Introduction

Handclapping games are a very conspicuous genre of children’s play. If you’re an adult looking for children’s games in the hubbub of primary school playgrounds at playtime and dinner time, the eye and, when near enough, the ear are readily drawn to these performances. They are generally done on the spot, have a well-defined beginning and end, and emphasise rhythm and coordination. This is not to suggest that the children playing these games are doing them for an ‘audience’ other than themselves. Nonetheless, the ‘performativity’ of these games, with their physical and verbal challenges, appears to be their main attraction and holds the key to their capacity to temporarily alleviate ‘boredom’.

Although we are still in the process of cataloguing the audio and video recordings undertaken at Monteney Primary School in Sheffield, it is clear that handclapping is a regular activity in the Key Stage 2 ‘yard’ or playground. It is mainly done by girls although boys may look on or attempt to disrupt the game by distracting the girls, or sometimes may try and join in. An in-depth study of handclapping at the school will form the focus of the next phase of our fieldwork, but for this paper I would like to focus on just one clapping game and text, which I will call ‘Eeny Meeny Dessameeny’. This game and text is not discussed in Iona and Peter Opies’ classic survey, The Singing Game (1985), although, as we shall see, it is mentioned in the book and the Opies were aware of its existence.

Since there was no ready reference to it in The Singing Game, my first instinct was to locate other versions of the game and find out more about its history, functions, varying forms and distribution. This urge to comparative analysis is deeply rooted in folklore studies. This is no surprise given that multiformity is such a salient, many would say a defining, characteristic of folklore (Honko 2000: 3). Multiformity gave

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1 Indeed, clapping games conform closely to Turino’s concept of ‘participatory performance’ (Turino 2008: 23-65).

2 See, for example, the definitions quoted on the website of the American Folklore Society (http://www.afsnet.org/aboutfolklore/aboutFL.cfm).
rise, especially in the study of folk literature, to the conceptualisation of a distinction between type (the ‘same’ story or song or rhyme) and version (differing iterations recognisably belonging to a ‘type’, such as the folktale Cinderella or the ballad Barbara Allen). As Ulrika Wolf-Knuts has pointed out, ‘the very concept of variation is the product of a comparison’ (nd). A corollary of this is that comparative study stresses a scholarly or analytical perspective rather than a native viewpoint since performers themselves are not usually collectors of different versions. Children, certainly, are not generally attracted to these games and rhymes because there are different versions from different places and different times — on the contrary, they go for them because that very thing is unknown or insignificant — they are ‘new’. The version that looms large for them is the one they have learnt and even that they may soon re-create to make it newer, more attractive, more useful, or more personalised.

Comparative study has been undertaken in different ways and to very different ends, including the recovery of supposed lost meanings, establishing the original or root form of a particular type of story or song, constructing nationalistic identity and demonstrating authenticity (e.g. Dundes 1965; Dorson 1972; *Journal of Folklore Research* 1986; Goldberg 1997). One of the most influential manifestations of comparative study has been the so-called historic-geographic method (Krohn 1926). The method aimed to infer a type’s life story. In other words, it attempted to trace the geographic distribution, history, and variation, including the place of origin, original form and routes of dissemination, of a given complex of related folkloric materials, often a folktale or narrative song type, through the systematic analysis of textual variants. Although criticised for, amongst other things, its historicist and positivist assumptions, and theoretical weaknesses, not least the perennial difficulty of dating oral texts (the date of documentation not being a reliable guide to the date of the text itself), the method has produced useful descriptions of geographic distribution and variation (Goldberg 1984; Honko 1986; Wolf-Knuts nd), and spawned important tools such as the tale type and motif indexes (Uther 2004, Thompson 1955–58). The method is most effective in delimited studies and, amongst other things, has the virtue of identifying the more stable and more variable aspects of the item being studied. Although the full-blown historic-geographic method has largely fallen out of favour within folklore studies, comparative study of variants is still prevalent and has continued in the comparative annotation (in the form of added comments to articles, such as those that appeared in *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, contributions to *Notes and Queries* (a forerunner of blogging?), or more formally as headnotes to items within published folklore collections (cf. Dorson 1972; Child [1884–98] 1965; Bronson 1959–72). The Opies’ comparative notes to each game in *The Singing Game* are in this tradition:

In this work we present the singing games and clapping games that used to be played, or are still played, by children in Great Britain, and set forth as much of their histories as could be discovered. What we have tried to show is

3 These are classified as ATU 510a (Uther 2004) and Child 84 (Child 1884–98) respectively.
that these games, now enjoyed by children, are the final flowering of a tradition known since antiquity. (Opie and Opie 1985: v)

We have, in the apparatus which follows each main article, aimed to provide an outline history in terms of printed sources and oral collecting, rather than to give every available reference. (Opie and Opie 1985: vii).

While I have no evidence that ‘Eeny Meeny Dessameeny’ (hereafter referred to as EMD) is of great antiquity, I propose to describe the extant sources I have found to date, including versions found on the Internet, to trace the variation evidenced in performance and text, and to consider its chronology, distribution and transformations in commercial song recordings. In order to emphasise the retrospective and inferential aspects of this method, the following is envisaged as a ‘back story’, in the literary and popular culture sense of being a constructed past or context, here for a game and its text rather than a character.

**EMD @ Monteney Primary**

EMD was one of a number of clapping and movement routines shown to me by a group of Year 4 girls in July 2009 when I had more or less just started filming at playtimes and lunchtimes at the school. One of them had learnt EMD from another girl in the class and passed it on to the others in the group. Lorna and Emma performed it for me as follows: [VIDEO CLIP]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Movements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eeny meeny dessameeny</td>
<td>3-way clap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are the one for me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (c'laporation?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like you.</td>
<td>Stop clapping and point to each other on ‘you’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down town baby</td>
<td>3-way clap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down to the roller coaster</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet sweet cherry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No place to go.</td>
<td>Shake index finger from side to side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caught you with my boyfriend</td>
<td>3-way clap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naughty naughty</td>
<td>Shake index finger forward and back in ‘telling off’ movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t do the dishes</td>
<td>3-way clap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy lazy</td>
<td>Palms of hands together to one side of head, then other, head bent to same</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Jumped out the window 3-way clap
Flippin crazy Index fingers of each hand pointing towards ears and circling, in ‘crazy’ gesture
Eeny meeny dessameeny 3-way clap
You are the one for me
Education (c'laporation?)
I like you. Stop clapping and point to each other on ‘you’
And you. And you. But not you. Pointing to self and then to partner on ‘you’; shaking head as well for ‘not you’.

