



# ACTUALISING CHILDREN'S IDEAS FROM CO-DESIGN

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**MEDICAL AND  
HEALTH SCIENCES**  
SCHOOL OF NURSING



## Background

Public Health & Nutrition

## Experience

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander  
communities in Australia

Vanuatu

Aotearoa NZ





## Health-promoting neighbourhoods

Health-promoting features support good health and wellbeing (e.g., green space, physical activity facilities)

Neighbourhood is inclusive of home, locality, and urban/district scales



## Co-design

A participatory process, engaging diverse people and knowledge, that applies collective creativity across a design process to generate solutions

Blomkamp, E. (2018). The promise of co-design for public policy. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 77(4), 729-743.

Sanders, E. B.-N., & Stappers, P. J. (2008). Co-creation and the new landscapes of design. *CoDesign*, 4(1), 5-18.



## Tangible outcomes

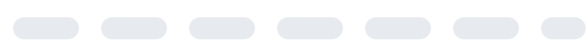
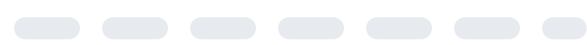
Material, often physical, changes



# **Co-design as collaborative engagement with children**

Lansdown, G. (2010). Rights through evaluation and understanding children's realities. In B. Percy-Smith & N. Thomas (Eds.), *A handbook of children and young people's participation: Perspectives from theory and practice* (pp. 11-23). Routledge.

# PHD THESIS OVERVIEW



Children's ideas for health-promoting neighbourhoods

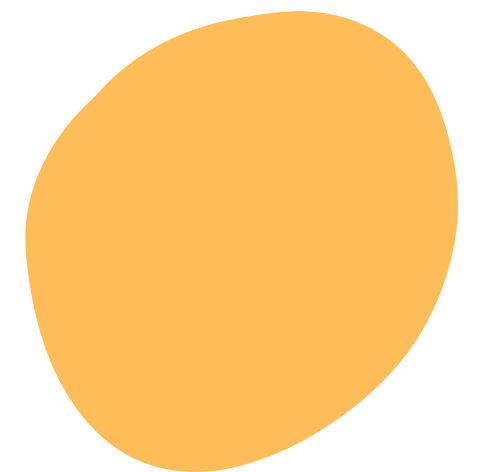
Decision-makers (practitioners, policy-makers, researchers) doing co-design with children aged 5-13 years in Aotearoa NZ

Actualisation of children's ideas as tangible outcomes

# AIM

Reference No. UAHPEC 25908, 2023

Elicit adult decision-makers' views on what is important for actualising children's ideas from co-design activities, to create tangible outcomes for health-promoting neighbourhoods



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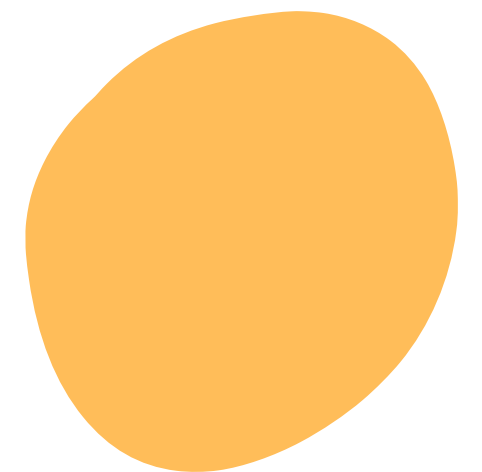
Elicit adult decision-makers' views on what is important for actualising children's ideas from co-design activities, to create tangible outcomes for health-promoting neighbourhoods

