

GENDER ISSUES IN THE PLAYGROUND RHYMES OF  
NEW ZEALAND CHILDREN: 1993-2003

AN ANALYSIS OF THE GENDER ISSUES EMBEDDED  
WITHIN THE PLAYGROUND RHYMES OF NEW ZEALAND  
CHILDREN

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**ABSTRACT**

This research investigated the gender issues embedded within the playground rhymes used by New Zealand school children over the last ten years. Comparisons were also made between these present-day rhymes and those from historical collections.

An inductive approach based on grounded theory was used and identified four main classification groupings related to gender:

1. gender based stereotypes,
2. power within both peer groupings and in relation to authority figures,
3. taboo issues including sexual knowledge and references to natural bodily functions and parts,
4. life passages, both traditional and modern day.

Close analysis and interpretation of the rhymes revealed key themes. Links were formed between these themes and current social trends and attitudes. The rhymes used by children were shown to contain hidden transcripts that related to culturally constructed gender issues. At the same time this research presents evidence that important traditional elements of these rhymes were still maintained.

The findings of this research project give insight into the often-subversive world of children's playground culture. The duality of children's playground rhymes was confirmed by this study. Children's playground rhymes are contemporary as well as traditional, innovative and conservative, improvised and inherited. Children preserve the traditions of the past while still managing to adapt their rhymes to reflect concerns of the present.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**Introduction**

*Background*

This researcher has been involved in many different levels of education over the last 30 years, including preschool, primary school, high

school and adult teaching. The interest in children's folklore, and playground rhymes in particular, arose from work as a student, followed by employment as tutor and course director of one of the compulsory papers of the Christchurch College of Education's National Diploma in Children's Literature (NZ). The *Patterns of Language* paper contains a section on children's folklore and involves students in the collection of children's playground rhymes.

### Research Questions

- What evidence is there of gender related issues in playground rhymes used by New Zealand children in the period of 1993-2003?
- What comparisons, in relation to gender issues, can be made between current rhymes and past collections?

### Rationale

The close examination of the folk rhymes of New Zealand children gives an insight into their culture, a world not readily accessible to the casual adult observer. The contention that in this highly media and technological focussed age children have lost the art of playing has been disproved by studies of several researchers (Factor, 1988; Sutton-Smith, 1999; Bishop & Curtis, 2001; Kelsey, 2001). After the initial assumption by the Opies (1959) "that children no longer cherished their traditional lore" (5) they concluded their study of 5000 United Kingdom school children with the finding that

the modern schoolchild, when out of sight and on his own, appears to be rich in language, well-versed in custom, a respecter of details of his own code, and a practising authority on traditional self-amusements. (9)

Recognition of gender issues, such as gender segregation in play and the identification of different play styles have been the focus of research studies, (Factor, 1988;. Thorne, 1993; Sutton-Smith, 1999; Hughes, 1999). Also consideration of gender issues within the rhymes themselves have been examined to some extent (McMahon & Sutton-Smith, 1999; Grugeon, 2001; Arleo, 2001).

Analysis and interpretation of the rhymes will establish links between the gender issues contained within the rhymes and the wider society in which they exist. These issues are both culturally constructed and are part of the subversive nature of playground rhymes (Grugeon, 1993). The links between tradition and modernity that exist will also be examined with referral to folklore collections of the past.

Children play for fun. In the process of play, particularly rule-governed play, children learn and practise skills and test themselves physically, socially and intellectually. The traditional games of the schoolground are as important to children's development as formal lessons in the classroom (Factor, 1983, 108).

Children's play traditions often reveal dimensions of creativity, artistry and complexity in their own right, including carnivalesque, subversive and parodic elements as well as normative ones. (Bishop and Curtis, 2001, 8)

To appreciate the value and importance of children's folklore, adults need to surpass what Sutton-Smith refers to as the "triviality barrier" (1970) in which the non serious is not necessarily deemed as unimportant.

The infant appears to babble for the joy of hearing himself. The child plays for the fun of it. The adults return addictively to their games for the enjoyments they find contained within them. We are saying, that is, that childlore deals not only with a definite series of *expressive forms* that can be traced throughout human development, but that these forms are normally, in some sense, self-motivating structures. Which is after all only what generations of humanists have been saying when they have claimed that poetry, drama and other forms of human expression have their own intrinsic vocabulary and system of internal dynamics which must be understood in their own right before it is possible to study how they can be put to the service of this or that functional end. .. It is true, then, that childlore deals with behaviour that has traditionally been regarded as nonserious, but as this behaviour appears to be a systematic part of the human repertoire, to think, therefore, it is unimportant might be a mistake. (Sutton-Smith, cited in Bishop & Curtis, 2001, 7)

With the recognised move of children's folklore play from the physical to the more symbolic and verbal (McMahon & Sutton-Smith, 1999), this researcher believes that it is important to take a more interpretative approach with collections of children's playground rhymes, in terms of looking beyond the surface of the text. This move from the physical to the verbal can be clearly seen when comparing the collections by Knapp & Knapp (1976) and Bronner (1988) with the earlier collections of Newell (1883) and Gomme (1894). The nineteenth century collections contain relatively little mention of purely verbal play,

whilst the later collections have over half the examples given related to verbal or symbolic folklore.

This researcher believes that it is important to go beyond the collection of playground rhymes and to interrogate the text, in this instance looking for issues related to gender. McMahon and Sutton-Smith (1999) recognised and encouraged a trend towards interpretative research and observation of context, both "historical and situational" (306). This researcher will use a similar approach using a combination of historical and present-day collections.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

Before considering literature related to the gender issues within playground rhymes, it is necessary to define more precisely the terms such as "children's folklore," "playground rhymes" and "gender issues" used in this study, and also to make a distinction between nursery rhymes and playground rhymes. This literature review will then move to examine historical influences and the research related to gender issues within the playground and within the rhymes themselves.

### **Defining the Key Terms**

#### **● Children's Folklore**

According to Bishop and Curtis (2001), the term folklore was first used by William Thoms, writing under the pseudonym of Ambrose Merton, in 1846. It referred to the lore of the people and included the traditions of childhood.

The recognition of childlore resulted in collections and research by the likes of Gomme (1894-98), Sutton-Smith (1959), the Opies (1959), Turner, (1969) and Knapp (1976). The items of childlore collected were regarded as folkloric because they were passed on by word of mouth and involved informal "watching, listening and copying of others." (Bishop & Curtis, 2001, 5)

The traditional formalised play activities of children, including forms of speech play and verbal art, that are engaged in and maintained by children themselves, within the peer group. Familiar genres of children's folklore include riddles, games, jokes, taunts, retorts, hand-claps, counting-out rhymes, catches, ring plays and jump-rope rhymes. It is likewise distinguished from, though it may share items and genres and have other continuities with, adult folklore. (Bauman, cited in Sutton-Smith, 1999, 172)

Folklore can also include such diverse activities as pranks, fortune telling, secret languages, tall stories, tongue twisters and superstitions. (Opie, 1959)

Folklore may be "contemporary as well as traditional, improvised as well as inherited" (Factor, 1988, 8), also innovative and conservative, variable and constrained. (Zumwalt, 1999)

- **Playground Rhymes**

A vital and vibrant component of children's folklore is the rhymes that children use in the playground.

Play rhymes are the rhymes which children use for their games-for skipping, hand-clapping, ball-bouncing, chasing games, for deciding who is to be 'he,' or to establish supremacy, to defend themselves, to express their affection or anger, or simply to amuse themselves and one another. (Turner *et al*, 1978, vii)

Children's traditional culture is an expression of their own beliefs and values, not isolated from contact with the adult world, but specific to themselves. Rhymes and other linguistic play are created and reproduced for children's own purposes, not for those of folklorists, the educational system or publishers. . . . Children create and pass on their rhymes for their own enjoyment as they play. They are a living, active art, made by children for their own purposes, their content to be taken in at the children's own level, and that is how they are best understood. (Boyes, cited in Bishop & Curtis, 2001, 8)

Playground rhymes need to be distinguished from nursery rhymes. The Opies (1959) noted not only a difference in cadence and subject matter, but also in the mode of transmission.

While the nursery rhymes passes from a mother to another adult to the small child on her knee, the school rhyme circulates simply from child to child, usually outside the home, and beyond the influence of the family circle. By its nature a nursery rhyme is a jingle preserved and propagated not by children but by adults, and in this sense it is an "adult" rhyme. It is a rhyme which is adult approved. The school child's verses are not intended for adult ears. (Opie, 1959,21)

- **Gender Issues**

Ivy (1994) distinguishes sex from gender by considering that sex is biologically determined and consists of the biological and physical characteristics that make us male and female. Gender, however, is more wide ranging, and includes psychological and emotional characteristics, as well as personality, attitudes, beliefs and values. Gender is culturally constructed as opposed to being biologically determined.

Thorne (1993) sees gender as a highly visible source of individual and social identity. Gender refers to "cultural and social phenomena-divisions of labour, activity and identity which are associated with but not fully determined by biological sex." (Thorne, 1986, I)

Gender is not a unitary, or 'natural' fact, but takes shape in concrete, historically changing social relationships. (Thorne *et al.*, cited in Ivy, 1994, 7)

According to Ivy (1994), children learn gender-related behaviours from their social contacts with their peers, parents and other adults, and they model the actions, thoughts and emotions as they see them. Reflections of these observations can be seen in the text of some of the rhymes they use in the playground.

### **Introduction**

Children's folklore, under examination here, focuses on the rhymes, chants, insults, taunts, rituals, riddles and parodies that are part of the folkloric traditions of children's play. This type of play has been classified as "verbal play" (Bishop & Curtis, 200 I, 13), as opposed to physical play and imaginative play.

Much of this verbal play contains hidden transcripts or underlying issues that are perhaps not immediately obvious as children struggle for mastery and autonomy as a subordinate group. According to Grurgeon (1993) playground rhymes form part of a subversive counter culture that occupies a different domain from the official school culture. It is the purpose of this literature review and following my research to consider what these hidden transcripts involve, in particular those related to gender issues.

Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a "hidden transcript" that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. (McMahon, cited in Sutton-Smith, 1997, 115)

While the age range of the children most involved in verbal play fits into the area known as middle childhood, "the period between early childhood and puberty" (Factor, 1988, 5), the rhymes associated with

games "belong almost exclusively to the eight to thirteen-year-old group" (Turner *et al*, 1978, 158). However rhymes of the playground, classified by Turner (1978) as "For Amusement Only" (158), cover a greater age range, extending from five to sixteen years. This section includes parodies as well as the more obscene playground rhymes. Primary school playgrounds are the focus of much of this activity, as "playgrounds themselves may be the only school setting in which spontaneous peer interactions are condoned." (Borman, 1979,251)

### **Historical Background**

As the origins of folklore are firmly grounded in tradition it is important to consider features of the past that may have influenced the folk play of children today. Folklore provides "a link with the past but also a vibrant force in the present" (Sutton-Smith, 1999,27).

