

Chapter 1: Introduction

Fostering the health and wellbeing of those who produce our food and fibre has never been more important for the global agricultural sector. In Australia, farmer numbers are declining while the demand for production continues to rise. The state of health and wellbeing in rural farming communities is not always a positive one, with a number of increased risk factors affecting morbidity and early mortality rates. An example of this identifies farmers—defined either by occupation or by those who live on farms—as dying at a higher rate by suicide (Andersen, Hawgood, Klieve, Kolves, & De Leo, 2010; Miller & Burns, 2008; Page & Fragar, 2002) and accidental death (Franklin, Mitchell, Driscoll, & Fragar, 2000; Lower & Herde, 2012) than most other population groups in Australia. A review of this data has been published (Kennedy, Maple, McKay, & Brumby, 2014). While debate continues over exact mortality rates—particularly suicide—increased risks for suicide and accidental death have been consistently reported for several decades. Although it is theorised that members of farming families are somewhat desensitised to death—via a process of vicarious habituation (Joiner, 2005) and as a result of their frequent exposure to livestock losses, pest reduction practices and firearms—we have little knowledge of how this segment of the rural population are directly impacted by human losses resulting from a suicide or accidental death. Our understanding is narrow and, more often than not, limited to hearsay or what the popular media reports.

A growing global body of research has been conducted examining bereavement following exposure to suicide and accidental death in the general population. However, this exploration is yet to extend to Australia’s rural farming communities. In the last 50 years several approximations have been made to determine how many people are likely to be impacted by a suicide death. The first and most famous was Edwin Shneidman who suggested six people would likely be impacted

by any one suicide (Shneidman, 1969). However, farming families exist within a heterogeneous segment of rural Australia in psychological, geographical and social contexts that set them apart from both rural populations generally and urban populations, contexts that would undoubtedly influence the impact of any traumatic death. Consider the hypothetical suicide death of Farmer James. He was a husband, a father of three children and grandfather of two. He ran the farm alongside his father, his brother, his wife and one of his daughters. He was a volunteer fire fighter, on the committee at the football club and on the board at the local bush nursing service. He had lived his entire 61 years in the small community where he took his own life. The idea that only six people would be significantly impacted by James' death seems to be a gross underestimation (see Figure 1.1).

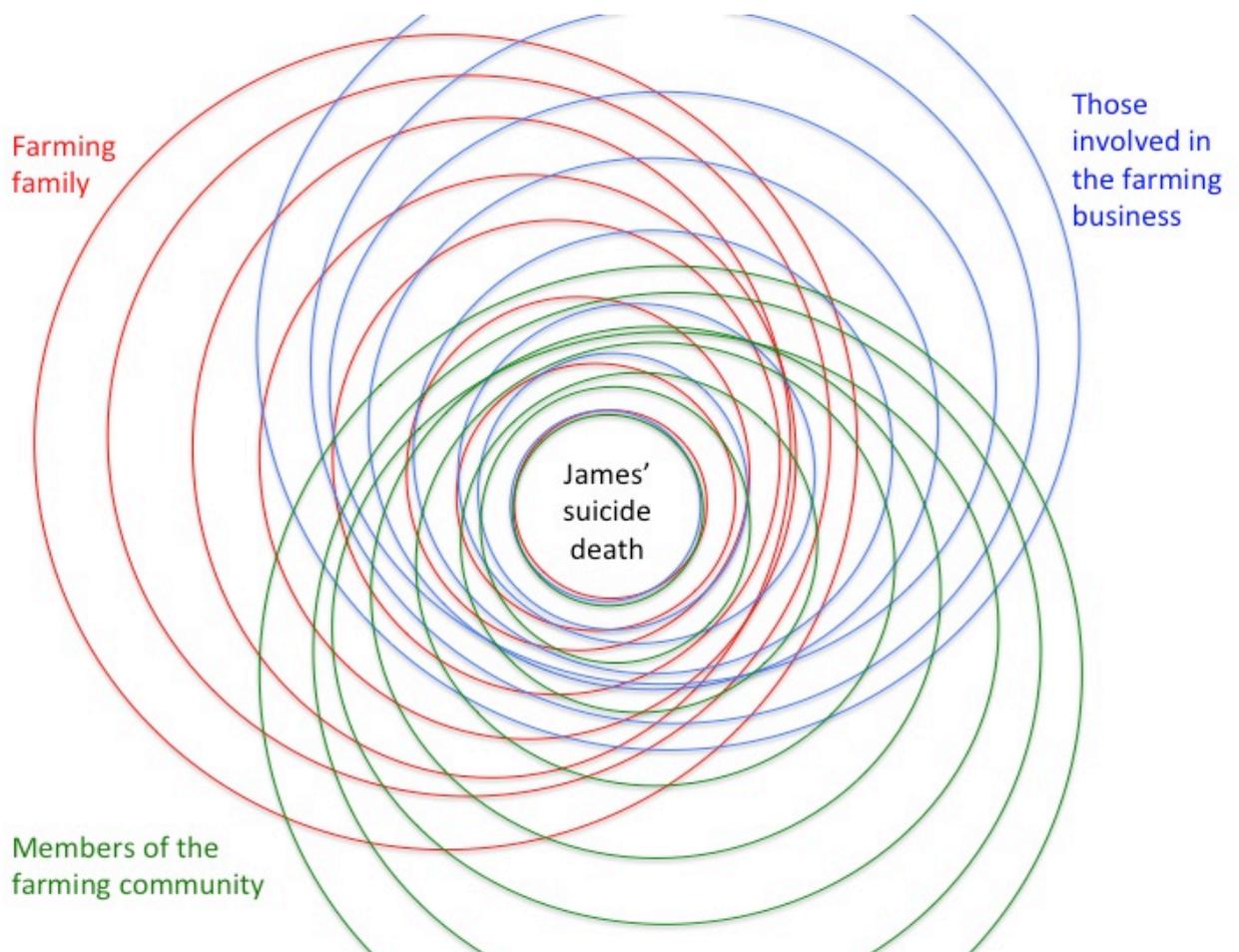


Figure 1.1: The ripple effect of James' suicide death

Not only is the context in which rural farming families frequently live and work likely to affect the extent of the impact of suicide and accidental deaths, but it is also likely to affect the nature of this impact. Consider again the hypothetical case of James and wonder how his brother Ted may have been impacted by his death? Ted not only lost his brother, but also his business partner, a significant proportion of his workforce and a close friend he had contact with on a daily basis. Consider how James' daughter Sally may have been impacted. Sally lost her father, the grandfather to her child, and a mentor and teacher with untapped farming knowledge and experience when James' life ended. Sally was also the one who heard the gunshot and found her father's body leaning against a tree.

This thesis endeavoured to fill a gap in knowledge by exploring in detail how the context of rural farming communities impacts upon the experience of bereavement following a death by suicide or accidental death. Taking into account what is already known about the experience of grief and bereavement—including resilience as well as the potential for adverse effects—this research allowed for the discovery and understanding of what is unique about experiencing suicide and accidental death bereavement as a member of a farming family.

