a threat of their becoming separated from their primary attachment figure. Bowlby extended this fear to include fear of strange people, events or objects, fear of the dark, fear of injury or death, fear of being alone, and fear of school (1973).

A number of theorists have conceptualised fear as a product of maturity or development (Bowlby, 1973; Izard, 1982; Izard and Kobak in Garber and Dodge, 1991; Saami and Harris, 1989; Sarason, Lighthall, Davidson, Walte and Ruebush, 1960; Stevenson-Hinde and Shouldice, 1995). With the view of emotions as developing with increasing cognition, Sroufe (1995) stated:

*Fear does not exist in the newborn period and yet develops from precursors early in infancy. Moreover, fear, like other emotions, continues to evolve through the toddler period and beyond, with advances in cognitive development (p.101).*

For example, infants are reported as experiencing fears of heights, loud noises and loss of support (Walk and Gibson, 1961 in Bowlby, 1973; Watson, 1970) while toddlers tend to show a fear of animals (Jersild, 1933, 1935 in Bowlby, 1973) and preschoolers develop imaginary fears (Sarason, Lighthall, Davidson, Walte and Ruebush, 1960). Stevenson-Hinde and Shouldice (1995) note:

*The frequency of occurrence of imaginary fears (e.g. ghosts and monsters), bedtime fears, and frightening dreams decreased with age, while realistic fears involving bodily injury and physical danger increased (p.1028).*

Ollendick's (1983) Fear Survey Schedule for Children has further categorised fear into five discrete categories: Fear of Failure and Criticism, Fear of the Unknown, Fear of Injury and Small Animals, Fear of Danger and Death and Medical Fears. First developed in 1968 by Scherer and Nakamura, this survey was revised by Ollendick in 1983 (Stevenson-Hinde and Shouldice, 1995). It contains a list of potentially fearful stimuli and children indicate their level of fear on a 3-point scale.

The above conceptualisations of fear seemed, in a number of cases, to be very broad and somewhat ambiguous. They seemed to need further examination and reconceptualisation to achieve a clearer picture of childhood fear.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out over a period of six months with forty-five preschool aged (three to five years) children, their parents and caregivers (trained and untrained employees of early childhood centres) in four early childhood venues in New South Wales - a long day-care centre, a preschool attached to a state school, a Kindergarten Union of NSW preschool and a Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Service. The research looked first at the presence of basic emotions in preschool children, then at the presence of a variety of fears. Following this, participants were asked about how caregivers respond to children's fears and how effective these responses were. This paper presents the results of the research question, "Which fears are reported as present in preschool aged children?"

Data were collected through parent and caregiver surveys and focal group interviews. Each of these surveys checklists, firstly about a range of emotions and then more specifically about particular fears. These were followed by open-ended questions, which gave participants the opportunity to expand on issues and to include any further information about children's fears. Caregivers were also interviewed informally for the duration of the research. The researcher, as a non-participant observer, attended each venue weekly during the research period and observed caregivers and children for emotion episodes and responses. A reflective journal was kept by the researcher.

Data from this research were transcribed and analysed, looking for emergent themes and issues. Triangulation occurred through written and audiotaped participant responses, observations, checking transcripts with participants, and a reflective journal kept by the researcher. One of the emergent issues, the theme of this paper, was the need to reconceptualise fear categories.

Data collected about children's fears were put into tables and ranked from the most commonly-reported to the least commonly reported, including the percentage of respondents who reported each fear. Tables 1, 2 and 3 show these rankings.