During the Middle Ages singing games were part of a courtship ritual for intending partners. By the 1800s these same games had developed into fantasies of marriage, "games of unsophisticated girls who could make their choices among other girls largely without the presence of boys at all" (McMahon & Sutton-Smith, 1999, 294). Apart from these singing games, boys were involved in a greater variety of traditional game pursuits than girls (Sutton-Smith, 1981). This is an historical reversal, as today it is the girls who are the chief preservers and initiators of folklore (Sutton-Smith, 1999).

Lady Gomme (1898) identified gender distinctions that divided the play traditions of children into dramatic play, being the property of girls, and competitive play, the property of boys (Turner, 1969). Sutton-Smith relates this to a significant factor "that girls acquire a consciousness of their future roles earlier than do boys, and that many girls' games act out these roles" (Sutton-Smith, 1959, 53-54). This consciousness was reflected in the language of the rhymes.

In the early 1900s girls, given greater freedom in terms of dress, footwear and in the playground, as well as being unchallenged by organised sports, became the chief participants in, and preservers of folklore (Turner, 1969; Sutton-Smith, 1981; Grurgeon, 1988; Carpenter, 2001). The change also included a movement from static singing games to the more physical skipping, hand clapping, handstand and ball bouncing games for girls. These aerobic games were most often accompanied by rhymes. This resurgence of rhymes, from only two or three rhymes in 1900 to over fifty skipping rhymes identified in the 1950s (Sutton-Smith, 1981) is partly attributed to the fact that many were now being published in children's magazines and annuals.

The general trend away from the physical aspects of folklore play to the more verbal is a result of a number of factors. In a move away from the freedom of the 1950s 1960s, restrictions on children's play and free time increased during the 1970s through to current times.

These restrictions can be attributed to a number of factors, including safety issues, increased academic emphasis and an increase in the adult direction of organised sports and after school activities.

The shift from physical to verbal play may reflect not only the general cultural changes in the world of adult work, from manual to symbolic, but also changes in the actual freedom that children have to carry out their older traditions of play. (McMahon & Sutton-Smith, 1999,299)

Commercial influences, in terms of modern entertainment and recreation, have also impacted and resulted in a shift from physical to verbal play (Sutton-Smith, 1981). "Perhaps current childhood does indeed occupy more verbal crevices and less obvious physical space than used to be the case." (McMahon & Sutton-Smith, 1999)

These changing trends can be seen when examining folklore collections of the past. The early collectors were more interested in the continuity of traditions than in looking for any variation or change. "They believed that the games and verbal lore of childhood were relics of adult traditions fallen into disrepair-fallen into the nursery, where they were taken up and tenaciously maintained" (Factor, 1988, 11).

Lady Gomme (1894) remarked,

Children do not invent, but they imitate or mimic very largely, and in many of these games we have, there is little doubt, unconscious folk-dramas of events and customs which were at one time being enacted as a part of the serious concerns of life before the eyes of children many generations ago. (Gomme cited in Factor, 1988, 12)

Children's playground rhymes today are both creative and conservative and incorporate references to cultural influences into their rhymes.

### **Gender issues within the playground today.**

Recent folklore researchers have recognised that, although essentially traditional, many of the folklore rhymes of recent times are based on dualisms that link the past with the present, tradition with modernity. This influence beyond the traditional is reflected in the comment by McMahon & Sutton-Smith, "Children's folklore appears in many games to have taken on the character of modern mass-media culture, with its cycles of fashion and popularity" (McMahon & Sutton-Smith, 1999,294).

- **Gender Segregation**

Gender differences can be readily observed in any school playground. Historical segregation of play areas still has repercussions in the playgrounds of today and impacts on gender issues within the playground. Researchers have found that when given a choice of play associates, children still choose same sex groupings (Borman, 1979; Factor, 1988; Thorne, 1993; Boyatzis, 1999). Studies have shown that this same sex preference increases with age (Martin *et al*, 1999). Peer interactions are segregated from as young as three years of age, and increase through to eleven years (Maccoby, 1990). Other studies have shown that greater sex integration occurs away from the school playground, in home and community environments (Thorne, 1993). Mixed gender play has also been found to occur more in schools with a wide social intake or in schools with children from more professional homes (Kelsey, 2001). Integration is more likely to occur with adult intervention or when adults give attention to gender equity (Zhumkhawala, 1997; Maccoby, 1990; Jaffe, 1998).

- **Different Play Styles**

There is an extensive body of literature available describing the gender differences in the play styles of boys and girls (Factor, 1988; Sutton-Smith, 1999; Hughes, 1999; Boyatzis, 1999). These differences are attributed to social, cultural and possibly biological factors. Mechling (2000) recognises the "complex dance between biology and culture in children's lives." Feminism expounds the view that all gender is a social construction (Thorne, 1993), however there are biological differences that can't be dismissed, based on "different bodies" (Mechling, 2000, 1).

Thorne (1993) expressed objections to the different culture model, in that it "implied that girls and boys are always apart" (90), and did not take into account the cross gender interactions that occur both in and out of school. Also she noted that this model "embeds the experiences of dominants and marginalises many other groups and individuals" (90).

Research has produced evidence of these gender-related differences. Considering first the social purposes of play, Sutton-Smith (1997) saw inclusion and exclusion as power tactics that differentiate girls from boys. "The most important thing about play is to be included and not excluded from the group's activities. Much of female play is about the play of exclusion" (103). Similarly, James (1993), in her studies of play in Great Britain, noted the importance for both sexes of developing play skills to avoid being seen as an outsider or different. "For boys this means manipulating the important signifiers of masculinity—'toughness' and 'physical prowess'—in the process of play; for

girls it means demonstrating through play the nurturing skills of wives, mothers and managers" (198).

Differences in play styles show boys to be more physical, more active and more involved in rough and tumble play than girls (Thorne, 1993; Lewis & Phillipson, 1998; Butcher, 1999; Vissel, 1993). Girls "tend to participate in sedentary games or activities and spend much of their time in socialising activities" (Butcher, 1999, 249) and from Estonian folklorist, Anu Vissel (1993), "Girls like those games that serve to set off and cultivate deftness, lightness and grace of movement" (1).

These differences are correspondingly reflected in use of playground space. In the 1980s Grugeon's (2001) research observed "girls seem to be marginalised on the edges of the playground as boys monopolised the centre space to play football" (101). She noted that since then schools have made some effort to make playground space more accessible to all. Similar observations were made by Lindsay & Palmer (1981) and Thorne (1993). The former found that it was the younger girls especially who stayed close to the safety and security of the school buildings and looked for adult contact. Thorne (1993) also noted that the boys had control of ten times more playground space than the girls, and even then they would still invade the limited play area of the girls.

Another area of difference in play styles relates to the boys' tendency to emphasise competitiveness as opposed to the girls' desire for cooperation (Lindsay & Palmer, 1981; Thorne, 1993; Twarek, 1994; Lewis & Phillipson, 1998). "While boys use a rhetoric of contests and teams, girls describe their relations using language which stresses cooperation and 'being nice'" (Thorne & Luria, 1986, 179).

### **Gender issues within playground rhymes.**

#### **● The Power Perspective**

Power related aspects are at the centre of much of what children's folklore is about. Modern folklore researchers have recognised the need

to look beneath the superficially placid surface of children's play to understand how important are the power-related aspects of children's folklore and its formation. . . the dominant theme throughout is that of the power children exercise over each other, and the power they seek in their relationships to adults, mythical or real. (McMahon & Sutton-Smith, 1999, 299)

The power exercised by children in the area of playground rhymes relates to both that of language and relationships. The ownership children have of playground rhymes allows them to manipulate language for their own purposes, free from adult control. The power within the

rhymes themselves relates to control over others, whether this be peers, inter-gender relationships, or adults, authority figures in particular because, ". . . as children compose the most powerless subaltern group, we should expect them to have multiple and complex ways of subverting authority." (McMahon & Sutton-Smith, 1999,302)

Teachers, in particular, are often the subjects of such verbal assaults with parodies such as such favourites as:

*Row, row row your boat,  
Gently down the stream,  
Throw your teacher overboard,  
And listen to **her** scream!*

and

*Pokare, kare, ana,  
I had a squashed banana,  
I threw it at the teacher,  
**She** said come here. . .*

A gender based issue arising from such rhymes relates to whether the female teacher is a greater target than her male counterpart, and if so why this would be the case.

There is also evidence that many of these rhymes are part of a culture of subversive acts of resistance against both adult authority and at times the other gender (Factor, 1988; Grugeon, 2001). Attempts by school authorities to ban or limit these rhymes, as occurred in Australia (Factor, 1988, 176) and in Britain (Grugeon, 2001,101), have only served to drive them underground or make children more cautious with their use when near adults.

Although close interaction between the sexes is not necessarily a feature of playground activity in the middle years, Factor (1988) observed that "rhymes and games are shared throughout the school" (136). She also noted that with the changes in social values and attitudes, evidence of power conflicts between the sexes became obvious in the development of some of the rhymes. The 60s rhyme,

*Girls are weak,  
Chuck 'em in the creek.  
Boys are strong,  
Like King Kong.*

produced many variants from the 70s onwards that reflect this sparring and was possibly influenced by the development of girl power, with the intense "girls can do anything" campaign of the time.

*Boys have the muscles,  
Girls have the brains.  
Boys are the stupidest,  
And we won the games. (140)*

Grugeon (1993) noted in her collection of rhymes from girls that

Listening to the words of the songs which accompany these games and watching the actions involved, a robust and challenging tone is apparent-parodying and ridiculing. Men and boys are mocked. . . In many versions the boyfriend is thrown around until he loses his underpants. Boyfriends have 'pickles' on their nose and are in danger of having their willies drastically shortened and balls caught in barbed wire. (23)

Grugeon recognised that girls use language, in preference to actual physical aggression, as a peaceful means of retaliation to the provocation of boys.

#### ● **The Rude and Crude**

Boys and girls are both actively involved in rhymes that challenge and defy adult standards and conventions. These rhymes give children the opportunity to explore taboo subjects and adult themes within the safe environment of the school playground (Grugeon, 1988). There are a variety of terms used by researchers of the past to describe this type of rhyme. The Opies (1959, 113-116) used the terms "erotic verse" or "the improper." Other terms used include "vulgar rhymes" (Turner, 1978, 162), "obscene rhymes" (Sutton-Smith, 1981, 95), "shockers" (Knapp & Knapp, (1976, 179-189). Lowenstein also made reference to "improper rhymes" and defined them as

. . . those rhymes created or circulated by children, which are calculated to shock or disgust the listener, to challenge adult refinement and to show, in the case of jokes about sex, that the child concerned is aware of its mysteries and has penetrated the adult veil of secrecy about sexual matters. (Lowenstein, 1974,1)

Lowenstein's "Shocking, Shocking, Shocking" (1974) exposed a number of children's improper rhymes that were current in Australia during the 1960s and 1970s. She found that it was the "good" girls who were the real experts in this area, rather than the "bad" boys. Her findings disputed the belief that obscene rhymes were commonly circulated among boys and "not very nice girls" or belonged to the "ogre child" or "delinquent" (Opie, 1959, 115-116). Also disputed was the finding that

these rhymes were more likely to be known by working class children than the sheltered middle class girls, who were in fact the source of much of Lowenstein's material (6). Similarly, Factor (2000) commented that,

In my experience there are students at the most expensive private girls' schools who have as extensive a repertoire of vulgar and abusive rituals as the toughest, roughest boys in the working class suburbs of our major cities. (xxii)

This contrasted directly with the comments from the previous century by Bolton (1888).