Research goals

This research explored the impact of death by suicide and accidental death on members of Australia's farming families. The study was conducted from a social constructionist perspective and within a narrative inquiry framework, thematically analysing semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews. The aim of the study was to understand how Australian farming families experience the suicide and/or accidental death of someone close to them.

The specific research questions were:

- Who are Australia's farming families? How do they live? How do they die?

- How do farming family members experience loss following suicide and accidental death?
- How does the farming family context influence this bereavement?

Research significance

How suicide and accidental death bereavement is experienced by farming families remains largely unknown. The outcomes of this research contribute new knowledge on an individual, community and global level. Providing an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of bereavement within a farming family context may help other individuals in comparable situations negotiate their own path through loss and normalise some of what they may also be experiencing. In doing so, this may contribute to reducing the sense of isolation and the associated self-stigma experienced by many individuals bereaved by suicide and accidental death and increase the likelihood of seeking help when required. On a community level, this research will guide the development of appropriate and acceptable responses when traumatic death occurs in a rural farming community. On a global level, this research will build on the existing research and broaden the understanding of suicide and accidental bereavement in heterogeneous populations beyond those usually studied. Spanning individual, community and global levels, the information gained from this research will also assist with efforts to break the ongoing cycle of suicide risk associated with bereavement.

Definition of terms

Rural

The term ‘rural’ is multidimensional and encompasses geographical (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2001) as well as demographic, economic, social structure, cultural and sociological dimensions (Ward, 2007). Within the current research, rural will be used in its simplest form as a means of encompassing those outside of urban areas. Rural will also be used in a more complex form as a means of explaining the contextual components of place of residence and employment.

Member of a farming family

The historical portrayal of the Australian farmer is usually that of a hard working male. Like farms themselves, the face of Australian farming is highly variable and a single inclusive definition of ‘farmer’ is difficult. The majority of Australian farms are family owned (Alston, 2012; Garnaut & Lim-Applegate, 1998) and frequently occupational and living roles are inseparable. Consequently, the role of ‘farmer’ encompasses multiple members of a family, young and old, at some point in time. Children are commonly involved in farming activities from a young age (Pollock, 2010) and their parents, male and female, often combine roles involving farming and employment external to the property (Alston, 2012; Erlich, Driscoll, Harrison, Frommer, & Leigh, 1993). Research to date has generally taken a narrow view of who constitutes a farmer and tends to focus on those who derive their main source of income from farming (Judd, Jackson, Fraser, et al., 2006). This has led to definitions of farming families—such as that derived from census data by the Australian Bureau of Statistics—as including families where the family reference person and/or their spouse/partner reported their main occupation as a farmer or farm manager (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a). Less consideration has been given to those who

may derive income elsewhere (Franklin, 2007), or may not classify themselves as ‘farmers’ (Franklin, 2007; Judd, Jackson, Fraser, et al., 2006; Kolves, Milner, McKay, & De Leo, 2012), but who may still play an integral role in the workings of the farm. This includes children and self-classified ‘farmer’s wives’, ‘farmer’s husbands’ and ‘retired farmers’. This is an important consideration given that over half of all family-run farms in Australia rely on off-farm income, with 80 per cent of this work performed by women (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation/Department of Primary Industries and Energy, 1998). Given that this group is likely to also live on the farm for at least some part of their life, their exposure to the contextual factors associated with farming will be strong.

The definition of ‘member of a farming family’ to be used in this research will be quite broad and include self-identified members of families on farms where one or more members hold (or have held) title (freehold or lease) to a farm and some members live (or lived) on that property. While this research recognises that children may have a role in farming, the addition of this group is beyond the scope of the current project, so will be excluded.

Classification of death

Death, or the end of life, can transpire in many ways. Delineation according to the causal element seems to be a logical place to begin the process of definition. The literature tends to describe death as either due to natural cause or due to external causes. Externally caused death is commonly referred to as fatal injury where fatality can be defined as ‘a disaster resulting in death; a calamity or misfortune’ (Macquarie Dictionary Publishers Pty. Ltd., 2012). Such deaths are said to stem from either an ‘accident’ or a ‘purposeful act’ (Carrington, McIntosh, Hogg, & Scott, 2011) and are generally differentiated according to their level of intentionality.

There is a continuum of intentionality when considering fatal injury. Unintentional fatalities have been described as those that occur during the course of the day without being

perpetrated by themselves or another (Franklin, 2007) and are pronounced as ‘accidents’. The term ‘accidental’, is commonly defined as ‘happening by chance or accident, or unexpectedly’ (Macquarie Dictionary Publishers Pty. Ltd., 2012). In actuality, these incidents often occur as a result of lack of due care or risk-taking behaviour and cannot be truly considered as unintentional. At the other end of the continuum are intentional fatal injuries involving a person setting out to cause harm either to oneself (suicide) or upon another (homicide). Intent, however, ‘is too intimate a thing to be more than approximately interpreted by another’ (Durkheim, 1897/1951, p. 43). The literature commonly focuses on either one or the other end of the intentionality continuum and rarely considers the fatalities for which a strict definition of intentionality is unclear, such as single vehicle accidents, drownings and drug overdoses. In Australia, a coroner must be satisfied that a person had an intention to die in order to rule a cause of death as suicide. In actual fact, intentionality is often difficult to establish and many such deaths are ruled accidental. Stemming from these dilemmas, for the purpose of this research, two distinct definitions will be discussed:

Accidental death

This term will be used to describe a death due to external causes (as opposed to illness) and without the intention to die (*reported by the research participant exposed to the death as opposed to the coroner*). While the connotation of a ‘purely by chance’ occurrence is not always accurate, this is a well utilised term both within the literature (Clarke, 2009; Franklin, 2007; Pollock, Fragar, & Morton, 2007) as well as in common usage, and will be adopted within this research.

Suicide

This term will be used to describe a death due to external causes (as opposed to illness) that was self-inflicted and with the intent of death (*reported by the research participant exposed to the death as opposed to the coroner*). This definition encapsulates the main tenets of Durkheim's definition where 'all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result' (1897/1951, p. 44) are considered suicide. This definition varies from the coroner's only in that the official ruling of suicide requires *the coroner* to be convinced of the intent of the deceased (Response Ability, 2009).

The purpose of selecting the research participants' reports of intentionality is controversial but important for a number of reasons. The first is to avoid the erroneous reporting of intent, particularly when considering suicide, through the investigative and coronial process. This will be discussed in more detail in the limitations of suicide reporting (from page 26 in Chapter 2). The second reason stems from the aim of this research to explore the bereavement process following exposure to either accidental death or suicide. It is thought that perceived intentionality is likely to influence the reactions of the bereaved and so warrants exploration. The third justification for focusing on the participant's perception of intentionality stems from the length of the coronial process, particularly if a ruling of suicide death is possible. The coroner must establish a suicide death according to the classification within the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) (World Health Organisation, 2011). The process of official suicide determination is protracted, usually taking a few years. Given this, some research participants may not yet know the coroner's ruling on intent.

