CHANGING PLACES –

RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN WHO MOVE

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The named author was primarily responsible for the research contained in this thesis. As such, the author:

- Reviewed the literature and, with the help of supervisors, developed the research questions.
- Developed and chose questionnaires.
- Liaised with the NSW Department of Education and Training and school principals for recruitment purposes. This included some visits.
- Contacted radio, newspapers, magazines and organizations such as the Air Force for coverage and recruitment purposes.
- Collated and sent packages.
- Marked the questionnaires and entered the data.
- Analyzed the data with the assistance of supervisors.
- Wrote the dissertation.
DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to another university or institution.

____________________________
Christine McLeod

DATE
ABSTRACT

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that over 40% of all Australian children moved at least one time in the census period from 1996 to 2001 (ABS, 2001). The literature varies in the impact that this has on children. The purpose of this study was to examine the associations between residential relocation, resilience and the emotional, behavioural and academic adjustment of children 8-12 years of age who had moved. Risk factors as identified in the literature as well as the relative impact of resilience were examined. By studying how adjustment occurs in the context of resilience, possible areas for prevention and intervention may be developed for the large numbers of children who move.

Results showed that the sample population was in the normal range in academic and behavioural terms. The sample was found to have repeated more grades than average; however the children did not exhibit significant behavioural or emotional consequences. A number of demographic factors have been indicated in the literature as affecting adjustment after residential relocations, yet these were generally not found to be significantly associated with adjustment for this study population. Socioeconomic status was the only factor other than resilience to have been significantly associated with adjustment. Possibly due to the developmental stage of the participants, only the resilience subscales of interpersonal strength and school functioning were found to be significant in their positive association with adjustment, leading to fewer behavioural and academic problems. While the children in this study have all had the potential stress of moving house, the demographic characteristics of this sample would suggest that they might not have had to encounter multiple life challenges or adversities. This conclusion may help explain the lack of significant effects of
demographic factors on the adjustment of the children in this sample. Results highlight the importance of good schooling and that the core business of schools in building and enhancing the intellectual functioning of children, is a vital component in the development of resilience. These findings suggest that different aspects of resilience may be important for different developmental stages and different life stressors. The distinction between cause and effect when examining resilience factors is discussed and it is suggested that outcomes in one context may be treated as influences upon outcomes in another context.