We take pleasure in stating that in all our oral and written communications with children in every walk of life we have not received a single vulgar rhyme, nor one containing foul language. The nearest approach to an oath is the exclamation 'Gracious Peter.' (Bolton, cited in Turner *et al*, 1978, 158)

The Opies' (1959) claim likewise that, "genuinely erotic verse, however, is unusual" (115) in children's groups. Comments such as these are reflections of the collectors' attitudes and their relationship with the children they were involved with, and also possibly reflect the more restrictive attitudes of that particular era.

In more recent years researchers have acknowledged the gendered nature of the content of the rhymes themselves. Grugeon (2001) expressed a strong interest in the

gendered nature of the content of the singing games played by girls in the first four years at school, in the way these games parody adult norms and behaviour, often dealing with taboo subjects through mocking and subversive texts. (99)

Rhymes such as the prolific "When Susie was a baby" allow young girls to explore the possibilities of adult life and the new roles they will soon be encountering in terms of the passage of life from infancy to death and after (Factor, 1988; Arleo, 2001). These rhymes allow children a "freedom from customary propriety" (Factor, 1988, 174) and to explore issues not available in their non-play lives. Sexually suggestive verses have been added and adapted across "social, political, linguistic and geographical barriers" (Arleo, 2001, 130).

*When Suzy was a teenager, a teenager  
When Suzy was a teenager, she used to go like this:  
'Ooh, aah, I lost my bra in my boyfriend's car,  
I don't know where my knickers are.*

*Ooh, aah, there they are—  
Hanging in my boyfriend's car.* (Arleo, 131)

Grurgeon (2001) also examined the use of Spice Girl songs parodied by young girls and accompanied by explicitly sexual and provocative actions, in terms of the process of media texts being adapted to the playground. Such rhymes also demonstrate the ease with which popular culture and mass media can be absorbed into children's play (Ackerley, 2002).

"The existence of vulgar and obscene children's lore is now recognised as a universal phenomenon. . ." (Factor, 1988, 160)

The usage of these rhymes gives a certain satisfaction, not only in playful exploration of language, but also in the exploration of adult taboos, and the appearance of "knowing" about such adult matters beyond their current experience. These rhymes give the participant an air of maturity that temporarily disguises the ignorance and inexperience. The children appear to know more than they do.

The openness of boys is contrasted with the subversiveness of the girls. Thome and Luria's (1986) observations of playground behaviour show the boys being more prepared to take risks.

Both girls and boys know dirty words but flaunting of the words and risking punishment for their use is more frequent in boys' than in girls' groups. Dirty talk is a stable part of the repertoire of boys' groups. Such talk defines their groups as outside the reach of school discipline (180-81)

The more subversive and private nature of the girls' behaviour sees them partaking in "giggling sessions" (183) on carefully guarded topics.

### ● **Sex Role Stereotypes**

Children's playground rhymes reflect the division between tradition and modernity, stability and change, the conservative and the innovative. The traditions of the past are preserved even though social changes have taken place. Virginia Caputo (1990) focuses on the traditional in her studies into children's songs in Canadian schools.

Changes in adult culture, with regard to issues of equality between men and women, the re-evaluation of patriarchal attitudes. . . do not seem to be reflected in children's musical culture as much as one might expect. (4)

Factor (1988), however, had a greater awareness in the variations in the rhymes reflecting changes in attitudes and societal values. She commented that changes in rhymes over time are a result "of children's acute observation and awareness of shifts in social values, their sharp ear for whatever is new and newsworthy." (142)

Sutton-Smith (1972) also recognised this duality. "In seeking to understand children at play. . . we must hold in mind the dual fact that children are innovative as well as conservative" (65). Mary and Herbert Knapp also stress that "while children are remarkably conservative in preserving their traditions for generations, they are also very flexible in adapting their lore to present concerns" (Knapp & Knapp, 1976, 14).

In response to the publicity about the longevity of women the following rhyme was heard in Australian playgrounds:

*Boys are weak,  
Chuck 'em in the creek.  
Girls are stronger,  
They live longer.*

(Factor, 1988, 141)

Jorgenson (1980) commented that rhymes such as this, and the Susie saga

often carry with them partially hidden attitudes, values and feelings which are particularly important to female children in this age group of approximately five to twelve years. At this time in their lives, young girls are beginning to consider the possibilities inherent in adult life and the new roles they will soon be encountering, especially ones such as girl friend, wife and mother. (63)

### **Issues arising and methodological considerations.**

As a result of considering a wide range of research related to children's play and folklore, there are two key issues that emerge. First is the trend of moving away from the consideration and collection of what children play, to the investigation of why and how these folklore traditions are kept alive. The comprehensive collections of the past decades (Opie, 1959; Opie, 1969; Turner, 1969; Kelsey, 1962-1990), though still of great value, have given way to greater consideration of the conditions under which such play occurs (Thorne, 1993; Grugeon, 2001; Bishop & Curtis, 2001).

McMahon & Sutton-Smith (1999) have recognised and encouraged a trend towards interpretive research and observations of context, both "historical and situational" (306) with a caution on being over zealous

in "reading into children's folklore what simply isn't there" (306). Related to the consideration of the situational, is the fact that the research cited in this review occurs largely in the school playground. Gender characteristics may be quite different had more observations been carried out in the neighbourhood or home environments. The social context of such research is of vital importance.

Limitations of earlier research collections have included the problems of the biases of the collectors and their methods (Turner, 1969; Grugeon, 1988). Turner speculated that early collections such as Bolton's (1888) collection of counting out rhymes did not include rude rhymes because the children he collected them from did not "want to offend him" (158).

The second issue to be aware of is related to the danger of creating a mind set prior to carrying out research. Thorne (1993) warns against the different culture mind set when considering gender issues. If observers concentrate their observations on distinct boy-girl groupings, then results will be different to observations with a focus on interaction between the two groups. Thorne (1993) advises starting "with a sense of the whole rather than an assumption of gender as separation and difference" (108).

Similarly verbal folklore should not be considered as entirely distinct from the adult world, as much of this rhetoric results from observations and mimicry of adults. With a recognised increase in verbal play with age, the boundaries between adult and children's humour are less defined, especially when considering the more vulgar rhymes. So much so that "in their mid teens, it is difficult to divide their rude rhymes and jokes from the adult tradition" (Lowenstein, 1974, 1).

## **Conclusion**

This literature review has considered the gender implications embedded in children's playground rhymes. There is a strong historical influence, seen in the physical gender divisions in the playgrounds 1990s and earlier. Environmental and social changes from the middle of the 20th century have resulted in a move from physical folklore play to more emphasis on the verbal and symbolic.

Although girls are shown to be the bearers and preservers of the traditional playground rhymes, inter-gender rivalry can be acted out through playground rhymes. Both sexes use rhymes as a vehicle to mock the power of those who have authority over them. The parodying of adult norms of behaviour and the exploration of a variety of possibilities in terms of the passages of life also feature gender, along with sexuality and stereotypes, which are also explored through these rhymes.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Introduction

There are two parts to this research process.

1. The collection and organisation of the data, and
2. The close examination of the raw data for identification of patterns, themes and issues related to the objectives of this research.

- **Over view of General Collection Methods**

Folklore has traditionally relied on multiple methodologies. Among the most prominent of these techniques are reminiscences, interviews and diaries, surveys and questionnaires, observations and experiments. (Fine, 1999, 121)

This researcher acknowledges that the multi-method approach produces the most complete range of data, but practicalities such as time constraints, resources and expenses must be taken into consideration. Notable researchers in the field of the collection of children's folklore have used a variety of methods depending on the focus of their studies. A combination of reminiscences (oral history) and observations were used by the Opies (1959, 1969), Sutton-Smith (1959, 1981), Bronner, (1988), Knapp & Knapp (1976), Factor (1983-1988), Turner (1969), and Lowenstein (1974). Reminiscences have the advantage of being relatively easy to collect and can yield historical or comparative data. However, the material collected is verbal rather than behaviour based and, because it is based on recall, may be subject to inaccuracies.

Observations have the advantage of occurring in a natural context and may involve video or audio recording. This technique was used by Goodwin (1985), Hughes (1999), Marsh (2001) and Beresin (1999) and has the advantage of going beyond the text of the rhyme, capturing the verbal nuances, cadence and rhythm. It also places the folklore in a social setting

Hughes (1999) combined interviews with observations and focussed on the 'how' of play in observing the social interaction in the midst of playground games, four square in particular, with the contention that "the gaming of the game is as important as the game" (72). She commented that with this research technique the researcher does not know beforehand exactly what the outcomes will be and, therefore, must remain open to all possibilities. Marsh (2001) and Beresin's (1999) research, using audio-visual techniques, allowed the research to go beyond the text and reveal intricacies of the wider social setting. The trend in recent years has been to conduct research that examines the

broader context of the games, but with a narrower focus on a particular games' type; for example, Beresin (1999) examined jump rope rhymes, Hughes (1999) four square, and Marsh (2001) hand clapping games.

### **Data Source and Collection**

The collection method used for this research project is a result of the researcher's involvement with the National Diploma in Children's Literature (N.Z.). Students of the *Patterns of Language* course (C.L. 713), for which the researcher is currently the Course Director, were required to collect samples of children's playground rhymes on a standardised form (Appendix II) and submit this to their tutor as a course requirement. The transcript of the rhyme, the place and method of collection, the social context, significant oral features and details relating to gender, culture and the age of the children involved, were all recorded on this form. Permission was granted from the Centre for Children's Literature, Christchurch College of Education, to use this collection for research purposes. The rhymes have been collected since 1993 and have been filed by the researcher on a first line or title basis. The collection at the present time numbers just over 4000 individual items. The rhymes used for analysis by this researcher were rhymes that were current in the last ten years.

For the purpose of historical comparisons, however, the researcher will consider rhymes that were recalled by respondents from earlier times, as well as rhymes from the collections of Sutton-Smith (1959; 1972; 1981); Turner (1969; 1978); Opie (1959,1969,1985); and Factor (1983-1988).

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Collection Method**

The method of collection used for this research resulted in a wide geographical coverage. This coverage extended throughout New Zealand from the top of the North Island to the bottom of the South Island. A wide range of community types were also covered in the collection, ranging from large multi-cultural city schools to small rural communities. This extent of coverage would have been very difficult and time consuming if observational studies had been carried out by the researcher alone.