The following October, Sara and Charlotte in Y6 were performing their own version of EMD, this time without clapping: [VIDEO CLIP]

Eeny meeny dessameeny Doing ‘the twist’
You are the one for me ‘Twisting’ plus pointing at partner alternating index fingers of each hand
Education (c'laboration?) Circling movement with RH index finger against head, then writing on hand movement
I like you. Point to each other with both hands
Down town baby One hand to nose, other hand held up by side of head, bending knees, then change hands
Down by the roller coaster Hand and forearm in wave-like action across front of body
Sweet sweet cherry Twisting hips
No place to go. Wagging index finger side to side
Caught you with my boyfriend Hand on hip, leaning forwards
Naughty naughty Moving index finger backwards and forwards in telling off movement
Didn’t do the dishes Circling hands, own palms facing
Lazy lazy Hands together and placed under head cocked to one side, then the other in ‘sleeping’ gesture
Stole a box of candy  \hspace{1cm} \textit{Beginning to rub tummy}

Greedy greedy  \hspace{1cm} \textit{Rubbing tummy}

Jumped out the window  \hspace{1cm} \textit{Jumping legs apart}

Flippin crazy  \hspace{1cm} [\textit{one girl:}] \textit{index fingers circling pointing to ears, twisting hips,} \hspace{1cm} [\textit{other girl:}] \textit{hand circling on head moving hair}

Eeny meeny dessameeny  \hspace{1cm} \textit{Doing \textquoteleft the twist\textquoteright}

You are the one for me  \hspace{1cm} \textit{\textquoteleft Twisting\textquoteright plus pointing at partner alternating index fingers of each hand}

Education \hspace{1cm} \textit{(c\textquotesingle laboration?)}

\hspace{1cm} \textit{Circling movement with RH index finger against head, then writing on hand movement}

I like you.  \hspace{1cm} \textit{Point to each other with both hands}

And you. And you. But not you.  \hspace{1cm} \textit{Point to one side, then the other side, then each other again.}

These two girls then performed it again, prefacing it with \textquoteleft One, two, a scooby dooby doo\textquoteright, chanted in a well-defined rhythm. In conversation, the girls explained that they had made up the movement routine above and that they also knew the clapping routine which was very similar to the one done by Lorna and Charlotte.

Within the same playground of the same school and between two different year groups, then, EMD evidenced very similar words (the older girls' version has two lines not in the Y4's version: \textquoteleft Stole a box of candy, Greedy greedy\textquoteright) and similar actions but, between performances \textit{by the same girls} on two different occasions, radically different actions.

\textbf{EMD in Sheffield}

Three years earlier than this, my daughter, Natasha, had brought home a version of EMD as she had learnt it in another Sheffield school six miles away from Monteney. She was in Y1 at the time, in an infants school without attached junior school, and had learnt it from a Malaysian girl friend in the same year group. When I saw the Monteney clapping versions, I was struck by the slightly different handclapping sequence compared to Natasha's, and the absence, in relation to her version, of a whole section of text. As a result, Natasha's version had a different coda which lacked the humorous bathos of the Monteney versions: [VIDEO CLIP]

\hspace{1cm} \textit{Eeny meeny dessameeny} \hspace{1cm} \textit{Palms together in horizontal prayer formation, moved side to side and}
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brushing first one side then the other of partner’s similarly formed hands

Shoo wop sha weeny weeny

Education, liperation [sic]

RH clasped, LH taking hold of partner’s hands above RH, then on RH, then below etc., as in ‘Hi Lo Jackalo’

I like you.

Pointing to partner

Down town baby

3-way clap

Sweet sweet cherry

Caught you with your boyfriend

Naughty naughty

Shaking index finger in telling off movement

Didn’t do the dishes

3-way clap

Lazy lazy

Placing hands, palms together, beneath head cocked first to one side then the other in sleeping movement

Jumped out the window

3-way clap

Flippin crazy

Index fingers circling and pointing towards ears as in indication of ‘mad’

Eeny meeny dessameeny

Palms together in horizontal prayer formation, moved side to side and brushing first one side then the other of partner’s similarly formed hands

Shoo wop sha weeny weeny

‘Hi Lo Jackalo’ movement

I like you.

Pointing to partner

Apple sticks

3-way clap

Make me sick

Not because you’re dirty

Not because you’re clean

All because you kissed a boy

Behind a magazine

4 Natasha also recalled two further lines which probably came here: ‘Ate a box of chocolates (3-way clap) Chocaholic (Rubbing tummy)’.

5 Later addition: ‘Make my heart go 2–4–6’.
If we consider the text of these initial examples, it falls into sections which are reinforced by the change in the accompanying sequences of actions. We can delineate these sections thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Monteney versions</th>
<th>Natasha’s version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>1, 2, a scooby…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Eeny meeny…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Down town baby…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Caught you/boyfriend…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Apple sticks…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>Not you/blowing kiss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cluster of textual elements ABCA clearly helps to identify this as the ‘same’ clapping game, the same ‘type’, but there is a marked difference in that Natasha’s version has an extra section.

In terms of the clapping sequence, we can label the clapping movements as ‘3-way clap’, ‘horizontal brush’, and ‘HLJ (Hi Lo Jackalo) clap’, plus the kissing, pointing and movements accompanying the words ‘naughty’, ‘lazy’ and so on, as ‘mime’. This can be mapped onto the sections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monteney versions</th>
<th>Natasha’s version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intro)</td>
<td>No action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3-way clap + mime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3-way clap + mime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3-way clap + mime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(alternating)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Horizontal brush + HLJ + mime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3-way clap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3-way clap + mime (alternating)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Horizontal brush + HLJ + mime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is immediately evident that there is more variety in the handclaps associated with Natasha’s version. Sara and Charlotte’s made-up routine replaces the clapping with dance moves – the twist and what we might call ‘the snorkel’ – and more mime.

A final point of comparison to highlight is the performance of the accompanying words. I have transcribed these in music notation and placed one rendition below another in the manner of a vocal score to facilitate comparison (see Figure 1 music notation below). Rhythmically they are almost identical. The most pronounced difference is in the vocalisations used for each section. The Monteney performers mostly sing our B and C sections (Down town baby and Caught you with my/your boyfriend) to definite pitches, with brief chanted interpolations, while Natasha chants these (as indicated by the x noteheads):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monteney versions</th>
<th>Natasha’s version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intro) No action</td>
<td>Chant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 3-way clap + mime Sing+chant</td>
<td>A Brush + HLJ + mime Sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 3-way clap + mime Sing+chant</td>
<td>B 3-way clap Chant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 3-way clap + mime Sing</td>
<td>C 3-way clap + mime Chant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 3-way clap + mime Sing+chant</td>
<td>A Brush + HLJ + mime Sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda Mime Chant</td>
<td>Coda Mime Sound effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are several points to make here regarding comparative method. Firstly, these are multi-faceted, multi-modal performances and variation may take place in a number of their dimensions or modes. Secondly, differences between one performance and another in one mode may or may not mirror differences between another mode of the same two performances. Thirdly, we are reminded that versions documented relatively close together in time and space may exhibit significant differences from each other.
Eeny Meeny Dessameeny

Transcribed JCB

Lorna & Emma
(Melody 90.0056)

Sara & Charlotte
(Melody 90.062)
1st edition

Sara & Charlotte
(Melody 90.062)
2nd edition

Natasha
(Brockmann 2005-06)

1. E

You are the one for me

Educ - u - ca - tion chab - o - ra - tion I like you.

S & C (1)

You are the one for me

Educ - u - ca - tion chab - o - ra - tion I like you.

S & C (2)

Nat

Shoo wa p  shu - wee - ny wee - ny

Educ - u - ca - tion hy - er - a - tion I like you.
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Eeny Meeny Miny Moe

Down town baby
Down by theitol counter
Sweet cherry No place to go
Caught you with my boyfriend Naughty naughty

L & E

Did n't do the dishes
Lazy lazy

S & C 1

Did n't do the dishes
Lazy lazy
Stole a box of candy
Greedy greedy
Jumped out the sun down
Flip flop crazy

S & C 2

Did n't do the dishes
Lazy lazy
(Ate a box of chocolate?) Chocolate ho-ho-ho
Jumped out the sun down
Flip flop crazy

N & T

(continued...)

[Instructions or notes for the music notation]
Children’s Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age

Eeny Meeny Minny Moe

You are the one for me.

Shoo, shoo, shoo, shoo.

