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**RETIREMENT VILLAGES
A LIFESTYLE CHOICE FOR OLDER
NEW ZEALANDERS**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of**

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in
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores why increasing numbers of older New Zealanders choose to live in retirement villages. In the apparent absence of any similar New Zealand-based research it comprises an exploratory study employing a resident-driven approach and a socio-relational focus. The central issues examined include: factors that cause older people to consider leaving their current homes; their reasons for choosing a retirement village; their experiences of life within those villages and the impact that residence within a circumscribed, age-defined housing complex has on their contacts with members of the outside community.

Informal correspondence with former and present retirement village residents; a self-administered questionnaire; face-to-face interviews and impressions gained during visits to retirement villages are used to develop a picture of retirement village life. The information gained is discussed in relation to those issues that appear to be important for older New Zealanders and in the light of negative comments about retirement villages encountered in several publications.

The conclusions of this research are that older people who are having difficulties coping in their present homes or have concerns about their health or security are most likely to conclude they should move house. The particular appeal of retirement villages relates to the support services, facilities and amenities provided; the security features; the maintenance-free accommodation and the opportunities for social interaction with like-minded people. No evidence was found to support the argument that retirement villages isolate residents from the wider community. However, access to the retirement village option is restricted to those who have the money to pay for accommodation and who are capable of living independently with minimal support.

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