This method employs a combination of techniques including reminiscences, observations and informal interviews with individuals or groups of children in both school and community settings. The collectors of the rhymes include parents, teachers, librarians, recent graduates, teacher trainees and people in general, who have an interest in children's language and books. Using this method of collection minimises possible ethical issues, as the rhymes are recorded anonymously as far as the user is concerned, with the collectors' details recorded only for the purposes of follow up or clarification. Collectors, however, must

be mindful of the child's privacy and the need to be sensitive to any possible discomfort that may be caused. As adults we are intruders in the child's private world and sensitivity relating to issues of compulsion and authoritarianism should be realised.

Possible limitations of the collection method would be that the data is verbally based rather than context based. There is only limited consideration of the physical and social aspects of the rhymes, with the focus being on the accurate transcribing of the text of the language used. Video or oral tape recordings would allow many other features of the rhymes to be examined, but this would not have produced the quantity and wide range of material and would not be possible within the time frame of this study.

This is a haphazard, rather than systematic method of collection. The researcher must also accept that there will be a level of inconsistency with having so many individuals collecting the rhymes. A wide variety of methods were used for this purpose, including direct observations in both the playground and home, recollection interviews and some written responses from students. Consideration must also be given to the adult intrusiveness factor, children will only tell us what we think they want to hear. This factor was recognised by Turner (1969,158).

### **Research Method**

The researcher considered that qualitative research design best suited the mode of analysis needed to meet the objectives of this project. The research design involves an inductive process of moving from specific data to a general theory.

Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individual's perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis. (Bell, 1993, 5-6)

This analysis contrasts with quantitative research methods that rely on deductive thinking, or the process of moving from general theory to specific observations. Qualitative research is ideal when working with subjects in social and cultural contexts.

The grounded theory approach, linked to qualitative methodology, involves the close inspection and analysis of qualitative data. Grounded theory is a

qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived theory about a phenomenon. (Strauss & Corbib, cited in Neuman, 1997)

This is an inductive method that involves continuous interplay between data and analysis. From the close analysis of the data salient categories and themes should emerge.

The stages in moving from the raw data to the development of a grounded theory are as follows:

1. **Collection** of raw data
2. **Organisation** of data, filing, creating a computer data base, sorting larger units of data into smaller ones.
3. **Perusal**. Getting overall sense of data, jotting down preliminary interpretations.
4. **Classification**. Grouping data into themes. Looking for patterns. Finding meaning in data.
5. **Synthesis**. Integrating and summarising data. Offering hypothesis or propositions
6. **Final Report**

(Leedy, P, 2001)

The **collection** of the raw data has already been described in 3.1 above. The **organisation** of data involved the filing of individual rhyme items as they came to hand on a first line or title basis. The data based sorting involved a spread sheet table organised in terms of type of rhyme and gender usage, that is whether the rhyme was used by male, female or mixed groupings. The eight main categories for the types of rhyme that emerged were skipping, clapping, taunts and teases, parodies, counting out, elastics, crude rhymes and amusement rhymes. This enabled the researcher to become familiar with the wide range of data and also to distinguish between those rhymes which were current and those that were based on historical recall. This information was also valuable when looking at the gender usage of individual rhymes and details of this are included in the appendix of this study. The next stage involved the **perusal** of the raw material for gender related issues within the rhymes and then looking for patterns and **classification** groupings related to the selected rhymes. At this stage the researcher looked closely at the text of the rhymes, in an effort to identify possible gender based issues embedded within the rhymes themselves and also to consider possible categories or classification groupings that may be forming. The **synthesis** process involves close examination of the selected rhymes and additional consultation and comparisons with related collection material, both current and historical.

Once completed the researcher moves on to presenting the **final report**.

Folklorist Gary Fine (1999) has described three different perspectives in analysing folklore.

- **thematype**, being analysis according to a theme or structure.

- ecotype, being analysis according to social environment.
- ego type, being analysis of performance.

Any item of folklore can be analysed from any and all perspectives, although most folklore approaches focus on only one. (Fine, 1980, cited in Sutton-Smith, 1999,47)

Thematype analysis was the perspective taken with this study.

In the final report and discussion, where rhymes have been lengthy or complex, only relevant extracts have been cited. Full text of the rhymes and details relating to the context and gender details of the users of the rhymes concerned, are given in detail in the appendix section of this research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results and Discussion

#### Introduction

The focus of this research is to look beyond the surface features of the text of children's playground rhymes and to explore culturally and socially constructed gender issues embedded within the rhymes. When discussing the ambiguity of children's play Fagen (1981) commented that

The most irritating feature of play is not the perceptual incoherence, as such, but rather that play taunts us with its inaccessibility. We feel that something is behind it all but we do not know, or have forgotten how to see it. (Fagen, cited in Sutton-Smith, 1997,2)

Close analysis of the rhymes, revealed the categories and themes as outlined in Table 1. It should be noted here that the categories are not all inclusive and the boundaries between them not clearly defined. There may be some overlapping in terms of categories and themes. Four main categories emerged on close examination of the content of the rhymes. The categories identified by the researcher were

- **stereotypes**—in relation to how children view and form images of gender
- **power**—in relation to those who control the lives of children and how they control others in their peer grouping and associations with aggression and dominance.
- **taboo**—aspects that are forbidden or not spoken about openly.
- **life passages**—traditional passages through life including rites of passage and future roles that children may anticipate.

**Table 1:**

Categories and themes identified within children's playground rhymes.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Rhyme</b> <b>Examples</b> (first line)
<b>Stereotypes</b>	Body image is all-important; perpetuation of "good" girl, "bad" boy myth; the formation of gender role identity is part of growing up.	Girls are sexy: I'm sexy, I'm cute: Oh my gosh! I think I broke a nail: I must increase my bust: I'm a Barbie girl: Ladies and gentlemen: I'm a little Dutch girl: I'm a little angel: Down in the meadow: Mummy had a baby: Here comes the bride.
<b>Power</b>	Ridicule of, and resistance against, those who hold power; girls do not have to submit to attempts at male dominance; boys/girls are superior to the opposite sex.	Joy to the world: On top of spaghetti: Glory Halleluiah: Po kare kare ana: Row, row, row your boat: My boyfriend gave me an apple: Under the apple tree: Girls are weak: Boys are strong.
<b>Taboo</b>	Natural bodily functions and parts hold a particular fascination; possession of "adult" sexual knowledge is a status symbol within the peer group; children have a desire to shock and defy adult prohibitions; children's recognition and mockery of different sexual preferences.	My boyfriend's name: My friend Billy: Ellie I, Ellie I: Nicholas Pickolas: Cinderella dressed in yella: Old King Cole: Hickory, dickory: Roses are red: Jack and Jill: Waltzing Matilda: Ashes to ashes: A man's occupation: Georgie Porgie: Little Jack Horner: I love you.
<b>Life Passages</b>	Different life stages are a reflection of traditional and contemporary social influences; courting rituals and choosing a marriage partner by a divination process; distinct features of the New Zealand male culture.	When Susie was a baby: K.I.S.S.I.N.G: AB.C.D: Doh, the stuff that buys me beer: God of nations: Sex, drugs and rock and roll: Roll your dope: Weed is a plant: It's raining: Fitz, Merts.

Unless stated otherwise all these rhymes are part of the National Folklore Collection (N.Z.). The full text of each rhyme is recorded in Appendix 1.

### **Stereotypes**

The gender related stereotypes identified by the researcher relate to conformity to the "perfect" body image, the "good" girl "bad" boy myth and changing gender roles.

- **Body Image conformity**

The conformity to the image of the "ideal," both for males and females, can be recognised within the context of many of the children's rhymes.

*Girls are sexy, made out of Pepsi*

*Boys are ugly, made out of rugby.*

(Part of the clapping rhyme beginning "My mother, your mother, lived down the street. . . 80,90 Marble Street. . . see Appendix I).

*Boys have got the muscles,*

*Teachers got the brains,*

*Girls have got the sexy legs,*

*So they win all the games.*

*I'm sexy, I'm cute,*

*I'm popular to boot.*

*Great looking, great hair,*

*The boys will love to stare*

*Go, go go touros*

(This was chanted by both boys and girls while waiting in line for a turn on the flying fox in the junior school playground.)

This image, however, is also subject to mockery. These rhymes emerge as a reaction to the extreme pressures exerted by media, to conform the ideal female stereotype. They are usually recited by pre-adolescent girls and are chanted in a highly exaggerated manner, at the same time taking the opportunity to mock the male, rugby fanatic.

*Oh my gosh! I think I broke a nail.*

*It's totally for sure.*

*I'm gonna need a manicure.*

*The sun up there, is shining on my gorgeous hair.*

*Hey, you! Go home,*

*I'm talking on my telephone.  
23,24, I don't know the stupid score!  
Go, go, fight, fight,  
Gee I hope I look all right!*

Direct references and undermining of pressured advertising campaigns are made in the following rhymes

*I must, I must increase my bust,  
Cos then, cos then, I will attract men,  
And get a job, a job,  
working as a blob At Jenny Craig,  
Jenny Craig,  
So they can all catch my plague,  
and get fat, get fat!  
So what do you think of that!*

Alternative version:

**(The bigger the better, the tighter the,  
sweater, the boys depend on us.)**

and in the parody of the Barbie song by the pop group Aqua.

*I'm a Barbie girl, in a Barbie world,  
Life's fantastic, I'm made out of plastic,  
I've got rubber hair, purple underwear,  
I take a shower, every half hour.  
Come on Barbie, let's go party....*

A more recent addition to rhymes relating to body image relates to the pre and early teen routine of removing bodily hair, in particular the 'adult' process of shaving of the legs. The clapping rhyme beginning "*Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls ...*" contains the following lines:

*I went to school, it was pretty cool.  
I shaved my legs and my face went red.  
I came back home and my mummy said,  
Naughty, naughty, girl  
For shaving your legs!*

Alternative version

**I got back home and my daddy said,  
You're too young to shave your legs. . .**

An interesting feature of the alternative version cited here, is that the group chanting this rhyme contained boys as well as girls. The re-

searcher has assumed that was the reason for the following lines being added:

*I went upstairs to light the fire,  
My balls got stuck in the electric fire.  
I went to the doctor, the doctor said,  
Sorry, Mister, but your balls are dead!*

● **The "good" girl, "bad" boy image**

Research by Zumwalt (1999) recognised the opposing images of the "ideal" little girl and the "real" little girl as presented in children's playground rhymes. The 'good' or 'ideal' little girl is respectful, predictable, co-operative as shown in the initial part of the skipping rhyme:

*I'm a little Dutch girl dressed in blue  
These are the things that I must do,  
Bow to the King,  
Curtsey to the Queen,  
Show my undies to the rugby team.*

The final line here introducing us to another side of the "good" girl, the subversive, provocative tease. A similar contradiction can be seen in this rhyme:

*I'm a little angel,  
I don't swear,  
Bugger, bugger, bull shit,  
I don't care!*

In looking closely at the rhymes the researcher noted that it is the girl that is the tease and the boys often appear as somewhat dull, one-dimensional characters.