Bereaved

The predominantly North American bereavement literature—particularly suicide bereavement—commonly refers to those bereaved as survivors. This term has, however, been criticised as confusing (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011c) and will not be used in this research. The term ‘bereaved’ will be used. While many people would say they know of someone who has died through suicide or accidental death, self-reporting as bereaved adds several dimensions beyond exposure only. Recently, a nested model of suicide bereavement has been proposed (Cerel, McIntosh, Neimeyer, Maple, & Marshall, 2014), which describes a continuum of impact from those *exposed* (anyone who knows or identifies with an individual who dies by suicide) to those *affected* (someone experiencing significant psychological distress following exposure to suicide) to those *bereaved* in the short-term (those with a close personal relationship to the deceased who are particularly vulnerable immediately following the loss) or long-term (those with a close personal relationship to the deceased who go on to suffer more protracted and clinically significant responses to the loss). There have been many educated guesses as to how many people are classified as bereaved—most notably within suicide research (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011c; Maple, Cerel, Jordan, & McKay, 2014). However, an adequate operational definition combined with true epidemiological estimates of bereavement have yet to be established (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011c). A more thorough discussion of these issues will be made in the literature review contained in Chapter 3. The definition of bereaved in the present study will focus on self-perception and will not be limited to any one type of relationship held with the deceased, and has been adapted from one defining those bereaved by suicide (Berman, 2011). For the purpose of this research, a bereaved person will be considered as someone who self-identifies as intimately and directly affected by a suicide or accidental death.

Postvention

First used by Shneidman (1969) more than 40 years ago, the term postvention refers to support services and interventions available to people bereaved by suicide. Given the circularity of suicide risk, postvention is considered to be prevention for the next generation (Maple et al., 2014; Shneidman, 1969).

Context

Within the findings of this research, the farming context refers to that which participants are immersed in through their socialised experience of living and working in a farming family. It is important to recognise that this was not a homogenous state across the participant group. The use of the term context—in what could be interpreted as a singular form—does not detract from the similarity of experience across the group, but continues to recognise the dynamic nature and individuality of experience encapsulated within the social, psychological and geographical elements of each participant's context.

Thesis overview

Following this introduction (Chapter 1), the literature review has been divided into two chapters. The first chapter of this review (Chapter 2) situates the present research by focusing on the demographics of rural and farming populations and the social context in which they live and work. Contextual consideration is maintained through a description and critique of the literature relating to the patterns of farming-related loss and death through suicide and accidental death in rural and farming areas. This chapter also reflects on the limitations of suicide and accidental death data reporting. This research was conducted with the circularity of suicide risk in mind, understanding that those bereaved—by suicide or accidental death—are at a heightened risk of

suicide themselves (Latham & Prigerson, 2004; Pitman, Osborn, King, & Erlangsen, 2014). Given this, the first chapter of the literature review also presents some of the theoretical understandings of suicide relevant to the farming family context.

The second chapter of the literature review (Chapter 3) focuses on the bereavement experience following exposure by members of farming families to suicide and/or accidental death. This chapter opens with a broad exploration of the theories of grief, with a narrowing focus on patterns of variability in bereavement. This is followed by a discussion and critical analysis of the literature identifying differences and similarities in bereavement after suicide or accidental death. The review of literature will then narrow further to focus on what is understood about the experience of such bereavement for members of farming families. A discussion of the limitations of the bereavement literature to date, culminating in a rationale for the current research, completes the second literature review chapter.

Chapter 4 justifies the methodological approach adopted within this research and progressively tightens the focus from a social constructionist perspective, to a narrative inquiry framework, through to a justification of in-depth narrative interviews and an explanation of the process of thematic analysis used. Completing this chapter is a discussion of the ethical issues considered in designing this research and an exploration of reflexivity.

The next three chapters comprise the findings of this research. Chapter 5 contains individual participant profiles. The goal of these profiles is to provide the reader with an understanding of the participant, the person(s) who died, and the context in which the death occurred.

Chapters 6 and 7 present a series of interconnected themes linking the farming context with perceptions of life, death and the subsequent experience of bereavement. Chapter 6 presents and discusses the data relevant to two themes. The first exposes how the farming family context

influences participants' worldview in relation to life and death. There were two notable contributions to this contextually situated worldview: an acceptance of risk and death, and a strong connection to place. The second theme presented in Chapter 6 is understood within a context of identified heightened exposure to suicide and accidental death in rural and farming populations. This theme highlights that when such deaths occur—the context in which they are experienced means that these deaths are often not the worldview shattering events frequently suggested in the bereavement research to date (Currier, Holland, & Neimeyer, 2006). This chapter concludes with a discussion about these themes relative to the existing literature about connection to place and understandings of suicide and accidental death bereavement in Western culture.

Chapter 7 presents a third interconnected theme from the data, demonstrating that participants' experience of bereavement following a suicide or accidental death was influenced by context in several ways. The first subtheme highlights how bereavement experienced within the farming family context did not appear to be influenced by (Western) gender norms. The second subtheme examines further participants' connection to the farm. This subtheme demonstrates this connection as a necessity for the ongoing viability of a farming business, yet one that may have positive or negative ramifications relative to bereavement. Connection to the farm was also demonstrated as a source of continuing bonds. Chapter 7 concludes with a discussion of the data relative to the literature on masculinist gender theory, the process of bereavement and current understandings of continuing bonds.

The concluding chapter (Chapter 8) of this thesis draws together the themes, summarises how members of farming families are impacted by suicide and/or accidental death and discusses the implications of these findings. Recommendations for the application of these insights in a policy and service delivery context are identified. A discussion of the strengths and limitations of this research and suggestions for future research directions is also included.

Chapter 2: Australian farming families—Who are they? How are they conceptualised? How do they live? How do they die?

Suicide and accidental death has an enormous impact on the families and communities in which it occurs—an impact arguably exacerbated when in smaller communities. The aim of this literature review is to explore and critique the current knowledge base related to the occurrence and outcome of suicide and accidental death in rural farming families. Farming families will be positioned as a heterogeneous group within the greater rural population. As a result, both must be understood. The dominant focus will be on Australian research, although international examples will also be included. The first chapter of this review will focus on the demographics of rural and farming populations and the social context in which they live and work. This contextual focus will continue with a description and critique of the literature relating to the patterns of farming-related loss, suicide and accidental death in rural and farming areas.

Literature search process

In developing this literature review, a snowballing and saturation approach was adopted. Initial search terms included suicid*, farm*, accident*, misadventure, fatal*, death, sudden death, rural OR remote, bereavement, suicide survivor, postvention, Australia and NOT Australia. Databases included in the search were SCOPUS, Pubmed, Proquest and SafetyLit; research from 1995 onwards was examined for relevance. Earlier seminal texts were also included. Reference lists of retrieved articles were searched and citations explored for further relevant research material.