Children's  
right to  
have views  
considered

Children as  
competent  
actors with  
evolving  
capacities

Numerous  
benefits to  
children's  
involvement

Disconnect  
between  
children's  
ideas and  
outcomes



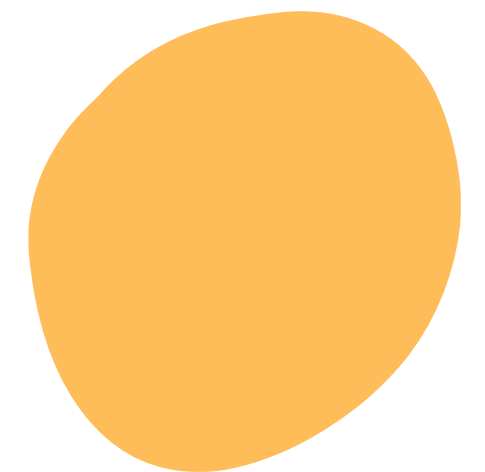
# METHODS

- Appreciative inquiry approach
- Active & passive recruitment strategy
- Individual interviews on Zoom with 10 adult decision-makers
- Reflexive thematic analysis to generate key themes – participants gave feedback on preliminary results to shape final themes

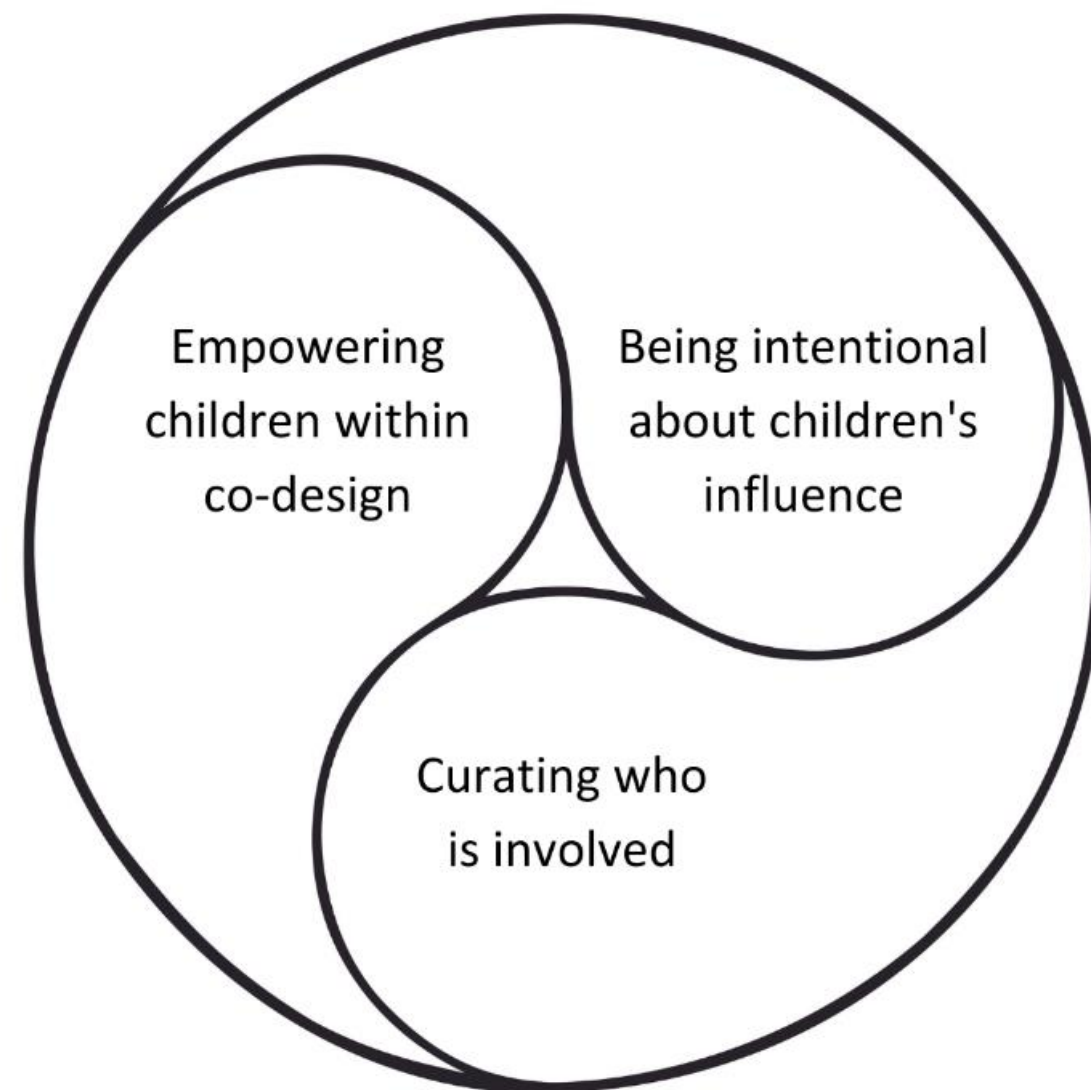


# RESULTS - PARTICIPANTS

- Projects across Aotearoa NZ
- Diverse professional backgrounds
- Range of proximity to co-design



# RESULTS - THEMES



Framework for impactful co-design with children

Striving for positive impact for places and people



## **Theme 1:**

### **Empowering children within co-design**

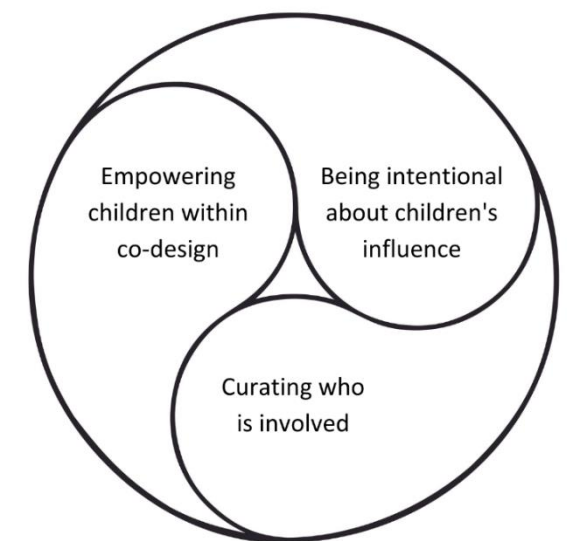
Importance of centring  
children's ideas to shape  
tangible outcomes

Process underpinned by  
learning and  