I like you. And you. And you. But not you.
Eeny Meeny Meeney Meeney

Apples sticks Make me sick Not because you're dirty Not because you're clean All because you kissed a boy behind a magazine [kiss]
EMD – the bigger picture

Through book searches and some archival research, and the generosity of colleagues (some of whom are in the audience today), I have located further versions of EMD:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 (+ 1 from American children at school in the UK)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An even greater number of versions has been located on the Web, including four on YouTube. As far it is possible to infer, the geographical locations of the contributors of these are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK + Ireland</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Bermuda</th>
<th>Geographical location of contributor unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(A selection of these versions are noted in the Appendix.) I have also located five commercially released songs in which the EMD words feature and these will be discussed later. In addition, there are a number of items which relate to EMD but which I do not count as part of the EMD complex as such. This raises the question of how we define EMD, a point to which I will return below, following a survey of the chronology, structure and variation evident in the versions amassed to date.

By way of preface to this survey, it is worth noting that, despite the abundance of versions found on the Web, there is often little or no indication of their provenance in terms of place or date practised or learnt. Many sources found on the Web give the text of EMD only, sometimes with an indication of how it was used. They are occasionally complemented by an audio file in which the item is performed; the fullest versions, from a multimodal point of view, are clearly those to be found on YouTube. These are useful comparative data but in many cases do not cast much light on questions of chronology or geographical distribution.

Finding these Web examples, in the case of a text like that of EMD which contains many nonsense words, was initially somewhat difficult. There are various ways to
spell 'eeny meeny' and it is, of course, the opening of a very widespread children’s play rhyme, ‘Eeny meeny miny mo’ (see Opie and Opie 1997: 184–86). Since the only connection between the latter and EMD was in the first two words, I did not include it as a member of the EMD complex. I therefore searched, using Google, on as many variant spellings of Eeny meeny as I could think of and disregarded the hits relating to ‘Eeny meeny miny mo’. Once a corpus of EMD versions began to be amassed, however, it became apparent that the third word – known in the Sheffield versions above as ‘dessameeny’ – was very variable, although it almost always retained the internal rhyme with the ‘eeny meeny’ opening.6 I took this as one of the identifying characteristics of the EMD complex and began to run Google searches on this third word (variations of which are exemplified below). This was extremely fruitful as these nonsense words were usually only associated with EMD and therefore tended to bring up relevant hits. As already mentioned, these were found on YouTube and were also contained in such sources as discussion lists (some, such as Mudcat.org and Snopes.com) dedicated to folkloric topics, websites dedicated to children’s songs or playground games and rhymes, personal blogs, and social networking sites such as Facebook.

While folklorists are no strangers to ephemeral sources, websites present a problem not encountered with, for example, printed ephemera such as broadsheets or press cuttings – the lack of permanence. One can print off the relevant web pages and deposit these in an archive, but it is unlikely that many of these websites will exist as such in the medium term, never mind perpetuity.

**EMD in the USA**

In *The Singing Game*, the Opies quote, but do not discuss, an American text of EMD (446):

Eeny, meeny, gypsaleeny,
Oh, oh, animal-eeny,
Achapacha, libavacha,
I love you.

The Opie papers at the Bodleian Library contain the press cutting from which this is taken, an article by Ann Geracimos, ‘Just Look and Listen’, published in the *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 August 1964 (Box 238). The text accompanies a photograph of handclapping by two black performers, a man and a woman, and is prefaced ‘Handclapping rhymes – “pattycakes versions” – often mixed with dance steps or descriptive motions. Verses, like related rope-skipping rhymes, seldom make sense.’ Exactly the same text is quoted six years later by Geracimos in a magazine article,

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6 In my own transcriptions, I have opted to spell the nonsense words in EMD in the manner which suggests most unambiguously their pronunciation.
‘The Games New York City Children Play’ (Geracimos 1970), with the comment: ‘Some of the rhymes one hears around New York these days seem to come from nowhere, done in unison with dance steps or jump ropes – sounds for sounds’ sake, like this one, heard on a stoop near 57th Street and Tenth Avenue’ (25). Although the text consists of the section dubbed A in the analysis of the Sheffield versions above, the reference to other actions and dance steps in addition to handclapping is notable. Also of relevance is the indication that the rhyme may be used for skipping, a point which will be taken up further below.


Eeny meeny pepsadeeny
Oo-pop-pop-sa-deeny
Atchi-catchi liberatchi
I love you
Tu-tu, shampoo
Saw you wit your boyfriend
Last night
What’s his name?
Andy White
How do you know?
I peeped through the keyhole
Newsy! [sic]
Wash those dishes
Lazy!
Gimme some candy
Stingy!
Jumped out the window
Crazy!
Eeny meeny pepsadeeny
Oo-pop-pop-sa-deeny
Atchi-catchi liberatchi
I love you
Tu-tu, shampoo.

This contains both the A and the C text sections and has a comparable structure to the Sheffield versions in its reprise of the opening A section. It is tempting to see this text as representing a line of evolution from the single A section to the ACA version. However, the date of documentation cannot necessarily be taken as evidence of the age of the textual content and this version may be as old as, or older than, the 1964 text. Comparing other features of this to the Sheffield versions, Gaunt’s transcription indicates that the text is sung to a ‘central tone with upper and lower neighbour tones’ throughout (195–96). Most distinctive, though, is the clapping sequence which consists of slapping right hand palm with partner, then back-side of same hands, thigh slap with right hand, then clicking right fingers. This results in a 4-beat rhythm,
rather than a 3-beat one as seen in the Sheffield versions. Gaunt's transcription shows that that this beat is maintained consistently against cross rhythms and syncopations in the vocal line.

Time does not permit a full discussion of all the versions amassed. Instead, I will focus on some general trends. Firstly, versions of EMD turn up regularly amongst the identifiably American materials from the late 1970s to the present. They come not only from Pennsylvania and New York, but also New Jersey, Georgia, Texas, California, (where, for example, Carol Merrill-Mirsky recorded seven versions in two Los Angeles schools – six from a primarily Euro-American school and one from an Afro-American school), Wisconsin and Kansas.7

These versions evidence considerable textual variation on several different levels. As mentioned earlier, for example, the word following the initial 'eeny meeny' is highly variable, e.g.:

- Gypsaleeny, dipsi-dini, diseliney, des-o-leenie, sissallini
- Pepsadeeny, bopsiteenie, popsikeeny, peppaneeny, pop zuchini
- That's a queeny
- Tortellini, tumble leeny, teeny weeny

There are further variations found in the rhyme word of the second line. Notable, too, among the American versions is the prevalence of the sound 'atch' in the third line of the A section, including in combination with a two-syllable prefix 'libba' or 'liver'. Not surprisingly, these included references to the American entertainer and pianist, Liberace, e.g.:

Achapacha libavacha…
Atchi catchi liberatchi…
Ah cha ca che Liberace…

Also:

Atchy atchy boomeratchy…
Etchy sketchy liveretchy…
Otch cotch liver-otcha…
Otchi Kotoch Koom-a-rotchi…
Atchi patchi liverini…

7 Merrill-Mirsky's thesis does not discuss any textual variation between the versions of EMD and only includes one transcribed text and tune.
Interestingly, of the identifiably American versions, very few contain the third-line words 'education liberation' found in the Sheffield versions (and, as we shall see, the UK versions more generally). 