*Boys, boys are no fun  
Here comes Susie with a mini skirt on.  
She can wobble, she can wobble,  
She can do the splits.*

If indeed the boy does make the first move towards the girl, it is the girl that is made to feel the ashamed.

*Down in the meadow where the green grass grows,  
There sat little Mary as sweet as a rose.  
Along came a boy and kissed her on the cheek.  
Shame little Mary!*

*Who's your little boyfriend?  
A, B, C, D...*

● **Gender-role Identity**

Gender-role identity develops predominantly during the period of middle childhood and relates to the way children see themselves relative to male and female traits. These roles can be developed and experimented with, within the bounds of their rhymes and chants, as can be seen in this handclapping rhyme:

*My mummy had a baby, yummy, yummy.  
My daddy is a dentist, gummy, gummy.  
My sister is a show off, honey, honey.  
My brother is a cowboy, bang, bang, boom, boom.  
Fifty bullets in my head!  
Turn around, touch the ground.  
Freeze!*

As children love to create chaos and overturn the adult world (Sutton-Smith, 1999,302), the nonsense element creeps in with:

*My name is Andy Pandy, sugar and candy  
Mum's gone crazy,  
Dad's had a baby!  
Do me a favour  
Get lost!*

A long-standing gender-role stereotype can be seen in the traditional wedding song beginning, *Here comes the bride*. Turner (1959) has noted the use of this rhyme in 1930, the Opies recorded it in 1959. The more recent rhymes have similarities to the historical versions, with the additional comments about the groom and a bawdy ending.

*Here comes the bride,  
Big, fat and wide.  
Slipped on a banana,  
Went for a ride.* Turner (1930)

*Here comes the bride,  
Fair, fat and wide,  
She cannot get in the front door,  
She has to get in the side.* Opie (1959)

*Here comes the bride,  
 Fair, fat and wide.  
 Where is the groom?  
 He's in the bathroom.  
 Why is he there?  
 He lost his underwear.  
 Great waterfall, he's peeing on the wall.  
 Here comes the usher,  
 The old toilet flusher.*                      Current

*She went with Romeo.  
 Here comes the bride,  
 Fat, fair and wide.  
 Slipped on a banana skin,  
 And went for a ride.  
 Where did she go?  
 She went to Mexico.  
 What did she wear?  
 Purple underwear.  
 With whom did she go?  
 She went with Romeo*                      Current

**Power**

It is in the playground, away from adult influence and control, the children find true power.

Children's folklore can be considered hypothetically as a series of hidden transcripts of the non-powerful segment of the population known as children. (Sutton-Smith, 2001, 116).

I suggest, along these lines, how we might interpret the rumour, gossip, folktales, gestures, jokes and theatre of the powerless as vehicles by which, among other things, they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind innocuous understandings of their conduct. . . . Together these forms of insubordination might suitably be called the infrapolitics of the powerless. (Scott, 1990, xiii)

Much of children's folklore consists of hidden transcripts. A hidden transcript according to James C. Scott (1992) "is a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant" (xi). In this case the dominant are the adults, parents and teachers, in the child's world. Their rhymes serve as expressions of defiance, as a challenge to the controlling forces in their lives.

The messages contained within the rhymes related to power come from both ends of a continuum. At one end we have expressions of extreme violence enacted against the dominating power with examples such as *Waltzing Matilda*, *On top of Spaghetti*, *Po Karekare Ana* and *Joy to the World*. At the other end the researcher has found a subtle undermining in the form of teases, "*Boys are weak, chuck 'em in the creek*" directed at the opposite sex. All these rhymes have a form of power at their base.

- **Ridicule of teachers**

The dominant authority figure in a child's world, at the age when playground rhymes are most prominent, is the schoolteacher. Even though changes to a less authoritarian culture within our schools over the last 30 years have taken place, this change has not been reflected in the text of the rhymes chanted by children today about their teachers. The tradition of undermining the teacher and their associated power still exists. This has been commented on by Factor "These rhymes endure despite changes in school climate and ethos in the last 30 years" (1988, 159) and Caputo (1990).

Changes in adult culture with regard to issues of equality between men and women, the re-evaluation of patriarchal attitudes, new ideas about methods of teaching have developed over the last twenty years or more, and so on, do not seem to be reflected in children's singing culture as much as one might expect. (Caputo, 1990,4)

The key gender issue that this researcher has identified within the selection of rhymes that mock the authority of the teacher, is that just over 90% of the references are to female teachers. Of the 62 individual rhymes referring to teachers, 56 made reference to female teachers, 2 to male teachers and 4 were neutral. This can be compared with the past collections of Turner (1969; 1978), and Opie (1959), where 60% of the references were to female teachers.

*Joy to the world,  
The teacher's dead.  
We barbequed her head.  
What happened to **her** body?  
We flushed it down the potty.*

*Round and round it goes,  
Round and round it goes.*

*On top of spaghetti,*

*All covered in blood (sand)  
 I shot my poor teacher,  
 With a M 16 slug (grey rubber band)  
 I shot **her** with pleasure,  
 I shot **her** with pride,  
 I couldn't have missed **her**,  
**She** was 20 foot wide.  
 I went to **her** funeral, I went to **her** grave  
 Some people threw flowers,  
 I threw a grenade!*

*Glory, glory halleluiah,  
 Teacher hit me with a ruler,  
 Poked her in the chin,  
 With a rotten mandarin.  
 And **her** teeth came marching ou-ou-out!*

*Row, row, row your boat,  
 Gently down the stream,  
 Throw your teacher overboard  
 And listen to **her** scream.  
 Ahhhh!*

*Po kare, kare ana,  
 I had a rotten banana,  
 I threw it at the teacher,  
**She** said, "Come here!"  
 I said, "No fear!  
 I'll be back next year,  
 With a bottle of beer!"*

The dominance of references to female teachers may be because they are seen as "easier" targets for such abuse, but may also simply reflect the male/female teacher proportions in our primary schools today. Latest figures from the N.Z. Ministry of Education's 2002 teacher survey reveal that only 13.6% of teachers in primary schools are male. The extreme violence contained within these rhymes would also suggest that while they are serving a purpose of mocking authority, they are not to be taken seriously, although situations in some schools where violent acts against teachers are increasing, may demonstrate otherwise.

### ● **Overcoming Male Dominance**

Girls have developed ways of overcoming male dominance in their rhymes. Rather than expressing overt aggression, the girls in their rhymes discretely undermine the males by a subtle 'turning of the ta-

bles." This can be seen in the changes in a rhyme developing from a popular singing game of the past, beginning "*My boyfriend gave me an apple, my boyfriend gave me a pear.*" In the earlier versions of this rhyme the girl is depicted as being manipulated by male suitors.

*". . . All the boys are waiting,  
For to take me out.  
One will give me an apple,  
One will give me a pear,  
One will give me fifty cents,  
To kiss behind the stair.  
I'd rather wash the dishes,  
I'd rather scrub the floor,  
I don't want an apple,  
I don't want a pear,  
I don't want fifty cents  
To kiss behind the stair.*

(New York, 1926)

The 1975 version contains the lines

*My mother took my necklace,  
My father took my dime,  
My sister took my lover-boy,  
And gave me Frankenstein.  
He made me dust the windows,  
He made me scrub the floor,  
He made me sew his smelly socks,  
So I kicked him out the door.*

(Opie, 1985)

There is a hint of the feisty young girl at the end of this rhyme, but this was only the beginning of the young girls turning the tables on the presumptuous males! The rhymes from the researchers current collection have many more aggressive variations on this theme.

*My boyfriend gave me an apple,  
My boyfriend gave me a pear. . .*

Version 1

*I made him do the washing,  
I made him do the floor,  
I made him clean the baby's bum,  
In 1994!*

Version 2

*I took him to the café,*

*To get some bubblegum,  
But when he wasn't looking,  
I shoved it up his bum,  
I took him back home,  
To tuck him into bed,  
But when he wasn't looking,  
I farted on his head!*

Version 3

*I gave him back his apple,  
I gave him back his pear,  
I gave him back his kiss on the lips,  
And threw him down the stairs.  
I threw him over England,  
I threw him over France,  
I threw him over the Waikato Bridge,  
And he lost his underpants.*

● **Inter-gender Teasing**

Playground teasing between the sexes takes the form of playful banter rather than that of the more serious malicious taunts. Sutton-Smith (1999), makes a distinction between teases and taunts. A taunt is "a malicious verbal expressive activity involving a victim," and a tease is "a verbal expressive activity involving a minimal degree of victimisation, with 'fun' rather than hurt as the motivation" (314).

Rhymes that are slightly provocative and contain teasing elements include;

*Boys, boys are no fun,  
Here comes Susie with a mini skirt on,  
She can wobble, she can wobble,  
She can do the splits  
I bet you five bucks you can't do this.*

(from Apple on a stick)

*Under the apple tree,  
My boyfriend said to me,  
Kiss me, hug me,  
Tell me that you love me.  
Underneath the apple tree,  
My boyfriend said to me,  
GET LOST!*

Another very common form of inter-gender teasing comes as part of one of the most popular clapping rhymes in this researcher's collection. There were a total of 132 individual entries for this rhyme "*Under*

*the Bambushes.*" Of this total, 128 were collected from girls. The rhyme concludes with a rhyming couplet that always follows the same format, but varies in content;

*Boys are spastic,  
Made out of plastic.*

*Boys got to Mars,  
To get fast cars.*

*Girls are sexy,  
Made out of Pepsi.*

*Girls go to Mars,  
To get more bras.*

*Boys are rotten,  
Made out of cotton.*

*Boys go to Jupiter,  
To get more stupider.*

### **The Taboo**

Rhymes dealing directly or indirectly with taboo subjects are a prime source of amusement for children.

Defecation, urination, nudity, the private parts, the sex organs, and the sex act, which, in a civilised society, are kept private, have a fearful fascination for children. (Opie, 1993, 15)

These rhymes are the property of both boys and girls and involve the mocking of adult values and preoccupations. "These rhymes parody adult norms and behaviour, often dealing with taboo subjects through mocking and subversive texts" (Grudgeon, 2001, 99).

#### **● Bodily functions and parts**

One of the key themes related to taboo subjects is the fascination children have with natural bodily functions and parts. An analysis of the researcher's rhymes related to farting or passing wind, shows that boys are involved in the telling of 80% of these rhymes, whereas with the more sexually explicit rhymes the balance is more evenly spread. This matches the findings of other researchers (Lowenstein, 1974; Factor, 2000). The boys are likely to be more open and direct with their telling of the rhymes while the girls may be more subversive (Thorne & Luria, 1986).