collaboration between  
children and adults

# THEME 1 – EMPOWERING CHILDREN

*“It doesn't look like giving the kids the right to say [the waterbody] should go here or there, but it is empowering their lived experience to influence the built outcome at the end...” [P7]*

*“... that process of having a voice and it being their project [...] made them realise that they had power to change things...” [P1]*





## **Theme 1:**

### **Empowering children within co-design**

Importance of centring children's ideas to shape tangible outcomes

Process underpinned by learning and collaboration between children and adults



## **Theme 2:**

### **Being intentional about children's influence**

Adults having clarity from the outset that children's ideas are likely to influence decision-making

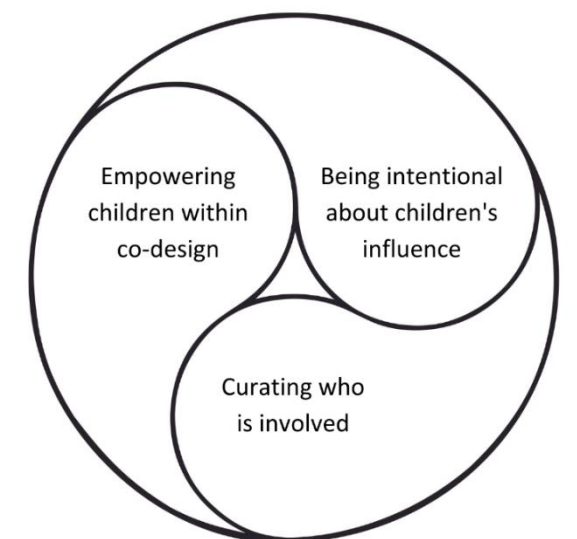
Actively enhancing their potential for influence throughout the process

# THEME 2 – INTENTIONAL ABOUT INFLUENCE

*“... you’ve taken two hours of [the children’s] life, like what is the impact that it’ll have for them?” [P3]*