Who are rural Australians?

Almost one-third of Australians live in areas outside of major cities, with just 2.3 per cent of the population living in remote or very remote areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b). Similar figures exist across North America (Nicholson, 2008; Rourke, 1997), the United Kingdom (Nicholson, 2008) and New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2012), despite differences in the classification of rural areas (Baeseman, 2009; Congdon, 2011; Gartner, Farewell, Dunstan, & Gordon, 2008; Ostry, 2009; Rourke, 1997; Statistics New Zealand, 2012; Wakerman, 2004). Through the progression of this review, it will become clearer that measures of health, wellbeing and mortality are not uniform across all Australian rural areas. Although there are benefits to living outside of major cities, there are also disadvantages that can be masked by unrealistically positive visions of rural life (Brumby, Chandrasekara, McCoombe, Kremer, & Lewandowski, 2011). Compounding this is the fact that what some may consider an advantage, others may see as a drawback. Wide open space may be seen as liberating by some but isolating and intimidating by others (Nicholson, 2008). While independence and interdependence have been identified as strengths within rural populations (Alford, Cook, & Conway, 2012), these can also be a disadvantage without adequate support structures and resources.

The statistics relating to rural populations frequently paint a bleak picture. Outside of major cities, self-reported levels of poor mental health increase along with obesity and risky health behaviours such as smoking and alcohol misuse (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). High-risk alcohol consumption is linked to greater associated risks in rural areas—such as alcohol-related violence, chronic health conditions and drink-driving (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). Other heightened mortality risks in rural areas (compared with urban) include a 66 per cent greater chance of death by suicide and three times the chance of death caused by a transport accident (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). Similar mortality patterns have been

found in comparable populations internationally (Burrows, Auger, Gamache, & Hamel, 2013). Overall, Australians in rural areas have a life expectancy four years lower than those in major cities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). While nationally, age-standardised employment rates vary little with remoteness (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008), these do vary when examined regionally (Commonwealth Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2013). Income frequently reduces with increasing remoteness (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003b) and educational attainment levels also decrease (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Other common themes relating to rural Australians include low population numbers and density, geographic isolation, a limited diversity of labour, small but dense social connections, a reluctance to share local problems and commonly conservative attitudes and values (Ward, 2007). While population growth is relatively consistent within major cities, a wide variability exists in rural and remote areas. Coastal areas with relative access to populated areas frequently experience growth—particularly from retirees—while population decline continues to hit areas of inland rural Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). This has been particularly pronounced in areas experiencing prolonged drought in recent years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b). While the characteristics outlined above may be common to many rural areas of Australia, it is also important to recognise the variability within rural Australia.

Populations in many rural and remote settings are not microcosms of the wider Australian society and must be understood on their own terms:

New mining towns of bubbling 4X4 affluence, largely male, young and impermanent; drought savaged marginal rural and pastoral communities where those too old, exhausted or poor to leave are in the majority; and oases of workshops, dongas, yards and a shop to service passers by who may never return. There are towns that come to life for a few months a year when a dozen languages are heard as the picking proceeds or the harvest is brought in. And there are the

discrete Indigenous communities of remote Australia, from the islands of the Torres Strait and the Arafura Sea to The Centre (Hunter, 2010).

Who are Australian farmers and farming families?

Farmers comprise one slice of the heterogeneous rural population. It is upon the rural farming population that this research will specifically focus. There remains a tendency to equate rural communities with farming ones, and describe them interchangeably (Alston, 2012; Fuller, Edwards, Procter, & Moss, 2000). However, farming communities should be viewed as a subset of the broader heterogeneous rural population and recognised for the contextual factors that help define them.

Farming, once a collective enterprise to produce food for a community's survival, has globally diversified over time to include variations from subsistence farming to massive commercial production enterprises, and a whole range in-between. Consequently, farming communities cannot be considered as a globally homogeneous group, although there are some global similarities. The next section will explore the context within which Australian farming communities exist. The focus will be on the demographic detail and socially-constructed elements of life and work in Australian farming communities and, more specifically, farming families.

Building an understanding of Australian farmers

Farmers, while spread across different farms and varying environments, demonstrate numerous contextual similarities that combine to increase the risk of accidental death and suicide. Farmers are a male-dominated (Australian Bureau of Statistics, November 2013) and ageing population (Barr, 2014; Fragar, Pollock, & Morton, 2008; Lower, Fragar, & Temperley, 2011; Pollock, 2010), in an industry with no clearly designated retirement age (Voaklander, Hartling,

Pickett, Dimich-Ward, & Brison, 1999). With increasing remoteness, the proportion of farmers increases yet the income they earn decreases (Kolves et al., 2012). Farmers work long, irregular hours and frequently labour on their own, adding to their social isolation. As farms grow in size and stretch further apart, there has been an increasing requirement for, and reliance on, large scale technology (Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010), further reducing direct social contact (Gallagher & Sheehy, 1994) in favour of more ‘virtual’ forms of communication (Milner, McClure, Sun, & De Leo, 2011). The association between strong traditional male gender roles—described as dominant within Australian farming communities (Alston, 2012)—and poor access to social support has also been identified (Conrad, 2010).

Seasonal work patterns result in periods of particularly intense labour requirements. A tendency towards high-risk behaviour has been identified in rural populations (Edmonston, Sheehan, & Siskind, 2009, November; Ward, 2007), particularly farmers (Courtenay, 2000, 2006; Smith, Humphreys, & Wilson, 2008) and, with it, a belief in the inevitability of farm injuries (Robertson, Murphy, & Davis, 2006). International research has identified a cultural recognition in farmers that their occupation is dangerous and unpredictable and that little can be done about farm safety and health except to be careful (Murphy, 2003). This population has also been identified as physically tough and stoic (Perceval, Fuller, & Holley, 2011). These characteristics are thought to stem from the traditional isolation associated with rural and remote settlements and have resulted in an expectation of being able to meet your own needs without outside assistance (Collins, Winefield, Ward, & Turnbull, 2009; Fuller et al., 2000). These ideals have resulted in rural communities having a tolerance for some degree of eccentricity (Fuller et al., 2000; Nicholson, 2008), as opposed to a belief that people should seek help with distress.