While heeding the warning of McMahon and Sutton-Smith (1999, 306), not to read too much into the interpretations of these rhymes, this researcher has noted a comment made by Grugeon (2001. p100) on the relationship between the notion of 'swallowing a snake' and the suggestion of pregnancy. On investigating this link further the researcher found many more examples within the current collection that appeared to substantiate this link.

Grugeon's examples were;

*My boyfriend's name is Tony  
He comes from Macaroni. . .  
I jumped in a lake and swallowed a snake  
And came up with a bellyache.*

(Jessica, Bedford, 1979)

and

*Meet my boyfriend Fairycake  
He gave me a cake and a bellyache.*

(Bedford, 1995)

Further examples located by this researcher not only further extend the pregnancy premise, but also establish a direct link of the penis with a snake.

*My friend Billy, had a ten foot willy.  
He showed it to the lady next door.  
She thought it was a snake,  
And hit it with a rake,  
And now it's only five foot four!*

Alternative

**(I shot it with a sniper  
'Cos I thought it was a viper,  
And now it's only five foot four!)**

Other current versions collected from New Zealand playgrounds that make reference to the snake and the subsequent bellyache include

*Ellie I, Ellie I,  
Chickalie, chickalie,  
Went to California, jumped in a lake,  
Swallowed a snake, and came out with a bellyache.*

and

*My name is Nicholas, Picholas,*

*Don't be ridiculous,  
Why don't you do me a favour,  
Swim in the lake, swallow a snake,  
And then come back with a bellyache.*

and from the rhyme beginning, *My boyfriend's name is Jackie. He comes from Taranaki.* . .

*One day when I went walking,  
I heard my boyfriend talking,  
To the prettiest girl with the strawberry curl,  
And this is what he said ,said, said.  
I L.O. VE. you—love you,  
I K.I.S.S. you—kiss you.  
So I jumped in the lake and swallowed a snake,  
And then came home with a bellyache.*

Perhaps the most commonly chanted rhyme in this section, with a total of 50 individual recordings (47 collected from girls), is this skipping rhyme,

*Cinderella, dressed in yella,  
Went upstairs to kiss her fella,  
By mistake, she kissed a snake,  
And ended up with a bellyache.  
How many doctors will it take? 1,2,3. . .*

When searching back through earlier collections the researcher could find little mention of a snake in this context. In examining the Cinderella rhymes from the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, now stored in Museum Victoria, this researcher noted that of the 110 Cinderella rhymes recorded, only three mentioned a snake and none made reference to a bellyache in connection with the snake. This researcher concluded that the linkage established here is a more recent variation of the skipping rhyme.

Turner recorded this version dated 1962-1973 Melbourne;

*Old King Cole had a forty-foot pole,  
He showed it to the lady next door.  
She thought it was a snake, and hit it with a rake,  
And now it's only two foot four.*

Dorothy Howard, in her 1968 publication, noted the Cinderella version, but according to Lowenstein (1974), she completely missed the sexual point. Although Lowenstein also commented that when she

asked her son about this same rhyme he remarked "If children want to be rude, they aren't subtle, they make it obvious" (3). This comment further reinforces the gender differences between boys and girls in such matters, with the boys being more open in their usage of obscene rhymes.

● **Possession of 'adult' sexual knowledge as a status symbol**

A major preoccupation of children is the acquisition of sexual knowledge, with the culture of childhood allowing them to use the rhymes "to explore dangerous adult themes while remaining children" (Grugeon, 2001, 113). Through these rhymes children can display an assertion of familiarity of a supposedly adult area of experience. The declaration of "knowing" creates a certain status within the peer group.

Jokes about sex and reproduction are also a sort of status symbol, indicating to the less sophisticated that the teller is part of an in-group, and knows all adult secrets. (Lowenstein, 1974, 1)

Some of the rhymes are very explicit and directly stated, while others contain a "hidden transcript" of meaning that the tellers may not even be aware of. The more directly explicit rhymes are often formed from parodies, and the effect on the listener is often one of shock, as what is heard may be totally unexpected. For some the thrill is simply in the use of taboo words and the accompanying "shock" factor. Examples from the researcher's collection include

*Hickory dickory dock,  
The mouse ran up my frock,  
It bit my tit  
And made me spit,  
Hickory dickory dock*

*Roses are red,  
Violets are corny  
When I think of you baby,  
Ohh I get horny.*

*Jack and Jill went to the dairy,  
Jack pulled out his big and hairy.  
Jill said, "Wow what a whopper,  
Lay me down and do me proper.  
Three months later doing well,  
Six months later doing swell,  
Nine months later, snap, crackle, pop.*

*Out came a baby with a six foot cock.  
No, that's not all, no, that's not all,  
Poor little bugger has only one ball!*

*Waltzing Matilda, who bloody killed her?  
Lying in the grass, with a dagger up her arse.  
Along came granny, chopped off her fanny,  
Took her to the movies, chopped off her boobies,  
Took her to bed and chopped off her head,  
And that was then end of Waltzing Matilda.*

*When I die, bury me,  
Hang my nuts (tits) from a cherry tree,  
When they're ripe, take a bite, Don't blame  
me if you fart all night.*

and the recitation from a 12 year old boy

*Jack and Jill, went up the hill,  
Each with a dollar quarter,  
Jill came down with two dollars fifty,  
Dirty hoe!!*

and the directly stated rhyme of a group of 9-12 year old males

*Ashes to ashes,  
Dust to dust,  
If it wasn't for the girls,  
Our balls would rust.*

The overlapping between the categories can be seen here with the following rhymes that are very explicit, but also follow a pattern similar to the life passage scenario, also giving warnings of the consequences of the acts involved.

*1+1 = the fun has just begun in the bedroom,  
2+2 = he's up to my shoe in the bedroom,  
3+3 = he's up to my knee in the bedroom  
4+4 = he's shut the door in the bedroom,  
5+5 = he's fucking me alive in the bedroom,  
6+6 = he's licking my tits in the bedroom,  
7+7 = he's this feels like heaven in the bedroom,  
8+8 = the doctor's at the gate in the bedroom,  
9+9 = the twins are doing fine in the bedroom,*

*10+10= let's do it all again in the bedroom!*

*Running down the road, knocking on the door,  
Fuck, dam, son of a bitch, couldn't find a whore.  
Finally found a whore, she was tall and thin,  
Fuck, dam, son of a bitch, couldn't get it in.  
Finally got it in, wiggled it around,  
Fuck, dam, son of a bitch,  
Couldn't get it out.  
Finally got it out, it was red and sore,  
The moral of the story is,  
Never fuck a whore!*

The childish fascination with the mysteries of the sexual act can be seen in this sequence of rhymes collected from the 1950s to the present time. This researcher compared the confusions of the past,

*A man's occupation is to stick his doodle-ation  
(cock-u-lation)  
Into a women's ventilation,  
To increase the population,  
Of the younger generation,  
Of the world.*

Melbourne, 1973 (Lowenstein), Newcastle  
1951-55 (Turner)

*The bodgie's occupation  
Is to stick his cockulation  
Up a widgie 's ventilation  
To increase the population  
Of the coming generation.*

Melbourne, 1962 (Turner)

with the equally complicated perception of the sexual act of current times;

*Sex is when a guy's communication  
Enters a girl's information,  
To increase the population,  
For a younger generation,  
Do you get the information?  
Or do you need a demonstration?*

*It's a man's occupation,  
To stick his copulation,  
In a woman's ventilation,  
To improve the population,  
Of the younger generation.  
I got this information from the Board of Education,  
If you want a demonstration, lie down!*

The comment from the teller of this rhyme to the collector was, that he had no idea what it really meant but that it sounded rude. This further reinforces the idea that appearance of 'knowledge' is more important than the actuality of knowing.

When considering issues relating to sexual preferences, there were only three rhymes the researcher found related to gay and lesbian lifestyles.

*Georgie Porgie pudding and pie,  
Kissed the girls and made them cry,  
When the boys came out to play, He  
kissed them too, 'cos he was gay.*

*He put in his thumb,  
And pulled out a bum,  
And said, "What a gay boy am I!  
Little Jack Horner,  
Sat in the corner,  
Eating his Christmas pie,*

and the Barney, purple dinosaur parody,

*I love you, you love me,  
Homo-sex-ual-ity  
People think that we're best friends,  
But really we are lesbians!*

These rhymes were all related by children over eleven years of age, and did not appear to be widely recorded. This researcher could not find any such references in collections from the past.

### **Life Passages**

#### **● The Susie Saga**

Sutton-Smith (1959) recognised that much of children's folklore is the property of girls and also that girls acquire a consciousness of future roles earlier than boys do. They often act out these roles in their

skipping and clapping games. An internationally used example of this is the enduring Susie saga. Variants of this rhyme

have been collected in Australia, Britain, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Ireland, Israel, South Africa, Spain and the USA and perhaps elsewhere, in at least five languages: English, Danish, French, Greek and Spanish. (Arleo, 1999, 115)

The Susie rhyme traces the life cycle of a female character from birth, childhood, courtship, marriage, death and the hereafter. The progression through different stages involving various rites of passage is counterbalanced by the mocking laughter and exaggerated actions that accompany each of the levels, undercutting the supposed certainty of life's passage.

The playground texts can be seen as part of an ongoing process of interpretations of different domains of discourse which have consistently shifting boundaries. (Grugeon, 1999, 114)

Arleo (1999) examined both the international traditions of the rhyme and the poetic, musical and kinetic features. Some of the conclusions relevant to this research were the cultural influences on different variants of the text. He noted, for example, that in only one version of the rhyme (Australian) was there any mention of Susie taking up a career: "*When Susie was a teacher, a teacher, a teacher, . . .*" In examining the rhymes from the Museum Victoria collection this researcher located references to a teacher, as well as a typist and a stripper.

The timing of pregnancy was also interesting, in that two English versions had pregnancy preceding marriage, whereas in the American version pregnancy follows marriage. In the Spanish version the rhyme begins at the courtship stage and deals with marital conflict and separation. The death and after-life stages are direct reflections of the particular society's cultural and religious beliefs. The American and Danish versions conclude with the central character as a ghost; whereas, the English and Danish versions explore themes such as heaven, hell and resurrection (Arleo, 1999)

Factor (1988, 175) comments that the Susie game shows "freedom from customary propriety," especially seen in the verse

*When Susie was a teenager, a teenager, a teenager,  
She went 'Ohh ahh I lost my bra,  
Left my knickers in my boyfriend's car!*

One version from the Australian Children's Folklore Collection replaces the reference to '*teenager*' with '*stripper*.' The Opies noted that

this game emerged in the late 1960s from an earlier singing game beginning "When I was a Lady" (1985, 458), with possible connections back to the nineteenth century (Appendix I).

