‘Children in place’:
A phenomenography of children’s understandings of place, identity in place and looking after place

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Sydney School of Education and Social Work Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
The University of Sydney

February, 2018
Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Annette Sartor
Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance and support of a number of people.

I would like to thank all the supervisors involved in this study at various stages. The supervision of Doctor Laurel Bornholt laid the foundation of the research while Doctor Rachel Wilson introduced me to a methodology that has been appropriate for the character of the study. A sincere thank you to Associate Professor Richard Walker for assisting in the sculpting and writing of the thesis. I appreciate his direction and attention to detail, and am especially grateful for his patience and support throughout the writing stage. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Stephen McLaren for the editing and proofreading of the final draft of my thesis.

A special thank you to the participant schools, especially the children involved in this study. I acknowledge their enthusiasm and willingness to share their ideas, and am thankful to their parents and carers for allowing them to be involved in the research. Also, without the assistance of the teachers and administrative staff, it would not have been possible to conduct interviews in a structured and timely manner.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my family and friends that have supported me throughout my research journey. In particular, I am deeply indebted to my two children, Sam and George, and friend Pip, for providing light relief and support when required, and not tiring of me talking about my thesis.

My PhD study was generously funded by the Thomas and Ethel Mary Ewing Postdoctoral Scholarship in Education and I am grateful to the Sydney School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney for this opportunity.
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Abstract

Place as an entity is not fixed, but is constructed through subjective understandings. While past research on children and place has tended to focus on children’s special places, this study extends the research on children’s conceptualisations of place arising from everyday experiences. In particular, it explores children’s understandings of place as a phenomenon and insider understandings of place as a local area encompassing everyday life. This research, framed within the broad scope of place theory, explores children’s experiences to provide new insights into child-place relationships that encourage environmentally sustainable practices.

The use of phenomenography as a research tool provides a snapshot of children’s conceptualisations of place and of themselves within it. Using an interpretive approach, variation in children’s understandings of the phenomena of place, children’s identity in relation to place and looking after place are explored. The participants are children aged 7 to 12 years living in a geographically and culturally distinct region, and data were collected using open-ended interview questions. Six categories of description were revealed: place is a space and a locality; place has a range of opportunities; place attachment, place identity and belonging; connections, caring and responsibility for place; the developing self in place.

This research revealed a pattern of children’s place understandings spanning spatial awareness, the functionality of place, and connections to people and nature. Children develop care and responsibility for place that encompasses both
community and environmental components. However, these understandings are affected by self-perceptions of identity in which being a ‘school child’ and ‘not important’ reveals an acute awareness of children’s position in society. Children expressed a conflict between wanting to protect place entities for which they have a close affinity for and value, and the limitations imposed on them as children which act as barriers to self-determination. Emerging ideas on children’s participation should continue to focus on enabling children’s voices and developing children’s capacities as active agents and future environmental citizens.
SECTION I:

INTRODUCTION
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The concept of place is central to human existence. Place conjures notions of dwelling in a geographic location in which one participates in a range of activities central to daily life. Increasingly, place studies are situated in research disciplines that seek new approaches to solving environmental problems. This is because place provides a microcosm of interactions related to the basic tenets of sustainability; physical systems, social dimensions and effective resource management, and the mantra ‘think globally, act locally’ urges people to consider the future of the entire planet and to take action at a local level.

Concerns over environmental issues draw attention to children of the coming generation, who will be more affected. Children are touted as both the recipients and fixers of environmental problems, and consequently are increasingly positioned as contributors to the socio-political landscape. While children’s interactions with environmental issues occurs within purpose built participatory project, their contributions within the local area remains unclear.
For children, place is often understood in relation to unique and complex encounters during the course of everyday life that span social, cultural and environmental contexts and spaces. Through experiences within place or ‘place experiences’ children develop environmental knowledge and an awareness of their capabilities to skilfully navigate various contexts and to shape ongoing transactions. This requires an understanding of identity in relation to spatial and political systems, as well as identity processes that result in motivation for preserving and caring for place in a sustainable way.

1.2 The purpose of the study

This research attempts to broaden approaches to ‘child in place’ research by using an interpretive approach known as phenomenography, which positions the meaning-making practices of children at the centre of the investigation. The objective of the study is to gain insights into the ways children experience place as a phenomenon. This includes understandings of place as the primary node of contact for children with the outside world. It also includes place as a local area within the context of a distinct region in Australia known as the Blue Mountains, known for its unique environmental landscape, cultural history, community living and tourism (Blue Mountains City Council, 2015). This study explores how place experience informs children’s developing understandings of self and identity, and how place experiences and developing identities inform children’s perceptions of ‘looking after place’. It is hoped that this study will provide new insights into ways of providing opportunities for children to engage in behaviour for environmental and social sustainability.
1.3 Significance of the study

1.3.1 Overview of children’s place experience

Research on children in place has been plagued by romantic ideas of the naturality of children’s relationship with place, including idyllic views of abounding freedom and connection to nature. However, this westernised view is not shared in representations of childhood in developing countries (Chawla, 2002; Malone, 2016).

In Australia, children’s experiences vary in relation to age, gender, socio-economic status, cultural background, and the divide between urban, rural and remote areas (Bowes, Grace, & Hodge, 2012). Additionally, children’s daily lives outside of schooling are increasingly structured by forms of institutionalised care such as early childhood education, before and after school programs and recreational activities, and tutelage (NSW Commission for Children & Young People, 2012). Regardless of the type of place interaction children have, there is a general understanding that place experiences are important to children, due to their unique perceptions and experiences (Murris, 2013).

1.3.2 Developmental opportunities

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on place and child development, for a number of reasons. Concern over children’s diminished interactions with outdoor settings has been fuelled by health issues arising from sedentary lifestyles including obesity (Ortega, Ruiz, Castillo, & Sjöström, 2008) and reduced long distance vision (Blinkert, 2004; Nowack, 2004). These may be linked to reduced
opportunities for independent outdoor play stemming from parental perceptions of danger beyond the confines of home (Pacilli, Giovannelli, Prezza & Augimeri, 2013). Indeed, more structured and controlled activities have coincided with reduced independent mobility (Charles 2009; Christensen & O’Brien, 2002; Hillman, Adams & Whitelegg, 1990) and opportunities for outdoor free play and interactions with nature (Carver, Timperio & Crawford, 2007; Louv, 2008).

Yet research on the importance of place encounters for supporting child development, has been demonstrated in a number of areas, including improved cognitive ability (Catling, 2005; Sebba, 1991; Wells, 2000), social competence (Hordyk, Dulude & Shem, 2015; Kylin, 2003; Nansen, Gobbs, Macdougall, Vetere, Ross & McKendrick, 2015; Powell, 2001) and physical development (Christensen, Mygind & Bentsen, 2015; Davison & Lawson, 2006). Opportunities for independence and risk taking also lead to psychosocial development (Carver et al., 2007; Hart, 1979; Louv, 2008; Malone, 2007b; Moore, 1986), informing the ‘self’ through a sense of autonomy, and developing independence as an active agent (Corsaro, 2014; M. Green, 2014).

1.3.3 Children engaging in pro-environmental behaviour

Children’s engagement with the environment and in pro-environmental behaviour is another area of significance to this study. Despite the many studies on adult pro-environmental behaviours (Bamberg & Möser, 2007; Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010; Whitmarsh & O’Neill, 2010), research on the development of pro-environmentalism in childhood has tended to focus on environmental education in general (Palmer, 1995; Powers, 2004; Rickinson, 2001),
but not on the theme of place as a local area. Calls for children to be involved in tackling environmental issues (Larson, G. Green & Castleberry, 2011; Manoli, Johnson & Dunlap, 2007), suggest that further research highlighting the way children approach pro-environmental behaviour is required. In particular, exposure to nature results in a tendency towards environmentalism (Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Collado, Staats, & Corraliza, 2013; Evans, Juen, Corral-Verdugo, Corraliza, & Kaiser, 2007; Tugurian & Carrier, 2016).

Exploring children’s unique responses to environmental issues requires research that examines a holistic view of their experiences. There is some suggestion that this is best achieved in relation to their local area—where they are immersed in daily experiences—rather than in contexts that are removed from everyday life. For children, environmental engagement in the local area allows them to develop agency that influences their capacity for taking a stance, and an awareness of their contributions (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008).

1.3.4 Children as active agents

Children as active agents are capable of determining social and environmental transactions leading to the construction of knowledge, cultural practices and identities (James & Prout, 1997). Indeed, there are numerous studies demonstrating how children display agentic behaviour in relation to place (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008; Gadd, 2016; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Mackey, 2012; Malone 2013; Nansen et al.; Pacilli et al.; Pike, 2011; Ross, 2007), however, this behaviour often goes unnoticed. Thomson (2007) argues that much existing research positions children within childhood constructs, where understandings of children are influenced by prescribed categories of children’s capabilities relative to
developmental stage. This influence is likely to inform researchers’ perspectives, as they focus on pre-existing ideas of what children might say, thereby ignoring children’s unique perspectives (Murris, 2013).

In investigating the agentic and authentic nature of children’s interactions with place, it is important to acknowledge that children are capable of framing how they perceive, experience and understand place. Given that most people would agree that children’s perceptions of their worlds are qualitatively different from those of adults, proponents of the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 1997) argue that a fundamental right of children and young people, as stated in the 1990 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1992) is the right to unconditional expression, outlined in Article 13. This includes the right to impart information and ideas, regardless of the social boundaries normally imposed on children.

1.3.5 Phenomenography giving children a voice

Phenomenography is one means of understanding children’s experience, and can play a key role in giving children a voice (Nagel, 2004). This is achieved by employing an exploratory approach to children’s descriptions of place, without using pre-determined categories. Phenomenography positions children’s meaning making at the centre of the investigation by collecting variations in responses about the phenomena in question (Marton, 1986). This is based on the assumption that children have their own worldviews, and is used to explore the subjective nature of understandings.
Like phenomenology, phenomenography is concerned with the experience of a phenomenon (Marton, 1986, 1988). However, whilst phenomenology explores a first-order perspective (Seamon, 1982) seeking to answer the question *What is the phenomenon?*, phenomenography uses a second-order perspective (Marton 1981) to explore the relationship between the individual and the phenomenon. That is, drawing from immediate experiences and past experiences, phenomenography seeks to answer the question *How is the phenomenon ‘experienced, interpreted, understood, apprehended, perceived or conceptualized’?* (p. 178).

In using phenomenography, descriptions of the phenomenon are thought to represent interpretations of different realities (Marton, 1981) by a selected group of individuals. Interpretations of different realities are referred to as ‘conceptions’ about the phenomenon, and similar themed conceptions are grouped together as categories of description with the sum of all categories of description referred to as ‘the outcome space’ (Marton & Dahlgren, 1976). In sum, phenomenography is used to capture individual children’s perceptions, experiences and understandings, to determine the qualitatively different ways children think about a phenomenon (Marton, 1986).

1.4 The research process

An overview of the research process is provided in Figure 1.1. The research question addresses three key themes; place, identity in relation to place and ‘looking after’ place, which were initially investigated by conducting a literature review (Phase 1). The literature review identified research on these topics to
uncover how further research can extend our knowledge of ‘children in place’.
Following this, data were collected using open-ended interview questions (Phase 2) and analysed to find answers to the overall research question (Phase 3). The findings provide recommendations to improve place experiences for children and to build their capacity for dealing with environmental issues (Phase 4).

Figure 1.1: Phases of the research process
1.5 The thesis structure

The thesis comprises five sections including twelve chapters. Sections 1-5 comprise the introduction; literature review; rationale and methodology; results and discussion; and the outcome space and conclusion. This chapter, Chapter 1, has outlined the purpose and the significance of the study, the methodological foundation and the research process. The chapters that follow, offer a literature review that explores the key areas under investigation.

The first chapter of this literature review, Chapter 2, explores research on children’s everyday places, including special and favourite places. The research suggests that children’s place experiences are understood in relation to time, spatial awareness, independent mobility, and ownership of space. The identification of functional attributes is explored, as is children’s ability to evaluate places.

The second literature review chapter, Chapter 3, investigates research on children’s identity development in relation to place. Although the number of studies is limited, they reveal that identity is experienced as place identity which is related to place attachment, place belonging, place identity processes, and place identification. In addition, self-constructs including self-concept and self-esteem inform self-identity, and relationships with nature lead to environmental and ecological identity.

The final literature review chapter, Chapter 4, focuses on themes associated with pro-environmental behaviours. Environmental knowledge, including awareness and sensitivity, as a precursor to pro-environmental behaviour. It is developed through direct experiences, environmental education and the influence of significant adults.
Chapters 5 explores the rationale of the research, including the context, and outlines why doing this study is worthwhile. The context includes children, place as a local area, and phenomenography as a research approach.

Chapter 6, the methodology chapter, explores the research design, including the research questions and the stages of the research. Assumptions of phenomenography including ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations, are discussed. The research setting is described, followed by ethical considerations and data collection, transcription and analysis, with discussion on the validity and reliability.

Chapters 7 – 11 are the five discussion chapters each presenting the conceptions of the phenomena derived from the data. Each chapter is organised into one category of description with its associated themes. The categories of description are, place is a space and a locality; place has a range of opportunities; place attachment, place identity, and belonging; connections, caring and responsibility for place, and the developing self and place.

The final chapter, Chapter 12, presents the five categories of description as the outcome space. It explores inter-relationships between children’s diverse and multilayered conceptions, as ‘cross-category themes’ that exist within the outcome space. The outcome space is discussed in relation to the research questions, highlighting key findings in the study and suggestions for further research. Limitations of the methodology and problems arising during the research are explored.
SECTION II:

LITERATURE REVIEW
Chapter 2

Literature review: Children’s understandings of place

2.1 Introduction

Children’s experiences in place tend to be framed by notions of childhood, which change in relation to periods of history (Aries, 1962). James and Prout (1997) argue that social constructions of childhood position children within cultural contexts that influence the way children are viewed and the way children view their everyday worlds. This is related to the tendency of past research to explore children’s lives in relation to social institutions such as family, school and society (Larson & Verma, 1999). More recently, a humanistic view of childhood has led to a recognition that research needs to consider children’s unique perspectives (Murris, 2013), and in particular, the discipline of human geography increasingly focuses on the relationship between geography and children’s lives, acknowledging that children’s lives are embedded within both social and physical contexts.

This first literature review chapter explores literature on children’s understandings of place as experienced within the course of everyday life. This includes experiences in relation to time and space, and the identification of affordances and evaluations of place.
2.2 Investigating children’s place

2.2.1 Children’s everyday places

Children’s everyday experience is immersed in what Malpas refers to as the primacy of place (2006), the contexts that children are immersed in, the opportunities they experience, and the rituals that children undertake on a regular basis. When one refers to place, the concept of place offers a common understanding amongst those who inhabit place and provides a platform upon which children’s everyday experiences can be understood (Somerville & Green, 2015).

Horton and Kraftl (2006) argue that the world of children is dictated by social structures informing their experiences and development (Eyles, 1989), such as structured routines for social processes such as school. There is also an argument for providing unstructured time for children to rest, play and experience their surroundings for experiencing unique understandings that are obvious only to the observer (Louv, 1990). Either way, the provision of social structure and patterns of behaviour or the provision of unstructured time constitutes an adult epistemic view of what is expected of children’s interactions with place.

Despite opposing ideas on children’s ‘worlds’, the way children formulate ‘place’ continues to be an area of interest. The focus of publications include places in the home and private spaces (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2001; M. Green, 2011) and school yards (Powell, 2001; Tranter & Malone, 2004), neighbourhood places such as streetscapes and parks (Day & Wager, 2010; Gadd, 2016; Karsten & van Vliet, 2006; Matthews, Limb & Taylor, 2000; Woolley & Johns, 2001), nature sites and empty blocks (Chawla, 1986, 1990; Derr, 2002; Dovey, 1990; Hart, 1979; Hay, 1998; Kjørholt, 2003; Kylin, 2003; Moore, 1986; Tunstall, Tapsell, & House, 2004).
and built areas such as shopping centres (Day & Wager, 2010; Pike, 2011; Skelton, 2000; Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2000) which provide places for children to meet. More generally, sites in urban areas (Cahill, 2000; Chawla, 2002; Lim & Barton, 2010; Min & Lee, 2006; Lehman-Frisch, Authier & Dufaux, 2012; Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2000) or rural areas (Derr, 2002; Kyttä, 2002; Lee & Abbott, 2009; Measham, 2006; Punch, 2000) have distinctive features that inform place understandings.

The range of research focuses on the way spaces are experienced within social and physical contexts. That is, there is a general assumption that people exist in geographical spaces and such spaces are defined in terms of dimensions, boundaries and occupation. Indeed, researchers argue that investigating children’s places is relevant, as people are becoming increasingly disconnected from local contexts (Giddens, 1991; Meyrowitz, 1985). This is especially important within the current climate of information technology, where children’s socialisation and environmental experiences are removed from reality (Relph, 1976). However, it is possible that children’s spaces can be imagined and that children are able to perceive themselves within social and physical spaces within online environments.

Rather than researchers arguing for the benefits of children conceptualising place devoid of online environments, what is required is the opportunity for children to express places that are significant to them. What does the notion of ‘place’ mean to children? To determine exactly how children experience place as a local area, this study assumes that the spaces children inhabit and encounter are significant to them, thereby providing the greatest insights into children’s lived experiences.
2.2.2 Children’s special and favourite places

Explorations of children’s understandings of place have tended to focus on special and favourite places, defined by spatial location and functionality. Early studies explored children’s place-making abilities in outdoor environments where children spent time modifying and adapting features of the landscape, resulting in places that were psychologically significant (Hart, 1979; Kylin, 2003; Powell, 2001; Sobel, 1996), suggesting that physical and psychological aspects of places are difficult to separate (Titman, 1994).

Indeed, special places are said to influence children’s development in various ways. The negotiation of social hierarchies and boundaries leads to social development (Kylin, 2003; Powell, 2001), while nature areas are used for emotional regulation (Bagot, Allen & Toukhsati, 2015; Korpela, 1989; Korpela, Kytta, & Hartig, 2002). Children often choose places that make them ‘feel good’ highlighting that place experiences lead to evaluative understandings of place (Castonguay & Jutras, 2009). Overall, special and favourite places were identified as those that afford experiences that allow for autonomy—suggesting that independence is highly valued in children.

2.3 Children’s place understandings in relation to time

2.3.1 How children spend time in everyday life

Everyday life is related to time, due to natural diurnal and seasonal patterns, together with culturally imposed schedules, which frame daily activities. Temporality is also tied to biological stages of development. In a socio-cultural
sense how children ‘spend time’ is related to age, gender and socio-economic circumstances, with children from different socio-economic backgrounds leading very different lives (Larson & Verma, 1999). The way children spend time, ultimately has repercussions for their developmental pathways with highly structured lives resulting in missed opportunities for socialisation, and creative and imaginary play (Day & Wager, 2010; Francis, Paige & Lloyd, 2013; Kylin, 2003; Ross, 2007; Sutton, 2011).

However, regardless of the nature of children’s daily lives, Adam (2006) suggests that children use time to carve out seemingly inert places for themselves to be alone or with friends. Such places are often unspecified to adults and only significant to the child observer, due to the informal, transient and unpredictable way children identify space. It is also possible that engaging activities that occur in such places result in periods of flow, where one becomes completely absorbed in what one is doing (Csikszentmihályi, 1990). Such experiences are deeply personal and are not likely to be revealed through observations but more likely through children’s conceptualisations of their experiences. What children are actually thinking can only be speculated upon by the outside observer; therefore, research is required that effectively extracts the understood experiences of children.

2.3.2 Time-geography and place attachment

The concept of time-geography outlines how children’s place experience is informed by spatio-temporal action resulting from an interplay of physical, socio-cultural and psychological dimensions (Hägerstrand, 1985). On a daily basis, children negotiate social and physical settings that impact on their psychological state at a given point in time (Gadd, 2016).
Children’s long-term place interactions result in deep understandings and emotional connections (Dallago et al., 2009; Gadd, 2016; Jack, 2008) known as place attachments (Low & Altman, 1992; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Adults’ long-term attachments to childhood places are perceived as an integral part of self-identity providing a foundation for self-definition (Chawla, 1992; Cooper Marcus, 1992; Sebba, 1991). Similarly, time-related knowledge enriches place understandings, including shared knowledge passed down through family (Derr, 2002; Hay, 1998) or through neighbourhood relationships (Manor & Mesch, 1998). The authenticity of knowledge needs to be considered further, as it is possible that adult understandings of childhood places run the risk of being perceived as geographical imagination (Philo, 2000) rather than the reporting of real lived experiences.

Children also have unique ways of understanding temporality through a series of events or intervals related to points in time (Ingold, 2000) and stages of development. These may include intervals throughout the day marked by adherence to time frames such as journeys to school (Ross, 2007; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008) or reminders of the passing of time through annual festivals (Measham, 2006). While Hay (1998) and Malinowski & Thurber (1996), suggested that as children grow older, understandings of place change in relation to changing goals and interests, both studies were not longitudinal in nature, instead comparing children of different ages. Interpretive approaches that place the child at the centre of the meaning-making process and investigate conceptualisations by children of different ages might further reveal children’s time-related relationships to place (Day & Wager, 2010; Gadd, 2016; Lim & Barton, 2010; Ross, 2007; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008).
2.4 Children’s spatial awareness

2.4.1 The development of spatial awareness

Another area of research relating to children’s understandings of place involves children’s experience of space. Spatial awareness is an awareness of one’s relationship to other objects, and has long been explored from a developmental perspective. Early Piagetian models theorised that children’s spatial awareness moves from an egocentric approach to a spatially referenced system (Blaut & Stea 1971; Matthews, 1984; Piaget & Inhelder, 1956) where the development of spatial knowledge is related to landmark recognition (Golledge, Smith, Pellegrino, Doherty & Marshall, 1985). These models suggest that children’s developing spatial awareness is tied to symbolic elements of the surrounding environment that have significance to the observer.

Children’s spatial understandings can also be explained using a socio-constructivist approach, in which the development of spatial awareness occurs through enculturation and socialisation, including what is learnt at school, through travel experiences and interactions with extended family living in other countries (Poria, Atzaba-Poria & Barrett, 2005; Scourfield, Dicks, Holland, Drakeford & Davies, 2006). Although school provides curriculum focused on spatial mapping, navigation and geographical distinct regions, it has been criticised for not incorporating local geographical and spatial knowledge developed through children’s everyday experience (Catling, 2005). Research has shown that spatial knowledge of the local area is developed in relation to social, cultural and landscape entities (Avriel-Avni, Spektor-Levy, Zion, & Levi, 2010; Gillespie, 2010; Matthews, 1995). Therefore, in investigating children’s spatial understandings, a research
approach that explores personal perspectives of local social and spatial knowledge is recommended (Gillespie, 2010; Matthews, 1995).

The idea that real and concrete experiences lead to spatial awareness can be explained in terms of the development of spatial cognition. Spatial cognition is the process of knowledge acquisition that allows people to move about their immediate environment through spatial positioning and wayfinding techniques (Waller & Nagel, 2013). Its significance is that it demonstrates how spatial knowledge is integral to spatial competence, and that through the accumulation of spatial knowledge, children are able to engage in spatial skills including problem solving, while navigating (Gauvian, 1993).

Indeed, Gerben and Kwan’s (1994) phenomenographic study highlights the complexity of children’s ‘wayfinding’ by detailing their self-regulatory processes. Sophisticated navigation processes were revealed as the methodology provided an interpretative approach which placed the subject at the centre of the meaning making process and explored layers of meaning through an interrogative questioning process. That is, self-regulatory navigation techniques utilizing an intrinsic awareness of the surroundings, might not have been revealed through other types of qualitative enquiry.

Overall, it appears that the development of spatial awareness is related to the self; the self as a reference point for spatial positioning, the self in relation to social and physical features of place, the self to guide through space for personal use, and the self to regulate processes of wayfinding. Children’s awareness of their local area, tied to everyday experience, forms the basis upon which they develop their own
perspectives of place, and often their perspectives are tied to a sense of self (McNamara, 2003).

2.4.2 Independent mobility for spatial awareness

One area of research that focuses on agentic behaviour for the development of spatial awareness and competence is children’s independent mobility (Hillman et al., 1990). Movement around the neighbourhood independent of adults and caregivers provides children the opportunity for self-directed and self-regulated experiences, resulting in the development of spatial skills and an acute awareness of their surroundings (Fang & Lin, 2017). The greater children’s opportunity for independent mobility, the greater their likelihood of identifying functional attributes that support development (Malone, 2011; 2013). Independent mobility also allows children to build confidence in dealing with safety hazards and power laden territories, and to increase social capital as they develop relationships with community members and peers (Weller & Bruegel, 2009). Children’s independent mobility results in unique understandings of place that might not otherwise be realised.

Despite these benefits, children experience a number of limitations on their independent mobility. Younger children have limited independent mobility due to parental concerns of social dangers (Blakely, 1994; Day & Wager, 2010; Scourfield et al., 2006), while older children seek ways to experience autonomy through independent mobility (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 1999; Hart, 1979; Moore, 1986; Ross, 2005; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008). Other research suggests that independent mobility is related to background, with children from poorer
backgrounds experiencing greater independence (Larreau, 2003) and children
from minority cultural backgrounds experiencing less independent mobility
(O’Brien, Jones, Sloan & Rustin, 2000).

Gender related independently mobility research also arrived at mixed results.
There is evidence that mobility is also restricted due to safety concerns, with boys
experiencing greater spatial mobility than girls (Chawla, 2002; Hart 1979; Kylin,
2003; Matthews 1987). However, despite earlier research (Hart, 1979), when equal
opportunities were provided for the development of spatial competence, gender
failed to predict the capacity for the development of spatial knowledge (Poria, et al.,
2005). Variations in findings suggest that other factors may influence gender
related independent mobility. That is, what is it about a particular group of
children that enables them to have greater opportunities for independent mobility
than others? Could it be more than socio-cultural factors and neighbourhood
safety? Rather than assuming the reasons or applying socio-cultural indicators as a
means of predicting causal factors, an argument exists for interacting with
children to determine if they perceive the presence of gender related variations in
their place related movements.

As with the development of place attachment (Gadd, 2016), the degree to which
children experience spatial mobility is ultimately dependent on interacting social,
physical and psychological factors. Although restrictions placed on girls are said to
result in fewer opportunities for spatial and environmental awareness (Hillman et
al., 1990; O’Brien et al., 2000), research suggests that girls continue to develop
spatial competence by finding other ways to be independent, such as avoiding areas
that are potentially unsafe (Brown, Mackett, Gonge, Kitazawac, & Paskins, 2008).
In addition, when there are limited transport options between everyday places, children are required to be independently mobile, irrespective of gender, age and background (Lehman-Frisch, et al., 2012). Therefore, one cannot not assume that children undertake independent mobility (or do not) on the basis of social determinants; rather, individual experiences must be investigated. The key to exploring children’s expanding spatial realms lies in how their experiences are captured in research.

2.4.3 Spatial ownership and spatial boundaries

Children’s carving out of spaces for ownership of space occurs through the imposition of spatial boundaries. Wolfe (1978) argues that children’s spaces are necessary for healthy child development, allowing them opportunities for autonomy and control over their surroundings. Spaces where children have a sense of control, either by themselves or with others, allow them to experience a sense of security and to work on self-related activities without interruptions from adults (Chawla, 1992; Fidzani & Read, 2012; C. Green, 2011). Spatial boundaries extend to spaces within the home, the yard and neighbourhood areas (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 1999; C. Green, 2011) and are used to include or exclude others (Kylin, 2003).

Spatial boundaries are also pertinent to the discussion of geographical territories such as regions and countries. Children appear to have limited understanding of spatial boundaries in larger territories (Scourfield et al., 2006) and this may be due to the abstract nature of geopolitical boundaries as opposed to real and experienced boundaries experienced in small scale spaces. For understanding
national boundaries, children often rely on symbolic markers related to national identity such as language and culture (Scourfield et al., 2006), distinguishing places through relational perspectives such as ‘self’ and ‘other’.

In a similar way, children tend to rely on symbolic boundaries for demarcating space, and this includes the use of objects to represent identity. Verkuyten, Sierksma & Thijs (2015) found that children use sophisticated reasoning skills based on first occupation or length of occupation, to respect the ownership of space. Adolescents also use their bodies to occupy public space as a way of asserting their identity, and also to experience autonomy (Childress, 2004; McDowell, 1999). At times, when children’s spaces cross over into public spaces, children experience feelings of being out of place due to negative connotations held by adults (Weller, 2006) suggesting that children’s understandings of spatial awareness are also tied to social structural processes that partition people into social groups.

### 2.5 Children’s affordances in place

Another area related to children’s place experience is the observer’s identification of resources in terms of their perceived functionality (Gibson, 1979) where the recognition of affordances is related to developmentally driven goals. Initial research by Heft (1988) led to the construction of a functional taxonomy of affordances based on typical actions executed during children’s outdoor play.

However, the definition of affordances continues to be expanded. Careful examination of children’s experiences in a range of settings, using inductive research processes (Kyttä, 2002), resulted in the identification of sociality-based
affordances. In another study by Kyttä, affordances were distinguished in terms of whether they were actualised or if they had potential for action (2004). This distinction indicates that children are capable of self-regulation in their use of affordances, relative to the demands of the situation and an awareness of their own capabilities and desires. It also reaffirms that the identification of affordances is subjective in nature and will vary in relation to the observer.

Specifying the type of affordances one might expect in children’s experiences, Heft (1988) illustrated how researchers tend to focus on presumptions about the nature of children’s experiences of place, rather than uncovering ‘the unknown’ of children’s experiences. Exploratory research has shown that children identify affordances for a number of reasons, related to physical activities (Hart, 1979; Lee & Abbott, 2009; Moore, 1986; Prieske, Withagen, Smith & Zaal, 2015; Woolley & Johns, 2001), socialisation (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009; Castonguay & Jutras, 2009; Powell, 2001) and emotional restoration and well being (Bagot et al., 2015; Collado et al., 2013; Korpela et al., 2002). Additionally, as children undergo a rapid period of biological and psychological change, research suggests that the identification of affordances will change in relation to development (Hay, 1998; Malinowski & Thurber, 1996; Powell, 2001; Schiavo, 1988).

2.6 Children’s evaluations of place

The fact that children recognize affordances that are context specific is significant, because it demonstrates children’s capacity for evaluating their surroundings. This implies that the identification of affordances is a complex process determined not only by developmental readiness, but by acute understandings and assessments of
their surroundings. It appears that children constantly evaluate their surroundings as part of their relationship with place (Lim & Barton, 2010), with negative evaluations leading to the avoidance of certain activities (Castonguay & Jutras, 2009) or to a diminished connection to place (Hay, 1998; Pretty, Chipuer & Bramston, 2003).

Evaluations can result from the identification of unexpected functionalities, such as seemingly mundane pockets of vegetation in urban streets affording emotional restoration (Castonguay & Jutras, 2009). Sensory experiences also feature in children’s evaluations of place, from positive evaluations of smells in the forest (Cumming & Nash, 2015) to negative evaluations such as too much noise or too many people (Lehman-Frisch et al., 2012). Other evaluations relating to the invasion of personal space include those of children who feel discomfort at being watched by CCTV cameras (Simkins & Thwaites, 2008).

Children’s evaluations of place also demonstrate the capacity of children to engage in critical thinking, adding kudos to research methodologies that allow children to express themselves freely. Perceptions of negative aspects of places that are valued were accompanied by suggestions for improvement (Lim & Barton, 2010). For example, the importance of providing retail services were considered, together with suggested strategies for reducing the visual impact (Avriel-Avni, et al., 2010; Lim & Barton, 2010). In Min & Lee’s research (2006) place experiences were evaluated in terms of individual and community experiences, highlighting the benefits and disadvantages at each level. These studies illustrated how children engage in critical thought about place rather than polarising issues that are multifaceted, and this demonstrates that children are capable of being critical active agents within their local areas.
Using a phenomenographic approach to explore the gamut of children’s understandings of place, Avriel-Avni, et al., (2010) demonstrated that children’s conceptualisations of the desert town in which they lived were unexpected, complex and diverse. On the one hand, evaluations in terms of social, urban and landscape features informed place attachment, feelings of belonging, a sense of community, and environmental awareness. However, other evaluations indicated that too much familiarity with the community resulted in boredom and frustration. In addition, the unique desert landscape was appreciated for its beauty, for attracting tourists and a sense of security, while other children felt that it was barren, hostile and dangerous. The variation in children’s perceptions of the town and surrounding desert landscape highlights the effectiveness of phenomenography as a research tool in drawing out children’s variations in understandings and the reasons behind them.

2.7 Contested ideas of place

The studies explored so far, highlight the varying ways children view place. However, at times, variations in children’s perceptions of place invites the reader to consider the socio-political lenses through which children’s experiences are viewed and interpreted. Framing place experiences in terms of set determinants may also include interpreting children’s experiences in relation to Australian colonization and nationalism. Research by Moran (2002) highlights how experiences of place and place identity in the form of nationalism, continue to be informed by (white) settler nationalism as opposed to pre-colonisation identity. Ideas of the contested notions of place experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian children is an
important area of research and it requires an exploration of the historical context place, rather than focusing on recording a snap shot of children’s second-order perspectives on place.

2.8 Conclusion

Exploring children’s personal geographies moves beyond looking at children’s places to discussing children’s experiences. Existing studies discussed in this chapter largely focus on children’s experiences in a range of settings. Through these studies explored it is possible to determine that children’s understandings of place are developed through their relationships with place. This is well illustrated in studies on children’s special and favourite places, and their recognition and evaluation of affordances. Children’s understandings are also mediated by time, dictating daily routines and long term attachments. Children’s spatial awareness is significant on a number of levels, especially in the development of environmental and spatial knowledge, which allows for greater independent mobility. In addition, knowing how to control space allows children to use self-regulation to define spaces including the inclusion or exclusion of others.

The main ideas arising from this literature review of children’s understandings of place are that future research must recognise that understandings stem from more than experiences. That is, what appears most relevant to children are experiences in their everyday lives and how these are perceived. While this approach has been used in a range of studies discussed in this chapter often the focus has been on particular elements such as time, spatial awareness limiting the extent of perceptions of experience that might arise from children’s experience.
In addition, studies are often influenced by existing discourses of childhood thought to constrain children’s activities therefore it is important to set aside elements of childhood that are perceived to limit their experiences. These include gender, socio-economic and ethnic background, and indigeneity. Indeed, one can still explore how children circumnavigate socially constructed paths to identify opportunities for developmentally driven action. Understandings of place are mediated by children’s interests and goals, which can only be revealed through children’s own accounts of their perceptions and understandings arising from experiences.

The next chapter, Chapter 3, will review literature related to identity in relation to place.
Chapter 3

Literature review: children’s identity in relation to place

3.1 Introduction

If place is thought to be integral to children’s everyday experiences, and children’s place meaning emerge from subjective understandings, then it is important to explore place in terms of children’s developing identity. In humanistic geography, conceptualisations of place develop in relation to the self, others and the environment (Gustafson, 2001), as contextualised place settings provide grounding experiences for identity development. Children’s everyday experiences provide the locus of meaning for a range of identity-related entities, including place identity, place attachment, social identity and self-related constructs such as self-concept and self-esteem.

Chapter 3, the second chapter in the literature review, looks at existing research on children’s identity in relation to place.
3.2 Place identity

The most commonly researched identity construct in relation to place is place identity (Proshanky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Place identity is used to describe the individual’s incorporation of place meanings into a larger concept of self, including ‘cognitions that represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behaviour and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being’ (p. 59). This is an all-encompassing definition, suggesting that place-based experiences inform cognitions of self and that the environmental past of a person consisting of places and spaces, in some way inform a person’s developing identity. In particular, experiences in place that are autobiographical in nature, that is, related to one’s personal history, inform developing place identity, as does the primacy of the physical world, in which experiences, both social and physical, occur (Proshanky & Fabian, 1987).

Place identity can be used to explore the relationship between identity and place understandings, and how they inform place-based knowledge and behaviour. So far, research on place identity in adults has tended to employ quantitative approaches (Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace & Hess, 2007; Knez, 2005) and this has resulted in the use of complex indicators, overlapping in meaning, leading to issues of construct validity (Patterson & Williams, 2006). Except for a notable study on causal links between school-based place identity, place attachment and place dependence (Fleury-Bahi & Marcouyeux, 2010), the relatively few studies involving children have tended to utilise qualitative methodologies.
The results in the literature review, provide insights into how children develop identity in relation to place, in a range of ways. Place identity is integral to the identification of places for emotional self-regulation (Korpela, 1989; Korpela et al., 2002), place personalisation (Fidzani & Read 2012; Maxwell & Chmielewski, 2008) and the development of personal understandings and evaluations of place (Castonguay & Jutras, 2009; Charlton et al., 2014; Lim & Barton, 2010; Min & Lee, 2006). Other studies have focused on how children’s subjective understandings inform a sense of self, in relation to perceptions, attitudes, values and worldviews in particular contexts (Avriel-Avni et al., 2010; Derr, 2002; Hay, 1998). This is based on the premise that contexts, both social and physical in nature, have high personal meaning informing identity (Tuan, 1977).

Furthermore, Avriel-Avni et al.’s use of phenomenography goes some way to investigating how place identity is informed by children’s perceptions of their experiences in place.

Research suggests that children’s evaluations of place form an integral part of identification with place. Experiences that are less enjoyable or meaningful impact on children’s place identity in a negative way (Manzo, 2005; Proshansky et al., 1983). ‘Insideness’ has been explored to ascertain children’s perceptions of neighbourhood characteristics that reinforce personal meaning and satisfaction (Lim & Barton, 2010). Similarly, when place is perceived as not providing opportunities for the achievement of self-related goals, place identity is diminished (Hay, 1998). Overall, place identity is related to the identification of attributes of place as opportunities toward achieving desired goals (Stokols & Schumaker 1981), and the key lies in exploring what attributes are perceived to provide opportunities, from the child’s point of view.
3.2.1 Place attachment and place identity

Place attachment is important in the development of self-identity (Dallago et al., 2009) due to its social and physical dimensions (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004; Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010, Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Uzzell, Pol, & Badenas, 2002). The social dimension includes family, community and other social groups where affiliations to the group and collective identity provide a shared history (Derr, 2002; Hay, 1998). Place attachments also develop in relation to the physical dimensions of place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Gadd, 2016), providing contexts for social bonds to develop and for action oriented behaviour that informs self-concept and self-efficacy.

As with place identity, past research on the relationship between place attachment and identity has tended to focus on adults ignoring psycho-developmental processes in children (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Massey, 1994). However, place attachments are an inherent part of children’s place experiences, in providing opportunities for self-referent continuity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), as children use places with which they have an emotional bond, as reference points for identity (Fidzani & Read, 2012; Hay, 1998).

Emotion is a crucial part of the relationship between self, others and the environment (Wohlwill & Heft, 1987). In social attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) children’s emotional responses and developing independence are an integral part of the relationship between the children and caregiver. Indeed, both place attachment and social attachment act as reference points for self-definition, either encouraging or inhibiting opportunities to fulfil aspirations for satisfying goals (Chawla, 1992; Hay, 1998; Pretty, et al., 2003). It is suggested that future research should provide
opportunities for children to explore the influence of place attachment on identity development, in the same way that social attachment is important for identity development in young children (Chawla, 1992; Morgan, 2010) and to date it is surprising that such research has yet to be undertaken.

### 3.2.2 Identity process theory

Hauge (2007) argues that although place identity theory emphasises the influence of social and physical environments on children’s identity, its contributions to the development of ‘self’ constructs are unclear. Conceptualising place identity as a process rather than an entity in itself, invites a better understanding of how place informs identity continuity and self-related meanings. Through Breakwell’s identity process theory (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), this is achieved by considering how place identification is used to maintain identity continuity, including links between significant places in childhood and adulthood (Chawla, 1992; Cooper Marcus, 1992; Sebba, 1991). In the same way, children’s appropriation of special places invites place continuity, as the selected sites are chosen for their potential to satisfy children’s interests and goals and self-identification.

Identity continuity can also occur when opportunities for agentic self-determining behaviour inform self-esteem and self-concept (Fidzani & Read, 2012; Fleury-Bahi & Marcouyeux, 2010; Lim & Barton, 2010), however, while children seek places that result in positive self-concepts and self-evaluations, places chosen for children by adults may not have the same results. Parental perceptions of places that are suitable for children may contrast to children’s perceptions of lack of opportunities (Matthews, Taylor, Sherwood, Tucker & Limb, 2000; Mee, 2010), leading to a
diminished sense of self. Regardless of the influence of parental decisions on the child, the experiences of the child are of primary interest in this study. Therefore, in exploring place in terms of identity development, adult and child perceptions are likely to be different inferring that investigations should focus on children’s perceptions of children’s lived experiences rather than on the accounts of parents.

3.2.3  Place identity and belonging

Place attachment is considered to be important in children's identity development when affiliations with social groups occur, resulting in a sense of belonging (Derr, 2003; Hay, 1998; Lalli, 1992). Place attachment as a sense of belonging is a powerful identity motive, due to the need to experience feelings of acceptance by others (Baumeister, 1999). However, place attachment and belonging can also occur in relation to the physical dimensions of place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010) when other human needs such as physical activity and exposure to nature are realised. For children, contexts that provide opportunities for agentic behaviour, strengthening self-concept and self-beliefs, will instil a sense of belonging (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi 2011; Ellis, 2005).

Self-concept and self-esteem continue to change in relation to different contexts, informed by changing place attachments, a sense of belonging and by perceptions of whether their needs and desires can be fulfilled (Longhinotti-Felippe & Kuhnen, 2012). The complexity of children’s changing identity processes throughout the course of everyday life is illustrated in Gadd’s (2016) research on street children. As physical and socio-cultural contexts change throughout each day, so do changing conceptualisations that influence place attachments and place
identity. The detail provided on children’s shifting identities in relation to changing experiences highlights the extent of the influence of place experiences on identity. This was achieved in part due to the exploratory nature of the research conducted by Gadd. Similarly, Malone (2007a) demonstrated that village children’s transactions with place across a number of dimensions, including the physical environment, cultural systems and social obligations, result in the negotiation of different identities and different capabilities. That is, experiences were influenced by situational factors that provided opportunities for the mobilization of different competencies.

To capture children’s understandings of place and how it informs identity including self-concept and self-efficacy, a bird’s eye view of their perceived experiences is required. That is, it is not possible to trace children’s fluctuating identity states as they move between different contexts. However, it is possible to capture their perceived experiences using a phenomenographic approach.

### 3.2.4 Place identification

Spencer’s search for a hypothesis linking place attachment, place identity and the development of the child’s self-identity (2005) exposed the finding that there is surprisingly little literature exploring children’s identity development in relation to place. That is, most research on children’s identity development is related to social contexts (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996; Erikson, 1968), even though it is within place that everyday experiences shape self and identity. Indeed, Spencer states that children often use place as an identifier ahead of other identity descriptions, in formulations such as ‘I am from Australia’—suggesting that children’s place identification is worthy of consideration.
Place identification occurs when distinctive attributes of place give a unique identity to the observer (Schneider, 1986) instilling associated attitudes and feelings of belonging to place (Uzzell et al., 2002). Research has shown that children associate distinctive attributes of place, such as the local community, landscape, cultural heritage and neighbourhood identity, with place identification (Hay, 1998; Manor & Mesch, 1998). Indeed, Gruenewald (2003) in his critical appraisal of the importance of place-conscious education, has long argued that distinctive attributes of place that instils place identification, are best examined using a multidisciplinary framework.

Nonetheless, a common way of identifying with place is through community identity. This usually occurs in relation to social groups characterised by shared symbolic traits, belonging, and mutual care (Uzzell et al., 2002). However, children’s descriptions of community identity often include both people and aspects of the physical environment, supporting other findings that place identification refers to social, cultural and physical attributes alike (Hay, 1998; Jung, 2015; Pooley, Pike, Drew & Breen, 2002).

Place identification within larger localities, such as regions, relies on collective identity amongst the population and an appreciation of a shared landscape. Distinctiveness is also perceived through comparisons with neighbouring regions (Paasi, 1991). In terms of the geographic and cultural features recognised through its World Heritage attributions, distinctiveness is relevant to the regional context of this study, the Blue Mountains National Park (Department of the Environment and Energy, 2017). Distinctiveness may also be appreciated by children through direct experiences with distinctive attributes
such as landscape features, or through symbolic attributes such as cultural 
celebrations or natural disasters (Measham, 2006).

Unlike place identification with small scale settings in which children have direct 
experiences, children’s place identification at a national level tends to rely on 
symbolic representations of place developed from a range of secondary sources, 
including parents and media (Poria, et al., 2005; Scourfield et al., 2006). In some 
cases, children’s views are influenced by parental interpretations of national 
identity and may be based on stereotypical views of cultural identity (Howard & 
Gill, 2001). Despite this, Dockett & Cusack (2003) suggest that when provided with 
opportunities to discuss their understandings, children are capable of 
deconstructing descriptors of Australian identity including social, racial and 
cultural differences in the population. Their research approach consisted of focus 
group interviews which encouraged open discussion of national identity, however, 
it is possible that this approach may have led to limited range of understandings 
given that the participants were aged 5-8 years and likely to influence each other 
perceptions of place identity. This suggests that individual interviews are more 
likely to capture a range of responses.

3.3 **Identity in relation to social contexts**

So far, explanations of place identity and place identification infer an essentialist 
view of ‘identity in relation to one place’. However, as demonstrated by Gadd (2016) 
and Malone (2007a), other forms of identity are in a constant state of flux, due to 
the continuous re-structuring of place meanings in relation to place contexts
(Massey, 1994, 1995). In particular, social identity is fluid in nature, due to changing social contexts (Hauge, 2007), whereby different social groups and their associated attributes inform group related behaviour (Hogg & Abrams, 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Within social contexts, socio-cultural processes inform place experiences and children’s identity, leading to variation in the way children view themselves. Children are able to negotiate socially constructed and agentic identities within different contexts (Malone, 2007a; Gustafson, 2009), demonstrating a hybrid approach to the accommodation of multiple identities (Hall, 1996).

As children interact fluidly with social, cultural and physical contexts, social identity and self-identity appear to be related to place identity. This is illustrated in Malone’s (2007a) research on children’s identities in relation to child-environment contexts, such as the physical child moving through the physical environment, the social child belonging to community, the natural child relating to living things and environmental conditions, and the learning child discovering their own capacity in relation to their surroundings. In a similar way, Avriel-Avni et al.’s (2010) investigation of children’s experiences in a desert town revealed fluid identities, such as, the sitting tenant’, ‘the lodger’, ‘the tourist’ and ‘the captive’ (pp. 248-252). That is, each identity illustrates a different attitude and way of experiencing place whereby ‘the sitting tenant’ represents an observer of the quality of the landscape and environment, ‘the lodger’ represents someone who lives in the town, although, has no real connection to the landscape, ‘the tourist’ is transient and moves through the town quickly and ‘the captive’ endures dissatisfaction with the town, describing it as quiet and boring.
However, there are notable differences between both studies. Whilst Malone’s research employed an ethnographic approach to observe children’s experiences and shifting identities, the children in Avriel-Avni et al.’s (2010) research were asked to describe perceptions of their place experiences. That is, in employing a phenomenographic process to explore children’s understanding of place, Avriel-Avni et al., revealed that conceptions of place were directly associated with perceptions of themselves within place. In addition, self-reported identities revealed that children were aware of their positionality, including self-beliefs relating to place attachment, place identification, place identity, and place satisfaction. Self-beliefs were both positive and negative in nature, with identification as ‘the captive’ (p. 251) for example, indicating a negative valence.

3.4 Being ‘out of place’

When children are dissatisfied with where they live, they can experience a sense of ‘being out of place’. The feeling of being ‘out of place’ occurs when children live in locations where their values are not shared, leading to an erosion of self-esteem and self-worth (Matthews et al., 2000). For example, whilst adults try to live in places that reflect their values and norms (Korpela, 1989), children are not in control of where they live, and one cannot assume that despite being part of a family group, children experience place identity in the same way as their parents. This exemplifies children’s lack of identity continuity, when contexts do not line up with self-identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996)—as occurs when teenagers are marginalised in public places (Derr, Chawla, Mintzer, Flanders Cushing & Van Vliet, 2013).
When there is conflict between children’s self-perceived identities and socially constructed identities, children experience marginalisation, resulting in feelings of not belonging and a tendency to not engage with place settings. Inherent in what Jack calls ‘the shrinking worlds of childhood’ (2008, p.7), are limitations on children’s independent mobility, resulting in less contact with other people, and places that inform developing identities. This further diminishes children’s developing capabilities and motivation for effective place participation (Bauder, 2001).

Although new constructions of childhood position children and youth as active agentic beings within their local area and society (James & Prout, 2005), traditional representations of childhood continue to result in children and youth being disengaged from the political contexts that impact on them (Harris, 2006). In particular, it is argued that the biggest separation lies in children being situated as ‘other’ from adults (James, 2011), and that for children to be recognised as having voices equal to adults they must overcome restrictive representations of childhood (Rabello de Castor, 2004), which result in limited inclusion at a political level (James, A., & James, A. L., 2004).

### 3.5 Environmental and ecological identity

As research builds on the importance of children’s agentic behaviour for tackling environmental issues, Chawla and Heft (2002) draw attention to children’s motivation for protecting the environment. Just as the children in Malone’s (2007a) research highlighted the natural child, Tugurian and Carrier (2016) suggest that
children’s developing identity in relation to the environment is informed by psychological development, such as nature-based activities that results in the development of autonomy and competence (Hordyk et al., 2015). Overall, research on children’s developing identities in relation to nature and the environment is limited.

As well, the contested notion of the child-nature relationship, as one example of child-place relations, rests largely on anthropocentric views in which humans are deemed more significant than non-human entities such as nature and the environment (Arvidsen, 2018). Here the term ‘nature’ refers to physical elements of the natural world that are not human-made and that interact with each other in natural ecological and biochemical processes to sustain life on Earth. More recently, new imaginings of children’s encounter with the more-than-human world, suggests that children’s relationships with nature are open-ended, inter-relational and less human centric (Rautio, 2013). This suggests that children’s developing identity in relation to nature is tacking a new turn away from current understandings of environmental and ecological identity.

Much work has been done on environmental and ecological identity in adult studies (Bragg, 1999; Clayton, 2003). Whilst there is some confusion in the use of the terms ‘environmental identity’ and ‘ecological identity’, these terms appear to serve different purposes. Environmental identity is a broader definition, encompassing a connection to ‘the non-human natural environment, based on history, emotional attachment, and/or similarity, that affects the ways in which we perceive and act toward the world’ (Clayton, 2003, 45-46). It appears that the term ‘environmental identity’ is often used as the default term when referring to identity relating to
natural environments. However, identity relating to understandings of ecological processes and what Bragg (1999) calls the ecopsychological self is a type of ecological identity in which the observer feels part of the ecological process for which he or she is discussing or proposing action. Ecological identity implies a clearer description of how identity is related to ecological processes, suggesting that human behaviour is directly related to disruption to ecological interrelationships, such as occurs in food webs.

Both definitions emphasise the importance of natural environments to humans, in terms of affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions (Clayton, 2003) and are manifest in a number of nature related constructs. These include connectedness to nature (Mayer & Frantz, 2004), inclusion of nature in self (Schultz, 2002), emotional affinity towards nature (Kals, Schumacher & Montada, 1999), love and care for nature (Perkins, 2010) and nature relatedness (Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2009).

Children’s studies have shown that an appreciation for nature evolves from direct and thoughtful experiences that foster deep understandings of links between humans and nature (Francis et al., 2013). Opportunities for discovery instil a sense of amazement with the natural world, resulting in positive experiences and relationships with nature (Cumming & Nash, 2015; Tugurian & Carrier, 2016). In other studies, the environmental identities of significant others, such as parents, were found to influence children’s developing environmental values relative to the environment (Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Payne, 2010). However, there is limited support for the role of teachers, as significant others, in the development of children’s environmental identities (Tugurian & Carrier, 2016) and studies
exploring children’s environmental and ecological identities are uncommon. The reasons for this is that most research involving adults tends to rely on indicators that are suitable for adults such as engagement in environmental direct action (Anderson, 2004).

Increasingly research investigates children’s predisposition for environmental care and sustainability by exploring children’s values and associated behaviour. Opportunities for moral reasoning instil a sense of care and responsibility for nature (Kals & Ittner, 2003; Payne, 2010). This includes engagement with the environment, developing self-efficacy for environmental action, including the capacity to think critically, and adopting relevant strategies. Blanchet-Cohen (2008) argues that children’s capacity for negotiating beliefs about nature is tied to a developing awareness of self and their own capacity for environmental involvement, however, further research is needed to explore the links between self-identity and understandings of nature.

### 3.6 Conclusion

Directly asking children to explore their identity in relation to place is plagued with construct validity issues, as identity is an abstract concept, and difficult for children to interpret. In addition, it is subject to multiple interpretations, depending on the research platform from which it is approached, as highlighted in the literature discussed in this chapter.

In line with place theory, place identity appears most commonly in the literature, although studies on children’s place identity are less common than those involving
adults. Place identity is often explored in relation to other place constructs such as place attachment and place identification mainly in studies involving adults. The role of emotion is tied to the development of identity through place attachment and belonging, as well as evaluations informing self-constructs such as self-esteem, other areas that require further exploration in children’s studies. However, as research on children’s identity is also influenced by socio-cultural overlays informing expectations of children, a research design that avoids such expectations is required.

Studies reveal that children are capable of negotiating shifting and hybrid identities within different settings. This suggests that children are competent actors in relation to social contexts and that children have learnt to be self-regulating, dealing with settings that may contradict their own sense of who they are. Studies show that children feel out of place when there is lack of identity continuity between internal and external perceptions of identity. Therefore, the key lies in exploring in an in-depth way, how children conceptualise identity in relation to different settings. This requires an interrogative approach that exposes personal experiences that are deeply meaningful.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, will explore literature on how children perceive understandings of looking after place.
Chapter 4

Literature review: Children looking after place

4.1 Introduction

The idea of looking after place can be thought of as a behavioural approach to maintaining, nurturing and caring for place. For the purposes of the present study, the term ‘looking after’ was used, due to its appropriateness for the age range of the study cohort, from 7 to 12 years. Encouraging children to look after place is discussed in terms of social and environmental elements. On the one hand, children’s behaviour is related to social connections, social cohesion and belonging. On the other, it is also related to maintaining and preserving the natural and built environment, so as to preserve and conserve it. Looking after place is manifest in relation to physical and social elements, and encompasses pro-environmental and pro-social behaviour: at times these are collectively referred to as pro-place behaviour.

This final chapter in the literature review, investigates research related to children’s understandings of looking after place. Relevant research incudes how children develop environmental knowledge and relationships with nature, which leads to caring and moral reasoning. Research examines how pro-environmental behaviour
is influenced by significant others and relationships with nature. In addition, how identity informs children’s participation in place.

4.2 Environmental knowledge

4.2.1 Developing environmental knowledge

Place knowledge is constructed by individuals, to enable them to make sense of the world and exist within it. In human geography, environmental knowledge is explored in terms of environmental awareness, which goes beyond familiarity to an awareness of consequences of behaviour relating to the environment (Stern, Dietz, & Kalof, 1993). It is also explored through environmental sensitivity, or ‘a predisposition to take an interest in learning about the environment, feeling concern for it, and acting to conserve it, on the basis of formative experiences’ (Chawla & Derr, 2012, p. 19).

For children, environmental knowing is thought to proceed in relation to developmental stages and socio-cultural influences (Barraza & Cuarón, 2004; Ernst & Theimer, 2011; Evans, et al., 2007; Powers, 2004). Successful approaches for developing environmental knowledge involve contextualisation (Lyons & Breakwell, 1994), which is relevant to investigations of children’s environmental awareness in relation to their local area. Research suggests that while younger children are more likely to have relational knowledge of their natural surroundings, they are not as concerned about or prepared to deal with local environmental problems compared with older children (Loughland, Reid & Petocz, 2002; Sobel, 1996). This suggests that there may be variations in children’s perceptions of looking after place within the study cohort.
4.2.2 Direct experience

Direct experience in environmental settings is known to build environmental knowledge and concern (Fisman, 2005; Hart, 1997; Sobel, 1996; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). Therefore, the extent of children’s direct experiences in nature is of interest in this study. Formative experiences in nature are linked to environmental conservation practices in adults (Chawla, 1998, 2007; Tanner, 1980) and primary learning experiences resulting in curiosity and an increased motivation for learning (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008; Reed, 1996). Children are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviour if they witness changes caused by environmental problems and appreciate how changes affect their everyday lives (Fisman, 2005). Conversely, short term events, such as school excursions to nature settings, are likely to reinforce the separation between environmental degradation and the students’ home environment, resulting in views that environmental issues are somebody else’s problem (Haluza-Delay, 2001).

Despite such experiences, the conceptualisation and understanding of environmental issues has been found to be challenging for children in a number of ways (Boyes & Stanisstreet, 1996). Nature experiences remain invisible unless experienced directly, and are only effective in promoting pro-environmental behaviour if children can make the connection between the affected area and the observer’s own action (Cullingford, 1995). In addition, dealing with environmental issues is associated with uncertainty, and is problematic for children who feel that they may be lacking the capacity or credibility to make a difference. It appears that there has been a tendency to explore children’s understandings of environmental issues related to problems that do not form part of their everyday worlds. Loughland, et al., (2002) argue that a relational aspect between the environment
and observer is required to encourage responsibility for the environment. This involves a shift from thinking about the environment as an object and as separate from the observer, towards conceptions of the environment as something that people can relate to and protect. Loughland, et al.’s, research suggests that examining the environment is part of children’s everyday worlds allows children to experience the environment first-hand including the impact of human activity.

### 4.2.3 Environmental education

Children’s environmental education appears to come from a number of sources, including school and family (Boyes & Stanisstreet, 1996) and the extent of effective education received at schools is related to a number of factors, including age and the effectiveness of the schooling. A socio-cultural approach to environmental education in school situates children’s environmental learning as being socially and culturally mediated by the curriculum and teaching approaches (Blizard & Schuster, 2007; Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014; Palmer, 1995) which may result in learning about environmental issues, being overshadowed by standardised curriculum and lack of teacher understanding on children’s place-based environmental experiences (Catling, 2005).

More recently, environmental education approaches combining local knowledge and settings have provided authentic place-based experiences for integration with formal learning (Cumming & Nash, 2015). The effectiveness of such programs is also influenced by interactions with members of the local community, including parents. In addition, some aspects of environmental learning are informed by children’s direct experiences, which invite sensory interaction, resulting in
environmental sensitivity (James & Bixler, 2008). Indeed, the most effective environmental education programs appear to be those that foster connectedness to nature and environmental identity (Ernst & Theimer, 2011) and programs encouraging relatedness to nature develop skills that are transferable to a broader level (Rickinson, 2001).

4.2.4 Social influences

Apart from school, another social context that leads to the development of environmental knowledge is family. Such opportunities allow children to engage opportunely with environmental issues in terms of their own interests (Catling, 2005). Influential family members such as parents, model a respect for nature through social learning (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008; Chawla, 2007; Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Grønhøj & Thøgersen, 2017; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001) or choose to live in places that symbolise positive values towards nature (Cheng & Monroe, 2012). They may practise environmental justice processes in the home by creating opportunities for discussion on environmental issues (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Payne, 2010) and allow children to engage in autonomous and self-directed activity, building children’s agency and motivation for dealing with environmental issues (Grønhøj & Thøgersen, 2017). Overall, experiences of environmental settings in the presence of environmentally minded significant others contribute to place attachment and place meaning, giving rise to environmental values and ethics (Davies, Rea & Waite, 2006; Horwitz, 1996; Kals, et. al., 1999; Payne, 2010).
4.3 Place attachment and pro-environmental behaviour

Pro-environmental behaviour is also linked to place attachment (Low & Altman, 1992; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Pike, 2011). When settings are imbued with meaning related to emotional ties, there is likely to be a greater commitment to looking after place (Hines, Hungerford & Tomera, 1986). Indeed, place attachments provide a strong motivating force for activism, relating to both the social and the physical context of everyday experience (Horwitz, 1996, Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001), with social activism occurring as citizen-like behaviour (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Lalli, 1992; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001; Vorkinn & Riese, 2001) and environmental action directed towards environmental protection and conservation (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

Children’s place attachments, that lead to a commitment to preserve and protect place, occur in a number of ways. When children are given autonomy to care and learn about a particular nature site, they develop environmental knowledge and awareness, resulting in concern and protective action (Cumming & Nash, 2015). For children, developing environmental knowledge occurs through experiential learning while engaged in imaginary, purposeful and cooperative play (Hill, 2013), and allows them to build connections with nature, impacting on the way they view their position with nature, thereby informing identity (Charles, 2009). Given the small number of studies, the processes by which children develop connectedness and relatedness to nature leading to pro-environmental behavior needs further exploratory research.
4.4 Children’s relationships with nature

4.4.1 Connections with nature

As a guide to exploring children’s connections with nature, a number of studies involving adults were drawn upon. The use of natural aspects of place as predictors of interest in environmentally friendly practices is largely driven by emotional responses (Mayer & Frantz, 2004). Feelings of emotional connectedness and empathy (Schultz, 2000) instil the motivation to act to protect natural elements for which a person feels emotional affinity (Kals et. al., 1999). The extent of emotional connectedness informs the development of attitudinal and behavioural orientations (Mayer & Frantz, 2004), feelings of responsibility (Kaiser, Ranney, Hartig & Bowler, 1999) and environmental citizenship (Collado et al., 2013).

