Girls will be boys, and boys will be girls:
An analysis of gender bias and stereotyping in a sample of New Zealand picture books.

by

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Abstract

Research Problem

This research project explores whether a sample of award nominated New Zealand picture books contain evidence of gender bias and stereotyping. As award nominated titles receive a greater level of public exposure, it is more likely they will be found in kindergartens, schools, and personal collections. Therefore it is more likely they will be read by educators, librarians, and young children. The sample included 54 titles nominated for the New Zealand Post Book Awards (best picture book prize) over the last ten years (2004-2014).

Methodology

This study developed a quantitative content analysis tool in order to assess the books. The content analysis quantified the number of times males and females were featured, and the number of times they were depicted participating in a range of stereotypical behaviours (active/passive character types, time spent indoors/outdoors, brave and nurturing actions). This study also explored the number of male and female characters that were depicted in paid employment, and the types of jobs they were assigned.

Results and Implications

The results demonstrated a likeness to trends seen in several overseas studies, and in general the female characters were vastly under-represented throughout the sample pool. However, some clear differences could be noted in the type and number of gender stereotypes seen throughout the books compared to those other studies. In particular, the sample demonstrated a prominent environmental theme, and had a strong focus on individuality and self-empowerment. As this study demonstrates, gender bias and stereotyping is evident in New Zealand children's literature and may consequently be having a negative effect on the gender development of young New Zealanders. It is the researcher's hope that this study raises awareness of gender bias and stereotyping that is found in many modern picture books, and that educators and librarians will feel equipped to recognise, discuss, and eliminate them in the future.

Contents

1. Introduction

In recent years, more than ever, people are asking questions about masculinity and femininity: What does it mean to 'be' and 'act' like a man or a woman (Cain, 2013; Brown, 2013)? Should everyone be encouraged to express themselves in their own, unique way, regardless of whether they are perceived as 'masculine' or 'feminine' by the rest of society? How should a woman/man behave and what should she/he do for a living? Traditionally, masculine and feminine attributes were very clearly assigned to one or the other sex. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "feminine" as "having qualities or an appearance traditionally associated with women" (Oxford Dictionary, 2015) and lists synonyms for the word that include terms like soft, delicate, gentle, tender, refined, modest, girlish, ladylike (Oxford Dictionary, 2015). Masculine is defined as "having qualities or an appearance traditionally associated with men" (Oxford Dictionary, 2015) and the synonym list includes muscular, strong, strapping, powerful, rugged, virile, male-orientated (Oxford Dictionary, 2015). Nowadays, these definitions are not as clear cut. The lines between 'male' and 'female' are blurred and this is reflected in the diverse ways men and women are being portrayed in the texts we watch, interact with, and listen to (Holmlund, 2001; England, Descartes, & Collier-Meek, 2011). In many modern publications it is not uncommon to find a mixture of wild, strong, and boisterous heroines, reserved, delicate, and gentle male protagonists, and a wide array of colourful characters that reflect the diversity of human expression (Rakestraw, 2013).

The topic of gender bias and gender stereotyping in children's picture books has been widely explored and discussed internationally. Much of the research has found a clear discrepancy in the number of times females were depicted in picture storybooks compared to male characters, and the types of stereotypical tasks and activities girls and boys are assigned (Heintz, 1987; MacArthur & Poulin, 2011; Peterson & Lach, 1990). Picture books are among the first media used to socialise very young children in New Zealand. They depict stories through a blend of art and text, and are usually written for an audience of around 2-6 years (Narahara, 1998). Picture books are read to young children by their family members and by educators during mat times in classrooms, libraries, and kindergartens. There is a wealth of research that describes the importance of picture books on a child's development and what they communicate about the types of behaviours that are expected of boys and girls (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, & Ross, 1972; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993). Between the ages of 3-5 years, most children will be able to identify their gender identity and the gender

of the people around them, using 'he' or 'she' fairly accurately (Chatton, 2001; Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006). Predominately, young children discern whether a person is male or female by their outward "appearance and behavioural traits" (Chatton, 2001), such as 'boys enjoy rough play' or 'girls wear purple and pink'. They learn these stereotypes from today's myriad of media (including toys, books, DVDs, games and commercials), and the adults they spend time with in their early years of life (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). When discussing gender with young children, studies suggest it is important to take into account that there is more to gender than just 'male' or 'female', and to acknowledge that gender is diverse, meaning **"**that many peoples' preferences and self-expression fall outside of commonly understood gender norms" (Gender Spectrum, 2014). Many international picture book authors and illustrators have taken steps to abolish the gender bias and stereotyping that was frequently evident in publications of the past (Fox, 1993; Rakestraw, 2013). In the article "Men who weep, Boys who dance" (1993), Mem Fox argues that educators and writers have the "power to change 'gender-appropriate' behaviour and attitudes" (p. 85) by providing stories and lessons that tell tales of diverse personal expression, regardless of the child's biological sex. However, this is not always the case, and instances of gender bias and stereotyping are frequently discovered in modern children's publications (Emmett, 2014; Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006; Flood, 2014).

2. Problem Statement

This research study analysed whether or not there is evidence of gender bias and gender stereotyping in some of the most popular and highly regarded New Zealand picture books of the last ten years. One of the most prominent awards for New Zealand children's authors is the annual New Zealand Post Book Awards (NZPBA) competition, and many established authors and illustrators vie for the "best New Zealand picture book" prize. As a pre-requisite to receiving a nomination, the authors must demonstrate that their book is "widely available to New Zealanders, either on sale in bookstores throughout New Zealand, or available online from two or more leading online retailers" (New Zealand Post Book Awards, 2013). Each year, five picture books receive nominations for the award, and those chosen receive high levels of publicity throughout the competition and the years following. Children's books that have been awarded or nominated for prominent prizes often experience an increase in sales within the first year of receiving the award, as well as increased publicity for the book and the author, especially those new to the publishing world (McDowell, 2013). For example, in 2014, copies of the nominees for the New Zealand Post Book Awards best picture book prize were presented to the infant Prince George during his inaugural tour of Australia and

New Zealand (Stuff.co.nz, 2014), and were described as the "cream of New Zealand children's authors" (New Zealand Post Book Awards, 2014). It is likely that this increased publicity will encourage more families and organisations (both nationally and internationally) to purchase copies for their young children, leading to increased sales and distribution around the country. As the books are also widely available either through shops or online, they will be easy to locate and purchase for the average New Zealand family, library, or kindergarten.

Taking their status as nominated titles to be an indicator of a reasonable level of public exposure, this study is interested in the rates of gender representation in these books and whether the messages being conveyed about gender are positive, or whether they re-enforce gender biases and the conventional notions of the roles of girls and boys. As these messages will vary from culture to culture, and reflect the values of the community in which the book was created (Weitzman et al., 1972), New Zealand has the potential to lend a unique perspective to the international body of research. While this study provides a quantitative analysis of a sample of New Zealand publications, it does so with the understanding that the experience of reading the selected works will inevitably differ from child to child. It is important to acknowledge that each reader is unique and that their personal interpretation may differ from how this project analyses the selected works. It is the researcher's hope that this study raises awareness of gender messages that can permeate children's books, and that this research will help to better prepare parents, teachers, and librarians to identify and discuss any instances of gender bias in the future.

3. Literature review
3.1 Male and Female Representation:

In her work *American Children's Literature and the Construction of Childhood* (1998), Gail S Murray explores social constructionism in popular children's picture books, and the impact it has on young children. Murray argues that the picture book can not only act as a reflection of contemporary children, but can also explore realistic situations and problems that modern children face. Therefore, picture books and the messages they contain have the potential to play a significant role in a child's mental and physiological development: (Narahara, 1998; Tsao, 2008):

> "Picture books offer young children a macrocosmic resource through
> which they can discover worlds beyond their own life-space. The
> young child's sense of personal and gender significance is changed,
> influenced and connected to this world community through books

written for them by adults."

<div align="right">(Peterson & Lach, 1990, p. 180)</div>

Many researchers have delved deeper into understanding what messages contemporary children's picture books communicate about gender to the young children that read them. One of the first studies to broach the subject was the 1972 article *Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children* by Lenore J. Weitzman, Deborah Eifler, Elizabeth Hokada and Catherine Ross (1972). This study, which has been widely referenced, explored the importance of picture books in what the research describes as the 'cultural socialization' of young minds:

> "Children's books reflect cultural values and are an important instrument for persuading children to accept those values. They also contain role prescriptions which encourage the child to conform to acceptable standards of behaviour."

<div align="right">(Weitzman, et al., p. 8)</div>

Weitzman et al. (1972) conducted a qualitative content analysis study on a sample of award winning picture books. They analysed the words, story, and pictures for the representation rates of males and females, and considered whether or not the books contained any examples of traditional gender stereotyping. The sample of picture books they selected was made up of the recipients of the Caldecott medal, a prominent award ceremony based in the United States that began in 1937. The findings indicated that females were vastly under-represented and were often present only as background characters with no substantial influence on the storyline (Weitzman et al., 1972). One of the conclusions that the study came to was "….children scanning the list of titles [that] have been designated as the very best children's books are bound to receive the impression that girls are not very important because no one has bothered to write books about them" (p. 1129).

Following Weitzman et al's. landmark publication, other researchers began to explore whether or not the numbers remained the same in the years that followed. In 1976, Stephanie La Dow designed a quantitative content analysis tool that recorded the frequency of male and female representation in 125 randomly selected children's picture books. The study analysed the "authors, illustrators, titles, main characters, illustrations, roles and activities of children and activities of adults" (La Dow, 1976, p. 9) for evidence of gender bias and stereotyping. La Dow found that "… females [were] vastly under represented and both males and females [were] limited to stereotypic roles" (p. 12) within the story. In 2001, 25 years after La Dow's study was published, Gooden and Gooden replicated the content

analysis to determine whether the rates and depictions of female characters had altered. The study analysed a sample of 80 picture books that were recommended by the American Library Association (ALA) on their Notable Children's picture book list. The sample pool was selected because it meant that their research assessed some of the most widely read and widely available picture books in the country (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). Each page was analysed for the number of male and female characters, gendered animal characters, and pages where girls and boys are described within the story. Gooden and Gooden also counted the number of "gender neutral" characters in their sample as some authors decided not to gender their characters so that the child may interpret the gender of the character independently (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). In these cases the author would refrain from using gendered pronouns, and illustrators would avoid drawing characters with any clothing or accessories that would indicate gender. Gooden and Gooden compared their findings to La Dow's to observe any difference in the ratios and found that although the "prevalence of gender stereotypes decreased slightly … the stereotyped images of females [were] still significant in Notable Children's Picture Books" (Gooden & Gooden, 2001, p. 96).