TABLE 1

### CAREGIVERS' RANKING OF CHILDREN'S FEARS

Rank	Fear	Percentage
1	Preschool	59
2	Being teased	39
3	New people/strangers	32
4	Being left alone	26
5	Doing something new	24
6	Punishment	22
7/8	Bad dreams/nightmares	17
	Making mistakes	17
9/10	Insects, spiders, snakes	15
	Ghosts, monsters, spirits	15
11/12	Dogs/animals	13
	Doctor, dentist, hospital	13

13	Loud noises	11
14/15	Fighting	9
	The dark	9
16/17	Accident, illness, death	7
18	Deep water	7
	Being lost	7
19/20	Adults arguing	4
21	Burglary	4
	Fire	4
22/23	Rides at fetes or fairs	2
	Heights/falling from high places	2

TABLE 2

## PARENTS' RANKING OF CHILDREN'S FEARS

Rank	Fear	Percentage
1	The dark	70
2	Being left alone	68
3	Loud noises	66
4	Insects, spiders, snakes	62
5	Bad dreams/nightmares	57
6/7	Preschool/babysitter	53
	Deep water	53
8/9	New people/strangers	51
	Punishment	51
10	Dogs/animals	47
11	Being lost	40
12	Rides at fetes or fairs	36
13/14/15	Adults arguing	34
	Doing something new	34
	Ghosts, monster, spirits	34
16/17	Accidents/illness/death	32
	Doctor/dentist/hospital	32
18	Fire	30
19/20	Being teased	28
	Heights/falling from a high place	28
21	Making mistakes	21
22	Burglary	17
23	Fighting	11

TABLE 3

## CHILDREN'S RANKING OF THEIR FEARS

Rank	Fear	Percentage
1	Heights/falling from high places	62
2/3	Deep water Fire	60
4/5	Being left alone Being lost	53
6/7	Bad dreams/nightmares Accidents, illness and death	49
8	The dark	47
9/10/11/12	Ghosts, monsters and spirits Being in a fight Adults arguing Burglary	44
11	New people/strangers	40
14/15	Punishment Loud noises	38
16/17/18	Going to preschool/babysitter Doing something new Being teased	36
19	Dogs/animals	33
20/21/22	Insects, spiders and snakes Doctor, dentist, hospital Making mistakes	31
23	Rides at fetes or fairs	24

The most common early childhood fears reported by caregivers were fear of preschool, fear of being teased, fear of new people or strangers, fear of being left alone and fear of doing something new. Parents, on the other hand, reported fear of the dark, fear of being left alone, fear of loud noises, fear of insects, spiders and snakes, and fear of bad dreams or nightmares as children's most common fears. Children's most commonly reported fears were fear of heights, fear of deep water, fear of fire, fear of being left alone and fear of being lost.

## CHALLENGING INHERITED OR MODELLED FEAR

While some might argue against the case for fear being an inherited trait, there are some fears that have been reported as present in young infants and that may have an innate or evolutionary base. These include fear of loud noises, fear of heights or falling and fear of loss of support (Bowby, 1973; Watson, 1970). Robinson and Rotter (1997) suggested that some children are predisposed to fear, but other theorists dispute the presence of fear in the newborn period (Stroufe, 1995).

It does suggest, however, that fears may intentionally or unintentionally be passed on to, or encouraged, in children. The use of the term "passed on" is preferable to "modelled" as "modelled" suggests that children pick up others' fears in non-verbal ways, through observing

processes of behaviour. To say a fear is "passed on" gives it the scope to be picked up through both verbal and non verbal ways (Saami and Harris, 1989). For example, a mother reported that her daughter is terrified of having her hair washed. The mother's explanation of this fear was that as a child, she had experienced a similar fear. In recollecting her own fear, the mother may have been hesitant or cautious while washing the little girl's hair and this could have given the child the message that hair washing is a fearful situation. Walden (in Garber and Dodge, 1991) noted "One way in which young children use interpersonal information to regulated affect is by referring to others' reactions to events. They may then use this information about others' responses to guide their own responses". (p.69)

Some fears are passed on explicitly. These may be considered "healthy fears" or fears that alert us to danger. In this research, a parent spoke of a "Stranger Danger" program that warned children to be careful of strangers. While there is reason for alerting children to possible harmful situations, these warnings could also develop in children a fear of anyone who is unfamiliar. Another parent described a fear of traffic, which she had "hopefully" instilled in her four-year-old son. She said:

Mother: He's sort of at the age too where he's just keen for everything. Hopefully, he's afraid of cars on the road. (*To her son.*) You can't go running on the road, can you?  
 Son: NO. They'll get me.  
 Mother: Yeah, that's right.