*“... involving [children] early, not just kind of at the end when we come in for, you know ‘we need these perspectives in this little box’. But, actually, start from the beginning.” [P5]*

On prioritising diverse ideas – *“Who is this thing for?” [P9]*





## **Theme 1:**

### **Empowering children within co-design**

Importance of centring children's ideas to shape tangible outcomes

Process underpinned by learning and collaboration between children and adults



## **Theme 2:**

### **Being intentional about children's influence**

Adults having clarity from the outset that children's ideas are likely to influence decision-making

Actively enhancing their potential for influence throughout the process



## **Theme 3:**

### **Curating who is involved**

Careful consideration of who is involved in co-design

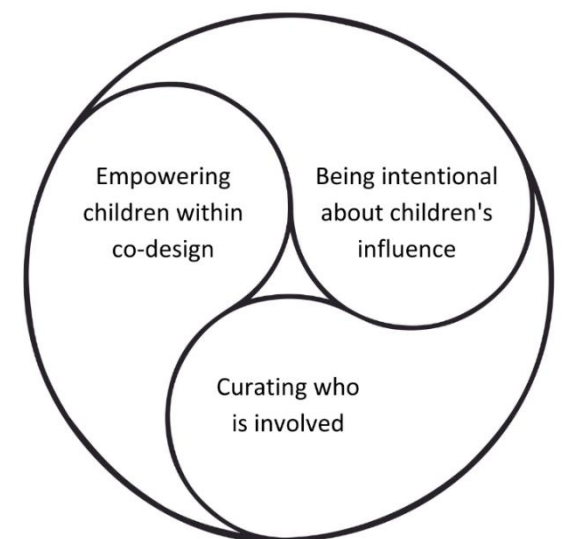
Which groups of children and the core qualities of adults

# THEME 3 – CURATING WHO IS INVOLVED

Diversity of children involved as “critical”, rather than just involving “the usual loud and proud” [P3]

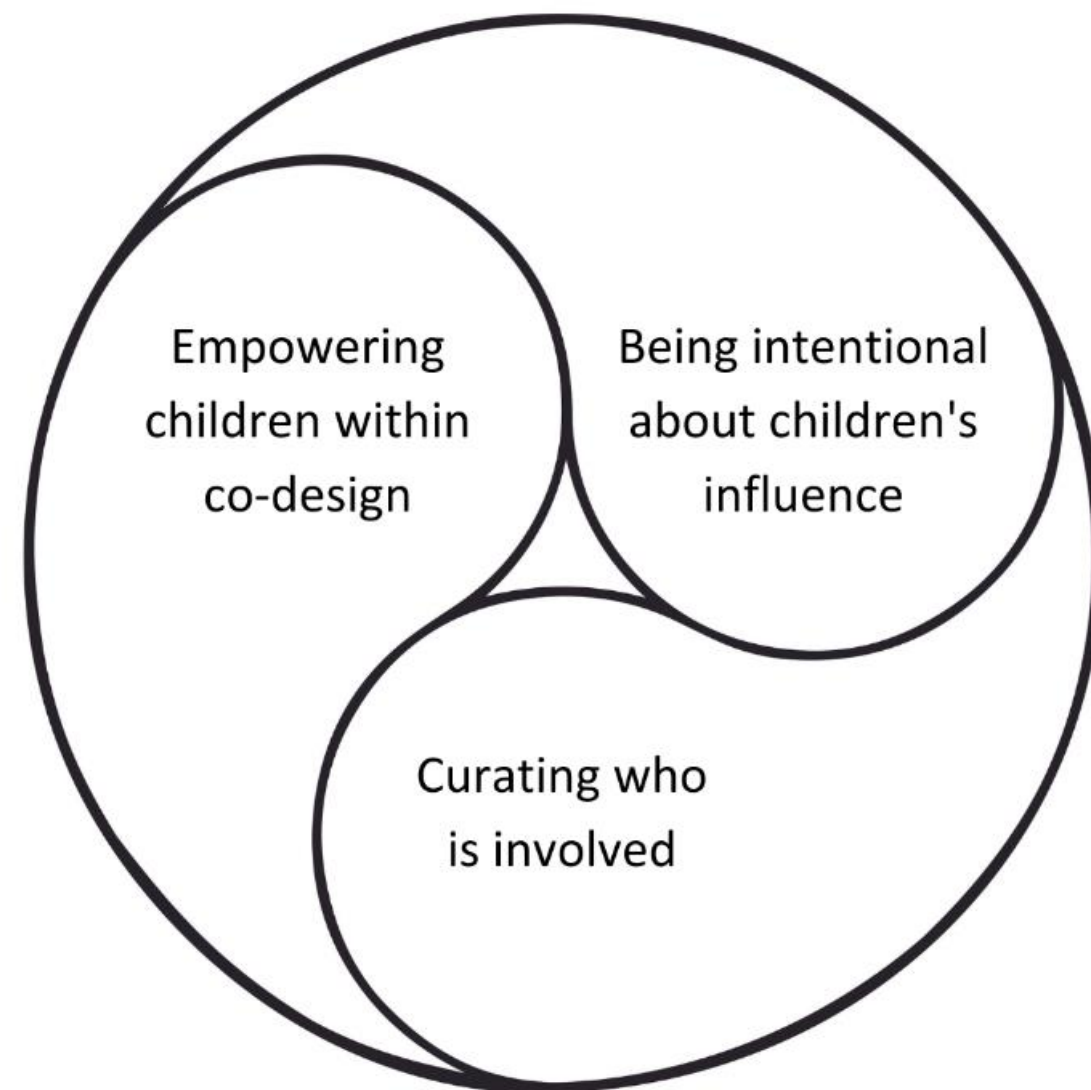
“... although it was the kids’ project, it was really hinged on the relationship of the adults working together.” [P1]