In 2011, Luyt, Sheh Lee and Ng conducted a study that explored gender bias in a sample of Singaporean picture books, published over a 30 year period. The researchers designed a comprehensive content analysis study that quantified the number of times males and females were represented in the words, pictures, titles, illustrations and story (see Table 1). When analysing the results of their work, they observed a clear bias in the ratio of male to female characters that spanned over the 30 year period, even in modern texts and illustrations (Luyt et al., 2011). Luyt et al's. study is a recent advancement in the subject and demonstrates that gender bias continues to be prevalent in contemporary picture books around the world, perhaps at a higher rate than is expected in today's modern world (Flood, 2014; Guest, 2014). As of 2015, there is very little recent research that explores the subject within a New Zealand context.

Category	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2008	1970-2008
Illustrations with males only	140	87	110	108	445
Illustrations with females only	22	39	33	37	139
Ratio (males to females)	6.4 : 1	2.2 : 1	3.33 : 1	2.9 : 1	3.2 : 1
Chi-square	84.5	17.54	40.4	33.8	
Significance	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	

Table 1: "Ratio of males only to female only illustrations" (Luyt, Sheh Lee, & Ng, 2011, p. 55)

3.2 Gender Stereotypes: Active and Passive

Male and female characters are portrayed very differently in stories that contain evidence of traditional gender stereotypes:

> "In children's literature, males typically are portrayed as competent and achievement oriented, while the image of females is that they are limited in what they do, and less competent in their ability to accomplish things. Female characters are involved in few of the activities and assigned few of the characteristics or goals that are accorded prestige and esteem in our society (Frasher & Walker, 1972), even though such goals and activities are pursued and achieved daily by a majority of women in the business and professional world".
>
> (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993, pp. 220-221)

Jackson and Gee (2006) published a qualitative content analysis study that echoed Kortenhaus and Demarest's above observations. Jackson and Gee's research analysed the *Janet and John* school reader books which were read by children when they began school in the 1950s and 1960s. The books contained simple and minimalist storylines that helped build vocabulary and word recognition (Jackson & Gee, 2006). Jackson and Gee analysed the story and illustrations for a range of descriptors, including details such as the posture (gesture and stance) of the men and women, the activities for children and adults, clothing and hair, the emotions the characters displayed, and the prominence of the different genders

within the story. The female characters were primarily given background roles and did little more than provide simple additions to the story such as offering directions, reading quietly, or passing information between two characters (Heintz, 1987; Jackson & Gee, 2006). Paynter (2011) discusses the concept of "active" and "passive" character types, and drew from the work of Kellner and Share (2005) to provide a definition for each of these descriptors:

> **"Active**: Characterized by energetic action or activity, gives rather than takes advice, helps rather than being helped, leading not following, deciding not deferring, doing not waiting;
> **Passive**: not participating, or acting, compliant, dependency, submission"
>
> (Paynter, 2011, p. 106)

In some cases, characters can take on aspects of both types, or their type may change as the story progresses (Hamilton et al., 2006; Paynter, 2011). It is also possible that a character may be neutral, and demonstrate neither active nor passive qualities if their character does not make any significant contributions to the plot or story (e.g. a narrated story).

Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus and Young's 2006 study analysed 30 Caldecott award winning picture books, and 200 other bestselling books in the country for evidence of gender stereotyping and gender rates of representation. Hamilton et al. designed a comprehensive coding sheet that had a checklist of 110 descriptors designed to analyse the books for gender representation rates, and evidence of a range of gender stereotypes (Hamilton et al., 2006). The coding sheet was recognised for its validity and reliability during peer review and revision by a panel of professors and graduate students (Paynter, 2011). Due to the success of the research, Hamilton et al's work was replicated 5 years later by Paynter (2011). The coding sheet that was used for Paynter's study was a reduced version of Hamilton et al's (2006) work as some descriptors were irrelevant to the research objective. Hamiton et al. and Paynter both observed in their results that in relation to the number of male and female characters, both genders were represented fairly equally as active and passive characters types. The studies found that the active characters in the story were more likely to ask and answer questions, make decisions, be assertive and propel the storyline forward (Hamilton et al., 2006). In general, the study found that the rates of gender representation had improved, and there was less stereotyping in general compared to the earlier studies within the subject field (Hamilton et al. 2006).

3.3 Gender Stereotypes: Indoors and Outdoors

A common trend, identified in many of the studies, was the frequency in which women were observed 'in the home' undertaking traditionally feminine pursuits including flower-pressing, baking, or taking care of children (Jackson & Gee, 2006; Heintz, 1987; Tepper & Cassidy, 1999). In traditional stories such as the *Janet and John* books there appears to be a greater number of 'mother' characters whose primary function involves looking after the family unit (Jackson & Gee, 2006). Comparatively, young boys were more often depicted as adventurous and engaged in a number of outdoor activities like climbing trees, fishing, or playing sports (Jackson & Gee, 2006). They were boisterous, social, busy, and rarely engaged in quiet play or solitary indoor activities (Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006). While the boys in traditional books go out on adventures and explore their surroundings, girls were more often portrayed as engaged in indoors activities like writing or painting (Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006).

3.4 Gender Stereotypes: Brave boys, nurturing girls

In many traditional picture books, boys were seen to "save the day" by acting bravely and assertively, while girls were depicted as fearful or standing to the side of the action (Jackson & Gee, 2006; Heintz, 1987; Tepper & Cassidy, 1999). Heintz's (1987) study of the Caldecott medal winners in the 1970s and 1980s found that while some female characters were depicted undertaking adventurous or risky play, it was not as frequently as their male character counterparts (Heintz, 1987). The aforementioned study also found that in every single picture from their sample, young girls were portrayed wearing a dress, regardless of whether it was realistic attire for the type of vigorous play they were engaged in (Heintz, 1987). Incidentally, boys seem to be as rigidly stereotyped as girls, often depicted participating in rough play, while very few male characters were seen helping indoors, colouring, or playing alone quietly. Zankel (2007) argues that while these stereotypes do paint a positive image of boys in general as brave and heroic, it is very misleading for young children to believe that all boys enjoy energetic and riotous play.

The Oxford Dictionary defines nurturing as to "care for and protect (someone or something) while they are growing" (Oxford Dictionary, 2015), and the synonyms listed for the term include cultivate, care, fostering, nourish, nurse, further. These behaviours may be demonstrated toward people or things (like toys or plants) (Narahara, 1998; Heintz, 1987). In traditional gender stereotyping, female characters were far more likely to demonstrate nurturing behaviours than male characters. Weitzman et al. (1972) noted that of the few female characters that did not conform to stereotypic gender attributes (such as being comforting or being kind) were considered Tomboys and rarely given defined and

comprehensive roles within the books. The central female characters that did make pivotal contributions to the storyline were mostly in nurturing roles and spent a large portion of their time looking after others and rescuing other characters (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, & Ross, 1972; Jackson & Gee, 2006). In 2005, Anderson and Hamilton selected a sample of 200 award-winning and best-selling picture books (1995-2001) to assess the types of roles given to Father figures. They found that Mothers were 50 % more likely to be present in the stories than Fathers, and were also twice as likely to be pictured nursing children compared to the adult male characters (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005). In comparison, boys were significantly more boisterous and aggressive than their female counterparts. They were also found to be less likely to display emotions or show fear (Tepper & Cassidy, 1999; Tsao, 2008).

3.5 Workforce and Occupation

Weitzman et al.'s found that none of the adult woman depicted in the books they analysed appeared to have an occupation outside of the home (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, & Ross, 1972). Jackson and Gee's study also comments on the disproportionate ratio of working male characters to working female characters, and liken the illustrations in the *Janet and John* series to depictions of "white, middle class, heterosexual perceptions of the world" (Jackson & Gee, 2006) where the main breadwinners of the household were male. A 2006 research study conducted by Hamilton et al. also highlighted the significant gender differences in the American picture books they analysed. They observed a significant imbalance in the ratio of working male to working female characters, but also that "more woman then men appeared to have no paid occupation" (Hamilton et al., 2006, p. 757).

Heintz (1987) discovered that men were three times more likely to have a paid occupation than women which was a dramatic decrease since the Weitzman et al. (1972) study, but still displayed a clear bias. Gooden and Gooden also observed that men were twice as likely to be in paid occupation than women, and men were hardly ever depicted completing household chores or looking after children (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). Women were depicted in some non-traditional occupations such as chefs and politicians, but were mostly depicted in traditional activities like cooking, cleaning and minding children (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). A number of studies noted that while men had a wide range of paid jobs and occupations, only a small handful of female characters were pictured in non-traditional capacities (Heintz, 1987; Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006; Gooden & Gooden, 2001).

3.6 Literature Review Conclusion

The breadth of research and the number of studies conducted to explore this topic are a

testament to its multi-dimensional nature. While it is true that a large body of the published research in this area discusses the imbalance seen in the ratio of male to female representations in picture books, the subject is continually being broadened to account for the nuance at play in gender representation. Rather than confining themselves to a focus on female characters, researchers have expanded their attention to include critiques of a wider range of gender issues. For example, Zankel (2007) discussed the lack of representation of boys in non-traditional gender roles, Jernigan (2003) explored the gender roles of grandparents in multicultural picture books, and Tepper and Cassidy (1999) analysed the emotive language used by male and female characters in a given sample of picture books. Research has also expanded into genres of children's literature outside picture books with some researchers choosing to focus on text books, school readers, and comic strips, to name just a few (Zittleman & Sadker, 2002; Bazier & Simonis, 1991).

