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**A COMMUNITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY:  
TALKING ABOUT LIFE IN A RETIREMENT VILLAGE**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Psychology  
at  
Massey University

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2002

## **ABSTRACT**

The recent emergence in New Zealand of commercially operated retirement villages has provided older adults with the opportunity to live independently in a community specially planned for their age group. The current generation of older New Zealanders is the first to live in this way, and little is known about the psychology of this lifestyle. It is well recognised that environment influences well-being, and the present study aimed to investigate the broad psychology of living in a retirement village.

The data was collected from twelve people living independently in a retirement village in a provincial New Zealand city. They were asked to talk about their decision to move into the village, and their experience of living in such a community. Verbatim transcripts of the interviews were examined using Potter & Wetherell's (1987) method of discourse analysis. Five themes were analysed: the decision to move, active ageing, company, privacy, and security. Overall, the analysis showed the ways in which the participants constructed their move to a retirement village as a positive and proactive part of the ageing process. Predominantly, this was achieved by highlighting the positive aspects of a retirement village community in contrast to constructions of the wider community, and by choosing contrasting features of the village lifestyle to construct different versions of the village.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To my supervisor, Keith Tuffin, thank you for showing me how I could make sense of psychology. Thank you also for seasoning your academic guidance of this thesis with generous measures of tact and humour, and for having the wisdom to know which to use.

To my husband, Grant Christian, and our daughter, Anna, thank you both for your outstanding emotional and practical support, and for your patience. I know you will be glad to have me back.

To the rest of my family, and to my friends, thank you for all you have done to maintain and restore my equilibrium. I am looking forward to spending more time with you.

To the people who took part in the study, thank you for giving your time, and the talk that was the basis of the study. I appreciate your contribution, and it was a great pleasure to meet you all.

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