It is surprising that children’s pro-environmental tendencies developed through emotional connections with nature have not been explored in a more significant way. Chawla is one of the few researchers who have focused on children’s development of pro-environmental behaviour. Chawla (2009) suggests that a love of nature and a sense of freedom, security and oneness with nature, encourages pro-environmental behaviour. It is through such experiences that meaningful bonds with natural environments are established during childhood (Chawla, 2002; Kellert, 2002), resulting in affectively and cognitively based attitudes linked to environmental concern and activism (Chawla 1992; Vaske & Korbin, 2001). Also, of significance is that children’s direct exposure to nature increases their emotional affinity and understandings of ecological processes (Collado et al., 2013), leading to a greater awareness of how human activity impacts on ecological systems.
Children’s emotional attachments to natural entities through anthropomorphism, or the attribution of human traits, emotions and intentions to non-human entities, result in children establishing ‘social like’ connections with plants and animals (Epley, Waytz & Cacioppo, 2007; Epley, Akalis, Waytz & Cacioppo, 2008; Tam, Lee & Chao, 2013). These include relationships with animals in which clear and direct reciprocal behaviour can be observed, resulting in feelings of relatedness and belonging (Davis, J. Green, & Reed; 2009; Mayer, Frantz, Bruehlman-Senecal & Dolliver, 2009) due to the inclusion of the relationship partner into one’s ‘social’ group and identity schema (Aron, A., Aron, E., Tudor & Nelson, 1991; Schultz, 2002).

The appreciation of native plants and animals in terms of human qualities demonstrates how children develop agency with the natural world. They utilise agentic responses to develop relationship with elements of nature attributing agency to anthropomorphised organisms. When organisms are perceived as having agency they are deemed to be ‘worthy’ of relating to (Gibson, J. 1979; Gibson, E. & Pick, 2000). This process is what Chawla (2007) refers to as learning to love nature in a way that is not only emotional and intuitive, but that encourages a desire to question human-nature interactions, and a motivation to find out more (Carson & Pratt 1965; Jørgensen, 2016; Thomashow, 2002). It also encourages children to care for nature in a way that humans care for themselves or each other (Chawla, 2007).

Another way that care may be encouraged is through more-than-human approaches to relationships with natural elements. Post-human or new materialist approaches, position child-nature relations are being equal, rather than human centered,
suggesting that matter has agency and interacts directly with children’s bodies (Änggärd, 2016; Rautio, 2013). That being so, the use of phenomenography as a tool for exploring how are children’s relationship with nature are experienced, understood and conceptualized (Marton, 1981), may provide support for the blurring of the nature-culture divide that has led to anthropogenic interaction with the natural world.

### 4.4.2 Children’s caring and moral reasoning

Nevertheless, the extensive research on children’s anthropocentric relations with nature, continues to provide insights into approaches that manifest as pro-environmental behaviour. It is possible that children’s caring for animals provides a foundation for caring for the natural environment, irrespective of their level of environmental knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation (Meerah, Halim & Nadeson, 2010). However, it is also possible that when children perceive that their biological, psychological and social needs are met through interactions with natural settings, they are more likely to perceive the environment as an entity that should be cared for (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008; Longhinotti-Felippe & Kuhnen, 2012).

The idea of children are critical evaluators the environment in terms of how it provides opportunities for their social and psychological development, strengthens the emerging argument that harnessing children’s agency, is one way of building children’s capacity for pro-environmental behaviour. When children see the value of the environment for their own development, it is likely they become emotionally invested in it.
In addition, when nature allows for experiences resulting in emotional attachments and belonging, it will be valued in the same way as community is valued, thereby instilling commitment towards its protection (Goralnik & Nelson, 2011). Indeed, a sense of belonging to a social group with similar value orientations, is also a powerful motive engaging children in conservation behaviour (Cumming & Nash, 2015; Schindel & Tolbert, 2017).

Although children’s moral values associated with social issues and social acts have been well documented (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Kohlberg, 1984; Turiel, 1998), children’s environmental moral reasoning is a developing area of research. Of note is Kahn’s work on children’s reasoning, where anthropocentric reasoning considers how the environment affects humans, whereas biocentric reasoning considers the intrinsic value of nature (Kahn & Lourenço, 2002; Severson & Kahn, 2010). That children experience biocentric reasoning is indicative of their unique relationships with natural environments on many levels, including physical, emotional and embodied relationships and their appreciation of natural ecological processes (Kahn & Lourenço, 2002).

Reasoning based on care and responsibility results in moral judgement informing values (Gilligan, 1982), leading to empathic responses and altruistic behaviour in relation to the environment (Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Schultz, 2000). Empathy is manifested as perspective taking on living things, and predicts feelings of responsibility (Chawla, 2007; Cheng & Monroe, 2012) and altruism: a propensity for placing the suffering of living organisms beyond the focus on oneself. Both are predictors of environmentally friendly behaviour (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002) that instil feelings of responsibility for other people and the environment, and are
representative of both pro-social and pro-environmental orientations. Therefore, the extent to which a person feels connected with nature, cares for nature and values nature is related to the likelihood of engaging in pro-environmental behaviour (Davis et al., 2009; Hinds & Sparks, 2008; Kals, et.al, 1999; Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Schultz, 2002).

4.5 Pro-social behaviour and self-determination

Just as studies have shown that caring for the environment is related to caring for people, children who develop pro-social skills are more likely to care for their local environment (Driskell, 2002). Pro-sociality is an important trait for engaging children in civic behaviour and for building competence for environmental action (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Szagun & Mesenholl, 1993). Interactions in special and favourite places allow for the development of pro-social behaviour (Hart, 1979, Kylin, 2003; Powell, 2001), and pro-social behaviour is inherent in a sense of community—manifested as behaviour that benefits others regardless of its motive (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998).

Caring, although integral to community initiatives, is only one component of civic mindedness and pro-environmental behaviour. Social skills for getting along with others, knowing one’s community and the capacity to effect change through helping and making a difference, are important elements of civic mindedness and social change (Nicotera, 2008). Pro-social behaviour requires self-determination, including self-regulatory skills (Meinhold & Markus, 2005), social competence (Benson, 2006) and the belief in one’s capacity to make a difference to the life of others.
These processes lead to independence and confidence to engage in issues at a local level, where the results of their contributions are experienced (Reichert & Print, 2017). Research on children’s developing competence indicates that it has a positive effect on children viewing themselves as change agents (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008; Malone, 2013), awakening an awareness of agency, and optimism about making a difference (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008). Children who participate in group activities where their agency and competence are appreciated, experience a stronger relationship with the group (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

4.6 Identity and its links to pro-place behaviour

Both place and environmental identity have been found to influence pro-environment behaviour. Place identity (Proshanky, et al., 1983) ties people to places through an appreciation of their distinctive attributes, whereby perceived threats to place attributes will encourage protective behaviour (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010). Environmental identity, like social identity, is reliant on its perceived value in relation to the social group (Dono, Webb & Richardson, 2010), whereby strong identification with a social group who share the same environmental concerns and values will increase the likelihood of environmental action (Whitmarsh & O’Neill, 2010). Place identity also mobilises social identity processes, resulting in specific group based behaviours to achieve desired outcomes (Anderson, 2004). That is, ‘who you are’ is dependent on ‘where you are’ and ‘who you are with’. Environmental identity can exist in relation to localised contexts requiring direct action (Anderson, 2004), or at broader levels, such as collective responses to environmental issues (Clayton, 2003; Mannetti, Pierro &
Livi, 2004). Environmental identity also lies on a continuum between identity that is strongly tied to the social group and identity that is individually oriented (Clayton & Opotow, 2003).

Research has shown that children in pre-adolescence experience both civic identity (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Chawla, 2002; Driskell, 2002; Gallagher, 2004) and environmental identity (Kals & Ittner, 2003). This is significant as adolescence is considered a developmental stage where individuals begin to differentiate from the values of socializing agents such as parents, exploring a sense of themselves as individuals, and controlling their own decisions and destinies. Adolescents explore aspects of self and social identity, while simultaneously developing citizenship orientations, including an understanding of the importance of personal responsibility (Hall, Coffey & Williamson, 1999). In addition, awareness of self-dispositions, including empathy, results in responsibility related to citizenship, including environmental citizenship (Tam, 2013).

4.7 Participation and Environmental citizenship

The emphasis on preparing children for the future emerges as a strong theme in both citizenship and educating for sustainability literature (Wilks, 2010). In particular, environmental citizenship is seen as an important step in developing young people’s values and self-efficacy for pro-environmental action (Barratt Hacking, Barratt & Scott, 2007). It aims to evoke the personal and sometimes latent values already within an individual (Dobson, 2003), to encourage a sense of ownership and empowerment (Hungerford & Volk, 1990) in regard to pro-environmental behaviour.
Research has shown that children continue to have concerns about environmental issues, both at a global level and locally. This is accompanied by a sense of unfairness that their concerns are not heard (Barratt Hacking, et al., 2007) and that children’s place-based competencies are rarely acknowledged (Campbell, E., Skovdal & Campbell, C., 2013; Hayward, 2012, Jackson, 2012). However, Rios and Menezes’ (2017) work on children’s environmental citizenship suggests that a suitable place for children to engage in environmental issues is the local community level. Within this context, children are likely to witness first hand environmental issues and to have more opportunities to participate in and develop youth citizenship.

Evidence supports the importance of self-efficacy and competence for environmental citizenship (Chawla & Heft, 2002; Meinhold & Markus, 2005). Children already exhibit relevant competencies in their homes (Horgan, Forde, Martin, & Parkes, 2017), schools (Mannion, 2003) and community centres (Juster & Leichter-Saxby, 2014), however, children’s participation continues to be marked by a struggle for recognition of children’s role and keeping abreast of adults in dealing with issues (Davis & Hill, 2006). More recently, involvement in projects indicates that when they are given access to knowledge about social and environmental issues, and to an audience that values their opinion and opportunities for engaging in appropriate action (Mackey, 2012), children present as capable and active participants (Derr & Kovacs, 2014; Derr & Tarantini, 2016; Malone, 2013).

Chawla and Cushing (2007) argue for the urgency of engaging children in environmental issues, due to the fact that children are increasingly exposed to
issues in school and media, without any sense of power to act as agents of change. There is a call for the recognition of what Malone calls ‘child-environment identities’ (2007, p. 9), including capacities to be ‘functional, confident and competent “environmental users” in the present and future’ (Wilks, 2010, p. 28).

4.8 Conclusion

The concept of looking after place, seemingly simplistic in nature, has not been the direct subject of any identifiable research. The various studies discussed in this chapter, have demonstrated how children’s looking after place is manifested as having environmental awareness through direct experiences and environmental education. Furthermore, the influence of significant others in informing caring behaviours, moral reasoning and pro-sociality, functions as a precursor to pro-environmental behaviour. Identity constructs such as place identity, place attachment and place identification, and environmental identity, are linked to maintaining, preserving, and caring for place, due to the emotional and cognitive attachments people develop in relation to place. Studies show that when people feel satisfied in and with place, they are more likely to depend on it and to want to preserve it.

An impediment that children face to engaging in pro-place or pro-environmental behaviour, is the degree of children’s participation in arenas that lead to the protection of place. Research suggests that the crucial factor is not children’s lack of opportunity for participation, but the way they are viewed at participatory levels. Rather than children being viewed as having their own experiences, ways of seeing,
ways of doing and evaluating, children are viewed as lacking competencies that adults believe are necessary for participation (Nagel, 2004). Indeed, as research on ways of engaging children in pro-environmental behaviour continues to begin with the assumptions that they lack relevant skills and knowledge, a research approach that explores children’s perceptions of their environmental capacity may reveal areas of child development that can be addressed.

The following chapter, Chapter 5, the rationale, explores more closely the context in which the research is located, outlines why doing such a study is worthwhile, and justifies the use of a phenomenographic approach to explore the research question.
SECTION III:

RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY
Chapter 5

Rationale

5.1 Introduction

Research with a focus on geography as an important part of children’s experiences, has moved from assuming that the realities of children arise solely from interactions with other people (James, A., & James, A. L., 2008) to an awareness that children’s interactions within physical spaces (including physical settings and the natural environment) provide opportunities for unique experiences. In particular, children’s experiences within place as a local area, are related to social and physical contexts, as well as cultural contexts that inform everyday processes.

The context of this research is threefold. It involves children, place as a local area, and phenomenography as the research approach. Building on the success of other studies exploring variations in children’s conceptualisations of place related entities, the intended purpose of using phenomenography to explore children’s experiences and understandings of place in the present study, to capture diversity in the ways children experience and think about ‘place’. As the construction of place meaning is unique for every individual, phenomenography is an appropriate methodology for capturing children’s subjective understandings on the basis of individual perceptions and experiences.
5.2 Children in place

In the current climate of global insecurity, both social and environmental in nature, the need to focus on the ‘child in place’ is salient. Aitken, Lund, & Kjørholt’s (2007) article entitled ‘Why children? Why now?’ (p.3) calls for a revisiting of tired agendas that look at children’s development in place, towards a non-representational approach. Rather than looking at ‘pre-given identities of young people’ (p. 9), it is important to look at how children perceive their own identities, and how these identities provide opportunities for engagement in place and environmental issues, to provide insights into what enables and constrains children’s participation in social realms.

Holloway (2014) argues that a shift from the research focus of developmental psychology in children’s geographies towards socio-cultural influences, needs to be progressed in such a way as to move beyond nature-culture dualism (Prout, 2005). That is, rather than focusing on the biological or social environmental nature of child development in relation to place, why not utilise a non-representational approach to explore ‘more-than-social’ (Kraftl, 2013) and ‘more-than-biological’ experiences? This idea embraces the view that children’s personal geographies, or the ways that children understand places of significance, result from the culmination of physical, social, cultural, psychological and possibly ‘other’ experiences. Place as a phenomenon lends itself to explorations of children’s experiences regardless of their origin, as demonstrated in a number of qualitative studies (Gadd, 2016; C. Green, 2011; Hart, 1979; Malone, 2007a).
5.3 Researching place as a local area

The concept of place continues to be explored in qualitative and quantitative realms. Early conceptualisations of place were guided by existentialism and phenomenology (Relph, 1976), and were later extended by the operationalisation of place constructs using sub scales and indicators (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kaltenborn, 1998; Lalli, 1992; Manzo, 2003; Marcouveux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011; Pretty et al., 2003). In children’s place research, qualitative approaches, rather than complex quantitative indicators that at times appear to overlap in meaning (Patterson & Williams, 2006), tend to be used to examine children’s experience of place.

However, it is the very nature of defining ‘place’ that leaves research about ‘place’ open to subjective interpretation. Place is often explored as a ‘sense of place’ representing an ambient feeling or perception about place in terms of positive and negative evaluations (Derr, 2002; Tuan, 1980). Existing research on ‘children in place’ assumes that adults are cognisant of themes that need to be explored (Murris, 2013) clouding how data is collected and analysed. This is problematic if understandings of place are considered to be related to unique experiences. Investigating place as bounded by theoretical parameters, implies that children’s conceptions will also be bound according to the researcher’s pre-existing ideas of how place should be explored.

As discussed in the literature review, evidence demonstrates that children experience place in a number of ways, such as time-geography, spatial awareness, affordances in place, place attachment, and place identity, nature experiences and connectedness to nature, environmental knowledge, values, caring and pro-sociality (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 1999; Chawla & Derr, 2012; Chawla & Cushing,
2007; Collado et al., 2013; Cumming & Nash, 2015; Dallago et al., 2009; Derr, 2002; Fidzani & Read, 2012; Gadd, 2016; Hay, 1998; Hordyk et al., 2015; Korpela et al., 2002; Kytta, 2002; Lim & Barton, 2010; Malone 2007a; Matthews, 1995; Maxwell & Chmielewski, 2008; Payne, 2010; Tugurian & Carrier, 2016). However, rather than directly exploring children’s conceptions of place using a range of place related constructs, it is important to use a methodological approach that does not impose pre-existing ideas relating to place as phenomenon even though they might appear in the results.

This study employs a phenomenographic exploration of ‘place’ and related phenomena, in the hope of capturing a holistic view of children’s experiences by inviting openness and detail in children’s reporting of responses. Within this ambit, it aims to capture children’s agentic behaviour, revealing capacities for autonomy and self-regulation. Children are invited to explore understandings of place developed through both past experiences and future possibilities, where past experiences are considered to be inextricably linked to conceptions explored in the ‘here and now’, and future ideas relating to place may reveal what place can provide for children and what children can provide for place.

In particular, to explore children’s understandings of their experiences within their local area, there is an assumption that place as a local area provides the contexts in which children undertake activities related to everyday life. Phenomenography endeavours to capture the richness of contextualised multi-dimensional everyday life experiences, uncovering unexpected perceptions and understandings that challenge pre-existing ideas of children’s place experiences. In particular, a relational view is likely to highlight understandings of the child’s self in relation to place.
5.4 Researching identity in relation to place

The shift away from a deterministic view towards an agentic view of ‘children in place’, has led to a greater research focus on children’s self-informed and self-directed behaviour. This implies that, if meanings of place are constructed by subjective experiences, then conceptions of place are likely to be centred on understandings of self, immersed in relational interactions with the social and physical contexts (Gustafson, 2001).

So far, research on children’s ‘identity in place’ has demonstrated that identity is informed by place, place attachment and the distinctiveness of place (Proshansky, *et al.*, 1983; Proshansky & Fabian, 1987; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), where the construct ‘place identity’ is theorised in terms of how it informs children’s identity development in social and physical contexts. Notably, there have been limited studies exploring children’s identity in place, compared to the number of studies involving adults.

It is also argued that there is a tendency to focus on essentialist notions of identity rather than on fluid identities, which are better suited to shifting everyday contexts (Malone, 2007a; Massey 1994). Whilst shifting identities are related to social groups, contexts and constructions (Malone, 2007a) and identity related to ‘self’ attributes such as self-esteem, self-concept and self-efficacy are informed by opportunities for the development of capabilities (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996).

Increasingly, research suggests that identity development is also related to one’s innate capacity to perceive the world through multi-dimensional and multi-sensual
encounters that inform evaluations of place (Kylin, 2003; Lehman-Frisch et al., 2012; Min & Lee, 2006; Ross, 2007; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008). This includes relations that children develop with natural elements of place, that lead to relatedness to nature in some way (Kals et al., 1999; Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Schultz, 2002), informing environmental identity (Clayton & Opotow, 2003) and ecological identity (Thomashow, 2002).

In the past, phenomenography has been successfully used to explore children’s understanding of identity, including discrete identity constructs such as ethnic identity (Peck, Sears & Donaldson, 2008). However, directly exploring ‘identity in relation to place’ using direct questioning or pre-established indicators is problematic, as it pre-supposes children’s conceptions of identity in place. Alternatively, Avriel-Avni et al., (2010) demonstrated that identity can be explored in indirect ways by searching for conceptualisations of identity within the rich data collected in a phenomenography of place. This is based on the assumption that conceptions of identity will be revealed, as the qualitatively different ways people think about a place are primarily concerned with relationally motivated processes such as identity (Gustafson, 2001). Similarly, Kalvaitis and Monhardt’s (2012, p. 209) use of phenomenography to investigate ‘the architecture of children’s relationships with nature’ revealed that children develop ecological identity in relation to the degree to which they include themselves in descriptions of nature.

In using phenomenography to investigate place, it is possible to capture children’s understandings of place, that provide insights into context based identities and self-systems of the whole child. Overall, when children are able to identify elements of place that support their developing identity on the basis of
preferences and intentions to ‘be’ a certain way, this will enable their agentic behaviour. Rather than just informing ‘who am I in relation to where I live’, allowing children to consider identity through active engagement in place may result in their thinking ‘who do I want to be in relation to where I live?’ In relation to living in an area that is environmentally rich, identity manifestations might lead to a capacity for pro-environmental behaviour.

5.5 Researching ‘looking after place’

The notion of children as competent actors suggests that children have the capacity to engage in place in a way that is relevant to them. Research has shown that children find ways to negotiate social and physical settings in their daily lives (Brown, et al., 2008; Lehman-Frisch et al., 2012; Nicotera, 2008; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008; Spilsbury, 2005) whilst searching for opportunities to be autonomous, to build competence and to experience relatedness with entities in their local area. Although such opportunities lead to self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2002), children continue to be overlooked as self-determining, limiting their opportunities for participation in place related matters.

There exists an opposing view: that childhood is a crucial period for the development of beliefs, values, attitudes and identities influencing political engagement (Davis, et al., 2009; Hacking & Barrett, 2007; Hicks & Holden, 2007; Larsson, Andersson & Osbeck, 2010) while simultaneously children are perceived as passive recipients of social and environmental issues. This suggests that children are shouldering the burden of responsibility to tackle such issues (Lister, 2006) without having the capacity to effectively deal with them and encapsulates
the need for children to develop not only awareness of social and environmental issues (Evans & Honeyford, 2012), but also skills that position them as competent contributors in participatory projects.

Indeed, research already exists on children’s capacity to work with adults on participatory projects concerning place (Derr & Tarantini, 2016; Malone, 2013). Such investigations have gone some way to exploring how children’s participation has moved beyond rhetoric to what Derr and Tarantini describe as ‘the challenging reality of planning a city with children as a valued constituent’ (p. 1). To achieve this, researching children’s experiences in everyday spaces focusing on children’s ‘lived’ participation rather than ‘performed’ participation (Pells, 2009), is a preferred way of understanding how children practise place participation. This approach circumnavigates what adult researchers perceive to be structural determinants of participation that emphasize the relevance of age and contexts for allowing children to have a voice (Wyness, 2013). By focusing on children’s relational experiences within their homes, school and communities, including social participation through democratic processes, children are framed as active agents (Horgan et al., 2017; Percy-Smith, 2015) rather than as merely as children.

5.6 The successful application of phenomenography

A number of phenomenographic studies consider children’s experiences in a way that focuses on children’s ability to articulate their ideas on pro-place behaviour, environmental understandings and environmental education. Through the application of dwelling thinking (Heidegger, 1977) or the sense of feeling at home
rather than only lodging in a specific place, Avriel-Avni, et. al., (2010) provided insights into children’s private views of inhabitation. These included variations in conceptions ranging from a sense of wanting to maintain or care for place, to a sense of a lacking opportunity to develop agentic behaviour for protecting place.

Loughland et al., (2002) explored more broadly, the impact of environmental education on children’s understandings of place, using phenomenography to uncover children’s conceptions of the environment, revealing that the environment is perceived as an objective and a relational entity. Both of these studies suggest that phenomenography aims to expose variation (rather than consistency) in the data, providing a realistic view of changing ideas about a phenomenon. They also suggest that children’s ideas and conceptualisation are varied, not only in relation to adult ways of thinking but also in relation to other children.

The third phenomenographic study by Nagel entitled “Lend them an ear: The significance of listening to children’s experiences of environmental education” (2004, p. 115) demonstrated that children have clear ideas about environmental education including suggestions for improvement, and that they appreciated the opportunity phenomenography gave them to express opinions and voice their concerns. This is because, Nagel’s research, assumed that children provide different perspectives than adults, rather than assuming that they know less.

It is possible that when children are positioned as active agents capable of constructing their own understandings of place (Christensen & James, 2008; James & Prout, 2005), they may provide insights into relational behaviours with
place that could be perceived as precursors to behaviours that lead to environmental sustainability.

5.7 Conclusion

In this study, place is explored as a site of interactions between children and their surroundings, from which meanings are derived that are unique to the observer (Marton, 1986; Gibson, 1979). Using phenomenography in children’s place research, will allow the researcher to cross the bridge between tangible elements of place that are readily observed, and the intangible elements of place that are yet to be recognised. What the researcher hopes to achieve through the use of phenomenography are deeper understandings of children’s relationship to a place as a site for everyday experiences, including how children develop understandings of self and identify in relation to place, and how they want to protect and look after place. The phenomenographic researcher must allow meanings to emerge through the application of phenomenographic methodology and analysis, based on a number of discerning principles; these are discussed in the next chapter.

The next chapter, Chapter 6, outlines the research questions and research methodology.
Chapter 6

Methodology

6.1 Introduction

Following the previous chapters, which provide a framework for the research context and the purpose of the research, this chapter outlines the research design and methodology. The methodological process utilised is phenomenography, which is discussed in relation to the collection of data and the techniques used in data analysis, and the manner in which issues of validity and reliability are addressed, including the perspective of ‘researcher as interviewer’. It addresses justification of the interview questions and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of employing an open-ended response interview approach with children. The participants and setting are described in detail to set the scene for the research, and ethical considerations are discussed.

6.2 Overview of the research design

Through exploring the themes covered in the research questions, this research aims to uncover ways to support children’s positive engagement with environmental issues, including pro-environmental behaviour in the local area. To achieve this, the
research design had to be carefully considered in terms of the aims of the research, the appropriateness and execution of the methodology, and the research context.

In the research design a number of factors were considered by the researcher:

1. A research focus that is clear in its articulation of the research questions.
2. An understanding of the underlying reasons for investigating the research questions.
3. The choice of a methodology—phenomenography—that suits the research focus.
4. Appropriately designed stages in the conduct of research.
5. An understanding of the basic assumptions, principles, and procedures utilised in conducting a phenomenographic study.
6. The selection of a study cohort to fit the research focus and ethical considerations.
7. The execution of data collection procedures, including organisational considerations.
8. The collection and analysis of data using phenomenographic interview techniques.
9. Checking the interjudge communicability of the outcome space with fellow researchers.
6.3 Research questions

This research is primarily an exploration of the gaps that exist in understanding of how children conceptualise place. This study involved a cohort of children, ranging in age from 7 to 12 years and living in two demographically and geographically similar locations in the Blue Mountains region. Using semi-structured open-ended interview questions, data were collected from 68 children aged between 7 and 12 years of age, with interviewees chosen from three discrete age groups; 7-8 years, 9-10 years and 11-12 years.

To explore this research problem, the following research questions were developed.

**Question 1**

*In what ways do children of diverse ages conceptualise ‘place’?*

**Question 2**

*In what ways do children of diverse ages conceptualise their ‘identity in place’?*

**Question 3**

*In what ways do children of diverse ages conceptualise how they can ‘look after’ place?*
6.4  The phenomenographic process

6.4.1  Using phenomenography in this study

Researchers utilising phenomenography move away from identifying the theoretical parameters within which problems are solved, towards exploring the conceptions of a group of individuals about the world they experience. They search for variations in the ways people experience, perceive and understand a phenomenon. In essence, this methodology explores the relational perspective between the mind of the individual and the world they experience (Säljö, 1988).

Phenomenography claims a number of differences from other qualitative approaches, the key one being that it takes a second-order research perspective, allowing the researcher to analyse people's experiences and understandings of a phenomenon, categorizing them to highlight variations. The data analysis is a form of iterative content analysis such as is used in many qualitative approaches. However, within phenomenography, analysis of participants' responses is taken at face value (Richardson, 1999). Responses representing variation in the data are isolated and grouped into categories of description providing rich descriptions of experiences. Measures taken to increase the range of responses obtained from the participants (larger sample range and/or in-depth interviews), are an important part of the phenomenographic research strategy.

Variation in the data are compiled into what is termed the 'outcome space', which comprises 'categories of description' that express 'conceptions' about the phenomenon. Conceptions are 'way[s] of seeing something, a qualitative relationship between an individual and some phenomenon' (Johansson, Marton & Svensson, 1985, p. 236), and will vary between individuals. Phenomenography is
designed to capture conceptions and establish dimensions of variation in understandings about a phenomenon. Varying conceptions of the phenomena are gathered and analysed in a structured and systematic way, using an empirical approach to quantify understandings of the phenomenon held by a study cohort (Seamon, 1982).

6.4.2 Stages in the conduct of research

The steps in conducting the research are as follows and illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Step 1 involved selecting the study cohort.

Step 2 involved conducting the semi-structured interviews in which subjects completed general statements about the phenomenon in question.

Steps 3 to 6 consisted of the data analysis, which involved transcribing the recorded interviews using voice recognition software and then checking transcriptions for clarity. This was followed by reading and re-reading the transcripts to become familiar with the data, and identifying key conceptions, which were condensed into five broad categories of description.

Step 7 explored the variations and similarities between each category of description to determine their internal relationships and distinctions.

Step 8 was the final stage, of presenting the nature and extent of variation in understandings of the phenomenon, assessing the limitations and significance of the findings, and suggesting areas that require further investigation.
Figure 6.1: Steps in the research process
6.5  Assumptions of phenomenography

It is important to explicitly state the rules and criteria that govern a research approach (Miles & Huberman, 1984). These are known as the assumptions, and provide a framework for understanding why specific tasks are performed. Phenomenography has its roots in the general scientific tradition but provides an alternative to traditional positivist, behaviouristic and quantitative research, and makes its own ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Svensson, 1997), which can be summarized as follows.

6.5.1  The nature of conceptions: Ontological assumptions

The aim of phenomenography is to describe conceptions about a phenomenon. The nature of conceptions is related to assumptions made about the nature of knowledge. Knowledge is created by thinking which has occurred through human activity within a world or reality external to the individual. Knowledge is seen to depend on context and perspective, and has a relational character, in that it presents itself as different yet related entities that can form units or wholes.

6.5.2  Categories of description: Epistemological assumptions

The need for description in phenomenography is related to an understanding of knowledge as a question of meaning, and similarities and differences. By relying more on individual descriptions to create categories of description, and less on prescribed categories, fewer assumptions are made about the held by the study cohort. In constructing categories of description, the processes of abstraction, condensation of meaning and reduction are undertaken in relation to the richness
of the phenomenon, to isolate whole characteristics which represent the central meaning of the object, while preserving similarities and differences between the parts of the organised whole.

6.5.3 Exploratory research: Methodological assumptions

Exploring variations: The explorative nature of the data collection is affected by the relational character of conceptions, and the uncertainty of such relations. The interview is focused on the expression of conceptions about the phenomenon that are delimiting and are therefore an exploration of parts within a whole. As the process of differentiating parts requires interpretation of data concerning their referential meaning, it cannot be easily verified using interjudge reliability.

Bracketing is a technique of phenomenographic analysis which goes to the heart of the exploratory nature of phenomenography. It aims to set aside all previous understandings and beliefs about a phenomenon, as they threaten to interfere with the researcher’s attempt to explore new and varied perceptions and conceptualizations about a phenomenon held by the research participants (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997). In undertaking phenomenographic analysis the attempt to bracket will not be fully achieved, as some of the ways of viewing the world will be difficult to set aside. Karlsson (1993) suggests that achievement of a degree of empathy with the lifeworld of the participant, and a degree of detachment from the researcher’s own lifeworld, will greatly assist the process of bracketing.

Ashworth and Lucas (2000) outline a series of practical guidelines for utilizing bracketing while maintaining an empathetic approach to data collection. Some of
these are comprised within the assumptions already outlined above. Of interest are guidelines concerning the avoidance of presuppositions held about particular groups or types of participants by the researcher, the use of open-ended data collection techniques which are not based on the researcher's presuppositions about the phenomenon and which allow participants time to describe their experience in detail; the importance of detailed transcription techniques which reflect the emotions and emphasis of the participant; and extensive data analysis that continues to avoid presuppositions and prematurely organising data into logical categories of description before comprehensively exploring various interpretations of the data. Lastly, all attempts are made to allow the reader to evaluate the researcher’s attempts to achieve bracketing, and to trace the process by which the findings emerge.

Whilst the researcher attempts to delimit the range of responses provided through the open-ended interview technique, participants, like the researcher, will have a finite number of understandings and perceptions about a phenomenon, which will ultimately result in a finite number of conceptions being revealed in the data collection process. The phenomenographic researcher describes their own position in relation to the context, highlighting the parameters that make up the meaning of the phenomenon as a whole (Marton, 1992).
6.6  The research context

6.6.1  The research setting and participants

The research design aimed to maximize the exploration of ‘place’ factors by interviewing children of varying ages. The research setting and participants were selected from two primary schools in two villages within one geographical region: The Blue Mountains Region of NSW Australia (Figure 6.2)

Figure 6.2: Map of Blue Mountains and cohort location (Blue Mountains City Council, 2018)
This region, The Blue Mountains National Park is known for being situated in a World Heritage Area, designated as such for its natural beauty (native forests and river systems) and historical and cultural (Aboriginal and European) significance. The Blue Mountains townships are located at altitudes ranging from 300 to 1000 m above sea level and are dotted within natural settings where residents often live in close proximity to ‘the bush’, a term frequently used to describe unique and semi-remote areas in Australia. The villages are 5 kilometres apart and have similar demographics. They have been established for a relatively long period of time in relation to European history, and continue to appeal to families who move to the area for affordable housing.

The population of the area can be described using two social measures. The first, known as the SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage provides a Score and a Decile number based on the 2006 Census Collection data, where Decile 1 contains the bottom 10% of collection districts and Decile 10 contains the top 10% (ABS, 2006). The Score is based on weighted characteristics from a collection district, where the average equals 1000 and roughly two-thirds of the scores lie between 900 and 1100. These characteristics are categorised into the following broad socio-economic dimensions: income variables, education variables, employment variables, occupation variables, housing variables, and other indicators of relative advantage or disadvantage. The lower the score, the greater the disadvantage.

The second social measure, reported in *Unequal in Life* (Vinson, 1999), goes beyond indicators of disadvantage to look at the extent to which such disadvantage is becoming entrenched within particular neighbourhoods. In this way it gives a more
comprehensive outlook of the social environment of the study cohorts. It provides a Risk Score and Ranking based on how many times the area has been ranked in the highest 30 for disadvantage in the following categories: unemployment rate, low income, low birth weight, child abuse, leaving school before 15 years, emergency assistance, psychiatric hospital admissions, defendants before courts, unskilled workers, and child injuries. The lower the Risk Score and Ranking, the greater the disadvantage. These measures are set out in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Demographic social rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Town/suburb</th>
<th>SEIFA</th>
<th>Unequal in Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
<td>Village 1</td>
<td>1093</td>
<td>0.92891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
<td>Village 2</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>1.04615</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two villages are comparable in terms of their socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. Given also the similarities in the built and natural surrounds, the lack of variation in socio-economic advantage and disadvantage should not impact upon the type of ‘place’ experiences encountered by the subjects. This clears the way for an investigation solely into how participants conceptualise elements of place through their experiences.
6.6.2 Ethical considerations

To gain entry to the schools as research sites, and to address ethical issues that may emerge, permission was sought and granted from relevant authorities, namely The University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee associated with Participant Information, Information for parents and guardians and Informed Consent forms, letter to the Principal and interview schedule (Appendices A-F) and the NSW Department of Education (Appendix G). Following this, initial request letters were sent to the schools, followed by phone calls and introductory visits. After approval from the Principal and school staff, letters requesting parental consent were distributed. These letters explained the reciprocal rights of the researcher and participant. They also provided a brief description of the purpose and nature of the study and explained to parents that they had the right to withdraw their children at any time from the study. Similarly, it was stated that children would be invited to withdraw from the questioning if they felt uneasy or discomfort during the interview process. This was particularly relevant as the use of a probing style interview technique can be quite intense, and may lead to fatigue and distress.

A total of 123 signed permission notes were returned from students in each of the age groups: 7-8 years, 9-10 years and 11-12 years. Of these, a significant proportion were returned by students in the older age group, 10-12 years. Notably, the number of returned permission notes tapered with age with the youngest students returning the least number. Due to the uneven distribution and because the study aimed to collect data from an equal number of children in each age group, it was decided that only 68 students were to be interviewed. This allowed for a similar number of
students (8-12) to be interviewed from each age group. The groups also contained an even distribution of males and females...

The number of respondents was deemed to be sufficient to achieve variation in responses; a key aim of the phenomenographic research process. As the survey was voluntary, the relatively large number of participants selected provided a safety net for students to exit the interview process if required. Children involved in the research received no financial reward for their participation. To protect the interests of participants, they were given assurances that they would not be identified by name, only pseudonyms, and that their responses would remain confidential.

6.7 The phenomenographic interview design

The research technique used to collect the data in this study was interviewing, using an open-ended interview approach. This is a common qualitative approach used to gather for the purpose of describing the depth and nuances of experience and to record how one has 'lived, felt, undergone, made sense of' experiences in place (Schwandt, 2001, p. 84). Although open-ended interviews are effective in revealing diversity in understandings of place when combined with other qualitative methodologies (Lehman-Frisch et al., 2012; Pike, 2011; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008), multimethod approaches tend to be time consuming, and generally are not viable for large sample sizes. Ultimately, the researcher’s use of an open-ended approach aims to obtain rich data (Marton, 1986) within the constraints of conducting interviews in a school setting. Such a setting provided access to a large number of participants of various ages: this is paramount in
obtaining a comprehensive list of themes and categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Interviews are often the preferred option for cohorts when information relating to the content being investigated is difficult to access via other qualitative methods. One of the biggest issues with questioning children is the complexity of the ideas being addressed (Pooley et al., 2002) and as place as a phenomenon is abstract in nature, it requires a specialised approach for the collection of data. Studies utilizing appropriate interview techniques lead to detailed responses, allowing children to expose different ways of ‘being and thinking’ in place. In particular, Catling (2014) recommends using interviews for hearing what children have to say and appreciating them as valued members of society (UNCROC, 1989). Such a level of appreciation results in a more equitable relationship between researcher and subject (Wilks & Rudner, 2013) and a greater likelihood of revealing complex relationships between the subject and the phenomenon in question (Adams et al., 2016). Complex and unexpected data require the researcher to be open to different ways of thinking about the phenomenon, rather than being from the ‘vantage point of existing research and intellectual traditions’ (Holloway, 2014, p. 388).

To achieve a deep level of analysis of children’s conceptions about place, in-depth interviewing was required due to their capacity for explorative data collection (Waterman, Blades & Spencer, 2001). This involved opening the interview with semi-structured statements allowing the researcher to set the theme. For example, the respondent was invited to complete the sentence ‘I think the word place means...’. The same incomplete statements were provided for each participant, regardless of their age or location.
In terms of working with children, the use of guide statements was chosen for a reason. These have been found to enhance the degree of spontaneity exhibited by children (Goodman & Reed, 1986), and have been used in interviews conducted in phenomenographic research with children (Loughland, et. al., 2002). A sequence of interview guide statements was used. These are designed to provide an opening for participants to discuss ways of experiencing a phenomenon. This technique allows participants to describe in detail their perceptions and experiences and to reflect on their descriptions in ways not afforded by a more structured question (open or closed) approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Issues of bias were also considered. By beginning a statement and inviting the participants to complete it, they are encouraged to describe the phenomenon in their own words and not to limit the comprehensiveness of their answer. Each guide statement was interspersed with more specific ‘wh-questions’, such as ‘what do you mean by...’ and other prompts ‘Is there anything else?’, for encouraging children to provide more detail in their responses (Powell, Roberts, Ceci & Hembrook, 1999). It is important to be aware of the nature of follow-up questions and not to ask questions that may influence the direction of the interviewee’s line of thought. That is, an interviewer will use follow-up questions that use terms already introduced by the interviewee (Bruce, 1994) to further explore their meaning.

To further reduce possible bias in the analysis of an interviewee’s responses, the construction of follow-up questions must not be influenced by the interviewer’s prior knowledge as allowing this knowledge to influence the nature of further questions would ultimately influence the answers. Instead, the interviewer’s role is
to consider how a response provides a particular dimension of a phenomenon; subsequent follow-up questions might investigate the possible values of the dimension and subsequently, the extent of variation within the dimension.

Care must be taken by the interviewer to not encourage dependency in the respondent by their looking for cues or approval from the interviewer about what to say (Theman, 1979). The interviewer needs to maintain a degree of sensitivity to such cues and know when not to proceed with a line of questioning. This was one approach to maintaining a degree of reliability in the data, as avoiding dependency will maximize the chance of a similar response/description being given in the event that the participants are questioned again by a different researcher. Similarly, a conversational style, whereby respondents are encouraged to use their own expressions and include even irrelevant information, promotes a relaxed interview environment that is conducive to open and plentiful discussion.

In addition, it is important to consider how the context of the research is introduced to the participants, so as not to inadvertently influence the responses of the participants. For example, if the participants were uncertain about what ‘place’ actually meant, discussing the context of the research in detail could lead them into a particular line of thought about place. Hence, an introductory statement was provided to all the participants that was general in nature. It read as follows.

*Welcome, my name is … Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. The interviewing will take about 20 minutes and will be recorded. Anything you say won’t be repeated to anyone else. You do not have to answer a question if you don’t want to.*
The nature of the guide statement is specifically aimed at obtaining a large variation in data in relation to children’s understandings of their place, how children’s identities are linked to ‘their place’, and their perceptions about caring after place. Based on the idea that individuals tend to remember connections between experiences rather than discrete ideas (Entwhistle, 1997), a question directly relating to ‘identity’ was not specifically included, due to the abstract nature of the concept. That is, the nature of phenomenographic interviews is that it focuses on perceptions that are often expressed within understandings of the phenomenon. It is also assumed that allowing participants to expand on ideas about how they relate to place will draw out conceptions of their ‘identity in place’. Additionally, an alternative guide statement “I see myself as someone who is...” was used to add another dimension to the data.

The open-ended guide statements are listed in Table 6.2, with an explanation of the intent of each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guide statement</th>
<th>Intent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My name is . . . and I am ...</td>
<td>The purpose of this statement was twofold. Firstly ‘My name is . . .’ was to ascertain the name of the respondent so that it could be linked to the demographic information about the subject. The second part ‘and I am ...’ gave the subject the opportunity to describe him or herself, including perceptions about identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the word place means . . .</td>
<td>‘I think the word place means . . .’ is an open-ended statement to gather a range of responses about the phenomenon of ‘place’ and how the subject conceptualizes ‘place’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My place is ... and it is ...</td>
<td>‘My place is ... and it is ...’ is a two-part open-ended statement to obtain a description of place from a personal perspective. By using the phrase ‘my place’ the subject is prompted to identify and describe (through ‘and it is’) the phenomenon of place for which they have a sense of ownership and belonging, as opposed to ‘a place’ in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live in ... and it is ...</td>
<td>‘I live in ... and it is ....’ is to determine if the concept of place as described by the subject is the same as and/or related to understandings of the subject’s place of dwelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself as someone who is...</td>
<td>I see myself as someone who is...is used to capture ideas relating to “the self” aspect of identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can look after my place by ... (Instead of ‘to care for my place ...’, as outlined in Appendix 6).</td>
<td>The wording of this statement was altered after the pilot interviews, as participants found the phrase ‘to care for’ difficult to comprehend. Instead, the phrase ‘I can look after my place by ...’ was used to gather a range of responses about perceptions relating to looking after place and, in particular, how the subject perceives his or her capacity to ‘look after place’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.8 Data collection: Conducting the interviews with children

The interview process utilised in this study had particular considerations that are unique to children, as well as to the phenomenographic method. Much research has been done on interviewing children—including the process and the impact of interviewing children. According to Hart (1997), children who are prepared for interviewing can learn a lot about themselves during the interview process, including the realisation that their opinions are valued.

To prepare the children for interviews, a number of steps were undertaken. After approval was granted and general information was given to the parents, carers and teachers, interview participants were selected. The choice of individuals to be
interviewed was initially determined by who had been granted parental permission to proceed. As more students than required returned permission notes, interview participants were randomly selected from the final list.

Due to the age variation of the participants, the process of interviewing needed to be refined prior to the commencement of data collection. For each age group, two pilot interviews were conducted, to test and refine the format for future interviews. Whilst this study initially intended to investigate how children experience, perceive and conceptualise understandings of ‘caring’, the original question stem was changed due to problems encountered by younger children, who had difficulty conceptualising caring for place. Therefore, in this study, caring was explored in terms of ‘looking after place’.

The interviewer then established an interview schedule for participants, in conjunction with teaching staff at each of the schools. As students were from three age groups and a range of classes, a high degree of organisation was required. On entry to the interview room, the interviewer spent some time establishing rapport with the individual child by attempting to refer to social and cultural characteristics that are important to the interviewee, such as style of dress, style of language, knowledge of children’s culture—for example, music, computer games, social networking sites, sports, electronic gadgets and after school activities. In particular, the style of language used is imperative in establishing open communication with children. According to Säljö (1996) the language used to describe experiences is derived from one’s culture and collective consciousness: thus, to maximize the comprehensive of descriptions, the nature of the questions and explanations about the research, should match as closely as possible the everyday language used by the children.
Establishing rapport also involved the interviewer setting the scene and establishing a non-threatening environment. After a standard introduction, the interviewer explained the purpose and structure of the interview and gave an assurance of anonymity. Participants were invited to ask any questions to satisfy their curiosity. The interviewer encouraged the participants to have agency during the interview process as a way of maximizing descriptions of their own experiences and understandings.

Interviews were conducted on an individual basis. Group interviews were purposefully avoided, due to the age of the participants involved. Typically, group interviews provide insights into the collective ideas of a group and can also be used to study how the behaviour of individuals changes in a group setting (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). As phenomenography looks at the individual’s relationship with the phenomenon there is limited scope to look at interpretations of group interactions in phenomenographic analysis (Willmett, 2002). Conducting interviews on an individual is less difficult for children under the age of nine, and avoids situations where children consider how they think they should act in front of peers (Krueger & Casey, 2000). There may also be issues regarding the composition of the group, in terms of some participants dominating the discussion or repeating what was said in the group to outsiders (Hallett & Birchall, 1992).

Interviews were conducted in venues that were conducive to engagement in the process. The interview rooms were generally quiet, well lit and had a comfortable ambient temperature. Both the interviewee and interviewer had comfortable seats, and the interviews were conducted using a microphone and recording device. Instructions were given on how to speak into the recording device. Data were
collected using two devices simultaneously—a primary and a backup device. The researcher kept written records of the interviews, noting the dates, times, places, names and ages of the subjects; other written notes also assisted in the interpretation of the results. The researcher also noted themes raised by the subject, so that they could be followed up in further, probing questions. Often the notepad looked like a flow diagram, with threads leading to themes that required further probing, and other threads ending abruptly because the subject had said all that needed to be said about the topic.

Care was taken by the researcher to schedule interviews during timeslots that did not interfere with important events that participants would not want to miss. To achieve this, the researcher frequently communicated with the relevant teachers and the school’s administrative staff, and with the students themselves. On arrival at each school for the first set of interviews, the researcher was given a list of documents to assist in the organisation and scheduling of interviews. These included a list of relevant staff members and their prospective classes and classrooms, class timetables, a school map, a list of bell times and access to the whole school schedule.

During the interview process the interviewer attempted to maintain a facial expression that was attentive but did not encourage any degree of dependency in responses. This also involved strategically placed silences, eye contact, and carefully considered gestures of acknowledgement. One of the greatest concerns with interviewing children is that they might not ask the adult to repeat the question if they don’t understand it, or ask the adult to speak slowly and clearly. Training children to say ‘I don’t know’ rather than presenting an answer shrouded in uncertainty, has been found to increase accuracy of responses (Waterman, Blades &
It is important to have an awareness of the intense nature of phenomenographic interviews. This type of probing interview can be tiring for the participant, especially if they are young children. The interviewer was attentive to signs of fatigue and frustration and when required, provided an opportunity for the participant to exit the interview. Also, the interviewer had to encourage the participants to maintain focus. Some children were uneasy, even though all attempts had been made to provide a relaxed environment for them prior to the interview. In addition, the presence of a microphone and tape recorder, or noise from outside the interview room, affected their concentration, resulting in some deviation in their line of thought. At times the interviewer had to work hard to keep the participants focused on the task at hand.

In collecting data, the interviewer had to simultaneously concentrate on maintaining the flow of information and utilizing an exploratory line of questioning, while at the same time maintaining a genuine interest in what was being said. This balancing act may have had implications for the quality of the data collected, as the interview process was fatiguing for the interviewer. In some instances, opportunities for ‘probing’ might have been overlooked, and information presented might have been misinterpreted or misrepresented by the interviewer when presenting findings, although all efforts were made to minimise such issues.
6.9 Data transcription and analysis

There are unique considerations in the transcription and analysis of data in a phenomenographic study.

6.9.1 Data transcription

Interviews were transcribed (Appendix F) as soon as possible after the interview period ended, to maximise the integrity of the responses collected (Merriam, 1998). The data was read several times so that the researcher could become familiar with the descriptions and explanations, and could recognise similarities and differences in descriptions. Comments were added to the transcripts where required, to further explain the intent of the description used, and an intricate coding system was used to link similar ideas. Descriptions that were deemed to not add any extra meaning to the interpretation of the data were ‘hidden’, so as not to be a distraction in the analysis. However, the links remained in place for reference, in case of future need.

6.9.2 Data analysis

Sorting and familiarisation. Although a total of 68 transcriptions were collected, not all were incorporated into the data. The researcher became familiar with transcriptions by reading all of them twice. Following this, 21 interview transcripts were omitted because they were limited and/or incomplete, or very similar to other transcripts and did not provide further variation in understandings. In total, 47 transcripts were used in the data analysis, consisting of 13 from the 7-8 years group, 18 from 9-10 and 16 from the 11-12 years group.
Condensation. Subsequent readings of the remaining transcripts resulted in the teasing out of similarities and differences through repeated analysis. This involved moving deeper into understanding the data by using critical reflection and asking analytical questions (Creswell, 2003) while focusing on the research questions.

Through the process of abstraction, care was taken to be open to new categories that emerged during the analysis (Merriam, 1998) and to avoid forming categories based on the researcher’s own presuppositions about the phenomena under investigation. This process continued until all the sources were exhausted and no further categories could be formed. Examples of responses were collected, to illustrate how the categories of description were arrived at.

As the volume of content placed into each category was extensive, the process of reduction was used, to highlight the essence of each category. That is, overall, variations in understandings were teased out and the main threads were brought together in categories of description and ultimately, into the outcome space of the whole cohort. The formation of categories of descriptions was not influenced by the participant characteristics—for example, age, gender, school or home location or region. Where appropriate, these details were considered when justifying the content in relation to the categories of description, as they provided some explanation for the presence of a particular conception or understanding.
6.10 Validity and reliability

6.10.1 Establishing validity and reliability in the research process

The scientific rigour of phenomenographic research is a contentious issue that is well debated in the literature (Cope, 2004; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002; Sandberg, 1997). As in all research, validity and reliability are areas of key concern. Achieving reliability is often considered a dilemma in phenomenographic research, due to the nature of such research, which aims to look at understandings of a phenomenon by recording the experiences of a unique cohort of individuals in a particular space and time. It can be argued that with regard to phenomenographic methodology, reliability is more of an issue in the analysis than in the collection of data. It is highly likely that different researchers would not report the same outcome space. This is described by Burns (1994) as variation by researchers in arriving at variation in a group of individuals’ experiences of a phenomenon and is justified using the core assumption that all individuals (whether they be the subject or the researcher) will experience phenomena in different ways. Therefore, it is important to understand the processes by which the researcher has arrived at the outcome space.

In phenomenographic research, strategies need to be incorporated throughout the research process, that continually identify and deal with issues relating to validity and reliability. Such strategies are numerous, and their use should demonstrate the researcher’s attempt to maximize the scientific rigour of the study (Morse, et al., 2002). They include a detailed description of the researcher’s perspective, as well as transparent reporting of the collection and analysis of data. By describing in detail a study’s methodology and data analysis, the researcher is justifying the presentation of the outcome space by providing a
comprehensive account of the reasoning behind the establishment of the categories of description (Booth, 1997).

6.10.2 The researcher’s perspective

As phenomenography is a distinct qualitative research paradigm involving interpretations of ideas, the phenomenographic researcher needs to provide a comprehensive and transparent account of the researcher’s perspective (Burns, 1994). Although the present researcher attempted to be objective and unbiased, the researcher will also bring to the study worldviews, values and attitudes that influence the way data is interpreted and assembled in the outcome space (Ballantyne, Thompson & Taylor, 1998). The second-order nature of the research results in variation by different interviewers in the data collection and analysis processes (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997). According to Creswell (2003), this introduces a range of strategic, ethical and personal issues into the qualitative research process. Although a researcher approaches data collection and analysis with an open mind, prior experiences will influence the overall process, as it is difficult not to frame interpretations within one’s own understandings, feelings and beliefs about the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The author of this study came to be interested in exploring children’s understandings of their place for a number of reasons. With her background in teaching science and environmental education, she has long held the belief that tapping into pre-existing conceptions allows the learner to build knowledge effectively (Roth, 1990). A natural progression was to explore the conceptions and understandings that children have in relation to their place. ‘Place’ matters have
long been of interest to her, as she spent her childhood in a country town within a rural landscape, and a significant part of her adult life living and working in the Blue Mountains region. Through these experiences she has come to appreciate that one’s relationship with place is mediated by a combination of social, cultural and physical factors.

6.10.3 Validity and reliability in data analysis

The aim of the phenomenographic analysis in this study was to establish categories that comprehensively summarize variations of conceptions. As children experience place in different ways and at different levels, phenomenographic analysis aims to put these conceptions into some hierarchical order and the formation of categories is described and adequately illustrated using quoted passages. Indeed, a phenomenographic researcher forms a unique relationship with the data. As it is unlikely that different researchers would end up with the same outcome space, *interjudge reliability* would not be a relevant criterion for checking reliability in this study.

The use of interjudge reliability in relation to phenomenographic research (Sandberg, 1997) has been questioned in respect of two arguments. Firstly, that interjudge reliability is a positivist research strategy based on objectivist epistemology, and is used to determine the stability of data by maximizing the degree of objectivity applied to the analysis of results. Phenomenography on the other hand aims to look differently at where the knowledge is coming from, by considering how knowledge is constituted between the subject and the phenomenon. Categories of description are intended to capture the researcher’s analysis of variation in a group of individuals’ statements about their experiences of
a phenomenon (Cope, 2004).

The second of Sandberg’s arguments relates to the use of interjudge reliability in general. Although interjudge reliability checks the processes by which data analysis occurs, it does not assess and provide information on the appropriateness of the research method. Hence, research structures such as construct validity may remain unchecked and unaccounted for in the data analysis. By virtue of the high level of transparency required, both in the collection and the interpretation of data collected using phenomenography, the assessment of construct validity and research integrity is dependent on the discussion of the process and results.

Sandberg discusses the importance of interpretive awareness as an alternative approach to interjudge reliability (1997). It is described as a way ‘to acknowledge and explicitly deal with our subjectivity throughout the research process instead of overlooking it’ (p. 209). This implies that the researcher has an acute awareness of the basis for her own interpretations, and continually demonstrates how these interpretive processes are controlled and checked.

It is this accounting for such interpretive processes that underpins the idea of interjudge communicability (Cope, 2004). The ability to communicate how categories of description have been derived provides a measure of reliability in that it allows other researchers to see how variations in the data have been arrived at (Säljö, 1988). However, *interjudge communicability* is not a blueprint for other researchers to arrive at the same outcome space. Instead, it can be used as an indicator of the reliability of the ‘description of the outcome space’, by simulating the processes used and the justification for using selected parts of the transcripts to represent aspects of the categories of description.
To test the interjudge communicability, a meeting was arranged with two independent researchers familiar with phenomenographic analysis. Each researcher was given 30 sample quotes and a list of the categories of description. The independent researchers were asked to marry each quote with a category of description. This technique was used so that the independent researchers could become familiar with the representative quotes, and the process of placing them into categories of description. They were then asked to present a brief justification for why each quote was placed into a particular category, as a way of considering how each category was derived. Following this, the independent researchers’ discussed with the main researcher, the justification for the formation of each category of description and then used this information to determine whether the researcher had clearly communicated how the categories of description had been constructed. Generally, the independent researchers agreed with the justification given by the researcher. However, where there was lack of agreement on clarity in seeing how the researcher had arrived at a category of description, the three researchers considered whether changes needed to be made, either to the communicability of the researcher’s approach or to the actual categories themselves.

6.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored in detail the procedures used to gather and analyse data for the present study. To study the knowledge and conceptions held by children required personal interaction with the participants. Open-ended interviews were conducted to get information from the children themselves about the different ways of experiencing place. Through a process of differentiation, abstraction, reduction and comparison of meaning in the data, categories of description were formed.
SECTION IV:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Introduction to results and discussion:

The next five chapters, Chapters 7 to 11, present the findings of the research. Each chapter explores one category of description and associated themes. In all, Chapters Seven to Eleven represent five categories of description, each with associated themes. The categories of description explore different aspects of place, with the main focus being on place as a locality providing different opportunities for identity development and looking after place.

The first category of description, place is a space and a locality is explored in Chapter 7. In this category, place is discussed in relation to space and time. Space becomes a place when it is given meaning through experience and identification. Through identifying the distinctive features of place, place develops its own place identification.

In Chapter 8, the second category of description, place has a range of opportunities is used to explore children’s understandings of how place provides for their basic needs and opportunities for development, including affordances for autonomy, independence and emotional regulation. Opportunities for learning and wonder is discussed as a separate theme within this category.

Chapter 9, category of description three, place attachment, place identity, and belonging, describes how respondents develop place identity, place attachment to family, friends and community, and special place features. Within place, self-continuity and a sense of belonging or not belonging is experienced. Place identity develops through continuity and congruency with place, which may result in feelings of belonging or, when absent, not belonging.
Category of description four *connections, caring and responsibility for place* in Chapter 10, is used to explore emotional affinity and relatedness to nature as connections to natural elements of place. This category further explores the respondents’ understandings of the consequences of disrupting ecological processes and perceptions of caring for place.

In Chapter 11, *the developing self and place* is the category of description used to focus on understandings of self in relation to place, beginning with social identity and self-concept, and highlighting a number of examples of self-determining behaviour. Lastly, this category tackles respondents’ views of their position in society, including a perceived ‘lack of voice’ and lack of inclusion in place-based participatory processes.
Chapter 7

Category of description: Place is a space and a locality

7.1 Introduction

*Place is a space and a locality* is the first of five categories of description derived from the children’s responses. It explores the qualitatively different ways children conceptualise place, and some of the ways in which children experience and describe place in relation to space, time and locality. This chapter contributes to answering the first, second and third research questions:

1. *In what ways do children conceptualise ‘place’?*
2. *In what ways do children conceptualise their ‘identity in place’?*
3. *In what ways do children conceptualise ‘looking after’ place?*

Children’s understanding of place was related to their understanding of space, which includes dimensions, spatio-temporality, objects, occupancy, ownership, personal space and territoriality. Space was seen as an area containing objects and occupied by the subject to give it meaning. Children identify the significance of a place in terms of the activities that occur there and the people that are present.
They describe the importance of personal space as private space and the movement of the body in space, by which children develop spatial awareness and competence. Over time, experiences in place result in memories, values and meanings. Children come to know places by their names, how they can be used, and their distinctive features. Places that are recognisable and distinct from other places result in place identification.

In this chapter, *Place as a space and a locality* is treated under the following three themes: *space, place and time*; *places can be identified and experienced in different ways*; and *the distinctiveness of place and place identification*.

### 7.2 Theme 1: Space, place and time

#### 7.2.1 Overview

The first theme to be explored in this chapter is *space, place and time*. Children’s understandings of place include the essence of place, described in terms of space and time. Place was thought of as a space or area having scale and dimensions and that is contained within boundaries. Space becomes place when it is given meaning by its occupants, developed through interactions over time. The significance given to a place by its occupants provides an insight into how and why the place is valued. The occupation of space occurs through the presence of objects acting as symbols of ownership. Ownership of space results in territorial behaviour towards other humans. However, non-human entities, including other living things were not perceived as impositions on personal space.
7.2.2 Place understood in relation to time

Place can be thought of as a spatio-temporal moment in time. The identification of place in relation to time is highlighted in the following response, wherein place was seen as part of a process that has sequential parts.

Place means ... the exact point where you are in a chain of events.

Shaun, boy, 12 years old

This understanding of place provides an abstract view of space as dynamic and changing, and as only existing at a point in time.