The variations in this researcher's collection are as follows

*When Susie was a baby she went wah, wah wah*  
*When Susie was a toddler she went scribble, scribble,*  
*scribble (**wobbly walk - action**)*  
*When Susie was a schoolgirl she went Miss, Miss I*  
*can't do this (**I want to piss**)*  
*When Susie was a teenager she went "Ohh ahh I left*  
*my bra (**knickers**) in my boyfriend's car!"*  
*When Susie was a mother she went "Rock, rock*  
*around the clock" (**1,2,3,4 chuck the baby out the***  
*door)*  
*When Susie was a grandma she went knit, knit I lost*  
*my stitch! (**smack, smack, smack**)*  
*When Susie was dead she went—silence. (**Whoooo..**)*  
*When Susie was a skeleton she went rattle, rattle.*  
*(**crackle, crackle, creak, creak**)*  
*When Susie was a ghost she went whooo, whoooo.*

Features of note here are that there is no mention of a career for Susie. The traditional pathways of the past are followed; however, the suggested actions at the different stages take on a much more bawdy tone than the original versions. The suggestion of violence comes in with the mother wanting to "chuck the baby out the door" and the grandmother's smacking actions. These lines do not appear in any of the other versions from other countries that the researcher located. Could this be related in anyway to the fact that New Zealand does not have a good record when it comes to child abuse? Alternatively, the fact that such cases have been more openly discussed than ever before may also be an influencing factor.

A less complicated rhyme following a similar sequence, is the common tease when a boy and girl are seen to "like" each other.

*Jack and Jill sitting in a tree,*  
*K.I.S.S.I.N.G*  
*First comes love,*  
*Then comes marriage,*  
*Then comes the baby in the baby carriage.*

With the modern additions of

*That's not all  
Now they're drinking  
ALCOHOL*

or

*That's not all  
Baby's playing basketball!*

or

*That's not all, 1,2,3,  
Jill ends up on the D.P.B. (Domestic Purposes Benefit  
for single parents in New Zealand)*

From these present-day examples it can be seen that children are very astute observers of adult's social and cultural practices, and will readily incorporate these observations in their folklore.

### ● **Divination**

Divination has long been used as a method of predicting life's passages. As far back as 1770s a procedure was described of foretelling a boy's destiny by counting buttons on a waist coat and chanting 'Sowja, sailor, tinker, tailor, gentleman, apothecary, plow-boy, thief...' Opie (1959, 363). Similarly young girls determined the character and station of their future husbands by counting necklace beads. In the 1950s the Opies quote a young schoolgirl

When you have prunes or something with stones in it at dinner, put the stones at the side of your plate and count them. As you are counting you find out what kind of man you are going to marry by saying, "Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief," and whatever name you stop at you will marry. After doing that you find out what you are going to be married in by saying, "Silk, satin, muslin and rags." Then you know what kind of house you are going to live in by saying, "Big house, small house, pigsty and barn." (Opie, 1959,363)

Skipping rhymes of today serve a similar purpose, with the choice of partner, and other decisions depending on the trip of the rope. The formula usually includes A,B,C,D . . . with bystanders supplying the name of the lucky boy.

From there the rhyme follows a pattern,

*A,B,C,D..  
Will you get married? yes/no  
What will you wear? wedding dress. bikini, nothing.  
(bra, undies, wedding gear)*

*What will your boyfriend wear? singlet, undies, tie,  
wedding gear.*  
*Where will you get married? church, beach, toilet.*  
**(house, pig sty, toilet, church)**  
*Where will you go on your honey moon? NZ, Australia,  
USA*  
*Where will you live? house, pig sty, toilet, church.*  
*What will your boyfriend wear? singlet, undies, tie,  
wedding gear*  
*What does he do? tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich  
man, poor man, beggar man thief*  
*Will you have babies? yes/no*  
*How many children will you have? 1,2,3,4...*  
*What will you have? single, twins triplets, quads.*  
*Will you split up? yes/no*

Turner's (1978) collection in *Cinderella Dressed in Yella* (18) contains a lengthy version of this rhyme with many different options given, including colour of the house, number of bottles and nappies and the age you will be when you die. Turner dates this rhyme from the period 1900-1973 in Victoria, Australia. The version above, from the researcher's collection, shows a blend of tradition and modernity, with historic reference to 'tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor' alongside the more modern day reference to marital separation and domestic discord.

### ● **New Zealand Male Culture**

Most of the rhymes discussed in this section so far relate to the life passages for girls and their future roles as wives and mothers. The rhymes that reveal the life passages of boys focus on the macho male culture, especially in New Zealand, in terms of the rugby and beer culture and more recently the experimenting with drugs. The following rhyme was collected from a group of twelve years old boys and reflects the beer drinking culture of adolescence.

*Doh. . . the stuff that buys me beer,  
Ray. . . the bloke that buys me beer,  
Me. . . the guy that drinks me beer,  
Fah. . . a long way to get beer,  
Soh. . . I'll have another beer,  
Lah. . . I'll have another beer,  
Te. . . No thanks, I'm drinking beer,*

*That brings us back to  
Doh, ray, me. . .*

The drug aspect is also incorporated in the following rhymes:

*Po kare kare ana  
I was smoking marijuana,  
I gave it to the teacher,  
She said, "Come here!"  
I said, "No fear!  
I'll be back next year,  
With a bottle of beer,  
To rub in your hair. "*

*Sex, drugs, rock and roll  
Speed, weed, birth control,  
Life's a bitch, then you die,  
Fuck the world,  
Let's all get high!*

*Weed is a plant that grows in the ground,  
If God didn't want it, it wouldn't be around.  
So tell all the people,  
Who don't want to get high,  
To shut the fuck up, and give it a try.*

*Roll, roll, roll your dope,  
Scrunch it at the end,  
Spank it up,  
And have a smoke,  
Then pass it to a friend.*

The rugby culture and trans-Tasman rivalry is also incorporated in rhymes such as

*It's raining, it's pouring, The  
All Blacks are scoring.*

*God of nations,  
In the serum,  
Kick the Aussies in the bum.  
If it hurts, serves them right,  
Blow them up with dynamite!*

Both boys and girls use such rhymes to experience possibilities that the future may hold for them, while maintaining the protection and security of childhood.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusion**

This research has investigated the gender issues within the playground rhymes used by New Zealand school children between 1993 and 2003. Comparisons were made between present day and historical collections of playground rhymes. Through the close examination of collected rhymes the researcher found that various categories and themes emerged. Such trends could be related to current cultural developments, while maintaining elements of the traditional from the original version of the rhyme.

Children, as a relatively powerless group in society, use these rhymes to comment on and experiment with the boundaries of their experiences. The rhymes are often subversive and not always immediately obvious to the casual observer. This research explored many of the hidden transcripts contained within these rhymes and concluded that children use these as an important element in their play lives, as well as a means of empowerment and experimentation with language. Just as gender itself is socially and culturally determined, so are many of the gender issues contained within the playground rhymes examined here.

There is an undeniable necessity for continued scholarship and research in the area of children's folklore. Since the studies of Sutton-Smith in the fifties and sixties there has been little research in New Zealand in children's folklore play. A recent study, looking mainly at dialectal variation in the playground vocabulary of New Zealand children, carried out through the Victoria University of Wellington by Laurie and Winifred Bauer (2002) has resulted in a collection of children's play rhymes. The Christchurch College of Education's, National Diploma of Children's Literature (1994) has also resulted in the development of a comprehensive collection of children's playground rhymes. This collection was utilised for the purpose of this study.

Within New Zealand the area for folklore studies is wide open with so many avenues unexplored in terms of the how and why, with much of the raw data now available and still in the process of being collected. A study of the effects of multi-culturalism on children's folklore would be one possibility. The publication of a scholarly collection of playground rhymes similar to that published by Turner (1969; 1978) is another area of consideration.

It is important that archival collections are maintained. As well as providing valuable insights for the adults that study them, playground rhymes also provide children with a link to the past as well as reflecting the vibrant forces of the present.

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Appendix I: FuJI-text of Rhymes used in Research

Page No.	Rhyme text of most commonly recorded version	Girls	Boys	Both	Total
11	<i>Row, row, row your boat, Gently down the stream, Throw your teacher overboard, And listen to her scream</i>	18	10	16	44
11	<i>Po kare kare ana, I had a squashed banana, I threw it at the teacher, <b>Alternative</b> She said, "Come here!" <b>(It hit her in the eye</b> I said, "No fear, <b>She said, "Wah, wah,</b> I'll be back in a year, <b>I lost my bra,</b> With a bottle of beer, and <b>I don't know</b> <b>where</b> To wash my hair <b>my knickers are!"</b>)</i>	11	5	2	18
11, 32	<i>Girls are weak. chuck 'em in the creek. Boys are strong, like King Kong.</i>  <i>Boys play rugby, to get more ugly, Girls take showers, to get more powers. <b>(Girls go to the gym to get more slim)</b> <b>Boys are spastic, made out of plastic)</b> Girls are sexy, made out of Pepsi Boys are rotten, made out of cotton.</i>	15	0	0	15
13- 14, 40	<i>When Susie was a baby, a baby, a baby When Susie was a baby she went wah, wah wah When Susie was a toddler she went scribble, scribble, scribble (<b>wobbly walk - action</b>) When Susie was a schoolgirl she went Miss, Miss I can't do this (<b>I want to piss</b>) When Susie was a teenager she went "Ohh ahh I left my bra (knickers) in my boy- friend's car" When Susie was a mother she went "Rock. rock around the clock" (<b>1,2,3,4 chuck the</b> <b>baby out the door</b>) When Susie was a grandma she went knit, knit I lost my stitch! (<b>smack, smack, smack</b>) When Susie was dead she went –silence. <b>(Whooooo..)</b> When Susie was a skeleton she went rattle, rattle. (<b>crackle, crackle, creak, creak</b>) When Susie was a ghost she went whooo, whoooo</i>	13	0	2	15
23	<i>My mother, your mother</i>	33	3	3	39

GENDER ISSUES IN THE PLAYGROUND RHYMES

	<p>Lived down the street, 18,19 Marble Street, And every time they had a fight, This is what she told me Girls go to Mars, to get more bras, Boys go to rugby, to get more ugly (<b>and other variations</b>).</p>				
23	<p>I'm sexy, I'm cute, I'm popular to boot. Great looking, great hair, The boys will love to stare Go, go go touros</p>	1	0	0	1
24	<p>Oh my gosh! I think I broke a nail. It's totally for sure. I'm gonna need a manicure. The sun up there, is shining on my gorgeous hair. Hey, you! Go home, I'm talking on my telephone. 23,24, I don't know the stupid score! Go, go, fight, fight, Gee I hope I look all right!</p>	2	0	0	2
24	<p>I must, I must increase my bust,  Cos then, cos then, I will attract men, And get a job, a job, working as a blob, At Jenny Craig, Jenny Craig, So they can all catch my plague, And get fat, get fat! So what do you think of that'</p>	1	0	0	1
24	<p>I'm a Barbie girl, in a Barbie world, Life's fantastic, I'm made out of plastic, I've got rubber hair, purple underwear, I take a shower, every half hour, Come on Barbie, let's go party, Come on Barbie, lets go party, No way, no way!</p>	1	0	0	1
24- 25	<p>Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, Goota re bub, she bub, she bub, I went upstairs to comb my hair, I went back down and the boogie man was there. I went to school and it was pretty cool. I shaved my legs and my face went red. I came back home and my mummy said, " Naughty, naughty girl for shaving your legs. I went upstairs to light the fire, Mv balls got stuck in the electric wire.</p>	4	1	1	6