Farmers have been described as having a carefree attitude when it comes to personal health and wellbeing, and a reticence for seeking help for health concerns, including mental health (Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2010). In reviewing the literature, Kolves and

colleagues (2012) described this aversion in relation to a number of factors associated with farming communities. These included the stigma reinforced by the traditional masculinist paradigm of farming; the heavy and unrelenting work demands; the lack of access to physical and mental health services; and a traditional focus on ‘practical’ problem solving as opposed to ‘seeking help’ (see also Alston, 2012; Caldwell, Jorm, & Dear, 2004; Hirsch, 2006; Judd, Jackson, Fraser, et al., 2006; Macintyre, Ellaway, & Cummins, 2002; Taylor, Page, Morrell, Harrison, & Carter, 2005). Research undertaken by Brumby with farmers across Australia, however, showed a high level of engagement on matters pertaining to farmer health, wellbeing and safety; it was noted that the context of engagement was as important as the content, and reluctance did not mean they did not want to engage (Brumby, 2013). Even where help is sought, particularly for mental health, the help available may not be considered appropriate (McPhedran & De Leo, 2013). Among farmers who have sought help for mental distress, international research has described symptoms of reduced cognitive ability and mental acuity (Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010). The loss of such critical capacities in ensuring safe practices when working with farm equipment may well affect accidental death rates, independent of their impact on suicidal ideation.

Building an understanding of Australian farming families

Having developed a picture of Australian farmers more generally, how are farming families understood within the literature? Over 90 per cent of Australian farms remain as family-run enterprises, making them the dominant form of primary production (Alston, 2012), a trend that is expected to continue (Clark & O'Callaghan, 2013). As such, farming communities frequently display distinctive living and working arrangements and family structures. Farming communities are made up of individuals and families who may either reside in town or on the land. While some who live in town may also work on the farm, so too may those residing on farms work in towns. For those farmers who both live and work on the land, isolation—both

geographic and social—has been reported (Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2010). The structure of the traditional farming family is important to understand. Female farmers are more likely to marry into rural areas whereas male farmers have a greater tendency to live and work in the same rural area for all of their lives (Alston, 2012), creating very different social connection patterns (Haslam McKenzie, 2000). The common practice of farming with multiple generations of the one family contributes to hierarchical—and mostly patriarchal—familial bonds, the persistent adoption of traditional (frequently unsafe) work practices and the stressful challenges of succession planning (Frank, McKnight, Kirkhorn, & Gunderson, 2004; Haslam McKenzie, 2000). Multi-generational farm-families may also have older generations who, while no longer officially employed on the farm, continue to contribute to farm work (Alston, 2012; Page & Fragar, 2002). Given the context of family farming, divisions between work and family are often blurred. For example, work does not occur within a set 9am–5pm timeslot, weekends are often used as another workday—and perhaps with more helping hands as children and spouses are available to help out (Franklin, Fragar, & Page, 1999). Given this context, children are frequently exposed to a range of hazards—both natural and work-related—that are unique to the farming environment (Franklin et al., 1999). Boys, in particular, are taught to adopt risk-taking behaviours (Bourke, 2003). Such practices include learning to drive farm vehicles and machinery from a very young age as well as the use of firearms (Courtenay, 2000).

The combination of geographic isolation and growing economic pressures has resulted in more necessary off-farm employment, thus reducing the availability of suitable childcare (The Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety, 2004). This means that farming families often have small children accompanying them or working with them on the farm, where it is difficult to sufficiently take care of them. Many farm activities also involve a degree of unpredictability (for example, working with animals), which may present risks for children (The Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety, 2004).

Loss in farming families

Loss in farming families can be understood as both an outcome and a cause of the changing situation of Australian farming. In the former case, loss can broadly relate to the direct and indirect impacts of challenges such as drought or flood and the changing climate of farming. In the latter case, loss relates to the suicide or accidental death of someone connected with a member of a farming family. Both types of loss reflect the important interaction between change and risk factors (Cleary & Brannick, 2007). Each will be explored in the following paragraphs.

Farming families' exposure to loss in a climate of change

The economic and climatic struggles of farming communities in recent decades—and the flow-on effect to the broader rural community—have been exhaustively described (for example Fragar, Henderson, Morton, & Pollock, 2007; Tonna et al., 2009). In brief, these include a reducing income combined with higher workload demands; extreme and unpredictable climatic patterns; an increasing burden of government-imposed regulatory requirements; a decline in rural infrastructure and subsequent opportunities for social connection; and, increasing levels of subsumption, the process through which farms are becoming increasingly subservient to off-farm organisations (Fragar et al., 2007; Lawrence & Gray, 2000). Internationally, farmers have been identified as particularly vulnerable in recent periods of economic decline (Cook, Alford, & Conway, 2012). While farm sizes are growing to create more productive agriculture, this seems to be at the expense of productive and viable farming communities (Haslam McKenzie, 2000). The accumulating challenges have resulted in a threat to the traditional—and primarily masculinist—farming way of life. Similar patterns of change have been identified internationally (Villa, 1999). Australia's farmers have been described as resistant to change when confronted by adverse

conditions, predominantly due to their strong connection with traditional, rural ideologies (Alston, 1997).

The traditional gender roles within farming families are evolving (Alston, 2012). Agricultural production is returning lower profit margins while requiring greater economic outlay than in the past (Fragar et al., 2008). Farming families are being forced to reduce the amount of labour they employ and rely more heavily on the labour of family members during busy periods (Alston, 1997). Female members of farming families are taking a much more active role in farm management, particularly in financial management (Stayner, 1997). Many farming families, particularly female partners of male farmers, are also turning to off-farm work to supplement the family income or keep the farm afloat (Alston, 2012). This may require members of farming families to move some distance away for extended time periods in order to obtain suitable off-farm work (Stayner, 1997).

The changing patterns of labour within farming families have a considerable impact on social interaction. Due to small community sizes, members of farming families have proportionally more strong than distant social ties. Chances of anonymity are, therefore, rare and the consequences of social disruption are likely to be severe (Bourke, 2001). The progressive decline in population density within many rural farming areas and the gradual amalgamation of holdings has seen an increase in single household properties with reduced opportunity for on-farm social interaction and mutual support (Stayner, 1997). The accumulating increase in workload further reduces members of farming families' ability to participate in social engagement beyond the farm gate through volunteerism and leisure pursuits (Alston, 1997). Young members of farming families are being encouraged to leave farming and find personal and professional fulfilment elsewhere (Muenstermann, 2010). This displacement of family members reduces their ability to contribute to on-farm labour during periods of peak demand (Stayner, 1997). The loss of young community members also leads to an increasing proportion of older, geographically

isolated adults with limited social and family support networks (Beard, Tomaska, Earnest, Summerhayes, & Morgan, 2009). Compounding this is the tendency for farming families in crisis to withdraw from their communities and isolate themselves on their farms (Alston, 1997). This pattern may eventuate in a self-reinforcing loop of weakened social cohesion and dwindling services (Beard et al., 2009). While new models of remote service delivery may be growing, these are likely to compound the issues of lost social capital and reinforce feelings of isolation (Beard et al., 2009).