While some fears may be present from birth, evidence from this research suggests that others pass on a number of fears to young children. This illustrates the importance of adults becoming aware of their own fears and the ways they may be communicating their fears to children.

### CHALLENGING BOWLBY'S SEPARATION FEAR

Bowlby (1971, 1973) named separation from primary caregivers as a common, instinctive fear that signals danger to the young child. He also stated that separation fear can take a variety of forms, including fear of strange people, events or objects, fear of the dark or of injury or death, fear of being alone, and fear of school. But to be true separation fear, the child must fear becoming separated from the primary caregiver.

Fear of being alone, fear of school and fear of death are all situations where a child would become separated from the primary caregiver, so support Bowlby's notion of "separation fear". However, other items that Bowlby included as separation fear - fear of strange people, events or objects, fear of the dark and fear of injury - are fears that can be experienced by children in the presence of the primary caregiver. In the cases of fear of strange people, events or objects and fear of the dark, it seems to be the unfamiliarity of the situation that triggers the fear. Fear of injury might be more a fear of being harmed than a fear of separating from the primary caregiver.

### CHALLENGING DEVELOPMENTAL FEARS

Many theorists see fear as a function of age and maturity that children experience, then grow out of (Harris and Saami in Saami and Harris, 1989; Izard, 1982; Smiley and Huttenlocher in Saami and Harris, 1989). For example, infants are reported as experiencing fears of heights, loud noises and loss of support (Walk and Gibson, 1961 in Bowlby, 1973; Watson, 1970). However, older children and adults may experience a fear of loud noises or a fear of heights as well as infants. A passing ambulance or a severe thunderstorm might cause fear in people of all ages. And fear of insects is not limited to early childhood. Lyn, a parent in the study, noted her own fear of spiders, saying, "My father says, 'If there was a spider on your child, you'd let them die!'"

As children grow and develop, other fears are said to appear, such as fears of unfamiliar situations, fear of animals and fear of monsters (Arnold, 1970, Sarason et al, 1960, Siouffe, 1995). But fear can develop at any age or life stage and does not necessarily disappear as one grows and matures.

### CHALLENGING FEAR SURVEY SCHEDULE FOR CHILDREN - REVISED

Some of Ollendick's (1983) fear categories overlap or present a limited picture of fear. For example, Ollendick puts fear of injury with fear of small animals and separates fear of danger and death and medical fears. It could be argued that fear of injury is similar to fear of danger and death, as a dangerous situation can produce injury and may lead to death. Medical fears are also related to fear of injury, danger and death as children usually see a doctor or dentist because of an injury or illness. These categories could be linked together with the common thread being a fear of being harmed. Other items that could potentially harm children could be included in this category, such as fire, deep water and burglary.

Fear of small animals is not necessarily linked to fear of injury, as not all small animals pose a threat of injury to the young child. However, many animals and insects produce a fear response in young children, whether they are large or small and should be included in a category on their own. Items that Ollendick has named as "Fear of the unknown" include getting a haircut, going to bed in the dark, lifts and loud sirens, yet these items may be fearful to a child, whether they are known or unknown. It may be more that they are unfamiliar situations to the child than that they are unknown to the child. Children generally get their hair cut on a regular basis and go to bed every night. They may use lifts in tall buildings and hear sirens from time to time as they go about their everyday lives. It may be more accurate to create a category of fear of unfamiliar items or events. Finally, Ollendick includes ghosts or spooky things with fear of injury or small animals, and nightmares with fear of the unknown. These items are similar in that they are intangible. While not necessarily leading to injury, they may also not be unknown to the child.