The occupancy of space changes according to time. How space is occupied is also influenced by objects providing opportunities for action oriented behaviour.

Being in place depends on what you do at different times of the day. At home you could play and ride your bike with the friends. You could go on the computer and watch TV and go out on the street or out the back and play with the dogs ... You can do lots of things around the house. Do chores. At night a good sleep or it is somewhere where you can relax and meet people like grandparents and relatives.

Joshua, boy, 12 years old

The type of objects present, inform everyday activities inside the home, outside the home and in the neighbourhood.
7.2.3 Length of time influencing the nature of place experience

In the next response, time appears to influence the nature of experience. More time allows for richer experiences, enhanced by the presence of others.

You get to see so much on a bike—because you can stop and have a look. One day when my uncle & I were riding, we found a purple leaf just sitting there, so we stopped and had a look at it. I never knew that there are purple leaves—that means it must come off a plant or tree. There’s many different things. It was exciting discovering it with my uncle. We just sat down for 10 minutes and thought about the ‘story of the tree’, where it came from. I can share anything with him. We found other things—flowers, leaves, trees.

Lucy, girl, 12 years old

The respondent demonstrates how taking time to observe and consider the story of the tree results in the tree being understood in a unique way. With the assistance of a knowledgeable adult, and with sufficient time to contemplate the history of the tree, a deeper understanding and heightened curiosity ensued.

Long-term connections to place were reported, with references to growing up in the local area, highlighting how the length of time spent in a place can inform the significance of place experiences.

My place is the Blue Mountains because it’s where I live and it’s my home area and I’ve grown up with the place. I’ve lived here all my life

Chris, boy, 10 years old
The previous response suggests that having lived in a place ‘all my life’ may result in a sense of ownership that develops through long-term occupancy and continuity in place.

7.2.4  Place understood in terms of space

Places as a space can be described in terms of dimensions and what they contain.

The following respondent describes place as an area of space in a geographical sense.

I think the place is an area. ... It is anywhere that has land.

Deanna, girl, 11 years old

An area of space was seen as a concrete entity that can be partitioned and that has a specified function.

My place is at my home and it is pretty big. It’s got 2 floors, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. Downstairs is a kitchen a lounge room and a dining room and a back veranda.

Jack, boy, 10 years old

The function of space is dependent on the objects present, which symbolize people’s interactions with place.
[The yard] is really big. There’s compost right down the back and just out the front of the studio there’s a vegetable garden. There are flowers in there and we’ve got a trampoline near the front. I like [the yard] because it’s really big so you can run around a lot. There’s a water tank in the middle of the yard and there’s a trampoline and there’s swings.

Caleb, boy, 8 years old

In the above response, place is external to the house and comprises the yard. The size of a space was seen as conducive to increased activity.

7.2.5 Places owned and occupied by individuals or groups

Places can be owned by an individual or a group through the use of the word ‘my’. The previous and the next respondent report ownership as ‘my home country’ and ‘my house’. These responses imply that ownership of place accompanies the occupation of space.

In the following, respondents report owning or occupying individual or shared spaces.

My place is my house and it is big. Five rooms, one for mum & dad and one each for me and my 3 sisters.

Felicity, girl, 7 years old

Sharing means sharing your home.

Corin, boy, 12 years old
Buildings or areas of land are described in terms of ownership by participants. While a house belongs to family members, buildings such as a community centre, belong to the community.

*Place is a community centre, a home or a building that’s in a certain space in the world that can be owned ... and you can do whatever you want without breaking the law.*

Adam, boy, 12 years old

When a place is owned there is an implication that the owner will have control over space.

7.2.6 Ownership of space resulting in territorial behaviour

Ownership of space results in territoriality allowing a person to control the boundaries by selectively including or excluding others. Territoriality is also practiced within one’s bedroom to ensure that personal space is protected.

*We have our own rooms and my brothers don't annoy me when I close my door.*

Angelique, girl, 10 years old

Boundaries represent symbols of protection against perceived threats. In the following response unwanted visitors are prevented from entering the yard by the use of physical barriers in the form of gates or dogs as protectors of space.
We also have a dog and gates. I’m glad we have gates because people would be entering our garden.

Maddy, girl, 10 years old

7.2.7 Personal space determined by personal objects and occupancy

The concept of ownership of place is related to the concept of personal space. The following respondent indicates how personal space is claimed through the use of objects owned by the occupier.

... This is my place. ... Sort of like my personal space. It’s my own thing. It’s not anybody else’s. It should be my business. It’s personal ... my bedroom, my diary and stuff like that. ... it can be anything personal. It’s my thing, it belongs to me. Sometimes I can go out and play in my personal space.

Keiran, boy, 10 years old

Objects that have personal significance help to maintain a sense of self identity through the personalisation of a setting. In the above response, ‘my bedroom, my diary’ are symbols of ownership of space, where personal space is relocatable and appropriated when required.

When space is shared it became less personal, decreasing any sense of ownership.

In the next response, spaces shared with unfamiliar others, resulted in a diminished sense of ownership relative to time and prior occupancy.
It would seem a bit less of my place because of all the other people already there. They think it’s their place and I don’t want to invade them.

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old

Although the previous respondent describes sharing space with unfamiliar people as an invasion of personal space, non-human entities such as birds do not impact on personal space.

The birds are ... kind of like a little bit of company.

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old

7.2.8 Summary

In Table 7.1, the conceptions referring to the theme ‘space, place and time’ are summarised as sub-themes and their defining characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>The nature and use of place is relative to time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time informs the length of inhabitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long-term inhabitation leads to familiarity and ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s place experience and development is relative to time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place is experienced as a point along a chain of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>Space depends on the perspective of the observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space is measurable and can be divided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space meanings change in relation to time and the objects present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space meanings are related to the size of space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Ownership of place          | Ownership of place occurs at various scalar levels  
|                           | Ownership implies occupation and control of place  
|                           | Strangers in space diminish ownership            
|                           | Spaces shared with familiar people are owned and occupied together |
| Private ownership of place | Personal space is tied to ownership of space      
|                           | Ownership leads to territoriality                
|                           | Boundaries are real or imagined                  
|                           | Infringement on boundaries is invasion of personal space |
|                           | Ownership of space allows for self-expression, autonomy and control |
|                           | Personal space is defined by personal objects    
|                           | Non-human entities are welcomed into personal space |

### 7.3 Theme 2: Places are identified and experienced in various ways

#### 7.3.1 Overview

The second theme discussed in this chapter expands on children’s conceptualisation of place in relation to space and time. The theme *places are identified and experienced in various ways* details how places were identified by the respondents, including the home, and places with distinctive features. If spaces become places through the attribution of meaning, this theme describes how places are given meaning through their identification, using a street address or name or through being identified as a landmark. However, while names and addresses provided symbolic markers of significant places, not all places had names; some were instead identified by their distinctive features.

Children readily identify with significant features of places, and they experience other features of place in a primal way, using their bodies and senses. Places are
experienced through physical activity, body orientation and sensory stimuli, providing unique insights into children’s place perception. In contrast, navigation in place relies on a range of structured processes, including the mobilisation of pre-existing environmental knowledge and wayfinding techniques.

### 7.3.2 Spaces identified using spatial knowledge and spatial competence

Spatial knowledge, including knowledge of objects and places, is essential for children to function within a given environment. The identification of a geographic locality is often achieved through the use of a location address.

The following are typical responses to the question ‘... place is ...’

I live in a house and it is at [address].

Hannah, girl, 7 years old

‘My address is’ or a place ... that I would go.

Jake, boy, 8 years old

An awareness of places as landmarks demonstrates how the observer uses particular places as spatial reference points. Knowledge of landmarks is an important part of spatial competence and the ability to navigate.

The following response demonstrates how knowledge of the home address and navigation techniques enables the respondent to find his way home independently.
My place is Faulconbridge which is where I live at [the address], down a [certain road] turn left.

Daniel, boy, 10 years

Competence in navigation was also demonstrated by the following respondent, who used a landmark feature to navigate her way home, relying on the spatial memory of the street shape.

If I see my landmark I always know that I’m not that scared. It’s not always the same because new things can come in but it always looks a bit familiar, like familiar shapes, like basically like a Q. [My street is] a bit like a Q or a P or something. The line is the road coming into your street.

Harriet, girl 10 years old

The use of distal landmarks and existing knowledge to navigate also reveals wayfinding competence. When a familiar landmark was identified, this instilled a sense of confidence in the respondent’s ability to navigate.

7.3.3 Spaces as places identified by a name

Some places are identified as significant landmarks, identifiable by name, as noted in the response below.
Well it depends on what place but if it’s a really special place like one of a kind like Sydney Harbour Bridge, you’d have to give it a name and the location.

Daniel, boy, 10 years old

The name Sydney Harbour Bridge represents an iconic landmark that induces place identification due to the significance of the place it represents.

The following respondent suggests that an area of space must have an identifying name to be given significance.

*Place is an area of space which has a name.*

Chris, boy, 10 years old

This corresponds to the basic tenet mentioned in theme one, that a space becomes a place when it has meaning. That is, by giving a place a name, one is ascribing meaning to space.

In the next response, places that are discrete and identifiable geographical units, such as a town, will have a name.

*When I think of a place I think of an area that has the name. Winmalee is where I live. My home. I suppose it doesn't have to have a name.*

Deanna, girl, 11 years old
The name of a town is a reminder of ownership. That is, ‘My home,’ where one resides.

### 7.3.4 Places identified by distinctive features

Places such as ‘rural bush areas’ can be identified by their characteristics rather than a name.

*A lot of rural bush areas don't have names.*

Deanna, girl, 11 years old

Another respondent attributed meaning to a place according to its functionality. Like a name, the functionality of place provides insight into its perceived importance.

*Place is a certain destination. A spot is where you do a particular thing.*

Jack, boy, 10 years old

In the previous response, a new dimension of place understanding is considered. Place is also a destination related to time.

*There is a place over there that I would like to go, for example, Katoomba or Sydney*

Zoe, girl, 9 years old
For a place to become a destination, movement is required and the name of the destination symbolises what the destination represents: an awareness gained through place identification.

7.3.5 Place understood and experienced in different ways

Place is understood in relation to the perspective of the observer, and through embodied experiences.

In the following response, place is experienced through a combination of body movements and sensory responses. Feeling the warm sun and wind on one’s face while riding a bicycle down a hill, results in an integrated multi-sensory experience of place.

*My road has a big hill and on the way to [a destination] you ride up and down the hills ... I can feel the wind in my face and because it's normally sunny when we go riding and it cools me down a bit.*

Angelique, girl, 10 years old

Another respondent describes the sensation of feeling the trees on her head as she bounces on the trampoline. The combination of reaching great heights and a ‘flying’ sensation suggests a vivid sensory experience related to motion.

*I like banging my head on the trees when I jump. I also like doing star jumps on [the trampoline]. I just like the feel of bouncing up and down because when I’m up I feel like I’m flying.*

Nadia, girl, 7 years old
In the next two responses, height also provides an alternative view of place.

Looking up at tall trees allows objects to be seen from a different perspective.

Looking from the trampoline to way up high in the trees. [It’s] relaxing looking at the colour of the birds, listening to sounds.

Caleb, boy, 8 years old

Alternatively, the following respondent looks down from high in the tree to observe the garden below.

... we have to climb up the tree ... you see all the garden from in the tree. It’s really special that I’m in this place.

Kalan, boy, 8 years old

This respondent equates the opportunity to view the yard from a special place as a feature of his home.

In the next response, the rhythmic sounds of the bush, such as water flowing, and frogs and birds calling, are also reported as significant features of place.

I like hearing wildlife—all the birds and the frogs that are calling. It sounds nice because of the way it echoes. I also like the streams in the gully because it takes 15 minutes to get down there and you sit and eat and then walk back up to the house. It’s nice and relaxing just to sit there and
hear the flow of the water. It sounds nice because it hits the rocks.

Dyson, boy, 12 years old

In this response, movement appears as an essential component of immersion in the bush. The sounds representing the activity of birds and frogs and the flow of water, invoke a sense of escaping to a place of peace and refuge.

Whilst previous responses highlight a number of elements that add to the richness of place experience through soundscapes, not all sounds are viewed in a positive way.

In the following, the respondent describes how the intrusive sounds of older siblings leading to a negative mood and invasion of personal space.

I have brothers 13 and 15 who go to high school. They are too noisy and I am not happy when they are around [home].

Sheridan, girl, 9 years old

Places can also be associated with taste and smell. The satiation obtained through eating coupled with hospitality instils a sense of belonging in the following response.

One of my more favourite places is my mum’s cousin’s house, because my mum’s cousin makes buns and he ices them and all that. I really
think he should have a café. He makes nice buns, coffee, tea. It makes me feel really happy.

Alex, boy, 8 years old boy

Smell as a sensory experience is described in the next response and is a distinctive part of the bush experience.

‘Foresty’ sort of smell and gum trees which is a pretty good smell.

Sophie, girl, 10 years old

Colour also adds an extra dimension to the experience of place by adding character and distinctiveness.

In the response below, the ‘sea of green’ highlights the expanse of colour that is experienced by viewing the landscape. That the vista is experienced ‘in the morning’ suggests an ongoing connection with place.

The views from ... [home] see across Grose Valley in the morning when the mist rising. It’s just all the green. I suppose it’s kind of like the ocean except the ocean is blue. It’s kind of like a sea of green. I feel good because it’s kind of unique.

Luke, boy, 12 years old
7.3.6 Summary

Table 7.2, the conceptions referring to the theme ‘places are identified and experienced in various ways’, are summarised as sub-themes and their defining characteristics.

Table 7.2: Theme 2—Places are identified and experienced in various ways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifiable places</td>
<td>Home is a spatial anchor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Places have geographic locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Places are identified by name, location, address and distinctive features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial awareness</td>
<td>Spatial awareness is knowing where one lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spatial awareness is required for navigating space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spatial awareness allows for the identification of landmark features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spatial awareness includes place identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embodied experience</td>
<td>Place experience is relative to the perspective of the observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place is experienced through body movements and orientations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place is experienced in a multi-sensory way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place experiences influence meanings and evaluations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.4 Theme 3: The distinctiveness of place and place identification

7.4.1 Overview

In the theme the distinctiveness of place and place identification, place was explored at a broader level. Many of the respondents referred to place as the geographical region in which they live: that is, the Blue Mountains region. They focused on the distinctiveness of the region, comparing it other regions, including its status of recognition as a tourist destination. The perceived positive attributes of
the region were contrasted with negative attributes of the nearby city. Additionally, the respondents described their relationships and interactions with unique natural features of the environment.

7.4.2 Blue Mountain regions containing natural entities

Distinctive natural features of the Blue Mountains region include bushland, native animals, walking trails, rock formations, places of interest, and views and scenery. The following responses describe a variety of these natural features. The region is identified for its biodiversity and rock formations.

[The region] has got lots of rocks and lots of nature. It’s got lots of leaves and trees and there are lots of different bugs and butterflies. The rocks give out colour to the bush.

Hannah, girl, 7 years old

The next respondent reports opportunities for seeing native animals as a distinctive characteristic of the area.

I’ve seen lots of kangaroos, wombats, koalas, and echidnas. There was one here in the top playground.

Jarrod, boy, 8 years old

Rocks, bushland and fauna are discussed in a number of responses and are identified as unique features of the area. As in Theme 2, places are identified and
experienced in various ways, natural features are often experienced in a multi-sensory way, adding to deep understandings of place.

[The region] has got different bushland where you find different animals and different rocks and bugs that you’ve never seen before. I love rocks and find them very fascinating especially how they are made. I think they are unique and beautiful because they are different colours and textures and layers.

Chris, boy, 10 years old

The importance of colour as a unique identifier of the region is emphasised in a number of responses. In the next response, the distinctive ‘blue’ colour is considered representative of the region, and is identified in the region’s name.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is important. It’s got lots of bushwalks and wildlife. When they discovered it they looked up [from the plains] and saw it was blue.

Jarrod, boy, 8 years old

The following respondent describes both the expanse of ‘green’ as a function of the vast bushland, and the mist that rises from the valley, as characteristic features of the region.

You’d have to travel up here to see it because not everywhere has the green, the trees, the bush and the valley and everything in the valley. In
the mornings when you drive past the Grose Valley you can see the mist
down below you. It’s kind of natural—it just happens by itself.

Luke, boy, 12 years old

The above response also draws attention to ongoing natural processes such as changes in the weather.

7.4.3 The Blue Mountains has features that distinguish it from other regions

The distinctive climatic features were important identifiers of the region: for example, snow is a distinctive characteristic of the region compared with other parts of Australia.

[The Blue Mountains] is different to the parts of Australia—all hot and dry. In winter you can go up there and have a lot of fun in the snow instead of just hoping that someday you could do it.

Laura, girl, 9 years old

In discussing the distinctiveness of the region, comparisons were made with the neighbouring city, Sydney. The presence of trees giving the region colour and personality was contrasted with the monotone colours of the city.

The trees give the Blue Mountains its personality because there’s green all around here. [In the city] you just see white and grey.

Adam, boy, 12 years old
The region is also compared to the city in terms of population density and noise pollution. The presence of many cars in the city is perceived as contributing to noise pollution, compared to the absence of cars in the bush.

*It’s in the bush and it’s peaceful not like in the city where there’s always cars going by and there’s always people honking their horns and people doing stuff ...*

Hannah, girl, 12 years old

The lack of noise pollution in the Blue Mountains is a treasured quality for the next respondent.

*My place is special. ... It’s a great place to live and it’s not in the noisy city.*

Lachlan, boy, 8 years old

The following respondents further explored air quality in terms of perceived health impacts and lack of place satisfaction.

*Little pollution is important because it’s better for me when I’m growing up. If you live in the city with all the pollution around you can get sick and damage your body inside and up here the air is fresh and it’s a lot better.*

Adam, boy, 12 years old

*The air is more fresh. When I go out to the city to stay with mum it is so different from our house because it’s all coughy, dirty.*

Keiran, boy, 10 years old
In the following response, human and non-human entities are considered together in terms of their impact on personal space. The respondent suggests that the presence of more people and particulate matter in the air results in the invasion of personal space, due to feeling ‘crammed’ and ‘squashed’.

You want to be on your own, doing your own thing without having other people because of the privacy, the fresh air, all the trees and stuff. If it’s all polluted you feel crammed, you feel very squashed. With fresh air you feel very free.

Hannah, girl, 12 years old

In this response the invasion of personal space is discussed in terms of social space, environmental embodied space and nonliving parts of the environment.

7.4.4 Unique features of the Blue Mountains attracting visitors

The next respondents described features of the Blue Mountains that are recognised at a broader level for attracting visitors and tourists to the area.

It is a place that is very well known. It is adventurous, because you can go bush walking, on bike tracks, you could go to see the rivers and cliffs.

Keiran, boy, 10 years old

There’s lots of nice bushwalks and places to walk to. Here is lots of interesting stuff like the Jenolan Caves and the 3 Sisters [rock formation]. It’s amazing how they were formed.

Lachlan, boy 8 years old
The level of tourism brought about by the region’s unique features is compared to other regions in Australia.

*Mum and dad said that it’s one of the sixth or seventh most visited tourist places in Australia. There’s just a lot of people visiting.*

Charlotte, girl, 12 years old

7.4.5 The biodiversity of Blue Mountains forms part of Australia’s identity.

The following response addresses the importance of the distinctive features of the region to Australia’s identity, due to the presence of native eucalyptus trees.

*The Blue Mountains is a place that is voted a National Park and has got 25% of the eucalypts in Australia or something like that. It’s got the wonderful blue glow of all the eucalyptus leaves and all the vapour. It’s a place where lots of it is unexplored like all the valleys and creeks and everything.*

Jackson 2, boy, 12 years old

This previous response discusses why the region is identified as the Blue Mountains National Park and described in terms of its unexplored or wilderness areas.

In the next response the eucalyptus tree, together with the native koala is recognised as a symbol of Australia. That the respondent refers to both symbols and the unique heritage of Australia as ‘ours’, suggests that ownership of native flora and fauna is seen as inherent in identifying as an Australian.
Most of [the animals] are native and it makes me happy about Australia... to know we have special icons like the gum tree and koala ... If you can say that it’s genuinely ours people take interest in us if because we have unique things and we also have a unique background.

Laura, girl, 9 years old

Unique plants and animals instil place identification and a sense of belonging in sharing distinctive and recognised attributes with others. There is also a suggestion that the natural heritage of the area is relevant to place identification.

7.4.6 Summary

In the table below, Table 7.3, sub-themes and their defining characteristics present a summary of the conceptions referring to the theme ‘the distinctiveness of place and place identification’.

Table 7.3: Theme 3—The distinctiveness of place and place identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The distinctiveness of the Blue Mountains</td>
<td>The Blue Mountains is identified by unique features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The unique features make the Blue Mountains distinct from surrounding areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distinct features include natural and human related elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The experience of the Blue Mountains</td>
<td>Distinctive features attract tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distinctive features are observed and experienced in everyday life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place identification</td>
<td>The distinctiveness of place leads to place identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place identification develops in relation to place meanings and place evaluations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Australian place identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place identification can exist at a larger scalar level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The unique natural elements of the Blue Mountains are representative of Australian identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7.5 General discussion: Place is a space and a locality

The category of description, *place as a space and a locality*, explores children’s understandings of place in a number of ways. These include conceptions of space and time, occupation, ownership, personal space and territorial behaviour, spatial awareness and competence through embodied and unique experiences, and place distinctiveness and place identification within place.

#### 7.5.1 Conceptions of space and time

Understanding space is a central aspect of human existence. An awareness of where one is in space, provides information on the relative location of objects required for survival, such as for protection from perceived threats. Understandings of place result in meaning that is relevant to the perceived function of place by the observer (Cresswell, 2004; Tuan, 1977). Reports indicate that space as a geographical entity is given meaning when it is experienced directly. Meanings are manifest through the partitioning of space or through sharing space (Bell, 2002); this demonstrates ways in which children use space for isolation or collective behaviour. Spaces are understood in terms of size, which informs functionality, as does the partitioning of space and the objects present (Bell, 2002).
Understanding of place includes the influence of time on the use of space. A number of responses highlight spatio-temporal understandings supporting assertion that space and time are intrinsically linked (Massey, 1995). Place is discussed in terms of the time needed to travel from a place of origin to a destination. Children demonstrate an awareness that the nature and functionality of place changes in relation to time (Gustafson, 2001; Hägerstrand, 1985), influencing activity patterns, and their ability to negotiate structured timeframes supports findings by Ross (2007) and Simkins & Thwaites (2008). However, other activities are less structured. Time ‘out of school’ is punctuated by home and family centred activity, including free play, recreation and social visits. Interestingly, there was little evidence of school-based activity in this study.

The idea that children encounter nodes of action involving different people at different points of times, provides evidence that they are aware of time-space relativism and use it to their advantage (Massey, 1994). Further to this, there is evidence that place is understood as a point in a chain of events, suggesting that place is framed by the past and the future, thus undergoing a constant process of change (Smaldone, Harris & Sanyal, 2005; Tuan, 1977). This indicates that children have the ability to understand the relevance of the history of place in shaping current experience, which in turn shapes future experience. Children’s understandings of time relate to place as a transient, dynamic and changing entity. However, reports suggest that place knowledge also develops from repeated encounters and is dependent on the amount of time lived in place.

A number of researchers have explored the relationship between time spent in place and understandings of place (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009;
Measham, 2006), demonstrating that children who live in an area all or most of their lives develop a sense of ambient familiarity, including an awareness of continuity that can be described as rootedness (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1980). This study also found evidence for the interrelatedness of place understandings and the length of place interactions, with reports suggesting that place knowledge and awareness is related to the amount of time lived in the same location. Further, there are indications that having lived in a place since birth is a significant influence, suggesting that knowledge is linked to development. This is an area of research that requires further attention.

7.5.2 Occupation, ownership, personal space and territorial behaviour

A theme that was repeatedly presented by children in this study is the awareness of space in relation to the self. Firstly, reports focused on the preservation of self through the occupation, ownership and demarcation of personal space. In the responses, occupation of place is perceived to be alone or shared with others within the family home, neighbourhood or community. However, descriptions of partitioned spaces, such as separate bedrooms in the family home, suggest that children appreciate personal and private spaces (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 1999).

As in a number of studies (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 1999; Bell, Fisher, Baum & Greene, 1996; C. Green, 2011) personal space is identified when the occupant takes ownership of space. This occurs when the space is used for certain activities or claimed through the placing of personal objects. These findings support Fidzani & Read (2012) and Maxwell & Chmielewski (2008) on how
children personalise spaces to establish identity. In this study, objects such as personal diaries, are used for self-expression and the control of space, symbolising the importance of psychological ownership (Bell, et al., 1996). This includes also the use of the body to occupy space and to set up imaginary boundaries around one’s self. Children’s transformation of spaces into places of significance, invoke strong emotions related to autonomy, control, agency and self-affirmation (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2001) and such practices demonstrate that children are active in seeking ways to preserve the self.

The occupation of space was also reported as a way of experiencing autonomy from parents. Children in this study perceived that sharing ‘out of the way’ spaces in the family home with siblings provided autonomy from adults while experiencing security (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2001). Territorial behaviour was recognised as necessary for maintaining autonomy and separation from unwanted visitors, with defined territories used to maintain private spaces (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2001: Kylin, 2003).

Evidence was found for the demarcation of personal space occurring through the use of physical and imaginary barriers (Kylin, 2003; Abbott-Chapman & Robertson (1999). Barriers and boundaries demonstrate territorial behaviour and instil a sense of empowerment through experiencing a sense of control (Matthews et al., 1998; Kylin, 2003). Unwanted visitors range from siblings who invade personal space and parents imposing unwanted rules; both resulting in a threat to self. Not reported in other studies is the presence of non-human entities as visitors, such as animals being perceived as company rather than invading personal space, suggesting that elements of nature do not pose a threat to the psychological self in the same way as
humans do. Rautio (2013) would describe this relationship in terms of matter having its own agency providing company for children.

That children value personal space is also evident in their reporting of first occupation. First occupation is another form of territorial behaviour reported, where the first occupant of space is perceived as owning space (Childress, 2004; Verkyten, Sierksma & Jochem, 2015). Again, reports illustrate that children practise ways of negotiating ownership of public space through the placing of objects such as school bags. The suggestion is that the sharing of space with strangers diminishes a sense of ownership, resulting in children avoiding spaces occupied by others and respecting spatial ownership.

The preoccupation with threats to personal space by a number of respondents, indicates that children are acutely aware of the importance of maintaining spatial security (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 1999; Kylin, 2003). This supports the idea that space is used for the security of the self, in terms of utilising measures to avoid intruders, including territorial behaviour. For example, within the family territory, fences and the yard are viewed as barriers separating the home from the outside world (Huttenmoser & Meierhofer, 1995). Included as a protective agent is the family dog (Kurdek, 2008). In addition, shared identity is communicated through the use of boundaries, sending messages to 'outsiders' of the group (Childress, 2000).

The use of phenomenography to explore understandings of place, based on experiences, has revealed a strong emphasis on autonomy for managing private spaces (Wolfe, 1978). The present study supports research on children’s special
places, where there is emphasis on places for autonomy and security such as dens, hideouts, huts, playgrounds, forts or public hangouts (Derr, 2002; C. Green, 2011; Hart, 1979; Kylin, 2003; Min & Lee, 2006; Moore, 1986; Woolley & Johns, 2001). However, while a number of personally significant spaces were discussed by respondents in this study, the identification of ‘favourite’ places per se was not sought. Instead, understandings of place in relation to everyday life were explored, to avoid pre-determined conceptualisations of children’s place experiences. Rasmussen (2004) has argued that the everyday experiences of children harbour a variety of meanings recognised only by children while the present study has uncovered other ways in which children experience autonomy and security in everyday life.

7.5.3 Spatial awareness and competence through embodied and unique experiences

The research findings discussed so far, highlight the importance of spatial awareness in terms of personal and protected space. However, spatial awareness was also explored in relation to spatial competence. Children’s unique perceptions of place are related to the way they move in relation to objects, and within spaces. In particular, reports suggest that through embodied and spatial cognition (Borghi & Cimatti, 2010; Matthews, 1992) children develop unique understandings of place.

Research on place experience in terms of children’s embodiment is uncommon. Embodiment can be thought as sensory experiences of the body as it moves within the material world and results in subjective understandings (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Within the context of this study, it appears that children’s embodied cognition through sensorimotor experiences is an important aspect of place experience.
(Barsalou, 2008). Children describe a range of sensory experiences and detailed
descriptions of bodily encounters in surrounding space, illustrating how changing
body position affects how senses are mobilised, and how information is perceived.
While some research on children’s place research has reported children’s sensory
encounters in relation to specific sites, these appear to be incidental findings
(Lehman-Frisch et al., 2012; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008) rather than comprehensive
accounts of embodied action, as uncovered in this study. The extent and diversity of
responses demonstrates that embodied cognition is an important part of children’s
place experience, and suggests that children’s embodied experiences should be given
greater focus in future research.

If embodied cognition is determined by the kind of body one possesses and the
action one engages in (Borghi & Cimatti, 2010), then embodied cognition may vary
in relation to stages of development. According to Auer (2008), sensory reactions to
one’s surroundings occur through the use of primal sensory stimulus detection,
providing unique understandings of place. The relational perspective sought by
using phenomenography in this research, revealed that experiences across the 7-12
years age group, were multi-sensory and multi-dimensional, and relative to specific
places and times.

Sensory interactions reported by respondents included description of colour,
depth and distance perception, smell, sound, touch and the awareness of bodily
movements in relation to the pull of gravity. Such encounters were often described
in a way that suggests children are acutely aware of how to use their bodies and
their body’s capabilities in space. They also reveal that an acute awareness of their
surroundings allows them to respond in ways that protect the body, such as
finding shade to protect themselves from the sun, and adjusting behaviour according to weather. Such awareness influences notions of the developing ‘self as body’ or the ‘body self’ an awareness of the body’s capabilities that will influence self-concept and self-efficacy.

Unlike embodied cognition, spatial cognition requires a complex set of strategies involving the cognitive processing of relevant information leading to goal-driven movement (Gunzelmann & Lyon, 2011). Descriptions of experiences requiring spatial navigation demonstrate how respondents utilise environmental knowledge, spatial skills and autonomous behaviour for moving around the neighbourhood. Spatial navigation included the use of allocentric approaches, such as referencing landmarks and geometric shapes to find one’s way home. This practice demonstrates that children are capable of spatial navigation in a variety of contexts (Gerber & Kwan, 1994; Learmonth, Nadel & Newcombe, 2002; Ross, 2005; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008). In particular, evidence was provided for children’s capacity to locate themselves in relation to home, using a location address.

The present study suggests that home as a spatial anchor symbolises the importance of successfully navigating one’s way home, in order to feel safe and secure. Past studies have demonstrated how an awareness of one’s place of residence is built through mental schemas based on spatial and social relations (Gillespie, 2010; Matthews, 1995), and these were supported by children’s navigational processes for finding their way home in relation to landscape and social settings.

The concept of ‘home’ is a common theme in this study, with home often referred to in terms of a location address where the respondent resides. Although addresses
were not transcribed from interview recordings to maintain anonymity, they were frequently provided by respondents. Children’s reporting of their addresses occurred in response to the question stem ‘my place is …’, suggesting that home is synonymous for ‘my place’ and demonstrating a sense of ownership and belonging. Interestingly, the clarity with which children described where they lived indicates a preparedness for locating home and family. It may be that children are encouraged to deliberately memorise their address in the event of becoming lost, and that having done so demonstrates self-responsibility and self-regulation.

While some studies have found age differences in the use of egocentric or allocentric approaches to spatial navigation (Pani & Dupree, 1994), this was not supported, as children of varying ages reported using both approaches for navigation. That is, children across the range of ages reported moving around the neighbourhood, suggesting that children are restricted from being independently mobile for reasons other than lacking spatial competence. However, as phenomenography is limited in respect of providing substantial evidence to refute other findings, further research is suggested in this area.

When opportunities are provided for autonomy in the form of independent mobility, children are encouraged to develop spatial awareness and competence (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009; Low & Altman 1992; Malone 2007b), leading to further autonomy and independent mobility. Spatial awareness and competence requires both spatial skills and spatial knowledge—the latter including the identification of place features.
Place distinctiveness and place identification within place

So far, understandings of *place as a space and a locality* have been discussed in relation to time, ownership and the way place is experienced. However, also impacting on understandings of place, are symbols of place that result in place identification. Identification of place relies on an awareness of the distinctive characteristics of place, and just as in this study a location address acts as a symbol for one’s home, the name of a destination symbolises what the destination represents (Alderman, 2008; Schneider, 1986; Uzzell et al., 2002). The name ‘Blue Mountains’ has a number of symbolic meanings for child inhabitants, the most obvious being mountains that appear blue. However, for those who inhabit the area, its significance is defined by natural features and cultural significance as a tourist destination.

Recognition of a number of distinctive features of the Blue Mountains as leading to place identification, suggests that children involved in this study have a strong awareness of their local region. Many responses included descriptions of rock formations, landscape, weather, biodiversity, bushland and native trees—demonstrating how the phenomenographic process effectively allows researchers to explore variations in understandings, rather than similarities. Children also reported culturally distinctive features, including a collective recognition of the local region’s importance for attracting tourists (Avriel, et al., 2010; Hay, 1998) and revealing an understanding of the relationship between natural resources, the local economy and the importance of both to the people living in the region.

It is possible that children’s place identification includes valuing the characteristics of the region, values which are collectively shared by its occupants (Hay, 1998).
Regional identity is determined by comparisons with other regions (Paasi, 1991; Lyons & Breakwell, 1994 & Uzzell, et al., 2002); this was supported by children’s comparisons of the Blue Mountains region with the neighbouring city. Comparisons were made in relation to landscape features, population and traffic levels, and through embodied experience: exploring colour, the ‘blue’ mountains versus the ‘grey’ city, and the effect of weather and pollution on place experience.

Although distinctive features were found to inform place identity in a number of adult studies (Lalli, 1992; Rollero & De Piccolo, 2010), studies exploring the influence of distinctive features of place on children’s place identity are limited. This study supports Avriel-Avni, et al.’s (2010) research on children’s place identity in relation to a distinctive place, finding evidence that children’s place identity is related to the distinctiveness of the area.

While place identification is influenced by narratives relating to place features that are identifiable and that represent shared place values (Tuan, 1977), this study also revealed that children’s unique experiences in nature provide a rich layer of meaning that is culturally shared. According to Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996), place identity is informed through place identification and the valuing of distinctive features of place, and it appears that the children in this study not only identify with the unique features of the region but are able to articulate how they evaluate their place experiences. This supports Lim and Barton’s (2010) work on the importance of children’s evaluations of place for informing place attachments and their likelihood of engaging in place.

This study also revealed that, as demonstrated by Lalli (1992), place identification operates on different scales. In particular, children identify with spaces of personal
significance that provide some separation from other spaces. Significant collective spaces such as home, are distinctive compared with other houses, and regions are separated by cultural occupation and landscape features. On a broader scale, children’s understandings of place identification tend to be based less on recognition of physical form and more on symbolic representations shared by others (Scourfield, et. al., 2006). For example, responses that discuss place identification in relation to Australia, outline how the eucalyptus trees and koalas found in the Blue Mountains act as iconic symbols of the Australian landscape and Australian identity: another type of place related identity.

7.5.5 Summary

In summary, the responses outline that children conceptualise ‘place’ in terms of time, objects, dimensions and the body. The ownership of space through demarcation and partitioning results in spatial and psychological security. Controlling space appears to be important to children, as it allows for their autonomy from parents and developing independence. Spatial competence is demonstrated through self-regulatory processes used in spatial navigation, and embodied experiences result in unique perceptions and understandings of place. Understandings of place are accumulated as one grows older, and through experiences, and result in the identification of distinctive features of place. Place identification leads to a shared collective identity that informs children’s conceptualisations of identity in relation to place. This includes family identity symbolised as ‘home’ providing a spatial anchor for children, and place identity developed through identification with the Blue Mountains resulting in collective values, leading to conceptualisations of ‘looking after ‘place. Such
values are articulated as the importance of preserving the environment’s unique physical and natural features to maintain the character of the region, acting as a symbol of Australian and regional identity, thereby attracting tourists and providing economic security for the residents of the area.
Chapter 8

Category of description: Place has a range of opportunities

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the second major category of description to emerge from the study. The idea that *place provides a range of opportunities* was a theme in most of the interviews. This is not surprising, as the essence of phenomenography is to focus on how the individual relates to his or her surroundings; therefore, experiences tend to be reported as opportunities and affordances. This chapter contributes to answering the first three research questions;

1. *In what ways do children conceptualise ‘place’?*
2. *In what ways do children conceptualise their ‘identity in place’?*
3. *In what ways do children conceptualise ‘looking after place’?*

Opportunities in place were varied, and included those associated with the basic needs of children and which were provided by family and community.
Opportunities were also discussed in terms of affordances in the environment, including those providing experiences for autonomy, exploration, independence, risk taking, imaginary play and emotional regulation. Respondents highlighted the ways in which place provided opportunities for wonder and learning, including
opportunities for social learning, learning about nature, history and heritage and for considering the impact on contemporary life of historical cultural practices.

The three themes that emerged within this category were: *opportunities for basic needs to be met, affordances in place and opportunities for learning and wonder*. They are discussed in the sections that follow.

### 8.2 Theme 1: Opportunities for basic needs to be met

#### 8.2.1 Overview

This section explores the theme *opportunities for basic needs to be met*. For children, ‘home’ refers to parents and the family’s place of residence. Home is perceived as providing for basic biological and psychological needs, including sustenance, rest, nurturance, and opportunities to develop self-care. Within the family, children are socialised, developing skills for engaging with family members and friends, and partaking in recreational activities. The provision of security is discussed in relation to family, including the family pet, and services provided at a community level.

#### 8.2.2 Home and family providing for the basic needs of children

The following response indicates how the home is perceived as both a place and a social context providing for the essential needs of children. Here, parents provide food, rest, care and protection.

*Mum and dad feed, care and keep me safe. Home is not just any place it somewhere where you can sleep and be looked after and be raised by your
parents.

Jackson, boy, 12 years old

8.2.3 Home and family for caring, sharing, support and collaboration

The next response identifies reciprocal opportunities for the child and family to engage in caring, sharing, support and collaboration.

*Sharing means share your home ... you do things together and work with them and cooperate with them like having meals, playing games, going places to see other relatives, and in other places you explore and discover new things with them and share your experiences. If they are having trouble at school, you can help them find a way of working through hard times and you’re there to be really supporting and caring.*

Corin, boy, 12 years old

In this response, attachment between family members results in mutual support, providing a secure environment for concerns to be addressed, and opportunities for recreation and interaction with extended family members.

Similarly, the next respondent highlights opportunities to be cared for and supported during illness.

*When people are ill you look after them and support each other, or if they need help you should always be there help, support, love and care for them.*

Corin, boy, 12 years old
8.2.4 Home and family providing learning opportunities

The importance of family for socialisation leads to opportunities for developing communication skills, social competence and self-care.

*It’s also about eating with your family, doing things with family. It’s good to spend time with people other than people at school and friends because it gives you social skills for life. Learning to talk, like when you’re a baby ...

... You learn from mum and dad [how] to take care of yourself. ... They ... act as a role model for me and give me freedom.*

Jackson, boy, 12 years old

Also, the family is considered as a context for providing opportunities for learning and developing new skills through structured recreational pursuits.

*My place is at home and it is to have fun doing different sports ... because you meet different friends and you learn different things because I do four dance classes, netball and cubs.*

Angelique, girl, 10 years old

8.2.5 Home and family providing security and protection

The following respondent outlines how a sense of security is perceived within the family context.

*I think the word place means my home where I live and where I feel most comfortable, safe and secure around my family because my family are*
there to protect me at all times.

Maddy, girl, 10 years old

In another response, protection is provided by the family pet. The anthropomorphising of the pet dog as a protective agent allows the respondent to extend the home range for walking, resulting in increased opportunities for independent mobility. This is significant in terms of the young age of the respondent.

I have a dog ... and he sometimes protects me when I go for bushwalks. It makes me feel really happy because sometimes he barks at big dogs that I don’t know .... because they might come and bite me. We walk down to the bush and he leads the way through. I like that he leads the way because it kind of makes me feel safe that he warns me that there is something ahead.

Kaylah, girl, 7 years old

8.2.6 Community providing security through essential services

Protection is provided at a community level in the form of social services, in the form of police. In addition, the community is perceived as providing essential consumer and transport services.

... we have a lot of community service, like police, shops, car place to sell cars and fix cars, petrol station & train station. They all help us get around or get food or arrest the bad people. I feel very good ‘cos we don’t have
people chasing after us and wanting to kill us or something. Friendly, safe.

Nathan, boy, 10 years old

8.2.7 Summary

Table 8.1, the conceptions referring to the theme ‘opportunities for basic needs to be met’, are summarised as sub-themes and their defining characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic needs provided by home and family</td>
<td>Food and shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring, sharing, support and collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social learning and self-care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security and protection from threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security of self through self-expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic needs provided by community</td>
<td>Essential services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security and protection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.3 Theme 2: Affordances in place

8.3.1 Overview

In this section, opportunities are discussed in the theme, affordances in place. The home and the neighbourhood provide a range of physical and social affordances for autonomy and independence. Affordances exist in private and public settings and provide opportunities for socialisation, autonomy, exploration, risk-taking activity and imaginative play. Imaginative play also provides
opportunities for making sense of cultural practices, and restorative places provide opportunities for managing emotions.

8.3.2 Autonomous spaces and places away from parents

Opportunities for autonomous behaviour are found within the home context. In the following response, the tree house is perceived as allowing for privacy and autonomous play within the secure space of the family yard, monitored by a significant family member.

*I have a big yard and a tree house to keep me away from parents. I climb the tree for privacy but I know that dad is watching me sometimes.*

Elliott, boy, 10 years old

Maintaining a balance between feeling secure and experiencing autonomy is a common theme in the responses.

In the response below, a balance is achieved within private spaces shared with a sibling. This shared space is owned by the occupants who are in control of activities.

*My place is a house with a cubbyhouse and a deck. My place is special because I have a brilliant brother ... he tells me stories ... we keep lots of our secret stuff in there because mum and dad don’t come in there much.*

Kaylah, girl, 7 years old
Sharing spaces in the absence of parents allows for siblings to build emotional attachments through the sharing of stories.

However, at times autonomy is sought from siblings also, as outlined in the following response. While the tree as an affordance is available to the older sibling who is capable of climbing to the top, it does not present as an affordance for the younger sibling. By remaining high in the tree, the older sibling enacts territorial behaviour to protect his autonomous and secure space.

*I like climbing up to that almost top branch and reading my books up at the top because it’s fun and it’s not as noisy as in my house. When my little brother gets angry and chases me with rocks and he throws them at me so I climb up the tree.*

Elliott, boy 10 years old

8.3.3 Places for autonomy and socialisation

As the previous respondent established an imagined territorial boundary, the next respondent reports an area without boundaries that simultaneously provides opportunities for autonomy from parents and socialisation. The lack of fences in a neighbourhood area allows for easy access to neighbourhood friends, and the presence of objects for physical activity encourages shared activity.

*We’ve got a little field there where we have a trampoline and a flying fox.*

*We have an open space where our neighbours are, so their dogs sometimes*
come into our yard. We can talk to them without having to go over a fence.

Kaylah, girl, 7 years old

Friends who live in close proximity spend time together away from parents, as outlined below.

I live in a spot I like and it is my house and I like it because I have all my friends nearby, because then I can go and play with my friends down the street.

Keiran, boy, 10 years old

Also, siblings who have the opportunity to play experience opportunities to develop social skills, including negotiation.

I'll play tip with my brothers .... When we have a race sometimes I slow down to let him win because I'm faster than him ... we used to always fight but when we run around and play together we'd getting rid of the fighting part.

Angelique, girl, 10 years old

8.3.4 Affordances recognised through shared experiences

In the following response, the respondent and his brother perceive the availability of sporting equipment as an affordance for skill development and motivation.
I live in a house and it’s a very sporty place because it’s got a basketball hoop, a soccer goal, a trampoline and a high jump stand. My brother is an extremely good high jumper. He can jump 1.06 and I’m pretty good at it too and he uses the high jump stand for AFL.

Jacob, boy 12 years old

The next response also highlights how the realisation of affordances can be influenced by the presence of other people who enjoy the same activities.

It’s also special because I live near Tom Hunter Park. I can go down and train for running and soccer and when I’ve got Little Athletics on Saturday and I can down there... It’s boring with my friends. I like going down with my brother and my dad because they race me or we play soccer or football.

Sophie, girl, 10 years old

8.3.5 Places for autonomy and exploration

In exploring the bush with a neighbourhood friend, the recognition of affordances is influenced by shared interests and time to explore.

Because there’s lots of new places to explore ... like places in the bush that I haven’t found before ... I like to find things like old cars, old rusty cars. I like to see how much they have rotted away, to see if there’re any interesting things worth keeping.

Jack, boy, 10 years old
As in the previous response, greater spatial autonomy results in more independent behaviours. Affordances for autonomous exploration also include a friend who lives nearby, access to bicycles for independent mobility, and the relatively close proximity of a cemetery.

There’s a kid that’s 3 doors up, he’s about my age. I go around the cemetery with him on my bike, because there is a cemetery 10 minutes’ walk from my house ... I like to see all the different kinds of gravebeds and headstones ...  

Jack, boy, 10 years old

Opportunities for autonomy are valued, and ‘feeling free’ is a theme present in a number of responses. For the following respondent, walking through long grass provides an affordance to experience a sense of adventure and freedom.

We are in bushland. You have to walk through tall grass and it’s an adventure which I like. I feel free when I’m doing that.  

Dyson, boy, 12 years old

Similarly, immersion in the ‘unknown’ is an important element of adventure.

... the fact that you know that you could be the first person to ever step there. I like exploring in the bush, because it’s kind of unknown.  

Luke, boy, 12 years old
8.3.6 Scary places for risk-taking

In the following response, ‘scary places’ provide opportunities for exploring the unknown, and a degree of risk taking.

_There’s a place next door to the gallery which kind of is our place and we share it with a couple of our friends ... we found a path and it went right down to this big funnel place thing which has got all these holes. Then one of my brother’s friend’s parents took us all for a bushwalk down there and we showed them. There were these caves and waterfalls and we all stuck our hands up through the holes and reached each other and it was really fun._

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old

Although there is tension between the need for autonomous play and the fear of the unknown, opportunities for autonomous play were valued. At the same time, security was provided by the presence of an adult.

Another respondent describes the staircase as an affordance for risk-taking.

_I like sliding down the staircase like in the movies. I like sliding down there and when I get to the end I do a back flip and then land._

Alex, boy, 8 years old

The presence of a significant adult as a social affordance encourages decision-making and the evaluation of risk-taking behaviour.
There’s not many caves but three years ago I found one ... My aunty came along and she went to explore further along the track so we went off the track and there was about a 10-metre-high ledge that looks like it went in so I walked over there and then I found a cave. It was so huge ... but I didn’t have a torch and I wasn’t really gutsy enough to go in there by myself. It’s not really good to go caving by yourself or ... go bushwalking by yourself.

Liam, boy, 11 years old

The respondent was able to assess the dangers associated with entering a dark cave. In confronting ‘scary places’ feelings of insecurity are mediated through the presence of a significant other.

8.3.7 Places for imaginary play

Opportunities for imaginary play are an important part of childhood, and imaginary play can be a solitary experience.

When you are listening to [the birds], you imagine you are not in your yard, that you’re in a zoo where there’s way more birds than there is because they sound really loud.

Caleb, boy, 8 years old

Affordances for imaginary play also exist within the family home setting.

The front of [my] house looks like a cat’s face. I play games in it with my next door neighbour who goes to this school. It is the giant and we are the
princesses and we live in the jungle because we have this little jungle thing out the front of my house with plants and trees and rocks and I got a tick from there. We are really poor in the jungle and we have to make things to sell and get money.

Felicity, girl, 7 years old

The previous response exemplifies how the stories children create in special places allow them to explore cultural practices. Stories created and shared with another person and extended at various points in time, provide continuity of the imaginary self.

The following respondent demonstrates how continuity of play occurs when a game is developed between siblings. The ‘fairy tree’ has transpired due to the provision of affordances for climbing the tree. Through climbing into the tree the children are embedded within it, experiencing a degree of intimacy which fuels their imagination about fairies. Continuity of the game is experienced in travelling to another country, due to the presence of plausible fairy objects.

Down the back, we have got a tree and me and my sister call it our fairy tree, because it’s got lots of branches that are kind of like seats. My dad put a piece of wood for my sister Rose and a bit of wood a bit higher for me and we get to sit on them. There’s a special little cut branch and that’s what I always hold on to when I’m on it and all the rest are short. We both feel like it’s our little fairy garden. It wouldn’t be as fun without my sister ... because I have someone to play with in there. We make rings of flowers (lots of pretty flowers) and we put a glittery shell in the middle of the
flowers and the fairies come and leave glitter. Well I’m not sure if they live inside the tree or anything, but I know there are fairies somewhere there. I go down there after school ... I went to England this year and I stayed at my aunty Margaret’s house and she has a loft and when we went up there, there was a shiny blue thing stuck on a web. We think it was a fairy because it wasn’t tinsel. We’ve never seen it before.

Nadia, girl, 7 years old

Opportunities children have to develop complex imaginary games are also influenced by the availability of space. The imaginary fairy world is developed through embodied experiences in the tree, allowing the respondent to formulate a world that instils a sense of belonging.

The imaginary game ‘highways’ involves the use of bicycles and a large backyard which is partitioned into imaginary geographic locations.

My brother and I used to play this thing called ‘highways’ but that’s actually a place as well. We had to ride tightly around because the last place was small. But now we have moved. We ride around in circles because we’ve got 3 poles in the middle. We have made it more interesting by adding more bits of the yard to it. It’s better than playing inside because we use our bikes. When we are inside we’ve just got a little board.

Patrick, boy, 10 years old
The above response demonstrates how the nature of play is based on a spatial scale. With more space the game is expanded, demonstrating how space becomes an affordance. It also allows for more complexity through bodily play, using bikes to simulate travel.

8.3.8 Restorative places

Places can provide opportunities for emotional regulation. The previous respondent, Patrick, described in detail the extent of imaginary play undertaken by himself and his sibling. In the following response, the same respondent provides context for the complex game called ‘Highways’.

*We play because we’ve moved a lot. My mum had this really good friend, they nearly got married but then my mum got kicked out.*

Patrick, boy, 10 years old

In this response, relocation and its associated insecurity is addressed through another imaginary game, involving movement. Affordances for dramatic and embodied play allow children opportunities to deconstruct life events by processing emotionally challenging information.

As well, in the following response, Patrick indicates how place play provides opportunities to extend embodied play, exploring physical and imaginary limits.

*I can go up in America and I’m still in my backyard. I pretend to be a scientist and all that. I pretend that my back tyres can turn into little*
propellers so I can just steer around and I’m still on the ground. When I had
gone to that country, I am in the top half and I took a holiday down to the
bottom half of the world where I got elected to be the King and I just stayed
there.

Patrick, boy, 10 years old

In this example, affordances for imaginary and embodied play allowed Patrick to
deal with emotions caused by insecurity, by taking control as ‘King’ of his
imaginary life in the game.

Affordances for physical activity encourage mood regulation. The following
respondent recognises the importance of exercise and playing with others, for
addressing negative mood and self-doubt.

If the backyard is bigger we have more space to run around in and burn
off energy. It also keeps you healthy and it helps you keep fit. [You] can
stay active and play games like tip and Bullrush and kicking the football
around. It means you are having a good time and not being negative. It
takes away from always being grumpy and always doubting everything.

Lachlan, boy, 7 years old

Similarly, the importance of animals, objects and space for finding refuge and for
overcoming sadness was highlighted.

It’s really nice just to have [pets] around. If you want to ... talk to your dogs.
My dog and cats give you comfort a lot and also when you want to play
with them, they are also there to play with. If I’m sad I can just go and play
with my toys. Because my sister sometimes gets angry with me and she hits
me and it would hurt and then I go into my room and play with my toys.

My bed makes me feel comfortable because it’s got all those sheets and
covers and that keeps you warm at night. The pets can cheer you because
they are always moving around with you.

Zoe, girl, 9 years old

A sense of attachment and belonging is experienced in relation to the family pets.
Family pets provide ongoing company and attention, and toys provide comfort and
distraction in relation to stressful situations. The bed covers are symbolic of
protection by providing warmth and security.

Restorative places act as affordances for ‘calming down’. For example, the next
respondent refers to a natural setting as a place for dealing with anger, due to the
presence of native animals whose sounds have a calming effect.

The bush is a nice place to be when I’m really angry and it helps me calm
down. I like ... listening to all the animals.

Jade, girl, 11 years old

8.3.9 Summary

The sub-themes and their defining characteristics arising from this section are
summarised in Table 8.2, referring to the theme ‘affordances in place’.
Table 8.2: Theme 2: Affordances in place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomous spaces</strong></td>
<td>Spaces away from parents</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spaces shared with friends</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spaces for exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affordances through shared experiences</strong></td>
<td>Affordances realised through shared interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordances realised through shared enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared experience encourages motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk-taking</strong></td>
<td>Risk taking occurs in scary places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spaces for confronting the unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk-taking for building awareness of capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of risks mediated by adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imaginary places</strong></td>
<td>Imaginary places in the home and yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imaginary places shared by siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imaginary places are related to time and place</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imaginary places for self-expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imaginary places for emotional restoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restorative places</strong></td>
<td>Restorative places for facing fears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restorative places for regaining control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restorative places for overcoming sadness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Restorative places to de-stress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.4 Theme 3: Opportunities for learning and wonder

8.4.1 Overview

The theme *opportunities for learning and wonder*, explores a number of learning opportunities perceived by respondents: through observation, and embodied learning experiences. The natural environment provides opportunities for expanding awareness of animal behaviour and relationships between plants and
animals. Opportunities are provided for leaning about the history of the area. A sense of wonder results in motivation to explore historical artefacts and cultural narratives, providing opportunities to consider past life and how it informs the present.

8.4.2 Direct experience for learning about nature

The importance of natural environments for learning about nature is discussed in the following response, where it is argued that experiential learning provides opportunities to observe nature directly.

It’s better to learn about the bush in the bush and not in the classroom ...
because then you can see what the colours of the trees are because if everything was white then we wouldn’t be able to see everything separately, like on pen and paper.

Corin, boy, 12 years old

Opportunities for learning about animal behaviour are found in natural settings.

Through detailed observations the next respondent discusses a complex level of understanding of the connections between bird behaviour and plants.

If you are on the trampoline and the trees are on top of you, you look at the birds which are sort of relaxing because they are nice and colourful. They are green, red, blue, yellow, white and black ... because if they were only
white and grey you wouldn’t able to know which is which unless they had a different ring. If you know what bird it is you can know its name and what sound it makes. Then if you hear the bird sound you can hear what kind of bird it is. I’d like to know all the plants names because [then] you’d know where all the birds would be because the birds eat the seeds of the plants ... or their houses would be on them. Some of them are different like cockatoos .... I like differences because the birds look the same until you look up and notice that they’re different.

Caleb, boy, 8 years old

The viewing of the birds in the trees from the trampoline suggests that the observer has a unique opportunity to observe animal behaviour in detail, suggesting that bodily orientation is an important component of observation.

The respondent demonstrates an understanding of ecological food chains and bird identification, using visual and auditory cues such as markings and bird calls.

8.4.3 Places provide opportunities for learning about the past and the present

Through the presence of objects as artefacts, children are inspired to consider past places and cultural practices. In the next response, a significant heritage site—namely, the grave of Sir Henry Parkes—motivates the respondent to learn about a significant figure in the context of Australian history.
In the Faulconbridge cemetery that’s where Sir Henry Parkes is buried. He named Faulconbridge after his mum. I think he is a special person. He helped Australia to become a better country. He started some schools for poor people so they can learn more stuff which they didn’t actually learn about before. They get to learn how to read and have jobs and have a better life by knowing how to read and write so they know the essentials of life. Knowing how to read and write is the main thing in life you do.

Chris, boy, 10 years old

The previous response indicates a high level of reflection in relation to the memorial celebrating the history of public schooling in Australia. This was further considered in terms of the impact of historical figure on the respondent’s own education.

8.4.4 Opportunities to wonder

Another respondent’s access to an historical site, the ‘old stone wall’ also resulted in thoughtful consideration of how the past informs the present. In considering how the ‘old stone wall’ was built and the materials used, the respondent comes to understand how this knowledge informs current and future building practices.

We have a stone wall that is 100 years old like when the settlers came. .... I don’t think many other people have things that are 100 years old in their back yard. I think it’s amazing that back then they could still build things like that. It’s got sandstone bricks and the bricks today look pretty similar to
the sandstone ones except that they’re that big and bricks today aren’t that big. It’s like we are relating the people in the past and to the people in the future ‘cos it’s helped us learn how to build houses. Probably like it has [modern] bricks in place of [sandstone bricks] and that’s probably what houses used to be made of in the olden days. So knowing about the past helps us now.

Zac, boy, 10 years old

This response is another example of how cultural symbols within local contexts provide learning opportunities through a sense of wonder.

In exploring gravestones, the respondent considers people of the past who are represented by gravestones, adding a temporal element to place experience.

... We ride around and have a look at the graves ... a lot of them are quite old, so just to see how old they were when they died. Also to see how long ago it was that they died.

Jack, boy, 10 years old

In the previous response, exploring symbols of people of the past evokes the importance of historical sites for understanding local heritage.

Similarly, knowledge of the local Indigenous tribe is used to contemplate a special place, the ‘circle of rocks’, as a gathering place for the local tribe.

Normally there isn’t much to watch but you just look and sit. There’s the circle of rocks and I think about if they could have been moved by
someone or if the Aboriginals ... were there and ... it could have been a place where they danced around it and they could sit and have different stories ... when I am about to go to sleep I think about these stories that could have happened there.

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old

A sense of wonder is stimulated by spending private time in special places.

8.4.5 Summary

The theme ‘opportunities for learning and wonder’ is summarised in the table below, including sub-themes and their defining characteristics.

Table 8.3: Theme 3: Opportunities for learning and wonder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning about nature</td>
<td>Learning about nature requires direct and embodied experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecological connections are observed and understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about the past and present</td>
<td>Learning about the past through artefacts and sites of cultural significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Artefacts are used to understand the present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding place heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sense of wonder</td>
<td>Old places and artefacts instil a sense of wonder and imaginings of what might have been</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.5 General discussion: Place has a range of opportunities

This category of description, place has a range of opportunities, explores the opportunities and affordances that are perceived by children in relation to place.
Opportunities include those allowing for basic biological and psychological needs to be met. The discussion that follows explores themes relating to affordances that are identified by children. These include affordances for autonomy and independence, exploration and risk taking, imagination and creativity, emotion self-regulation, and for learning and a sense of wonder.

8.5.1 Opportunities for basic needs to be met

Place as a space for everyday living encompasses all factors required for survival. In this chapter, responses indicated that place is perceived as home and that within the home, parents and family provide for the basic needs of children. Basic needs include the provision of food, shelter, rest, recreation, nurturance, care and security; necessities that are supported by the World Health Organisation’s quality of life indicators (Costanza, et al., 2007). There is also a sense of being ‘looked after’ due to the presence of community services: with shops, police and transport, food, protection and mobility.

However, reports indicate an awareness of the importance of family on other levels. Family is discussed in terms of opportunities for socialisation, where the family as the primary socialising agent is perceived as providing opportunities for the development of social skills through family interactions, including communication skills and skills for working together leading to shared values (Corsaro, 2015; Payne, 2010). Other reports reveal further opportunities provided by parents, including opportunities for self-expression and development through recreational activities, allowing children to fulfil their goals within a secure context. Similarly, as an extension of family, the family dog was perceived as providing opportunities for independent mobility when children go beyond the security of the family territory.
That children have a sophisticated understanding of their biological and psychological needs indicates a high level of self-awareness and a degree of agency in embracing what is required for the maintenance of wellbeing and life satisfaction (Noll, 2002). Not only do children recognise the importance of basic needs, they appear to have implicit understandings of holistic needs (Weingaertner & Moberg, 2011), including those required for positive socio-emotional development, leading to confident and independent adults.

8.5.2 Affordances for autonomy and independence

In this study, reflecting Bowlby’s attachment theory (1982), accounts of the need for protection and security provided by caregivers are counterbalanced by opportunities for autonomy, independence and competence building away from caregivers. Finding a balance between security and independence is a common theme in the responses, with children referring to spaces to be alone or playing with siblings away from parents, yet still within a secure home setting (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2001, 2009; C. Green, 2011).