The traditional male farmer is no longer viewed as the backbone of the ‘wide, brown land’ of Australia, but more likely portrayed as downtrodden and never happy with his lot typified by popular media headlines such as ‘Farmers depressed by drought could take years to recover’ (ABC Rural, 2011). The public status of farmers has been damaged in rural areas no longer dependent on agriculture (Alston, 1997). While farmers have often borne the burden of public blame, particularly for environmental damage (Alston, 2012; Lawrence & Gray, 2000) and animal welfare issues (Hogan, Scarr, Lockie, & Chant, 2012), male farmers in particular also lay self-blame. The ‘hyper-masculinity’ of male farmers has led to a constant struggle to perform in a culture where to fail as a farmer is to fail as a man (Robertson, Elder, & Coombs, 2010). Farmers have demonstrated their difficulty coping with the community expectations of what constitutes a successful farmer while continuing to balance everyday family life (Haslam McKenzie, 2000). They view themselves as failures through not being able to live up to traditional values of successful rural masculinity (Ní Laoire, 2001), failing their male ancestors and established family traditions (Alston, 2012), and failing in their moral obligation to effect the transfer of an intact farming enterprise to the next generation (Voyce, 1997). Farmers are experiencing a loss of hope for the future (Sartore, Kelly, Stain, Albrecht, & Higginbotham, 2008).

While farming men and women are generally identified as having set ways to respond to challenging situations, several key events have been identified as potentially altering these

patterns. King and colleagues (2011) found that moving on or off-farm, taking off-farm work, intergenerational transition, having children, and financial difficulty could all influence individuals' responses to challenge. This perceived flexibility further supported the researchers' belief in the capacity to shape an individual's ability to become resilient during adversity (King et al., 2011).

Longstanding battles with drought and flood conditions have resulted in an overwhelming sense of loss among farmers (Polain, Berry, & Hoskin, 2011). While the most visually obvious forms of loss relate to livestock, crop failure and environmental degradation (Speldewinde, Cook, Davies, & Weinstein, 2009), there are other less visual but equally crippling forms of loss experienced by farmers. These relate to financial and professional success, status within the community, reduced physical wellbeing and comfort, and a declining ability to participate in the modern world (Polain et al., 2011). A particular influence of drought on loss of wellbeing results from an increased workload, due both to a reducing workforce and increasing off-farm employment (Alston, 2012). International research supports these findings (Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010). Being unable to escape the loss associated with drought and flood conditions affects farmers' wellbeing (Albrecht et al., 2007).

Above all, farmers feel the loss of relationships as families become separated and friends move away (Polain et al., 2011). Social bonds have been identified for their protective value, particularly in relation to work and personal attachments (Shiner, Scourfield, Fincham, & Langer, 2009). However, when work and family life become strained, social bonds may become a source of tension rather than support. Men, particularly, feel the loss of purpose and social belonging as an outcome of work-related problems and financial difficulty (Shiner et al., 2009).

Farming families' exposure to loss through suicide and accidental death

Contemporary farming communities exist in a time of unstable balance between tradition and a state of change. This places a significant burden on individuals and families involved in primary production. Outcomes of this burden include rising rates of families leaving long held farming enterprises and increasing levels of self-reported psychosocial distress amongst this population (Brumby, Kennedy, & Chandrasekara, 2013; Fragar et al., 2007). An extreme indicator of this burden is the rising rate of premature death recorded for farming communities (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2007). Suicide and accidental death have been identified as elevated in rural and remote areas when compared with metropolitan and general populations (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2007). Within rural areas, farming communities in particular have high accidental death (Herde & Lower, 2011; Lower & Herde, 2012) and suicide rates (Miller & Burns, 2008; Page & Fragar, 2002). The literature on suicide and accidental death in rural farming communities will be explored and critiqued in the following sections.

Suicide

The profile of suicide in Australia is changing and calls have been made for a greater emphasis to be placed on the broader psychosocial issues that influence the pathway to suicide (Judd, Jackson, Komiti, Bell, & Fraser, 2012). A range of psychosocially diverse population groups within Australia have been identified as at a heightened risk of suicide, including young people; men; Indigenous Australians; culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities; and rural and regional communities (Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2010). This first section will focus initially on suicide deaths in general rural populations. The following section will explore and critique the literature specifically focusing on suicide in Australia's rural farming communities.

Suicide in the general rural population

Within the general rural population, young males are at the greatest risk of suicide, and rates have been identified as increasing with increasing remoteness and over time (Kolves et al., 2012). While an increase in suicide with remoteness was identified for females during the period 1998-2002, rates for females in remote and very remote areas actually declined in 2002-2007 when compared with previous figures (Kolves et al., 2012). Considering the known limitations of data collection and reporting—as discussed later in this chapter (Henley & Harrison, 2009)—the rates for the second time period may well be under-reported.

Specific methods are associated with rural suicide, often related to availability and familiarity with the chosen lethal means (Baume & Clinton, 1997; Sankaranarayanan, Carter, & Lewin, 2010). In their review of suicide in rural and remote Australia, Kolves and colleagues (2012) found conflicting data with regard to the patterns of use of firearms as a suicide method. Despite this lack of clarity, up to 75 per cent of rural male suicides in Australia use firearms (NRHA, 2009). Firearms remain an accessible and highly lethal tool in rural suicides (Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2010).

Broad descriptors such as urban and rural may not adequately capture the factors that influence suicide patterns. It may be more appropriate to look at the heterogeneity of within-rural variations to develop a clearer picture of the mechanisms that underpin differential suicide patterns (Arnautovska, McPhedran, & De Leo, 2013; Judd, Cooper, Fraser, & Davis, 2006). The literature examining one specific group within the rural population—farming communities—will consequently be explored and critiqued in the following section.

Suicide in rural farming communities

In Australia, there is a growing body of research identifying farming communities as at a greater risk of suicide than the general rural population and the national population (Miller & Burns, 2008; Page & Fragar, 2002). This section will explore the different perspectives from which farmer suicide has been investigated and the outcomes and limitations of this research.

Research into suicide in rural Australian farming communities has been limited in volume and varied in its focus. Within this small collection of data, conclusions have been drawn based on both farmers as an occupational group (Arnautovska et al., 2013; Guiney, 2012; Gunn, Langley, Dundas, & McCaul, 1996; Page & Fragar, 2002) and as residents of farming enterprises (Miller & Burns, 2008). Within the occupational focus, further differentiation has been made between suicide among male farm managers and farm/agricultural labourers (Page & Fragar, 2002). These two foci of research will be explored and critiqued in the following paragraphs.