“... there's the capability side of ensuring that the people doing [co-design] are able to relate and empathise with young people when engaged with them effectively... ” [P10]





# RESULTS - OVERALL



- Co-design occurs in a dynamic context
- Tangible and intangible outcomes
- Children's safety and seeking consent
- Evaluation
- Cultural context

# RESULTS - UNIQUENESS


- Diverse participants, projects, and locations
- Focus on actualising children's ideas (vs engaging children)
- Insights useful elsewhere – other participatory processes, co-design with different groups in the community, applicable to different ages
- Written from pragmatic worldview – focus on “what works” in real-world

# RESULTS - OUTPUTS

## Journal article



## Practical resource



**Checklist for impactful co-design with children**

This resource provides a series of reflexive prompts and practical examples for adult decision-makers doing co-design with children. Adult decision-makers may include practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers.

The checklist was developed based on insights from research in Aotearoa New Zealand, which sought to understand how children's (aged 5-13 years) ideas for health-promoting local environments are brought to life through co-design.

- Empowering children within co-design
- Being intentional about children's influence
- Curating who is involved

Please cite this document as: Williams, Tiffany; Ward, Kim; Goodwin, Deborah; Smith, Melody (2024). Checklist for impactful co-design with children. The University of Auckland. Online resource. <https://doi.org/10.17608/ks.auckland.25395403>

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# RESULTS – APPLICATION

- Use to reflect on current/past co-design projects
- Use to plan and evaluate future co-design projects
- Use as evidence to support co-design approach and advocate for adequate resourcing (e.g., evaluation, skilled facilitators)
- Use in discussion with colleagues and collaborators to understand if co-design is the best approach (versus consultation / child-led approaches)