### FEAR RECONCEPTUALISED

The true origin of the emotion of fear may never be known. But rather than linking fear to age or stage of development, responses to the research question, "Which fears are reported as present in preschool aged children?" were analysed and from the data six discrete categories of fear evolved. They are: Fear of Separation from the Attachment Figure, Fear of the

Unfamiliar, Fear of Being Harmed, Fear of Failure, Criticism and Embarrassment, Fear of Insects and Animals, and Fear of the Intangible. Table 4 below lists these fear categories and gives examples in each category.

TABLE 4  
FEAR CATEGORIES

<b>Fear Category</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Fear of separation from the attachment figure	Fear of school/preschool Fear of being lost Fear of being alone Fear of being left with a babysitter
Fear of the Unfamiliar	Fear of strange people, places or objects Fear of the dark Fear of loud noises
Fear of being Harmed	Fear of injury, accident, illness or death Medical fears Fear of deep water, fire, rides at fetes and burglary Fear of heights or falling from high Places
Fear of failure, criticism and embarrassment	Fear of being teased Fear of being in a fight Fear of making mistakes Fear of adults arguing
Fear of insects or animals	Fear of spiders or other insects Fear of snakes Fear of dogs Fear of cats Fear of bats
Fear of the intangible	Fear of bad dreams or nightmares Fear of ghosts, monsters or spirits

Using these new categories, the most commonly-reported fears in children are re-categorised in Table 5.



TABLE 5

MOST COMMONLY REPORTED CHILD FEARS IN RANK ORDER BY RESPONDENT GROUP

Caregivers	Type of Fear	Parents	Type of Fear	Children	Type of Fear
1. Preschool	Separation fear	1. The dark	Fear of the unfamiliar	1. Heights/falling from high places	Fear of being harmed.
2. Being teased	Fear of failure or criticism	2. Being left alone	Separation fear	2. Deep water	Fear of being harmed
3. New people/strangers	Fear of the unfamiliar	3. Loud noises	Fear of the unfamiliar	3. Fire	Fear of being harmed
4. Being left alone	Separation fear	4. Insects, spiders and snakes	Fear of insects or animals	4. Being left alone	Separation fear
5. Doing something new	Fear of the unfamiliar	5. Bad dreams or nightmares	Fear of the intangible	5. Being lost	Separation fear

Table 5 shows that, according to caregivers, children most commonly experience separation fear, fear of failure or criticism and fear of the unfamiliar. These are all fears that could quite feasibly occur in preschool. Parents' reporting of children's fears was more diverse, including fear of the unfamiliar, separation fear, fear of insects and animals and fear of the intangible. The two extra categories in parents' reporting of fear are "fear of insects and animals" and "fear of the intangible," which are less likely to occur in the preschool environment. Parents, however, did not include a fear of failure or criticism in their most reported fears, which could suggest that in the home situation children are not positioned to experience these kinds of fears. In children's reporting of fear, their most common fears were fear of being harmed and separation fear. Fear of being harmed was highly reported by children, yet neither caregivers nor parents reported this type of fear as common to children. Separation fear was reported by all participants in their lists of most common fears, which seems to support Bowlby's (1973) concept of the great significance of secure attachments in early childhood.

#### **Fear of separation from the attachment figure**

This category includes only situations where the child is actually apart from the primary attachment figure. In this research, items such as fear of being left alone, fear of being left at preschool or with babysitters and fear of becoming lost are included in this category. These items were strongly reported by all three groups. Caregivers ranked fear of preschool as the most common fear in their focal children. They ranked fourth the fear of being left alone.

Fear of being lost was ranked much lower by caregivers, with only seven percent reporting this fear. As there are probably no opportunities for becoming lost within the preschool setting, the only opportunity caregivers would have to note this fear in their focal children would be through reports by parents or by the children themselves.

Parents ranked fear of being left alone as the second most commonly reported fear in their preschool children. Fear of being left at preschool or with a babysitter ranked sixth. While

fear of being lost was ranked eleventh by parents, still forty percent of parents noted this fear. Being left alone and being lost were ranked fourth and fifth by children. However, fear of going to preschool or being left with a baby sitter was ranked much lower by children.