In traditional stories, the literature indicates that the male characters are assigned active, boisterous, risk-taking roles that have adventures, drive the story, make difficult decisions, and save the day. In comparison, female characters were often depicted as passive, background characters who primarily reside in the home and participate in tasks that are seen to be nurturing, kind and gentle. In traditional stories, men were the breadwinners of the family and were seen in paid occupation far more frequently than their female counterparts. Men were more often employed in jobs that required high levels of physical strength and responsibility. While there is some research on gender in children's books that has a New Zealand focus, in general there is not very much recent literature that explores popular New Zealand children's texts for gender bias or stereotyping.

4. Research Design

4.1 Research objective

This research project sought to discover whether or not there is evidence of a difference in the number of times males and females are depicted in a selection of award-nominated New Zealand Picture books. The study also explores whether the roles, tasks, and occupations the characters undertake conform to traditional gender stereotypes seen in publications of the past (Weitzman et al., 1972; Jackson & Gee, 2006; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993). In addition, it will focus on the portrayal of men and women in paid occupation, and ascertain whether they are depicted as participating in a range of paid employment.

4.2 Research questions

1*.* Do the number of male characters and illustrations exceed the number of female characters and illustrations in the analysed picture books?

2. Is there a correlation between the characters' gender and the roles, tasks, occupations, and activities they perform?

3. Do the picture books have an equal portrayal of men and women in a range of paid employment?

4.3 Hypotheses

H01A: The number of adult female characters is equal to the number of adult male characters.

H01B: The number of child female characters is equal to the number of child male characters.

H01C: The number of female main characters is equal to the number of male main characters.

H01D: The number of illustrations of females is equal to the number of illustrations of males.

H01E: The number of titular male characters is equal to the number of titular female characters.

H02A: Female characters are as likely to be pictured indoors and outdoors as male characters.

H02B: Female characters are as likely to be active or passive character types as male characters.

H02C: Female characters are as likely to portray nurturing behaviours as male characters.

H02D: Female characters are as likely to behave bravely as male characters.

H03A: Adult female characters are as likely to be in paid employment as male characters.

H03B: Adult male characters are as likely to have a wide range of occupations as female characters.

4.4 Method

This research project was a quantitative study that utilized a content analysis tool to gather the data and undertake a close reading of each of the books in the sample. Quantitative research "involves looking at amounts, or quantities, of one or more variables of interest… [and] measures variables in some numerical way" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012, p. 97). In order to

measure the variables of interest in this sample pool, a content analysis coding sheet was designed to analyse each book (see Appendix 1). Leedy and Ormrod define content analysis as "…a detailed and systematic examination of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes or biases" (2012, p. 150). The coding sheet designed for this study was based on those created by Hamilton et al. (2006) and Luyt et al. (2011) who carried out similar studies within this subject area. The content analysis tool used for this study was three pages long and required the reader to record to count, record, and comment on happenings within the story. Each picture book was read twice and on the first read-through no notes were taken. This was to ensure the researcher gained a solid understanding of the book before an assessment was carried out. During the second read through the researcher began to complete the coding sheet. A third read-through was then completed if there was a need to. The frequencies were recorded by circling yes/no, choosing between categories, keeping a tally of numbers, or recording specific details such as the types of jobs assigned to men and women. Each book took approximately 10-15 minutes to assess.

There was also a small space at the end of each section to record notes or circumstances within the story that may have affected the reader's interpretation of the book. While quantitative research creates a clear statistical picture of the overall data, it lacks the in-depth discussion and insight into why the data is presents as it does (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012). Leedy and Ormrod discuss how quantitative methods can sometimes present a biased or limited view of texts that can be interpreted in more than one way, such as works of art, literature, and film and television (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012). In this study this was also found to be the case, and in many instances the picture books required a more open-minded approach in their assessment. For example in one story, a male character made several daring choices and performed frightening tasks, but prior to these also consistently pushed a companion character into the dangerous situations before him. This demonstrates a more multi-dimensional child character who may not have been as brave as his words and actions suggest on first glance. When approaching examples such as this, Leedy and Ormrod suggest a qualitative approach as it can better identify themes, trends, and any extenuating circumstances that may not be immediately obvious when viewing the raw data. Qualitative discussion "can provide a rich and deep understanding of complex phenomena" (O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014), and so as the books were read the researcher recorded extensive notes, grouped themes into categorical headings, and colour coded the books to link those with similar trends together.

4.5 Research Population

The selected sample for this research project was the 2004-2014 NZPBA nominees for the Best New Zealand Picture Book Award prize. The NZPBA have been operating for over 20 years and are held annually to "recognise excellence in children and teens literature" (Booksellers, 2014). There were 56 nominations during this period, however two picture books from the sample pool were not included in the analysis for the following reasons:

1. **Shaolin Burning** / *Ant Sang* (nominated in 2012, awarded the Honour Award)
This nomination is a graphic novel for older children, and the length and complexity of the story line would not be easily compared with the remainder of the sample pool.

2. **The Word Witch** / *Margaret Mahy* (nominated in 2010)
This publication is an anthology of poetry that is much longer than the other publications, and contains a significant number of poems that could not all be analysed individually and may also create a spike in the data if all were accounted for.

This brings the total sample size to 54 picture books (See Appendix 2 for a full list of titles) that were included in the content analysis. The sample size contained a smaller number of titles compared to many overseas studies. This was because this research study was undertaken by an individual researcher for a final requirement in the Master of Information Studies (Victoria University, NZ), and was therefore subject to greater time and resource constraints.

4.6 Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions: This study proceeded based on the following assumptions: (1) The researcher examined each book thoroughly with strict adherence to the proposed coding schema (2) Quantitative close analysis is an effective method for identifying gender bias and stereotyping in picture books (3) Qualitative discussion is an effective method for highlighting instances of gender bias and stereotyping in picture books (4) Picture books are able to convey and communicate messages about gender and gender identity (5) Award nominated titles are more likely to receive greater public exposure and are more likely to be purchased for libraries, schools, and personal collections. (6) The dichotomies of gender stereotyping identified in the literature review (such as active/passive character types, nurturing/brave behaviours, time spent indoors/outdoors) can be identified and quantified.
Limitations: (1) This study examined 54 books nominated for the New Zealand Post

Children's Book Awards – best picture book prize between the years of 2004 and 2014. No other picture books or children's books were assessed. The books studied are limited in their representation of overall trends in picture book publishing as they are a small sample of New Zealand picture books. (2) Two nominated titles could not be assessed due to the reasons stated in the "Research population" section. (3) As the sample size was smaller than many similar overseas studies, certain tests to determine statistical significance could not be completed.

5. Data Analysis
5.1 Microsoft Office Excel 2014

Microsoft Office Excel 2014 was the primary tool used to analyse the data and gain an overall understanding of how the numbers presented. A comprehensive data sheet was created into which was entered all of the information, frequency counts, notes, and descriptive metadata (e.g. title, author, year of publication) that was recorded for each of the titles. A colour coding system was also developed to link those with similar trends together, and it was possible for the books to have more than one colour tab assigned to it. Once all 54 books had been entered into the sheet the counts were grouped by year, and five yearly intervals to see if any key themes could be noted. The researcher was then able to use Microsoft Excel 2014 to generate graphs and tables that would organise and collate the data into a meaningful formats. As the results were being formulated, the researcher was then able to revisit the books to collect specific examples that would elucidate the numerical findings.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics provide a means to organise and collate quantitative data into an easily analysed format, and are used to describe the main features of a collection of data:

> "Descriptive statistics summarize the general nature of the data
> obtained – for instance, how measured characteristics appear to be
> "on average", how much variability exists among the data… The
> ultimate question in research is, What does the data
> indicate?...Statistics give us *information* about the data, but a
> conscientious researcher is not satisfied until the meaning of this
> information is revealed."
>
> (Author's emphasis, Leedy & Ormrod, 2012, p. 10)

Descriptive statistics indicate general trends in the data and in many cases provide a useful summary of the different types of information within a sample pool (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012).

They can be presented in a quantitative format (e.g. statistics, statistical tables), or a visual format (e.g. graphs or tables), depending on the type of information that is being analysed and the intended audience (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012). This research project presents the collected data in a series of graphs and charts to illustrate, compare, and describe the basic characteristics of the data. These numerical trends were then used to form the basis of qualitative discussion. Key examples were taken from the texts to support the themes identified during the content analysis. The use of descriptive statistics was particularly helpful in aiding the researcher to identify significant changes or points of difference throughout the ten year period. A range of descriptive statistic presentation options were used to display the findings, including frequency tables, cross tabulation, and a range of graphs.

5.3 Statistical Testing

To assess the data collected in this study, the researcher approached the student statistical advisor at the University of Victoria (Wellington, New Zealand) to obtain advice on the types of tests that should be performed on the data to ensure accuracy. It was advised that a chi-square test should be performed on some of the totals to assess the if the differences are significant. The chi-square goodness of fit test is used to "measure the actual number of observations against the expected number of observations within the group" (Paynter, 2011, p. 87). For example, a null hypotheses for this study may assume that the numbers of male characters, female characters, and gender neutral characters in the sample were all equal. A chi-square goodness of fit test would then test whether this is true, or whether the null hypotheses can be rejected as the number of one gendered character exceeds another by a significant amount. A chi-square probability result of less than or equal to 0.05 means that the null hypotheses can be rejected; the closer to 0 the number is, the more significant the difference. Chi-square tests are used with mutually exclusive data (i.e male and female) (Paynter, 2011), however, things can be measured in an "infinite number of ways" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012, p. 87). For example 'female' and 'male' could be further limited to just measure the frequency of 'female adults' or 'male children'. However, in order to use chi-square testing, the counts in the group of data being assessed must be greater than five (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012).

In order to demonstrate and experiment with chi-square testing, the researcher conducted two chi-square goodness of fit tests. These tests were undertaken to demonstrate chi-square testing and for exploratory reasons, not to prove or disprove any of the research project's hypotheses. The total number of female, male and gender neutral characters (both adults and children) were amalgamated for each respective gender group, as depicted in Chart 1.

To determine whether there is an equal proportion of each gender type in the picture books, two chi-square tests on a one-way table of counts were conducted:

- A chi-square test was performed to examine if there is a difference in the proportion of male characters to female characters within the picture books. The results show that there is strong evidence that the proportions of the number of male and female characters are not equal (X_2 (1, N = 187) = 8.9893, p <**0.01**). There were 114 males in the picture books and 73 females, therefore the result seems to be disproportionate (see Chart 1).

