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

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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.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories of adjustment to ageing.....	2
Disengagement theory	2
Socioemotional selectivity theory.....	2
Continuity theory	3
Activity theory	4
Reasons why older adults might want to live in a retirement village	4
Sociability	4
Independence	7
Security and safety.....	8
Exclusivity	9
The present study in the New Zealand context.....	11
Summary.....	13

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK

The social constructionist perspective	14
The consequences for researchers	15
Reflexivity applied to the present study	16
Discourse analysis	18
Social constructionism and discourse analysis in the present study	19
Summary.....	20

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Procedure	21
Ethical issues	22
Transcription.....	24
Coding.....	25
Validity	25
Analysis	26

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DECISION TO MOVE

Timing is important	28
Leaving the family home	33
Sentimentality and pragmatism	36
Possessions and memories.....	38
Summary.....	41

CHAPTER FIVE: ACTIVE AGEING

It's important to be active	42
The village is a busy place.....	44
It's important to use time.....	46
Summary.....	49

CHAPTER SIX: COMPANIONSHIP	
Expectations about company	51
Getting to know people.....	53
Not everyone participates	54
The kind of people who live here	58
Summary	61
CHAPTER SEVEN: PRIVACY	
Privacy and sociability.....	62
Privacy and concern for others	69
Summary	74
CHAPTER EIGHT: SECURITY	
Constructing danger in the community.....	76
Contrasting the village with the wider community.....	79
Security in the village	82
How secure is it really?.....	84
Summary	87
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION	
Summary.....	88
Qualifications to the study	91
Suggestions for further research	92
REFERENCES.....	94
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Invitation to participants	98
Appendix B: Information sheet	99
Appendix C: Interview prompts	101
Appendix D: Consent form.....	102
Appendix E: Confidentiality agreement	103
Appendix F: Transcription notation.....	104
Appendix G: Summary of results for participants	105