Compared with other occupational groups in Australia, farm work has been identified as carrying a high suicide risk (Andersen et al., 2010; Gunn et al., 1996; Page & Fragar, 2002). While farmer suicide rates have been identified as regionally variable (Arnautovska et al., 2013), the risk consistently increases with increasing remoteness (Kolves et al., 2012). Both agricultural labourers and farmers/farm managers have been identified as at greater suicide risk than other occupational groups (Gunn et al., 1996). For the period of 1988-97, the increasing risk of suicide in the agricultural classifications of farm managers and agricultural labourers was almost as frequent as work-related accidental death on farms (Page & Fragar, 2002). In this time period, 921 farm suicides were identified across Australia, with age-standardised rates of suicide for farm-managers as high as 51.4/100,000—2.19 times more than the comparative national rate. Of those suicides, over two-thirds were male farm managers, with almost half of all suicides occurring in farmers aged 55 years and over (Page & Fragar, 2002). The patterns of suicide death were

reversed in the agricultural labourers, with over half of the 300 suicides occurring in the 15-39 years age bracket (Page & Fragar, 2002). Firearms accounted for half of all male farm suicides, more than double the rate in the general Australian male population during the same period (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000). While no further national assessment of farmer suicide has been undertaken, more recent regional assessments continue to identify farmers as at a high risk of suicide. Queensland data suggests farmer suicides as occurring at twice the rate of non-farmer suicides (28.92/100,000 v 14.17/100,000) (Arnautovska et al., 2013) and 2.2 times the rate of the general employed population (24.1/100,000 v 10.6/100,000) (Andersen et al., 2010). Elevated rates of farmer suicide and the predominance of firearm related farmer suicide have also been reported in international research (Booth, Briscoe, & Powell, 2000; Browning, Westneat, & McKnight, 2008; Lee, Burnett, Lalich, Cameron, & Sestito, 2002; Skegg, Firth, Gray, & Cox, 2010; Stallones, Doenges, Dik, & Valley, 2013). Female suicide patterns have been largely ignored in occupational research, other than to admit that recorded rates are small, yet likely to be underestimated (most likely due to females not being classified as farmers by occupation, despite their identified contribution to farm work), and subsequently have been eliminated from further analysis (Page & Fragar, 2002). Females are not the only ones to be excluded from occupation-determined suicide data analysis. In many instances, farm family members and other farm residents (including older generations of the family who are technically retired but still contribute to farm work) who are equally exposed to the vagaries of the rural economy and the stresses and strains of farm life are not identifiable in agricultural occupational classifications (Page & Fragar, 2002). An accurate rate of suicide among these groups is, therefore, unknown.

The second focus of farming-related suicide deaths assesses rates according to those that reside on farms. Miller and Burns (2008) took this approach as a reaction to the failure of previous research to consider the broader impact of farming-related suicide beyond an occupational hazard. Through a combination of techniques, calculations identified both the

number of people living on farms and the corresponding rate of suicide deaths for this population. Farm resident rates were identified as higher than both general rural suicide rates and suicide rates within the general population (Miller & Burns, 2008). Although this research explores a previously neglected segment of the farming population, an all-encompassing view of farming-related suicide is still absent from the literature. While this focus includes farmers living on-farm and their families, it fails to consider farmers who live off-farm but may also be exposed to the stresses and strains of farming. This sub-population of farmers may have a different pattern of risk and protective factors than those for whom living and work are co-located. It seems likely that the greater proportion of those farmers not living on the property may fall into the occupational classification of farm/agricultural labourers. Consequently, this may go some way to accounting for the different patterns of suicide mortality between farm owners/managers and farm/agricultural labourers.

The impact of drought on rural suicides has long been implied (Alston & Kent, 2008) but few direct links have been clearly identified in the research (Kolves et al., 2012). In a study of Victorian farmer suicides during a period of prolonged drought, Guiney (2012) identified no evidence of a pattern of increasing farmer suicides during these years, in addition to existing elevated levels. This may be explained, at least in part, by the widely run Sustainable Farm Families program (fostering the health, wellbeing and safety of farmers and their families) across Victoria in response to drought during this period (Brumby, Willder, & Martin, 2009). Research exploring drought and suicide in NSW indicated a small rise in the suicide rates of men aged 10-29 years and 30-49 years during drought periods, yet a decrease among women (Hanigan, Butler, Kokic, & Hutichinson, 2012). The authors emphasised the breadth of potential factors influencing suicide. While consistently demonstrated direct links between drought and suicide are non-existent, drought conditions have been identified as affecting wellbeing through increased workload, due to both a reducing workforce and increasing off-farm employment (Alston, 2012;

Hogan, Maguire, Russell, & Stakelum, 2008). Canadian research supports these findings (Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010).

Limitations of suicide reporting

While a number of limitations of the suicide research pertaining to farming communities have already been raised, further concerns arise from the management and reporting of suicide data (not always exclusive to farming communities) (De Leo, 2015). Some of these limitations also effect accidental death reporting (De Leo et al., 2010).

Issues relating to data management impact the accuracy of suicide reporting in the farming community including coding practices, data amalgamation procedures and data reporting practices. ABS coding practices, particularly for data between 2002 and 2007, have led to significant recording errors of both suicide and accidental death rates (Harrison, Pointer, & Elnour, 2009). This has had the effect of under-reporting suicide deaths (De Leo, 2007; Harrison et al., 2009; Henley & Harrison, 2009; Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2010) and over-counting accidental deaths (Henley & Harrison, 2009). New coding and revision processes introduced by the ABS in 2007 were expected to improve data accuracy but maintain the problem of delayed data availability for several years (Henley & Harrison, 2009; Herde & Lower, 2011; Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2010). Despite two revisions of the suicide data for 2006-2009, ongoing elevated rates of death assigned to 'unknown cause' and 'undetermined intent' categories suggest that suicide rates remain underreported (Sveticic, McPhedran, & De Leo, 2013).

Small absolute numbers of suicide deaths in some areas create challenges for the meaningful calculation of relative rates, particularly when considering the impact of female suicide (Kolves et al., 2012). The use of contemporary remoteness classifications further complicates this process. While developments have been made in classifications of remoteness to

increase the detail when describing different regions, this detail is often lost in suicide research. The practice of amalgamating remoteness categories has been justified by the need to obtain more meaningful analysis of small absolute numbers of suicide deaths, but results in a greatly simplified rural-urban division (Pearce, Barnett, & Jones, 2007). Thus, much of the detail of the heterogeneity of rural or remote areas is lost in the context of this methodology.

The reporting of a death as definitively caused by suicide is not always clear-cut (De Leo et al., 2010). Some deaths, including single vehicle crashes, drug overdoses and drowning, may be suspected as suicide but classified as accidental death due to the absence of any surety of intent (De Leo et al., 2010). Particularly relevant to farming communities, less indicative methods by females compared with males (for example, overdose as opposed to firearms) may conceal female suicides (De Leo et al., 2010). Farming communities may also report fewer suicides due to concerns about stigma and confidentiality (De Leo et al., 2010). De Leo and colleagues (2010) caution, however, that these hypotheses require confirmation. Within farming communities—where survival of a family farm following a death may rely on successfully claiming an insurance policy—suicide has, reportedly, been concealed:

[I]naccurate recording of the cause of death can occur through the intention to avoid financial hardship for a family—especially in smaller communities where families know each other and socialise together. (Lifeline Australia, 2009, p. 30)

While suicide data is unlikely ever to be completely accurate, this is particularly the case in Australia as reporting relies on the collection of human-interpreted data from inconsistently resourced states and territories with varying death registration and coronial legislation (Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2010). The data reviewed by the coroner relies on an accurate investigative process. However, no standardised process for investigating a possible suicide death currently exists across Australia (De Leo et al., 2010). Consequently, numerous human elements including human error, stigma and family pressures may directly or indirectly

influence the reporting of suicide (Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2010). Considering the process of under-reporting—in combination with the fact that some of the limitations reflect factors influenced by the context of farming communities—the concern with regard to suicide and its impact on this population persists.