Looking at the structure of the US versions, we find diversification through the addition or substitution of sections and/or their rearrangement. Particularly common is the addition of a rhyme along the lines of:

Take a peach, take a plum
Take a stick of bubblegum

This is sometimes extended into four lines as in the following version: [VIDEO CLIP]

1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4
Eeny meeny sissle-eeny
Ooh ah combaleeny
Achi cachi liberachi
I love you
Take a peach take a plum
Take a stick of bubblegum
No peach no plum
No stick of bubblegum
Saw you with your boyfriend last night
How did you know?
Peeking through the keyhole
Nosey
Ate a box of candy
Greedy
Didn't do the dishes
Lazy
Jumped out the window
Now you know I'm/you’re crazy
That's why they call me
Eeny meeny sissle-eeny
Ooh ah combaleeny
Achi cachi liberachi
I love you.
Yeah!
(Holycrapabana 2009a)

Abrahams and Rankin note that this plum/chewing gum rhyme is usually found as an ending to various counting-out rhymes (1980: 90 [no. 199]).

8 An exception to this is Merrill-Mirsky’s version collected in Los Angeles (1988:139–40).
Several other rhymes with which EMD has been concatenated are also known as standalone rhymes for clapping, skipping, entertainment, or counting out. They include ‘I like coffee, I like tea, I like the white boy and he likes me’ (Tobin 1980: 33), ‘I met my boyfriend at the candy store’ (Eilonwy 2003), and ‘Amen amen A men of San Diego’ (Seedy Songs 2007):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eeny meeny</td>
<td>Down down/town</td>
<td>Caught you/Boyfriend</td>
<td>Apple sticks</td>
<td>Peach/plum/bubblegum</td>
<td>Sick in bed</td>
<td>Meat pie</td>
<td>Wibble wobble</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This leads to a variety of structures (see Select List of EMD Versions in Appendix). Texts are further extended with an introductory line or interpolated line, such as ‘Tutti frutti’.

The majority of these texts do not, of course, come with a transcription or even a description of their associated vocalisation or clapping movements. One or two do have an mp3 file, though, and several have been posted on YouTube, as the above example. Through these we discover alternative vocalisations, especially singing the syllables in an even, rather than a ‘swung’ rhythm, and alternative clapping routines. The video just shown demonstrates one of the more complex clapping routines encountered across all the data. It consists of the horizontal brush, Hi Lo Jackalo movement, taking first right hands then left hands (in the manner of a grand chain in country dancing), slapping right thigh twice, and clicking right hand fingers twice. Aware of its complexity, the two girls just viewed also posted an ‘instructional’ video, slowing the movements down, at first in isolation from the text.

Notable by its absence from many of the identifiably American texts is the ‘Down town baby’ section. As the structures above indicate, it is often replaced by the ‘Take a peach, take a plum, take a stick of chewing gum’ lines. A notable exception is the Los Angeles version stands out in this regard as containing ‘down down baby’ lines:

Eeny meeny pepsadeeny
Oo pop popsadeeny
Education, liberation,
I love you,
Tutti frutti,
Down down baby
Up in a roller coaster
Sweet sweet baby
I’ll never let you go
Shimmy rock, shimmy rock
Shimmy, shimmy, shimmy rock.
Caught you with your boyfriend,
Naughty, naughty
Stole a piece of candy,
Greedy, greedy,
Wouldn’t wash the dishes,
Lazy, lazy,
Jumpin’ out the window,
Crazy, crazy,
Eeny meeny pepsadeeny,
Oo pop popsadeeny,
Education, liberation,
I love you,
Tutti frutti Wow! (Merrill-Mirsky 1988: 139–40)

The ‘Down down baby’ lines are clearly related to the clapping game ‘Down Down Baby’ discussed extensively by Kathryn Marsh (2008). She quotes the following version:

Down down baby, down down the roller coaster
Sweet sweet baby I’ll never let you go.
Shimmy shimmy coco pops shimmy shimmy pow [punch fist].
Shimmy shimmy coco pops shimmy shimmy pow [punch fist].
Granma, granma sick in bed.
She called the doctor and the doctor said,
Let’s get the rhythm of the head, ding dong [shake head].
Let’s get the rhythm of the head, ding dong [shake head].
Let’s get the rhythm of the hands [clap, clap].
Let’s get the rhythm of the hands [clap, clap].
Let’s get the rhythm of the feet [stamp, stamp].
Let’s get the rhythm of the feet [stamp, stamp].
Let’s get the rhythm of the hot dog [swivel hips].
Let’s get the rhythm of the hot dog [swivel hips].
Put ‘em all together and what do you get?
Ding dong [clap, stamp, stamp] hot dog.
Put ‘em all backwards and what do you get?

When the ‘down down baby’ lines occur in EMD, however, it is almost always limited to the first two, or occasionally four lines, as they appear above. One UK text, collected in Coventry in 1998 (Gould n.d.) contains the ‘Grandma grandma’ lines but does not progress to the ‘Let’s get the rhythm’ sequence which seems to be very much a defining characteristic of the ‘Down Down Baby’ complex. For this reason, I consider the EMD complex as related to, but distinct from, the ‘Down Down Baby’ one.
Finally, recalling Natasha’s version, it is notable that the ‘apple sticks make me sick...kissed a boy behind a magazine’ lines are completely absent in the US versions. Instead, it seems, these lines are well known in the US, Australia (Factor 1989: 83) and New Zealand (‘Apple on a Stick’ in Bauer and Bauer), and to some extent in the UK (Roud 2010b; McVicar 2007: 67), as a standalone rhyme used for clapping and skipping:

Apples on a stick
Make me sick
Makes my tummy go
Two Forty-six
Not because its dirty
Not because its clean
Not because I kissed my mommy
Behind the magazines. (Michels and White 1983: 11)

It often continues along the following lines (which equate to the section designated H above in the EMD versions):

Girls, girls
Do you want to fight?
Here comes Dickey
With her pants on tight
She can wiggle
She can woggle
She can do all that
I bet you ten dollars
You can do this
Count to ten with your eyes closed
A-baby one
A-baby two
A-baby three, four, five
Baby, I don’t take no jive.
A-baby six
A-baby seven
A-baby eight, nine, ten
You better back it up and do it again. (Michels and White 1983: 11)

**EMD in the UK and Ireland**

The EMD versions found in the UK come from a good spread of the country, including Surrey, London, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, plus Oxford, Coventry and Sheffield further north, Hereford to the west of England, and Ross-shire in the
Northwest of Scotland. One of the versions from the Web may come from Ireland (inasmuch as the contributor’s name is displayed with an Irish flag beside it). By far the majority of them were documented during the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century. Together with the fact that there is no British version of EMD in The Singing Game, which was published in 1985, this suggests that EMD was not known or not widespread prior to the Opies’ cut-off date for The Singing Game. This is clearly the view of the Opies themselves since, in their unpublished papers, Iona has noted items ‘post Singing Game’, including EMD (Box 238). These versions include the earliest known rendition of EMD in the UK, recorded by Iona from girls of 8 and 9 years old at the American School in London in March 1975, which is among the sound recordings now being indexed as part of our project. Laura has kindly located this clip. (PLAY SOUND CLIP) This is Iona’s transcription:

Eeny meeny desta meeny
Ooh ba, babaeenie,
Atchy katchy liver atchy,
I love you.
Hey, boy,
Watcha name?
Jim-mie.
Watcha got?
Hot dogs.
Gimme some.
Jump out the window.
Ladies and gentlemen,
Children too,
This little girl
Got something to do.
Turn around
Touch the ground
The sun goes up
And then goes down.
Eeny meeny desta meeny
Ooh ba, babaleenie
Atchy katchy liver atchy
I love you.