Situations where the child may be separated from a primary attachment figure are common sources of fear to children. While fewer children reported fears of being left at preschool or with babysitters, adults reported these fears. Children may have reported fewer fears because they recognise caregivers or babysitters as substitutes for primary attachment figures. Many preschools implement a system whereby each child is assigned to one caregiver, who then becomes that child's primary caregiver when the child attends preschool. This system may address children's fears of being separated from the parental attachment figure, by offering the child a particular caregiver in preschool who then becomes the child's primary attachment figure during the preschool hours. Babysitters may also be substitute primary attachments figures while parents are away.

#### **Fear of the unfamiliar**

Some of the items Bowlby (1973) includes in separation anxiety are actually fears that children can experience even with an attachment figure present. Ollendick (1983) uses the category "the unknown" for these fears. However, some of these fears are actually known by children. So I have reclassified these fears as Fear of the Unfamiliar, because they are fears that children experience not only on the first occasion, but also on occasions thereafter. What they have in common is the unfamiliar aspect. For example, fear of the dark could be a fear that children experience because in the dark they are unable to see familiar people or objects.

Besides fear of the dark, the unfamiliar includes fear of people, places and things that are unfamiliar to the child. Caregivers rank fear of new people or strangers as the third most common fear in preschool children. Doing something new was ranked fifth, with twenty-four percent of caregivers reporting this fear.

Fear of the dark was the most commonly reported fear by parents, with seventy percent of parents reporting this fear. While fear of new people or strangers was ranked eighth by parents still more than half the parents in this research reported this fear. Fear of the dark was children's eighth most reported fear, with forty-seven percent of children reporting this fear. Forty percent of children reported a fear of new people or strangers and thirty-six percent reported a fear of doing something new.

#### **Fear of being harmed**

There are many items which could be potentially harmful to children. These include: injury, accident, illness ordeal as well as what Ollendick (1983) calls "Medical Fears" - such as fear of getting a needle from a doctor or having to go to hospital. In this category I have also included fear of deep water, fear of fire, fear of rides at fetes and fear of burglary, as these, as well as other incidents, could be potentially harmful to children. However, the reports of these incidents vary greatly. Caregivers ranked fears of being harmed low, with between two and thirteen percent of caregivers noting each harm category. As has been mentioned earlier, the preschool is a safe environment and many of these items would neither occur nor be discussed in the preschool environment.

Parents, however, reported some of the harm items much more frequently than others. Fear of deep water was reported by more than half the parents while thirty-six percent of parents reported fear of rides and thirty-two percent reported fear of accidents, illness and death

fear of doctors, dentist or hospitals. Fear of fire was reported by thirty percent of parents and fear of burglary by seventeen percent. It may be that burglary, fire, doctors, dentists and the hospital do not necessarily guarantee harm to the child. Houses are usually burgled when no one is home, fire observed at campfires and visits to the doctor do not usually mean a lot of pain for the child. Some of the items that parents reported frequently may have been the result of parent's fear of their children being harmed. No adult wishes to see children ham-led, so their concerns about some situations could both be passed on to children and could influence their perceptions of children's fears of these items.

Children's rankings of items that could harm them also demonstrated some discrepancy. Fear of deep water and fear of fire were the second and third most commonly reported fears. Accidents, illness and death ranked sixth/seventh. However, children's least reported fears were fears of rides as fetes and fear of doctors, dentists and the hospital. Ollendick categorised different kinds of harm: "Minor injury and small animals", "Danger and Death" and "Medical Fears." While this research does not equate minor injury with small animals, it is possible that minor or potential harm should be further differentiated from "Danger and Death" or "Items that could cause great harm".

#### **Fear of failure, criticism and embarrassment**

To Ollendick's (1983) Fear Survey Schedule for Children - Revised category of fear of "Failure and Criticism" I have added "embarrassment" as some fears seem to be based not so much on failure or criticism but on how children believe themselves to be perceived by others. However, embarrassment seems to be more commonly reported during the school years, when children are more able to report events that precede and follow an emotion (Saami and Harris, 1989).