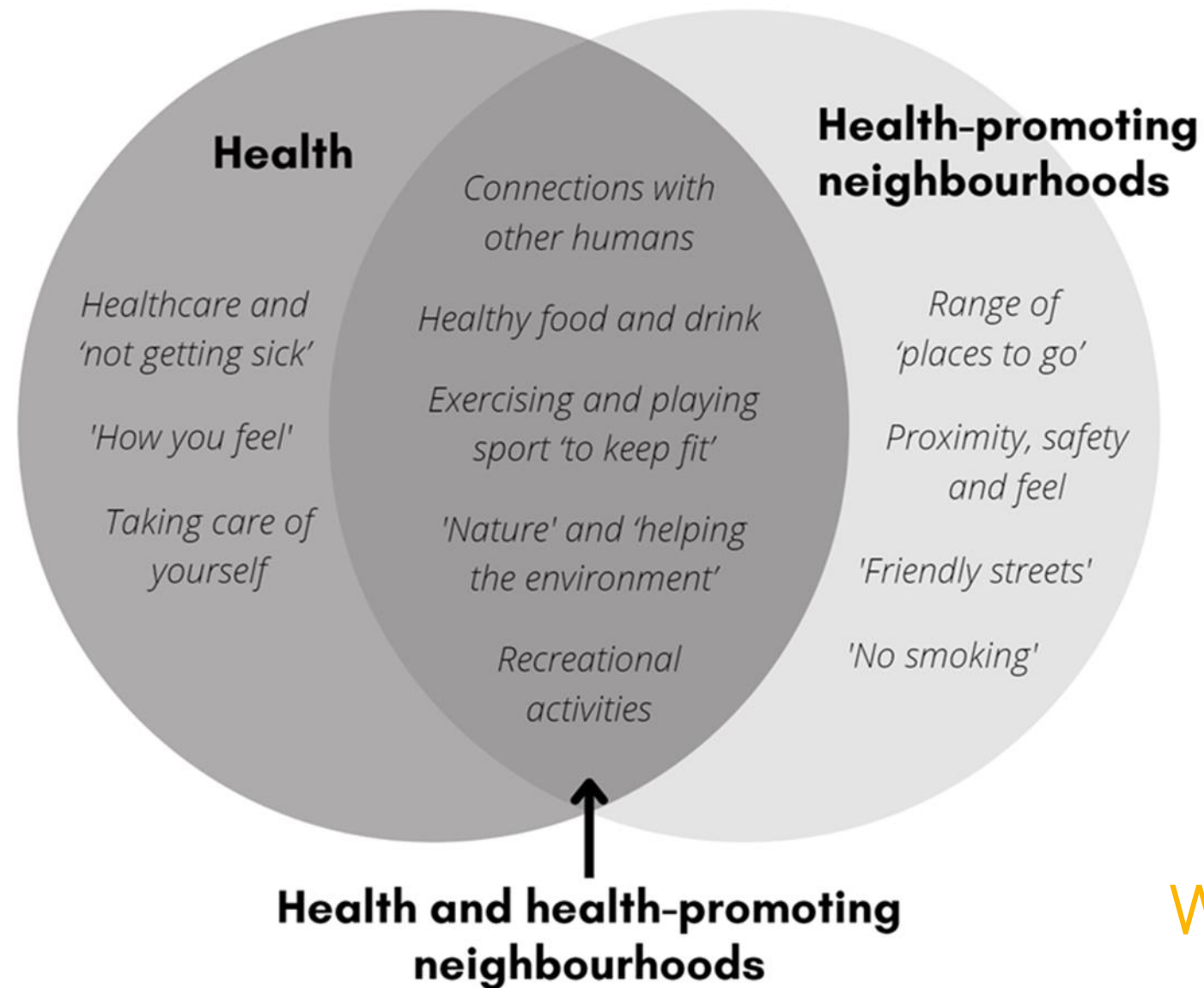
# LITERATURE REVIEW ON "CO" PROCESSES

- Scoping literature review on co-creation, co-design, and co-production with children aged 0-17 years
- Studies focused on understanding & influencing physical (natural and built) environments
- International focus



Review findings

# NEIGHBOURHOODS & HEALTH STUDY



Aimed to understand children's perceptions of health and health-promoting neighbourhoods in urban NZ

- Participatory & creative approach
- 2 schools in 2 cities
- 93 children aged 8-10 years

Walking, biking, scootering, streets



Study findings

QUESTIONS?



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See/request articles & resources:

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Tiffany-Williams-48/research>