Iona has also noted: ‘Horizontal-style clapping [i.e. the 3-way clap], except when doing actions at ‘Turn around’, ‘Touch the ground’, ‘The sun goes up’, when the arm is raised, and ‘The sun goes down’, when it is lowered… Learnt at the school’ (Box 238).

There is a further text likely to be of UK provenance among those located on the Web, as it refers to ‘primary school’ (http://onceuponawin.com/2009/05/20/win-pics-the-hand-clap-game/).
The next earliest version located is also among the Opies’ papers (Box 238). This is a press cutting from the *Times Educational Supplement*, dated 13 January 1984. Under a general heading of ‘Lingo’, it is reported:

Homer lives! Troubadours are still among us, their works passing from mouth to ear to mouth again – but only so long as they remain useful to their public. Both bards and public are children. While girls of nine and ten at North London primary schools play clapping games too complicated for emulation by their elders, they keep time by singing of matters as old as love as new as “liberation”.

Eeny meeny popsadeeny,
Oompa popsadeeny,
Education liberation I love you,

Tootie-fruitie down-town baby,
Down by the roller-coaster, sweet sweet honey
No place to go,
Caught you with your boyfriend naughty, naughty,
Stole a piece of candy, greedy, greedy,
Wouldn’t wash the dishes lazy, lazy,
Jumped out the window crazy, crazy,

Eeny meeny popsadeeny,
Oompa popsadeeny,
Education liberation I love you.

They’ve done this sort of thing before. When they were younger – seven and eight – they were clapping to a different tune, and singing still of love, but not yet of liberation: See See my baby...[etc.]
These girls do no inhabit a time-warp. They watch *Top of the Pops* like everyone else. But they don’t just sing what they buy. When they do their own things they sing their own songs, as children always have and, we hope, always will.

On the same page, Iona has noted, ‘now naturalised in North London’.

The fact that EMD as a clapping game was known within the US from at least the 1960s, and was only encountered prior to 1984 by the Opies at an American school in the UK, suggests that the direction of influence was from the US to the UK – in other words, that EMD spread from the US to the UK, although not necessarily via the specific version collected by the Opies from the American school in London. ¹⁰ It

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¹⁰ Whilst one can detect similarities between texts, it is another matter to ascribe genetic connection between them unless one can provide other evidence to
has since spread widely across the country. As already seen, even within Sheffield there are distinct versions of the game and its text, and we now turn to the other UK versions for comparison.

The structure of the UK texts, in terms of the sections identified and discussed above, is noted in the Select List of EMD Versions (see Appendix below). The text of the version from the American school is the least similar to any of the children's versions located for this study, either in the UK or the US. Nonetheless, in its references to touching the ground and ladies and gentlemen it relates to a commercial song, discussed below. It has the 3-way clap and elements of miming. The girls perform it very fast and with the straight rather than swung rhythm.

It is notable that the core sections of the remaining UK versions are ABC, that is ‘Eeny meeny’, ‘Down down/town baby’ and ‘Caught you with your boyfriend’. As already noted, the ‘take a peach, take a plum, take a stick of bubble gum’ lines associated with many US texts are completely absent as are sections J, K, L, M, and N with which a number of US EMD texts have been combined. Again, as already noted, the core ABC or ABCA structure of UK texts may be preceded by or, more frequently, succeeded by the ‘Apples (on a) stick(s)’ lines (D), sometimes in their extended form (H), a combination which is completely absent in the US texts.

Another notable feature of the UK texts is that the variation on the third word of the opening line is much more limited than in the US:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Line Variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American School</td>
<td>destameeny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North London</td>
<td>popsadeeny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>dessameeny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney</td>
<td>dessameeny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>dessamesser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry 1998</td>
<td>(My name is Ena Beena) Boxer Beena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry 2001</td>
<td>essameeny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

support the relationship. A further problem can be to decide on the direction of influence. For example, the Los Angeles text collected by Merrill-Mirsky contains a number of textual features which relate it to the UK rather than the US versions (such as in the use of ‘education, liberation’, the ‘tutti frutti’ interpolations, and the use of further lines from ‘Down Down Baby’. In the absence of further evidence regarding the ‘backstory’ of this text, it is impossible to determine the direction and more precise nature of this suggested relationship.
I can only make a suggestion to be investigated rather than account for this categorically. One other song with which EMD shows textual parallels is a well known scout/guide song, known by various titles including ‘Flea Fly Flo’, ‘The Beestay’ and ‘Koomala Vista’. It is usually performed as a call and response song and is largely made up of nonsense words:

Flea, flea,
Flea, fly, flea, fly,
Flea, fly, flo,
Flea, fly, flo,
Vista, vista,
Cuma lara, uma lara,
Cuma lara vista,
Cuma lara, cuma lara,
Cuma lara vista,

Oh no, no, nona ta vista,
Oh no, no, nona ta vista,

Eeny meeny decimeeny,
Oo wara wara meeny,
Eximeeny salimeeny,
Oo waru wah.

Eeny meeny decimeeny,
Oo wara wara meeny,
Eximeeny salimeeny,
Oo waru wah.

Bee balu ootin dotin,
Do dotin shhhht!
Bee balu ootin dotin,
Do dotin shhhht!
Woooooo! [Indian whoop]
Spee-ar Whoo! (Stanley Robertson 2006)

The Opies comment that ‘this is a typical gibberish campfire song, sung by Scouts and Guides in this country and at summer camps in the USA. During the 1970s the incantation gripped the imagination of junior school children, who inevitably muddled it into unorthodox playground variations’ (1985: 405).

Clearly, the lines of interest here are ‘Eenie meenie dessameenie/decimeeny ….’ and they seem to be extremely stable. Although the song is well known in the US as well, I wonder if it has exerted a particular influence on the UK EMD texts because it was well-established in the UK before EMD took root.

Finally, as already commented, none of the UK texts contain the ‘achi/cachi’ sounds in their third line, apart from the one from the American school. The third line of the 1993 Hackney version runs ‘eeny meeny lavaricious’. Otherwise the UK texts consistently use ‘education liberation’, or some variant of the second word. Gaunt comments:

This game, like several others, features so-called nonsense language. This language is marked by dramatically contrasting timbres, or the nonlexical manipulation of vowels and consonants – ‘atchi-catchi liberatchi.’ This is a linguistic code for ‘education liberation’ like the code known as pig-Latin that masks everyday speech among children and adults (Merrill-Mirsky 1988).

(Gaunt 2006: 89)

**EMD in the Antipodes**

Only three versions, two from Australia, one of which is fragmentary, and one from New Zealand have so far been located. The earliest of these texts is from Australia and was documented in 1985, in Pearcedale, Victoria, from a 9-year-old girl; it has many features in common with the UK texts:

Eeny meeny popsikeeeny
You are the opsikeeeny,
Education, liberation, I like you.
Down town baby, down by the roller coaster,
Sweet, sweet baby, no place to go.
Didn't do the dishes, lazy, lazy,
Jumped out the window, crazy, crazy.\textsuperscript{11}

The New Zealand version was documented in 2002. It is a unique text in relation to the others located for this study in that it combines elements of EMD with another popular clapping rhyme, ‘Ronald McDonald’, and borders on the scatological in places:

Ronald McDonald
I gotta biscuit a biscuit
I sue sue wala wala biscuit
I gotta boyfriend a boyfriend
He’s so funky funky
I gotta ice cream with the cherry on top
I gotta cherry on the bottom
Down down down baby
Down down the toilet hole
Jumped on me boyfriend
Naughty naughty
Jumped out the window crazy crazy
Never do the dishes lazy lazy
Eeny meeny disapene
Uwala wala wala uwalawala
I hate school.\textsuperscript{12} (Bauer and Bauer 2003: e15)

It is clearly impossible to generalise from so few instances of EMD but they demonstrate the further spread of EMD in the English-speaking world.