- A chi-square test was performed to examine if there is a difference in the proportion of male, female, and gender neutral characters within the picture books. The results show that there is strong evidence that the proportions of the number of male, female, and gender neutral characters are not equal (X_2 (1, N = 229) = 8.9893, p <**0.01**.). There were 114 male characters, 73 female characters and 42 gender neutral characters (see chart 1). There appears to be a greater number of male characters compared to gender neutral characters. Female characters are approximately as expected.

With little prior experience dealing with statistical data, the researcher approached a postgraduate student advisor for assistance on the remainder of the chi-square tests. The advisor recommended the software SPSS (version 22) to carry out statistical testing. The data was inputted into the programme which created a comprehensive documentation of all of the findings. The data was then examined to see whether chi-square testing was possible and found that in most cases the chi-square test could not be performed. Many of the counts in each cell were less than 5 (the minimum frequency for a chi-square test to be performed). The statistical advisor suggested combining the data by yearly or 5 yearly intervals to combat this problem, however there were still some cell counts that did not exceed five as the sample size was too small to get a larger count. By combining the totals by five year intervals, it was also found that the data was diluted and did not present an accurate spread of the changes that occurred over the ten year period. As a result the chi-square tests were not carried out to prove or disprove the hypotheses. For future research studies in this subject area that elect a larger sample pool, chi-square tests should be used to determine if there are any significant statistical differences between the categories.

Chart 1

Number of characters vs. gender of characters
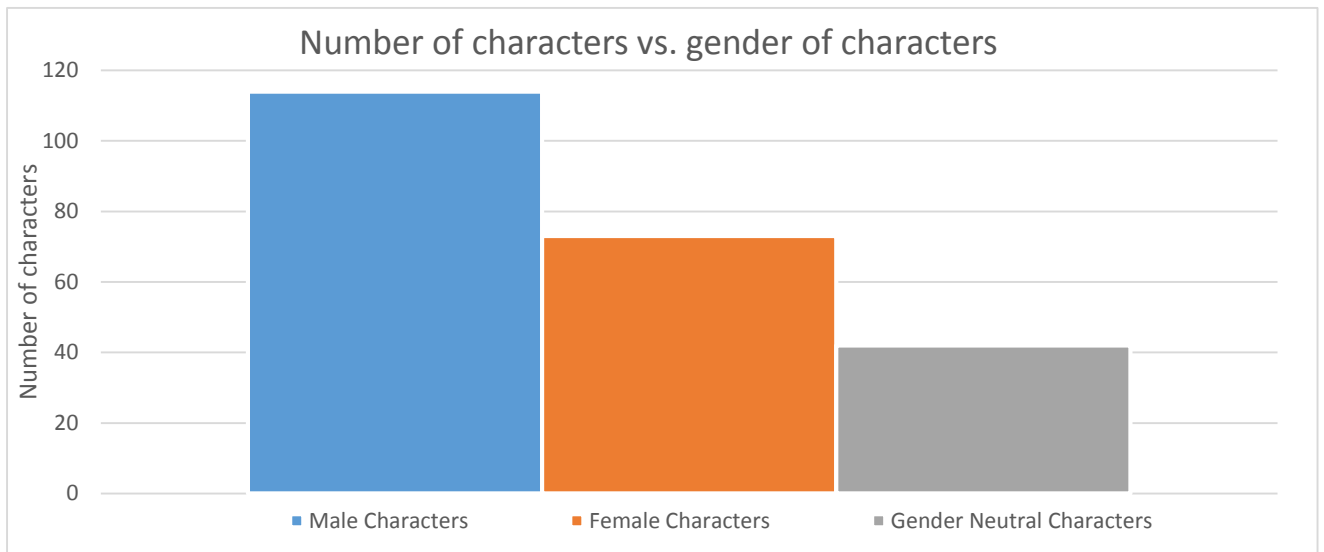
6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Rates of gender representation

Of the 54 picture books sampled in this study, there was a pronounced difference in the number of male title characters compared to female title characters in the sample pool (see Table 2). The term title character describes a book that has character's name in the title, such as *Old Hu-Hu, Mister Whistler,* and *Cuthbert's Babies*. These results demonstrate that a larger portion of the books in the sample pool are written about boys or men, while under 10% of the total number of books were named after a female character. In some cases, while the title of the book may not have a featured a female character's name, the primary character in the book was female, such as *Waiting for Later* and *A Present from the Past*. It is worth noting that there were individual examples where the main cast of characters was predominantly female, such as *Selfina* and *Clubs: A Lolly Leopold Story.* However this was a disproportionately smaller number compared those that had a predominantly male cast of characters.

Table 2

Number of books with a title female character	5
Number of books with a title male character	18
Number of books with a gender neutral title character	1
Number of books with no title character	30

There was a notable difference in the rate of representation between the numbers of male characters compared to female characters (see Chart 2 & Table 3). This study observed a

higher frequency of male adult characters compared to female and gender neutral characters. This was particularly evident when the frequency of male to female children was compared. Of those that appear in the books, there was almost double the number of male to female children overall (see Chart 3 & Table 4). These results reflect the international trends noted in much of the prominent literature; in general the rates of male characters compared to female characters tend to be significantly higher in notable children's picture books (Gooden & Gooden, 2001; Luyt et al., 2011; Paynter, 2011). However compared to the very early studies in the subject field, the disproportionate rates of males to females has dramatically decreased and continues to over time (Weitzman et al., 1972; La Dow, 1976; Paynter, 2011).

Chart 2:

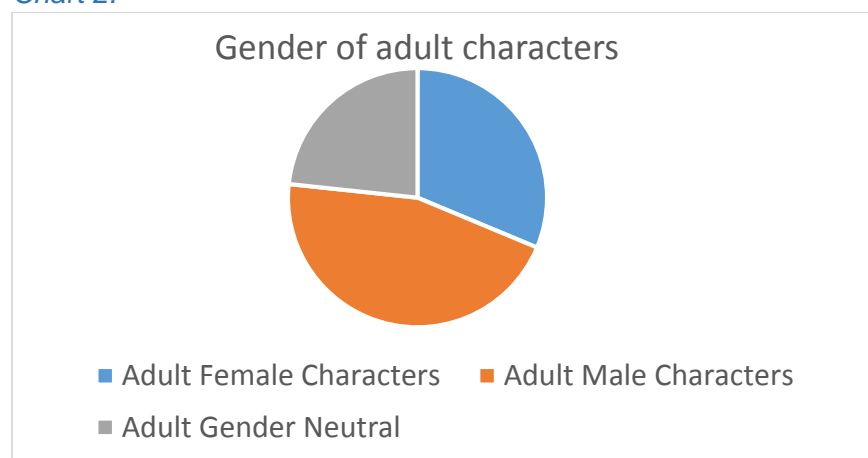Gender of adult characters

■ Adult Female Characters ■ Adult Male Characters
■ Adult Gender Neutral

Table 3

Male Adult Characters	74
Female Adult Characters	51
Gender Neutral Adult Characters	38
Total	**163**

Chart 3

Gender of child characters

- Female Child Characters
- Male Child Characters
- Gender Neutral Child Characters
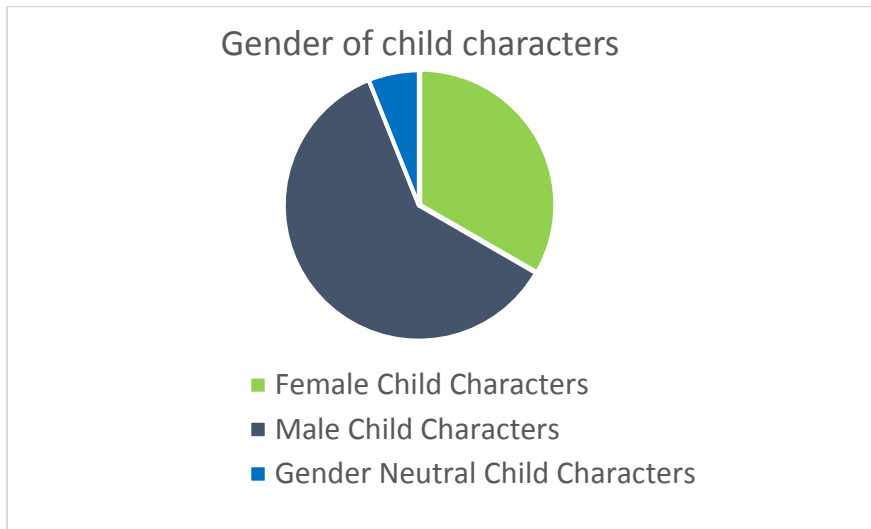
Table 4

Female Child Characters	22
Male Child Character	40
Gender Neutral Child Characters	4
Total	**66**