Allowing children to have spatial autonomy outside of the home range encourages independent behaviour through the building of skills for spatial competence, prosociality and self-regulation (Hart, 1979; Kylin, 2003; Punch, 2000). When engaging in independent mobility, children are likely to perceive and actualise opportunity affordances (Gibson, 1979; Kytta, 2004), and a range of affordances were identified in this study. These included spaces away from home, including accessible areas in neighbourhood streets, green open spaces and the bush—supporting research on favourite and special places (Hart, 1979; Kylin, 2003;
Woolley & Johns, 2001) and the importance of accessibility for the realisation of affordances (Malone, 2013). Similarly, accessibility of neighbourhood friends as social affordances (Castonguay & Jutras, 2009; Kytta, 2002) provides opportunities for independent mobility through shared experiences.

Experiencing a sense of connection to other children is likely to validate the importance of independent mobility and the development of spatial competence and knowledge. However, this study also found that family members allowing children to act autonomously in their presence, leads to increased independence while retaining collective identity. In sum, the identification of affordances is influenced by the presence of others, such as family members and friends, when they encourage self-directed action (Moore 1986; Woolley & Jones, 2001). Such findings support social relationships as a type of affordance encouraging the realisation of other affordances (Castonguay & Jutras, 2009; Kytta, 2002).

While parents were perceived to be important socialising agents (Gillepsie, 2010) respondents described opportunities for socialisation independently of parents as also being important for the accrual of social skills. This study suggests that the absence of parents leads to opportunities for the strengthening of emotional attachments and relationships between siblings, because social interactions between siblings provide ongoing opportunities to develop social skills in a number of ways.

There has been a tendency to focus on children’s interactions within ‘special places’, including formal and informal play areas with friends, rather than siblings, ignoring the value of pro-sociality developed in the home as a precursor to pro-environmental behaviour (Chawla, 2007; Payne, 2010). Nevertheless, a range of
special places for socialisation in local settings were also described by respondents of different ages. These include places in the bush that were easily accessible, and safe neighbourhood streets that provide affordances for social activities.

In past studies, and particularly in relation to age, safety appears to be a key element in children being allowed to wander. Therefore, the extent of independent mobility is likely to influence the type of setting children select for independent play. Previous studies have reported that younger children tend to stay closer to home territories, due to parental constraints, whilst older children travel further away from home to places that have minimal supervision (Childress, 2004; Hart, 1979; Skelton, 2000). These findings were partially supported, with younger children aged 7 years generally reporting playing within the home territory. However, there did not appear to be variation between the 9-10 and 11-12 years age groups, with both groups extending their recreational range to neighbourhood areas and bushland. Again, while phenomenographic analysis reveals new insights into children’s experiences, the intent is not to establish causal links. Rather, it aims to provide room for further exploration.

Further, in some responses the range of movement is unclear, as children’s reports of places seemingly away from home, may be located within the home territory—such as ‘the bush’ in the back yard. Despite this, in this phenomenographic study, children’s conceptions suggest that they experience a sense of autonomy regardless of the spatial range covered.
8.5.3 Affordances for exploration and risk taking

Although the focus so far has been on affordances for autonomy, in relation to opportunities for independent mobility, opportunities for independent action in terms of exploration and risk taking were also reported. What these behaviours have in common is the probability of adverse consequences, due to unknown factors. Children’s reports include descriptions of children’s explorations to ‘unknown places’; supporting Christensen, Mygind and Bentsen’s findings (2015) that exploration is important for gaining confidence and environmental awareness.

In this study, some reports suggest that within the local area, children purposefully seek affordances that are interesting and challenging, as exploration provides opportunities for facing fears; building capacity for emotional growth. Whilst other studies refer to challenging and scary places in relation to social danger, such as crime (Prezza & Pacilli, 2007; Nayak, 2003; van Andel, 1990), in this study, ‘scary places’ were understood as places with unknown elements that would challenge one’s own abilities.

Scary places were found in a variety of settings, both indoor and outdoor places, and resulted in emotional responses such as fear and fascination. At times, feelings were mediated by the presence of a significant adult who inspired curiosity and allowed freedom to explore personal limits—again illustrating how children move away from attachment figures as they become more confident to venture into the unknown by themselves (Bowlby, 1982; Morgan, 2010). As opportunities to face fears within place, lead to confidence and resilience (Wells & Evans, 2003), they also appear to result in positive associations with places, suggesting that
environmental programs involving adventure, will lead to increased place attachment and the likelihood of increased pro-environmental behaviour. Is it important to note that as affordances are recognised by the observer, it is not always possible to predict whether seemingly challenging affordances will be utilised. Contrary to the belief that children flock to challenging situations, Prieske, Withagen, Smith and Zaal, (2015) found that young children avoided challenges if they were lacking in confidence—suggesting that confidence plays a part in the actualisation of affordances (Punch, 2000). That children in this study reported a number of risk-taking behaviours without adverse consequences demonstrates their capacity for self-regulation in relation to competence levels.

Self-regulation builds competence for negotiating and managing risks, improving children’s awareness of their psychological and physical limits (Christensen & Mikkelsen, 2008; Dweck, 2000). It also encourages children to engage in problem solving as new challenges arise, preparing them to deal with future uncertainties (Gill, 2007).

**8.5.4 Affordances for imagination and creativity**

A number of responses suggest that self-regulation was utilised in goal-driven activities involving imagination and creative embodied play. For example, some reports described affordances for encouraging play to make sense of cultural practices such as manufacturing and selling, and other reports described affordances for imaginative play to reflect on troubling emotional experiences. A number of children described how spaces for creativity and imagination provided opportunities for self-expression, where psychologically safe spaces, allow one to
communicate messages about secret concerns or secret aspirations relating to self (Cohen & Trostle, 1990). Reports also outline how imaginary adventure play allows children to communicate messages about how the ‘body self’ embraces personal space through embodied action. Children explored their bodily limits through climbing trees and riding bikes, resulting in intimate awareness of their body’s capabilities. Deeper understandings of the ‘body self’ strengthens self-identity and when they are in relation to places, result in place identity informed by interactions, interpretations and feelings related to the physical setting (Proshanky et al., 1983).

A sense of relatedness and belonging is experienced by children when rich place related narratives are shared, revealing a relational view of interactions with others and with physical spaces. Such narratives, validated through the sharing of a collective identity that informs self-identity and self-esteem (Maxwell & Chmielewski, 2008) need to be listened to when investigating children’s place experiences. Self-narratives recorded in this study, revealed processes that children use to maintain identity continuity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996) as they seek out new places where they can maintain a constancy of self. Imaginary spaces allow children the freedom to be themselves within their own imagination, thereby maintaining a stable self-concept (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2001; Korpela, 1989; Kylin, 2003; Sobel, 1993).

### 8.5.5 Affordances for emotional self-regulation

As for some imaginary places, places providing opportunities for reflection, for gaining perspective on personal issues and for taking control of one’s emotions are known as restorative places (Korpela, 1989; Korpela et al., 2002; Mayer et al., 2009). Restorative places were reported inside homes, in the backyard, and in
natural settings. In support of Abbott-Chapman & Robertson’s (2009) findings, bedroom act as safe spaces to be with personal objects that provide comfort and sanctuary, including pets, who instil a sense of belonging and provide company and emotional security (Kurdek, 2008). In particular, outdoor and nature settings appear to provide refuge in which to deal with difficult emotions, providing the space and objects for children to formulate new worlds where they can regain a sense of control (Chawla, 1992; Dovey, 1990; Titman, 1994). Opportunities for exploring possible solutions to their problems, through emotional self-regulation, strengthen their self-awareness and sense of self identity (Bagot et al., 2015; Korpela, 1989).

### 8.5.6 Affordances for learning and a sense of wonder

While affordances for independent or shared activity have been discussed at length, this research also highlights the importance of affordances that result in learning opportunities for children. For example, experiential opportunities such as the observation of birds result in deeper understandings of ecological processes, while direct experiences appear to inform the construction of ecological knowledge more effectively than learning from secondary sources (Duerden & Witt, 2010). In particular, sensory embodied experiences, such as listening and observing behaviour, result in observations of relational interactions between plants and animals, and between animals and humans, both of whom adjust their behaviour in response to each other. Similarly, children’s intra-actions with inanimate objects such as trees and caves is theorized as more-than- human experience (Malone, 2016; Rautio, 2013), whereby the object invites interactions by children.
In other accounts, direct experiences allow children to develop nuanced understandings of place. Everyday experiences such as playing near an old brick wall, can inspire wonder about the significance of the site to the history of the area, as seemingly mundane places inspire imagination and curiosity (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009; Ross, 2007). This supports the argument that knowledge accrued through first hand experiences in special places instils the motivation to discover more (Jørgensen, 2016; Thomashow, 2002).

So far, research exploring a sense of wonder in outdoor places has tended to focus on natural settings (Carson & Pratt, 1965; Dewey, 2006; Thomashow, 2002). A sense of wonder results from impressions resulting from experiences that encourage the desire to find out more. However, this study shows that a sense of wonder can also be experienced in relation to cultural artefacts and their significance to knowledge about place. This is because the primacy of experience involves embodied cognition and emplaced understandings that integrate natural, social and historical elements of place.

Indeed, children’s interest in the history of place was a surprising element uncovered in this study. Learning that occurs in the local context leads to greater understandings of one’s everyday life (Pike, 2011) with historical stories resulting in understandings of place that are anthropocentric, mediated by cultural understandings (Blizard & Schuster, 2007). This study supports the importance of symbols of cultural history in the form of artefacts: as reminders of past life and to provide opportunities to consider the relevance of cultural history in the present world, resulting in an appreciation of the history of place as a way of motivating children to protect place.
This revelation of the importance of affordances for understanding history demonstrates how the culture of place is significant to children, in that children demonstrate the capacity for critical understandings of place as a cultural context. Min & Lee (2006) also demonstrated how children made connections between the places they experience and the importance of such places within the broader sociocultural context. It is evident in the present study that children search for deep understandings of place through connections between place, heritage, community and social context (Derr, 2002) and that such critical understandings illustrate that children desire to make sense both of cultural and environmental contexts.

8.5.7 Summary

Children conceptualise place in terms of opportunities for their basic needs to be met, and affordances for psycho-social development. Security is provided within the family and community context, and affordances are perceived by children (Heft, 1988; Gibson, 1979). These include opportunities for independent mobility, independence from parents, and building capacity for goal directed action such as exploring with friends, risk taking, social collaboration and emotional self-regulation. A range of affordances exist inside and outside of the home, in the neighbourhood and natural settings, and are realised through spatial and embodied cognition. Conceptualisations of identity occur in the sharing of spaces, providing opportunities for belonging through collective narratives and shared place identity. Self-awareness and identity is developed through the actualisation of affordances, resulting in competence, and autonomy leading to agentic behaviour.
and self-determination. Increasing awareness of the ‘body self’ occurs through direct and embodied experiences, resulting in nuanced understandings of place. In addition, developing understandings of heritage sites informs place identity in relation to time-geography and leads to an appreciation of place as a site for physical and socio-cultural attributes as representations of the history of place.

While there is a sense that children conceptualise being ‘looked after’ through the provision of basic needs and opportunities for psycho-social development, it appears that conceptualisations of looking after place are encouraged by direct experiences which lead to an appreciation of place for attributes that are functionally significant to children. ‘Looking after place’ is also conceptualised through caring relationships between siblings—an important finding, given the evidence suggesting that pro-sociality leads to pro-environmentalism (Chawla, 1992; Chawla & Cushing, 2007).
Chapter 9

Category of description: Place attachment, place identity and belonging

9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the third major category of description: place attachment, place identity and belonging. It explores the qualitatively different ways children conceptualise place experiences and identity in relation to place. This chapter contributes to answering the three research questions:

1. In what ways do children conceptualise ‘place’?
2. In what ways do children conceptualise their ‘identity in place’?
3. In what ways do children conceptualise ‘looking after place’?

Place attachment as emotional connection occurs in relation to social attachments with family, friends or community groups, and attachments to physical aspects of place. Place attachment is related to place identity, the cognitions about place in which one lives (Proshanky et al., 1983). Place identity is informed by understandings of the ‘autobiographical self’ developed over time, and occurs in relation to reference points for self-definition. Identity is also informed by belonging established through shared connections with family, friends and
community. Disruptions to identity, such as changes to social groups or moving to other places, lead to feelings of not belonging.

The three themes within the category are discussed below under the appropriate sub-headings of place attachment and place identity, belonging in place, and not belonging in place.

9.2 Theme 1: Place attachment and place identity

9.2.1 Overview

The first theme, place attachment and place identity, considers the influence of place attachment and understanding of places and place identity. Place attachment is an emotional connection resulting from an awareness of particular attributes of place, such as familiarity, ownership, opportunities for emotional regulation and enjoyment. It is related to social and physical aspects of place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010) and understandings of continuity and change. It is captured in memories providing continuous references to the autobiographical self in relation to family, the local area, objects as artefacts, and special places.

9.2.2 Physical place attachment and place identity

In regard to the first theme, of attachment to physical places, the following respondent identifies opportunities for enjoyment, quiet time and privacy as resulting in emotional connections. Spending time in place and developing familiarity, results in a sense of ownership and attachment, indicated through the term ‘my place’.
If it’s ‘your place’ it’s a place that you like or a place that you really belong in. A place that you like is one that you enjoy being in. I have this bush place and it’s a couple of rocks together ... I like it because the rocks are there to sit on and I can just watch everything happening. ... If you sit somewhere and you’ve been there a few times, then you think this is ‘my place’ and I’m one of the few people who know about it. I like to sit here. I know what all the things look like, I know about it and I don’t think I’m going to forget it. Then you feel like you are going to belong, because you are really familiar with it.

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old

9.2.3 Continuity and change in place strengthening attachments

Familiarity with place suggests a level of intimacy based on knowledge, awareness and appreciation of place. Knowledge of place also involves an awareness of change and continuity.

In the following response, the notion of change is discussed as observations of subtle changes, such as new plants or change caused by bushfire, that demonstrate a degree of intimacy with place.

You can see some waterfalls, some streams and new plants ... it can change, the next day it could be a bush fire and it could be totally different.

Keiran, boy, 10 years old
Conversely, in the following responses, lack of change results in constancy and a sense of security in maintaining familiarity with where things are situated in place.

[You can] go back there a week later and ... stays how it is. It’s not boring. I just like it that it stays the same and you can know where everything is.

Luke, boy, 12 years old

The next respondent highlights how rocks are perceived as symbols of constancy, enduring change around them.

Rocks are stable and don’t change, everything around them changes.

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old

9.2.4 Social place attachment and place identity

Place identity occurs through the incorporation of place meanings into self (Proshanky, et al., 1983). Understanding self in relation to place is a preoccupation of many of the respondents, and the following responses demonstrate a piecing together of information of past selves to construct a ‘story of self’.

The following response indicates an awareness of the importance of one’s mother in the development of self, and understandings of social attachments.

I wouldn't be alive now if my mum had never looked after me and my world revolved around my mum because I didn't really do anything without her ... I don't remember much [about growing up] but I know that's what it was like from watching my little brothers and how they
This response highlights attachment to a mother as the primary caregiver and a developing understanding of mother-child attachment bonds through observations of similar bonds between mother and younger sibling.

9.2.5 **Self-referent continuity informing place identity**

Place referent continuity involves maintaining links with past reminders of self—including objects, people and places (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Shared memories in relation to place also provide continuity of self and help build an awareness of the past self, which informs place identity.

In the following response, memories developed through annual photographs provide continuity of self-identity relating to family.

> Well if you destroy the trees then you wouldn't have a beautiful sight to look at. It's also nice because when we ... take photos at Christmas time we normally do it down the back when we stand in front of the trees. The garden and trees are a symbol of us all ... as mum planted it when we first moved to the new place.

Angelique, girl, 10 years old

The changing self within the family context is captured in photographs and provides an identity reference point in relation to the family. Similarly, the enduring qualities of the garden provide continuity for the family over time.
Not only places but objects can provide continuity between the past and self, including connections to past family members. Objects handed down through generations maintain links with family heritage and identity, as demonstrated in the next response.

*If I break things I could get in trouble, because it could be something really old because mum’s piano used to be mum’s great grandmother’s piano and we’ve had that for a long time. It’s important to look after those old things otherwise it might not go along more generations ... people that have used it have died.*

Hannah, girl, 7 years old

Objects such as toys provide continuity for children. The ‘story of self’ is further explored through memories of objects that were important to the respondent in the past.

*My place is the place I call home. It is the place where my family is and all the things that I love: my family, some of my very precious things like my toys, ... a rocking horse and the snow dome and a couple of dolls I’ve had since I was born. They are one of the first things I ever knew. I played with them a lot when I was little and I used to cry when I left them behind. I suppose toys are special to little kids because it's almost as if they've got a responsibility for them and ... because they hold my memories. I make sure I should preserve them for future because without them you wouldn’t know*
about the past and that means a lot. I can remember people that I don’t know now.

Deanna, girl, 11 years old

Toys act as reminders of the younger self in relation to the family context and people of the past. Caring for toys leads to responsibility for preserving objects which may be of value.

Spending time in place develops deep connections to place. Being in a place since birth can result in a stronger identity through familiarity with place and a lack of familiarity with other places.

My place is the Blue Mountains because ... I’ve lived here all my life and I haven’t seen any other areas.

Chris, boy, 10 years old

Familiarity with the biography of one’s parent provides an opportunity to explore place identity in relation to family ties with place. In the following response a parent’s connection to a place affirms the importance of the local area to the respondent, as part of the story of the family.

My dad in his teenage years went to some of the high schools. Also, he used to go to a swimming pool ... [that is] now grassed area and my favourite spot.

Laura, girl, 9 years old
9.2.6  Self-congruent continuity informing understandings of place identity

While place referent continuity results from memories of past objects and places, self-congruent continuity can be found in new places that are congruent with the existing self.

Although having lived in another country may disrupt the place systems that anchor identity, congruency in the form of a similar lifestyle and community allows for place identity to be transferred from one setting to another.

When I was 6, I went to America with my parents and we lived there for 2 years. There was snow and we made new friends. It's very different to here. You see new animals and a new way of living. It's somehow different but the same. ... they have like apartments and the schools were very different but they all still work together, make friends and you get involved and really soon you feel like you're just like another one of them. After a while it still felt like home.

Corin, boy, 12 years old

Place congruency also appears in responses addressing the relevance of current place to self, experiences of place are captured in positive memories and understandings that reflect a level of place satisfaction.

In the next response, place satisfaction in terms of the social and physical aspects of place, informs the desire to continue living in the area as an adult.
My area is the Blue Mountains ... and it provides everything that I need. It’s very bushy and there’s lots of different opportunities that you can take and there’s very friendly people in the area. Overall it [provides] opportunities to secure your future ...

Charlotte, girl, 12 years old

The response provides evidence of children’s future aspirations to live in a place that allows for identity continuity due to perceived opportunities for a desired lifestyle.

The suggestion that place provides for the respondents’ needs, emphasises place satisfaction and ongoing place dependence as related to a combination of social cohesion, natural features and perceived opportunities.

9.2.7 Summary

In Table 9.1, the theme ‘place attachment and place identity’, is summarised as sub-themes and their defining characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place attachment</td>
<td>Place attachment is developed by spending time in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place attachment is developed through familiarity, continuity and change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1: Theme 1: Place attachment and place identity
Place identity and the autobiographical self

| Place identity develops through an understanding of the autobiographical self |
| Place identity develops through shared memories |
| Place identity develops in relation to significant places |
| Place identity is related to artefacts of self |

Place identity—self referent continuity

| Place identity develops through memories and continuity |
| Place identity is related to family heritage |
| Toys provide continuity of place identity |

Place identity—self congruent continuity

| Identity occurs in congruent places |
| Home provides congruency of place identity |
| Congruency of place identity is related to place satisfaction |

9.3 Theme 2: Belonging in place

9.3.1 Overview

A component of place attachment is the second theme in this chapter. A sense of belonging in place instils social identity, connectedness and security in relation to place. This develops in relation to family and friendship groups through sharing of experiences, and can also exist in relation to the neighbourhood and local community through the provision of social supports. Attachments to physical components of place, such as nature, result in a sense of belonging through shared awareness and appreciation of the landscape and the climate, and a collective understanding of the importance of landscape features to its inhabitants. Belonging to place occurs through connections to place that result from long-term family occupancy.
9.3.2 Belonging to social groups

The following respondent outlines how physical spaces take on a special meaning when they are shared with significant others, leading to a sense of belonging.

*We also have fires down the back, to talk with my family and have marshmallows, brings us together. I like it because of the marshmallows and just sitting in front of the fire and warming myself up and talking about things.*

Jacob, boy, 12 years old

Belonging occurs through identifying with family and friendship groups, whereby a sense of belonging is influenced by the social structure within each group, as demonstrated in the following response.

*My place is the son of my father and mother and it is a good place for me at the moment. A family looks out for each other ... I've also got a place with my friends as being their friend.*

Shaun, boy, 12 years old

Being part of a social group is seen as resulting in being looked after and cared for. When social roles within a family group are dependent on family structure, place is considered as the social position occupied within the family.

The following respondent identifies the child-parent relationship as a social structure where roles are shared.
We do a lot together—work out, use the punching bag, cook together, dance together and sometimes we watch TV together. There’s just us two... It’s quiet because no one is ever home, only me and my mum. Me and my mum help each other all the time.

Elisha, girl, 8 years old

When people live in an isolated locality, a sense of belonging is strengthened, due to strong neighbourhood ties developed through living in close proximity.

Yellow Rock is a community. You have to drive down one road to get there as it’s out on a rock and you know everyone ... If you get hurt, you can go and talk to somebody else if your parents aren’t there. You can have friends, my age, older and younger. It doesn’t matter what age they are they can still be a friend.

Deanna, girl, 11 years old

As in the previous response, belonging can result from social connections within a community. A sense of community is manifest as social cohesion, where group members are accepting of each other despite age differences, promoting a feeling of being valued.

A sense of belonging also leads to security and protection from sources other than family, as described in the following response.

I live in a great [area] where there are lots of animals and I have lots of friends around like the next door neighbours and across the road ... having
friends make me feel safe everywhere because there is nearly one person in all the streets ... if you fall off your bike and people will come out and help.

Keiran, boy, 11 years old

This respondent also demonstrates how the notion of community is inclusive of both human and non-human entities, through the inclusion of animals as part of community.

9.3.3 Summary

In the table below, Table 9.2, sub-themes and their defining characteristics present a summary of the conceptions referring to the theme ‘belonging in place’.

Table 9.2: Theme 2: Belonging in place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to social groups</td>
<td>Belonging to social groups occurs in shared spaces and through shared activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging to social groups leads to shared memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent on family structure</td>
<td>Belonging occurs in relation to position in family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging leads to shared responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared isolation</td>
<td>Belonging results from living in close proximity and through neighbourhood ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging results from geographical isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community</td>
<td>Belonging results from social cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging instils a sense of security and protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging is related to human and non-human entities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.4 Theme 3: Not belonging in place

9.3.4 Overview

The third theme discussed in this chapter is not belonging in place. When connections to people are absent or disrupted there is a sense of not belonging, a lack of social supports and a diminishing of place identity. This can be experienced when moving to a new location, or can result from the loss of social support caused by changes to family structure or the loss of friendship groups. Not belonging is perceived as breaking the link to self-referencing systems that inform identity. These include systems related to national identity and citizenship.

9.3.5 Changes in family structure

Feelings of not belonging can be caused by changes in family situations. In the following response, changes to parental work arrangements disrupt the parent-child relationship, leading to a sense of not belonging for the child. A special place in the home acts as a reminder of a past relationship with the child’s father, demonstrating a physical aspect of belonging.

My spot is the side of the house. I would try to help my dad...add I enjoyed it because I got to use some welders to melt metal together and I used a spray painter. I enjoyed it because I could spend time with my dad and we used to do that before he had his own business, and now we don’t really see him much.

Keiran, boy, 10 years old
In the following response, the presence of a new family member also results in changes to family dynamics and feelings of not belonging.

At Dad’s he’s got another girlfriend. It’s good as an only child so you can do stuff together ... but it doesn’t feel like a ‘me and Dad’ thing when Catherine helps. Dad said that if Catherine helped we could spend more time but that hasn’t worked out, because I spend less time with him ... He said that when we’d go to England she’d come too, but going to England has been like a family thing. Since Mum and Dad have split, it was just me and Dad.

Daniel, boy, 10 years old

A parent’s re partnering has changed the relationship between father and child, resulting in grief and loss of the existing family structure.

9.3.6 Relocation between places

As places provide opportunities for social interaction and belonging, relocation can result in a lack of continuity, due to loss of social contacts.

I wasn’t born in the BMs. I was born up in Queensland, a long way away from here. I’ve only got my mum and my dad and there are 2 kids in the family ... that lives in the Blue Mountains. I feel different because other people talk their aunties or grandmother for news. I don’t even see my grandmother every holiday because she works in a hospital and we have to take time off to see her and this could affect my schooling. She lives 2 hours away in Orange. I feel bad because one aunty lives in Perth, other aunty lives in New Zealand and my uncle lives in Queensland. I can’t go to school
and say that I have seen my aunty or uncle because it would be a lie. I feel different. ... I would like to see them a lot because they are in my family ... Other people don’t really know, have no idea what it feels like.

Patrick, boy, 10 years old

In this response, not belonging is perpetuated by feelings of exclusion from engaging in culturally valued practices, such as interactions with extended family members.

In the following response, there are similar concerns about not belonging, due to an impending move to a new locality.

We are moving to Hartley. It’s pretty scary as I’ve never changed schools except for preschool. It’s scary because I won’t get to see my best friend because where I live now, he just lives 10 houses down from me. It’s going to be sad. I’m scared that some people might be mean to me when I first go into the school.

Lachlan, boy, 7 years old

The respondent expresses concern about moving away from friends and establishing a new social group at a new school.

Similarly, the following respondent describes the importance of place for experiencing relatedness and building social attachments to friendship groups. Friendships developed through climbing a tree were perceived as important for developing a sense of belonging, and when the tree was removed a sense of loss was experienced.
They [friends] always used to come over on the weekends when I went to my mum’s and we used to always play in the tree. The tree we had was big and trunky and all the leaves were hanging out and branches as long as this room. I was really upset when the neighbours cut down the tree. It was because of the tree and my friends.

Zac, boy, 10 years old

9.3.7 Belonging and citizenship

Feelings of belonging were also associated with place identity in the form of national identity and associated group behaviours.

In the following response, national identity is equated with citizenship, and the respondent laments the lack of belonging due to his parents originating from another country. In particular, not possessing Australian citizenship is deemed as not belonging, despite his parents engaging in behaviour perceived to be representative of Australian cultural identity.

I like mowing the lawn because it makes me feel like an Aussie because my mum and dad came from the UK. ... A lot of Aussies mow lawns or just watch the cricket or listen to it on the radio and if we did live in England, I wouldn’t have done that at all. All my family and their families have been in Great Britain for a long time but we’ve only been here for 12 years now, which is not that long and my mum or my dad are not Australian citizens either ... I don’t have Australian relative blood. If my parents were citizens it would make me more of an Aussie ... not just parents from another country that you call immigrants ....

Adam, boy, 12 years old
9.3.8 Summary

In Table 9.3, the theme ‘not belonging in place’, is summarised as sub-themes and their defining characteristics.

Table 9.3: Theme 3: Not belonging in place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in family structure</td>
<td>Not belonging results from changes to parental work arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not belonging occurs due to a new family member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving to a new place</td>
<td>Not belonging results from the absence of family ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not belonging occurs due to relocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of citizenship</td>
<td>Lack of citizenship is tied to feelings of not belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizenship is linked to Australian identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.4 General discussion: Place attachment, place identity and belonging

The category of description, *place attachment, place identity and belonging* explores the way children form connections to place. Connections are formed through emotional ties with significant others and the landscape, leading to place identity that informs self-identity through meanings and feelings related to place. Place identity is discussed in terms of how identity continuity is maintained in relation to place, including a sense of belonging developed through shared attachments to social and physical places. The feeling of not belonging can be experienced when changes occur to social contexts such as family dynamics and relocation.
9.5.1 Place attachment and the autobiographical self

Place attachment results in emotional ties and belonging to place (Low & Altman, 1992). This study demonstrated that place attachment occurs through direct experiences of the social and physical dimension of place, resulting in an appreciation of what place has to offer (Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Uzzell et al., 2002). In relation to physical elements, place attachment develops through accumulated knowledge resulting in deeper understandings, including an awareness of continuity and change in the physical environment over time (Chawla, 2006; Measham, 2006). An appreciation of the change or continuity of distinctive features also informs place identification (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Uzzell et al., 2002). Responses suggest that children develop understandings of place in relation to their own development. Understandings are related to one’s personal history associated with social elements such as parents, grandparents and siblings.

Children perceive having a deeper understanding of and stronger connections to place, because they had lived in place since birth (Hernández et al., 2007), and their knowledge of place is related to age. A number of place related memories were reported by children, such as toys owned at a younger age, and past significant places shared with others. Emotional attachments between parents and younger siblings result in children providing a context for exploring their own development, and increasing independence in relation to attachment figures (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009; Measham, 2006).

The social dimensions of place attachments include social groups and processes which inform place identity, and a number of respondents focused on family as an
identity anchor point for self-definition. By considering earlier versions of self, the ‘story of self’ emerges, informed by place attachments and parental knowledge of place. This supports Hay (1998) and Derr’s (2002) findings that family attachments to the landscape instil shared place attachments.

9.5.2 Place identity and place continuity

Like place attachment, place identity is influenced by experiences in place relating to physical and social dimensions (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), with the experience of the environmental past of a person informing environmental cognition (Proshanky et. al, 1983). Reports suggest that the environmental cognition of parents provides sources of meaning for the children about ‘self’ where special places act as reference points for past and present identity. Family memories in annual photographs at a specific site, act as symbols of continuity through shared experiences. Also, objects handed down through generations provide links to family heritage through narratives that inform memories of place (McAdams, 2001), and other objects, such as children’s toys, symbolise the changing self, due to their history of usage, allowing children review their identity in relation to their own maturation. These provide examples of how identity continuity is maintained through time.

In addition, place identity continuity exists when new places are found that are congruent with identity and that allow for maintaining continuity of self (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996): for example, parents selecting a locality to live in abroad that can support a familiar way of life. This idea can be extended to interpret children’s desire to remain in the Blue Mountains ‘when they grow up’, due to the region’s perceived compatibly with their anticipated adult self.
9.5.3 Belonging and not belonging in place

A sense of belonging is a characteristic of place attachment. Describing oneself as belonging to a specific place is an integral component of place identity (Hernandez et al., 2007), as belonging is manifest in psychosocial commitments to place related group identity (Fried, 2000). In this study, belonging was described in relation to social groups such as family (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 1999) through the sharing of activities and mutual support. A sense of community group in a geographically isolated locality can exist amongst neighbourhood friends (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Children perceive connections with community members as providing support in times of need, or providing informal surveillance of children as they move around the neighbourhood. As an extension to ‘community’, children also perceive other living things, trees and animals, as part of their community—encouraging a sense of belonging.

Belonging satisfies fundamental needs of children to be accepted by others (Baumeister, 1999), maintaining continuity of the psychological self. The degree to which acceptance by others instils a sense of belonging was reported in relation to being part of a family or community group. In particular, the importance of family structure is recognised by children, as it defines one’s social position within the family group, instilling a desire for acceptance. This implies that it is the nature of group relationships that they impact on a sense of belonging or not belonging. Therefore, when one’s social position is threatened, a sense of not belonging can be experienced.

A sense of not belonging, due to disconnections from the social group, can result in feelings of isolation and exclusion (Fried, 2000; Hummon, 1992). This occurs
when a parent changes employment or re-partners, leading to changes in the parent-child relationship. It appears that changes to family structure cause changes in family dynamics and social attachments, leading to confusion. When children feel that they are not accepted or valued their place attachment is likely to diminish, resulting in reduced place engagement.

9.5.4 Not belonging and ‘otherness’

In addition to belonging to social groups, evidence in this study suggests that spatial referents also impact on identity. Reports of the impact of moving from one geographical location to another were discussed in terms of concern about lack of familiarity with the area and loss of friendship groups, resulting in a sense of ‘otherness’ being felt within a new socio-cultural context. Otherness was perceived in terms of lack of group identity and of not engaging in valued shared cultural practices manifested as social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Similarly, reports of moving from another country suggest that belonging is diminished, due to perceived lack of national identity. In this example, feelings of not belonging were experienced due to a perceived lack of citizenship, which was understood as being synonymous with national identity, where citizenship is linked to mythologised stereotypes of Australian identity (Howard & Gill, 2001).

Experiences of ‘not belonging’ and ‘otherness’ appear to be informed not only by loss of social groups belonging, but by a loss of place-based knowledge, including environmental knowledge, and social and cultural capital. This suggests that children value knowing about place, including social, cultural and physical aspects of place. However, perceptions of lacking citizenship as not belonging, also suggest
that being a citizen and engaging in citizen-like behaviour is another valued aspect of belonging and place identity. Perceived lack of citizenship, and Australian identity as place identity, have been shown to inform engagement with place participation and pro-environmental behaviour.

9.5.5 Summary

Children’s conceptualisations of place are tied to emotional connections realised through significant people and significant places. Place attachment to social and physical entities is developed in relation to time, resulting in a familiarity with place that leads to conceptualisations of place in relation to identity. Autobiographical understandings of place emerge through personal reflections of the younger self, family members and their attachments to significant places. The continuity of identity is maintained through identity reference points relating to objects and places, and to shared collective memories. A sense of belonging is experienced in relation to social place attachments—for example, being a part of a social structure such as family and friendship groups.

When social structures are disrupted, this results in feelings of not belonging. Not belonging occurs after relocation, due to loss of extended family friendships and, after moving from another country, cultural knowledge and citizenship. Not belonging is perceived as lacking social support bases and cultural embedding, resulting in feelings of exclusion and isolation and a sense of not being looked after within place. Together with a perceived lack of citizenship and not belonging, this may result in not looking after place.
Chapter 10

Category of description: Connections, caring and responsibility for place

10.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the fourth major concept: connections, caring and responsibility for place. This chapter contributes to answering the first, second and third research questions:

1. In what ways do children conceptualise ‘place’?
2. In what ways do children conceptualise their ‘identity in place’?
3. In what ways do children conceptualise how they can ‘look after’ place?

Understandings of nature develop when connections are formed through emotional attachments and relationships with wildlife and natural settings. Such connections emerge from immersion in nature, resulting in opportunities for learning, embodied experiences, for consideration of the meaning of ‘being alive’, and developing understandings of ecological systems. These require knowledge on the connections between humans, other living things, and nonliving elements.
of the environment. An awareness of the carbon and oxygen cycle, food webs and types of pollution, leads to understandings of the consequences of disruptions to ecological systems. Connections with nature include a sense of being a part of nature (represented as an ecological identity), leading to caring, empathy and responsibility. Caring for other humans is identified in the same way as caring for nature.

The three themes within this category of description are discussed under the appropriate sub-headings: connectedness and affinity with nature, ecological connections and consequence, and caring and responsibility for place.

10.2 Theme 1: Connectedness and affinity to nature

10.2.1 Overview

The first theme to be explored in this chapter is connectedness and affinity with nature. Humans develop connectedness with nature in a number of ways, including direct experience (involving relationships with natural elements), and place identification. Relationships result in emotional affinity and attraction to nature, due to the contemplation of how human-nature relationships enhance well-being. The anthropomorphising of living things elicits empathic responses. Embodied experiences result in subjective responses, which may be used in emotional self-regulation. Some embodied experiences are described as ‘magical’, and they can deepen understandings of the importance of protecting and preserving nature.
10.2.2 Human connections to nature occurring in various ways

Nature that exists within one’s garden is considered part of the family’s place or home. In the following response, whilst the family home is described in terms of physical aspects, the garden is discussed in terms of functionality and what it provides.

_I live in a house and it is tall. The outside looks like there’s heaps of bricks on it. It has a green roof and is 2 stories tall. There’s heaps of fences, one on either side to stop the dog getting out. My front yard has black fence out the front and then it’s all concreted and then I’ve got a grassy area on the left side of the house with a walk way in between. The yard is good because there’s heaps of plants and stuff. Plants are good, because some trees can give us oxygen so we can breathe. I’ve got a garden in my front yard and I’ve got all different types of plants, because it gives you something to look at._

Katie, girl, 7 years old

In this response a detailed description of the house and yard suggests that both features are of equal importance to the observer. The house contains physical features providing shelter and protection, while plants in the yard are perceived as providing essential oxygen for the family and other living things.

Nature provides for human needs, including companionship. The anthropomorphising of trees is one way of feeling connected, where trees are personified as parents and perceived as providing protection.
*Just the swaying of the trees, it makes you feel good because you know you’re in safe in their hands. Makes you feel protected from all the other wildlife ... like snakes. It sort of feels like it’s your parents because they are moving around and there’s lots of them, and because they are moving it makes you feel more relaxed.*

Keiran, boy, 11 years old

The swaying of the trees is reminiscent of the action of parents when providing protection and attention towards a child. Also, the number of trees suggests more protection, resulting in a greater sense of security.

Trees are significant to humans in a number of ways. The next respondent outlines the aesthetic qualities of trees and how trees provide opportunities for fun.

*Well if you destroy the trees then you wouldn’t have a beautiful sight to look out ... it is a better site because the kids like having fun down there.*

Angelique, girl, 10 years old

As well as opportunities for physical activity and fun, the following response describes trees as providing a connection to the Blue Mountains through place identification. That is, the identity of the trees adds to the distinctiveness of the area, and the respondent outlines the dissatisfaction she would feel if the trees were removed, resulting in the loss of place identity.
...not cutting down trees—trees are part of the environment and if we didn’t have trees I would probably hate to live in the Blue Mountains. Trees are one of my favourite things. You can climb them, you can build tree houses in them and you can sleep up there, with my friends.

Sophie, girl, 10 years old

The importance of trees for place identification in relation to the Blue Mountains, is also discussed in the following response. The distinctive trees are perceived as integral to the distinctiveness of the region and are associated with the region’s name, The ‘Blue’ Mountains.

... not cut down trees so all the Blue Mountains would still be the ‘Blue Mountains’ and not just the mountains. If you take down all the eucalyptus trees it might not be blue anymore because the eucalyptus leaves send out this stuff and makes everything blue.

Jackson, boy, 12 years old

Learning about nature is another way to develop connections to nature. Natural places provide opportunities to observe animals interacting with each other and their surroundings, resulting in understandings of animal behaviour.

In the bush I like watching the animals like the birds. We get a lot of birds. I suppose I want to learn more about them ... we are not used to the way they do things. Actually they are a lot like humans in some ways but not in other
ways because whenever they come for the seeds they always fight about who’s going to get the seeds, calling to each other. My mum and me have learnt some bird calls from watching them.

Deanna, girl, 11 years old

In attempting to understand animal behaviour, comparisons with human behaviour and learning is enhanced when shared with a significant adult.

Interactions with wild animals are also perceived as friendships. The following respondent outlines his friendship with a blue-tongue lizard, attributing human-like qualities to the lizard, while understanding the importance of the lizard remaining in its natural habitat. Empathetic reasoning is used to explore the repercussions of containing the animal in a tank.

I have a blue-tongue lizard ... I call him Bluey. He usually just takes cares of the garden and I think that is really good ... He whips his tail. He keeps bad things away. [One day] he just crawled up my arm and licked me and I said ‘hello’. He doesn’t live in my yard, he lives in the bush and he just walks in my yard. He just comes and goes ... I just go outside and play with him for a while and then I can see him later. But if he is in a tank, my mum would stop me opening that tank and I wouldn’t get to play with him. He would just go around in circle and do nothing.

Alex, boy, 8 years old
Similarly, family pets can be a source of friendship, and are also attributed human-like qualities, such as names (based on appearance). The following respondent had developed a connection with pet chickens through observing interactions with them.

*Two of [the chickens] are mine ... mine are a brown one called Milo and white one with a dot on its head called Dot. I like pets so that you can play with them and I like looking after them ... It is fun. I like putting my hand out so they can peck the food out of my hand. Once one of them pecked my finger instead of the food.*

Nadia, girl, 7 years old

In this response, these connections result in a sense of caring for the chickens, expressed by ‘looking after them’ and feeding them.

**10.2.3 Embodied experiences in nature**

Nature provides opportunities to explore understandings of natural processes through embodied experiences. In the following detailed response, the bush is described in terms of its impact on the respondent. The sense of being alive, due to the presence of living things in their habitats interacting with each other simultaneously, instils a sense of calm and arousal in the observer. Interactions occur between living things and nonliving things: earthworms in the soil, birds in the trees. The respondent tries to explore subjective understandings of ‘being alive’ by considering what is meant by ‘not being alive’.
"I think [the bush] is very peaceful and it's very calming and it's very alive... if you go into the bush there’s always things moving. If you dig in it, you’ll find earthworms. If you look in the trees, there are birds and the trees are always whispering to each other. I think it shows that life comes in many forms not just the way we normally think about it. When we think about life we think about humans and when we think about death we think about people dying. But if something is not alive then it doesn't necessarily have to be dead as such, but it can be like soil. If it's not alive it's not very nice soil. Sometimes it’s got a lot of clay in it. But if something is alive it’s got a lot of movement and life in it ... The wind is whistling through the trees and all the animals dig in and whatever else they do. I think it calms me, the sound and noises. I ... feel really proud that I live near something that’s mine and something that's alive makes me feel proud because I don’t want to see something that is dead like a city."

Deanna, girl, 11 years old

In this response, the moving trees and the animals reacting to their surroundings are perceived as an important element of being alive. The movement experienced through sound has a calming effect on the respondent, and a sense of ownership of a part of the bush that is alive instils a feeling of deep satisfaction and an appreciation of the qualities of the bush. The distinctive qualities are highlighted through comparisons with the nearby ‘dead city’.
The following respondent describes rich descriptions of multi-sensory experiences in a special place. Embodied experiences provide an opportunity for emotional self-regulation by avoiding unwanted sounds such as people yelling; instead, embracing the calming sounds of nature. Birds and trees produce sounds through movement and provide company for the respondent; however, the absence of other humans is indicative of private space.

*[In the bush] ... I sit there and it’s really quiet ... because you can’t really hear the cars rushing past and people yelling. You can see a couple of houses across the valley but other than that it’s just a whole lot of bush. It’s nice to hear all that bush because after a while it seems normal and it’s also a very nice sound of the birds and the tree sounds and the leaves rustling under some other animal’s feet. I just need some quiet time on my own and the birds are kind of like a little bit of company. I just need to go and relax somewhere.*

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old

Whilst the following description does not clearly outline all the facets experienced by the respondent, it demonstrates how nature is conceptualised by the observer. For this observer, the bush has to be directly experienced to be understood, and understanding the bush will lead to its preservation. However, the observer also considers aspects of the bush that are beyond human understanding, describing them as ‘magic’.
... as someone who hopes to try and find a way to preserve it and to keep its magic for the future. I want to teach people about [the magic] and show people what they can learn through the bush, all about it being alive rather than about the animals that live in it and about how it interacts together. It’s like it’s all interacting and you can just feel it around you and be a part of it. It’s just a sort of magic that it’s got about it that you can’t really see. I don’t think there’s really another word for it. To me it’s something that we don’t quite understand. It doesn’t really mean what most people think.

Deanne, girl, 11 years old

10.2.4 Summary

The sub-themes and their defining characteristics arising from this section are summarised in Table 10.1, referring to the theme ‘connectedness and affinity with nature’.

Table 10.1: Theme 1—Connectedness and affinity with nature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection to nature occurs in various ways</td>
<td>Nature in the backyard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anthropomorphic qualities of nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friendships with nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning and understanding nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pets as nature-related entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees</td>
<td>For safety and protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aesthetic qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For activities and fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integral to Blue Mountains ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For place identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For gaseous exchange</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A sense of being alive
- Living things moving and making sounds
- Living things interacting with each other
- Living things interacting with nonliving things

The sounds of nature
- Nature is calming
- Sounds of nature block out unwanted sounds
- Nature provides company and connectedness

Direct experiences of nature for preservation
- Direct experience in nature is required to understand nature
- Direct experience results in emotional affinity with nature
- Experiencing the ‘magic’ of nature to preserve nature

10.3 Theme 2: Ecological connections and consequences

10.3.1 Overview

The second theme discussed in this chapter is ecological connections and consequences. It explores children’s understandings of the relationship between living things, and between living things and their surroundings. The importance of trees to ecological systems and humans is recognised through the impact of destroying trees on living things and humans. Pollution is perceived as having adverse effects on ecological systems, disrupting relationships within food chains. Concern for natural processes alludes to the formation of ecological identity.

10.3.2 Connections between living and nonliving things

Understanding animals requires an awareness of animal habitats. In the following response, the natural environment of the Blue Mountains is identified as a place for observing and understanding animals in their natural habitats. Anthropomorphic qualities are attributed, in order to make sense of their
behaviour.

*The Blue Mountains is a place that is beautiful because of the habitat where all the animals live and the bushland sounds nice and all the animals are relaxing. Lizards just sit in the sun to sunbake and conserve energy to get their food.*

Dyson, boy, 12 years old

In this response, the behaviour of animals is understood in relation to their natural habitat. For children, such observations and interpretations result in understandings of connections between living things and nonliving elements.

10.3.3 **The importance of trees to ecological systems and humans**

Vegetation, including trees, is an important element of animal habitats. In the following response, the importance of trees for the survival of insects is discussed. Again, the application of human attributes results in a greater understanding of what animals require for survival: that is, trees provide protection from predators and shelter for rest.

*If the trees were gone, bugs won’t have anywhere to live and they’d just be crawling around the ground or if they were butterflies they’d be flying high and they’d have no rest or shelter. They be flying to get food and then something could come and grab them. Also they might need to hibernate.*

Hannah, girl, 7 years old
Through anthropomorphic understandings of insect behaviour, the respondent develops empathetic awareness of insect behaviour and what is required for survival.

Trees are also recognised for their importance in sustaining life in other ways. The following response outlines the role of trees in the carbon and oxygen cycle, as well as their aesthetic qualities and discusses how the loss of trees results in an accumulation of carbon dioxide, which acts as a greenhouse gas.

_Because if nature isn’t alive and the trees weren’t alive there would be no oxygen. In the bush ... trees are what breathes in carbon dioxide and makes all that oxygen ... Here [in the Blue Mountains] there’s a lot of trees that can breathe in carbon dioxide which is what makes pollution and greenhouse gases. It stays the way it is because people don’t want to get rid of it because it’s such a beautiful place._

Adam, boy, 12 years old

As in the previous response, the next response more explicitly describes the impact of tree removal on the accumulation of air polluting gases.

_Trees ... but we are cutting down trees which are not good because the air is just getting more polluted. They take out all the pollution and put in nice air and stop coughing._

Sophie, girl, 10 years old

As well as trees reducing air pollution, the following respondent outlines how trees provide shade for protecting humans from the sun.
Get lots of oxygen in our lungs and the trees have shade so we don't get sunburnt. The trees are protected by the environment. Lots of trees and lots of plants.

Kalan, boy, 8 years old

This response also demonstrates an understanding of the importance of habitats for trees for their survival.

There is also a clear understanding that the removal of trees is a direct consequence of land clearing for the construction of buildings for urbanisation.

We are cutting down more trees and we are getting more ‘city’ and there’s not as many places where there is just countryside because they are constantly making new buildings and dumping rubbish and waste everywhere.

Corin, boy, 12 years old

This respondent also recognises that there are other consequences of land clearing, including the dumping of waste.

10.3.4 Pollution has an impact on humans, animals and ecosystems

A number of responses discuss the impact of pollution on natural processes. Although he is unclear of the direct relationship between pollution and global warming, the following respondent outlines that pollution affects the atmosphere, which in turn controls the movement of heat and radiation.
Pollution creates global warming which is something to do with the atmosphere. It controls our heat and coldness. It stops lots and lots of radiation and heat coming into the Earth.

Dyson, boy, 12 years old

In the following response, another form of pollution, litter, results in the suffocation of animals.

... [Animals’] heads could get inside the plastic bag or something and they can’t breathe and they will die. Littering is bad for the environment.

Lachlan, boy, 9 years old

The consequences of littering for animals and the food chain are outlined in the next response, which demonstrates an understanding of the complex feeding relationships in a food chain. The flow-on effect between animals in the food chain suggests that the loss of one animal species affects the population of other animal species.

... If I saw plastic rubbish I wouldn’t be happy ... I might pick it up because if it gets into a stream it can choke fish and if the fish die then the animals that eat the fish can die and the animals that eat the animals that eat fish die and so on. Then animals that the fish ate will overpopulate and that wouldn’t be good.

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old
The next respondent outlines a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of pollution on a range of species.

*Animals can die, fish can die, sharks can die, sometimes birds think the plastic things from milk are worms and they put it around their neck by accident and as they get older, their neck gets wider and they can stop breathing. It’s important that animals don’t die because the sea needs the animals keep it clean. The trees sometimes need the animals to spread the seeds.*

Lucy, girl, 12 years old

Although this is not explicitly stated, there is some reference to the importance of ‘consumers’ in the aquatic ecosystem for the removal of debris, possibly decaying organisms, for keeping it clean. The importance of animals for spreading seeds is also highlighted, suggesting that while the respondent is unclear of the direct relationship between the species, she has developed an appreciation of how organisms either directly or indirectly impact on each other in feeding relationships.

10.3.5 Summary

In Table 10.2, the conceptions referring to the theme ‘ecological connections and consequences’ are summarised as sub-themes and their defining characteristics.
Table 10.2: Theme 2: Ecological connections and consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecological connections between living</td>
<td>Animals needs habitats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and nonliving things</td>
<td>Trees are a part of the carbon/oxygen cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisms respond to nonliving things in the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological connections between living</td>
<td>Trees regulate gases for other living things, including humans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things</td>
<td>Trees provide habitats for other living things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution disrupts ecological processes</td>
<td>The removal of trees affects air quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Air pollution leads to climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Litter kills animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Litter disrupts ecological processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.4 Theme 3: Caring and responsibility for place

10.4.1 Overview

The third and last theme explored in this chapter, caring and responsibility, covers ways in which children perceive they can look after place. The concept ‘caring for’ is applied to a number of situations, including caring for oneself, caring for one’s home and garden, caring for others (including family and community), and caring for animals and their habitats. Looking after place requires respect for oneself, one’s property, and nature. This includes taking responsibility for teaching people how to care for injured wildlife, protecting the bush by removing litter, and preventing others from polluting, or cutting down trees. It also requires reporting suspicious activity to the police. To preserve its character, and subsequently the tourism industry and economy of the region, taking responsibility for looking after the Blue Mountains is required. Taking responsibility for the Earth is seen to be the responsibility of every human being.
10.4.2 Looking after place requires caring for self

Looking after place begins with caring for oneself through good hygiene practices, avoiding germs and cleaning the house to avoid illness.

*I can look after my place by having a bath because it makes things smell nice and lets me be healthy.*

Hannah, girl, 7 years old

*... by washing your hands when you put your hands over your mouth to stop the spread of germs.*

Jacob, boy, 12 years old

*I can look after my place by cleaning, dusting, helping. Cleaning and dusting helps us not get sick.*

Elisha, girl, 8 years old

10.4.3 Looking after place requires caring for the house and the garden

The following respondent describes how, if in need of repair, the family house can be maintained.

*Making sure wood on the house doesn’t fall down, it’s painted properly and not really dirty. ... By keeping the wood clean, because if it’s dirty the mould will get on it and then the mould will start eating through the wood and then the house will start breaking badly.*

Caleb, boy, 8 years old
Looking after one’s house also means looking after one’s yard, as outlined in the next response.

*Gardens can be healthy and they can provide food for you all. Like with farming you can grow things.*

Corin, boy, 12 years old

In the previous response, looking after the vegetable garden to grow ‘healthy vegetables’, is perceived as a way of looking after oneself.

10.4.4 **Looking after place requires respect**

The following respondent outlines a number of reasons why it is important to look after place and the people within it. Looking after place presents a positive place image to others, and engenders respect for self and place.

*I can look after my place by keeping it clean as I don’t want to live in a pigsty. No one would want to visit because it’s such a mess. Need to look after it and what’s inside and also caring about the people and things around. You want others to respect that it’s your house you should feel good about it. If you don’t care about it, they might not respect your place too.*

Adam, boy, 12 years old

Looking after place also means looking after and caring for the yard. In this response the garden is not considered an object but is a significant place to a
family member. Caring for place signifies respecting the emotional connections that other people have with place.

_I can look after my place by getting my brother not to kick the balls in the garden because it’s not very caring for it because it might hit my mum’s lamps and we have plants that my mum brought half year ago ... I try to stop it by playing goal keeper or garden keeper._

Kalan, boy, 8 years old

This respondent considers himself to be the ‘garden keeper’: a protective behaviour based on respect for the significance of the garden to his mother. This implies that respecting place involves respecting other people’s property.

As in the previous response, the following response implies that not looking after place will result in a loss of place. That is, if the rental property is not looked after, the occupants will be asked to leave.

_We look after our place by not littering and by playing ball games outside and not inside. It’s because it’s a rental house ... so we have to take care ... because if the people that actually own it can kick us out of the house ... we wouldn’t have anywhere to live._

Lachlan, boy, 9 years old
10.4.5 Looking after place requires caring for others

Looking after place also includes working with others to look after place.

... by helping other people if they needed a job done and my family doing chores. I help as much as I can.

Jade, girl, 11 years old

The following respondents outline how working with others, sharing activities and supporting each other, is representative of place. This occurs at a friendship level and a community level, and involves working together to support and care for each other.

I think the word place means community and friends. ... like helping if they're in trouble like if they have got no lunch give them some of mine. My place is friendly and caring.

Charlotte, girl, 12 years old

In a community I am friendly, helpful to people who are sick or can't get to the shops. I am considerate to others.

Lucy, girl, 12 years old

10.4.6 Looking after place requires caring for plants and animals

Looking after place also requires looking after plants and animals, including caring for animal habitats, as they are important for the survival of animals.
Someone who is a caring person to the Blue Mountains so doesn’t totally go in destroy animal’s habitats. A habitat is where they live and keep all their babies and eggs.

Angelique, girl, 10 years old

One way of not destroying animal habitats entails appreciating that trees provide animal habitats. This includes preserving trees rather than cutting them down.

**Being respectful to the area is by not chopping down trees because [they are] homes to animals. You feel happiness inside of you because you think these people have looked after their place so we should look after our place more. Happiness to see that people really are caring about the Earth.**

Keiran, boy, 10 years old

The previous response also outlines a sense of appreciation of others in the past, who have preserved trees by practising environmental stewardship. Conservation practices at a local level, such as looking after trees, are considered a way of caring for the Earth.

In addition, caring for animals requires educating others to care for injured wildlife, including an awareness of local authorities who care for injured wildlife.

**Someone who teaches people how they can help all the animals if they ever find one. Me and my mum found a little bird that had a broken leg so we called WIRES ....**

Zoe, girl, 9 years old
10.4.7 Looking after place requires taking responsibility for one’s own actions

Looking after place requires taking responsibility for place by acknowledging and dealing with issues that one has control over. Children demonstrate responsibility for place in a number of ways, for example by making suggestions for reducing litter.

... that you have to learn to recycle and you have to try and find places where it’s not going to harm any life at all.

Keiran, boy, 10 years old

The next respondent takes responsibility for his family’s wastage problem by sorting waste for recycling and trialling new ways to encourage his family to recycle.

*My family doesn’t like recycling, but I always go in the bin and pull all the stuff out that can be recycled. We have recycling bins that [are] down the back ... But I put one close to the house yesterday, so I think they will use it now.*

Keiran, boy, 10 years old

A number of respondents take responsibility for picking up litter that other people have dropped, in order to protect the animals.

*If there’s rubbish in the bush area, I’d pick it up and put it in the bin or carry it with me until I see a bin so animals don’t die.*

Dyson, boy, 12 years old
Not throwing rubbish ... making sure I can clean up after what other people have done. Rubbish can destroy our area. If they didn’t destroy it, we could live here longer.

Keiran, boy, 10 years old

This respondent is aware that littering an area can indirectly harm humans.

Also, the following respondent outlines how humans may be harmed by discarded broken glass, or cigarettes, causing bushfires. Therefore, the respondent takes responsibility for removing dangerous objects, to protect humans in a number of ways.

*Usually every day I see litter or broken glass, or cigarettes on the ground. It’s important to pick it up because you don’t want anyone in bare feet to step on the glass or the cigarette to set the playground or the school on fire.*

Callum, boy, 8 years old

Threats to place also include anti-social behaviour, as outlined in the next response. Responses to perceived threats to place include alerting the police of suspicious behaviour.

*We could try and report things that are suspicious to the police. Then a follow up-robbery and crime could come, so reporting is a way of trying to keep it all safe.*

Nathan, boy, 10 years old
10.4.8 Looking after place requires taking responsibility for the local economy in an indirect way

While looking after place involves looking after people and the environment, it also includes looking after local revenue sources.

*By keeping it safe and making sure it doesn’t get dirty with litter and everything, we don’t want to turn it into a junkyard ... we need to keep it looking good for the tourists, because they give money to the government who help to fix up things.*

Adam, boy, 12 years old

This respondent demonstrates an understanding of how the consequences of littering would impact on the aesthetics of the local area: an important element in attracting tourists and for the economic sustainability of the region.

10.4.9 Reciprocity in people and place interactions

The following respondents address the reciprocal nature of relationships in place. In the response below there is a sense of mutual caring and responsibility between people and place.

*If you care about the people, they will care about you.*

Adam, boy, 12 years old

The next respondent highlights the importance of looking after the Earth so that the Earth can continue to provide what humans need for survival.
The Earth gives you all these wonderful things but with global warming if we don’t look after our Earth the Earth can’t look after us.

Keiran, boy, 10 years old

### 10.4.10 Summary

In the table below, Table 10.3, sub-themes and their defining characteristics present a summary of the conceptions referring to the theme ‘caring and responsibility for place’.

**Table 10.3: Theme 3—Caring and responsibility for place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Looking after place requires caring and respect | Caring for self  
Caring for house and garden  
Caring for others—family and community  
Respect for self, others and place. |
| Looking after place requires caring for plants and animals | Caring includes not destroying habitats  
Teaching others how to care  
Environmental stewardship |
| Looking after place requires taking responsibility | Taking responsibility for one’s own actions and the action of others  
A collective sense of responsibility is required  
Taking responsibility for one’s place |
| Preserving place for the future | Preserving the future for the plants and animals  
Preserving the future of plants and animals for humans  
Preserving place for human habitation  
Preserving place for the local economy |
| Reciprocity in people and place interactions | Reciprocity amongst people  
Reciprocity between people and natural systems |
10.4 General discussion: Connections, caring and responsibility for place

The category of description *connections, caring and taking responsibility for place* explores how children form connections with nature and develop understanding of nature and ecological processes, resulting in emotional connectedness towards nature. As a result, children come to understand the ecological consequences of human actions. Ways of taking responsibility for nature are discussed, including the importance of an ethic of care.

10.4.11 Children’s relationships with nature

Human connections to place as a natural setting were explored, wherein nature was discussed in terms of plants and animals, habitats and natural processes—symbolising the relationship between living and nonliving entities. Descriptions of nature in the backyard suggest that children are in daily contact with nature, and that they believe nature to be important for what it provides for humans. That human and environmental components of place are given equal consideration suggests that they are equally important to the observer. This idea is supported by Loughland et al.’s findings that nature is discussed by children as a place containing living things and people, which are interrelated through various ecological processes (2002). It also supports the ‘new nature’ movement, which rejects anthropocentric views of nature and moves towards humans as a part of nature experiencing human-nature relations (Malone, 2016; Rautio, 2013).

Another relational approach to understanding nature is the attribution of human qualities to organisms—or anthropomorphism. The process of attributing human qualities makes that object more deserving of protection (Tam et al., 2013; Watanabe, 2007), as connections to animals are perceived in the same way as
human connections, making them more worthy of protection (Goralnik & Nelson, 2011). Anthropomorphising often leads to the perception of a mutual relationship between the anthropomorphised entity and the observer. A blue-tongue lizard provides friendship to its human host, while the human host appreciates the importance of the lizard retaining its own habitat rather than being captured and caged. Such relationships demonstrate a biocentric view of nature (Schultz, 2000), in which each organism is of value to its natural environment. This demonstrates children’s capacity for empathy for native organisms, which is likely to lead to the preservation of natural areas.