**EMD – Antecedents**

We have seen, then, that the earliest documented versions of EMD as a clapping game are from the US. It is also among the US versions that we find other functions for the EMD text. Several examples are clearly identified as counting out rhymes. These were documented as in use during the 1950s (New Jersey), the 1980s (New York City), and 1990s (Wisconsin). One further text has no reference to place or date (except mention of it coming from the author’s ‘far-off childhood’). The 1980s examples equates to sections A and E of the EMD text:

Eenie meenie sicileeny,

\textsuperscript{11} From the Australian Children’s Folklore Collection, courtesy of Judy McKinty. Judy also recalls another version with similar elements but a longer text which she noted in the late 1980s or early 1990s (McKinty 2010)

\textsuperscript{12} Clapping Games, e15, New Zealand Playground Language Project, Winfred and Laurie Bauer, \url{http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/Research/playground}.
Ooh ah zambalini
Achi cachi Liberache
I love you
Take a peach
Take a plum
Take a stick of bubble gum
Not a peach
Not a plum
Not a stick of bubble gum (Leonard 2009).

The 1990s version is parallel to sections A, E and J:

Eeny meeny tortellini
Beep bop bopellini
Etchy sketchy liver etchy
I like you.
Take a peach
Take a plum
Take a stick of chewing gum
Stick it here
Stick it there
Stick it in your teacher's hair
No more school
No more books
No more teacher's dirty looks
Yeah (Weaver 2009).

The 1950s version and the undated version comprise section A only. There is a distinct difference between them, however, in the second and fourth lines:

1950s       Undated
Eeny meeny that's a queeny    Eeny meeny pepsi seeny
Ooh ah thumbelini     Alabama, boo!
Ahche mache cucharachi    Hootchie kootchie, donna loochie
I love you (Azizi 2005).    OUT GOES YOU! (Bard 2005)

The rhythm of the second line departs from the EMD norm by stopping on the second strong beat ('Alabama, boo'), rather than using a four-syllable word comprising one stressed and three unstressed syllables ('thum-belini'). Further, the variant text of the fourth line, whilst evidencing the same rhythm and the same final word, makes explicit reference to the rhyme's counting out function and is a widespread ending to counting out rhymes in general.

A further example, documented in 1949 from Pennsylvania, is given as both a skipping rhyme and a counting out rhyme:
Eeny meeny, tipsy teeny
Applejack and Johnny Sweeney
Hokey-pokey, dominoky.
Hom, pom, tusk.
Tusk in, tusk out,
All around the waterspout.
Have a peach, have a plum,
Have a stick of chewing gum. (Harris 1949; quoted in Abrahams 1969: 48)

Still another example is described as an adult-to-child finger (and vocabulary?)
game:

Eeny meeny dixie deeny
Apple jam, John queeny
Hokey pokey, I point to it! (Moss and Fawcett 1995: 252)

A final example is characterised as a rhyme, used in Georgia around 1916, chanted
by the seeker in Hide and Seek whilst waiting for the other players to find a hiding
place:

Eeny Meeny, Dixie Deeny,
Hit 'em a lick and Johnny queeny
Time, time, American time,
Eighteen hundred and ninety-nine. (Kienzle 2002)

It is clear that these rhymes have textual similarities but, more importantly, all of
these texts relate to or form part of a larger textual family of counting out rhymes
which, to a greater or lesser extent, evidence similarities to the EMD A section. Abrahams and Rankin have listed many of these in their Counting-Out Rhymes: A Dictionary (1980: 66–68 [no. 140]) and, before them, Henry C. Bolton identified this as a distinct group among the British and American counting out rhymes he examined (cf. Opie and Opie 1997: 264 [no. 251]). The Opies found versions of this in the UK, the earliest orally collected text dating from 1946 (Opie and Opie [1969] 1984: 42). They comment, however, that it is ‘a count that has always had a more
lively existence in America than in Britain. Not only did Bolton collect thirty versions in the United States in 1888, but the rhyme appears to have been as well known there in the mid nineteenth century as in the mid twentieth century’ (Opie and Opie [1969] 1984: 42).

13 This is cited as learnt from the mother of one of the authors but no date for this event is
given. From comments in the article, it would seem that this was in around 1960. The mother
is said to have learnt the rhyme as a child in Appalachia suggesting that the text dates from at
least c.1940.
Abrahams' sample text illustrates some of the continuities and differences with the EMD A section:

Eeny, meeny, tipsy tee (teeny, toe, taily)
Delia, dahlia, dominee;
Hatcha, patcha, dominatcha.

The earliest use of a two-syllable ‘eena’ or ‘–eeny’ ending to the first line among the instances detailed by Abrahams and Rankin is from the 1885–1910 period from Nova Scotia, Canada. Further examples come from Pennsylvania and New Jersey and were documented in 1916, beginning ‘Ena, mena, tipsa, tena (teney), one ending ‘Apple jack and John Sweeney; /Have a peach and a plum. / Have a stick of chewing gum’.

Thus, it begins to look as if the antecedents of the EMD clapping game text lie in this cluster of older counting out rhymes. Versions of these rhymes continued to be used for counting out, moreover, at the same time that EMD became popular as a clapping game and the texts of each appear to have exerted reciprocal influences on each other from time to time. Indeed, Maureen Kenney documents an instance of the EMD clapping game being used for a counting out function: ‘Played in a circle with the three-pulse clap pattern...each time faster and faster. Children must drop out if they miss a clap. Last one left is the winner or “it”’ (Kenney 1983: 50).

**Defining Eeny Meeny Dessameeny**

With this evidence in front of us, how do we define what is EMD and what is not? I have invoked a number of criteria to delineate EMD. Its kernel is what we have termed the A section. I regard the counting out rhymes or other rhymes using this text whose first line ends in ‘eena’ or ‘–eeny’ as proto-EMD texts, especially if their third line contains the ‘atch’ or ‘atcha’ sound and/or their second line ends in a strong-weak formation, such as ‘sweeney’ (as distinct from ‘dominee’, for example, which ends on a strong beat). The connection of this kernel to the EMD complex is reinforced in the case of counting out rhymes which also incorporate the peach/plum lines. Once the A section of text is used with any form of clapping, it falls clearly within the EMD family. The game may then be extended by the concatenation of the kernel with other rhymes, used in part or in whole, with clapping and often miming movements. These concatenations can still be regarded as part of the EMD family. Anything less than the A section, such as its first two lines as incorporated in the middle of the Flea Fly Flo text, lies outside the complex, although clearly evinces parallels with it.

**EMD in Commercial Songs**
On this basis, we can identify the use of the EMD kernel in a number of commercially recorded songs.

**Slim Bryant and the Wildcats**

The earliest of these dates from 1946 and is by the country musician Slim Bryant who was born in Atlanta, Georgia, 1908 (Bryant 1946). Bryant remembered the hide-and-seek rhyme quoted above from a girl playmate he knew when he was aged about 7 or 8 and used it as his source of inspiration for the song, although he 'changed it around, put music to it' (Kienzle 2002):

'Eeny meeny Dixie deeny
Hit 'em a lick and Johnny queeny'
Sing the kids when they go out to play
'Double time American time,
Eighteen hundred and ninety-nine'
This is the way they pass the time away.
Eeny meeny derley deeney
Hide your face and you're a meany
Give them lots of time to go and hide
???
Now they're hid and you must go
You must hunt them out so far and wide.