The data also showed that there were more male main characters than there were female or gender neutral main characters. Altogether, out of the 54 books analysed, 60% of the sample pool contained a main male character, while just 38% of the books contained a female main character. That means that in 33 of the books in the sample pool, there were no female main characters at all (see Chart 4 & Table 5). Females were not featured as main characters very often, however they did feature heavily in the illustrations. This was especially evident in the data collected for the years 2009-2014, where the number of female illustrations exceeded the number of male illustrations (see Table 6). This observation echoes the findings of Jackson and Gee (2006) as well as Weitzman et al. (1972) who noted that female characters were often depicted in the peripheral of the action (such as in the illustrations) rather than being the focus of the story. A possible reason for this, as suggested by Heintz (1987) and Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993), is that females tend to be given background, passive roles within traditionally stereotyped children's picture books.
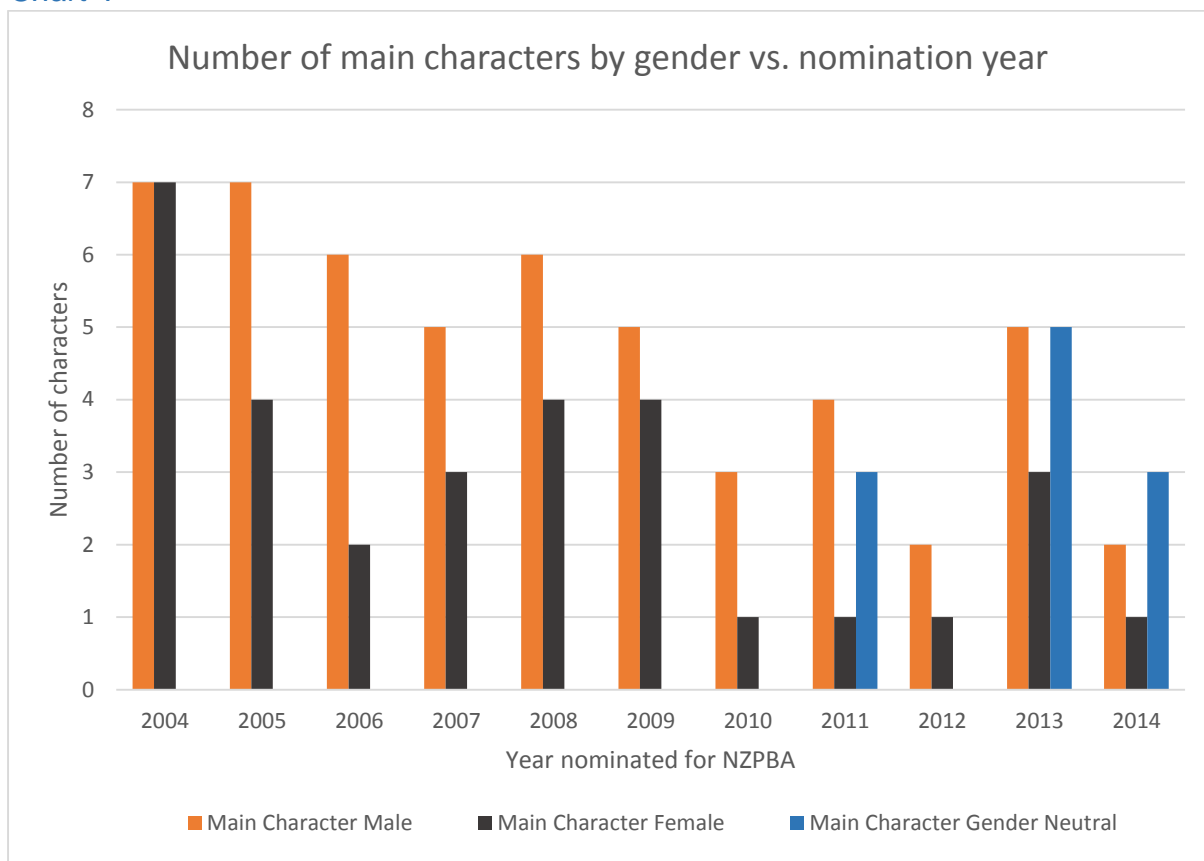
Chart 4

Number of main characters by gender vs. nomination year

Table 5

Gender	Total number of main characters
Male	51
Female	31
Gender Neutral	11
Total	**93**

Table 6

Years	Number of Female Illustrations	Number of Male Illustrations	Number of Gender neutral illustrations
2004-2008	85	115	15
2009-2014	72	69	51
Total	**157**	**184**	**66**

Interestingly, the data demonstrated that the rate of gender neutral adult characters and gender neutral illustrations greatly increased between 2008-2014 (see chart 4 & table 6). In several of the books, gendered pronouns were excluded. An excellent example of this is the

title *Baa Baa Smart Sheep* written by Mark Sommerset and illustrated by Rowan Sommerset. Neither of the two main animal characters in the book are referred to with gendered pronouns, and neither wear any kind of distinguishing dress or accessory that would easily identify them as either male or female. Many of the gender neutral characters in the books were portrayed as animal characters, and some of the non-fiction picture books that spotlighted aspects of New Zealand wildlife avoided using gendered language altogether (*Watch Out Snail!, A Booming in the Night)*. In other titles, while the main characters may have been given a gender identity, the illustrations of the secondary characters were more ambiguous. In these cases it was difficult to discern whether the illustrations depicted a male or a female character as their dress, appearance, or activity was not indicative of established gender stereotyping. This trend may indicate that writers and illustrators are taking steps to portray less rigid representations of the sexes within their books, or that in modern society the differences between gendered dress and activity are less prominent (Fox, 1993; Gooden & Gooden, 2001). This is seen in the 2014 category winner *The Boring Book* by Visanthi Unka (see figure 1). The bright, colourful, illustrations and modern interpretation of a busy day in society presents a balanced snapshot of everyday life for males and females within New Zealand.
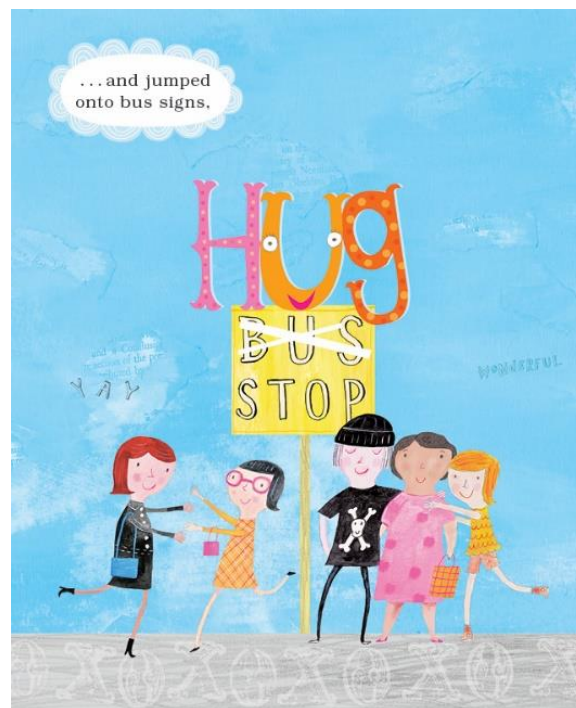
Figure 1

Figure 2: Illustration from The Boring Book by Visanthi Unka

6.2 Gender Stereotypes

This research project replicated the findings of a number of past research studies that analysed the actions, tasks, activities and occupations of male and female characters (Jackson & Gee, 2006; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993). However, some distinct differences were also noted. The sample did show clear diversions from other international research studies in the same field.

(A) Active and Passive Characters

There were a greater number of male main characters compared to female main characters. A consequence of this is that there were more opportunities for male characters to be scored as "active" compared to their female counterparts within the sample. Altogether, there were 93 main characters recorded throughout the books, and 40% of these characters were scored as active male (see chart 5). In many of the titles, there were two or three examples of active male characters, while no examples of active female characters could be found within the story. This can be seen in titles such as *The Three Fishing Brother's Gruff* by Ben Galbraith, *To the Harbour* by Stanley Palmer, and *Mr. Bear Branches and the Cloud Conundrum* by Terri Rose Baynton. All three of the above titles included multiple active male characters, but no main female characters were present in the story. In total, active female characters made up 18% of the total number of main characters. However in comparison to the number of active male characters who are also depicted throughout the sample pool, active female characters appeared infrequently, even in the latter half of the decade. This data aligns with similar international findings in which there tended to be a higher number of active male main characters compared to active female main characters throughout the samples (Paynter, 2011; Anderson & Hamilton, 2005).

Out of the total number of 31 female main characters within the books:

- 17 of the female main characters were considered active characters.
- 11 of the female main characters were considered passive characters.
- The remaining 3 were recorded as "both" (see Chart 6 & Table 7).

In many cases, the passive female characters were often mothers or older female characters, echoing similar conclusions found in several international studies (Heintz, 1987; Jernigan, 2003; Peterson & Lach, 1990). This can be seen in the books *Cuthbert's Babies* and *Into the Harbour*, where both of the female mother characters appeared in the story but maintained a background presence. Many of the passive male characters in the books were secondary ('sidekick') characters. These characters supported the active main character, but were generally depicted as compliant and dependent on the main character's decisions or

actions within the book (*The Three Fishing Brother's Gruff, Into the Harbour)*. Some characters were scored as both active and passive as throughout the story their role oscillated or changed from one to the other. This change often depicted a sense of growth where a character overcame their passive beginnings to take a more active role as the story progressed. This is seen in the book *The King's Bubbles* by Ruth Paul, where the 'royal advisor' characters are initially dependent on the King to give orders, make decisions, and direct their actions. As the story progresses the Royal Advisor(s) are forced to take actions to resolve the King's problem as he is no longer capable of doing so himself. The Royal Advisor(s) gains confidence and social standing because of their actions, and the reader is given the impression that they will be better equipped for the future because of it. Lastly and least frequently, in some books the characters was scored as neither active nor passive. This was seen in the book *Stomp* by Ruth Paul where the narrative voice in the picture book dictates the character's actions and they have limited (or no) opportunities to display independent thought, or to take an active or passive role within the story.

Chart 6

Number of character types by gender

- Active Female
- Active Male
- Active Gender Neutral
- Passive Female
- Passive Male
- Passive Gender Neutral
- Both Male
- Both Female
- None
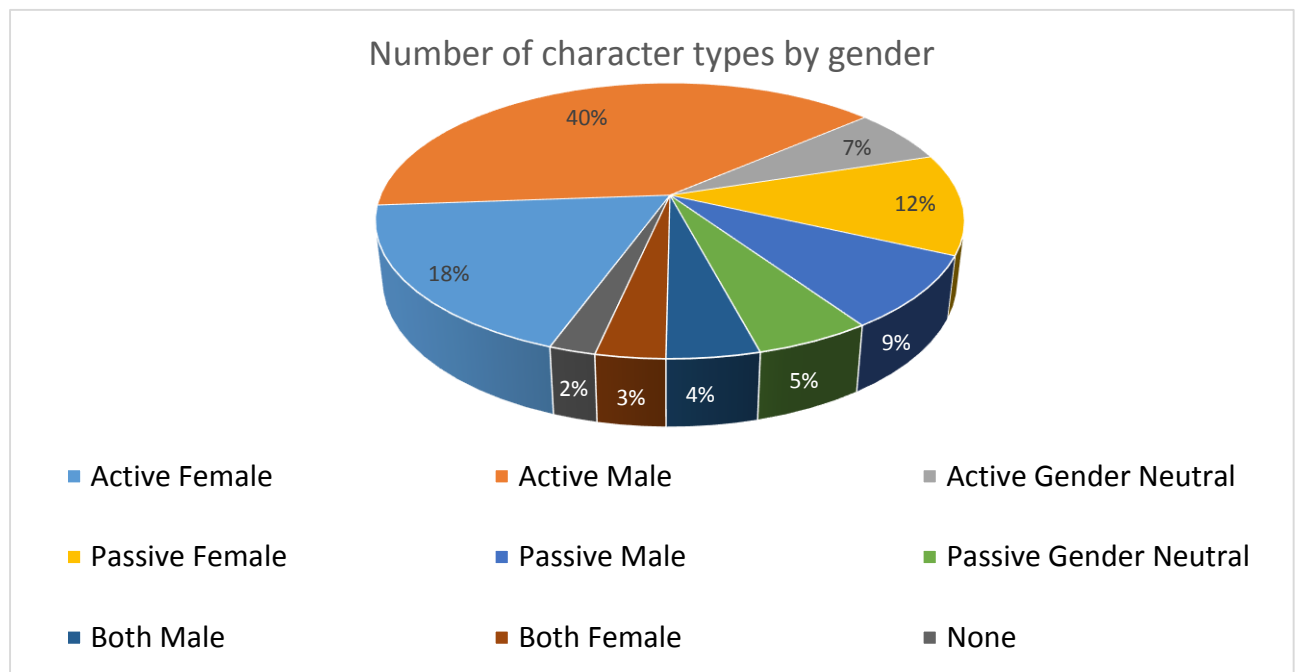
Table 7