An alternative way to consider children’s understanding of the relational view is using Schultz’s empathising with nature model (2000), which incorporates the egoistic, social altruistic and biocentric views. On a personal level, children reported an egoistic view of trees—valued for being aesthetically pleasing and for play—while other reports indicated children’s view of nature from a social altruistic perspective, recognising that the environment is important to humans for reducing air pollution. An appreciation of the importance of maintaining natural habitats for the preservation of plants and animals was present in many responses. This indicates a strong tendency by the study cohort to engage in biocentric thinking and reasoning (Schultz, 2000; Kahn & Lourenço, 2002). The responses demonstrate that children understand the importance of trees to other organisms in providing shelter and oxygen, in reducing carbon dioxide and maintaining interrelationships within ecosystems, rather than just for anthropocentric reasons (Kahn & Lourenço, 2002).
Kahn and Lourenço (2002) suggest that children move from an anthropocentric view to a biocentric view as they grow older. The findings of this study did not provide any suggestion of this trend, however, developmental shifts in thinking were not explored due to unexpected limitations in the research design as discussed in Chapter 12.

However, a noteworthy finding is that children’s valuing of native plants and animals in relation to the local environment does not centre on competing forces: between the preservation of nature and the use of nature for human resources. This is due to the context of the study, a region important for its natural heritage which attracts tourists. It appears that children are aware of the link between preserving the environment and maintaining the character of the area as a human resource.

In this study, perceptions of human-like qualities in natural entities led to persons including themselves in conceptions of nature (Davis et al., 2009; Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Schultz, 2002), thereby giving equal value to humans and nature rather than applying an ‘anthropogenic’ view of humans having dominance of nature. When humans identify as being interdependent with nature, they experience ecological identity (Bragg, 1996). Perceiving interrelatedness between nature and humans, implies an understanding of the consequences of human behaviour on ecological systems such as food chains and food webs. There is evidence of this level of understanding, including a degree of perspective taking in one’s actions towards nature entities, supporting the findings in Kalvaitis and Monhardt’s (2012) phenomenographic study of children’s relationships with nature.
Kalvaitis and Monhardt’s (2012) study not only demonstrated that children empathise with nature through friendship with plants and animals, but perceive their relationships with nature to be similar to those with family members, and that ‘[c]hildren understood that they live in an ecological context as just as much as a social one’ (p. 221). This viewpoint was supported in the present study by children’s descriptions of the need to care for family in the same way as caring for nature, suggesting that an ethic of care is translatable between human and natural entities, and would lead to pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour (Chawla, 1998).

10.4.12 Intangible qualities of nature

The interdependence of organisms and ecological processes forms the basis of Mayer and Frantz’s (2004) tenet that connectedness to nature instils a sense of belonging to nature which leads to an appreciation of nature’s intrinsic value. This is tied to an appreciation of every organism as a tangible entity, as well as intangible qualities of nature that transcend conscious experience (Schultz, 2000). Descriptions of qualities such as ‘magic’ and of ‘being alive’ were reported by children in relation to experiences had in special places— emphasising the importance of direct engagement for experiencing intangible qualities.

It is possible that the recognition of intangible qualities results from embodied experiences (Aaron & Witt, 2011), with reports suggesting that movement is symbolic of ‘being alive’ and is perceived through sounds representing communication and interaction. Indeed, soundscapes are recognised as essential for experiencing place (Turner, McGregor, Turner & Carroll, 2003) and evidence of
embodied experiences of sound in this study, includes listening to interactions amongst living things, and between living things and their surroundings. There is also evidence of deep reflection, as the concept of ‘being alive’ is considered in relation to hidden features of habitats that support life. Listening to nature is perceived as calming and useful for emotional regulation, as well as instilling a sense of oneness with the bush.

Reports of ‘magical’ experiences support Chawla’s idea that magical experiences in nature encourage unique perspectives and a sense of harmony (1986, 1990, 2002). Magical experiences are thought to inspire the emotions of awe and wonder in relation to the complexities of nature (Carson & Pratt, 1965; Jørgensen, 2016), with children reporting curiosity inspired by a lack of understanding of unknown elements. Awe and wonder, as a spiritual dimension, can result in internalised motivations for pro-environmental behaviour, due to its ability to inspire emotional relationships with nature (Perkins, 2010).

Analysis of results so far has argued the importance of direct experience for understanding nature and environmental awareness. This was also stated by a number of respondents, who believed that nature needs to be directly experienced—observed, felt, embraced—in order to encourage an interest in and motivation for continued learning about nature (Fisman, 2005; Hart, 1997; Nisbet, et al., 2009; Sobel, 1996; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). This study has also highlighted that relationships between children and adults play a role in fostering emotional connections with nature through engaging in direct experiences. It has added to the literature of the importance of significant adults in passing on conservation knowledge (Derr, 2002; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001).
10.4.13 Understanding ecological connections

The focus on nature in these responses appears to result from the embedding of children in the natural surrounds of their local area. Indeed, a number of children had well developed knowledge of ecological processes involving living (biotic) and nonliving (abiotic) elements of the environment, including children aged as young as 7 years. Responses describing animal interactions between biotic and abiotic factors included the importance of trees as habitats for other creatures and for the regulation of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to support all living things. Also revealed were understandings of feeding relationships between species, including food chains and food webs.

Past research suggests that ecological knowledge is more common in older children (Leach, Driver, Scott & Wood-Robinson, 1996), therefore, the level of ecological understanding by younger children appears significant. It is not possible to ascertain whether this knowledge is developed through direct experience or is the influence of formal and informal environmental education; this question needs further exploration. Having a well developed understanding of relationships between environmental elements is significant, because it results in greater appreciation of the value of nature (Schultz, 2000) and greater likelihood of embracing caring responsibilities for the environment (Nisbett, et al., 2009).

10.4.14 Understanding the consequences of disrupting ecological connections

Within environmental education, learning about ecological relationships also involves learning about the consequences of disrupting them. This research uncovered children’s awareness of the direct link between human activity and
disruptions to ecological relationships (Shepardson, Niyogi, Choi & Charusombat, 2009). For example, if trees are cut down, animals habitats will be lost and there will be more carbon dioxide in the air, leading to global warming, which will subsequently affect existing ecological processes. This awareness is also highlighted in responses stating that deforestation is linked to urbanisation, which results in the destruction of habitats, thereby disrupting the balance of ecosystems and encouraging air pollution and the dumping of waste (Alerby, 2000).

Overall, different types of pollution were described by children in terms of their impact on humans and other living things. Air pollution was recognised as directly impacting on human health and climate change (Littledyke, 2004), and litter as having a direct effect on animal feeding patterns and indirectly affecting the trophic levels in food webs. There is evidence in this study that the complexities of disruptions to food webs appear to be well understood. Kahn and Lourenço (2002) suggest that direct observations of human impact on feeding relationships result in acute understandings of ecological connections, through the use of biocentric reasoning. However, social altruistic reasoning was also utilised, to explain the impact of deforestation on the livelihood of the Blue Mountains population. This is a unique example of how preserving the environment supports humans as well as nature itself.

10.4.15 Taking responsibility for place

In the light of children’s acknowledging the consequences of human activities on natural ecosystems, responses suggest a range of ways to take responsibility for the problems created by oneself or others. As found in Loughland et al., (2002)
children reported a willingness to take responsibility for the environment, and that responsibility for the environment was perceived as a type of environmental stewardship; a way of preserving it for the future (Worrell & Appleby, 2000). Of the suggestions reported, there was a mixture of behavioural intentions and reported behaviours. Behavioural intentions included general approaches, such as intentions to not destroy habitats or cut down trees, while reported behaviours were individualistic and child friendly, and included putting containers in the recycling bin or picking up litter. It appears that while some respondents are aware of other approaches for protecting the environment, they perceive limited opportunities for gaining appropriate knowledge and the capacity to enact them. That is, this study suggests that children are willing to engage in environmental behaviour that is effective and leads to significant change. However, they only possess the capacity for simple responses, as would be expected of children.

10.4.16 The ethic of caring and pro-social behaviour

Caring is an inherent quality that translates from human relationships to relationships with nature (Chawla, 2007). In this study, caring was explored in terms of 'looking after place'. There is some suggestion that children appear to have an innate desire to care for living things, regardless of limited knowledge, attitudes or beliefs about the environment. Despite this shift in focus, the concept of caring appeared in a number of ways. A number of children considered caring for place to be synonymous with caring for self, discussed in terms of looking after self, bathing, eating healthy food and caring for home. This supports findings that the action of caring becomes part of the nature of a person and will be practised in a number of ways (Chawla, 2007; Goralnik, & Nelson, 2011).
Caring for home informs place identity and how place is valued. If we consider that Proshanky et al.’s., (1983) place identity incorporates the relevance of children’s feelings and cognitions of everyday places for self-identity, including self-esteem and self-worth (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), then when children perceive that the appearance of home is negative to others, as reported in this study, this will impact on their self-esteem and self-worth (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 1999).

It may be that perceptions of caring for one’s home are also associated with feeling secure: as Castonguay and Jutras (2009) found, in poor neighbourhoods, dilapidated houses and neglected streets can symbolise antisocial behaviour and danger. Similarly, in this study, reports of broken glass in playgrounds and the bush were perceived as representations of neglect, and of lack of care and safety. Conversely, children who perceived that caring for one’s property represented valuing the property, hoped to encourage others to do the same.

Learning how to care for valued entities results in behaviour affirming care for the environment (Clayton, 2003; Perkins, 2010). This was found to occur when animal habitats were equally valued equally, children experienced a sense of caring to maintain them. Therefore, links can be made to the importance of instilling an ‘ethic of caring’ for encouraging identity development that leads to positive interactions with both human and non-human elements. This suggestion is based on Martin’s (2007) findings that relationships with wild animals engage the relational self, overcoming children’s conceptions of the environment as ‘something in the distance” (Loughland et al., 2002). Instead, the environment becomes a part of self and is more likely to be protected.
Caring is one form of pro-social behaviour. However, other forms of prosocial behaviour are developed through place-based social interactions (Hart, 1979; Kylin, 2003; Powell, 2001). Children’s descriptions of pro-social activity, involving collaboration and cooperation with others, demonstrated other forms of caring for place. This included mutual care between family members and between members of the community, as well as valuing working with others and government authorities who care for animals. There is also evidence of altruistic tendencies, due to concerns for the well being of others, and a degree of humanitarianism: exhibiting a kindness to others less fortunate (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). This links with the importance of becoming environmentally aware through understanding the consequences of one’s actions: a foundational underpinning of altruism.

Possessing altruistic tendencies and pro-social skills leads to pro-environmental behaviour (Driskell, 2002; Nicotera, 2008; Szagun & Mesenholl, 1993) suggesting that social skills are linked to environmental care. In this study, there was a perception that catering for the well being of people is equally important to catering for well being of the planet. In addition, stated ideas of the importance of an ethic of mutual care between people and the Earth, support Loughland et al.’s (2002) findings that children perceive people to be in a mutually sustaining relationship with nature. Being in a mutually sustaining relationship with nature is perceived as looking after the natural surroundings by taking responsibility for one’s own actions. This is demonstrated in children’s descriptions of not littering, of disposing of waste correctly, and encouraging one’s family to recycle: demonstrating environmental stewardship, behaviour to preserve and protect the environment from destructive influences.
10.4.17 Summary

In this chapter, children conceptualise place in terms of their relationships with nature and environmental awareness. This includes relationships with natural entities, formed through attributing human qualities that instil an ethic of care. The direct experience of nature, including embodied experiences, results in an appreciation of intangible qualities of nature, informing an appreciation of nature’s worth. Nature is attributed value from an egocentric, social altruistic and biocentric point of view (Schultz, 2000). Understanding the ecological connections and processes within ecosystem, results in awareness of the impact of human activity, which causes disruptions to ecological relationships.

**Conceptualisations of identity** in place revolve around an awareness of self in place, including identification with nature, resulting in ecological identity. Valuing the natural environment encourages environmental citizenship as a form of identity, with a view to preserving the natural heritage of the region. As a consequence, **conceptualisations of how to ‘look after place’**, such as protecting the environment, not only stem from understanding and appreciating ecological processes, but from an ethic of care. An ethic of care is developed through learning how to care for entities that are valued—including the self, family, home and others. Caring is manifest as pro-social behaviour, and extends to pro-environmental behaviour when children come to value environmental settings. Environmental knowledge, together with the valuing of place, results in the desire to take responsibility for protecting the environment.
Chapter 11

Category of description: The developing self in place

11.1 Introduction

Place can be considered as the general context within which children develop a sense of who they are. This chapter explores the qualitatively different ways children conceptualise self and identity in the final category of description, the developing self in place. This chapter contributes to answering the first, second and third research question:

1. In what ways do children conceptualise ‘place’?
2. In what ways do children conceptualise their ‘identity in place’?
3. In what ways do children conceptualise how they can ‘look after’ place?

In this chapter, understandings of self are considered in terms of self-concept, including social categories and dispositions. Social identity includes an awareness of self in relation to social groups, social contexts and social constructs. Identity is also performative, informing roles and relationships, and at times leading to confusion about children’s identity in society.
The developing self is discussed in relation to the self-determining child, whereby children exhibit the capacity to take control of or engage in various self-regulatory processes, such as managing emotions, monitoring one’s development, assessing risks, and spatial navigation.

The three themes defining this category are: *Who and what am I in relation to place?*, *the self-determining child*, and *my place in society*.

### 11.2 Theme 1: Who and what am I in relation to place?

#### 11.2.1 Overview

The first theme, *Who and what am I in relation to place?* explores children’s understandings of themselves in relation to place. An awareness of self is related to identity with a social group and the inherent qualities that are important to the child. Examples of social identity include being a soccer player, a dancer, a school child, a girl or boy. Acknowledging membership of such categories allows for self-definitions. Identity is also described in relation to other species, and as dispositions that make one distinctive.

#### 11.2.2 Social identities

Social identity is an identity that is recognised in relation to social settings. The following response suggests that identity is related to social context and the activity performed in place.

*Identity varies depending on place and what you do in place.*

Charlotte, girl, 12 years old
A number of respondents identified with sporting groups. The respondent below explains in detail her perceptions of her sporting identity, which is related to the number of sports she participates in.

*I see myself as competitive sport player. I have gone to regional for high jump for the school and the Blue Mountains. The sports I concentrate on the most are soccer, skiing, athletics and surfing. I’ve been skiing once this year already. I surfed with Pam Burridge she lives down in Mollymook and I took surf lessons. My grandparents bought me a surf board and I stay with them when I go surfing every summer and sometimes in autumn and spring.*

Sophie, girl, 10 years old

In addition to the physical opportunities, the above respondent identifies social affordances to support her sporting activities, including social learning from an experienced other, and the support of her extended family. Similarly, the following respondent is supported through the provision of sports equipment in the home environment.

*I like it because I’m really sporty and I can play with the [sports stuff] every time I come home from school or in the morning when I’m ready for school early.*

Kalan, boy, 8 years old
This respondent demonstrates high self-concept about his sporting ability, envisioning himself as a professional soccer player. The respondent is aware that to achieve this aspiration, competence needs to be built through skill rehearsal in the back yard.

*I’ve got a soccer goal out the back and a basketball hoop—to practise shooting goals. I need to practise to get better so that I might have a career in it.*

Jacob, boy, 12 years old

The following respondent identifies as a school child, another type of social identity, and the support of family instils confidence in her ability to succeed in school and in the future.

*If I’ve got my family and my friends by my side ... I keep doing well. I feel comfortable around the people who love me and are important to me. I know where I stand ... is my home and school and street which is where I live and with my school work and my friends and stuff like that. ... if I didn’t have all the things I probably wouldn’t get a very good result on the academic side but if I’ve got everything that I need I won’t have any worries for the future.*

Charlotte, girl, 12 years old

Another respondent also identifies as a school girl, with a range of self-perceptions relating to pro-environmental behaviour. This demonstrates that despite the
socially constructed nature of self-identity, children’s actions are also informed by self-perceptions based on what they value.

*If I see myself in the Blue Mountains as someone who is a school girl, someone who likes to care for the environment, someone who likes the bush and a girl that doesn’t like to get bored.*

Harriet, girl, 10 years old

The next respondent discusses another school related identity, associated with transitioning to high school, where concerns exist about an anticipated lack of familiarity and belonging.

*I nearly know all the people in our school but with high school it’s like a whole new school. My family does Rock Eisteddfod up there so I know someone from each grade in high school, but there are still a whole bunch of students that you don’t know, different teachers, a different principal, different rules, different ways of doing things and you have to change classes.*

Lucy, girl, 12 years old

Despite the concerns this respondent considered opportunities for social networking, indicating agentic behaviour and self-regulation.

For the following respondent, transitioning to secondary school represents the transition from childhood to adolescence. Becoming a teenager suggests socially
constructed notions of age-related identity.

... as someone who is a primary student about to become a teenager.

*Adam, boy, 12 years old*

### 11.2.3 Gender identity

Another socially constructed identity, gender is explored from the perspective of a female, in the response below. Distinctions are made on the gender-associated mode of play.

> Boys are different to girls to play with because if you go into the bush with them they always want to collect staffs and attack people with them and do these duels and everything where you hit people with the sticks and they have to try and defend themselves and if you lose you have to pay leaves and if you win you go up a rank and I’m only a rank up from the worst rank because I keep losing.

*Catlyn, girl, 11 years old*

The following respondent draws comparisons between varying types of ‘girl’ play, where the distinction is made between girls who are comfortable around nature and those who are not.

> I think there are two kinds of girls – The girls that are kind of like me who like to sit there or sit and talk in the bush and there are girls who think the bush is full of ants and leaves and stones and icky stuff like that and spiders and spider webs and they don’t want to go anywhere near it. I really don’t
mind either ‘cos we can sit and talk anywhere around the block or outside my house or inside my house.

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old

The assumption that girls are uncomfortable with ‘icky stuff’ was not shared by the respondent, who instead focused on opportunities to engage in different play with different people, regardless of gender.

11.2.4 Self-concept and dispositions

A number of respondents described themselves in terms of self-concepts in relation to others.

*The type of person that I am is trustworthy, considerate, helpful and funny. I am different in different friendship groups.*

Lucy, girl, 12 years old

*I make a lot of people laugh at school and at home because if I do that people will think of me as trustworthy.*

Lucy, girl, 12 years old

Self-image is an element of self-concept, a sense of how one believes one ‘presents themselves’ to others. This is outlined in the next response.
The way you look, the way you dress, the way you speak, your accent, the way you do things, where you go [all] show how unique you are.

Luke, boy, 12 years old

Global self-concept is informed by building competence in a range of areas, as described by the following respondent.

... when you learn new things you can do more things better than you used to be able to.

Angelique, girl, 10 years old

This respondent applied more of a global identity in relation to other species.

My name is Alaska and I am a human being, a mammal.

Alaska, girl, 8 years old

Another respondent identified himself only by his name.

I am just my name.

Patrick, boy, 10 years old
11.2.5 Summary

In Table 11.1, the conceptions referring to the theme ‘Who and what am I in relation to place?’, are summarised as sub-themes and their defining characteristics.

Table 11.1: Theme 1: Who and what am I in relation to place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social identity</td>
<td>Sporty, dancer, soccer player School child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially constructed</td>
<td>Gendered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identified by name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identified as a mammal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-concept and dispositions</td>
<td>Dependent on perceptions of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humorous, trustworthy, helpful, friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-image</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.3 Theme 2: The self-determining child

11.3.1 Overview

The second theme in this chapter, the self-determining child, encompasses children acting autonomously to execute actions that build self-confidence. Self-determination is demonstrated in a number of ways, including independent and assertive behaviour in relation to others, including parents, siblings and friends. It includes self-regulation of risk-taking behaviour and monitoring one’s own development and emotional responses. Although self-determining behaviour is found in a number of place-based experiences, discussed in other chapters, responses that best illustrate self-determination are discussed below.
11.3.2 Self-regulation for managing relationships

Opportunities for autonomy come in many forms. Removing oneself from situations in which one is not in control, is one example. In the following response, the respondent retreats from family life and parents to be with friends, to wander the neighbourhood. Through the presence of affordances in the form of friends and space to explore, the respondent is able to demonstrate autonomy and self-regulation.

... you can just go off and play with the friends ... we can just walk around or go off and explore ... to get away from everyone talking, saying do this and do that. It’s the way that when I want to sit down and do stuff they [parents] tell me do this and do that. I just normally get up and do it but sometimes it just gets really annoying.

Jackson 2, boy, 12 years old

One's agency is one's independent capability to act on one's will. Agency is also demonstrated through assertive behaviour, in the following response.

My brother used to own the whole world in Highways but I told him off once. Now we split it up into two so it's fair ... That game it is special because it's in the backyard and it's with my brother and on the bikes.

Patrick, boy, 10 years old

In the previous response, the backyard is an extension of the home, affording social play, involving the negotiation of roles and relationships between siblings.
The younger sibling demonstrates assertiveness in negotiating new game rules. Other special places also provide opportunities for self-reflection on social roles. In the next response, the older sibling reflected on her assumed position as the leader of the group, due to her perceived ownership of the space.

_They used to go down to [my place] without me because I was such a leader so I decided not to be. Now I don’t mind because I'm in [the club]. If I'm there with them, we are collecting leaves together which we use as money._

Catlyn, girl, 11 years old

However, rather than be excluded, the respondent was able to self-regulate by repositioning herself as a member of the group, in order to join in with social play.

11.3.3 Agentic behaviour for competence building

Ownership of space allows opportunities for autonomous behaviour and competence building. The next respondent discusses the presence of affordances in the form of space and objects for facing a fear of heights. The notable absence of parental restrictions may also be considered as a social affordance.

_On 1 acre I can do what I like on my motorbike ... I like doing jumps to see how high I get to get rid of my fear of heights, so I do high jumps on purpose._

_I walk across this pipe that is 20 metres high to get rid of my fear._

Dyson, boy, 12 years old
In the following response, a lack of congruency between family rules results in the respondent experiencing frustration and a desire to live autonomously.

*I’m looking forward to having my special place, having my own rules in my own place. Mum’s rules are harder than dad’s rules. I would just like a place where I can have ‘me’ time.*

Daniel, boy, 10 years old

For this response, living autonomously rather than following established rules, is perceived as providing opportunities for self-regulation.

The opportunity and ability to be in control of one’s own actions, adjust behaviour accordingly and overcome challenges, is highlighted in the following response.

*I love sport. It’s a challenge. You have to work your way and find a way to get through.*

Sophie, girl, 10 years old

Similarly, the same respondent used self-regulation to overcome the challenge of climbing a tree. The presence of a significant adult for guidance also allowed for self-regulation to negotiate branches, using one’s mind and body.

*I like climbing trees cos it’s fun it’s like an adventure. You have to use your mind to find a way up. My dad helps us in some situations but he likes let us*
find our way up as well. When you use your mind—you have to work out where to put your feet and hands and push up and try and find place to hold on to and not fall.

Sophie 10, girl, years old

Self-regulatory processes are required in ‘wayfinding’, as demonstrated in the next response. The respondent described the identification of landmarks through an awareness of specific knowledge; the shape of the street, to find one’s way home.

... if you are lost down in the bush and you saw a garden, then you might know that it’s on your street if you looked at [it’s] shape. .... It makes me feel happy because then I know we’re almost home.

Harriet, girl 10 years old

Developing environmental awareness, including of where people live, is perceived as an important process in spatial competence and the gaining of independence.

When I grow up if I know places I can go to them. You would know quite a bit of people in your community so you know where they live. [In] my community I have friends there so I know where [they] live, so I can easily go and visit them ... I know [how] to get back.

Harriet, girl, 10 years old

The following respondent uses self-regulation to be industrious and gain some financial independence.
We get pocket money when we do chores so sometimes I help dad with the car, clean it and chop firewood.

Callum, boy, 8 years old

The next respondent uses past toys as reminders of a past self, which act as reference points for a future self. Here, self-regulation is used to monitor one’s own development.

Toys are quite important because I’ve had them a long time and because they are keepsakes and something that I can remember from when I was little. It’s good to think how you were and how you are now and how you have changed … probably to see how you’re progressing in the life. … I see if I’m on the right track and then I’m happy.

Charlotte, girl, 12 years old

The importance of self-regulation in relation to school is discussed by the following respondent. Self-determination is demonstrated in the belief in his own capacity to succeed at school and to monitor his progress.

I see myself as someone that tries to do their best at everything [at school] instead of thinking that I didn’t try hard enough … the amount of disappointment depends on what the circumstances are.

Luke, boy, 12 years old
A sense of control over circumstances and actions is important in emotional self-regulation. The following respondent equates ‘fresh air’ with a sense of freedom and a feeling of empowerment to recover from a bad experience.

*With fresh air you feel very free ... It makes you feel as though if you’ve just had something bad happen to you and you go out you’d just feel like you could start all over again sort of thing. ... You feel as though the air is all thin.*

Hannah, girl, 12 years old

Opportunities for creativity provide opportunities for emotional self-regulation. Creative experiences have a calming effect, and by engaging in woodwork, the respondent’s mood shifts from being irritable to being happy.

*Outside is where I go and try to make stuff out of wood. When I’m tired and all cranky I go out and then I’m happy. At the side of my house I can sit there and just relax and just wait until I feel OK.*

Keiren, boy, 10 years old

11.3.4 Embodied experiences as opportunities for autonomy

Embodiment suggests an awareness of surroundings at a bodily level, and sensory interactions act as motivating factors for place interactions.
In reference to the autonomous activity of bike riding, the next respondent
describes the importance of an embodied experience in the appreciation of place.
In this example, the close proximity of the school to his new home has afforded the
respondent the opportunity to ride his bike to school, rather than being
transported by car. He is aware of a richer experience through the use of his body
and exposure to the surroundings, and his choosing to engage in this embodied
experience demonstrates self-regulatory behaviour.

I live in [town] and it is good because I can ride to school now because it is
closer ... I used to live in [another town] and I couldn’t ride from there. I get
more exercise and it’s more interesting because you don’t just sit and look
out the window like in a car. You get on a bike and you get pedalling and
you are holding your handle bars, you see lots more and you hear more too.

Lachlan, boy, 9 years old

Embodied awareness for self-regulation is also demonstrated below.

The next respondent carefully considered the characteristics of the tree for
climbing, indicating a strong affinity between the structure of the tree and the
respondents’ self-determination for climbing the tree. An awareness of the strength
of the branches indicates his capacity for monitoring his own risk-taking behaviour.

The other tree we had was big and trunky and all the leaves were hanging
out but this one is a bit windlier. It’s a bit easier to climb up but the
branches are still strong.

Zac, boy, 10 years old
Self-regulation is also demonstrated through the assessment of risks while engaging in risk-taking behaviour. The following respondent interprets the landscape in terms of risk: that is, the effect of increasing speed while riding down the hill.

*I like riding and we ride lots. If we get time we ride down to the petrol station or the park ... Our road has a big hill and then on the way to the park you ride up and down hills. I like going up because I hardly ever go up and I like going down because I can put the brakes on if I need to. It is fun because when you don't put your brakes on you can go really fast.*

Angelique, girl, 10 years old

### 11.3.5 Summary

The theme ‘the self-determining child’ is summarised in the table below, including sub-themes and their defining characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous experiences</td>
<td>Autonomy from parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agentic behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ownership and control of space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Self-regulation in place | Rule making  
|                          | Negotiating risks  
|                          | ‘Wayfinding’  
|                          | Industry  
|                          | Monitoring one’s own development  
|                          | Emotional regulation  
| Competence building | Identification of affordances for competence building  
|                         | Environmental awareness  
|                         | Challenging oneself  
|                         | Practising being independent  
| Relatedness | Independence from parents shared with friends and siblings  
|              | Competence built in the company of others  
|              | Self-regulation in relation to others or independent of others  
|              | Self-regulation through embodied activity  

### 11.4 Theme 3: My place in society

#### 11.4.1 Overview

The third theme to be discussed in this last chapter is *my place in society*. It explores children’s understanding of themselves as children in society. In this chapter, place is discussed as a social position. Children hold a number of social positions within the family, friendship groups, school, and the local population. The notion of what it means to be a member of society is considered, including being an active citizen. One’s privileged position within Australian society is also discussed.

#### 11.4.2 Place is related to culture, culture is related to place

The following respondent outlines how one’s social awareness and cultural practices are dependent on place. Places where one lived or where one’s parents
lived, inform cultural ideas and practices.

If you didn’t know anything about where you lived, it would be really hard just to live there. You wouldn’t know what to do and where to go. Different places where you lived would change how you think. The way you grew up, the way parents acted around you, how they grew up, what kind of childhood they had. Living in a certain place could influence your religion which could change the way you think and living somewhere could also change what types of food you eat.

Shaun, boy, 12 years old

In this response, environmental, cultural and social knowledge such as spatial awareness, beliefs and values, heritage, childhood and food, is required for effectively engaging with place.

The next respondent identifies perceptions of cultural practices in the Blue Mountains in relation to cultural and environmental settings.

In the Blue Mountains I see myself as someone who is normal—owns a house, has a family, helps the environments and helps around at the local place.

Laura, girl, 9 years old
11.4.3 Work is a valued cultural practice in place

Another respondent highlights what are perceived to be important cultural practices for the local area: that is, to become a contributing worker and to support local businesses. Others valued cultural practices, include looking after and knowing about the local area.

*I see myself as someone who works for the area. Who does their bit of work, contributes their bit of money and supports their local business.*

Corin, boy, 12 years old

*I see myself in the Blue Mountains as someone who is learning ... learning about the environment and everything else in life you have to do like getting a job and thinking about your future. When I grow up I might want to get an apprenticeship and a good job and learn more about the Blue Mountains because I want to be living in the area living ... It would be good to live near Mum and Dad and Nan.*

Jackson, boy, 12 years old

The previous two responses demonstrate the perception that place specific knowledge is integral to effective functioning in place.
11.4.4 Place as a social position

So far, the responses have supported notions of place as a locality. However, understandings of place as a social position were also outlined.

The following respondent reveals an awareness of his social position in relation to others, where one’s social position is relevant to the context.

Theoretically not physically it’s where you are, where you stand, where you are in the world. Like the place that you are in a friendship. It could be your place in a family, your place within a group of people and in a school. It’s just like a jigsaw puzzle. It wouldn’t be complete without everybody.

Shaun, boy, 12 years old

In this response, the distinction is clearly made between place as a physical location and place as a social position, where social position is within a societal structure.

The next respondent suggests that social position should reflect an egalitarian approach in that each individual has an equal right to be heard within the family structure.

My place would probably be a place where everyone is equal and everyone has an equal say. It's a place where everyone gets a chance to say and do what they want to do because sometimes people don't get a fair share of something.

Jackson 2, boy, 12 years old
In the following response, place as a social position is perceived to be determined by the unique qualities of the individual and the individual’s role in society (in terms of employment). This respondent perceives that as a school child, he does not have a place in society.

I think the word place means how everyone kind of belongs somewhere—your job, the way you live. Your place is how unique you are ... your place for example as a librarian ... I don’t really have a place in society yet, well in this school I belong here but I don’t really have a place in society yet. Your job defines your place because that’s where you work. Your job is like how you do things differently to other people and the way you do things to get money, which is the way you fit in to society.

Luke, boy, 12 years old

As in the previous response, the next respondent explores social position in terms of employment. The theme of finding the ‘right role’ implies finding employment that is suited to the individual and that is applauded at a societal level. The assumption is that having a role in society implies having a place in society.

... everyone has their own place, what they are supposed to do, so you should do as much as you can before your time is up so that you can fulfil [life] at its best ... to not just be buried in the ground but be remembered for inventing something. ... You have to fulfil a certain role. You have to find it out for yourself and you just know what you are supposed to do. It'll feel like the right thing to do.

Shaun, boy, 12 years old
There is a sense that finding a role in society requires self-determination and will result in satisfaction.

In the response below, the idea of contributing to society is tied to contributing to the environment. This respondent believed that, in addition to having a role and function in society, it is important to have a role in protecting the Earth by working collectively as a group for the effective functioning of systems in society and the planet. Work is evenly distributed when each role has an important function, and when people do not evenly contribute to the system, the balance is disrupted.

_We all have a role to keep the Earth healthy and support each other and be together with everyone. You have to give more than you take and when you work for someone you get money to pay for things but you are also helping other people at the same time. It all rolls around and if one person didn’t do their part it wouldn’t be as easy. ... There’s like chains and stuff, if part of it gets broken and people don’t do their part (like bringing in food for the community) then others would have to do more work and there’d be an imbalance._

Corin, boy, 12 years old

A number of respondents discussed their ‘importance’ in relation to place.

This respondent equates being a child with not having importance, not being heard and not being valued.
I see myself in the Blue Mountains as someone who is ... not really important because I’m not an adult or hardly anyone ... Because when you are a kid ... they don’t really take us seriously.

Elliott, boy, 10 years old

Importance also refers to the perceived value of the role played in the local area and society at large. In the next response, importance is represented by heroic acts.

... I’m not important because I haven’t done anything heroic or something.

Elliott, boy, 10 years old

The following respondent perceives himself as undertaking future employment that has less social value than other employment. In this instance, the type of employment is equated with his level of contribution to the local area.

I see myself in the Blue Mountains as someone who is not that important. I’m just a local person. Well, someone who is living in the Blue Mountains, not a president or a manager. I haven’t even got a job yet, so I’m not really doing anything.

Maddy, girl, 10 years old
The lack of capacity to contribute to the environment due to being a child is also raised by the next respondent. Not having employment is perceived as not actively contributing to ‘the environment’.

*I did find out about extra ways that I could help, but there wasn’t much I could do [about the environment] because I’m just a kid and I don’t work or anything. There are opportunities for kids when they get older but not at the moment ... you could get involved in something if you’re passionate, but on a day to day basis there’s not much opportunity.*

Charlotte, girl, 12 years old

In this response, although there is a suggestion that children are able to be involved in opportunities to actively participate in addressing environmental issues, the nature of these opportunities is not specified. However, the opportunity to contribute to society on a daily level is not recognised by the respondent.

In contrast, the following respondent outlines how ‘little things’ can be done in relation to the environment. However, being involved in more significant pro-environment activities, such as protesting, is perceived with negative connotations.

*I see myself who is just an ordinary person helping the area but not so much that you have to go and protest and stuff like that, but just doing the little things like not littering. If everyone does the little things, it helps by a big amount. [Protesters] get out of control sometimes.*

Hannah, girl, 12 years old
The belief that children’s social position limits their engagement in pro-environmental behaviour is supported by the following respondent who perceives that children have a lack of voice in their local area.

... no one listens to you and if you write a letter to someone to stop doing something they won’t listen to you unless you’re an adult.

Elliott, boy, 10 years old

11.4.5 Being part of an egalitarian society

While some children perceive that they lack a social position enabling them to make positive contributions to place, the following response explores notions of Australian society as one of being safe, having equal rights, and being fair.

Australia is nice because we don’t have wars going on everywhere and we have a lot of rights and privileges that people in other countries wouldn’t get. Like we are allowed to worship any religion we want and we have a fair government system.

Shaun, boy, 12 years old

In the following response there is also a sense of appreciation and place satisfaction in the perception that Australian society allows for safe and nurturing family contexts where basic needs are met.

My place is a home with family, friends and a place [where] you are sheltered from the bad things and anything that might harm you. You have a roof over your head and food to eat and when you think back to other
people they are not so lucky to have protection and people who love [them]. I feel grateful to know that they care about you so much, but then you feel should I be giving other people more because there are other people starving in other countries and dying in wars. And feel like when I’m older I’ll go and help them.

Corin, boy, 12 years old

11.4.6 Summary

In Table 11.3, the conceptions referring to the theme ‘my place in society’ are summarised as sub-themes and their defining characteristics.

Table 11.3: Theme 3: My place in society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Defining characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place and culture</td>
<td>Place is related to culture, culture to place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place is defined by valued cultural practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work is a valued cultural practice in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place and social position</td>
<td>‘Place’ is a social position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social position is relative to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social position is performative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social position encompasses social contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social contributions are related to pro-environmental behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ‘important’ in place</td>
<td>Lack of importance due to lack of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of importance restricts active contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s lack of voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of a privileged society</td>
<td>Safe and free from conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A democratic society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place satisfaction as needs are met</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11.5 General discussion: The developing self in place

11.5.1 Overview

In exploring identity in relation to place, distinctions are made between understandings of identity and self. Identity is viewed in relation to self, including self-concept and self-determination, as well as social identity related to group activity or shared identity. Identity is influenced by social and physical contexts and socially constructed ideas relating to childhood.

11.5.2 Self-identity in relation to place

Children describe themselves in terms of self-definitions such as trustworthiness and self-image, or symbolic markers, such as one’s name, or distinctive identifiers compared to other organisms, such as ‘mammal’. Opportunities for the development of self-related constructs such as self-concept and self-efficacy are considered be developed in relation to social and physical contexts within place (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). The present study revealed that respondents held self-concept in relation to activities such as schoolwork or sports. Although this was not explicitly stated by children, the evidence suggests that children’s perceptions of self-worth are evident in their appreciation of opportunities provided for them. Opportunities for autonomy and competence building lead to self-determination, and this develops within the contexts of supportive relationships with others.

11.5.3 Social identities in relation to place

An awareness of self is tied to perceptions of identity in relation to others. Membership of a social group results in social identity and social behaviour
indicative of the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and this was demonstrated in relation to a number of contexts, including activity based social groups, such as groups involved in soccer or dancing. Other responses discuss family, friendship groups and community groups as informing social identity and behaviours. Reports suggest that at times, social identity is subsumed by place identity (Proshanky et al., 1983), due to the identification of a social group in relation to a physical context. In addition, there is evidence that the availability of affordances for shared activities leads to shared values that are related to physical contexts. It follows that respondents who live in natural areas of the Blue Mountains, and who engage in nature related activities, share values for protecting the environment.

In this study, the ‘school child’ as a social identity is discussed in terms of expectations for the achievement of high grades and for participation in extra-curriculum school based activities. This research also reveals that school children experience shifting identities in relation to transitioning from primary school to secondary school, and that concerns are related to changing social groups and contexts. Despite children spending a significant amount of time at school, and the fact that data were collected from school children on school grounds, there was little discussion on place-based identity related to school. That is, children did not discuss the physical context of school in any way, and the only reference to schooling related to children’s perceptions of identity constructions of ‘the school child’, school related activities elsewhere and the transition from primary to high school.

Some children reported a number of flexible and changing identities in relation to different social contexts; supporting work by Malone on hybrid identities (2013).
That is, reports suggest, children move between identity in relation to family, being a school child, recreational activities, and friendship groups. As each group provides a context for group activity, this suggests that children are capable of transgressing social boundaries and operating on different social levels as they move into different roles in relation to their social and physical surroundings (Malone, 2007a; Scourfield et al., 2006). There is also evidence to suggest that children are aware of variations in identity in relation to social contexts, including notions of self in private and public worlds (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 1999; Malone, 2007a).

11.5.4 Negotiating gender identities

Identity is related to socially constructed ways of being, determined by broader societal ideas, such as notions of gender. Discourse on gender is centred on notions of gendered behaviour and power (Kjørholt, 2003), and such understandings were reported only by girls in relation to gender stereotypes associated with nature play. In the present study, girls reported perceptions of stereotypical ‘boy’ behaviour in the bush, such as playing with sticks. There was also evidence of critical reflection on how girl’s behaviour in relation to nature is categorised as either feminine or masculine, thereby demonstrating the capacity to identify, understand and critically reflect on socially constructed gendered behaviour. The results indicate that whilst children recognise gendered play, they tend to focus on ways of negotiating power, rather than identifying whether gendered behaviour exists. There is scope for further work on children’s identity within place making activities and on how children negotiate power related play.
Past findings suggest that the extent of independent mobility is linked to gender (Hart, 1979), however, in this study both male and female respondents of varying ages reported a degree of independent mobility. Gender differences in place making activities have also been noted by a number of researchers (Hart 1979, Kylin, 2003; Kjørholt, 2003; Punch, 2000) who categorised observed behaviour into gender groups. However, using a phenomenographic approach in this study, behaviour was reported on the basis of children’s perceptions of the meaning of behaviour, rather than being a researcher-focused study on gender variations.

11.5.5 Self-determination in relation to place

Self-determining behaviours are behaviours that bring about desired outcomes due to the fulfilment of basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Having a sense of control, and the appropriate skills and confidence to meet challenges, results in self-efficacy, an important component of self-determination. Aside from negotiating gender stereotypes, this study has demonstrated that opportunities exist for children to exhibit self-determining behaviour in other ways.

In relation to identity, reports suggest that children engage in self-determining behaviour to maintain identity continuity when there is a mismatch between self-perceptions and the expectations of others. Children engage in autonomous behaviour as individuals or with friends, by making decisions independently of adults, increasing their capacity to meet situational demands (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). On encountering challenging situations, children engage in problem solving skills, improve confidence by trusting one’s capacity to act autonomously.
Opportunities for independent mobility built capacity for spatial navigation and spatial awareness (Gerber & Kwan, 1994; Spencer & Blades, 2006). Play involving storylines and props was used effectively to regulate emotions and improve psychological well being and embodied experiences, where bodily and psychological limits are tested, leading to further capacity for monitoring one’s own risk-taking behaviour. These examples indicate that seeking solutions to challenging situations requires confidence in one’s cognitive and bodily capabilities, suggesting that allowing children to engage in autonomous and physical activities is important for self-determination.

Overall, self-determination involves harbouring the desire to engage in self-regulation for the achievement of goals. Often the achievement of goals is related to being independent of caregivers, to gaining knowledge of one’s surroundings and to forming evaluations based on the likelihood of achieving goals. This study revealed how children monitored goal achievement related to sports, emotional self-regulation, one’s own development and school progress. For example, toys, as reminders of past selves, were utilised to monitor self-development, in order to assess developmental opportunities. Such examples show how children harness opportunities for agentic behaviour, leading to developmental opportunities (Cumming & Nash, 2015; Hart, 1979; Kylin, 2003; Rasmussen, 2004; Ross, 2007).

In addition, relationships that support autonomous development are based on the psychological need for relatedness. Children reported that successful negotiation of challenging situations often involved others, including parents, siblings, friends and community members, and that social attachments that allow for increasing independence resulting in children feeling supported in their quest for self-
determination. In some instances, change in relationships was achieved through self-determination, fuelled by the desire for independence. One could also argue that lack of relatedness and belonging led children to wanting greater independence. As illustrated in this study, a lack of relatedness may occur when children experience exclusion and a lack of agency due to changes in family structure, resulting in the desire to leave home and construct one’s own rules. The extent of children’s agency suggests that children can be producers of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), negotiating their own relationships. This is supported by evidence in this study that an awareness of the agentic self, fuels aspirations for the future in relation to social contexts.

11.5.6 Place as a social position

Understandings of place as a socio-cultural context are discussed in relation to the influence of cultural context on child development, with reports suggesting that ‘culture’ informs opportunities for children. Children identified a number of valued cultural practices, such as home ownership, living with family, protecting the environment and being community minded. In particular, employment as a cultural practice was discussed on a number of occasions, suggesting that ‘work’ is valued as a way of contributing to the community and of achieving life goals.

There was a sense that children had positioned themselves as adults in the making, as they aspired to gain valued work when they leave school. While this initially appears forward thinking and suggests self-regulating capabilities, it also demonstrates how children position themselves as future citizens, rather than citizens with their own rights. This approach has implications for considering
children as active agents in the present rather than in the future, including being active agents on current environmental issues. However, reports suggest that children already perceive themselves as environmental citizens by engaging in learning about the local environment, teaching others and practising ways of ‘looking after’ the environment.

Place is generally considered in relation to a locality. However, responses reveal that for children, ‘place’ is also understood as a social position. That is, children are aware that for them ‘being in the world’ is informed by the way children are perceived as dependent on adult. Children perceive that to be a valued member of society one must have a social position that is defined by unique qualities, informing one’s function as a worker and a contributor to society. Children display a view of society in that being a contributing member of society requires a purpose and fulfils a specific role, and it is possible that a functionalist view of society is informed by school curriculum, which covers citizenship and governance in the later years of primary school (Board of Studies, 2007), due to reports by older children aged 11 and 12 years.

While the results indicate that children believe that Australian society provides for their basic needs, including safety and security, and is a democratic system of government where everyone is equally valued and has equal opportunities for participation, other results highlight how children perceive they lack importance in Australian society because they are children. That is, children’s place in society is limited by virtue of being a school child and lacking employment. James & Prout (1997) argue that discourses of vulnerability and the need for protection, position children as lacking competence to be citizens of today, rather than being agentic
and self-determining beings, thereby delimiting children’s engagement in citizenship activities (Wilks, 2010; Woodhead, 1999) including environmental citizenship.

11.5.7 Children’s willingness to contribute to place

Despite children’s perceptions of a lack of social standing, responses suggest that there is a willingness amongst children to contribute to the local area. Contributions outlined include learning about the Blue Mountains and the environment, protecting the environment, providing social support to community members, and engaging in useful work. A number of responses discussed finding employment as a significant aspect for determining children’s future, including the potential for place satisfaction and place dependence.

Overall, aspirations to be an independent and contributing member of society were conceptualised in a number of ways. Children reported confidence in their ability to engage in a variety of social, cultural and physical aspects of place. Children believe that having local knowledge is required for effective place engagement, and that having spatial skills and independence provides opportunities for undertaking daily activities like going to school, recreational pursuits, accessing and engaging with community services and finding employment. Independent mobility also increases capacity to build social capital by socialising with others and interacting with community members, building a sense of community identity with a shared purpose (Hillman et al., 1990; Kytta, 2004). These examples suggest that children are keen to engage with and contribute to place in a proactive way. However, they perceive that engagement
with place issues requires being recognised as a citizen, for which employment is required.

Contributing to place is also perceived as engaging in pro-environmental behaviour. However, there are varied findings on the extent of children’s participation in matters related to environmental protection suggesting that children are unsure as to how they can participate and are despondent about their ability to engage in pro-environmental action. Children believe that participation is possible at times, if one is passionate enough, however, concern exists around participating in ‘activism’, which is perceived as unruly. This suggests children feel uncomfortable with direct action approaches to environmental issues, and further investigation is required on the reasons why. There is also little evidence of how they might engage in other types of pro-environmental action, apart from individual responses such as picking up litter and recycling, and this lack of awareness of possible action may be contributing to their perceptions of limitations on environmental behaviour.

Despite children’s uncertainty about what they can achieve, there is hopefulness in children’s aspirations for contributing to place. They are positive about supporting others, working together, fulfilling specific roles and protecting the environment. Such actions are supported by understandings of the interrelatedness of societal members, where the actions of one member impacts on another. This idea resonates with ecological thinking on the interrelatedness of living things and ecological systems. The conflation between societal and ecological connections suggests that children apply the same principles of understanding to human and natural worlds, thereby accepting that they have an equal part to play in protecting both people and the planet.
11.5.8 Summary

Children **conceptualise place** in terms of opportunities for identity development. Place is also perceived as a social position in society, informed by notions of childhood. **Conceptions of identity** range from understandings of self in terms of dispositions, self-concept, social identity and self-determination. Experiences in place demonstrate the extent of self-determining behaviour in daily activities, indicating that children have the capacity to be active social agents and to participate in place. However, perceptions of children’s agency are informed by social discourses relating to childhood. Being perceived as a school child is in opposition to having a ‘role’ in society resulting from employment.

Therefore, perceptions of identity in terms of social position situate children as less-than-citizens, diminishing opportunities to look after place in the present, thereby limiting children’s **conceptualisations of ‘looking after’ place**. While some reports of pro-environmental behaviour include ‘child friendly’ behaviours such as picking up litter, overall behavioural intentions tend to be general statements on protecting the environment. Children exhibit a willingness to engage in pro-place behaviour. However, despite this they appear to lack the agency, ‘know how’ and social status to be considered as capable of finding and enacting solutions to environmental problems.
SECTION V:

THE OUTCOME SPACE AND CONCLUSION
Chapter 12

The outcome space and conclusion

12.1 Introduction

This study explored children’s understandings of place on the basis of everyday experiences within their local area. Phenomenography was used to strip away all pre-conceived notions of what the respondent might say and analyse responses, with a view to finding diverse and interrelated ways of experiencing the phenomena. This was achieved and the conceptions found were arranged into five categories of description that denote the totality of the outcome space. Overall, the results were considered in relation to the individuals involved in the study and the context in which they are situated (Marton & Booth, 1997).

In this chapter, conceptions are discussed in terms of the outcome space, relevance to the research questions, contributions to the research field and for providing insights into areas that require further investigation. Methodological limitations and problems arising from the research were considered.
12.2 The outcome space

The five categories of description that make up the outcomes space are: *place is a space and a locality; place has a range of opportunities; place identity and belonging; connections, caring and responsibility for place; and the developing self in place*. In Figure 12.1 each category is presented as a circular area and represent logically related conceptions described as themes and sub-themes as discussed in Chapters 7-11.

The conceptions within each category of description may be related to conceptions in other categories of description because the subjects’ understandings of place are drawn from the same context (Marton, 1981). Therefore, each conception within each category of description represents a dimension of awareness that may be logically linked (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Although it is not visually possible to highlight all of the logical relationships that exist between ‘cross-category themes’ in Figure 12.1, they are represented as dotted lines between each category of description. However, the discrete relationships between cross-category themes are discussed in detail within this chapter.

In sum, from the categories of description and the total outcome space, it is possible to draw conclusions on how individuals in the study cohort constructed their reality in relation to the phenomena (Marton, 1986); place, identity in place and looking after place. It is also possible to draw conclusions on how children’s experiences, perceptions and understandings of place as a local area might be used to provide opportunities for children to engage in behaviour for social and environmental sustainability.
Figure 12.1: The outcome space
12.3 Answering the research questions

In this section, the main findings of this research are discussed in relation to the research questions.

12.3.1 Research Question 1

*In what ways do children of diverse ages conceptualise ‘place’*

Children conceptualise place in relation to space, time, objects, dimensions and the body. The occupation of ownership of space results in spatial and psychological security, whereby controlling space provides opportunity for autonomy and independence. Place is experienced through spatial and embodied cognition resulting in unique perceptions.

Understandings of place are tied to development and result in the identification of distinctive features of place and the recognition of affordances. These include opportunities for basic needs to be met, and affordances for psycho-social development. Affordances are perceived as those that provide opportunities for self-regulating and self-determining behaviour including independent mobility, independence from parents, risk taking, social collaboration and emotional self-regulation.

Children’s conceptualisations of place are also discussed in terms of opportunities for identity development and from emotional connections to people and places which develop over time leading to place attachment. Understandings of place result from witnessing continuity and change, and from developing a familiarity
with place that informs place identity. Autobiographical understandings of place emerge through personal history related to place.

Children conceptualise place in terms of their relationships with nature instil an ethic of care. Nature, is experienced using the body and valued from an egocentric, social altruistic and biocentric point of view (Schultz, 2000) as well as some reference to children’s understandings of nature as being equal to the human world (Rautio, 2013). Children conceptualise nature as ecological understandings and an awareness of human impact. Place is also perceived as a social position in society, informed by notions of childhood.

12.3.2 Research Question 2

**In what ways do children of diverse ages conceptualise their ‘identity in place’?**

Children conceptualise identity in relation to place through place identification that leads to shared collective identity including social identity and place identity. Social identity exists in relation to social groups, shared activities and collective narratives, and place identity through identification with significant places including the Blue Mountains.

Place identity is informed by the history of place and identity develops through autobiographical understandings of place that emerge over time. The continuity of identity is maintained through identity reference points relating to people, objects and places, and shared collective memories. Self-awareness and identity is
developed through the actualisation of affordances, informing self-concept, and result in agentic behaviour and self-determination. This includes an awareness of the ‘body self’ developed through the embodied experiences.

A sense of belonging is experienced in relation to place attachments and being a part of a social structure. Moving away from place or disruptions to social structures result in not belonging. Together with ‘place’, one’s identity is also perceived as a social position, including being a ‘school child’ or ‘not have a job yet’ informing children’s perceptions of agency. Lack of citizenship is perceived as not belonging.

Conceptualisations of identity are also informed by a sense of relatedness to nature, resulting in environmental and ecological identity. This is manifest as environmental citizenship as a form of identity.

**12.3.3 Research Question 3**

*In what ways do children of diverse ages conceptualise their ‘looking after place’?*

Conceptualisations of ‘looking after ‘place reveal that place identification and place attachment with the Blue Mountains result in collective values, leading to protective tendencies. These include understandings the importance of preserving the unique environment to protect place distinctiveness and continue attracting tourists to the region. Children appear to develop tendencies for looking after place through direct experiences lead to an appreciation of place.
Conceptualisations of looking after place also include behaviours such as learning about the environment and taking responsibility for protecting the environment by ‘picking up litter’. This represents a type of environmental citizenship which stems from understanding and appreciating ecological processes. However, although children exhibit a willingness to look after place, they appear to lack the social status to do so.

The tendency towards ‘looking after place’ is encouraged by an ethic of care, developed through learning how to care for entities that are valued—including the self, family, home and others. Caring is instilled through anthropomorphic relationships with animals. Caring is manifest as pro-social behaviour, developed through interactions with others including family members and friends. Caring is also identified as being ‘looked after’ through the provision of basic needs and opportunities for psycho-social development. An ethic of care extends to pro-environmental behaviour when children value environmental entities including trees.

A sense of not being looked after within place is experienced by children when there is a perceived lack of social support, resulting in feelings of exclusion. Together with a perceived lack of citizenship and not belonging, this may result in not looking after place.

12.4 Cross-category themes: Extending the field of research.

The cross-category themes that are common in each category of description (COD), are outlined in Table 12.1. While the conceptions revealed in each COD is the intent of phenomenography, the cross-category themes extend research on ‘children in
place’ by revealing insights into children’s ways of experiencing and understanding place.

### Table 12.1: Cross-category themes drawn from categories of description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of description (COD)</th>
<th>Cross-category themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Place is a space and a locality** | Place heritage  
Autobiographical understandings & personal histories  
Children’s evaluations of place  
Independent mobility for capacity building  
Space for spatial and psychological security  
Children’s identities in place  
Relatedness to nature  
The ‘body self’  
Developing environmental knowledge: Where and who with?  
Valuing nature  
An ethic of care  
Pro-sociality and social skills for participation and citizenship |
| **2. Place has a range of opportunities** | Place heritage  
Autobiographical understandings & personal histories  
Children’s evaluations of place  
Independent mobility for capacity building  
Space for spatial and psychological security  
Developing environmental knowledge: Where and who with?  
Valuing nature  
An ethic of care  
Pro-sociality and social skills for participation and citizenship |
| **3. Place attachment, place identity and belonging** | Place heritage  
Autobiographical understandings & personal histories  
Children’s evaluations of place  
Independent mobility for capacity building  
Space for spatial and psychological security |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Connections, caring and responsibility for place</th>
<th>5. The developing self in place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children’s evaluations of place</td>
<td>Autobiographical understandings &amp; personal histories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent mobility for capacity building</td>
<td>Children’s evaluations of place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s identities in place</td>
<td>Independent mobility for capacity building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatedness to nature</td>
<td>Children’s identities in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘body self’</td>
<td>Inclusion and exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing environmental knowledge: Where and who with?</td>
<td>The ‘body self’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing nature</td>
<td>Valuing nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ethic of care</td>
<td>An ethic of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing and able? Intentions for looking after place</td>
<td>Pro-sociality and social skills for participation and citizenship Willing and able? Intentions for looking after place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cross-category themes are discussed as follows.

**12.4.1 Place heritage**

The first theme to emerge from the findings that contributes to children’s place research is place heritage. In this study, place heritage refers to the history of
place, and for the occupants of place, how it provides a sense of who one is and where one has come from. Children’s interest in place heritage suggests an awareness of space and time being intrinsically linked (Tuan, 1977).

The findings suggest that collective narratives that emphasise the importance of significant places, are developed and shared with significant others over time through place attachment (COD 1, 3; Hay, 1998). Understandings of significant places are related to family heritage, suggesting that an appreciation of place is passed through generations (COD 3; Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009; Derr, 2002).

Further, the findings reveal the relevance of place history to place meanings developed through direct engagement with historical sites in the local area (COD 2). It appears that historical artefacts encourage reflective consideration of the importance of place as a cultural context for shaping daily practices that are evolving over time. In addition, free play activities allow children to develop interest in cultural symbols, leading to a sense of wonder about place heritage and the desire to learn more (COD 2, 4). Cultural sites as historical artefacts add to awareness of place, informing place attachment and identity, encouraging subjects to protect sites of cultural significance (COD 2).

### 12.4.2 Autobiographical understandings and personal histories

Time was particularly relevant for the subjects’ understandings of place in relation to their own development (COD 1); in providing developmental context for children (Measham, 2006). The relevance of time for the study cohort is related to
autobiographical understandings and personal history developed in relation to significant others and significant places (COD 3). The findings demonstrate that understandings of place are related to understandings of self developed in relation to place (COD 1, 3; Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009) supporting Proshanky’s et. al’s (1983) assertion that place identity is built on autobiographical memories relating to significant sites. As retrospective adult studies have shown links between environmental autobiographies and conservation behaviour (Chawla, 1992; Sebba, 1991), it is possible that children’s studies would provide insights into their developing ideas throughout childhood, as related to pro-environmental behaviour.

This study suggests that the reporting of personal history is significant on two levels. Firstly, the subjects demonstrate a capacity for monitoring their own development through time, including assessing opportunities for goal achievement (COD 2, 3, 5) in relation to social and physical contexts. There is also an understanding that place is informed by past events which together with current actions, shape future events, instilling a deeper appreciation of the consequences of one’s actions on the future of place.

12.4.3 Children’s evaluations of place

Past research referring to affordances as physical attributes (Heft, 1988) or social attributes (Kytta, 2002), has shown that perceived functionality is an important aspect of children’s engagement with place. However, this study suggests that affordances are identified in terms of the reason for identifying functionalities: namely, opportunities for self-determination in terms of autonomy and independence, confidence building, self-regulation, and connecting with others.
This extends the field of research on children’s affordances in place by placing greater emphasis on the agentic nature of affordance identification. That is, the observer is a proactive and self-regulating being who seeks out affordances based on self-determining goals, rather than the emphasis on affordances being ‘out there’ and waiting to be recognised by the observer.

Associated with the identification of affordances is evidence of children’s capacity for evaluating places in terms of satisfying needs (COD, 1-5) supporting the research of Gadd (2016) and Lim and Barton (2010). While children’s studies have tended to focus on general evaluative responses, including likes and dislikes in place (Lehman-Frisch et al., 2012; Lim & Barton, 2010; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008), examining place satisfaction appears to be limited to adult studies (Insch & Florek, 2008; Pretty et al., 2003). This suggests that place satisfaction and associated indicators (for example, place dependence and social bonding) that usually appear in adult studies, are perceived to be most relevant to adults.

Satisfaction in itself, refers to one’s fulfilment, and the seeming lack of focus on place satisfaction in children’s place studies may illustrate what Murris (2013) refers to as adults approaching children’s research with pre-existing epistemic ideas of what is important to children. In addition, this study revealed that children experience future aspirations relating to where they want to live, work and how they might engage in pro-place behaviour (COD 5), therefore, there is a need to consider children’s evaluations in terms of place satisfaction and place dependence. As research has shown that place satisfaction is associated with protective behaviours (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983), exploring the extent of children’s place satisfaction in relation to their local area may provide insights into how to build motivation for pro-environmental behaviour.
12.4.4 Independent mobility for capacity building

The findings suggest that children’s recognition of affordances for autonomy, exploration and independent mobility indicates a preoccupation with the development of independence. In particular, this study demonstrated that independent mobility in the local area allows for further identification of accessible affordances (COD 1, 2, 4, 5; Malone, 2013), increasing spatial competence (Ross, 2005; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008).

Spatial competence builds capacity to expand one’s spatial range allowing one to partake in activities that build both social and environmental awareness. Therefore, independent mobility, builds social capital through interactions with neighbourhood friends and community members (COD 1, 2, 3; Ross, 2005; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008), strengthening place attachment and place identity (COD 2, 3) both of which lead to pro-environmental behaviour.

Independent mobility provides opportunities to build confidence by tackling challenges such as venturing into scary places (Christensen, et. al., 2015; COD 2), allowing children to develop confidence in their own capabilities for facing adversity. This includes dealing with power laden territories that might exist in gendered play (Kjørholt, 2003) or expectations of spatial competence related to gender (Hart, 1979) and age (McDowell, 1999). The findings show that children demonstrate a capacity for self-regulation based on competence levels, therefore opportunities to develop capabilities will allow them to deal with futures problems. Additionally, opportunities for confidence building result in positive associations with the environment (Wells & Evans, 2003).
12.4.5 Space for spatial and psychological security

Building on research on children’s ‘favourite’ and ‘special places’, this study demonstrated that children consider space and place in terms of occupation and ownership (COD 1; Bell et al., 1996). In particular, personal space is perceived by its occupants as a site of spatial ownership, to which is attributed identity-related meaning through personal items (COD 1; Fidzani & Read, 2012), behaviours for building self-esteem, for maintaining continuity of self (COD 2; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), and for emotional self-regulation (Dovey, 1990).