I'd bet you'd like to be a kid again
Hide-and-go-seek was such a lot of fun
And if you'd like to be an It again
Take a little time to have some fun.

Bryant and his band, the Wildcats, achieved regional fame in the Pittsburgh area through radio and early television but did not become national stars so it is likely that any influence this exerted on the use of the rhyme is limited to this area (Kienzle 2002).

**Lee Andrews and the Hearts**

Kyra Gaunt has discussed in detail the 1957 doo-wop song by Lee Andrews and the Hearts entitled ‘Glad to Be Here’, the B side of a single entitled ‘Why Do I?’ (Gaunt 2006: 90–91), which includes the EMD A section:

Say, Eeny meeny distaleeny
Gooah my de comb-a-lee-na
Ratcha tatcha boom-a-latcha
Alla-ya-loo
That means we’re glad to-a be here

We’re really glad to-a be here

Ladies and gentlemen, a-children too.
Here’s a five boys to do a show for you
We’re gonna turn all around
Gonna touch the ground
Gonna shim-sham shimmy all around
Gonna shim-sham shimmy all over the stage
We gonna shim-sham shimmy when we get paid…
Eeny meeny distaleeny
You are my da-comb-a-leen
Ratcha tachta book-a-latcha
Alla-ma-doo
It means I’m really glad to be here

Gaunt poses the question ‘did Lee Andrews and the Hearts imitate an earlier version of a locally popular game-song that was known long before Nancy [the source of Gaunt’s quoted version of EMD] and her girlfriends performed it during the 1970s?’ (Gaunt 2006: 91). As we have seen, ‘We’re Really Glad to Be Here’ pre-dates the earliest extant US EMD text associated with clapping (Geracimos 1964; not mentioned by Gaunt), but only by seven years. That EMD clapping game was noted from black performers in New York. It is therefore within the bounds of possibility that the clapping game was known to Calhoun and Henderson, Philadelphia school friends of Lee Andrews also involved with the band, who are credited with writing the song.14 If so, the draw of the text appears to have been at least partly in its sound:

The dramatically contrasting timbres expressed [in the words of ‘Eeny Meeny Pepsadeeny’] are further nuanced by the presence of assonance (internal rhymes) within each phrase. These same linguistic features are consistent with certain ‘novelty’ dance tunes recorded by male artists: the jump-band jive of the Savoy Sultans in the 1940s, doo-wop of the 1950s, and R&B or early rock ‘n’ roll during the 1950s and 1960s. The opening flurry of language in Little Richard’s ‘Tutti Frutti’ (‘A-wop-bop-a-loo-bop-a-lop-bam-boom’) is probably the most well-recognized example of playful speech. (Gaunt 2006:89–90)

Interestingly, Geracimos, collector of the earliest EMD clapping games in New York, refers to the fact that the verses ‘seldom make sense’ and that they are ‘sounds for sounds’ sake’ (quoted in full above; see pages 14–15).

14 Gaunt notes that ‘the songwriting credits are attributed to Calhoun and Henderson (perhaps Royalston “Roy” or Wendell Calhoun, who were members of the group, and disk jockey/manager Jocko Henderson’ (2006: 91).
As Lee Andrews and the Hearts were also promoted in Philadelphia from 1957, Gaunt points out that it is possible that ‘Glad to Be Here’ may have influenced the clapping game song recalled by her informant in the early 1970s (quoted above). Whilst this may be so, in general if not specific terms, a much more striking textual parallel is found in the EMD version collected by the Opies in the American School in London nearly twenty years later:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Glad to Be Here’</th>
<th>American School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ladies and gentlemen, a-children too.</td>
<td>Ladies and gentlemen, children too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here’s a five boys to do a show for you</td>
<td>This little girl got something to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’re gonna turn all around</td>
<td>Turn around, touch the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonna touch the ground</td>
<td>The sun goes up and then goes down.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which way was the influence, however? Gaunt, who does not cite the American School text, uses these lyrics to argue for the reciprocal influence of girls’ games on popular recorded songs:

First, the phrases ‘We’re gonna turn all around / we’re gonna touch the ground’ are a common chant accompanying double-dutch and single-rope play. Second, ‘shim-sham shimmy’ recalls a segment of a handclapping game-song known as ‘Hot dog’ or ‘Down, down baby’…It also recalls an important dance of the same name, the ‘Shim-Sham,’ ritually performed by swing and tap dancers. Perhaps the ‘traditional’ or public domain performance of girls’ games could be credited as the source of this song, performed or sampled by Lee Andrews and the hearts... This suggests that popular music long before hip-hop was incorporating everyday, found sounds, or folklore, into its compositional processes and begs a closer look at hip-hop as an extension of earlier black practices. (Gaunt 2006: 91–92)

The work of the Opies and others supports the notion of reciprocal influence between girls’ singing games and popular music but not necessarily in the context of black practices (Opie and Opie 1985; Marsh 2008:156–95; Bishop and Curtis 2006).

In specific terms, the American School EMD text is the only one which incorporates the ‘Ladies and gentlemen…touch the ground’ lines and this suggests, though not conclusively, that it is directly influenced by the Lee Andrews and the Hearts release.

**Vito and the Salutations**

Six years later, in 1963, another doo-wop group, Vito and the Salutations, from Brooklyn, New York, released ‘Eenie Meenie’ as the B side of their single ‘Extraordinary Girl’ (Vito and the Salutations 1963). Here the EMD A section acts as a chorus:
Eeny meeny dissle-eny
Ooh bop combaleeny
Racka chacka umbalacka
Y-O-U
Eeny meeny dissle-eny
Ooh bop combaleeny
Racka chacka umbalacka
?? will do??

As already mentioned, Ann Geracimos noted ‘Eeny meeny gypsaleeny’ on the streets of New York and published it in year following the release of Vito and the Salutations’ song. Yet, there are no particular textual similarities between them; indeed the game text differs from that of Vito and the Salutations in several details. Instead, the specific forms of the words sung by Vito and the Salutations seem to be closer to those of Lee Andrews and the Hearts.

J. J. Fad

There is a gap of 35 years between Vito’s doo wop song and that by the all-female black rap group, J. J. Fad, from Los Angeles. Their 1998 album, *Supersonic*, includes a track entitled ‘Eenie Meenie Beats’:

Superson-Superson-Super
Supersonic motivating
Superson-Superson-Super
Rockin’ your world

Superson-Superson-Super
Supersonic motivating
Supersonic motivating
Rockin’ your world

Eenie meenie disaleenie ooh wah bop a leenie
Asa cotcha Liberace I love you
Take a peach, take a plum
Take a piece of bubble gum
No peach, no plum, no piece of
Supersonic..[etc.] (Fad 1998)

This example clearly goes further than the previous commercial songs in including not only the EMD A section but also the peach/plum/bubble gum (E) section which, as we have seen, is commonly found in US versions of EMD, a good number of which were documented prior to the J. J. Fad release. The change from the very relaxed movement of the ‘Superson-super’ section to the faster, more urgent style of
‘Eenie meenie disaleenie’ is very marked in J. J. Fad’s song. In particular, the words are delivered at a much faster pace, more or less on a monotone. Hence the text is embedded within the musical arrangement but forms a distinct feature of it.