Gender	Active type	Passive type	Both types	None	Total
Male	37	8	4	2	51
Female	17	11	3	0	31
Gender Neutral	6	5	0	0	11

26

Total					93

(B) Indoors and Outdoors

The data shows that both male and female characters were depicted outside more often than they were depicted indoors (see Table 8). This aligns with much of the research already published on the subject that argues girls are more often depicted inside than outside (Jackson & Gee, 2006; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993). There were instances where the researcher was unable to determine the location of the character(s). The data discussed in the following section is based on the times where the location of the story was possible to determine. Those situations where the indoor/outdoor location could not be determined were not included in the count. When accumulating the totals of times the characters were observed indoors and outdoors, boys were pictured outside 65% of the time, whereas girls were slightly more often found outside (53%) rather than inside (47%). While the female main characters in the books did generally spend more time outdoors than indoors, they spent 12% more time indoors than their male counterparts. As noted above, in general males were over-represented in the sample and consequently had more opportunities to appear in various roles and locations.

As stated previously, a large proportion of the female main characters in the story were mother, wife, or grandmother characters, and they were often depicted inside performing household tasks and caring for their families (*Piggity Wiggity Jiggity Jig, Napolean and the Chicken Farmer, Cuthbert's Babies*). In these cases the "inside" belonged to the female adults while the outside was the children's area to play or explore. In some titles the mother character accompanied the child on their outdoor adventures and encouraged the child's exploration of their environment (*A Great Cake)*. Fathers, Grandfathers and other adult male characters also played outside with the children in several titles (*Grandpa and Thomas, Every Second Friday, Mr. Whistler*), and there were also several examples of male characters inside the house completing chores and tasks (*Oh, Hogwash! Sweet Pea, Waiting For Later, Enough is Enough*).

Throughout the sample there were strong themes of outdoor experience and environmental conservation. In multiple titles, both genders were shown exploring the environment and spending a significant amount of time in outdoor locations. In the book Oh *Hogwash! Sweet Pea* by Ngareta Gabel, Sweet Pea (the female main character) spends a lot of the story re-imagining her activities over the last week, and describing the fantastic events that led to her losing her shoes. In nearly all of her descriptions she is outside and interacting with nature,

whether it is listening to birds, playing in sand pits, or climbing trees. The main female character in *Waiting for Later* by Tina Matthews also spent most of the story in her garden, and when the members of her family are too busy to play with her, she instead makes friends with a tree near her house and occupies herself for the afternoon. Male characters were also depicted outside very regularly, and books like *Koro's Medicine*, *Rahui*, and *The Moon and Farmer McPhee* all contain strong themes of outdoor experience and environmental conservation (*The Three Fishing Brother's Gruff, Out of the Egg)*. Several of the picture books were stories set in and about the New Zealand eco-system, and featured native New Zealand wildlife (*Tahi – One lucky kiwi, A Booming in the Night).* A large proportion of the native New Zealand wildlife was not gendered within the books, and were scored as gender neutral characters (*Watch out – Snail, A Booming in the Night).* When comparing this trend to similar overseas studies, it appears that in New Zealand characters do seem to spend more time outdoors than in other countries (Weitzman et al. 1972; Hamiton et al., 2005; Paynter, 2006).

Table 8

| Frequency recorded	Number of times females pictured:	Percentage:	Number of males times pictured:	Percentage:
Indoors	57	47%	99	35%
Outdoors	65	53%	185	65%

(C) Bravery

The data shows that the male main characters demonstrated brave qualities and made brave choices within the books with greater frequency than the female main characters (see chart 7), which echoes the findings from other studies that explored bravery in picture books (Zankel, 2007; Chatton, 2001). However, in general, bravery was a common character trait throughout the sample, and main characters from both sexes demonstrated brave qualities. In Kyle Mewburn's story *Old Hu Hu,* Hu-Hu-Tu is grieving as Old-Hu-Hu has passed away. He is feeling uncertain and fearful of what that means. Through soul searching and help from his friends he overcomes his fear and grief to fly to the moon and back like Old-Hu-Hu used to do. In other stories the main female characters also overcame great challenges, such as *Selafina's* fear of performing in public, and the Red Hen in *Out of the Egg* who continued to plant trees even though she faced ridicule from the other animals on the farm.

There was also an emphasis on individuality (*The Wonky Donkey, Mister Whistler).* Characters often made brave choices by deviating from societal expectations or family

traditions. For example, the main character in Kyle Mewburn's title *Melu* breaks away from his pack and explores the island by himself, despite the warnings from his friends and family. Similarly, in *Toucan Can* by Juliette McIver, the story promotes self-expression and encourages the reader and characters (of mixed gender) to demonstrate what they are able to do that other's cannot. Comparatively, there were fewer examples of characters feeling fearful or anxious than any other stereotype explored in this study. The books were generally positive and did not contain many examples of scary or frightening situations for the characters. Some books did contain frightened characters that had to be rescued, this is seen in *Rats* by Gavin Bishop, where Mrs. Polly Piper has a rat problem and calls the rat exterminator "Rapscallion Claw" in a state of panic. He arrives to save the day and put her at ease, and she eventually misses the rats and allows them back into her home. Similarly Stella-Rose in *The Were-Nana* is terrorised by her older brother and believes that her Nana (who she is about to meet for the first time) is a werewolf. In general, more characters were depicted overcoming their fears then they were being beaten by them.

Chart 7

Number of brave actions vs. gender
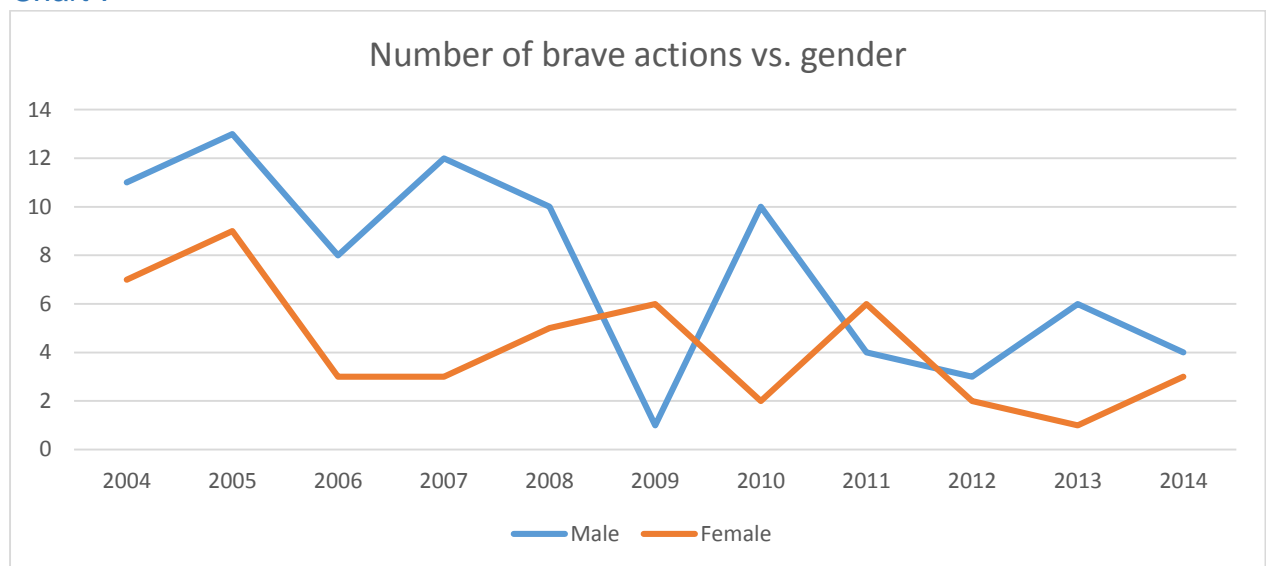
(D) Nurturing

In 2004, the female characters in the storybooks were observed nurturing others twice as often as they were in 2014, and the rates of nurturing actions performed by girls and women in the books did decline over the decade (see chart 8). In saying that, the data showed that the books nominated for the 2004 prize (the first year assessed by this study), had the greatest number of female main characters throughout the sample, which may account for why there were more instances of female nurturing in that year. As mentioned earlier, the older female adults in the sample were most likely to be portrayed as loving mothers or

grandmothers, and were most likely to demonstrate a nurturing nature. Overall, there were no examples of young girls playing "house" or performing household chores. Some girls appeared to cradle a cuddly toy or doll, such as Stella-Rose from *The Were-Nana* who carries a small teddy bear with her throughout the book. However, in general, the small number of female children that appeared in the books played mostly outside and did not appear concerned with caring for others, nurturing their friends, or caring for their toys which were all prominent themes identified in a number of other studies (Anderson & Hamilton, 2006; Hamilton et al., 2006). Some characters actively rejected this persona such as Lolly Leopold from the title *Clubs* by Kate de Goldi. While her female classmates join the "Barbie girls" and "Kitten club" in the playground, Lolly abstains from the club culture with two friends, and discusses the inequality of the "Lego club" whose membership is reserved for "loud and violent" boys. The rates of nurturing among female characters gradually decreased over the decade, while the rates of male characters demonstrating nurturing behaviours remained steady but at a noticeably lesser rate than the female characters.