As found by Abbott-Chapman and Robertson (1999) and C. Green (2011), children identify personal spaces that are fixed such as a bedroom. However, this study also suggests that personal space may be transient (COD 1) indicating that personal spaces are identified when the need arises, another example of self-regulation. Personal spaces are described as spaces for maintaining psychological and spatial security (Wolfe, 1978) highlighting the importance of boundaries protecting against unwanted intruders (COD 1, 2; Kylin, 2003). However, the findings also suggest that boundaries may be metaphorical, where personal space is established by the placing of a personal objects (COD 1). Therefore, adults must be attentive of cues provided by children in relation to personal space.

The use of boundaries also symbolises a separation from parents imposing restrictions on behaviour (COD 1, 2, 3), suggesting that territoriality is used to gain autonomy. Interestingly, the presence of nonhuman entities, such as wildlife and pets are not perceived as unwanted intruders (COD 1, 2, 4) as they do not threaten psychological safety. That children feel threatened by rules to govern them, reflects the issues experienced by children and youth in public spaces (McDowell, 1999).
Children seek places away from parents to be autonomous, however, the very places they seek are marred by other rules defining expected behaviour.

Increasing opportunity for physical and psychological separateness from caregivers is an important process in the development of independence. While this is understood at a parental level (Bowlby, 1982), at a societal level, it is important to recognise that children need to be given ‘autonomous spaces’ for the development of psychological well-being. Furthermore, when children have access to spaces for autonomy from adults, such spaces become symbolically significant (COD 1) resulting in place identity and place attachment which results in protective behaviours. Places that children identify with, by attributing special meaning (Avriel-Avni, et al., 2010) or that children achieve familiarity with, also result in place attachment (Hay, 1998; Manor & Mesch, 1998; Uzzell et al., 2002). However, as research shows that children do not always share the same evaluative associations with places as adults (Matthews et al., 2000; Mee, 2010), this study suggests that one must understand the nature of children’s identification of personal or autonomous spaces, before they can be used to encourage protective behaviours.

12.4.6 Children’s identities in place

The findings of this study support the presence of place identity, social identity and identity processes. Place identity is revealed through autobiographical understandings related to place based experiences in one’s personal history, and developed through the association of social groups to physical sites (COD 3; Avriel-Avni, et al., 2010; Derr 2002; Hay, 1998). In addition, place identity associated with
sites (home), may also be informed by social identity (family) and spatial identity (location in relation to other houses and family).

Evidence suggests that home as a spatial anchor acts a symbol of place identity (COD 1) demonstrating how social identity is often subsumed by place identity. As place identity is a strong predictor of protective behaviour, encouraging children to develop social identity in relation to a significant place, is likely to instil a tendency to ‘look after’ it.

Places that are valued for identity continuity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), such as heritage sites and sites of significant memories including the sites of childhood, are more likely to be protected. However, as children engage in identity continuity processes in other ways, including the use of objects, such as toys and cultural artefacts, it is not only sites that hold significant memories but also objects within them. Cultural sites contribute to children’s identity processes at a broader level; as being a member of society.

The findings also suggest that both human and non-human entities are included in social categories such as ‘community’ (COD, 4) suggesting that children form identity relationships with livings things that are other-than-human. Another way children develop identity in relation to place is through relatedness to nature which leads to environmental identity (Clayton & Opotow, 2003) and ecological identity (Bragg, 1999; Thomashow, 2002), both instilling the importance of the natural environment to humans and other living things.

Children appear to harbour a collective environmental identity in relation to their region. That is, as residents of the Blue Mountains, children perceive the
importance of preserving the environmental qualities of the region to maintain the distinctiveness of the region; for attracting tourists and for their own sense of place (COD 1, 4). So far, research has tended to focus on the influence of nature experiences as children, on the development of environmental identity as adults (Chawla, 1998; Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Wells & Lekies, 2006). It is suggested that future research might focus on children’s developing environmental and ecological identity throughout their childhood, to provide insights into what informs it and how it is tied to nature based experiences, shared environmental attitudes of social groups or the development of other forms of identity.

12.4.7 Inclusion and exclusion

This study suggests that both place identity and social identity informs a sense of belonging. Results indicate that children experience belonging to place through familiarity (COD 3) and social groups; the sharing of spaces, activities and knowledge, and a sense of community and mutual caring (COD 3). Results also suggest that children experience not belonging in relation to place and social contexts, resulting from geographical relocation and loss of social support.

Belonging is also discussed in terms of Australian identity and citizenship, whereby a lack of citizenship results in feelings of not belonging (COD 3). A preoccupation with citizenship for belonging, suggests the importance to children of social inclusion at a societal level, and the belief that citizenship is an inherent part of place identification as an Australian (COD 3). Here ‘citizenship’ refers to the act of officially becoming a citizen and associated citizen-like behaviours are perceived as behaviours that stereotypical of Australian identity. This reveals a limited view
children’s understanding of citizen-like behaviours, an area that needs attention by citizenship educators, considering such behaviours are important pre-cursors of pro-environmental behaviour.

However, while some children describe Australian society as egalitarian, with the population having equal rights as citizens (COD 5), others lament over their limited capacity and inclusion as contributing members of society (COD 5). That is, self-perceptions of identity in which being a ‘school child’, ‘not important’ and ‘not having a job yet’ reveal children’s belief that their position in society as less-than-a-citizen, and the absence of a sense of belonging as a citizen, diminishes self-esteem and motivation for agentic behaviour (Ellis, 2005; Gustafson, 2009).

12.4.8 Relatedness to nature

According to this study, another way children develop identity in relation to place is through relatedness to nature where the term ‘relatedness’ to nature is used to refer to a number of relationships that children develop with natural elements of place in a number of ways (Tugurian & Carrier, 2016).

Children reported relationships with nature in a number of ways. Relationships with nature that leads to a feeling of being a part of nature (COD 4) instil the value of nature for nature itself. Nature’s intrinsic value was particularly evident in discussions of the importance of trees for ecological processes and for providing habitats for other living things (COD 4). The results also indicate that an appreciation of nature and the environment evolves through direct and embodied experiences that foster deep understandings of the link between humans and nature (Francis et al., 2013) and the post-humanism view that children’s relationships with
nature are less human centric (Rautio, 2013). Findings suggest that such experiences instil a sense of awe and wonder (Carson & Pratt, 1965) resulting in motivation to learn more (Jørgensen, 2016; Nisbet et al., 2009; Perkins, 2010).

The current findings enhance our understanding of how children’s relatedness to nature leads to environmental and ecological identity, through the extent to which children reported embodied experiences in nature (COD 1, 4). Kalvaitis and Monhardt’s (2012) study demonstrated how embodied experiences result in nature relatedness, however, the link between children’s’ embodied experience and environmental and ecological identity has not been widely researched. Also, the idea that nature’s matter has agency which directly interacts with children’s bodies (Änggärd, 2016) is suggested, although this idea requires further investigation. Embodied experiences in children’s place studies have been used mainly for evaluating place (Lehman-Frisch, et al., 2012; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008), suggesting that similar approaches might encourage children to evaluate nature sites adversely affected by human activity.

Furthermore, time to experience the intangible qualities of nature results in deep connections leading to relatedness to nature (Aaron & Witt, 2011; Mayer & Frantz, 2004) and in this study, descriptions of nature-based encounters imply that children have direct and frequent experiences in the local environment on a regular basis, (COD 2, 4). In particular, unstructured activities in nature in which children experience autonomy and a sense of discovery result in the development of environmental knowledge and values (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Cumming & Nash, 2015; Louv, 1990; Tugurian & Carrier 2016) and encourages protective qualities through the attachments they make to the sites (COD 2, 3, 4).
12.4.9 The ‘body self’

This research supports the idea that embodied experiences reveal the importance of the ‘body self’ as another aspect of a person’s identity. A sense of the ‘body self’ appears to be developed through embodied experiences, thought to occur through the unconscious connections individuals make with their surroundings using their bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Philo, 2016; Stevens-Smith, 2004). That is, the primary experience of space involves the body senses, movements and orientations (Auer, 2008; Barsalou, 2008; Humberstone, 2011) and the results of this research illustrate the various ways in which children use their bodies to experience place (COD 1, 2, 3, 4).

This study indicates that children develop emotional affinity and a protective instinct towards nature through embodied experiences in which they use their senses and body orientations to experience nature in unique ways (COD 1, 4). Another finding suggests that the ownership of personal space is also related to the ‘body self’ in a number of ways. This includes how children’s engagement in place involves an awareness of their bodies in space, including what the body can and can’t do (James, A., 2000), how to balance risk with security when undertaking bodily play (COD 2), how to immerse the body in imaginary settings (COD 2), and how to use the body to harness private space (COD 1).

That is, children use their bodies to facilitate a number of self-regulatory processes in the course of everyday life. Children’s involvement in physical activity supports findings that children seek opportunities to develop body capabilities (Woolley & Johns, 2001), although research tends to focus more on the action of physical activity rather than the ‘body self’ as an agentic being. It may be that examining the
‘body self’ in terms of agency requires consideration of ‘body sense’ (Fogel, 2009), for example, an awareness of the impact of emotions on the body, and body intelligence (Pfeifer & Bongard, 2006), how the body shapes thinking.

12.4.10 Developing environmental knowledge: Where and who with?

The extent of existing research exploring environmental education programs suggests that environmental knowledge is key for preparing children to deal with environmental issues (Kent, 2000; Rickinson, 2001). While it is possible that learning is supported by environmental education programs at school, this study provided support for the development of environmental knowledge in other ways (COD 4). This study revealed a number of areas in which children had well developed knowledge relating to animal behaviour, ecological processes, the carbon/oxygen cycle, and the impact of humans on ecological systems (COD 2, 4). However, no explicit reference was made to the context of knowledge development including environmental education programs, formal outdoor education program or indeed schooling in general.

There are several possible explanations as to why the research subjects did not refer to formal education programs and settings for environmental learning. It may that environmental learning opportunities in school either did not exist, or that the students did not think to identify programs in their discussions on place. However, the lack of presence of the school context in children’s discussion of their environment knowledge and experiences, suggests that school is not a significant or effective space for the development of pro-environmental tendencies. This interpretation of the findings suggests that children do not equate learning about
their local area with school, supporting what Catling (2005) describes as the disjuncture between geography education and local learning.

In addition, this study suggests that when parents provide opportunities for children to autonomously explore nature settings (C. Green, Kalvaitis & Worster, 2015), they encourage children to build relationships with natural elements (COD 1, 2, 3, 4) and to develop competencies for further exploration (COD 2, 4, 5), as well as self-determination for protecting the environment (COD 2, 4). Findings also provides evidence for the influence of family members on environmental attitudes, including direct family involvement in nature experiences (COD 1) and indirect social learning through family informing environmental attitudes and values (COD 1, 4).

12.4.11 Valuing nature

An appreciation of the importance of nature was found in a number of responses. In particular, the findings in the present study made a number of references to the importance of trees (COD 1-5), exposing a range of values in line with Schultz’s empathising with nature model (2000). From a personal egoist point of view, trees are used for fun, functionality and associated memories, and are attributed human qualities such as providing company and protection. Trees provide aesthetics as individual trees, or as a mass of trees exuding oils that instil a distinctive character to the region, enabling place identification and place identity. From a social altruistic point of view, trees are crucial to humans for their role in gaseous exchange and sustaining life. Lastly, the ecocentric value of trees relates to the importance of trees for other organisms and ecological processes.
Due to these understandings of trees, children demonstrate an awareness of the consequences of tree removal on a number of levels, but in particular, relating to gaseous exchange and air pollution, and place identity. As trees are often found in a range of areas including urban and rural regions, they afford the opportunity for children to consider how they value nature, regardless of the context in which they live.

12.4.12 An ethic of care

The evidence suggests that when children develop relationships with natural entities, attributing to them human qualities (COD 1, 4) they form emotional attachments, resulting in a degree of empathy and care (Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Tam, 2013; Tugurian & Carrier, 2016). Goralnik & Nelson (2011) state that in attributing anthropomorphic qualities to animals and plants, one is more inclined to develop emotional attachments, increasing the motivation to preserve and care for them.

In addition, Chawla and Cushing (2007) propose that to encourage children to care about the environment, children must embrace an ethic of care stemming from their everyday settings. This was demonstrated through children’s descriptions of caring for the psychological self and the ‘body self’ (COD 2, 5), being cared for by others (COD 2), engaging in mutual care with family and the community (COD 2, 3) and caring for friends (COD 3). Caring was also extrapolated to significant places such as the home, garden, pets, personal spaces, the bush, heritage sites and trees (COD 1-5).
The findings suggest that a caring disposition may translate into caring for nature and encouraging children to engage in protective behaviour (COD 4) of the environment, regardless of how the environment is valued, however, further research is required to establish this link. Similarly, caring is evident in the reporting altruistic tendencies towards others that may lead to a degree of humanitarianism (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998) required for dealing with environmental issues, particularly in developing countries.

Payne (2010) argues that moral reasoning about the environment begins in the home through pro-social relationships that instil a sense of care and mutual respect. Similarly, significant care values can also be instilled by teachers who demonstrate caring, respectful and democratic processes, with children instilling caring attitudes towards the local environment (Schindel & Tolbert, 2017).

12.4.13 Pro-sociality and social skills for participation and citizenship

The purpose of this study was to gain insights into how children might better engage in participatory behaviour relating to environmental issues. The results of this investigation show that children possess a number of self-determining behaviours that can be translated into competencies for place participation and involvement in environmental interventions. These include collaborative, decision making and problem solving skills (COD 1, COD 2), assertiveness in the creation of private spaces (C. Green, 2011), negotiation of power relationships (COD, 5) and capabilities for working on existing relationships (Chawla, 1992, Powell, 2001).

Horgan et al., (2017) outline how family relations provide important opportunities to learn how to practise democracy and, in particular, this study demonstrated that
siblings play a large part in developing pro-sociality, either because siblings are an easily accessible affordances or because siblings engage in self-determining behaviour that is often in conflict with the behaviour of others (COD 1, 2, 3, 5). Pro-sociality in the form of democratic processes, is the ultimate valuing of the other, leading to complete participatory social inclusion of children (Payne, 2010).

12.4.14 Willing and able? Intentions for looking after place

The evidence suggests that children harbour a number of intentions for looking after place, however, these were limited to strategies that children undertake in their everyday action: namely, ‘picking up litter’ (COD 3, 4). Although worthwhile strategies, the notable absence of other forms of participation suggests that children are limited in their awareness of strategies, self-belief to achieve worthwhile measures and the capacity to contribute at a societal level. There appears to be a disconnect between specific strategies such as ‘what I can do here and now’ (COD 4) and the willingness to engage in environmental responsibility as environmental stewards (Worrel & Appleby, 2000). Also, although the strategies that children suggested were often general; ‘not cutting down trees’ and ‘looking after the community’, they reveal that children think about ways to engage in pro-environmental behaviour concerned with environmental sustainability and social justice (COD 3).

The findings demonstrate the variation in understandings held by the study cohort, and demonstrates how exploring variations reveal underlying discourses held by children. What they suggest is that conflict exists between children’s intentions to actively participate in society and their structural capacity to do so. Therefore,
strategies for engaging children should integrate meaningful connections with others (Cumming & Nash, 2015) both at an intimate level, with people they encounter in everyday life, and at a societal level, where children are perceived as citizens in their own right.

12.5 Overview of key findings

In the context of this study, using phenomenographic analysis to explore understandings of place held by a group of children living in the Blue Mountains region, it was revealed that understandings are related to the natural environment and cultural heritage of the region. At the same time, children position themselves as developing beings seeking understandings of their own personal journey, and finding opportunities for autonomy and independence. In endeavouring to negotiate this terrain, children traverse a range of identities related to place, social groups and social constructions of childhood.

Key to this experience is the necessity of relatedness and belonging. In one sense, children feel related to nature through activities and embodied experiences. However, their sense of belonging varies, and is conflicted by structural changes in social groups, and ideologies within society. This impacts on children’s capacity for participation in place, despite their having environmental knowledge, participatory skills and motivation relating to attachments to place, valuing place, and an ethic of care.

The following section will explore three areas that require further consideration for offering insights into how to more effectively engage children in pro-environmental
behaviour.

12.6 Significant themes arising from the research

The key implications arising from this research were ‘the child citizen’, self-determination for participation and engagement, and strategies for engaging in environmental behaviour.

12.6.1 ‘The child citizen’

This study found that children’s perceptions of societal ideas relating to children’s capabilities are a limiting factor in their engagement in environmental issues. One the hand, children regard Australian society as egalitarian in nature, and on the other hand, children feeling excluded, due to perceptions of their limited social position in society (COD 5). Children’s identity development is immersed in socio-cultural processes and notions of childhood that position them as ‘citizens in the making’ rather than citizens in their own right (Nutbrown & Clough, 2009). Social systems that impact on the social position of children, including ideologies surrounding children’s limited capabilities (James, A., & James, A.L., 2004), are likely to instil a sense of not belonging (COD 3). This results in children remaining marginalised in terms of their rights (UNHRC, 1989) and denies their inclusion at a political level which is in direct conflict with research demonstrating the importance of children’s rights in educating them for sustainable practices (Somerville & Williams, 2015).

Indeed, variations in children’s capabilities in different cultural contexts, suggest that biological differences (compared to adults) need to be separated from
cultural differences, and therefore separated from expectations of what children can and cannot do (Wyness, 2013). Children are perceived as incapable of undertaking citizenship roles, while at the same time, children are perceived as being capable of taking responsibility for their actions (Such & Walker, 2005). Additionally, perceptions of a lack of citizenship, with associated roles and responsibilities, has ramifications for children’s understandings of their capacity for contribution (COD 5). Mackey (2012) argues, in adherence to Articles 13, the right to freedom of expression, and 29, the right to gain knowledge about the earth (UNCROC, 1989), children should not only learn about and engage in capabilities for pro-environmental action, but that their contributions should position them as active agents capable of tackling environmental issues as they arise.

12.6.2 Self-determination for participation and engagement

To achieve these goals, the issue lies not only in children’s perceived lack of capabilities for agentic action but in harnessing their existing self-determining capabilities to effect change. Although research on ways that children look after place suggests that children are capable of participatory action (Lansdown, 2009), these approaches are largely limited to participatory intervention programs that have been well tailored for children and that provide strategies that are either child ‘appropriate’ or well supported by adults (Malone, 2013). Findings in this study suggest that valuing children’s perspectives and allowing them to develop autonomy and competence, is likely to result in children experiencing a sense of belonging and of being valued as able contributors to place.
Increasingly, opportunities for self-determining behaviour, such as autonomy and self-regulation, are being encouraged in a number of ways, including through place design (Olwig, 1990; Tai, Haque, McLellan & Knight, 2006) and targeted environmental programs (Cumming & Nash, 2015). However, the problem is that children’s self-determining behaviour is not being translated into other areas of society (Hart, 1997).

Harnessing children’s self-determination requires increasing opportunities for autonomy, and providing opportunities for the development of the necessary skills required for engaging in place at an adult level and in a productive way. Lastly, for children to feel related to their surroundings, both people and the environment, they need to be valued as citizens capable of enacting change.

Suggested ideas relating to children’s participation in local government areas include strategies using a more holistic approach, involving parents, teachers and local government representatives working in tandem to develop capabilities for looking after local places, and people. This requires harnessing skills they already exhibit within their daily levels, such as self-regulation, spatial navigation, problem solving and pro-sociality (COD 1-5). Further, this study, and other studies (Payne, 2010) have shown that children have the ability to consider value based issues within everyday contexts (COD 1-5) and that children have agency for interpreting information, constructing knowledge and influencing others, as they often occur within social contexts such as family (Horgan et al., 2017).

To engage children in participation, instilling a sense of inclusion must be key. This involves validating children to stand as equal participants including consultation on
the parameters placed on children in participatory roles (COD 3), while at the same
time ensuring appropriate conditions for children to actualise their engagement
potential. As well, children’s subjective understandings, including their perceptions
and experiences, must be heard and not taken for granted (Skivenes & Strandbu,
2006). Most importantly, for children to be motivated they must be involved in
preserving places and elements of place, that are significant and meaningful to them
(COD 1 -5), therefore, children must be involved at a grass roots level, in the planning
of place-based projects, both social and environmental.

12.6.3 Building capacity for pro-environmental behaviour

As well as harnessing self-determining behaviour, one could look at the importance
of opportunities for building capacity for pro-environmental behaviour. This begins
with environmental learning to improve competency in terms of relevant
knowledge and skills. Although environmental education tends to be situated
within educational settings and programs, there is recognition that ‘environmental
learning’ in informal everyday experiences is an effective way of engaging children
(Hacking & Barratt, 2007). Learning that occurs in everyday settings and within the
local community results in whole child development, by supporting cognitive,
affective, social and physical skills.

One of the issues surrounding effective formal environmental education is the gap
between what is taught in schools and what is experienced by children in their
personal geographies. Children’s understandings of geographies relevant to them
are dismissed in school learning contexts, rendering their lived experiences,
interests and future aspirations for engagement in place, of little importance
Catling suggests that there are a number of ways to more effectively engage children in environmental learning at school. These include targeted curriculum that explores children’s use of the local environment in all its forms and may involve studying leisure patterns, social interactions, favourite and important places and embodied experiences. It also involves observing and understanding continuities and changes in the local area, and their causes. Knowledge and skills developed through children’s personal geographies may then provide opportunities to engage the whole school population in a sustainable approach to caring for the school’s physical and social environment. More specifically, programs that are embedded into the local community as a way of connecting to children’s lived experiences, are increasingly utilised to provide opportunities for personal development, including self-determining behaviours, building connections and social capital, and a sense of community (Charles, 2009; Cumming & Nash, 2015; Somerville & Green, 2015). Indeed, Blanchet-Cohen (2008), demonstrated that children’s capacity for negotiating beliefs towards the local environment is tied to a developing awareness of self, and capacity for involvement.

In addition, engaging in what Gruenewald (2003) refers to as ‘political ecoliteracy’ encourages children to critically examine their actions in relation to impacts on the sustainability of the local environment, as well social justice issues involving the community (Rios & Menezes, 2017). Such an approach alludes to the development of environmental citizenship in students, instilling an ethos that engaging in environmental issues requires a responsibility to act pro-environmentally and sustainably throughout the course of everyday life, and that environmental issues
are intrinsically tied to social issues (Dobson, 2010).

To facilitate environmental citizenship, existing citizen education needs to be considered. Wilks (2010) argues that while the learning of ‘citizenship’ is comprehensive in schools, it rarely translates into action, as it does not relate to the everyday worlds that children inhabit and for which they can find a solution. Incorporating an environmental citizenship into citizenship education, provides opportunities for democratic decision making processes, and focuses on the importance of rights and values associated with groups affected by environmental issues; including future generations. Within citizenship education, topics focusing on local environmental issues can be explored with a view to understanding their impact on particular members of the community, some of whom may be known to children. This is what M. Green (2015) refers to as sustaining both people and places.

12.7 Limitations of the methodology

The research was conducted using phenomenography as a tool to explore understandings of a number of place related phenomena amongst children aged 7 to 12 years. The overall aim of the phenomenographic study was to understand conceptions rather than to measure human behaviour, compare data variations with existing distributions or develop causal links. It must be stressed that the study was primarily concerned with collecting perceptions, experiences and understandings, therefore, links between perceptions, experiences and understandings can only be highlighted to capture the entirety of conceptions and to suggest areas for further research.
Phenomenography, like other qualitative approaches, presumes that data is collected so as to express the views of the respondents. However, in interviewing children there is always the chance that a number of factors will diminish their capacity to reveal understandings.

The first factor interfering with the collection of data is the using of an open-ended interview approach. The researcher endeavoured to collect data that exposes the subject’s perceptions, experience and understandings, however, it was not possible to ascertain if the subjects focused on areas that they perceived to be important to the researcher, rather than revealing their own understandings and experiences of a phenomenon? To guard against this, the researcher ensured that an identical opening sentence stem was used for each interview, and did not introduce new themes but dealt only with those introduced by the subject. In doing this, the researcher tried to facilitate the exposure of as many aspects of the subject’s perspective as possible, inviting the subject to expand on an area until all ways of viewing the conception had been exhausted.

Another factor, was the conceptual limitations posed in investigating the relatively abstract terms—place, place identity and ‘care for place’—in children of that age. In phenomenographic research no assumptions can be made about children’s understandings of a phenomenon; nor can prompts be used to help children describe their understandings. Asking children to describe what they know to understand ‘place’ to be, at times resulted in confusion. Often the question was repeated, and answers given were taken at face value and deemed to reflect their understandings. Other phenomena explored—that is, identity and caring of place—were equally challenging. It was predicted at the beginning of pilot interviews that
children would not fully comprehend the word ‘identity’, so the phrase ‘see myself as ...’ was substituted. This appeared to provoke responses related to the many facets of identity including subjects’ appearances. However, the phrase ‘care for place’ was also challenging for many children, especially the younger ones who couldn’t associate ‘caring’ with ‘place’. Therefore, in post pilot interviews the phrase ‘to look after ...’ was substituted leading to the collection of relevant responses.

Related to this, was the information provided in the Information Sheet and Consent Form, which described the investigation as one about place and the local area. It is possible that parents and teachers provided some context for the interview to the subject, many of whom delved straight into the meaning of place related to where they lived. Despite this, phenomenography explores variations in the responses of the study cohort, so whilst many respondents referred to their addresses, there were also other responses, which provided alternative understandings.

Another related factor, is that of data reliability. As phenomenographic research is used to explore the subject’s experience as captured at the moment the interview occurs, subsequent interviews at a later time would lead to variations in conceptions, resulting in limited reliability of findings. This was problematic in that there is limited capacity for testing the accuracy of children’s perceptions and understandings, and the researcher cannot be sure that children are basing their understandings on real or imagined experiences. For this reason, it is important to note that although a large amount of data was captured on children’s conceptions, assumptions cannot be made on the basis of the data gathered in this study. Therefore, this study has not attempted to make universal claims, but instead has
sought to uncover a number of areas that may lead to areas that require further research including interventions and strategies for improving children’s capacity to engage in pro-environmental behaviour. Further research is a necessary part of positioning a phenomenographic study in the wider research field.

Another limitation includes the relation between the researcher and the phenomenon, in the analysis of the results. Because the researcher has a vested interest in the topic, it is impossible for the researcher to put aside all existing knowledge related to the phenomenon, therefore, the researcher attempted to analyse the data in an objective way. This involved a lengthy and confusing process of moving back and forth between transcripts, by re-reading transcripts and deciding if the intended meaning of the quotation was best positioned within one conceptualisation or another. As the data analysis required considering quotations outside of their context, there was some potential for misinterpretation of intended meanings to occur. At times a portion of quoted text, while providing meaning in itself, also added meaning to its context. It is possible that portions of text might have appeared repetitive if they were used to add meaning to other text and used as separate quotes.

The final limitation was the age of participants involved in the phenomenographic study. Phenomenographic interviews can be taxing, in that the interview must continue to probe the given responses for hidden meanings held by the subject. Although this was possible for older children aged over 10 years, it was difficult for the younger children, who ceased to respond when they became fatigued. Given these developmental limitations, the responses presented still provide a ‘snapshot in time’ of the younger subject’s understandings, even though the same level of deconstruction did not occur as in the older subjects.
12.8 Problems arising during the research

The main issue that arose during the course of the study is that one of the initial intentions in the design of the study could not be realised. That is, children’s conceptions were not explored in relation to age. Although the views of children aged between 7 and 12 were collected, they could not be analysed to explore developmental shifts in the way children relate with the phenomenon. This is because in the early phases of the research, the extent of responses provided by young children of 7 years old, varied significantly compared with those aged 12. That is, in general the younger children’s responses were significantly shorter and less detailed than those of the older children and did not provide enough data to allow for meaningful comparisons between children of varying ages. For this reason, it was decided not to engage in a developmental study. However, despite this, some useful insights were provided both by younger and older children.

12.9 Future research

Future research might focus on the development of pro-sociality in family contexts (Payne, 2010), particularly amongst siblings, and examining the extent to which caring relationships between siblings lead to pro-social values and skills that transfer into community and environmental settings. While Chawla and Cushing (2007) examine an ethic of care developing more generally in the family, sibling relationships provide unique contexts, in that caring behaviours will often be conflicted with democratic processes and resources based needs—areas that often lead to a disconnect between groups debating environmental protection policy and
developing environmental programs. Sibling relationships are a particularly relevant context, as it is likely that each sibling will experience a sense of belonging to the relationship while negotiating power elements related to order in family, or perhaps gender. In fact, any opportunity for children’s political development will improve a child’s sense of competence as related to participatory and citizenship contexts.

Another avenue for research would be to examine the role of embodied experiences in promoting environmentally sustainable behaviour. This area, uncovered by a number of responses (COD 1,3,5) suggests that embodied experience involving the whole body, leads to different and nuanced perspectives on natural areas. Embodied experiences in children’s place studies have been used mainly for evaluating place (Lehman-Frisch, 2012; Simkins & Thwaites, 2008), suggesting that similar approaches might encourage children to evaluate nature sites adversely affected by human activity. In particular, emotional responses can be used as a type of environmental sensitivity, comprising observations and experiences that lead to a ‘predisposition to take an interest in learning about the environment, feeling concerned for it, and acting to conserve it, on the basis of formative experiences [in nature]’ (Chawla & Derr, 2012, p. 9). In addition, further work is required on influence of embodied experiences on children’s developing ecological and environmental identity (Kalvaitis & Monhardt, 2012).

It is also important to investigate the environmental identities of young children and older version of themselves, by means of longitudinal studies, to determine what factors lead to them becoming, what Malone refers to as ‘functional, confident and competent “environmental users”’ in their present and future lives’ (2007a,
p.9). At present, research exploring the links between other forms of identity—social, place and even ecological identity—runs the risk of providing reasons for why children do not engage in certain behaviours, rather than uncovering potential causal relationships between children’s environmental identity and competent and agentic behaviour that leads to change. Longitudinal studies will not only reveal what children ‘become’ as a result of intervention programs, but also what aspects of their everyday lives have facilitated the development of a functional and action-based environmental identity.
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Appendix A: The University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee Approval

Human Research Ethics Committee
www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human
Senior Ethics Officer:
Gail Brtdy
Telephone: (02) 9351 4811
Facsimile: (02) 9351 5706
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Rooms L4.14 & L4.13 Main Quadrangle A14

Human Secretariat
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8 November 2006

Dr R Wilson
Faculty of Education and Social Work
Education Building -- A35
The University of Sydney

Dear Dr Wilson

Title: A sense of self within a World Heritage Area: Education about place and children’s identity in attitude-behaviour models
Ref No.: 06-2006/8962

The Executive Committee considered your request to modify the above protocol. The Executive Committee found that there were no ethical objections to the modifications and therefore recommends approval to proceed.

The following modifications were approved:

- Instruments to focus on general understandings of ‘place’ and individual interviews to be conducted.
- Amendments to the Participant Information Sheet.
- Amendments to the Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians
- Amendments to the ‘Dear Principal’ letter.
- Amendments to the Questionnaire.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities to ensure that:

1. All serious and unexpected adverse events are to be reported to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) as soon as possible.

2. All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project are to be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

3. The HREC is to be notified as soon as possible of any changes to the protocol. All changes must be approved by the HREC before continuation of the research project. These include:-

- Notifying the HREC of any changes to the staff involved with the protocol.
- Notifying the HREC of any changes to the Participant Information Statement and/or Consent Form.

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(4) All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The Participant Information Statement and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee and the following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement. Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or sbriody@usyd.edu.au (Email).

(5) A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Associate Professor J D Watson
Chairman
Human Research Ethics Committee

cc: Ms Annette Sartor, Room 516, Faculty of Education and Social Work, Education Building – A35, The University of Sydney

Encl:

Participant Information Sheet
Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians
'Dear Principal' Letter
Questionnaire
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Research Project

Title: Identity and the Blue Mountains

What is the study about?
This study is about you and living in the Blue Mountains area.

Who is doing the study?
The study is being done by Annette Sartor (PhD candidate at the University of Sydney) and Dr Rachel Wilson (Lecturer at the University of Sydney).

What does the study involve?
You will fill in a questionnaire on living in the Blue Mountains. Later, you may be asked some questions about the place where you live and the Blue Mountains.

How much time will the study take?
It will take about 10 minutes to introduce the questionnaire. The questionnaire and interview will each take about 30 minutes to complete.

Where will the study take place?
The questionnaire and interview will be done with two researchers and your teacher.

Can I not do the study?
You do not have to participate and you can stop at any stage.

Will anyone else know what you have written?
Your answers will not be shown to other people. Only reports with answers in groups will be given to the school, other researchers and the people who made up Earth Journeys.

Will I get anything out of the study?
You may like to know more about the Blue Mountains, yet you will not necessarily benefit directly from the study.

Can I tell other people about the study?
It is alright to discuss the study with your friends and family.

What if I want to know more about the study?
When you have read this information you may contact Rachel Wilson (9351 6390) or Annette Sartor (9351 5419) who will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

What if I have a complaint or concerns?
Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPROVED
DATE: 26 OCT 2005

4 February 2005
Appendix C: Information for Parents and Guardians

The University of Sydney
Faculty of Education & Social Work

NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

Dr Rachael Wilson
School of Development and Learning
Building A35
Telephone +61 2 93514990
Facsimile +61 2 93512006
Email: r.wilson@edfac.usyd.edu.au

INFORMATION SHEET for PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Research Project Title: Identity and the Blue Mountains

What is the study about?
This study will investigate children’s identity, attitudes and behaviours towards the Blue Mountains as a place.

Who is carrying out the study?
The study is being conducted by Dr Rachael Wilson (Lecturer at the University of Sydney) and Annette Sartor (PhD candidate at the University of Sydney).

What does the study involve?
We would like your permission to ask your child to fill in a questionnaire about themselves in relation to the Blue Mountains region. Your child may also be involved in an individual interview to discuss living in the Blue Mountains.

How much time will the study take?
The questionnaire and interview will each take about 30 minutes and will be explained to participants prior to commencement.

Where will the study take place?
The questionnaire will be undertaken by students in their respective classrooms or in a room made available by the Principal. The study will be under the supervision of two researchers and the classroom teacher.

Can my child withdraw from the study?
Participation is completely voluntary and your child can withdraw from the study at any time.

Will anyone else know the results?
The responses of individual children will be strictly confidential. Only the researchers will have access to the data. A brief report of the results will be given to the school for you to read. A report will also be given to the developers of the Earth Journeys Program, submitted for publication in a research journal and presented at conferences. Results are presented as groups so individuals are not recognized.

Will the study benefit me?
Children may like to know more about the Blue Mountains, yet you and your child will not necessarily benefit directly from the study.

Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information you may contact Rachel Wilson (9351 6390) or Annette Sartor (9351 5419) who will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

What if I have a complaint or concerns?
Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811.

This information sheet is for you to keep

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPROVED
DATE: 26 OCT 2011

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Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

The University of Sydney
Faculty of Education & Social Work

NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

Dr Rachel Wilson
School of Development and Learning
Building 4.35
Telephone +61 2 9351 3950
Facsimile +61 2 9351 2609
Email r.wilson@edfac.usyd.edu.au

PARENTAL (OR GUARDIAN) CONSENT FORM

I, ___________________________________ agree to permit ____________________________, who is aged ___________________ years, to participate in the research project –

TITLE: Identity and the Blue Mountains

In giving my consent and I acknowledge that:

1. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the time involved for my child’s participation in the project. The researcher/s has given me the opportunity to discuss the information and ask any questions I have about the project and they have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time without prejudice to my or my child’s relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.

3. I agree that research data gathered from the results of the study may be published provided that neither my child nor I can be identified.

4. I understand that if I have any questions relating to my child’s participation in this research I may contact the researcher/s who will be happy to answer them.

5. I acknowledge receipt of the Participant Information Form.

________________________________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian

________________________________________
Please PRINT name

________________________________________
Date

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPROVED
DATE: 22 JUN 2006

Page 24
Appendix E: Letter to Principal

The University of Sydney  
Faculty of Education & Social Work

NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

De Ranch Wline  
School of Development and Learning  
Building ASB  
Telephone +61 2 93516300  
Fax: +61 2 93512600  
Email: r.wilson@ll,faculty.usyd.edu.au

5 June, 2006

Dear Principal,

Re: Research on 'Identity and the Blue Mountains'.

Annette Sartor is undertaking an investigation into the influence of 'sense of place' on children's identity, attitudes and behaviours in relation to the Blue Mountains as a place.

A sense of place influences children's identity, attitudes and behavioural intentions towards their local area or region. We will also be investigating how identity, attitudes and behaviour varies in relation to where children live in the mountains, and according to their age.

This is the major part of a PhD in Education at the University of Sydney. As an extensive research project, it will involve 2 lots of data collection. That is, a survey will be given to students as part of Study 1. Based on the results of Study 1, students may be asked to participate in an interview as part of Study 2. Not all students who participated in Study 1 will participate in Study 2.

It is hoped that students from Stages 1, 2 and 3 can be involved in the study. Stage 2 and 3 students will be given the questionnaire to complete by themselves under the supervision of researchers. All students will receive help and extra attention will be given to students in Stage 2. The collection of data from Stages 2 and 3 will be completed in a day.

Each Stage 1 student will complete the survey with the assistance of a researcher. This will involve the researcher reading out the items and writing in the child's response. Due to individual attention given to each participant in Stage 1 it is assumed that data collection will take about 2-4 days, although each individual child will only be involved for approximately 20-30 minutes.

As Annette's supervisor I would like your approval to invite students at your school to participate in the project for three reasons. The findings will give a clearer understanding of how learning about the local area influences the way children think about themselves. The findings will be significant in terms of how children value areas of physical and cultural significance, such as those found in the Blue Mountains. Lastly, the findings will provide evidence for the effectiveness of place education programs and place curriculum.

The research application is currently under review by the University of Sydney's Human Ethics Committee and will then be considered by the NSW Department of Education and Training. Once the project is approved, data collection and analysis will be performed early in 2007.
If you are willing to participate, Annette or myself will be in contact with you again when approval is achieved to establish a schedule for handing out information sheets and consent forms, and to organize appropriate dates and times to survey the students.

If you have any questions about the project please contact Annette Sartor on 9351 5419, 47 556 346 or 0411 257 734.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rachel Wilson  Annette Sartor

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPROVED
DATE: 26 OCT 2006
Appendix F: Interview Schedule

Appendix 2

STUDY 2 ‘Children's understandings of place’.

Interview schedule.

Introduction: Welcome, my name is .......... Thank you for agreeing to take part in the interview. The interview will take about 20 minutes and I will be recording the interview on cassette tape. Anything you say won't be repeated to anyone else. You do not have to answer a question if you don’t want to.

I have come here today to learn more about how you think about your place and the Blue Mountains.

Semi-structured interview questions

Themes Lead in phrases

About you My name is .......... and I ....

About where you live I live in .......... and it is ..........

About your place My place is ..........

The meaning of 'place' I think the word 'place' means ..........

About the Blue Mountains The Blue Mountains is ..........

Caring for place To care for my place I could ..........

Closing Comments: Thank you for coming along today.
Ms Annette Sartor
4 Albert St
WARRIMOO NSW 2774

Dear Ms Sartor

SERAP Number: 06.310

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled "Identity and the Blue Mountains". I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation.

This approval will remain valid until 8 November 2007.

This approval covers the following researchers and research assistants to enter schools for the purposes of this research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approved until</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annette Sartor</td>
<td>8 November 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian Koo</td>
<td>8 November 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to General Manager, Planning and Innovation, Department of Education and Training, GPO Box 33, Sydney, NSW 2001.

Yours sincerely

Dr Christine Ewan
General Manager, Planning and Innovation

December 06
Appendix F: Interview transcripts

Subject 2
F6  SHAUN, boy, 12 years old

I think that the word place means where you are, where you stand, where you are in the world. Like the place that you are, the exact place where you are in a chain of events or just in a friendship. It could be your place in a family.

Anything else?
Your place within a group of people. In a school. It’s just like a jigsaw puzzle. It wouldn’t be complete without everybody. Everybody has a place.

Is there any other word for place?
Maybe a point. Theoretically not physically. Everyone has their own place what they are supposed to do, so you should do as much as you can before your time is up so that you can fulfill at its best - to be remembered as something not just be buried in the ground and forgotten but be remembered for inventing something.

What do you mean by ‘everyone has their own place’?
If you get remembered for inventing it, I think it would be to be remembered for something good not starting a war or anything.

You said that it’s ‘where you are in the world’, what do you mean by that?
Yeah kind of just like a big play, a drama. You have a certain place that you have to fulfill a certain role. You have to find it out for yourself. It happens whenever, when you just know what you are supposed to do. You’d feel really good. You’d just know ‘I’ve done what I should have done. I’ve done what I needed to do’. It can be 10 years, 20, 30, 40.

Can you explain ‘your place’ more?
That’s a hard thing to explain. My place in my family would be the second sibling. My place with my friends would be the random one – always random I can say something that won’t make any sense to anyone. It’s just funny.

In terms of ‘your place in the world’...
No, you have to find it out. You should know eventually. I’m starting to get an idea. I’m not too sure. I feel like I’m on the right path. Just doing what I like, what I feel like I should be doing.

Is there any other meaning to the word place?
A place can be so many things, just depending on what you are talking about. You could be talking about a book or a person, a building, anything. Like a book could have a certain place in history. One book could change history e.g. Harry Potter. It started a lot of people reading I guess.

Anything else?
A place might not be important to one person but it could be important to another person. Just like something as worthless as a drawing... different to different people. It depends on who is thinking about it.

My place is the son of my father and mother and it is a good place for me at the moment. It’s just nice to be in a family. A family looks out for each other. You just feel warm and fuzzy inside. That feeling is happiness. I’ve also get a place with my friends as being their friend.

What do you mean by that?
It’s hard to explain. It’s just you’re their friend and friends look out for each other.

I live in Australia and it’s nice. I live in a house.
What do you mean by 'Australia and it's nice'?
Australia is nice 'cos we don't have wars going on everywhere and we have a lot of rights and privileges that people in other countries wouldn't get like we are allowed to worship any religion we want.

Anything else?
We don't have to have to just worship one exact religion and we have a fair government system. Of course people in other countries would argue that some of that stuff would be better. But you don't really know until you have actually lived in that other country for so long. If you didn't know anything about where you lived, it would be really hard just to live there. You wouldn't know what to do and where to go.

What do you mean by you don't really know until you have actually lived in that other country?
Different places where you lived would change how people think - the way they grew up, the way parents acted around them, how they grew up, what kind of childhood they had.

Anything else?
Like if you had a really boring childhood you might tend to be a boring person, but if you had a fulfilled childhood like going fishing every weekend you'd probably feel very good when you are an adult. You'd feel like you'd fulfilled your youth.

What do you mean by 'different places where you lived would change how people think'?
Living in a certain place could influence your religion which could change the way you think. And living somewhere could also change what types of food you eat. You might want more natural food, not just Mackas. You might think it's OK to beat a child or violence or that war is OK.

I can look after my place by keeping good connections with my family and friends. Looking after my house, keep it for a long time, making sure it doesn't get too run down and broken and everything. Keep upgrading it.

Subject 3
F6  CATLYN, girl, 12 years old.

I am a ballet enthusiast. I mean really like ballet and dancing of all sorts.

The word place means... If its 'your place' it's a place that you like or a place that you really belong in.

What do you mean a place that you like?
A place that you like is one that you enjoy being in. Well, I have this bush place and it's a couple of rocks together and I sit there and it's really quiet and I like it because the rocks are there to sit on and I can just watch everything happening. It's really quiet 'cos you can't really hear the cars rushing past and people yelling. You can see a couple of houses across the valley but other than that it's just a whole lot of bush.

Anything else?
It's nice not to hear all that bush because after a while it seems normal and it's also a very nice sound because of the birds and the tree sounds and the leaves rustling under some other animal's feet.

Anything else about this 'bush place'?
It's nice for a change because most of the time, even though I live on a quiet road, I am always running around with my brother's friends (they are kind of nice to me) because I have no friends around there. Sometimes I just need some quiet time on my own and the birds are...kind of like a little bit of company.

What do you mean by 'quiet time on my own'?
I just need to go and relax somewhere.
It gets a bit much because I'm always over at someone's house playing and then I'm back at my house playing with someone and I'm over riding my bike around the block with everyone and it's too much and takes out a lot of my time and energy and I just need to go and sit down sometimes.

Any more about this place?
Normally there isn't much to watch but you just look and where I sit there's the circle of rocks and I think about if they could have been moved by someone or the Aboriginals or something and or if they were just there. I think of all these stories that could just be there.

I think about if the circle of rocks, for example, that could have been a place where they danced around it and they could sit. Sometimes when I am about to go to sleep I think about these stories that could have happened there and I know that probably someone didn't move them there but they could have.

Anything else?
I also think about other rock formations and there's a rock that looks like an eagle, different shapes and things. Sometimes I'll see that there's some sticks and leaves in one part and then there's a rock and the ground is the same but there's no sticks or leaves on that side.

What do you mean by "a place that you really belong in"?
If you sit somewhere and you've been there a few times, then you think this is my place and I'm one of the few people who know about it. I like to sit here and I know what all the things look like and I know about it and I don't think I'm going to forget it then you feel like you are going to belong, because you are really familiar with it.

My place is the area around my home and it is very special to me because I'm really familiar with it because if I just suddenly move house even a few street away I would not be familiar with it and I've have to go exploring and look at everything.

Can you tell me more about your place?
There aren't many children that I know around the block which means that I don't have as many people to share it with so it's more of my place. With more people it would seem a bit less of my place. They think it's their place and that I don't want them to invade on them.

What do you mean?
Me and my brother go down to the gallery and sit outside a park and there's no one there but we don't go inside the gallery cos we can't say that's our gallery cos there's everyone else inside the gallery.

Is this another place?
Yeah, we ride down and then we eat our lunch and there's a place next door to the gallery which we kind of think is our place and we share it with a couple of our friends. It's like a circle and it has a stump which is hollow in the middle and we put all our things in the bag and then we just ride around and keep looking for new paths.

We went exploring there and then we found a path and it went right down to this big tunnel place thing and it's got all these holes. Then one of my brother's friend's parents took us all for a bushwalk down there so we showed them. There were these caves and waterfalls and we all stuck our hands up through the holes and reached each other and it was really fun.

I like exploring places in the bush but sometimes I get worried that if I go too far in.

I live in a really special area and it is extremely special to me because there aren't many people around there and all the people around there are older and all they do when they come out is just to go for a walk around the block or walk their dog or just wash their cars.

I have been there since I was 4 and I think I prefer this place to where I've been before because that used to be busier and I couldn't go out on my own.

Can you explain more?
We had a park I am miss the park but one of my friends now lives next to a park and she says just get boring. Whereas with the bush it doesn’t get boring because you can just explore further down and climb up the rocks.

Anything else about your place?
When my brother and friends went down to the space I got really upset that they were using it without me so I trashed their stuff but then I decided to ask them to be part of the club. They used to go down without me because I was such a leader so I decided not to be. Now I don’t mind ‘cos I’m in it. If I’m there with them or we are collecting leaves which we use as money, I feel like I’m there for the club. But if I’m there just sitting on a rock then I really think it’s my place.

What do you mean?
Boys are different to girls to play with because if you go into the bush with them they always want to collect staffs and attack people with them and do these duels and everything where you hit people with the sticks and they have to try and defend themselves and if you lose you have to pay leaves and if you win you go up a rank. I’m only a rank up from the worst rank ‘cos I keep losing.

What do you mean by ‘boys are different to girls’?
I think there are two kinds of girls. The girls that are kind of like me who like to sit there or sit and talk in the bush and there are girls who think the bush is full of ants and leaves and stones and icky stuff like spiders and spider webs and they don’t want to go anywhere near it.
I really don’t mind either ‘cos we can sit and talk anywhere around the block or outside my house or inside my house.

I can look after my place by sitting and looking in my spot for plastic rubbish. If I saw plastic rubbish I wouldn’t be happy. I’d immediately think this man who lives nearby has done it and I would ask him. I might pick it up like if it gets into a stream it can choke fish and if the fish die then the animals who eat the fish can die and the animals who eat the animals who eat fish die and so on. That just builds on and the animals that the fish ate will over populate and that wouldn’t be good.

Subject 4
F6 CORIN, boy, 12 years old

I think the word place means being a family member like when people are Ill you look after them and support each other, or if they need help you should always be there help, support, love and care for them.

What do you mean by being a family member?
Sharing means sharing your home and you don’t be selfish and you share your life with them. You do things together and work with them and cooperate with them like have meals and share the same house, play games, go places like to see other relatives and in other places you go and explore and discover new things with them and share your experiences.

Is there anything else?
If they are having trouble at school, you can help get through and help them find a way of working through hard times and you’re there to be really supporting and caring.

What do you mean?
When you do stuff by yourself, you don’t get some much of a thrill but when you do stuff with other people you go back in a few years and say “do you remember when we did this”.

Can you explain that further?
Remembering is not the main reason. It’s sort of just nice to be with someone else and be with someone special. If you were with someone you didn’t like you probably wouldn’t have enjoyed it as much. When you are with someone special you’d have more fun and enjoy it and have a good time.

**What do you mean by “do you remember when we did this”?**
When you keep to yourself, no one knows what you are thinking but when you are with them and you’re sharing the whole thing with them, there’s no secrets. If you are having a really good time or a really bad time you know what the other person is thinking.

**I think the word place means a** home to someone special, a place where you can remember something or where you live. Sort of like where a community would probably be.

**What do you mean by community?**
We all have a role to keep the Earth healthy and support each other and be together with everyone. You have to give more than you take and when you work for someone you get money to pay for things but you are also helping other people at the same time.

**What do you mean?**
It all rolls around and if one person didn’t do their part it wouldn’t be as easy it would be harder to get on with life ‘cos there’s like chains and stuff. If part of it gets broken and people don’t do their part, like bringing in food for the community, then others would have to do more work and there’d be an imbalance.

**My place is a** home with family, friends and a place for shelter ‘cos your family are there and you can tell them what you have been thinking and maybe tomorrow might be a better day. You are sheltered from the bad things and anything that might harm you. You have a roof over your head and food to eat and when you think back to other people they are not so lucky to have protection and people how love them.

**Anything else?**
I feel grateful to know that they care about you so much, but then you feel like you should be giving other people more ‘cos there’s other people starving in other countries. I sort of feel bad ‘cos you feel like you should be helping them ‘cos there’s their other people dying in wars and stuff and that makes you feel bad. And feel like when I’m older I’ll go and help them and make this a better world. I don’t want to be a massive person but I want to be part of a group and travel to places and try and help.

**I can look after my place by** picking up rubbish and tending to the gardens and contributing. The Earth gives you all these wonderful things but with global warming if we don’t look after it, the Earth can’t look after us. Rubbish can go into the oceans and stuff, and animals are killed and things are polluted. They sort of become sick and they are sort of just getting worse and worse ‘cos people dump things in places and you can’t just do that you have to learn to recycle and you have to try and find places where it’s not going to harm any life.

**What do you mean by’ tending to gardens”?**
Gardens can be healthy and they can provide food for us all. Like with farming you can grow things. We need trees ‘cos they change the carbon dioxide into oxygen. If we had no wildlife and just buildings, you sort of feel crowded. When you go into the country, you can feel a breeze whereas in the city everyone is busy doing what they want to do that they don’t see what other people would notice. We are cutting down more trees and we are getting more city and there’s not as many places where there is just countryside ‘cos they are constantly making new buildings and dumping rubbish and waste everywhere.

Also it’s nice to see trees which give an effect because you feel happiness inside of you ‘cos you think these people have looked after their place so we should look after our place more. Happiness to see that people really are caring about the Earth.
I see myself as someone who does their bit of work, keeps their place clean, contributes their bit of money and supports their local businesses. Who knows their place really well and can tell people about it and says this is a really good place you should come and live here.

Subject 5
F6  ADAM, male, 12 years old.

I think the word place means a community centre, a home or a building that’s in a certain space in the world. Like you could own a block of land that could be your place, you own that land and you can do whatever you want without breaking the law. A community centre is a place where people can get together like a town hall or a gym, leisure centre and stuff like that.

Anything else?
A place can be your home where you live and stay with your family. You have fun at home, you eat, sleep, stay at home. Having fun on computer games, it can be having fights and talking, or in the backyard playing cricket or something. On the weekend we talk about what happened ‘cos we don’t spend much time together in the mornings so we catch up at the weekends, mainly on Saturday and Sundays.

My place is my home and it is a great place to live ‘cos in the Blue Mountains there’s not a lot of pollution. We live right next to the bush. It’s a sort of small house but we’ve got a big yard to play in it and it’s got all our stuff in it that we like to use.

Anything else?
The Blue Mountains has little pollution and is important ‘cos it’s better for me when I’m growing up ‘cos if you live in the city with all the pollution around you can get sick and damage your body inside and up here the air is fresh and it’s a lot better. The Blue Mountains doesn’t have anything really new like a giant plaza but it wouldn’t work ‘cos not many people would go to it.

Can you explain further?
In the bush it’s a great place to be because when you’re walking around and you just look at what’s around you and you realize that you live in a great place and there’s just so much to do but in the city all you see are buildings and not many plants. You just see white and grey and there’d be little room for gardens and trees and that’s what breathes in carbon dioxide and makes all the oxygen and that’s why pollution goes straight up into the air. Here, there’re a lot of trees that can breath in carbon dioxide which makes pollution and greenhouse gases. It stays the way it is. People don’t want to get rid of it because it’s such a beautiful place and lots of people go bushwalking and find a certain spot you could have a picnic or a clean river, have a dip and just go for a clean swim.

Anything else about your place?
My house is small ‘cos we don’t really need a big place because there’s just the 3 of us and there’s lots of room in the backyard to play lots of sports. Sometimes we go out the back and have a camping thing and have a fire and stuff. We don’t get to do it often but when we do it its really fun, ‘cos we get to cook marshmallows on the fire and we eat natural foods and we don’t use the electricity and then you realize that life isn’t that bad without electricity cos there’s lots to explore.

What do you mean?
I like that because I am a curious person ‘cos there’s a whole world out there. Especially ‘cos you’re walking where people beforehand have walked thousands of years ago. Like when you go to Egypt and you see the pyramids and you realize how old they are. It’s just amazing how they built something like that over 3 ½ thousand years ago.

Anything else about your place?
I get paid a lot when I mow the lawn 'cos it's so big. I like mowing the lawn because it makes me feel like an Aussie 'cos my mum and dad came from the UK. There was the 4 of us but then mum and dad divorced, and now I live with my brother and mum. A lot of Aussies mow lawns or just watch the cricket or listen to it on the radio and if we lived in England, I wouldn't have done that at all. Mum's brother is a huge cricket fan and when he came over last year for the ashes, we were having a go at him.

Can you explain further?
All my family and their families have been in Great Britain for a long time but we've only been here for 12 years now which is not that long and my mum or my dad are not Australian citizens either. I know that I don't have Australian relatives only British relatives and if my parents were citizens it would make me more of an Aussie if I had Aussie parents not just parents from another country, because you'd call them immigrants.

I live in a home with my family and it is a great place to live.

I can look after my place by keeping it clean. I don't want to live in a pigsty as it wouldn't be nice. Everything is all over the place. No one would want to visit 'cos it's such a mess.

What do you mean by keeping it clean?
Looking after my place and what's inside, family and visitors and friends, and also caring about the people and things around. You want others to respect that it's your house, you should feel good about it. If you don't care about it, they might not respect your place too. If you care about the people, they will care about you. They are human beings just like you and me. We are the same, all equal and sometimes we could make a mistake and everything could go bad and they could help you.

I see myself as someone who is a primary student about to become a teenager and a person who'd like to live here as long as possible 'cos there's not a lot of pollution, there's bush and the community is friendly. I'm learning a lot of things that I wouldn't understand when I was younger like boys and girls are from the same planet I guess and the fact that we have to grow up. I didn't want to grow up when I was younger.

Subject 6
F6 JADE, girl, 11 years old.

I think the word place means where I belong...here 'cos most of my family, I don't think I'll ever leave here 'cos it's a good place and most of my friends live up here. I'd always remember this place as where I grew up and where I used to live.

What is 'this place'?
Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains. I like the environment — with all the bush. I like it around here 'cos of all the people. The bush is a nice place to be when I'm really angry and it helps me calm down. I also like to be in the bush when I'm looking through the bush and listening to all the animals.

Can you explain further?
I think the bush is really interesting and sometimes I see new things that I've never seen before like wallabies and kangaroos. They are one of my favourite animals. Because part of my family used to look after a kangaroo and it died so it just reminds me of it. I liked looking after the kangaroo because its mother got hit by a car. It makes me feel really good because I've discovered something new that I have never thought of.

Any more?
It's the relaxing noises, they are not loud or noisy. They are just soft and not very loud. Soft noises are better.

Anything else?
Most people are really nice and most are from the school. Sometimes people from school might just stop and talk to me, 'cos when I lived somewhere else, people from the school wouldn't talk to me if I saw them outside.
the school. Most of my friends live around this area and I can just go and visit them if I’m allowed to. I make a date and go over to their place ‘cos sometimes at school they won’t talk to me but out of school they will. I can talk to them better without getting interrupted all the time, ‘cos there’s not a lot of people. I can’t talk to them much at school cos they are with other people and they don’t really talk to me.

*My place is really nice and a good place to live just ’cos of all the people in the environment and I like spending time in the bush.*

I live in Faulconbridge and it is a good community to live in cos of all the nice people and I know a lot of people that I can just stop and talk to.

I can look after my place by helping other people like if they needed a job done and my family chores. I help as much as I can.

I see myself as someone who is just part of the community like everybody else. A community is a group of really nice people who help one another. They help them with their jobs or clean up.

**Subject 7**

F6  DYSON, boy, 12 years old.

I think the word place means place value.

My place is big and it is annoying ‘cos my little brother is just annoying. He is 8, he pulls faces. It’s a really big house and we have big backyard of 1 acre. The house has got 5 rooms, 1 room for the pets; mouse, a snake called ‘Willow’ and a cat. I like seeing my snake run around freely and the mouse running on the wheel. The snake roams around the room and sleeps on window sills. There’s another one full of random toys for me and my brother.

Anything else?

We also have motorbikes that we ride around and I tear up the grass. I can’t ride it until the grass grows. I like doing jumps to see how high I get to get rid of my fear of heights, so I do high jumps on purpose. I walk across this pipe that is 20 metres high to get rid of my fear. It’s in the bush.

Anything else about your place?

We are in bushland. I like because I hear wildlife and stuff. I like hearing wildlife – all the birds and the frogs and that calling. It sounds nice ‘cos the way it echoes. I also like the streams in the gully ‘cos it takes 15 minutes to get down there and you sit and eat and then walk back up to the house.

It’s nice and relaxing just to sit there and hear the flow of the water and stuff ‘cos it always hits each other and hits the rocks. You have to walk through tall grass, it’s an adventure which I like. I feel free when I’m doing that and I normally go in the bush with friends in case I get hurt or something. Also my friends enjoy it too.

I live in the bush and it can get cold sometimes. You wake up in the morning and it’s really cold. You have to turn the heater on. The heater makes me feel relaxed when it’s really really really cold by keeping me warm.

I can look after my place by putting rubbish in the bin and cleaning it all up and doesn’t get polluted ’cos it creates global warming something to do with the atmosphere. It controls our heat and coldness. It stops lots and lots of radiation and heat coming into the Earth and that’s got to do with the atmosphere.

There’s a certain amount of animals and a certain amount of humans so being responsible by looking after the bush. If there’s rubbish in the bush area, I’d pick it up and put it in the bin or carry it with me until I see a bin. I’d do that so animals don’t die. They could choke on it and stuff thinking that its food.
The Blue Mountains is a place that is beautiful 'cos of the habitat where all the animals live and the bushland which sounds nice where all the animals are relaxing. They just sit in the sun to sunbake and conserve energy to get their food.

I see myself as someone who is responsible, like looking after animals and bushland and all that. So the animals are here in the future 'cos they have a balance of wildlife and we need a few animals to eat.

**Subject 8**
F6, LUCY, girl, 12 years old

I think the word place means my home, my school, where I feel comfortable and where I know that I can trust people. Where I know people really well and I can talk to them, like if my mum and dad weren’t home I could go to their place and stay there. Like the person who does the crossing, we’ve known him for a very long time. He is a family friend and he comes over all the time and we know lots of people up and down our street also.

