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**SECOND LIFE:  
FROM KIWI SOLDIER TO CIVILIAN**

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

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in  
Psychology

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New Zealand

**Thomas R. Smart**

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## **Abstract**

Experiences of sixteen former New Zealand (NZ) Army soldiers and officers were analysed to investigate the transition from NZ Army service to civilian life. All participants completed demographic questionnaires and participated in semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify and interpret patterns in relation to the research question. Analysis indicated that transition from the NZ Army is an experience comprising a search for personal meaning, vocational and identity adaptations, and social support in various forms. Having joined the NZ Army to fulfil personal incentives, soldiers realise career aspirations through the application of their skills during overseas missions and other activities. The transition process, which begins with disidentification and a manifest desire to leave, includes a search for rewarding employment beyond the NZ Army. Former soldiers use education, as well as personal strengths gained during service, to achieve vocational goals. Social aspects of the transition experience include poor leadership and disappointing farewells, fuelling discontent toward the NZ Army. In contrast, camaraderie between soldiers is a memorable and valued element of the NZ Army career. Having left the NZ Army, individuals experience a loss of this bond, negotiating personal identities while drawing on social support to successfully manage transitional challenges.

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