The books did show several examples of male characters nurturing and caring for others in their day to day lives. For instance in the book *Kiss Kiss Yuck Yuck* by Kyle Mewburn, Aunty Elsie loves to hug and kiss her young nephew Andy each time she comes to visit. Andy is reluctant, and spends his time running away and hiding from her affection. However in an interesting twist, when Aunty Elsie breaks her leg and does not visit for a fortnight Andy misses her, and runs into her arms to greet her, returning her hugs and kisses. There were other examples of young male characters showing affection and caring for family members or special toys. For instance, Cuthbert in the book *Cuthbert's Babies* by Pamela Allen struggles to come to terms with the arrival of his quadruplet sisters into the family unit. Cuthbert initially feels ignored and wishes for a "big" and "bad" boy to play with, which conjures up three boisterous pirates that arrive for some explosive games. Their noise wakes the babies and Cuthbert feels guilty about his actions, he shoos the pirates away and begins to try and stop his sisters crying. He first tries by playing games that would have impressed his pirate friends (pulling faces, jumping up and down) but when that does not work his mother arrives and shows Cuthbert how to help his sisters. Cuthbert is pictured holding them, cuddling them, and quietly coo-ing (see figure 2). After the babies have fallen asleep the final picture in the book shows Cuthbert and his mother lying in bed and reading a story. Cuthbert is one example of a multi-dimensional character who demonstrates a range of interests and emotions. These are the types of character representations Zankel (2007) argues are lacking in many modern picture books, but are interestingly present in this sample. While Cuthbert seems to enjoy boisterous play and loud noises, he also enjoys cuddling quietly with his mother, and comes to enjoy spending time with his baby sisters too.

The number of nurturing acts performed by female characters gradually decreased over the ten year period. In the later years of the sample, the number of nurturing male acts over took the female number. From 2009-2014, there were less adult female characters, and instead there were several adult male characters who took on the nurturing role in the books. These characters demonstrated a caring side, especially when looking after younger children (*Koro's Medicine, Every Second Friday, Haere Ra Jack – Haere Ra).* Similarly to their female counterparts that were seen in the early years of the study, these characters were older members of the family such as grandfathers, fathers, and uncles. As suggested by some studies, this may reflect the changing nature of adult roles within society and the make-up of the modern family unit (Zankel, 2007; Fox, 1993).
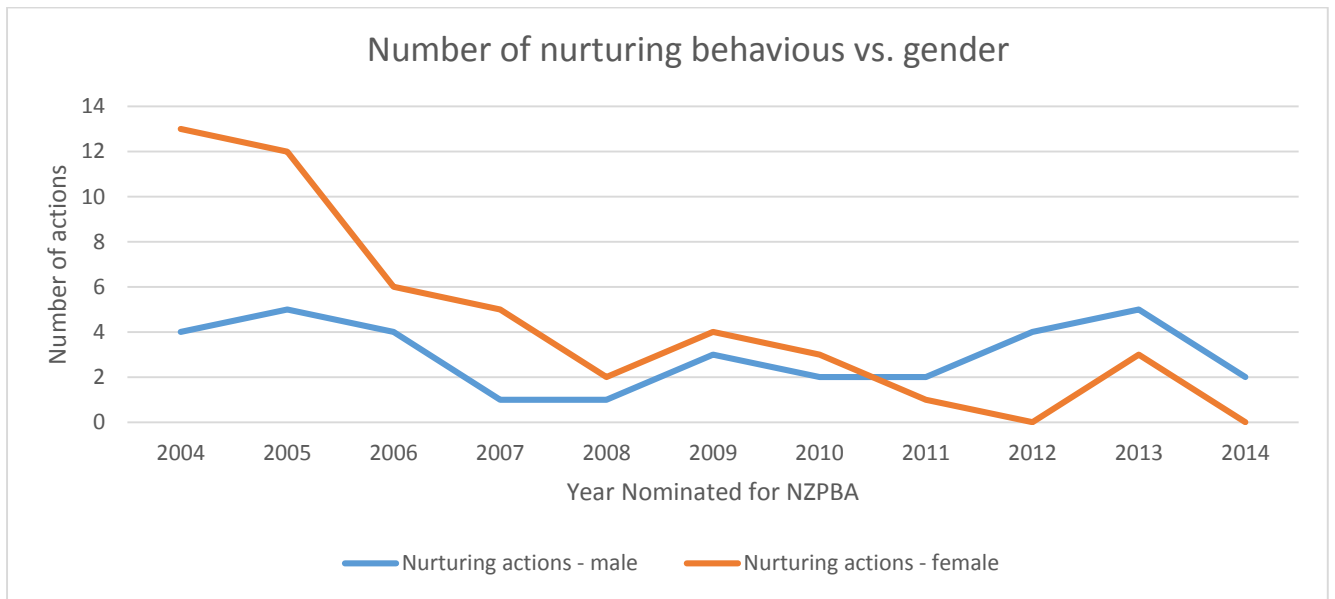
Figure 2

And, one by one, on Cuthbert's bed
he cuddled them and he comforted them,
until the crying stopped and they were
all fast asleep.

Figure 2: Illustration from the book Cuthbert's Babies by Pamela Allen.

Chart 8

Number of nurturing behavious vs. gender

6.3 Workforce and Occupation

The data from this study showed that there was a small difference in the number of adult males who were in paid employment and the number of adult females who worked (see Table 9). There were more male characters in paid occupation than women, and more women than men appeared to have no occupation or were unemployed. However, many of the books did not contain evidence of adults in paid work or references to work and employment in general. This may be because work is not necessarily a popular topic in children's books, or that there was no room in the story for employment to feature. However there were some cases where the books demonstrated a progressive and modern view of the workforce that goes against many of the stereotypes seen in similar studies (Paynter, 2011; Fox, 1993). This attitude was even noted in some of the older titles such as *Enough is Enough* by Scott Willis, nominated for the NZPBA in 2004. In this story the female member of the couple appears to be the main breadwinner, while her male partner stays at home, does the grocery shopping, and prepares an evening meal for his partner. Similarly in *Waiting for Later,* the mother character appears to be working in a home office while her husband completes the household chores.

In general, the male characters in the books have a greater variety of jobs than the female characters do (see Table 10). The jobs assigned to male characters are of a more adventurous and interesting nature (e.g. pirates, exterminators, chef) than the female occupations. However, it was interesting to note that there was more than one inspiring female teacher in the books whose skills significantly helped and assisted other characters

to achieve their goals. In *Clubs! A Lolly Leopold Story* Lolly affectionately talks of her eccentric teacher who consistently impresses her female students with her feminist world views. Similarly in *Selfina*, the main character's cousin is a primary school teacher who teaches Selafina how to perform a traditional dance from Samoa. In some stories the mother character appeared to have no paid occupation while the father went out to work (*Piggity Wiggity Jiggity Jig: Goes to Dad's Café, Cutherbert's Babies)*, but in other stories both the father and mother character both demonstrated evidence of a paid occupation (*Oh Hogwash, Sweet Pea).*

Table 9

Gender	Adults In paid occupation	No evidence of occupation/unemployed
Male	38	7
Female	29	12

Table 10

Year	Type of Job: Male	Type of Job: Female
2004	grocer, fishmonger, baker, cheesemaker, deli owner, chicken farmer, teacher, grave digger, flower seller, fisherman, sailor, businessman	teacher, stall owner, businesswoman
2005	businessman	teacher
2006	pirate, farmer	
2007	Businessman	gardner, farmer, nurse, paramedic
2008	bargeman, fisherman, zoo attendant, exterminator, royal advisor, King	zoo attendant, royal advisor
2009	roadworker, chef	
2010	lawyer, businessman, chef, politician	politician
2011	farmer	
2012		
2013	Office worker	
2014		

7. Implications of Findings/Future Recommendations

This research demonstrates that in some of the most widely read New Zealand picture books of the last ten years, there is evidence gender bias and traditional gender stereotyping. Men and boys were depicted substantially more than women and girls, and fewer stories were about female characters. According to the research in this field, this bias is unlikely to have a positive effect on the self-esteem and self-worth of young kiwi girls (Hamilton et al., 2006; Peterson & Lach, 1990; Narahara, 1998):

> "As society acknowledges that women are just as capable as men, it is imperative that their roles in literature also change. Today's women should be portrayed as members of the work force, as professionals, as household leaders, and as active and versatile citizens".

> (Gooden & Gooden, 2001)

Future research could explore how young girls are affected by negative messages to further raise awareness about gender bias and stereotyping. Such findings could influence authors and illustrators to be aware of the types of gender messages their stories are communicating to young children (Fox, 1993). More research could also be undertaken to examine ways and strategies to assist librarians, educators, and parents to identify instances of gender bias and stereotyping in children's literature. Further research in this area could equip educators (teachers and children's librarians) with skills to help navigate meaningful discussions with young children about gender and gender identity.

If this study was replicated or a similar research project was embarked on, the researcher would recommend that a larger sample pool was selected to gain more generalizable picture of the New Zealand picture book environment. This research project only sampled a very small proportion of New Zealand picture book publications. As such it only gained a limited insight into some trends that may be present on a much wider, more expansive scale. The sample could be increased by including titles from outside the 'award nominated' criteria in order to get an overview of the New Zealand situation as a whole. This could be completed by collecting a random sample or by analysing the top 50 bestselling books of the last 5 years. This would also allow for a number of statistical tests to be carried out on the data to discover whether or not a significant statistical difference could be found. It would also be interesting to see this research directly compared with another country's picture books (such as the US or Australia) to identify the similarities or differences.