What do you mean by ‘I feel comfortable’?
To me it means that you can trust them with anything if you feel sad or lonely and you don’t want to talk to your parents then you can talk to them.

I have my next door neighbours. I don’t see them that often, but I can nearly trust them with anything. We have so much fun together. You can tell them nearly everything and they will keep it a secret if you want them to or if you are sad, or you are angry at your mum or your dad, you see them and then you can explain it to them and they will listen to you. They won’t go like ‘oh I have to go now’. They will actually sit and listen.

Any more?
They listen about everything. It’s really important because some people, if people sit and just listen to you then you think I can really trust this person. Lying makes me feel bad cos I can’t trust this person, so what’s the point of telling them something when I can trust them. Like some of my friends at school I can trust them with nearly everything, if I want them to keep a secret.

Can you explain further?
It’s part of a friendship and you need to trust somebody. I have lots of friends that I can trust. My friend who I have known since preschool has moved up to Queensland, but we still keep in contact. I also trust my mum, my brother, our family friends and my nan. My other nan died a few years ago.

Do you want to add anymore?
I have friends of different ages. My friend Chloe, she’s actually in Year 5 and we hang around each other. She plays netball with me and there’s also different people from choir and we interact with everybody. I like having friends of different ages.

Why?
It’s a good feeling because you know you can trust people and you can help others like the younger one in choir. I encourage them in sport and other classes.

Anything else?
My family does rock Eisteddfod up there, so I know someone from each grade but there are still a whole bunch of students that you don’t know, different teachers, a different Principal, different rules, different ways of doing things and you have to change classes.

Anymore about your place?
I feel comfortable at home ‘cos I know I can trust anyone. I have 3 dogs, Monty, Scruffy and Bonny. One of them is as tall as me when it stands on 2 legs. Everybody at home, with my brother sometimes we have a fight or be
I really happy and do all this stupid stuff, like dress up and go out on the trampoline. It’s really good. If I’m really angry I write a letter and hide it and then in 2 weeks you read it again. By doing this I learn that you can be angry but you never take it out on a person.

My place is my home, my school, my friend’s house and it is so comfortable, you know everyone, you can trust them.

I live in an environment that is really good, ’cos you get to know everybody. There is bush where my uncle and my cousin go walking, ride our bikes everywhere. You get to see so much on a bike – ’cos you can stop and have a look. One day when my uncle & I, were riding we found a purple leaf just sitting there, so we stopped and had a look at it. I never knew that there are purple leaves. That means it must come from a plant or tree, so there’s many different things. It was exciting discovering with my uncle. We just sat down for 10 minutes and thought about the “story of the tree” where it came from. I can share anything with him. We found other things – flowers, leaves, trees. We don’t see him that much but when we do we have a great time.

Anything else about where you live?
We go bushwalking, bike riding near Norman Lindsay where we found all these different tracks to go to. Like one day, we saw paintings on the rock and we hadn’t seen then before. My mum, dad and brother are really busy, I like doing it with my uncle or my friends ’cos we have the time. They set the time and we can go and do it. It makes me really happy and sometimes when we are exploring and that’s a bit scary in case we get lost. Sometimes there are fires, and sometimes you can just tell that it doesn’t get really dangerous. It could have been all grass before. It could’ve been a paddock, a farm, no road there.

I can look after my place by making sure I feel see people littering! I ask them not to and if I see plastic bags just about to go in the gutter, I will run up to them and to make sure they don’t hurt any animals because I love animals and I don’t want animals to die.

What do you mean?
Animals can die, fish can die, sharks can die, sometimes birds think the plastic things form milk are worms and they put it around their neck by accident and as they get older, their neck gets wider and they can stop breathing. It’s important that animals don’t die because the sea needs the animals to keep it clean, the trees sometimes need the animals and in the book I’m reading at the moment, the family is actually shooting birds and ducks to sell.

I see myself as someone who is friendly, helpful to people who are sick or can’t get to the shops. I am considerate to others. I make a lot of people laugh at school and at home. Because if I do that people will think of me as trustworthy. Making people laugh make them feel good about themselves and it makes them feel happier than they were.

Subject B
F 6 LURE, boy, 12 and am a student.

I think the word place means you are right in society, like where you belong, how everyone kind of belongs somewhere like your job and the way you live. Your place is how unique you are and that’s how you get your place. Not how unique you are but when you are unique, you have your place because no one is like you, like as a librarian that would be my place in society.

You are also unique in the way you look, the way you dress, the way you speak, your accent, the way you do things, where you go.

What do you mean by ‘place in society’?
Your place in society is where you belong. Society is the places in a certain area and the people that are there. Like the society of Faulconbridge and the people that are in Faulconbridge. Belonging is where you should be and have the right to be there.

Can you explain that further?
I don’t really have a place in society yet. Well in this school I belong here, but I don’t really have a place in society yet. Not just the school but the Blue Mountains is where I’m happy and I think I should be. It’s where I belong.

What do you mean by ‘I don’t really have a place in society yet’?
Your job defines your place because that’s where you work. Your job is like how you do things differently to other people and the way you do things to get money, which is the way you fit in to society. Someone else might have your job but they are unique as well but you are unique apart from them because you may look different and you do things differently to them. If someone wears crazy clothes or something like that, they would recognize that person by the clothes that they were wearing. Or they do a certain sport, that makes them unique in a way.

My place is the Blue Mountains and it is where I belong. It’s kind of as if I have the same personality as the Blue Mountains even though it doesn’t literally have the personality. It’s kind of the perfect place for me. It has all the things that I need.

It’s kind of like every time I go on a holiday to Klama or somewhere, and then I get home, it just feels like a relief to get home and it kind of feels that something else is relieved that I am home too. It’s a relief to get home because when you are away you are not sure that something is going to happen up here like a bush fire. When you get home you can know that it’s OK.

Anything else?
I like exploring in the bush, ‘cos it’s kind of unknown. You don’t know what will happen next. It just feels good. Well places can be similar to this but it’s not really as bushy, that’s why I like it so much. It’s kind of just the fact that you know that you could be the first person to ever step there.

I live in Woodford and it is clean, beautiful. It’s clean ‘cos you never see much litter around or no trees getting taken down. It always stays how it is. There are views from up there, seeing across Grose Valley in the morning and the mist rising. It’s just all the greens, I suppose. It’s kind of like the ocean accept the ocean is blue. It’s kind of like a sea of green, the valley itself and everything in the valley. In the mornings when you drive past Grose Valley you can see the mist down below you. It’s kind of natural. It just happens by itself.

Anything else?
There are rarely new things built. You can go back there and it’s much the same. It stays how it is. It’s not boring. I like it when a new things is built but not all the time like in other places. I just like it that it stays the same and you can know where everything is in a way.

I can look after my place by showing people what the right thing is to do and teaching them how to do things and learning from other people. Also when they teach me to listen to them about the ways that will help.

Anything else about looking after place?
With littering and pollution, teach them that this is the world we have and if people don’t look after it then it could change for the worst. We have to look after this world because we are not going to get another chance. Not just littering but pollution, with the ozone layer. The air isn’t as clean as it should be and the waters are full of rubbish which is killing off animal life. With smoking and air fumes it’s bad for the ozone layer and the atmosphere. It puts holes in it.
The animals get dogged in their throats and the waters get dirty and maybe the salt rises and they can't live their anymore. They just die off. If it rises dramatically they can't just change. They can't live there anymore. It's something -- they have a certain amount of salt that they can take and if it gets too much then they just die.

I see myself in the Blue Mountains as someone that tries to do their best at everything instead of going home and knowing that I didn't try hard enough. I'd be disappointed in myself because I know that I could've done better. The amount of disappointment depends on what the circumstances are.

Subject 9

F6 HANNAH, girl, 12 years old.

I think the word place means your home or your special place that you like to be at.

What do you mean 'special place'?

I have a special place down the back of my house. It's like a little rock area and it's got this seat sort of thing in it that the rock has made. It's really peaceful and it's really cool down there 'cos there's all sorts of stuff like there's really nice plants and flowers and stuff. It makes me feel happy. Flowers are usually bright and they smell nice and stuff. So it makes me feel happy. The colour makes me feel happy. If it's a dark colour it makes you feel different but if it's a light pink it makes you feel more cheerful. They just smell nice.

Anything else about your special place?

My special place is in the bush and it's peaceful not like in the city where there's always cars going by and there's always people honking their horns and people doing stuff, whereas in the Blue Mountains there's not as many big buildings and not as much traffic so it's not as noisy. Not so crammed, like in the city. You don't feel so surrounded by all these cars, almost like there's countries that are landlocked, where you feel free sort of thing 'cos there's a lot of space.

My place is around my home and its good, great, nice. I like my home because I am always spending time in it. It's a really nice home. We are always at home doing stuff, after school we go home and in the mornings.

Anything else?

It's nice being around your family in a really nice place. Like when you wake up in the morning I go down stairs to this big area that is all tiles and stuff. It's very spacious and you just feel very free sort of thing, instead of in a little tiny small house with carpet.

My family is a good family to be around. They can be annoying at times but they are nice 'cos they look after you. They are just your family so you feel really close and safe and everything. Even if your brother and sister is 2 years older you still feel very safe. Like if something does go wrong there's always people to help you out in your home. It doesn't matter if they say something you don't like, you'll always still love each other. It's not like meeting a new person.

Anything else about your place?

Around my home, our house is very private. We are not always into someone's window or something. It's just trees and looking at other people's backyards but it's not that bad because we have lots of trees and rocks...If you look at the window and see someone right next to you, you feel a bit uncomfortable, sort of thing because you want to be on your own, doing your own thing without having other people.

What do you mean by 'doing your own thing'?

The privacy, the fresh air, all the trees and stuff. If it's all polluted you feel cramped, you feel very squashed. With fresh air you feel very free. If you run forever, you'd never get lost sort of thing. Cos you'd always be there. You just get that feeling sort of thing. It makes you feel as though, if you've just had something bad happen to you and you go out you'd just feel like you could start all over again sort of thing. Like it makes you feel relaxed
and never all upright and stuff... as though the air is all thin. If you've got polluted air it feels very clogged up but with fresh air it feels very thin like it's made out of nothing.

I can look after my place by not chucking rubbish and not destroying the trees and plants and being careful when you walk and put creatures where they were meant to be.

Anything else?
Plastic breaks down and can affect the soil. Also, the trees and plants and stuff, if they get stuck in it they could die. Don't destroy trees as they give you fresh air which makes you feel free and be careful when walking. If there is a plant and you step on it, it would die or you could accidentally step on an animal including a snake.
I see myself as someone who is just an ordinary person helping the Blue Mountains but not so much that you have to go and protest and stuff like that, but just doing the little things like not littering. If everyone does the little things, it helps it by a big amount. Some protesters get out of control sometimes. I don't think it's typical for them to get angry.

What do you mean by an 'ordinary person'?
Just people who live here, get education here, do stuff here. Not like someone who is well known in the Blue Mountains, or protesting and have come here for a reason, not just to live.

Subject 10
E6, EMILY, girl, 12 years old

I think the word place means a special area to someone or something.

My place is my home and it is special because I live there and I feel safe there. It is special because my family live there with me and I have lots of fun playing games and things like that.

I live in the Blue Mountains and it is a very beautiful place there's lots of things that I could do if I wanted to when I get older I know there would be lots of jobs. It makes me feel glad because I know that I can choose.

I can look after my place by cleaning up the environment. Pick up litter and stuff and recycle things. Planting trees because of the greenhouse gases from rubbish and things you put it in can cause really big problems for the environment. Trees can clear the atmosphere of being... they get the carbon dioxide out of the air and they put out oxygen.

Subject 11
E6, KIERAN, boy, 11 years old

I like to do sport and explore in the bush to see all the wildlife. It's fun to try and find them because sometimes it's hard and you have to look really hard and then they look really nice.

I think the word place means where you live. You have a right to look after it and you should look after your place, home and the bush. Because it's where I live there and it makes me relax because I don't have to worry about any other stuff apart from the animals coming to a yard and eating the leaves. They eat all the plants and everything and mum really likes the plants.

My place is a nice relaxing place. You can always go out into the bush whenever you like to and it's because I know I'm safe. I feel in good condition with all my family. They can't hurt you or anything you just feel really close to them

Can you explain further?
The trees and the noise are relaxing and you always know that your safe and at home in the bush. Just the swaying of the trees, it makes you feel good because you know you’re in safe in their hands. It makes you feel protected from all the other wildlife, that can be like snakes and that. It sort of feels like it’s your parents because they are moving around and there’s lots of them.

I live in a great National Park like the Blue Mountains where there are lots of animals and you have lots of friends around like the next door neighbours and across the road. It’s just having friends so then you don’t feel lonely. They make me feel safe everywhere because there is nearly one person in all the streets... So then we feel safe like if you fall off your bike and I’ll come out and help if their home.

Anything else?
I can look after my place by looking after the environment and all around the place where I live, the streets and the town. Just respect for everyone as well as the environment. Just don’t harm them. Don’t harm the animals and the people by bullying them.

Is there anything else you’d like to say?
You should have respect and don’t hurt anyone because they might care about the environment.

Also, not hurting the animals and finding a way not to hurt anything like the trees which would to live in the environment. Riping down all the trees that could be homes of koalas, as well as lizards and snakes and birds. If we knock down the bush in the blue mountains otherwise it wouldn’t be called the ‘Blue Mountains’. Because although the eucalypt trees let out the oxygen that makes the ‘blue’ mountains.

I see myself as a person who just caring after the trees and the animals. Someone who takes care of all the environment.

Subject: 12
65 SARA, girls, 12 years old

My name is Sarah and I am friendly nice and I like to help people.
I think the word place means community and friends. Like helping people and doing stuff like helping trees grow.

What do you mean?
You can cut some of another plant and stick it on the ground or get some from another shop and caring and helping people. If they’re failing over helping them up. Or if they’re in trouble just tell them like if I they have got no lunch give them some of the mine.

My place is friendly and caring like home.

I live in Wymallee and it is a nice place because people are really nice to speak to and everything, if no one speaks to you it’s pretty rude and I just like speaking to people.

I can look after my place by helping things about what they can do and how things like feed the animals, like the endangered species or normal animals like cats and dogs.

The Blue Mountains is the place where there’s gum trees and it’s another bit of Australia. I feel good because this is where I live and like everything is in its lots of places, like the bush and the outback.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by planting trees and cleaning up the place so that it’s not bad and helping in every way that I can. Because we keep cleaning up there’s hardly much pollution everywhere and if it gets in the sea it might hurt the animals in the sea.
Anything else?
Planting trees for more oxygen so if the trees died there are more trees to help us.

I see myself as a person who is friendly and kind and I will help to do stuff, help the animals and helped everywhere that needs to be helped. by cleaning up and doing anything that needs to be helped.

**Subject 13**
**E6**  WILLIAM, boy, I am 12 years old.

I think the word place means somewhere like the bush.

I live in a house and it is made of brick.

I can look after my place by...there's nothing to look after, 'cos it's clean and if it's got huge fallen down trees it's natural, like when the wind comes.

The Mountain's is better than living in the city. I have a bigger backyard and there's a lot more room.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by keeping it clean like picking up all the rubbish.

**Subject 14**
**E6**  LIAM, boy, 11 years old

I am fun, interesting, 11 and cool.

I think the word place means home or 'a place to hang your hat'. Like the figure of speech, so that a good feeling to know that you can hang your hat on a nail because Charlotte the dog would rip the hat to pieces.

My place is cool and it's in the bush which I really like because I've been studying herpetology at home. I really like snakes. They are my favourite animals. My house is really special because you have all your family, all you need and cool friends next door. If you have no family there'd be no you. If you had no family, you might be self-taught but it is unlikely that you could talk. Like your family teaches you how to talk when your baby.

I live in the bush. I cannot live in the city it's too crowded, no trees and there's really wacky people there. The only good part about Sydney is the water and the Opera House. I reckon the bush is top quality because of everything you want there. There's even food sometimes, snakes, wildlife, caves.

Can you explain further?
There are not many caves but three years ago I found one. We went walking down the bush and we found small shelf and that's what we think is the cave ...my aunty came along as she went to explore further along the track so we went off the track and there was about a 10 m high ledge that looks like it went in so I walked over there. It was huge so we went in off the track and it was about a 10 metre high ledge so I walked over to the cave. Then I found it went deeper in but I didn't have a torch and I wasn't really gutsy enough to go in there by myself. It's not really good to go caving by yourself. You could never really know what would happen if you go bushwalking by yourself.

Kieren, he came over to my house last weekend for a sleepover and we went into the bush. It's nice and cool down there and we brought lunch and everything you need in case we got lost and we started to go deeper but then it started to get cloudy. We went into the cave to have lunch and then it started to rain and we waited there are about three minutes until the rain stops and it became more clear. Then we were in a hurry to get back home as my mum was pretty nervous about having another person's kid over.
Anything else?
I felt great after it, really successful because I could never find. I was expecting dad to because he drives down there to get some wood which has been left over by the Grose Valley Fire. I was expecting him because he was always looking for it.
I felt a great touch of success and genius because when I looked at all the rocks, it was made of sedimentary rocks and a little bit down, everything was made of igneous rocks.

I live further up the mountains. It is beautiful. It's got beautiful people. The only thing bad about it is that most people are protecting all the time and dad doesn't have the time because he is a fitter and turner. Everyone is always protesting against something I don't know what they do.

I can look after my place by keeping watch over what's going on but I do want to be a sticky beak like one of my neighbours. But in a way he is looking after the place.

I can look after my place by watching over trees and what people are doing. Watching over various people. Making sure that no one goes on our property.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not littering, not destroying the environment, no vandalism. Putting in an amusement park helping with our tourism.

Subject 15
6 E Jackson, boy, I am 12 years old. I play footy and guitar.
I think the word place means a happy place where you can go to forget everything. In case something bad happens. Like something bad that you've done that you regret.

A place could also be something else. Whatever someone wants it to be. If someone has a really good imagination they could imagine themselves into a different place. And someone who can take themselves away to a place and just bring them back. Like daydreaming.

My place would probably be a place where everyone is equal and no one is above anyone else and everyone has an equal say. It's a place where everyone gets a chance to say what they want a say and do what they want to do. Sometimes people don't get a fair share of something and everyone puts themselves first and then the other person is second or below.

I live in a house and its very nice home that I like. I have lived in it for 7 years. It's got a nice garden. I just like the feel and where it is, ... gives me a warm feeling, sort of like a happy feeling.

Anything else?
There's lots of space in the backyard and you can just go off and play with the friends of something and you have plenty of space. I also go off with a friend or something. We can just walk around and explore. To get away from everyone talking and do this and do that.

What do you mean?
It's the way that, when I wanna sit down and do stuff they tell me you do this and do this. I know it's whenever I wanna sit down and do stuff they tell me you do this. I just normally get up and do but sometimes I get really annoying.

I can look after my place by doing the gardening not letting things die by watering them don't kick up plants and stuff make it look nice.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is its voted in our national park and has got 25% of eucalyptus in Australia or something like that. It's got the wonderful blue glow of all the eucalyptus leaves and all the vapour. It's a place
where lots of it is unexplored like all the valleys and creeks and everything.

Is there anything else?
I like exploring in the bush by go check out animals. Me and my friends we ride around there and play different games and stuff like that. The stuff you find when you adventure and find something seen before and find something you haven’t seen before.
You can be an adventurer like me and explore things which have stayed where they have already been found. I just feel great to go down and look at all the stuff and go into little caves and look at all the rocks and stuff.

I can look after the blue Mountains by not littering and looking after like saving energy and stuff like that. It’s also help the needy global issue but it’s also helping the environment.

I see myself as part of the blue Mountains because I was born here was brought up here, this is the only place I’ve ever lived. I’ve never lived anywhere else.

Subject 16
E6 JOSHUA, boy, 12 years old

I think that the word place means like some way you can go somewhere. Like a house, park or city or something. It depends on the place that you are at.
Being in place depends on what you do at different times of the day. At home you could play and ride your bike with the friends. Like if you play and ride your bike and to stuff with the friends. Or you could go on the computer and watch TV and go out on the street or at the back and play with the dogs. Or go to the shops and to the movies. You can do lots of things around the house. Do chores. At night a good sleep or it is somewhere where you can relax and meet people like grandparents and relatives.

Anything else?
A place is also somewhere where you can go on relax and other people can go. If like go and talk with your friends and have a picnic and meet people there like grandparents, relatives and stuff. It’s somewhere where you can sleep and be looked after and raised by your parents.

My place is warm and a lot of other things. Warm and comfortable not too big and not too small. It’s not a massive house and it’s not a tiny house.

I live in yellow rock and it is peaceful because there’re not too many cars around making too much noise and you know everyone. If you get hurt, you can go and talk to somebody else if your parents aren’t there.

Anything else?
You can have more friends, friends my age old and younger. It doesn’t matter what age they are they can still be a friend.

I can look after my place by picking up litter, like stop driving to school so much like stop the pollution and greenhouse gases and stuff
If you start cutting down trees through logging. Trees make oxygen and for koalas and if you cut down all the trees not everyone would live. The trees give animals homes. If they keep cutting down trees we get rid of the native possums and koalas. That’s not a good thing.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by trying to stop people cutting down trees and only cut down dead ones.
And the ones you cut down plant a new one.

I see myself as someone who is learning. Having fun in the Blue Mountains. Learning about the environment and everything else in life. Thinking about your future and stuff. When I grow up
I might wanna get an apprenticeship and a good job. It would be good to live near mum and dad and nan. Cause nan lives across the road from me.

**Subject 17**  
E6  
DEANNA, girl, 11 years old

I think the place is an area. It can be anywhere. I suppose it has to have a name. I don’t really know why it’s just what I think of the place. When I think of the place, I think of an area that has the name... anywhere that has land. I can have a name like Winnaklee where I live. A lot of rural bush areas don’t have names.

My place is Yellow Rock. It is my home that’s where I live. It is near some bush and it is the place where I call home. It is the place where my family is and all the things that I love like my family and some of my very precious things like my toys, a rocking horse and the snow dome and a couple of dolls I’ve had since I was born. They are one of the first things I ever knew. I played with them a lot when I was little and I used to cry when I left them behind.

Anything else?
I suppose toys are special to little kids because it’s almost as if they’ve got a responsibility for them and... because they hold my memories. I make sure I should preserve them for future because without them you wouldn’t know about the past and that means a lot. I can remember people that I don’t know now.

I wouldn’t be alive now if my mum had never looked after me and my world revolved around my mum because I didn’t really do anything without her... I don’t remember much but I know that’s what it was like from watching my little brothers and how they react [to mum].

Anything else about your place?
I mention the area surrounding it like the bush. In the bush I like watching the animals like the birds we get a lot of birds. I suppose I want to learn more about them. I just think there are a little bit funny because they are so different to ours we not used to the way they do things. Actually there are a lot like humans in some ways but not in other ways because whenever they come for the seeds they always fight over at about who’s going to get the seeds. My mum and me have learnt some bird calls.

The bush is very peaceful and it’s very calming and it’s very alive. Well if you go into the bush there’s always things moving. If you dig in it, you’ll find earthworms. If you look in the trees, there are birds and the trees are always whispering to each other. I think it shows that life comes in many forms not just the way we normally think about it.

What do you mean?
Well when we think about life we think about humans and when we think about death we think about people dying. But if something is not alive but then it doesn’t necessarily have to be dead as such, but it can be like soil if it’s not alive it’s not very nice soil some terms it’s got a lot of clay in it. But if something is alive it’s got a lot of movement and life in it. I don’t really know what word to use. The wind is whistling through the trees and all the animals dig in and whatever else they do.

Can you explain this further?
I think it shows that life comes in many forms not just the way we normally think about it. When we think about life we think about humans and when we think about death we think about people dying. But if something is not alive then it doesn’t necessarily have to be dead as such, but it can be like soil. If it’s not alive it’s not very nice soil. Sometimes it’s got a lot of clay in it. But if something is alive it’s got a lot of movement and life in it. The wind is whistling through the trees and all the animals dig in and whatever else they do. I think it calms me, the sound and noises. I ... feel really proud that I live near something that’s mine and something that’s alive makes me feel proud because I don’t want to see something that is dead like a city.
I can look after my place by finding out more about it. Let other people know about it...about it like how it works how to preserve its why you need to preserve it. You can let them know through your local council and In the bush for example, there’s a lot of national parks and there is awareness and stuff.

Because the Blue Mountains is a national park and is not in very many other places like that. A to be preserved for the future.

I can look after the blue Mountains by preserving its learning more about it and making sure we don’t contaminate it.

I see myself in the Blue Mountains as someone who hopes to try and find a way to preserve it and to keep its magic for the future. I want to teach people about it and show people what they can learn through the bush, all about it being alive rather than about the animals that live in it and about how it interacts together. It's like it's all interacting and you can just feel it around you and be a part of it. It's just sort of magic that it's sort of about it that you can't really see, I don't think there's really another word for it. To me it's something that we don't quite understand. It doesn't really mean what most people think.

Subject 18
E6 CHARLOTTE, girl, 12 years old

If I think the word place means my home, the area and somewhere where I feel comfortable. My home is the house that I live in where I have my family and all my things that I need like toys, food and water and the comfort of my home...my bed and stuff.

My toys are quite important because I’ve had them a long time because they are keepsakes and something that I can remember from when I was little. It’s good to think how you were and how you why now and why you have changed...probably to see how your progressing in the life, sometimes I see if I’m on the right track and then I’m happy.

Anything else?
I feel comfortable around the people who loved me and are important to me like my family who live at home with me and just to have the comfort of my room and to know that I feel safe where I am. If I’ve got my family and my friends by my side... I keep doing well. I feel comfortable around the people who love me and are important to me.

Can you explain this further?
Well I know where I am and where I stand which is good to feel comfortable and safe. The fact that where I stand is my home and school and street which is where I live and with my school work and my friends and stuff like that.

Well if I didn’t have those things that I mentioned I probably wouldn’t get a very good result on the academic side and but I’ve got everything that I need and I don’t have any worries so will help me in the future. If I’m happy and I feel good about what I’m doing when I get the good marks, then it’s always good to be doing something that you’re happy with.

Anything else about place?
In my area it is the Blue Mountains and it’s a very lovely place to live and it provides everything that I need. Well it’s very bushy it and there’s lots of different opportunities that you can take and there’s very friendly people in the area. It’s just a lovely area overall.

It’s important to me because it makes the area look very pretty to visitors that come in and also its it’s a lovely to
look at and know that you've got a lovely place for area. It's just over all, it is a good place to secure your future.

What do you mean?
If you lived in an area that wasn't very friendly you wouldn't be very happy and you wouldn't feel very comfortable with the people that are around you because you know that they could not be very nice to you and you could be treated badly and that they could really hurt you.

My place is the atmosphere of the Blue Mountains and to my home and it is the lovely bushy area and the comfort of just where I am now. We've got lovely area here and a lovely place and it's very fresh...nice foods and good drinking water. If that all went downhill all the then it wouldn't be as nice a place to live.

All parts of the environment like the bush area keep the wildlife going and also the farmer's area which has food and wheat and stuff.

I can look after my place by doing all things right by not hurting the environment by littering so you can keep the wildlife going. Because if it gets into the ocean it can kill most of the animals and if they eat it and if it gets into the bush those animals can die that way to.

What do you mean by 'it'?
If they eat the litter and it goes into their stomachs. If I did find out about extra ways to stop it, there probably wouldn't be many things that I could do except if you try and get other people who are working on it already to try and find extra ways, then they could help a more than I could. Well I could do some things but it couldn't be much I could do because I'm just a kid and I don't work on that or anything.

What do you mean by that?
There are opportunities for kids when they get older but at the moment unless you really really wanted to, you could get involved in something if your passionate. But on a day to day basis there's not much opportunity. Just because they are older and they can get into the study side of it.

I see myself as someone who is part of the community. It's all about the people. If someone was gone it wouldn't be the same place. I think that I am a person in the Blue Mountains who is just like any other. If any other person was gone then it would seem different. Like my family and my friends and even some people that I know outside of school.

What do you mean by that?
It's good to know people who had just don't go to your school so that you can meet other people where you live...so that you can have a change. If you know them really well even though they don't go to your school, It shows if that you don't have to be really close to someone to know them and to be friends with them.

Subject 19
E6 LAURA, girl, 12 years old

I think the word place means where you feel comfortable. Like at home because you know that you are safe. You know that you're not going to be hurt in any way. You can sort of relax. Like you feel comfortable at home so that was like your place sort of thing. Somewhere you like to go like a cubby or something.

My place is my house and nice. There's a lot of stuff I'd like to do there like read books and watch TV.

I live in the Blue Mountains and it's a good place to live. Because there is lots of bush around and it's not too crowded. It's nice bush because there's not just all buildings around everywhere. The bush just looks better because buildings are boring. Because there's birds in the trees and the wind moves them and buildings would just stay there.
It's just easier to go places because there aren't many people there like traffic jams and heaps of people everywhere.

I can look after my place by not littering. Keeping it nice. Because animals can choke on the bits of plastic bands that would pollute everything so he wouldn't be very nice. Like the river might have heaps of plastic bags floating around. Because birds could suffocate in the plastic bags and fish could eat and choke on the plastic.

Anything else?
You wouldn't feel like swimming in the river because the be plastic everywhere

The Blue Mountains is a place that got lots of bush.

**Subject 20**
**F 4** CHRI$ boy, 10 years old.

I think the word place means an area of space which has a name. Like a large open place, like a park and National Parks. The people know the different places there are and areas with different names, bushwaka and stuff.

Can you explain this more?
Names are important so they don't get mixed up with which place they want to go to. So they don't go to the wrong places.

My place is the Blue Mountains because it's where I live and it's my home area and I've grown up with the place. I've lived here all my life and I haven't seen any other areas.
I know everywhere and every place in the area. Well I've grown up with it and that makes me feel unique.

I live in Australia and it's my home country. I also live in Faulconbridge. I'd like to learn about Sir Henry Parkes because he named Faulconbridge after his mum. I think he is a special person.

Why?
He helped Australia to become a better country. He started some schools for poor people so they can learn more stuff which they didn't actually learn about. They get to learn how to read and have jobs and have a better life but knowing how to read and write so they know the essentials of life. Knowing how to read and write and that the main thing in life you do.

I can look after my place by keeping it clean and picking up other people's rubbish which is choking animals, by them choking on it and eating it and suffocating.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is a really unique place because there's no other place like it. It's got different bushlands where you find different animals and different rocks and bugs that you've never seen before. I love rocks and find them very fascinating how they are made. I think they are unique and beautiful 'cos there's different colours and textures and layers.
I like different animals because you can actually see them when you've never learnt about them before.

**Subject 23**
**F 4 Bill, boy, 10 years old**

I think the word place means...don't know...
My place is home and it is comfortable—not irritating. No one bugs me to do anything. I don’t need to do anything urgent or straight away like at school. I just play on the X-box ‘cos it’s fun. There’s tonnes of games you can play. They are cool and fun. And I don’t have to do any work except for chores which I earn money for, sweep the kitchen downstairs and I have to sweep the stairs.

I live in a home and it is fun ‘cos you can play around and go outside and climb trees. It’s fun ‘cos it gets you exercising and playing around like jumping off the trees and swinging on the branches. It’s dangerous but it’s still fun—dangerous ‘cos you might fall and break a leg or something and fun because it’s just fun.

Anything else?
I’ve been ill that all my life. I want to get injured so that I can go to hospital and see what it’s like.

I can look after my place by helping out, and don’t bash stuff into walls, ‘cos the wall might break and the house might fall down. Also sweeping and keeping it clean. To stop getting ants in your house.

I see myself as someone who is...

**Subject 22**
F4  ZOE, girl, 9 years old

I think the word place means “there is a place over there that I would like to go, for example, Katoomba or Sydney”. They have names and if they have names then they are a place as well. Also, places where you can go and play.

My place is home and I like it because it’s nice and comfortable. As in, you can go home and it’s really nice to be home, ‘cos that’s where you live and it’s got everything that you like as in your dog, cats, toys, bed.

Can you explain this more?
It’s really nice just to have them around. If you want to go and talk to somebody or sit down and play on the couch or go and talk to your dogs. My dog and cats give you comfort a lot and also when you want to play with them, they are also there to play with.

What do you mean?
If I’m sad I can just go and play with my toys. Because my sister sometimes gets angry with me and she hits me and it would hurt and then I go into my room and play with my toys. My bed makes me feel comfortable ‘cos it’s got all those sheets and covers and that keeps you warm at night. The pets can cheer you ‘cos they are always moving around with you. So then it makes you feel happy. Like if you have a problem you can go and talk to your mum about it on the couch.

I can look after my place by tidying my room to stop the cockroaches in case they crawl on my bed. Helping my mum, dad & sister out. My sister is only 2 and my dad wants me to watch her while they are outside talking. Sometimes my mum will get really really angry so I just make my own dinner. I tidy my room. Sometimes my mum will leave me alone for an hour to get ready for school when she has gone to work. We have a water tank so we can only have a 1 minute shower. We have water restrictions and the rain fills up the water tank so we can use it on the garden. So we don’t have a big water bill.

The Blue Mountains is the place that is important to me ‘cos we have lots of bushland to have a picnic and for bushwalks. It’s also important to me ‘cos some animals need homes and some animals don’t have any homes, so people have to go out and find those animals and give them homes, if they are injured. Then they release it back into the wild when it’s all better.

Anything else?
It's nice to look out and see bushland and not see all those houses. In the middle of the valley, it's nice to just look at all the trees and think, wow, this is where I live. I am very lucky. Then we know that we are not living in the city and it's just nice to see all those trees. Bushwalking is a nice thing to do because if you go bushwalking you might see all the trees and might even be able to see a lyrebird or wattle bird. It's nice to see an animal 'cos that might be the only opportunity you get to see a rare animal. 'Cos most people would hunt rare animals and put them on the wall.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by being sure that our family doesn't litter and we don't leave anything behind if we go on a picnic because near our bin we have a recycling place and we put all of our recycling in there.

You also wouldn't knock down too many trees for houses, 'cos there wouldn't be any room for bushwalks. Also not to leave things behind to stop birds eating them like plastic.

I see myself as someone who is making sure as a bushwalker and someone who teaches people how they can help all the animals if they ever find one. Me and my mum found a little bird that had a broken leg so we called WIREs and they said let it go if it flies it flies and if it doesn't we'll come and pick it up. It flew away.

**Subject 23**

**F4 ZAC, boy, 10 years old**

I think the word place means what you can do and where you live. My place is helping people or my place is to have fun or something like that.

*My place is...address...and it is kind of to make people laugh and to have fun. 'Cos I can do lots of accents like...an example...When I do the accent it's like they'll laugh at you but not in a bad way but not in a good way. If they're laughing at you 'cos you've done something bad and you've gotten in trouble in class or something you probably wouldn't let them be friends.*

I live in house and it is medium sized. I have a pretty big backyard. I have a dog. My mum and dad are divorced and I live with my dad mostly. I see my mum on weekends but sometimes she's done silly stuff.

**Anything else about where you live?**

My dog's name is Max and sometimes I go up in the fenced off area for him and run around and chase him and stuff. I rely on him for being my friend and protecting me. He is my friend 'cos he plays with me a lot and I rely on him for protecting me 'cos if someone tries to rob me he will get them. Like if someone bad comes in he will sense it because he is a Doberman Pincher.

**Anything else?**

We have a big backyard. We have a stone wall that is a 100 years old like when the settlers come in. There's a fenced off area and then I have my trampoline just beside it. I have a tree that I climb on. I'm thinking of making a cubby house in it. Then there's my dad's garage next to the 100 years old wall.

*Keep going...*

I just like climbing the tree. Like hanging around and all that. I used to have a tree at my mum's house and it used to be really good but then the neighbours next door chopped it down 'cos they had to build a house and I really didn't like that so I was looking for another tree and dad's house had one. I just started climbing it maybe 2/3 weeks ago.

The other tree was in Sydney at my mum's house 'cos we always used to have fun. It was big and trunkly and all the leaves were hanging out but this one is a bit twindlier. It's a bit easier to climb up but the branches are still strong.
We used to build in it. We used to hang on it. My friends down there they used to live in a boat shed but they have made it into a house to live in and my mum was renting that and they had a big house up the top. They always used to come down like on the weekends cos that's when I went to my mums and we used to always play in the tree.

Anything else about the tree?
My friends were building a cubby house in it. I was really upset when the neighbours cut down the tree. It was because of the tree and my friends. They didn't even talk to us about it. They just cut it down with a chainsaw. So it wasn't that good. Me and my friends always used to climb in it.

Anything else about your place?
We also have a stone wall that is 100 years old like when the settlers came. ... I don't think many other people have things that are 100 years old in their back yard. I think it's amazing that back then they could still build things like that. It's got sandstone bricks and the bricks today look pretty similar to the sandstone ones except that they're that big and bricks today are that big. It's like we are relating the people in the past to the people in the future 'cos it's helped us learn how to build houses. Probably like it has [modern] bricks in places of [sandstone bricks] and that's probably what houses used to be made of in the olden days. So knowing about the past helps us now.

I live in a house. It's pretty big. It has a lounge room area and a little door to go into the kitchen. There's a little cupboard and then we put our TV ... explains the layout of the house...

I can look after my place by keeping it clean and not leaving things around and pretending it's a garbage bin or something, 'cos if that happens you'd be living in pig sty and then if you were living in a pigsty not many people would come to your house. There could be diseases in there.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is very calm and it's not as bad as the city 'cos the city has horns, car pollution and all that; but here there's lots of fresh air and you can just breath it all in. Sometimes when I went to the shops with my mum in the city I used to smell the sewers and it didn't smell nice. Here the fresh air is pretty good and the water tastes nice. Mum's water used to be cloudy and polluted. If it was polluted and cloudy and all that it might not be that good for you. You might be carrying sicknesses or rust. It doesn't have lots of cars and trucks beeping their horns driving around. And you can sit without much disturbing you.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not littering. If you litter it will turn into a big mess. The mess will kill all the animals, like the fish get stuck in between the beer can things and that's what could happen to possums and all that. All the pollution could sink and it could rot the trees and grow fungus.

Can you explain that more?
It wouldn't rot quickly but it would rot in a year or 2 or 3 years and the tree would fall down and inside a family of possums might die 'cos there would be a big vibration and it could crack or something and they might get stuck in it and then it might fall on the trunk hole and might get stuck that way. If you litter there'll be lots of candy wrappers and waste and it would be up to our legs. You'd want to see all the trees and views. You wouldn't want to see rubbish and junk in the view.

I see myself as someone who is growing up and trying to be good. Like don't screw up, like you don't do something bad. You gotta be good and do nothing that is really silly or something. I am growing up in the Blue Mountains and probably live in the Blue Mountains. I think I'd turn out a bit different if I grew up in the Blue Mountains instead of the city 'cos there'd be different schools, I'd have different friends and a different community.

Subject 24
F4 SOPHIE, boy, 10 years old
I think the word place means a special place which I like mostly. A special place is a place where you feel comfortable. There could be another place where you couldn’t feel comfortable. So there’s different sorts of places.

What do you mean ‘comfortable’?
Where there is not violent people around and it’s nice and quiet and there’s not a little city and stuff. There’s not a lot of buses and cars around and there’s not a lot of people around. In the city it’s very crowded and there’s a lot of people around and it’s not good. ‘Cos there’s big buildings and there’s millions of people around which mean you feel surrounded which mean you can’t get away.

My place is my home and it is special to me. ‘Cos it’s my house and my house is one of the main things I would choose. It’s special ‘cos it’s big, it’s comfortable and it’s just your home. You feel comfortable and you don’t want to leave it.

Anything else about your place?
It’s also special because I live near Tom Hunter Park. I can go down and train for running and soccer and when I’ve got little athletics on Saturday I can down there. I live exactly in front of the line that joins the top of the T that goes down. I go there with my brother and my dad or friends. It’s boring with my friends. I like going down with my brother and my dad cos they race me or we play soccer or football. My mum just walks around the park...that’s boring. I want her to give me piggy backs, jump into the sand and stuff like that. It’s a lot of fun.

I live in Falconbridge and it’s a nice quiet suburb cos it’s not like a city. It’s got nice quiet people who know each other and say hi randomly whether they know you or not. So it’s the fact that people are friendly.

What do you mean?
It’s a nice community. Nice people who live in Falconbridge and a nice village centre and stuff. This includes Springwood as well, ‘cos my dad lives in Springwood. It’s a little main road and all the shops are on the main street.

Anything else?
I have friends in both suburbs. Quite a few in Faulconbridge and Springwood. It’s important to have friends in both places where you live ‘cos then you don’t feel alone.

I can look after my place by keeping it clean and tidy and by not wrecking my stuff and taking care of it. Keeping it safe. It’s important ‘cos people might give you things e.g. my mother had a prism from her mother, and I had it when I was little. Some things have memories. If you wreck stuff, there’s nothing to do.

What do you mean?
When you live in a pigsty it’s terrible. My dad’s house is like a pigsty unless he cleans it. It’s good to have it clean ‘cos then you know where things are and when friends come over you don’t feel embarrassed cos it’s not messy. Sometimes it’s good to have it messy too. ‘Cos it’s fun to have it messy. If you have blankets everywhere you can just bounce on them.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is quiet, beautiful, it’s got nice people, nice community, you do sports up here. We have got the 3 sisters, the Zigzag Railway— it’s fun, little town centres, the National Park. We are actually not cutting down trees and we have nice smell there. Foresty sort of smell and gum trees which is a pretty good smell. It’s better than the smell of gases and pollution, it’s better than pollution and it’s nice to walk through. National Park’s are fun to walk through because you can jump all over everything. You can go over ridges and walk through waterfalls which is my favourite bit.

I can look after place by not cutting down trees—trees are part of the environment and if we didn’t have trees I would probably hate to live in the Blue Mountains. Trees are one of my favourite things. You can climb them, you can build tree houses in them and you can sleep up there, with my friends.
Anything else?  
I like climbing trees cos it’s fun it’s like an adventure. You have to use your mind to find a way up. My dad helps us in some situations but he likes let us find our way up as well. When you use your mind—you have to work out where to put your feet and hands and push up and try and find place to hold on to and not fall.

I see myself as someone who is a competitive sport player. I have gone to regional for high jump for the school and the Blue Mountains. The sports I concentrate on the most are soccer, skiing, athletics and surfing. I’ve been skiing once this year already. I surfed with Pam Burnidge she lives down in Mollymook and I took surf lessons. My grandparents bought me a surf board and I stay with them when I go surfing every summer and sometimes in autumn and spring. I surf when I stay with my grandparents. I go down there every second weekend in summer. I go surfing with my mum and mum’s boyfriend and his daughter and Lachlan (brother) might bring a friend.

I love sport. It’s a challenge. You have to work your way and find a way to get through.

Subject 25
F4, SAM, boy, 8 years old

I think the word place means a certain place where you are going. It’s all a different one so you can’t be in the same place. There’s all different places like the shopping centres, basketball courts, school, home.

My place is my favourite place at a soccer field because playing soccer is my favourite thing to do. Most of my friends are there and I get to talk to them. I like riding my bike because I like to really fast down the hills ‘cos you get the wind to blow in your face. I like the wind on hot days ‘cos it cools you down. It feels really fun ‘cos you are going really fast. Most of the time I ride with my big brother so I get to have some time with him too.

I live in a house and it is pretty big, it’s got about 4 storey’s. It’s very large. Lots of people can go in there at the same time. Last week we had about 15 people in our house ‘cos it was my brother’s birthday party. I like the big house but I also like my old house ‘cos I had some really nice neighbours. We moved last year. You could basically just call them and say do you want to come over and they did. I don’t like being on my own so I liked them always being there. I liked them ‘cos one of them was younger than me which means that you’re the boss of them instead of them being the boss of you. They didn’t seem to mind it. They were lots of fun like the older one Ali, he likes riding his bike too so we’d go riding together.

I can look after my place by stop littering. If we keep littering all bush will die and you kill all the possums and birds out the back. They could eat the plastic bag and probably choke on it or put their head down a can and can’t get it off and all the air will suffocate them.

Littering causes greenhouse gases. I don’t how. You could try not to smashing glasses.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is sort of big. I think it’s a shame that they are cutting down all the bush to build houses. I want to keep the bush. If you cut down the bush, then none of the animals can survive there ‘cos you chop down all their food and it’s killing their habitat too. Also, if you cut down all the trees we won’t be able to breath, we’ll just suffocate ‘cos trees blow out oxygen and suck in ... I forgot.

The Blue Mountains is big so you never know what you’ll see there. I think it’s very interesting, ’cos I hope that I could explore a new place. You’d feel like you’ve done something for the community so you can have new areas where you can go to do all different things...like you could go for new bushwalks.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not littering. We want to do this that said when you fluff it causes global warming. They didn’t really explain why but it was called ‘Waste Watchers’ which is about watching where you recycle stuff and what stuff you recycle and what stuff you don’t recycle, which bins to put it in and make sure you put it in the bin.
I see myself as someone who is... I don't make a big difference but everyone makes a difference. Say if we didn't have enough teachers well kids wouldn't be able to learn and help. Kids don't make a big difference but they can still make a difference.

Subject 26
F4  LACHALU, boy, 8 years old.

I think the word place means somewhere you live to survive, somewhere to store stuff and sleep. You would store food and clothing.

My place is special and it is in the Blue Mountains. It's special cos it's a great place to live and it's not in the noisy city. It's great to live cos there's lots of nice bushwalks and places to walk. The bushwalks are nice 'cos they have nice things to look at along the way like Australian trees and stuff. Australian trees represent Australia.

What do you mean? They spread around everywhere so that trees don't get cut down. 'Cos they are part of our environment 'cos they are in Australia and on the planet. They live here. It's like their home. It's like we live in the houses and they live in forest and bushes.

The Blue Mountains is not as busy and there's not as much pollution as the city. There are not as many cars and it's not as noisy. There's not as much smoke and pollution and stuff and that keeps the environment alive 'cos car exhaust could choke trees and plants.

What do you mean? Well plants sort of need oxygen and the exhaust gets into the air and makes it a bit harder for them to breath. If the plants can't breathe they might become extinct and there could be none left and you could never get them back again.

I live in the Blue Mountains and it is a nice place to be.

I can look after my place by helping the environment grow. I could do that by trying keep all the amazing Australian plants alive and stuff. To keep Australia a popular place and to learn about the Blue Mountains so they can tell their children and then they might visit them.

I see myself as someone who is a local member of the Blue Mountains... I mean you've been in it and you are growing up in it.

Subject 27
F4  JESSICA, girl, 10 years old.

I think the word place means a certain place in the world. It could be in China for all we know. It's a place because it's on the earth and part of the landmass so I suppose it's a place.

My place is big and red.

I live in a big house and it is nice and cozy because it's got lots of furniture and is filled with people and animals that I love. They make the house not feel as lonely. Like if it wasn't cozy, it would be pretty empty and boring.

I can look after my place by not leaving rubbish around it and keeping the garden watered and things like that and making sure there's not too many dried leaves because I live near the bush and if a fire comes through it will
burn easily. If there are no leaves the fire will just burn out. I don’t like fire ‘cos it can kill animals and it’s a danger to people.

Anything else?
Also, keep the garden watered ‘cos otherwise the plants die and it looks really brown and icky then it makes the house look bad as well. I don’t like the colour brown. I prefer green because it’s a rich colour.

The Blue Mountains is green. It’s blue ‘cos of the gum leaves, they give off this acid that makes the mountains look blue and it’s also a nice place to live ‘cos it’s a high area and we have lots of clean air. In the city they have kind of polluted the air with greenhouses gases and things.

What do you mean by that?
They are things that are produced by petrol and they all make a hole in the ozone layer around the Earth. As far we know, the Earth will flood and we will die ‘cos Antarctica will melt and it will make a big flood. The Greenhouse makes everything gets hotter and that’s why we are experiencing such hot days. That’s what people say.

The Blue Mountains has animals that other places don’t have such as kangaroos and things like that. I like it because I like the atmosphere. The air is nice, the places are nice and the bush is nice. It gives us fresh air, it smells nice because it’s got nice flowers and some of the leaves smell as well.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not littering, by putting rubbish in the bin and trying to use less electricity ‘cos when you use electricity there’s more pollution in the atmosphere and that uses more greenhouses gases. Electricity is made from coal and the break down coal and produce steam and that goes into the atmosphere.

Anything else you’d like to add?
By not littering the animals won’t get stuck or killed and that means the animals will stay alive and we’ll still have animals in Australia. Our animals are Important because they are not in other countries like kangaroos. Otherwise they’ll be extinct then we won’t be able to see them anymore and it will be a lesser experience to come to Australia ‘cos there will be the same animals as in other countries.

I see myself as someone who looks after animals and I see myself working in the Blue Mountains. I wouldn’t like to move to another country because I think Australia is a really good place to be and then I could look after the other animals. The Blue Mountains is a really nice place to be. It’s more interesting ‘cos of more animals, plants and other habitats.

Subject 28
F4 RHIANNON, girl, 10 years old.

I think the word place means a nice place for you to stay, if you have house its nice because some people don’t have a house because they have no money. You get to have a bedroom to sleep in and not on the road.

My place is a big house with a backyard. My dad is working on the grass and me, and my mum and brother were planting flowers the other day, so that we can play outside and play on the grass. I like doing handstands and Jarrod likes doing somersaults and digging the dirt. We also play 44 home and hide and seek. My house is 2 storeys and it’s got 4 rooms and a kitchen near the TV. It’s got 2 lounges and 3 TVs.

I live in a house and it is warm, because we always put the heaters on when we get home if it’s cold. That makes me feel happy because when I take my shoes of it feels good when I watch TV.

I can look after my place by not littering. By picking up the litter and just making it a better place around our house and the roads. Litter might get eaten by the animals or they get tangled up and die. If the rivers get polluted, we’d get lots of dead fish and icky water. Then we won’t get any fish to eat and will have to have Omega 3 tablets. Icky water makes people sick.
The Blue Mountains is a place that’s not Sydney and it’s where they film my favourite show, Home and Away in the Blue Mountains. I would like to travel more around it and see what town we go to. There’s a lot of towns. I’d like to travel because you might get lots of souvenirs along the way and nice food. There’s also lots of koalas.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not killing the wildlife and not throwing the cigarette butts out the window so that they make fires because I don’t like the trees getting burnt cos there’s lots of koalas and kangaroos and I like animals.

I see myself as someone who is a person that looks after wildlife and studies them by looking at them and tries to draw them and write down what they are doing like the koala is climbing the tree eating a gum leaf with a baby on its back. It’s interesting to do that and sometimes I look at things I’ve written.

Subject 29
F4 MADDY, girl, 10 years old

I think that the word place means where I live and where I feel most comfortable, safe and secure around my family because my family are there to protect me at all times. It’s where you feel safe and you have a roof over your head, because it’s your home and when you go in people care about you.

My place is on top of a shop and it is pretty big.

I live in a house and it’s big and on top of the shop, so it has big rooms. They’re pretty good because I have heaps of brothers and it’s easier to play. I’ve got 8 brothers and no sisters. Some of the big trucks go by and they are so noisy and it annoys me if I’m trying to do my homework. But it’s good living there, maybe because I’m in a house.

Would you like to add anything else?
I have a little yard. We go down there sometimes. I feel pretty good about having a little yard, because we play on the grass. Sometimes we play touch football and me and my friends play tip.

I can look after my place by cleaning up more.

The Blue Mountains is good because there’s nice people and now I’m come to know heaps of people now and that’s good. There’s heaps of nice teachers, nice friends, and some of my family is up here. Where I used to live there wasn’t much family.

Anything else?
I feel very good about having my family closer because now I can see my two cousins more and my aunty and uncles. I like seeing them cos they are very nice people and fun. When I go and visit them I feel very excited cos we can go and play in the bush. I like that cos we play wars and armies and stuff, and we play snipers. It’s fun because you get to run around in the bush and hide and in be in teams.

I see myself as someone who is nice cos I have heaps of friends and I can be nice to them and they can be nice to me.

Subject 30
F4 NATHAN, boy, 10 years old.

I think the word place means my home or to put down something right here (a verb).
My place is a house and it's very nice because we have lots of room and we have a big backyard and a pool and very nice stuff. It's good having a lot of room so that we don't get squished so that if we have a big party we don't get squished. We have the same amount of room in our house as we have in our backyard. And it's just so that people don't invade your personal space.

Anything else about your place?
In the big backyard, I can have friends over. We have a dog and I have a big ramp so the bikes can go down it. And to gain more speed we go right up the back. It's really fun cos I like the thrill of going down the hill really really fast. By yourself! It's not that good cos you don't have many people to talk to and tell you how you did, but with other people it's really good and they can watch you do 360's.

We also have a garden and its very nice and we have a crab apple trees and a pool yard and I keep my rabbit there. We have five chooks and 2 fish. The garden gives the backyard a lot of colour and places to hide and seek. There's heaps of pinks and blues and purple. The animals are all fun to play with. All the animals mean that when I'm lonely I can have company.

I live in a street and it is a no through road ie that you can go to any other street from that road. I like the street cos we live near the bush and there's a lot of bushwalking and our neighbours are very nice.

Anything else?
I like the bushwalking cos I like going out and looking at all the plants and climbing on all the rocks. If the rocks are really high its challenge getting up and its really fun to climb them. And when we get to the top we think this is a good view. It doesn't have a feeling, it just looks really good, looking at the valley. I like that just because of all the plants I guess.

Anything else about where you live?
Like our neighbours come over to our house and give us a bit of chocolate cos they are really nice and we also have people who live behind us and they are nice cos when we are bored after school, sometimes we go onto our cubby house deck and start talking to them about stuff.

I can look after my place by watering the plants with our rainwater tanks (so we are not using water out of the dam) and we can make the plants look prettier. So it can increase the amount of air because plants breath out air that we can breath in and vice versa.

Also making sure my room is clean all the time so that every time someone goes in my room they won't hurt themselves.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is very pretty because from a distance its blue and there's a lot of beautiful flowers and most of the people are very nice and we have a lot of community service like police, shops, car place to sell cars and fix cars, petrol station & train stations. They all help us get around or get food or arrest the bad people. I feel very good 'cos we don't have people chasing after us and wanting to kill us or something. Friendly, safe.

I can look after the 8ms by not polluting, not littering, not smoking because that will pollute the air. We could try and report things that are suspicious to the police. Then a follow up robbery and crime could come, so reporting is a way of trying to keep it all safe.

I see myself as someone who is very nice and caring. Wants to grow up to be a vet.

Subject 31
E4 SAM, boy, 10 years old.

I think the word place means a place where you can go and stay. Or a place at home where you feel safe. You can eat sleep drink play, meet new people and stay with relatives. Like at home where your mum and dad are,
and I feel safe at my nan’s and at school.

My place is at home and it is fun. Because there my mum and my dad are really kind to me and let me go on the computer. My mum and my dad care for me and buy me stuff. They teach me new stuff like my dad teaches me heaps of stuff about animals and wildlife. Because I think it’s fascinating to see what other animals are like except for humans because they have better senses in some ways. Dogs have a better sense of smell and night vision but they’re not as intelligent as us.

What do you mean?
Because my dad is a really good teacher and he’s an ambulance officer. He sometimes teaches new ambo’s what to do because he’s a paramedic and I was talking to him the other day, asking him why do footballers get so much money when you get save lives and you get hardly any money?

I live in (the address) in Springwood. I live in a house and it is not very big but it is big enough and it can hold all of the other four people in my family.

Anything else?
Parents feed you, keep you safe, and care for you, teach you knew things. They give you a bed and a room to sleep in, food. Where I live has four bedrooms and it would be fine if it was just me and my mum and my sister, but it’s too small for us now so we going to move soon because my nan and grandad are knocking their house down and building a new one on the property because they are retiring this year. My mum is going to live on it because we couldn’t afford to buy our own. I don’t want to move because I really like the property that where on because were allowed to have my dog. It’s got lots of good climbing trees because I like climbing and it backs on to heaps of bush for five acres.

Do you want to add anything else?
I am just naturally good at climbing. It’s nice and quiet and I like hearing birds because their singing sounds nice. I have a big yard and a tree house to keep me away from parents. I climb the tree for privacy but I know that dad is watching me sometimes.

I like climbing up to that almost top branch and reading my books up at the top because it’s fun and it’s not as noisy as in my house. When my little brother gets angry and chases me with rocks and he throws them at me so I climb up the tree. I’m not sure why. I get into trouble sometimes. It’s just funny seeing him try and knock the tree down with little pebbles.

I can look after my place, if the place is in the bush I can help people by cleaning it up and stopping polluting the rivers. Because if we don’t stop using it and putting greenhouse gases out soon it’s going to be totally polluted and the plants are going to die. That means that the air won’t be very clean and little children will get very sick from the air. We have to go to another planet and make a new colony. Although they are trying to get through the atmosphere without burning up. It will be hard to get there and on Mars if the polar ice melt will be able to breathe there.

I can look after place by stopping people polluting it and if there is an injured animal keep it or send it to the RSPCA. Also by cleaning up the rubbish. It’s going to pollute that river and it probably goes to Warragamba Dam or the ocean or something. That will make our drinking water really dirty and the animals that drink from the water will die.

I see myself as someone who is not really important because I’m not an adult and hardly anyone in the Blue Mountains like I am not famous or anything. Because when you are a kid mostly no one listens to you and if you write a letter to someone to stop doing something they won’t listen to you unless you’re an adult. They don’t really take us seriously.

I’m not important because I haven’t done anything heroic or something.
Subject 32
E4 PATRICK, boy, 10 years old

I think the word place means at this spot. It’s like I want to here like school is a place. It is somewhere where I am or it could be somewhere where I could be going. If I am at home, I could be going to school and if I am going home I could be walking from school. It depends on where you are. If you are at school, there’s lots of things you could do there. You could go to scripture on Wednesdays. At home, I would probably be doing my homework or playing with my brother and sister.

My place is a house and I keep all my stuff in it – laptop, Nintendo, cars, board games, magnetic dartboard. They can be fun. Sometimes they are not really much. They are a lot other times. Sometimes my laptop might not be much (money) because I might get a PlayStation but then that gets old and it’s not worth much. If I didn’t have them things it would be very boring.

I live in a house and it is my home. I keep all my stuff in it and it’s my home because I have my bed and stuff and a big piano which we can play sometimes mostly if we have a headache. I have my bike. My scooter and maybe sometimes I can ride my brothers bike.

Anything else?
I can be very very fun because I can pretend am riding across to China and I’m still in my backyard. Because my brother and me, when we play ‘highways’ there’s this brown fence I usually go down the back to which is the bottom half of the world and big brother owns up above in America and all that. This is a game we play in the backyard. I can go up in America and I’m still in my backyard. I pretend to be a scientist and all that. I pretend that my back tyres can turn into little propellers so I can just steer around and I’m still on the ground. When I had gone to that country, I am in the top half and I took a holiday down to the bottom half of the world where I got elected to be the King and I just stayed there.
My brother usually owns the whole world but I told him off once but now we split it up in 2 so it’s fair. But because he is the oldest he pretend he gets the most and all that.
My brother and I used to play this thing called ‘highways’ but that’s actually a place as well. We had to ride tightly around because the last place was small. But now we have moved. We ride around in circles because we’ve got 3 poles in the middle. We have made it more interesting by adding more bits of the yard to it. It’s better than playing inside because we use our bikes. When we are inside we’ve just got a little board.

Would you like to say anything else?
We play because we’ve moved a lot. My mum had this really good friend, they nearly got married but then my mum got kicked out.

I can look after my place by not throwing golf balls which I usually don’t and not rolling my cars around on the floor until I got sent to my room for 1/2 hour. Not drawing on the walls which my sister does and clearing up after myself.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is a lot of homes for people. It got its name because coming in all the mountains look blue and they’re mountains. That’s why it’s called the Blue Mountains and it’s a place because its somewhere. It’s a spot.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not throwing rubbish around, putting rubbish in the bin, taking my rubbish out so that the garbage man can collect it. I’m trying to stop people from building more smokier companies, because they are chopping down the trees which is destroying homes for birds and stuff.

I see myself as someone who wasn’t born in the BML. I was born up in Queensland, a long way away from here. I’ve only got my mum and my dad and there are 2 kids in the family. That lives in the Blue Mountains, I feel different because other people talk their auntsies or grandmother for news. I don’t even see my grandmother every holiday because she works in a hospital and we have to take time off to see her and this could affect my schooling. She lives 2 hours away in Orange. I feel bad because one aunty lives in Perth, other aunty lives in New...
Zealand and my uncle lives in Queensland. I can’t go to school and say that I have seen my aunty or uncle because it would be a lie. I feel different. ... I would like to see them a lot because they are in my family. ... Other people don’t really know, have no idea what it feels like.