Gauging the impact of this release warrants further research which is beyond the scope of this paper. Noting the group’s popularity, and the fact that they are an all-female line up, prompts the question as to whether this release had the effect of validating the EMD text among children who already knew it as a counting out rhyme or handclapping game. It is also conceivable that it brought the text to the attention of children who did not know it before and who saw its potential as a clapping song. Alternatively, children may have known that it went with clapping but had no immediate model, leading them to create their own routine to accompany the text.15

Jelly’s Pierced Tattoo

The following year, 1999, saw another use of EMD, this time in a song entitled ‘Black Flowers’ by the Detroit duo Jelly’s Pierced Tattoo, and featured on their album, *The Rebirth, Live in the Studio* (Jelly’s Pierced Tattoo 1999). They are described as making ‘funkternative music, which melds funk, alternative & world beat with the influence of rap and thick soul’ (Anon: 2001?). In ‘Black Flowers’, the EMD A section is combined with lines which sound as if they come from another rhyme (‘Said Shirley Temple, thank she cute / All she c’ wear is a bathin suit’ – which is similar in rhythm to the ‘grandma grandma, sick in bed’ rhyme) and the ‘wibble wobble’ lines of section H. It functions as a ‘middle 8’ within the whole song and is performed by Jelly, the female singer, as a counterpoint to the part sung by Thy, the male singer. In contrast to the rest of the song, and in common with J. J. Fad’s ‘Eenie meenie beats’, it is chanted on a monotone at a faster pace of delivery than the sections which surround it:

black flowers grow in the concrete ground  
and wingtipped shoes try to crush them down  
some rare white roses from the ghetto understand  
and it don't change

brotha in the name of hood love  
you're fallin into the drug filled mud  
but your mind is weak and you dont understand that  
it don't change

paint the flowers on your face  
throw a peace sign in the air

15 Or was there a pop video that went with this song which featured accompanying clapping?
flowers on your face and love everywhere

green collard greens and black eyed peas
hot buttered corn bread don't necessarily
make the only black folks you ever did see
and that won't change

now let me break it down so you can comprehend
i know some folks say that they understand
i know you say you're only getting ends
and soulfood was just the only thing they had and
that won't change

paint the flowers on your face
throw a peace sign in the air

(jelly - at same time as thy)

eeny meeny gipsaleeny ooh ah kinda meeny
atcha katchy liberache i love u
said shirley temple thank she cute
all she c' ware is a bathin suit
she c' wibble she c' wobble she c' do the splits
but i betcha $5 she can't do
jelly on 1 foot 1 foot 1 foot
jelly on 2 foot 2 foot 2 foot
jelly on 3 foot 3 foot 3 foot
jelly on out [etc.]

Kathryn Marsh has proposed a model of the cycles of appropriation and
reappropriation of Down Down Baby and there are ways in which her findings parallel
those presented here (Marsh 2008: 186). Yet, it is hard to determine the way or,
more likely, multiple ways, in which the cycle works in specific terms. Intriguing
questions spring to mind:

- Why do commercial artists include such items?
- What is their provenance, e.g. in terms of one performer’s or band’s influence
  on another and each one’s knowledge of and relationship to orally transmitted
  renditions by children?
- In what ways are textual, musical and perhaps movement elements
  recontextualised within the song and, nowadays, any accompanying video,
  and in relation to the performers’ identity in terms of, for example, gender and
  image?
• What multimodal 'affordances' do these commercial versions offer and what influences can they be observed as having on contemporary singing game practices among children of different identities and in different contexts?

These require specific answers based on empirical evidence before we attempt broader generalisations.

Conclusions: The Comparative Method in the Global Age

This ‘delimited’ comparative study of a clapping game and its associated text has proved an unexpectedly extensive task. Through it, we have established a corpus of materials relating to EMD, attempting to delineate aspects of its identity, examined likely antecedents of its core identifying text, and found evidence of the spread of EMD as a clapping game from the US to the UK in the 1970s and early 1980s. We have also examined ways in which the EMD texts, vocal realisations, functions and accompanying clapping routines have been varied, and examined the transformations of the EMD text in various commercial transformations from the US.

From this data, it is so tempting to infer that analogues, especially textual ones, are the result of actual genetic relationship. Yet, we must always bear in mind that the data we have available is, and always will be, partial, and represents but the tip of a massive iceberg. The urge to interpret and make sense of the ‘mega mashup’ may also lead us to oversimplify the numerous parallel and simultaneous lines of transmission of the material in which we are interested. In the global age, a clapping game or other folkloric form may be disseminated even faster than ever. As Jackie has mentioned, websites such as YouTube may provide a virtual kind of ‘face-to-face interpersonal’ transmission, opening new possibilities for the dissemination of folklore items in time and space. The challenge facing us is to trace these processes in a meaningful way and construct or adapt models which can account for them. In the case of the EMD text, there is no narrative to hold it together so what factors bring about the transformations and variations that we have charted above? Rhythm, sound and the sense of certain words may be among the factors involved at some points in the complex but there are undoubtedly others to be investigated, since as the identification of the handclapping game, in some places and at certain times, with black girls’ play.

Meanwhile, we might do worse than examine the relevance of the rhizomatic metaphor developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) to our conceptualisation of the complex web of performances and interactions of folkloric items.16 Their model was proposed as a counter to the hierarchical tree-like

16 I would like to thank Jackie Marsh for first suggesting the potential relevance of this work to folkloric transmission and variation.
conceptualisation of humanist thought and belief which implies the possibility of tracing a single origin. The positing of an origin, or totalizing structure, in turn leads to ‘thinking in terms of binary oppositions, and the privileging of one binary over another’ (O’Kelly 2008). They propose instead that a model based on multiplicity:

The ultimate symbol of the multiple, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is the rhizome. A rhizome is a rootlike (though not a root) organism that spreads and grows horizontally (generally underground). Some examples are potatoes, couchgrass, and weeds. Couchgrass…continues to grow even if you pull up what you think is all of it, since it has no central ‘governing’ element. As a rhizome has no center, it spreads continuously without beginning or end and basically exists in a constant state of play (O’Kelly 2008).

Many principles of the rhizomatic model suggest relevance to folkloric expression. The implications and applications of these in relation to folklore must, however, await a further paper. Suffice it to say here that it is useful for ‘decentering’ our notions of folkloric transmission and variation and may be fruitful to consider in relation to new directions in the folkloric study of variation, such as Honko’s call for the generation of ‘thick corpus’ and the study of ‘organic variation’ (Honko 2000). At this stage, one can safely conclude that that old folkloristic chestnut (or should I say rhizome?) – the study of continuity and change – still offers us exceedingly rich possibilities for scholarly research and theorizing.

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Roud, Steve. 2010b. Email to author [re Apple sticks], DATE


Turrell, John. 2010. Email to author. 5 February.


## APPENDIX List of Versions Cited

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**UK versions**

1. Girls, aged 8–9, American School, London, 1975
3. Girls, Bedford, c.1990?
4. Hackney, 1993
5. Primary school, Oxford, 1996
7. Girl aged 12, Coventry, 2001
8. Y1, Broomhill IS, Sheffield, 2005–06
15. Y4s, Monteney PS, Sheffield, July 2009
16. Y6s, Monteney PS, Sheffield, Oct 2009
17. Snushi [Ireland flag by name], 2009

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**Source**

A = AOCOA
ABCA = Ilson and Ilson 1984
AOCOA = Opie and Opie n.d.
ABC = Opie and Opie n.d.
ABCA = Grugeon 1993: 16–17
ABCAF = Gould n.d.
ABCAD = Gould n.d.
ABC = McVicar 2007: 78
BADH = Roud 2010b
ABCA = Turrell 2010
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ABCA = MPJB 2009a
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