	<i>I went to the doctor, the doctor said, "I'm sorry Mister, but your balls are dead!" Turn around, turn around, touch the ground, FREEZE!</i>				
25	<i>I'm a little Dutch girl (Girl Guide)dressed in blue These are the things that I must do, Bow to the King, Curtsey to the Queen. Show my undies to the rugby team.</i>	6	0	2	8
25	<i>I'm a little angel, I don't swear, Bugger, bugger, bull shit, I don't care!</i>	2	0	0	2
26	<i>Apple on a stick, makes me sick. Makes my heart beat two forty six, Not because you're dirty, Not because you're clean, Just because you kissed a boy, Behind a magazine, Boys, boys are no fun, Here comes Susie with a mini skirt on, She can wobble, she can wobble, She can do the splits, But I bet you five bucks she can't do this !</i>	8	0	0	8
26	<i>Down in the meadow, Where the green grass grows, There sat little Mary as sweet as a rose, Along came a boy, And kissed her on the cheek. Shame little Mary! Who's your little boyfriend? A.B.C.D...?</i>	1	0	0	1
26	<i>Mummy had a baby, yummy, yummy. Daddy is a dentist, gummy, gummy. My sister is a show off, honey, honey. My brother is a cowboy, bang, bang, boom, boom. Fifty bullets in my head, Turn around, turn around, Touch the ground FREEZE!</i>	1	0	0	1
26	<i>My name is Andy Pandly, sugar and candy Mum's gone crazy, Dad's had a baby! Do me a favour Get lost!</i>	1	0	0	1
27	<i>Here comes the bride... (Many variants of this rhyme)</i>	5	1	5	11
29	<i>Joy to the world, The teacher's dead</i>	6	3	3	12

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	<p><i>We barbequed her head. What happened to her body? We flushed it down the potty. Round and round it goes. Round and round it goes.</i></p>				
29	<p><i>On top of spaghetti, all covered in sand, I shot my poor teacher, with a grey rubber band, I shot her with pleasure, I shot her with pride. I couldn't have missed her. She was 40 foot wide. I went to her funeral, I went to her grave, Some people threw flowers, I threw a grenade. Her coffin went up, her coffin went down. Her coffin went splat, all over the ground. I looked in her coffin, she still wasn't dead. So I got my bazooka, and shot off her head. <b>(Her head went flying, up into the sky, Then the All Blacks kicked it, and scored a great try)</b></i></p>	7	7	7	21
29	<p><i>Glory, glory halleluiah Teacher hit me with a ruler. Poked her in the chin, With a rotten mandarin. And her teeth came marchin" ou-ou-out.</i></p>	1	0	2	3
31	<p><i>My boyfriend gave me an apple, My boyfriend gave me a pear. My boyfriend gave me a kiss on the lips. And threw me down the stairs. I gave him back his apple, I gave him back his pear, I gave him back his kiss on the lips. And threw him down the stairs... (Many variations to the ending)</i></p>	25	0	5	30
31-32	<p><i>Underneath the apple tree. My boyfriend said to me "Kiss me, hug me, tell me that you love me" Underneath the apple tree, My boyfriend said to me, "Get lost!"</i></p>	6	0	2	8
33	<p><i>Billy, had a ten foot willy. He showed it to the lady next door. She thought it was a snake. And hit it with a rake, And now it's only five foot four</i></p>	0	2	0	2
34	<p><i>Ellie I, Ellie I. Chickalie, chickalie,</i></p>	1	0	0	1

	<i>Went to California, jumped in a lake, Swallowed a snake, and came out with a bellyache.</i>				
34	<i>My name is Nicholas, Picholas, Don't be ridiculous, Why don't you do me a favour, Swim in the lake, swallow a snake, And then come back with a bellyache</i>	8	1	1	10
34	<i>Cinderella, dressed in yella, Went upstairs to kiss her fella, Made a mistake, and kissed a mistake, Then came back with a bellyache. How many doctors did it take? 1,2,3,4...? <b>(On the way her panties busted, How many people were disgusted? 1,2,3,4...?)</b></i>	47	3		50
34	<i>My boyfriend's name is Jackie, He comes from Taranaki, With a pimple on his nose, And big long toes, And this is how my story goes, One day when I went walking, I heard my boyfriend talking, To the prettiest girl with the strawberry curl, And this is what he said ,said, said. I L..O.V.E. you -love you, I K..I.S.S. you - kiss you. So I jumped in the lake and swallowed a snake, And then came home with a belyache.</i>	10	0	2	12
35	<i>Hickory, dickory dock... (Many variants of this rhyme)</i>	1	7	2	10
36	<i>Roses are red... (Many variants of this rhyme)</i>	13	16	10	39
36	<i>Jack and Jill... (Many variants of this rhyme)</i>	10	9	7	26
36	<i>Waltzing Matilda, who bloody killed her? Lying in the grass, with a dagger up her arse. Along came granny, chopped off her fanny, Took her to the movies, chopped off her boo- bies, Took her to bed and chopped off her head, And that was then end of Waltzing Matilda.</i>	4	4	8	16
36	<i>Ashes to ashes, Dust to dust, If it wasn't for the girls, Our balls would rust.</i>	0	2	0	2
36	<i>When I die, bury me, Hag! my nuts (tits) from a cherry tree,</i>	1	2	0	3

GENDER ISSUES IN THE PLAYGROUND RHYMES

	<i>When they're ripe, take a bite. Don't blame me if you fart all night.</i>				
37	<i>1+1 the fun has just begun in the bedroom, 2+2 he's up to my shoe in the bedroom, 3+3 he's up to my knee in the bedroom 4+4 he's shut the door in the bedroom, 5 +5 he's fucking me alive in the bedroom, 6+6 he's licking my tits in the bedroom, 7+7 he's this feels like heaven in the bedroom, 8+8 the doctor's at the gate in the bedroom, 9+9 the twins are doing fine in the bedroom, 10+10 let's do it all again in the bedroom</i>	1	0	0	1
37	<i>Running down the road, knocking on the door, Fuck, dam, son of a bitch, couldn't find a whore. Finally found a whore, she was tall and thin, Fuck, dam, son of a bitch, couldn't get it in. Finally got it in, wiggled it around, Fuck, dam, son of a bitch, Couldn't get it out. Finally got it out, it was red and sore, The moral of the story is, Never fuck a whore!</i>	0	1	0	1
38	<i>Georgie Porgie... (Many variants of this rhyme)</i>	6	3	3	12
38	<i>Little Jack Horner... (Many variants of this rhyme)</i>	2	1	1	4
38	<i>I love you, you love me, Homo-sex-ual-ity People think that we're best friends, But really we are lesbians. (Other variants related to Barney the purple dinosaur)</i>	2	1	3	6
41	<i>X and Y sitting in a tree, K.I.S.S.I.N.G. First comes love, Then comes marriage, Then comes the baby in the baby carriage.</i>	28	6	14	48
42	<i>A.B.C.D. (divination) Will you get married? yes/no What will you wear? (Many variations in responses throughout rest of this rhyme) What will your boyfriend wear? Where will you get married? Where will you go on your honeymoon? Where will you live? What will your boyfriend wear?</i>	54	0	12	66

	<p><i>What does he do?</i>  <i>Will you have babies? yes/no</i>  <i>How many children will you have? 1,2,3,4.</i>  <i>What will you have? single, twins triplets, quads.</i>  <i>Willyyou split up? yes/no</i></p>				
43	<p><i>Doh... the stuff that buys me beer,</i>  <i>Ray... the bloke that buys me beer,</i>  <i>Me... the guy that drinks me beer,</i>  <i>Fah... a long way to get beer,</i>  <i>Soh... I'll have another beer,</i>  <i>Lah... I'll have another beer,</i>  <i>Te?... No thanks, I'm drinking beer,</i>  <i>That brings us back to</i>  <i>Doh, ray, me...</i></p>	0	1	0	1
43	<p><i>Po kare, kare, ana,</i>  <i>I was smoking marijuana..</i></p>	0	2	0	2
43	<p><i>Sex, drugs, rock and roll,</i>  <i>Weed, speed, birth control.</i>  <i>Life's a bitch and then you die,</i>  <i>Fuck the world, let's all get high.</i></p>	0	1	0	1
43	<p><i>Roll, roll, roll your dope,</i>  <i>Scrunch it at the end,</i>  <i>Spank it up,</i>  <i>And have a smoke,</i>  <i>And pass it to a friend.</i></p>	0	6	1	7
43	<p><i>Weed is a plant, that grows in the ground,</i>  <i>If God didn't want it, it wouldn't be around.</i>  <i>So tell all the people, who don't want to get high.</i>  <i>To shut the fuck up, and give it a try.</i></p>	0	1	0	1
44	<p><i>It's raining, it's pouring,</i>  <i>The All Blacks are scoring.</i></p>	0	1	0	1
44	<p><i>God of Nations, in the serum,</i>  <i>Kick the Aussies up the bum.</i>  <i>If it hurts, serves them right,</i>  <i>Blow them up with dynamite!</i></p>	0	2	0	2
44	<p><i>Fitz, Mers, Cullen, Bull,</i>    <i>If you support the Aussies,</i>  <i>You're a bloody fool!</i></p>	0	1	0	1
		356	103	114	573

## APPENDIX 2

### 1. WHEN I WAS A LADY

*When I was a lady,  
A lady, a lady—  
When I was a lady,  
Oh! then, oh! then, oh! then,  
It was hey oh! this way,  
This way, this way;  
It was hey oh! this way,  
Oh! then, oh! then, oh! then.*

*When I got married,  
Got married, got married—[etc.]*

*When I got a baby,  
A baby, a baby—[etc.]*

*When my baby cried,  
Cried, cried—[etc.]  
When my baby died,  
Died, died—[etc.]*

*When I had a bustle,  
A bustle, a bustle—[etc.]*

*When my bustle fell,  
Fell, fell—[etc.]*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following for their assistance with the completion of this study:

Sue Clancy of Charles Sturt University whose guidance was invaluable in focussing me on the requirements of this study.

John McKenzie, Director of the Children's Literature Centre at the Christchurch College of Education, whose foresight in the establishment of the National Diploma in Children's Literature introduced me to the fascinating world of children's folklore. His permission was also granted, on behalf of the Christchurch College of Education, to use the vital resource of the New Zealand Children's Folklore Collection, so essential to this study.

Moya McFadzean, from Museum Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, for providing me with rhymes from the Australian Children's Folklore Collection.

Dr. Derek Syme (Ashburton College) and my colleagues at Ashburton College and especially to my family for providing the support and encouragement all the way along this journey.