**Subject 33**
**E4** LAURA, girl, 9 years old.

I think the word place means where you fit in or a place where you want to stay. Like at school you might not have many friends so you wouldn’t fit in much but in netball you might have a few friends. In your netball team you’d fit in and have a lot of fun or you feel comfortable in that area with the group. Like you don’t fit out of place. You don’t really feel that you need to act like something you just need to be yourself.

My place is home and it is comforting because you don’t have total strange things. If it’s the total strange place, then you’d think this is strange and wouldn’t touch anything and you’d feel scared that you didn’t know where anything was.

Also, just say you’re a different religion and you when you went into this area of a different religion, people might not look at you and say that’s not a person that would want to live here or wouldn’t want to be friends because there are different religions because they would feel that that’s not the real god.

I live in Wimmera and it is my home town. I feel comfortable in the streets basically because I know some people and I know where everything is. You get used to where everything is and you can say this is that street and what it looks like. Knowing that I’m not going somewhere where if it’s completely strange and I might get lost. I would know my way home from that spot.

Anything else?

It’s just a good place. It’s small, it’s got plenty of trees and scenery. Because in really city places you don’t see many trees you just have to go to a park or ride on the street and look around. Most of them are native and its makes me happy about Australia.

Can you explain that further?

Well to know we have special icons like the gum tree and koala. You’re happy that you have a variety of things that you can call from your country. If you can say that it’s genuinely ours people take interest in us if we have unique things and we also have a unique background. Because you’re not bored there and people do find that stuff interesting and we say on my gosh we’ve got that everywhere.

I can look after my place by cleaning up litter and using less water. Litter might get caught up in that or if it was stamped into the ground the plants couldn’t grow over it or anything. Lots of animals have died of eating litter thinking it was food. And using less water apart from drinking water. You can drink or you like, to let there be more water in the dam. Because without enough water if we couldn’t survive properly like we couldn’t drink enough water that we need.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is unique. Well it gets a lot colder than other places and it grows a lot of special trees. Also my family grew up there. It’s just a nice place to hang out. It is different to the parts of Australia—all hot and dry. In winter you can go up there and have a lot of fun in the snow instead of just hoping that someday you could do it.

My dad in his teenage years went to some of the high schools. He used to go to a swimming pool and my dad used to jump in. It’s now grassed area and my favourite spot.

I can look after the blue mountains by littering less. You wouldn’t just be looking after the Blue Mountains you be looking after a lot of places. There you can look on roads and pathways and you’d usually find a lot of rubbish.
In the Blue Mountains I see myself as someone who is normal. Owns a house, have a family, helps the environment and helps around at the local places instead of being like really really important.

**Subject 34**

**E4**  JIM, boy, 10 years old.

I think the word place means that it is somewhere that you are. This place is the park and I am here at the park. If you don’t have to be there or you could say if that place is a park or that place is the school.

My place is home and it is really fun there. Because you can play around and play with your neighbours. Skip play ball with your friends. Sometimes I play cricket, soccer. If it’s raining, we play PlayStation.

I live in a big pink house and it is nice and fun there. Because it’s beautiful, pretty and because it has native flowers. It is very special to Australia. That everyone should like them in Australia.

I can look after my place by cleaning up rubbish if it is on the ground. Making sure it doesn’t get damaged. Protecting it so that it doesn’t get damaged by mean people.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is nice and beautiful. Because when you’re standing on top of the mountain and you can see blue mountains like all over the place.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not trashing it. Don’t wreck the trees. Don’t cut down trees. Don’t wreck the plants. Don’t take anything off the plants. So that the animals can live. So that birds can make nests in them.

If they did cut down the trees the animals won’t have anywhere to live. They will have to go somewhere else to live.

Anything else?

Don’t litter. Don’t wreck the bush by putting junk in there. The animals could die because they could choke on it, because they wanted it for food. Also by picking up the rubbish and put it in the bins. That helps by protecting the environment for the animals.

I see myself as someone who is a caring person who cares about the environment. By protecting the environment, caring about it and I help others. I’d be kind to others. If they fell over I help them up and go to the teacher and help them up to sick bay.

**Subject 35**

**E4**  ANGELIQUE, girl, 10 years old

I think the word place means somewhere where you can stand.

What you mean by that?

Some week you can go and look at things like a museum, statues, old houses and parks. You can also go to different countries. I’ve been to a different state, Queensland for my birthday.

My place is at home and it is to have fun doing different sports and playing outside heaps. Because you meet different friends and you learn different things. I meet lots of new friends and they’re all nice because I do dance classes, netball and clubs. There’s heaps of kids in each of the things. Because when you learn new things you can do more things better than you used to be able to.

I like playing outside s only when its sunny ‘because it’s nice and you can run around heaps.

Can you explain this more?
Because it's hot and it's more fun when it's sunny and when it's cloudy it might start raining and you have to go inside.

When I run around I'll play Tip with my brothers. I'd just run around the house because, one of my brothers goes to Winmalee high school and he doesn't get home when we do. When we have a race and sometimes I slow down to let him win because I'm faster than him. Because we used to always fight but when we run around and play together we'd getting rid of the fighting part.

I live in a house and it is good. Because we have our own room and my brothers don't annoy me when I close my door. Because if they annoy me I lose concentration if I'm doing my homework.

Anything else about where you live?
We have got a small street. It is fine because we are allowed to ride around our streets. It's only got 20 houses in it.

Can you explain that further?
I like riding and we ride lots. If we get time we ride down to the petrol station or the park. I just ride there for fun and back. Sometimes we get milk and bread. Our road has a big hill and then on the way to the park you ride up and down hills. I like going up because I hardly ever go up and I like going down because I can put the brakes on if I need to. It is fun because when you don't put your brakes on you can go really fast. I can feel the wind in my face and because it's normally sunny when we go riding and it cools me down a bit.

I can look after my place by not dropping rubbish on the grounds and not destroying the trees behind us. Because then we are littering and you can destroy the environment. Well if it's something like plastic it might get stuck around their neck so they could choke. It kills animals and then the animals die and they don't get to have fun with other animals.

What do you mean?
Well if you destroy the trees then you wouldn't have a beautiful sight to look at and you can kill trees by doing that as well. It's nice because when we have Christmas and when we take photos at Christmas time we normally do it down the back when we stand in front of the trees. The garden and trees are a symbol of us all ... as mum planted it when we first moved to the new place.

Anything else about this place?
We like playing down there and we sit on the rock. Sometimes we have a picnic down there like the girls get a picnic table and the boys get a picnic table and they have their picnic. Sometimes we do it with the boys but mum says because there's not enough room sometimes that we split up. I like having a picnic because we play together then we have lunch and then we play again and then they go home.

Sometimes you can find sticks and you can use them as walking sticks and sometimes we pretend that we break a leg and we use them as that. Because we play games, like Mum and dad games it's how we have fun. Then we go down there and we pretend to break a leg down and then we come back and keep playing.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is a beautiful place because if you're not in the Blue Mountains you can see the Blue Mountains. You can see mostly bush. It's nice and sometimes when you're in the Blue Mountains you can hear lots of birds. The bird sound is really nice and they sort of sound like bells. There are these birds that are out the front and back of my house and dad doesn't really like it, because of the sound. But I like the sound because it is in one of the trees that I climbed up and I was about that far away from it. I'd just like climbing the tree and when I climbed it, the bird flew on and sat on the tree. I was already sitting on the tree and then it sat near me.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not destroying things. Plants and bird nests because then the birds have to build new ones. Plants could be animal's food. Well if you destroy the trees then you wouldn't have a beautiful sight to look out ... it's a better site because the kids like having fun down there.
I see myself as someone who is a caring person to the blue Mountains so doesn’t totally go in destroy animal’s habitats. A habitat is where they live and keep all their babies and eggs. They care about the blue Mountains.

Subject 36
E4 HARRIET, girl, 10 years old

I think that the word place means your home, the place you live in, and nice area, your streets and the community. The place that you normally live in, eat in, watch TV in, play in the area you always normally been in and that you really liked. Something like a nice bush or garden.

I live in a house and I have bush right behind it, so it’s a nice area to go down and visit. You can go down there is a river down the maybe you can have lunch down there you can go in look. It’s fun you can get lots of exercise walking down and back. And it’s a fun thing to do with his family. You can go and see the river and there is a cave down there.

Can you explain this more?
This is good thing to do because it’s different to do because we don’t normally do it. To have a change so you aren’t always doing the same thing. So that you learn more about life and that you can do other stuff, have fun. Can go to different places. Sometimes can learn stuff there. It’s like knowing that there is something down there that you don’t actually normally see.

Anything else?
Well I’ve only been down there twice and I never knew that there were such things as caves until I heard about them and actually went in there. Going in there, knowing new things, looking at it, looking at stuff in it like dangly stuff from the roof. Big walls. Heaps and heaps of rocks on the ground. Once I saw at tent in there. There was the little rock pool.

Anything else about your place?
The garden is nice to look at. I like to jump on the trampoline or skip and kick the ball around. And I like to see something besides plain grass. Because it makes me more happy because flowers are more pretty, it gives me a nice view. It makes me think that I’ve got a nice big backyard, and nice place. We don’t have a pool or anything but we still have good activities. It’s good exercise, fun, gives you something to do, so that you don’t waste your time because we are doing something that we actually like.

Also your street is your place, it’s a place it’s a good place. Because you live in it. And there’s people in it that you normally play with that you get to know anyway. You see it a lot. You know it’s there all the time. You know where it is just in case you get lost. But you have somewhere where you should see lots instead of seeing one part only for a day. So if you are lost down in the bush and you saw a garden, then you might know that it’s on your street if you looked at the shape. So if you come back up you will know that it’s your street. It makes me feel happy because then I know we’re almost home.

Why does it make you happy?
If I see my landmark I always know that I’m not that sad. It’s not always the same because new things can come in but it always looks a bit familiar, like familiar shapes, like basically like a Q. It was stay at bit like a Q or a P or something. The line is the road coming into your street.

Normally you would know quite a bit of people in your community so you know where they live. My community is around Winnakee and Springwood places close to Winnakee in the Blue Mountains. That’s my community and I have friends there so I know where most of my friends live, so I can easily go and visit them. Once I go and visit them I know how to get back.

What do you mean by community?
Community is a bunch of people. It is a place where people live. It’s got shops, centres, schools.

My place is my home and it is in the address.

I live in a house and it is a nice good-looking double storey brick house. Well, it’s not that good-looking as we haven’t got the flooring yet properly, but it is a good house and its nice.

I can look after my place by not leaving the heaters on all day. By closing the fridge door so that I don’t eat any rotten food, by turning the computer off so that we don’t waste our money and electricity. Then if we’re trying to save money so that we can go places.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is mountains that people live in. It’s a great place in Australia and lots of visitors come. People live in it. Its green and its bushy. It’s got lots of trees. Hasn’t got big city. It’s just little towns. I like small areas with bush and valleys.

I like to go bush walking down in the valley’s and back up. I like to walk down and I like to walk up over rocks even though I get tired.

Anything else?

Mum and dad said that its one of the sixth or seventh most visited tourist places in Australia. There’s just a lot of people visiting. I don’t mind the visitors. Some of them speak different languages. It’s good to have other people coming. I like it because I’d like to have different people. I like knowing some different languages. I don’t mind different colored skin or different colour hair. If where will all the same it would be hard to notice people. If they would just be like five of me and you wouldn’t be able to learn different things like from a different skin person.

I like to have some trees around if I don’t like it when there is absolutely none. I love the breeze. I love them and when it’s windy so then I can hear them. I like the noise of the trees when it’s windy.

I see myself as someone who is a school girl. If someone who likes to care for the environment. Someone who likes the bush. A girl that doesn’t like to get bored.

Subject 37

E4  KEIRARI, boy 10

I think the word place means that I am here and this is what I do this is my place. Like I am here. This is my place. I live here. Sort of like my personal space. It’s my own thing. It’s not anybody else’s. It should be my business. It’s personal.

Like sometimes my bedroom, my diary and stuff like that. No it can be anything personal. It’s my thing, it belongs to me. Sometimes in my personal space I can go out and play in my personal space outside where I go and try and make stuff out of wood. When I’m tired and all cranky I go out and then I’m happy. It’s at the side of my house. I can sit there and just relax and just wait until I feel OK.

Anything else?

My spot is the side of the house. I would try to help my dad make a pathway on the weekends. I think that’s good. I was going to help dad to make it a few years ago but then we started making the camper trailer. With nearly finished that now so we are making the pathway. It was fun I enjoyed it because I got to use some welders to melt metal together and I used to spray painter. And I helped dad to put the equipment in. I enjoyed it because if I could spend time with my Dad and we used to do that because he has his own business, and we don’t really see him much.

I live in a spot I like and it is my house and I like it because I have all my friends nearby, because then I can go and
play with my friends down the street. Wall I don’t have to go far, because it only takes to minutes to go down there and if mum says be back in an hour that gives me heaps of time to get there.

Anything else?
We can have sleepovers, I can just walk down, we can go on bush walks and that’s all. It’s fun we can do anything really, and in the morning we go into the bush walls and stuff. In the morning after breakfast we do the bush walls. You get to see new stuff. You can see new rocks the rocks can change sometimes. You can see some waterfalls some streams and new plants. Once we saw a goanna. It was really weird as I don’t usually see a goanna at the back of my house.

What do you mean?
In the bush it’s always different, it’s not always there, it can change, the next day it could be a bush fire and it could be totally different. Everything can be different.

Because I like where I am it’s fresh, it’s always fun to go out and explore. The air is more fresh. Anytime it wasn’t fresh is when we had the bush fire. When I go out to the city to stay with mum it is so different from our house because it’s all coughy, dirty.

I can look after my place by not throwing rubbish. Not destroying it. Looking after it by making sure I can clean up after what other people have done. Plant to new trees and stuff. If they didn’t destroy it, we could live here longer.

What do you mean?
It destroys the birds and stuff because they could pick it up and try and eat it and they might die. I don’t want it to get destroyed because I like it. If they didn’t destroy it, we could live here longer and it would be the same. Tell people to recycle. That you have to learn to recycle and you have to try and find places where it’s not going to harm any life at all.

My family doesn’t like recycling, but I always go in the bin and pull out all the stuff out that can be recycled. We have recycling bins that you have to go outside down the back where we can put it in. But I put one close yesterday, so I think they will use it now. If someone throws paper and junk, then I will come and pick it up and put it in the bin.

Anything else?
Planting new trees because the air will get fresh, and you’ll have a new plant and it could be different. Then there will be more plants and trees. Because they breathe in carbon dioxide and they breath out oxygen.

In the area there’s always lots of gum trees, so if you plant something else there would be more of it and the seeds would drop and spread and then there be more of those types of plants in our place. The Blue Mountains is a place that I like. It is a place that is very well known. It is adventurous, if because you can go bush walking, on bike tracks, you could go to see the rivers and cliffs. Because you can go walking into the bush. We lost ourselves once and we had to go into new tracks and then we got out. It was fun because we went to different spots. We were scared at first but then when we got on new tracks we felt happy. It was like an adventure we had no idea that we were doing. Because we used our instincts and got out on our own. We thought should we go this way or that way, and then we went this way and we found our way out.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by am going to new places so I can plant stuff. I can help pick up rubbish. Then I can look after it by telling people that you shouldn’t do that, that you’re not allowed to cut down trees. If you haven’t been there and there’s rubbish and stuff, you could pick it up and put it in the bin. The other people come and say this is much better than it was before.

Because the Blue Mountains is mainly trees and plants so if you plant them more, they would have more plants and trees because we live in a very environmental area, and we don’t have as much rubbish lying around as in the city, but we are mainly environmental so that’s why we should pick up the rubbish.
What do you mean by 'environmental'?
There's lots and lots of trees, plants, it's fresh, it's good, it's not bad, it's not destructive, it's good for the environment. Well buildings, power plants are destructive. Gases go up to the ozone layer and destroy it. Our area tries to prevent it because it's environmental.

I see myself as someone who is respectful, and cares for it. Being respectful to the area by not chopping down trees, and planting new ones. You feel happiness inside of you because you believe these people have looked after their place so we should look after our place more. Happiness to see that people really are caring about the Earth.

Subject 38
E4   JACK, boy, 9 years old.

I think the word place means a spot somewhere. Place is a certain destination. A spot where you do a particular thing. I guess you wouldn't go somewhere particularly and not do anything.

My place is at my home and it's pretty big. It's got 2 floors, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. Downstairs is a kitchen, a lounge room and a dining room and a back verandah. It's not that big but it's big enough. Big enough for whatever we need to do. Whether it's just riding a scooter on the back verandah or playing soccer or something.

Sometimes I go to the bush or in the backyard on the grass. To climb on rocks, explore new places. There's a lot of new places to explore and lots of fun things to do. Like places in the bush that I haven't found before. Like I found a big shed a few weeks ago down the bush. I like to find things like I find old cars, all rusty cars. Just to have a look. To see how much they have rotted away and that kind of stuff.

Anything else?
There's a trampoline in my backyard and I like to kick the soccer ball around with my sister. I like to find big sticks and then I break them up for my mum in the fire. I like to do some skipping with the skipping rope. Because it's fun and it's a bit of a challenge. I like rock climbing and that.

I live in address Springwood and it's a quiet street. Not many cars go by and there are not too many noisy people. You can play out there because it is safer and we can play a game on the road and just move when we hear a car or something.

Anything else?
There's a kid that's 3 doors up, he's about my age. He is in Year 5. I play with him sometimes. I go around the cemetery with him on my bike, because there is a cemetery 10 minutes' walk from my house. We ride on our bikes and scooters. I go around the cemetery with him on my bike, because there is a cemetery like 10 minutes walk from my house. I like to see all the different kinds of gravebeds and headstones. I don't really compare them. I just see which ones are more stylish and things.

We ride around and have a look at the grave. Because a lot of them are interesting and a lot of them are quite old, so just to see how old they were when they died. Also to see how long ago it was that they died. Some of them are well maintained and some of them are really old but they still look new and some others are old and you can hardly. Like all the writing has faded out.

I can look after my place by not running things and trying to be careful. Try not to break anything, keep the place maintained, neat and not just. The house probably wouldn't look that great and probably wouldn't be that great. Just try not to break things and try to be respectful of the house.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is very big and very quiet compared to a lot of other places. There aren't as many cars as there are in the city or places like that. It's a bit quieter in the Blue Mountains. There isn't as much
pollution and there aren’t as many of those big towers with the smoke coming out of the top. So it’s not polluting the air or the Blue Mountains.

I see myself as someone who is protective of the environment. Like I don’t take unnatural things into the bush and bushfire. I’ll walk or ride a bike, because it’s not putting pollution into the air while using the car.

**Subject 39**  
E4 MADDDY, girl, 10

I think the word place means my home because it is where I live and where I feel most comfortable, safe and secure and around my family because my family are there to protect me at all times. They always put me first. Because I grew up with them I love them the most. They look after me and they love me so much. My place is my home and it is a two storey house and it’s in Wimmera. My garden is 1/4 of an acre. It’s quite big. We have this quad bike so that we can ride around it all the time. But it’s on such a slope that you can’t really play much on it really.

It’s quite nice having a 1/4 acre because we have a dog and quite a lot of pets, so it doesn’t feel to spurious. It’s quite nice and spacy. The only thing that scares me a little bit is because we live so far in the bush that we are surrounded by it, so it overlaps a whole house. Once we had a bushfire and we were trapped inside our garden. I felt quite scared. My family had to stay in the house while he went outside. I’m not sure what my dad was doing. I think he was ringing someone. Then probably 1 hour later this helicopter arrived with this gigantic parachute that had lots of water in it and it poured over the bushfire. It’s still black around there now.

Anything else?

I was mostly scared about the fire getting too close and burning our home. I was also scared about dad, because he went outside and I wanted to stay with him because he is quite big and I feel most safe around him. Because he is so big and tough. I wanted to follow him outside but he wouldn’t let me. And I kept nagging but he just wouldn’t. I thought he might’ve have been doing something dangerous trying to stop the fire. And I didn’t want him to die in case he burnt himself maybe.

Do you want to say anything else?

I don’t like to think about having fires in it again but it still reminds me when I see the black trees. It was three years ago and now I don’t feel that scared going out about the fire but sometimes I do feel a bit scared about what’s lurking in there maybe. Because I was playing in my yard and I once heard these noises in the bush. We also have a dog and gates. I’m glad we have gates because people would be entering our garden probably.

What do you mean?

It makes me feel a bit unhappy because they usually do leave rubbish in there. Me and my brother when we were younger, maybe 2 years after the fire. We kind of got over it. We keep playing in there and then we had the holidays so we could do lots of stuff with my mum and my dad. Then when we came back the other day, all these trees had fallen over and it all looked so broken down and collapsed that we never went in there again. Lots came down and there might be lots of spiders and snakes in there too.

I can look after my place by making it nice and neat and tidy. Sometimes I like to rake the grass or ask dad to mow it or maybe arrange stuff so that it’s all nice to play in. I like to buy plants sometimes for it and plant them. It makes it look nice and it makes it more colourful.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is surrounded by trees. It has got so many trees, that’s why it’s called the Blue Mountains because they are all blue. It’s got lots of hills and it’s mostly got everything you need in there like a good butcher and good shops, good clothing shops. Places to get our food. Where you can trust what they say about it. And they are not too dear. Clothes, we can trust that they are well made and that they won’t tear.
I see myself as someone who is not that important. I'm just a local person. Well someone who is living in the Blue Mountains, not a president or a manager or something. I haven't even got a job yet, so I'm not really doing anything.

What do you mean?
Well I haven't got a job and I don't work in a business. Like there's this guy who works in the chicken shops, mum calls him the chicken man. Well people know him because he provides the chicken.

**Subject 60**

44 SHERIDAN, girl, 9 years old.

I think the word place means somewhere were you go to.

**My place is** a house and it is big. It's a 3 storey house. It's busy because you do lots of things in there. You clean up, you do cooking, homework, look after the pets. A guinea pig and lots of fish.

Anything else?
We have 5 people. I have 2 older brothers. I have brothers 13 and 15 who go to high school. They are too noisy and I am not happy when they are around.

**I live in** Winmalee and it is peaceful because there is the bush. There are birds singing. I go down the bush with mum. There is a waterfall in the bush. We just sit down and watch it. I see lots of trees. Sometimes we see some animals.

I see myself as a wildlife warrior. I'm not a wildlife warrior but I'd like to be. They look after things – animals and bushes. Because they can help make the place a better place to be.

**Subject 63**

F3 JAKE, boy, 7.

I think the word place mean where I live.

**My place is** my address is...or a place that I would go. Because it's fun playing my brother and sister and my dog. Because we play fun games like 44 home, tug a war and fish.

My dog's name is Roco. We got her in 2004 and she's my dog. We have had her for quite a long time. We love to play with her, with my friends and my family. When you are playing tug-a-war she gives you a bit of a tug.

**I live in** my house and it's quiet and peaceful. Sometimes when we are watching movies we focus more on the movie than talk. When we are having fun there's a lot of noise. My parents shout at us to keep the noise down. I feel pretty happy because I'm quite used to it.

Anything else?
If I go to the bush on my own, it doesn't feel like much fun to me. Because when I am with other people, we actually climb up stuff and jump off stuff. Because I go down there with my cousins sometimes and I keep on finding arrows down the cave. That really starts to worry me if I'm on my own.

**Subject 62**

F3 LACHLAN, boy, 9 years old
I think the word place means like places around, for example, Falconbridge Primary School and my house is a place and stuff. You can place a plate on the table.

**My place is in Falconbridge and it is ...address....**

I live in Falconbridge and it is good because I can ride to school now because it is closer. I used to live in Linden and I couldn’t ride from there. I get more exercise and it’s more interesting because you don’t just sit and look out of a window like in a car. You get on a bike and you get pedaling and you are holding your handle bars, you see lots more and you hear more too.

Anything else? This is the 3rd time we have moved and it the same as the other houses we had. First we moved into a number 7 which was the same as the next house which was another number 7 and the next one is number 56 and it’s the exact the same as the other two. It’s a bit strange that they are all the same.

I can look after my place by not littering, place by not littering and by playing ball games outside and not inside. It’s because it’s a rental house. It’s not our house so we have to take care of it so if we play ball games outside it’s unlikely to smash windows or something. Inside we can break walls and things that we don’t own.

What do you mean? We don’t want to break things that we don’t own ‘cos it might be something precious to my mum and I might be grounded and I can’t go over to friend’s houses and stuff. So we have to take care because it’s not our house, because if the people that actually own it can kick us out of the house and that’s bad because we wouldn’t have anywhere to live.

If we get kicked out of the house, we couldn’t get all the stuff out of the house in the one day but also we wouldn’t have anywhere to go. It’s because if we live somewhere we can feel comfortable inside and stuff. It means that we feel safe. We feel that people wouldn’t attack us or anything. Anything else? If we don’t litter, then there’s no rubbish around and animals can’t suffocate or anything. Their head could get inside and plastic bag or something and they can’t breathe and they will die. Littering is bad for the environment.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is good because in Blacktown where my dad lives there’s crazy people around, like people in their cars do skids and we could get hurt. That makes me feel sad because when we are going to our dad’s house, I don’t like going to Blacktown because I don’t feel safe. The people there aren’t friendly so I won’t have any friends to play with.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by keeping safe and putting my rubbish in the bin. If we throw the rubbish everywhere, animals could die and the Blue Mountains could smell bad because when animals die they could smell horrible. Animal’s heads could get inside the plastic bag or something and they can’t breathe and they will die. Littering is bad for the environment.

I see myself as someone who is kind. I’m not a bully. I don’t hurt people or anything. If I was mean and I hurt people at school, I would get suspended or be expelled. At school I get a bit smarter because I learn things everyday and if I didn’t go to school everyone would be at school and I would have no friends to play with.

**Subject 43**

F2  FELICITY, girl, 7 years old.

I think the word place means when you go to a place it’s a big area, there’s heaps of shop and heaps of room to walk around.
My place is my house and it is big. Five rooms, one for mum & dad and one each for me and my 3 sisters.

I live in a house in address...

The front of the house looks like a cat's face. I play games in it with my next door neighbour who goes to this school. It is the giant and we are the princesses and we live in the jungle because we have this little jungle thing out the front of my house with plants and trees and rocks and I get a tol from there. We are really poor in the jungle and we have to make things to sell and get money.

I can look after my place by helping them keep it clean and keeping it tidy and plant some trees. Keeping it clean would show that you are looking after it and planting trees makes it look nicer and helping in our garden because my mum wants heaps of trees in it so it looks much better.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is an area with nice mountains that look blue but they are not actually blue they are green, but from a distance they look blue. An area is a big place to live in. It's a good place because you've got heaps of area to play and for shops.

I can look after my place by picking up rubbish to keep the area nice and clean.

I see myself as someone who is me, myself. I see my own reflection and that is what I am wearing and what my face looks like.

Subject 44
F2 KATIE, girl, 7 years old.

I think the word place means somewhere that you can go. Like you can do things at the place, like walk, sometimes you can eat, you can play, hide and seek, sit. Somewhere that you can actually be yourself. Well sometimes you have to other stuff that you normally wouldn't want to do but at home you can do the stuff that you like.

At home there's lots of things you can do. You have your own things that you can play with, you don't have the guilt if you accidentally break something of the schools.

My place is home and it is fun because there's lots of things you can do and I've got a dog or a cat. My dog is fun. He jumps on the trampoline and licks me and the cat plays with string. I can jump on the trampoline, play X-box, watch TV, play with craft, play with my soft toys, and go out the back and ride my scooter. They all make me feel happy and excited. I get to do things. It's not like I'm bored or anything.

I live in a house and it is tall. The outside looks like there's heaps of bricks on it. It has a green roof and is 2 stories tall. There's heaps of fences, one on either side to stop the dog getting out. My front yard has black fence out the front and then it's all concreted and then I've got a grassy area on the left side of the house with a walk way in between. The yard is good because there's heaps of plants and stuff. Plants are good, because some trees can give us oxygen so we can breathe. I've got a garden in my front yard and I've got all different types of plants, because it gives you something to look at.

I can look after my place by...I could help the plants by planting new plants, because there'd be more plants and some of them could grow into trees. So in case all the trees get chopped down or they fall at least we'll have another one.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is happy because there's lots of people. There's lots of nature and lots of oxygen. It lets you breath. I really love nature because it's a good thing for the environment and its part of the environment. If you didn't have nature you wouldn't have vegetables and salad.
Anything else?
Well the people are normally really nice cos if you have no one to play someone normally comes up and plays with you.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by . . . I don’t know...

I see myself as someone who is helpful. I can help put fires out. I could but I don’t. Fires could burn down houses. That’s not a big thing here.

Subject 45
F2   CALLUM, boy, 8 years old

I think the word place means somewhere where people can go and can enjoy, like home or a shop or something.

My place is near Springwood High School, just down the road.

I live in a house and it is really good. It’s got a long backyard. We like to play and run down the slope. It’s active and I like it. I like playing games with my cousin and my sister. We like playing Pirates of the Caribbean and there’s a skeleton and if it catches you, you become the skeleton. There’s a passageway where my dad parks the car. It goes around in circles.

I like it when we go to the back we are able to talk to our neighbours. I like having conversations with them. I talk to Miss Val and the one down the back has a dog called Cookies. I like talking to them because I know them and they are pretty nice. They make me feel fine when I talk to them.

Anything else?
There’s not only the slope but a slope covered with branches with leaves on them and it used to be only a small entrance. There’s 3 lumps that you can jump from lump to lump. It’s fun because its active.

I can look after my place by we have pocket money when we do chores so sometimes I help dad with the car, clean it and chop firewood.

The Blue Mountains is wonderful. I like the Springwood Pool, MacDonal, and Laserzone at Penrith. I also like the indoor pool, the seafood restaurant – the potato wedges and the fishcakes.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by picking up rubbish. I haven’t done it apart from my own. Usually every day I see litter or broken glass, or cigarettes on the ground. It’s important to pick it up because you don’t want anyone in bare feet to step on the glass or the cigarette to set the playground or the school on fire. It would mean an absolute tragedy. I usually put my plastic in the rubbish bin. If you keep littering the whole place will be filled up with rubbish and it would be very bad.

I see myself as someone who is pretty nice. I got a few friends. I’m the one who always gets friendly with neighbours.

Subject 46
F2   ALL, boy, 7 years old.

I am cute and small and I am the smallest in my class. I am 7.

I think the word place means like a place near Sydney, like In the shopping centre, like anywhere. Sydney has lots of buildings like 4 storey buildings and lots of cameras and lots of people from different countries and buses and trains and train stations and Frank’s pizza.
I also think place means when you go somewhere like Dunn’s Swamp and Sydney Wildlife Aquarium and I go to Sydney a lot because my dad works in Sydney.

**My place** is Falconbridge. I go to Falconbridge Primary School and it’s in... address... down the street. It's like a beautiful place. There's a beautiful place to play in and there's a bushwalk down the end of our road. It's a beautiful place because there's not very much traffic and I can play on the road sometimes and it means to me that I can play with the ball on the road.

**My place** is a mud brick house. I’ve got a cat named Trick and I’ve got one fish named Harry, a possum named Stinger. There's lots of wildlife; a blue tongue lizard, echidna, joeys. We play on the trampoline, watch DVD's and play computer games.

**I live** in Falconbridge and it's a lovely place to live because it has lots of good healthy things there and lots of fresh air and lots of trees. They are healthy because they make oxygen and if there were no trees we would die. My cat is healthy to take care of you.

The Blue Mountains is a beautiful place to live because you get to see lots of trees like in Penrith where it's so hot and there's hardly any trees. There's lots of beautiful trees and my dad’s favourite tree has two trunks coming from the base, that's where my dad’s cat is buried. He planted the tree. The tree is very special.

**I see myself as** is a nice person.

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**Subject 47**

**F2**  CALEB, boy, 8 years old

**My place** is small. Where you sleep is only big enough to put the lounge room and for everyone to sleep in there but the little house is to put everything in. I like the little house because no one is disturbing you when you are reading or playing. There's 4 people in my family.

My back yard is really big. There's compost right down the back and just out the front of the studio there's a vegetable garden. There are flowers in there and we've got a trampoline near the front. I like it because it's really big so you can run around a lot. There's a water tank in the middle of the yard and there's a trampoline and there's swings.

When it's nature time, the birds are nature in the yard. We get lots of birds like cockatoos because on the trampoline you can hear more things than just yourself and if you're trying to sleep on the trampoline you can hear more things while you're sleeping. It's good, cos the birds are nice and they don't peck you and stuff.

**Anything else about your place?**

Most time my sister would play with me and we would go down there to play on the trampoline. Playing with my sister is different to playing with yourself, it's better if you have someone else to play with than just yourself because then you can play more games. You can get lonely by yourself.

I like looking at birds, cos the birds are high. Looking from the trampoline to way up high in the trees. [It’s] relaxing looking at the colour of the birds, listening to sounds. If you are on the trampoline and the trees are on top of you and you look at the birds and the birds are sort of relaxing cos they are nice and colourful. They are green, red, blue, yellow, white and black... because if they were only white and grey you wouldn't able to know which is which unless they had a different ring. If you know what bird it is you can know its name and what sound it makes. Then if you hear the bird sound you can hear what kind of bird it is.

The birds eat the seeds of the plants, so if you know what the plants names are when you look in books for birds you can look at what the plant is to see if it's in your yard. So if you go there you'd probably only find that bird. I'd like to know all the plants names because [then] you'd know where all the birds would be because the birds eat the seeds of the plants They'd probably eat them or their houses would be on them.
Some of them are different like cockatoos, some are different compared to others. I like differences you notice that the birds look the same but when you look up you notice that they’re different. I like them being different because if they were the same you wouldn’t notice if they were a boy or a girl, or little or big.

They make me feel happy. When you are listening to the birds, you imagine you are not in your yard, that you’re in a zoo where there’s way more birds than there is because they sound really loud.

I can look after my place by making sure wood doesn’t fall down, it’s painted properly and not really dirty. Keeping it clean, cos if it’s clean you know where everything is on the house and you stay organized. If you know where everything is, so if something is broken, you know exactly where it is and it’s easier to fix them. By keeping the wood clean, because if it’s dirty the mould will get on it and then the mould will start eating through the wood and then the house will start breaking badly.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is where you live and there’s more things than you think there is. So if you lived there you know where everything is, but if you’ve just driving through you think it’s all lovely because you only see shops and things passing through. So if you see Warrimoo from the highway you’d think no one really lives there so you wouldn’t want to live there.

If you live in an area you’d probably see more things, like if you’re one of those people that drives around all the time you’d probably wouldn’t see many things compared to if you’d have to stay in the one place for about a year to see everything. When you live in area you would probably respect the area so it doesn’t break down and get deserted.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not littering because litter gets pollution in the air and that’s not good for us. When we breath in the pollution it damages our lungs, so we can’t breath as good. If it’s near a beach, plastic bags might get eaten by jelly fish and they’d die.

Anything else about looking after your place?
Making sure the water supply isn’t dirty because if you run out of water you’d die because water is the main thing that you need to survive. So, if there’s water people would live there and if we run out of water everyone would die and become deserted and then no one would know about this area. It would just become a big bush. If no one uses the water supply, and the bush was there, the water supplies would come back (rivers and creeks). So from the sea and stuff, the clouds take the water and then the rain would take it down to us then the trees would use it and when the leaves fall off the ground sucks the water out and then all the water will go to one particular area.

I see myself as someone who is kind to nature that the Blue Mountains makes. Then more animals will come there, then it will become a place where everyone will go so then the animals will move and people will move along with them and then there will be more things there like the zoos and lolly shops and stuff.

Subject 48
F2 ABBY, girl, 8 years old.

I think that the word place is a home. It’s a place because it is somewhere where you sleep, eat and have fun in. You can ride bikes and play with balls and read.

My place is home and it is nice because its small and cozy and you have your family there and they love you. You get cuddled and it makes you feel smaller when they cuddle you and you feel cozy.

I live in a house and it is big because of our land. We have a pool, and half an acre. An acre is a big piece of land, so its big but not as big as an acre. It’s joined to our house.
At home we jump on the trampoline and in our house we sleep and eat, and we do cartwheels and handstands outside. I feel happy because sometimes I do it with my sister and normally she has to do homework and so it's not normally what we do. When you do it with other people you make up a game and they have different rules and then it gets a bit confusing and sometimes when I do that with my sister we have a fight and sometimes we don't.

I can look after my place by cleaning and doing gardening and not trying not to break things. If you don't clean your house it's just a big mess and then your house doesn't look very nice because you can't get to things and it doesn't look very nice for when people who come over because then they won't reckon your house is nice and they won't want to come back. If it was one of my best friends, I wouldn't feel happy that they wouldn't want to come over to my place to play.

Anything else about looking after your place?
If there are weeds everywhere, you want your garden to look nice as well. Same as the house, you want people to come back instead if there's dead plants everywhere it wouldn't like nice.
If you break things you don't have these nice things in your house, like if you have a nice cup and you accidentally drop it because you're holding it funny or if you broke the TV.

The Blue Mountains is a place that it very nice and clean because some people do look after the Blue Mountains but then some other people don't. They put their rubbish in the bin as animals would die if they get something stuck on their heads, and plant trees, plants and flowers because it keeps the air giving you the oxygen.

The Blue Mountains has lots of trees, nice and green and it can be a nice place to live because there's a lot of friendly people around. Friendly people are really nice like they'll come and give a housewarming gift if you've just moved in.

I see myself as someone who is a dancer because I do a lot of dancing now and I'm really confident when I dance and I see myself as doing that.

Subject 49
F2 Elisha, girl, 7 years old.

I think the word place means somewhere you go and play games. Where you play in the water and go fishing. Play at home with friends and go to their place.

My place looks very small on the outside but it's very big on the inside because me and my mum have heaps of things. We do a lot together — work out, use the punching bag, cook together, dance together and sometimes we watch TV together. There's just us two.

I live in... address... and it's quiet because no one is ever home, only me and my mum. Me and my mum help each other all the time. The others are at work.

I can look after my place by cleaning, planting, dusting, helping. Cleaning and dusting helps us not get sick and its fun for me but my mum hates washing and that's why I help here.

Planting is making more oxygen, plants suck in all the bad air and give out all the clean air and its very good for the planet because the planet needs more oxygen and it needs to survive more because if it goes all dirty with rubbish everywhere it will not be safe, happy and kind place to be.

Some people throw their rubbish on the ground and don't pick it up. All the bad and naughty people will be around. So the naughty people will be around cos they throw rubbish and do spray painting.
I can look after the Blue Mountains by making cleanliness all the time, making sure there's nothing wrong is no rubbish.
I see myself as someone who is clean and gentle – doesn't want to hurt anyone, look after everyone, and wants to help people.

**Subject 50**
**F2** SARAH, girl, 7 years old

I think that the word place means where I live.

My place is nice and it is in address...It has flowers and trees and it looks beautiful and it has lots of shade. That's important so we don't get burnt.

I live in a house and it is nice and big. It's nice because I have my own room then I can do what I want. Sometime my brother comes in and hits me and starts a fight. My own room means I have more room to play with my toys, that makes me happy. My house is big which means I can run around more and there's more space to spread my toys out, but now I have to keep them in my room.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is nice and sunny in the summer. It's beautiful, pretty and has lots of weather. Sometimes it snows up that way at Katoomba and at Blackheath. When it snows its cold.

It's a good place to live because it's not too hot or too cold. It's just right. It doesn't snow in Springwood.

I can look after my place by not littering to keep our world healthy. By cleaning it up if there's rubbish and taking care so that nothing can get hurt in the environment. It could hurt the plants by strangling them.

Don't waste water so we have more water with the water restrictions. Not waste water otherwise we can't drink it if there's no water left. Also cleaning up my place so that if people come they will see that it's tidy so that they come back.

I see myself as someone who is happy. I'm happy because I can go out and play a lot in my big backyard. I like playing with my brother because I like going on the swing, jumping on the trampoline, playing in cubby and the sandpit, sliding down the slippery dip. I wouldn't have as much fun if my backyard was smaller because I couldn't have a cubby.

**Subject 51**
**E2** LACHLAN, boy, 7 years old

My place is my home. I am welcome at home. Like I feel like I'm someone in the family, like everyone is caring for me. What I mean it is that mum and dad are taking care of me. They make me feel warm.

My place is very good. It's built well and we have a good back yard and we'll have a better backyard soon because we are moving to Hartley, to mild Hartley. It's scary as I've never changed schools except for preschool. It's scary because I won't get to see my best friends so where I live now, he just lives 10 houses down from me. It's going to be sad. I'm scared that people might be mean to me when I first go into the school. If that happens I'll probably have a little talk to the Principal.

Can you explain further?
We've got nice people that live around us and nice friends and it's not far to go to people's houses. Its good because most of the time it's all quiet. I like it quiet because I'm a bit older than my brother and sister and I need some more time to myself and because if we move into the city it will be much louder so I think it's pretty good
moving to the country.

What do you mean?
I read more time to myself because my brother is always asking me to play video games with me and to help him write sentences and my sister is younger than my brother and she always cries and gets her own way with me. I get angry because my brother and sister as always asking me to do things.

Anything else?
My place is good because no one has ever been hurt there. Also, the houses aren’t so close together. They are further apart and we have a bit more room. If the backyard is bigger we have more space to run around in and burn off energy. It also keeps you healthy and it helps you keep fit. They can stay active and play games like tip and bullrush and kicking the football around. It means you are having a good time and not being negative. Its taken away from always being grumpy and always doubting everything. Out there it makes you feel much better and stops you from doubting things. We are doing other things with each other instead of being grumpy and bashing each other up. Other things that make us feel good.

I live in the country and it’s very quiet. There’s not so much noise as the city and not so many places where people can be noisy like smashed cars and motor shows. If you’re in the city you wouldn’t get much sleep especially at night time.

I can look after my place by not littering and not throwing bad stuff (spray stuff) on the ground and weeds and stuff and to always mow the grass so it doesn’t get too long. If you litter it keeps the environment healthy for the worms to produce the soil. The worms will get into the paper and try and eat it and they’ll choke on it and they won’t be able to produce the soil and then all the trees will die and we will die and all the animals will die.

Anything else about looking after your place?
If everything gets destroyed then the place would look ugly and we won’t be alive anymore, because trees give us oxygen because they keep farming the oxygen from the sky.

You also should mow the lawn to look after your place, it keeps everyone safe because if the grass grows too long it can wrap around the trees and squeeze or snakes could hide in the lawn.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is quiet and it doesn’t have a lot of animals that are noisy like lyebirds and not many crows and stuff.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by stopping other people from littering and throwing their rubbish on the grass. Also stop people from lighting fires and burning down the trees. You have to cut down some trees to get paper otherwise you’d be bored and wouldn’t have a job.

If you stop people lighting fires, then it doesn’t kill lots of animals and it doesn’t take lots of oxygen away.

I see myself as someone who is taking care of the environment and being kind to it and not being mean to the environment like killing trees.

Subject S2
E2 JARROD, boy, 8 years old
I think the world place means ...not sure...Springwood because it’s a place its somewhere.

My place is home and it is fun because I’ve got 2 dogs and they like playing with me. Sometimes they chase me. I’ve 2 of my own rooms. One that has a TV and one that is my normal bedroom. One is kind of like a family room, but I normally play in it. My bedroom has one of those high beds, not a double one. And the other one has a sofa that can fold out into a bed, so I can sleep out there sometimes. I get to stay up and my mum and dad don’t know that I’m watching TV all night. There’s a mattress underneath and when my friends come and they stay I can sleep on the mattress.
I live in this world and it is wonderful. Because I have friends and family and they be nice to me.

I can look after my place by cleaning up my room so that it’s not messy.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is important. It’s got lots of bushwalk, wildlife. It’s blue. When they discovered and looked up from Penrith it was blue. I’ve seen lots of kangaroos, wombats, koala’s, echidna. There was one here in the top playground.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not littering and not using much electricity. Not littering takes care of the wildlife. With the electricity factor, the greenhouse gases because the electricity uses greenhouse gases.

I see myself who is a person who looks after the environment. As caring for the environment.

Subject: S3
E2 NADIA, girl, 7 years old

The word place means somewhere.

My place is in Springwood and it is a house. We’ve got about 5 or 6 or 7 rooms in our house. In Rose’s room we walk in and then there’s a door on the wall. My room is only small but hers is big. Her room used to be my room and my room used to be the toy room but I like my room because it is pretty. It’s my favourite colour yellow. My dad painted it and painted the door. I’ve got lots of hanging things from the roof. I’ve got this swirly yellow thing with a bird hanging from a piece of string at the bottom and I’ve got a star. And a little dolphin in chime tins.

Anything else?
For some reason I don’t know why Rose always plays in my room as it’s not hers and hers is much bigger and warmer than mine. She touches my breakable things. Sometimes if it’s a very special thing, I’m a little bit mad. Sometimes when it’s one of my money boxes, not very special money boxes, I don’t really mind that much. She is coming to school the year after.

I live in Springwood and its nice there, because every morning the birds wake me up. It’s better than my alarm that’s just a ‘bip bip’. Because my alarm is really loud and it sometimes scares me. The birds aren’t as scary as my alarm. It’s a nicer way to wake up than the alarm because it’s not scary.

Anything else about where you live?
I’ve got kind of a big backyard with chickens. I’ve got a trampoline and the cubby house is the chicken shed, so then the chickens can sleep in it. Two of them are mine. We have all got 1 or 2 chickens each. Mine are a brown one called Milo and white one with a dot on its head called Dot. I like pets so that you can play with them and I like looking after them because it is fun. I like putting my hand out so they can peck the food out of my hand. Once one of them pecked my finger instead of the food.

Also down the back, we have got a tree and me and my sister call it our fairy tree, because it’s got lots of branches that are kind of like seats. My dad put a piece of wood for my sister Rose and a bit of wood a bit higher for me and we get to sit on them. There’s a special little cut branch and that’s what I always hold on to when I’m on it and all the rest are short.

Can you explain more?
Down the back, we have got a tree and me and my sister call it our fairy tree, because it’s got lots of branches that are kind of like seats. My dad put a piece of wood for my sister Rose and a bit of wood a bit higher for me and we get to sit on them. There’s a special little cut branch and that’s what I always hold on to when I’m on it and all the rest are short. We both feel like it’s our little fairy garden. It wouldn’t be as fun without my sister ...
because I have someone to play with in there. We make rings of flowers (lots of pretty flowers) and we put a
glittery shell in the middle of the flowers and the fairies come and leave glitter. Well I'm not sure if they live
inside the tree or anything, but I know there are fairies somewhere there. I go down there after school.

Anything else about your place?
Sometimes I go on the trampoline. I like banging my head on the trees when I jump. I also like doing star jumps
on it. I just like the feel of bouncing up and down. Because when I'm up I feel like I'm flying.
I went to England this year and I stayed at my aunty Margaret's house and she has a loft and when we went up
there, there was a shiny blue thing stuck on a web. We think it was a fairy because it wasn't tinsel. We've never
seen it before.

I can look after my place by keeping it tidy and making it look clean. Sometimes I put my feet on the wall at
night and make dirt marks all over the wall and my mum and dad tell me not to.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is peaceful. Because there aren't many cars going past our house. There are
lots of birds and stuff. There aren't many spiders near where I live. I'm kind of happy that there are lots of birds
and not many spiders because I like birds and I don't like spiders much. And next year after Christmas in April, we
are getting a puppy. I want to teach it to jump through our tyre that's on the tree and my sister Rose wants to
teach it to sit in the plant pot.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not throwing rubbish. Putting the rubbish in the bin and not treading on
ants.

I see myself in the Blue Mountains as someone who is ... not sure...

Subject: 54
E2  ALASKA, girl, 8 years old.

I am a human being, a mammal. I am 8.

I think the work place means, like a place where you can play. You don't have to play. It could be like home is a
place.

My place is ... address, ... and it is home. It is a place where I keep lots of my things, presents, cards, where I make
lots of stuff. A place where my family is, where I sleep, watch TV, eat.

I live in a house and it is home.

I go to my aunts a lot. I go to my grandparents. I don't really go the rest of my family that much. But I do go to
my big brother Jade's. He lives in Balmain because he is 29. I visit him and he comes over a lot and he brings me
lots of stuff like when he went to this place he brought me back giant panda chocolates to share and he bought
me a T-shirt and other stuff for the family. I like visiting him because he always gives us pizza and it's really nice
his apartment.

I can look after my place by doing chores, helping around, looking after things. Like if I'm done my chores I can
help other people do their chores. I can make things for Christmas.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is nice and windy. There's lots of bush. There's a bushwalk and a camping
park. I've seen one or 2 camping parks and they have waterfalls, freshwater so you can drink it, waterfalls were
you can shower in a river.

There is a wonderful view that looks pretty. There's no people that are mean. And if you knock on the door for
Halloween they give you treats straight away and if they don’t have treats they give you money. Which is nice of them and there’s not one person in our road that mean and says just get out of here or don’t knock on my door or anything. They are all friendly.

Anything else about looking after you place?

I like the views because they have bushes and sometimes you can see kangaroos and birds and once I saw a dingo. We try to bushwalk once a month and if we get thirsty we have water in our bag and we try and do some exercise. Sometimes it gets really windy.

**I can look after the Blue Mountains by** not throwing our rubbish around. Not leaving our magazines out for ages. Not trying to kick things that are neat, like pick-ups on the side of the road for the council. That happened to us. Teenagers kicked it all across the road and then it all got broken and smashed.

Sometimes animals could come up to it and choke on it. Also, the air would make the Blue Mountains a very dirty place and you couldn’t go barefoot because you could easily cut yourself. Leaving our magazines out covers out the whole front yard and sometimes the plastic falls of and then I’ve seen a bird die from trying to eat the plastic.

**I see myself as** someone who is helpful. I do have a bit of a temper. I can be really nice sometimes, but I can get angry. I’m not rude or anything.

**Subject 55**

E2  ALEX, boy, 8 years old

I think the word place means where I can go or a place I where I live. Like, I like playing with my friends. I usually go out the back and play with their toys and mostly just have fun. What I do at home is really fun stuff with my family.

Places are things that you can go or do. It means ‘I can go that that place’ or ‘I would like to go to your place’. Like, if you go in Sydney, that’s like a history place and you can’t see any other places of those anywhere. Because it was from the olden days so now people have started building it again so that people can go and have fun there.

Anything else about place?

My favourite place is home and Luna Park. At home, we grow our vegetables and I have a Blue Tongue Lizard. My Blue Tongue, I call him Bluey. He usually just takes care of the garden and I think that is really good. He scares them. He whims his tail. He keeps bad things away. Yes, he just crawled up my arm and licked me and I said ‘hello’. I think its special because I just found him in the garden. I think I need to get a license or just put him back in the bush. He doesn’t live in my yard, he lives in the bush and he just walks in my yard. He just comes and goes. Because if he comes and goes, I just go outside and play with him for a while and then I can see him later. But if he is in a tank, my mum would stop me opening that tank and I wouldn’t get to play with him. He would just go around in circles and do nothing.

Anything else?

Luna Park has good rides and one of my friends works there, so he does great deals. But I would like it just as much if he didn’t work there. Because there’s this grandpa that comes in the yard with his guitar and he brings money and does money for cancer. He makes you feel happy. It’s just so nice that he comes, because to young people he says ‘do you want to have a go on my guitar?’

I live in a house with 12 windows and 5 doors and it’s a really big house, 2 storeys. I like sliding down the stairs like in the movies. I like sliding down there and when I get to the end I do a backflip and then land.

**I can look after my place by** not using matches on the carpet.
The Blue Mountains is a place that is very special, because I really think it’s a great place. Because it has all interesting flowers and my dad works on flowers and plants. He is a scientist. It has some pythons, blue tongues and crocodiles. Alligators I mean.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not doing burnouts and setting big fires alight, and not littering. Burnout and fires can kill animals and burn down trees. We need trees. We bring what they want and what we bring out they need to live on. I just mean the leaves from the trees. The leaves bring out oxygen.

I really like animals and I don’t like them being dead. They might get extinct and I don’t want them to be extinct. That means there is no more of them. The furry animals are really cute, and if we interrupt their habitats, they might have nowhere to go and they will just die.

I see myself as someone who is caring. Caring about the environment. I care about not using all the power up and saving water. If we use all our water, then we’ll have to use dirty water and then we might get sick and die.

Subject 56
E2 KALAH, boy, 8 years old

I think the word place mean somewhere you go. The shops, grandpas, school. At school we work, we have lunch and recess. At grandpas you go to the place for something to eat then you have a play. Then you go back home. At party’s you always do a celebration, a thing that celebrates your birth.

My place is really comfortable because there are all these things that I really need for school, like my bag, hat, lunch and recess and your manners.

I live in my house and it’s really good because we always get to the things that we can do like on the computer and do some education games. The computer doesn’t really work that good.

We also have a soccer goal and 2 kinds of swings. One like a wooden one like a backyard swing and another one with a tyre and we have lots of sports stuff that we can play with. I like it because I’m really sporty and I can play with it every time I come home from school or in the morning when I’m ready for school early.

Anything else?
The wooden swing we got on my sister’s birthday last year and the other one we got on my 4th birthday. But we have to climb up the tree for them.

I can look after my place by getting my brother not to kick the balls in the garden because it’s not very caring for it because it might hit my mum’s lamps (in the garden) and we have plants that my mum brought half a year ago and the ball keeps on going there and I try to stop it by playing goal keeper or garden keeper.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is really natural because there are lots more trees than the city and there’s lots of pollution in the city and not very good smelling air in the city. But in the country down here in the Blue Mountains it’s always got really fresh air but the bad thing is there’s lots of bush fires. You get lots of oxygen in our lungs and the trees have shade so we don’t get sunburnt. The trees are protected by the environment. Lots of trees and lots of plants.

I can look after the Blue Mountain’s by protecting the wildlife.

I see myself as someone who is ...I don’t know....
Subject 57  
E2  HANNAH, girl, 7 years old

I think the word place means somewhere, as in the city type of places, the country.

My place is home and I am 7. Because I spend most of time there and because I love it, because it’s got all my family there.

I live in a house and it’s in the address.....

I’ve got a dog called Jonah and a rabbit called Rabby and a few goldfishes. I love them. My dog has diabetes. I love my dog because I get to take care of him. I have 3 goldfish and they make bubbles and I like my rabbit because he is fluffy.

I can look after my place by having a bath because it makes things smell nice and lets me be healthy. Not jumping hard and not smashing the tiles. Always be careful of glass things.

If I break things I could get in trouble, because it could be something really old because mum’s piano used to be mum’s great grandmother’s piano and we’ve had that for a long time. It’s important to look after those old things otherwise it might not go along more generations. Because it would be really old and we have had it for so many years and people that died that used to own it will get really mad.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is very nice. It has got lots of rocks and lots of nature. It’s got lots of leaves and trees and there are lots of different bugs and butterflies. The rocks give out colour to the bush. Because is there’s not much colour in the bush, so you wouldn’t want to go there all the time.

If people don’t go to the bush they wouldn’t be able to study things that they need to study. If scientists didn’t go there to find out things then schools wouldn’t be able to do work on them. If we don’t then we won’t learn much things. Like if someone asks you a question, you wouldn’t be able to answer it. You wouldn’t know what’s in the bush.

The teachers give you work to do and you have to answer the questions. The teachers give you the instructions to do and you do it. So you can colour the trees the right colours. But the bush because then you can see what the colours of the trees are.

Anything else?
If the trees were gone, bugs won’t have anywhere to live and they’d just be crawling around the ground or if they were butterflies they’d be flying high and they’d have no rest or shelter. They’d be flying to get food and then something could come and grab them. Also they might need to hibernate.

I can look after the Blue Mountain’s by not getting rocks and smashing them onto other rocks. By not cutting down trees. Because if you cut down more trees and there’s no trees left then we wouldn’t be able to breath and everybody on the Earth would die and we would have nowhere to live. Because they have got oxygen inside them and because they grow and so they are still alive.

I see myself as someone who is nice, caring and sharing.

Subject 58  
E2  KAYLAH, girl, 7 years old

I think the word place means somewhere you might live or go. You might drive there or walk.

My place is a house with a cubbyhouse and a deck. My place is special. Because I have a dog there and a brilliant
brother. Because he tells me stories. He is older than me.

My daddy built it and it’s really big. So that I can have lots of room. We have a table, 2 cupboards, a bed, a stuff like that. We keep lots of our secret stuff in there, me and Jarrod.

We keep it in there because mum and dad don’t come in there much. Kind of like books we make up and stuff.

I have a dog... and he sometimes protects me when I go for bushwalks. It makes me feel really happy because sometimes he barks at big dogs that I don’t know ... because they might come and bite me. We walk down to the bush and he leads the way through. I like that he leads the way because it kind of makes me feel safe that he warns me that there is something ahead.

I live down this road right at the bottom, with lots of bush and that where I go for bushwalks. We’ve got a little field there where we have a trampoline and a flying fox. We have an open space where our neighbours are, so their dogs sometimes come into our yard. We can talk to them without having to go over a fence.

I can look after my place by keeping my room tidy, so people don’t come in a say ‘your house is very messy’.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is really pretty because there’s lots of mountains, and we’ve the 3 sisters and Jenolan caves and they are really pretty. Sometimes you look at them and they are blue, white and kinds of pinky. They are lots of different colours.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by not littering because the animals can eat the wrappers.

I see myself as someone who is an Australian. Someone who was born here and has lived here all my life. I also see myself as an animal lover.

Subject 59
E2  JAMIESON, girl, 7 years old.

I think the word place means you are at a different country or a shop or something.

My place is a house and it is a home.

I can look after my place by taking care of it, like when it’s dirty you clean it.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is wonderful, because there are lots of things to do like going to school and swimming in the pool when it’s hot.

I see myself as someone who is special because I’m me.

Subject 60
E2  DANIEL, boy, 10 years old.

I think the word place means a certain area of space. There would be everything around it so it’s a specific thing in the middle of that space. The space is a place in the world itself.

What do you mean?
Well it depends on what place but if it’s a really special place like one of a kind like Sydney Harbour Bridge, you’d have to give it a name and the location. Like Springwood.
My place is Faulconbridge which is where I live at... the address... down a... turn left. The address is... It's where I live and where I grew up and it's got my family, it holds lots of happy memories.

I live in a house and it is extremely special to me, because its shelter, it's got food. It's got everything to survive. It's got things to keep you entertained. I wouldn't want to give it up. Dad's been working on it really hard, painting and fixing stuff. We've got nice neighbours, so nice, they wouldn't shout at you. They'd be kind. Say I had a dog, I do at one house but not at the other. If it was barking they wouldn't be rude. They'd say it kindly.

I live in two houses. At Dad's he's got another girlfriend. It's good as an only child so you can do stuff together... but it doesn't feel like a 'me and Dad' thing when Catherine helps. Dad said that if Catherine helped we could spend more time but that hasn't worked out, because I spend less time with him... He said that when we'd go to England she'd come too, but going to England has been like a family thing. Since Mum and Dad have split, it was just me and Dad.

Mum's house is smaller.

I'm looking forward to having my special place, having my own rules in my own place. Mum's rules are harder than Dad's rules. I would just like a place where I can have "me" time.

I can look after my places by helping around the house and making sure that everything is in place. If it's a really messy house then everything would get broken, but if everything is in place then you would know where stuff is. We paint it so that it doesn't get rusty. So you do stuff together. It depends, he usually gives me a choice but if I'm not there he does stuff. Which I don't really mind.

The Blue Mountains is a place that is a very beautiful tourist attraction, because it's got tourist sites like the 3 sisters and a lot of bush and adventures like going bushwalking. There's a lot of bush tracks in the Blue Mountains and some of those are in the most beautiful places and others are hidden that you might just find out about. You might just find the track.

Can you explain further? They are very cool because you feel like you're the one that discovered them and you can see where it leads and everything and it's really fun. I'd like to discover things on my own because then I could tell the people I want. But if I discovered things with others, they'd go and blab it out. You are the one that's seeing everything before anyone else, it's like discovering something so you can tell people about it. They could come and see it. Or if you don't want to tell anybody, so that you could just hang out.

I can look after the Blue Mountains by keeping it safe and making sure it doesn't get dirty with litter and everything. We don't want to turn it into a junkyard because we like how it's nice. So lots of litter would change it. We need to keep it looking good for the tourists, because they give money to the government who help to fix up things. We could try and report things that are suspicious to the police. Then a follow up- robbery and crime could come- so reporting is a way of trying to keep it all safe.

I see myself in the Blue Mountains as someone who is very grateful to live here. I wouldn't want to leave because as I said before it's a peaceful and nice place and you can buy everything.

Subjects 62-68

Very little reported
Interviews terminated early