Items in this category include fear of punishment, fear of being teased, fear of being in a fight and fear of making mistakes. In agreement with Ollendick, I have included fear of adults arguing in this category because young children's egocentricity might cause them to blame themselves for the arguments and may fear punishment as a result. Christa, a mother in this study, noted of her two preschool children: "They are afraid when their father and I argue if we even raise our voices to each other they say 'Stop arguing, NOW!'"

All of the items in this category seem not so much to be feared because of their potential harm as because of the verbal response from others that could be critical and cause the child to feel embarrassed and unsuccessful.

In this research, fear of being teased was the second most common fear reported by caregivers in their focal children. Twenty-two percent reported a fear of punishment. Seventeen percent of caregivers reported a fear of making mistakes, while nine percent reported a fear of fighting and four percent reported a fear of adults arguing.

More than half of the parents in this research reported a fear of punishment in their preschool children, while thirty-four percent reported a fear of adults arguing. Fear of being teased and of making mistakes were reported by twenty-eight and twenty-one percent of parents, and only eleven percent reported a fear of fighting, which was the least commonly reported fear by parents. Forty-four percent of children reported fears of being in a fight and of adults arguing, thirty-eight percent reported fears of punishment, thirty-six percent of being teased and only thirty-one percent of making mistakes.

#### **Fear of insects or animals**

Fear of insects or animals seems to vary with geographical location. While Ollendick (1983) found a strong fear of lizards in his British research, this research in Australia found no fear of lizards but highlighted fears of spiders and snakes, which are common and dangerous here. Fifteen percent of caregivers reported fears of insects, spiders and snakes, and thirteen percent reported fears of dogs or other animals. Thirty-three percent of children reported fears of dogs or other animals, and thirty-one percent reported fears of insects, spiders and snakes. The greatest discrepancy was in parents' reporting. Sixty-two percent of parents reported fears of insects, spiders and snakes, while forty-seven percent reported fears of dogs or other animals.

#### **Fear of the intangible**

Fears of ghosts, monsters or spirits were originally thought of as "Imaginary fears". However, it was pointed out to the researcher that some cultural groups do not believe these items to be imaginary, but to be real. Ollendick (1983) classifies nightmares as fear of "the Unknown." However, I believe that fear of ghosts, monsters, spirits, bad dreams and nightmares are all fears of the intangible and have classified them as such. These items are not the unknown, as they can never be known. They are perceived but cannot be touched and are incorporeal.

Caregivers report these items similarly, with seventeen percent of caregivers reporting fears of bad dreams and nightmares and fifteen percent reporting fears of ghosts, monsters and spirits. Forty-nine percent of children reported a fear of bad dreams or nightmares and forty-four percent reported a fear of ghosts, monsters or spirits. Again, the greatest discrepancy was with parents, as fifty-seven percent reported a fear of bad dreams or nightmares, ranking this fear fifth and only thirty-four percent reported fears of ghosts, monsters or spirits.

Fear of failure, criticism and embarrassment appeared in caregivers most reported and least reported fears. As well, fear of being harmed appeared in children's most reported fears and least reported fears. Perhaps these two categories need further reconceptualisation, so that items which appear as most common are in discrete categories from those that appear as least common.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research confirmed that preschool aged children experience a variety of fears. Some fears are more apparent to parents; others to caregivers. However, the types of fears reported suggest fear categories beyond fear as inherited, modelled, separation fear and developmental fear or fear as defined by Ollendick's (1983) Fear Survey Schedule for Children - Revised. The categories suggested by this research: Fear of Separation from the Attachment Figure, Fear of the Unfamiliar, Fear of Being Harmed, fear of Failure, Criticism and Embarrassment, Fear of Insects or Animals and Fear of the Intangible - seem to more accurately reflect the types of fears reported by parents, caregivers and preschool-aged children themselves. Looking at young children's fears through these discrete categories might give us a more lucid and comprehensive view of fear in young children.

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