8. Conclusions:

This research set out to find out if the number of male and female characters in the sample pool were of equal number. It also aimed to understand if there was any evidence of gender stereotyping within the story in terms of the character's behaviours, actions, or occupations. In general, the study found that the representation rates of males was much higher when compared to the rates of female and gender neutral characters. There was a significantly larger number of male title characters, male characters and male main characters than the female characters of the same description. There was almost twice the number of male child characters recorded compared to female child characters. Female characters did feature within the stories, but were predominately seen in the illustrations rather than main character roles. In the latter years of the study especially, the number of female illustrations increased. From 2009-2014, there was also a greater number of gender neutral characters and illustrations within the sample. Several main characters in the books were not gendered, and in several illustrations it was challenging to determine whether the character being portrayed was male or female.

When examining the results from this study, it appears that the gender stereotypes evident in many publications of the past still permeate New Zealand children's literature today. Boys were more often the active characters within the stories while active female characters were found in less than half the books. Boys were more often portrayed as brave, heroic, adventurous and fond of the outdoors than women were. Female characters were more likely to demonstrate nurturing behaviours in the first half of the decade, but from 2009-2014 boys and men began to nurture more. A theme that seems particularly unique to New Zealand picture books was the noticeable number of stories about the environment and the native New Zealand wildlife. Both boys and girls spent a large portion of time exploring their surroundings and many stories had a strong environmental theme. Finally, while work and employment did not feature often the stories, there was also more men employed then women, and more women than men appeared to have no paid occupation. Additionally, the men in the books appeared to have a more varied and exciting range of employment options than the female characters.

9. Appendix

9.1 Coding Sheet
Developed by Rhiann Munro from the University of Victoria, Wellington
for the Master of Information Studies, 580 Research Project:
"Girls will be boys and boys will be girls: An analysis of gender bias and stereotyping in a

sample of New Zealand picture books".

Based on the coding sheets by:

Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006;

Luyt, Sheh Lee, & Ng, 2011;

Paynter, 2011.

1. Title _____

2. Year of Publication _____

3. Year nominated for the NZPBA *Best Picture Book* Prize: _____

    (1) Category winner? YES   NO

4. Author(s) _____

5. Illustrator(s) _____

6. Gender of title Character (explicit or implied):

    Male   Female   None

7. Description of book type:

    _____

    _____

8. Summary of Plot:

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

All Characters

- Fairies, animals, elves and bipedal aliens are all classified as characters and included in the count.

- Unless the gender of a character is specifically defined (i.e male/female pronouns used or the character is very obviously being portrayed as a male or female), they will not be included in the male/female count but counted as gender neutral.

- Count each character once, not once per page; "A character is anything actively interacting with surroundings, and/or would change the story significantly if they were omitted; not just referred to, seen, or non-actively involved" (Hamilton et al. 2006; Paynter, 2011).

- Count the total number of illustrations of males and females, but only count each character once. For example, if grandma is depicted, just

count one, even if grandma is depicted a further 10 times throughout the story.

- Count group illustrations but only if females/males are clearly defined. If sex cannot be assigned count as gender neutral.

1. Number of adult female characters: _____
2. Number of child female characters: _____
3. Number of female illustrations: _____

Male

1. Number of adult male characters: _____
2. Number of child male characters: _____
3. Number of male illustrations: _____

Gender Neutral

1. Number of gender neutral adults: _____
2. Number of gender neutral children: _____
3. Number of gender neutral illustrations: _____

Analysis Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Main Characters

- A 'main character' is defined as those characters appearing in 50 % or more of the story. Each coding sheet has space for 3 main characters.
- Unless the gender of a character is specifically defined (i.e male/female pronouns used or the character is very obviously being portrayed as a male or female), they will not be included in the male/female count but counted as gender neutral.

Main Character #1

1. Character's gender:

          Male   Female   Gender neutral

2. The number of times the main character is/or shows these qualities:

- Pictured indoors: _____
- Picture outdoors: _____
- Behaves bravely: _____
- Behaves fearfully: _____
- Nurtures another character/object: _____

3. Categorised as: Active Passive Both

    None

Main Character #2

4. Character's gender:

    Male Female Gender neutral

5. The number of times the main character is/or shows these qualities:

    - Pictured indoors: _____
    - Picture outdoors: _____
    - Behaves bravely: _____
    - Behaves fearfully: _____
    - Nurtures another character/object: _____

6. Categorised as: Active Passive Both

    None

Analysis Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Main Character #3

7. Character's gender:

    Male Female gender neutral

8. The number of times the main character is/or shows these qualities:

    - Pictured indoors: _____
    - Pictured outdoors: _____
    - Behaves bravely: _____
    - Behaves fearfully: _____
    - Nurtures another character/object: _____

9. Categorised as: Active   Passive   Both
                      None

Analysis Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Occupation and Workforce

- Evidence of paid occupation may be seen in both the words and pictures of the book, i.e. through description such as "Mummy is at the office" or a picture of a character working.
- All characters (including main and secondary characters) should be counted.
- Unless the gender of a character is specifically defined (i.e male/female pronouns used or the character is very obviously being portrayed as a male or female), they will not be included in the male/female count but counted as gender neutral.

Paid occupation

1. The number of times:
   - Female adult characters are in paid occupation: _____
   - Male adult characters are in paid occupation: _____
   - Gender neutral adult characters are in paid occupation: _____
2. The number of times:
   - Female adult characters have no job/no evidence of an occupation: _____
   - Male adult characters have no job/no evidence of an occupation: _____

Please list female/male occupations below.

- If occupation if unclear or ambiguous please write "unclear", or a general descriptor such as "office worker", "shop assistant".
- If the same occupation occurs in more than one character, please count each character separately.

Female:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Male:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Gender Neutral:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

9.2 Full list of titles in Sample Pool

The full list of titles included in the sample pool:

2004

- Cuthbert's babies Pamela Allen **(Winner)**
- Napoleon and the chicken farmer Lloyd Jones; illustrated by Graeme Gash **(Honour Award)**
- Enough is enough! Scott Willis; illustrated by Jenna Packer

- Grandpa and Thomas Pamela Allen
- Oh hogwash, Sweet Pea! Ngareta Gabel; translated and adapted from te reo Māori by Hannah Rainforth; illustrated by Ali Teo and Astrid Jensen **(Children's Choice Award)** (Published in te reo Māori as:Tekiteora, kei hea ō hū?)
- Selafina Catherine Hannken; illustrated by Trish Bowles

2005

- Clubs: a Lolly Leopold story Kate De Goldi; illustrated by Jacqui Colley**(Winner)**
- Taming the sun Gavin Bishop
- Koro's medicine Melanie Drewery; illustrated by Sabrina Malcolm
- The night kite Peter Bland; illustrated by Carl Bland
- The other ark Lynley Dodd

2006

- A booming in the night Benjamin Brown; illustrated by Helen Taylor **(Winner)**
- Haere — farewell, Jack, farewell Tim Tipene; illustrated by Huhana Smith**(Honour Award)**
- Nobody's dog Jennifer Beck and Lindy Fisher
- The waka Jean Prior; illustrated by Gavin Bishop / Te waka Jean Prior; illustrated by Gavin Bishop; translated by Kāterina Mataira
- Where's the gold? Pamela Allen

2007

- Kiss! Kiss! Yuck! Yuck! By Kyle Mewburn; illustrated by Ali Teo and John O'Reilly **(Winner)**
- Matatuhi Robyn Kahukiwa
- A present from the past by Jennifer Beck; illustrated by Lindy Fisher**(Honour Award)**
- Riding the waves by Gavin Bishop
- Whakaeke i ngā ngaru by Gavin Bishop; translated by Kāterina Mataira
- The three fishing Brothers Gruff by Ben Galbraith

2008

- Tahi - one lucky kiwi by Melanie Drewery; designed and illustrated by Ali Teo**(Winner)**

- The king's bubbles by Ruth Paul **(Children's Choice Award)**
- Out of the egg by Tina Matthews **(Best First Book Award Winner)**
- Rats! By Gavin Bishop
- To the harbour by Stanley Palmer **(Honour Award)**

2009

- Roadworks by Sally Sutton; illustrated by Brian Lovelock **(Winner)**
- Piggity-Wiggity Jiggity Jig by Diana Neild; illustrated by Philip Webb**(Honour Award)**
- Duck's stuck! By Kyle Mewburn; illustrated by Ali Teo and John O'Reilly
- Every second Friday by Kiri Lightfoot; illustrated by Ben Galbraith
- The Were-Nana by Melinda Szymanik and Sarah Nelisiwe Anderson

2010

- Old Hu-Hu by Kyle Mewburn; illustrated by Rachel Driscoll **(Winner)**
Hū-Hū koroheke (Te reo Māori edition) translated by Kāterina Te Heikoko Mataira
- Cowshed Christmas by Joy Cowley; illustrated by Gavin Bishop
- Piggity-Wiggity Jiggity Jig goes to Dad's cafe by Diana Neild; illustrated by Philip Webb
- The wonky donkey by Craig Smith; illustrated by Katz Cowley

2011

- The moon and Farmer McPhee by Margaret Mahy and David Elliot **(Winner)**
- Baa Baa smart sheep by Mark and Rowan Sommerset
- A dog like that by Janene Cooper; illustrated by Evie Kemp
- Hill & Hole by Kyle Mewburn; illustrated by Vasanti Unka
- Marmaduke Duck and the marmalade jam by Juliette MacIver; illustrated by Sarah Davis

2012

- Rāhui (Te reo Māori edition by Szekely; nā Malcolm Ross ngā pikitia; nā Brian Morris i whakamāori **(Winner)** Rāhui (English edition) Chris Szekely; illustrated by Malcolm Ross
- The cat's pyjamas by Catherine Foreman
- Stomp by Ruth Paul
- Waiting for later by Tina Matthews

2013

- Mister Whistler by Margaret Mahy and Gavin Bishop **(Winner)**
- A great cake by Tina Matthews
- Melu by Kyle Mewburn, Ali Teo & John O'Reilly **(Children's Choice Award)**
- Mr Bear Branches and the cloud conundrum Terri Rose Baynton
- Remember that November / Maumahara ki tērā Nōema Jennifer Beck, Lindy Fisher and Kawata Teepa

2014

- The boring book Vasanti Unka **(Winner and Margaret Mahy Book of the Year)**
- Machines and me: Boats Catherine Foreman
- The three bears, sort of Yvonne Morrison**(Children's Choice Award)**
- Toucan can Juliette McIver, illustrated by Sarah Davis
- Watch out, Snail! Gay Hay, illustrated by Margaret Tolland

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