The social context of suicide in farming communities

In order to understand patterns of suicide within farming communities, it is important to look beyond the numerical rates and recognise the context within which death transpires. As an outcome of the mounting stress associated with rural populations, a number of studies have described a reduced coping ability as a contributing factor to suicide in rural communities (Baume & Clinton, 1997; Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010; Weaver & Munro, 2009). In Weaver and Munro's (2009) historical study of rural suicide in New Zealand, rural men had higher rates of suicide during times of known struggle, such as war and economic downturn, as they were argued to be less resilient than their urban counterparts or felt the crises more intensely (Weaver & Munro, 2009). The inability to adapt to change through globalisation—due to dominant conservative attitudes—has also been associated with rising suicide rates (Milner et al., 2011). Canadian researchers have identified farmers seeking assistance with mental distress to have a very limited repertoire of coping skills, if any at all (Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010). Attempts to cope were commonly limited to mood altering medication, alcohol and other drugs (Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010). The combination of despair and an aversion to seeking external help leads some male farmers to try to solve their problems through self-harm (Alston, 2012).

Limited coping skills and lack of resilience has also been linked to young suicides in farming communities. Baume and Clinton (1997) proposed that demands by young rural people for high levels of autonomy have resulted in an expectation of self-sufficiency. In times of distress, however, this lack of support results in a reduced resilience and a greater potential for

self-harm (Baume & Clinton, 1997). Young rural people's resilience to suicide has also been discussed in connection to urban drift; it has been suggested that those leaving are more resilient and protected by the resources of where they relocate, while those left behind are less resilient, more personally susceptible to suicide, exposed to reduced resources, and endure more adverse circumstances (Baume & Clinton, 1997).

Internationally, social connectedness has been identified for its potential capacity to encourage resilience against rural suicide (Cutlip, Bankston, & Lee, 2010; Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010), although the authors warn against the direct inference that socially connected individuals themselves are less likely to die by suicide (Cutlip et al., 2010). The idea that social factors influence suicide rates dates back to the work of Durkheim (1897/1951), who proposed that changes associated with modernisation resulted in increased suicide levels (Milner et al., 2011). Durkheim believed that the social dislocation caused by an expanding or contracting population, in combination with economic instability, may create an environment conducive to suicide, primarily through the absence of social forces that act to mitigate suicidal tendencies (Hempstead, 2006). While protection from suicide is gained through social bonds, strained work and family conditions may turn this support into an increased source of tension (Shiner et al., 2009). Traditional masculinist expectations about the male farmer's role may mean that that work-related problems and financial difficulties strike a particularly profound blow to a male farmer's sense of purpose and belonging (Shiner et al., 2009). Male farmers' reduced social connectedness (Milner et al., 2011; Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010), combined with the financial instability common to contemporary farming (Booth et al., 2000; Fuller et al., 2000; Page & Fragar, 2002), may contribute to elevated suicide rates.

Female farmers, while under increasing levels of stress (Alston, 2012), have far lower suicide rates than their male counterparts (Page & Fragar, 2002), although 'farmers' wives' have been identified internationally as having the highest rates of suicide for the wives of any

occupational group (Kelly, Charlton, & Jenkins, 1995). A number of potential resilience factors have been raised to account for the different suicide rates of male and female farmers. For women, adversity is considered an innate part of rural life, as is the expectation of being able to cope with whatever comes along (Harvey, 2007). Women are thought to be more likely to seek help and have greater access to social connections through off-farm employment and associated social avenues (Alston, 2012). However, other research suggests that the additional role of off-farm work may in fact have a negative impact (Harvey, 2007). The distracting focus of the family's wellbeing is thought to ensure that women reduce the focus on their own problems and avoid becoming consumed by their own situation (Alston, 2012). This suggests that—even where women experience similar levels of suicidality to men—they may not act on it because of their responsibility for the family's wellbeing. Support for these findings can be seen in a Canadian study: where women did seek help in relation to suicide, they were almost always seeking help for their spouses (Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010). This pattern persisted even when the women were under significant stress themselves and considering leaving the marriage (Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010).

Very little research has been conducted to explore factors benefiting the health and wellbeing of farming women. That which has been found described the strength gained through a connection with the land (Harvey, 2007). Given the relatively low rates of female farmer suicide, it seems intuitively important to explore the factors leading to such resilience and to develop an understanding of how women negotiate rural identity and the social, cultural and physical environments in which they live in order to achieve health and wellbeing. Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) pose two possibilities as to why farming women exhibit lower suicide rates:

It could be that farm women are experiencing less stress than farm men, or that they have more effective coping strategies and use alternate support systems. It could also be that farm women are indeed experiencing the stress, perhaps more so

as they are also concerned about their partners, but are not expressing it (as suicide). (p. 202)

Women's resilience to suicide has been explained in terms of the protective factor of having children (Qin & Mortensen, 2003), through increased emotional ties and their feelings of ultimate responsibility for their children's wellbeing (Shiner et al., 2009)

Theoretical contributions to understanding farmer suicide

In addition to the contextually-determined risk and protective factors described in the literature, there have been several theoretically based contributions to our understanding of farmer suicide dating back to the work of Emile Durkheim (1897/1951). In combination with an inherent connection to economics, Durkheim describes two relevant pathways that lead to suicide, either independently or in combination. Egoistic suicide arises from a lack of collectivity that results in a loss of meaning in life (Durkheim, 1897/1951). It seems just as reasonable in the current context to compare this with the collectivity attained from meaningful membership of a farming family or community. A threat to this connection would result in a risk of egoistic suicide. Anomic suicide, on the other hand, results from a disturbance of the collective order and a lack of social regulation, resulting in social uncertainty (Durkheim, 1897/1951). Durkheim describes this risk of suicide as an outcome of economic instability and also as an outcome of bereavement (1897/1951). In the current research context, both risks could theoretically be identified. Farmers in financial crisis as well as farming family members impacted by bereavement could struggle to adapt to the situation they find themselves in and, as such, be at a greater risk of anomic suicide. The combination of egoistic and anomic dynamics increases the risk of suicide (Hogan et al., 2012).

There have been a number of other more recent theoretical contributions that are also applicable to our understanding of suicide in rural farming communities. These include work by

Joiner (2005), Bryant and Garnham (2014), Stark and colleagues (2011), Hogan and colleagues (2012) and Albrecht and colleagues (2007).

Hogan and colleagues (2012) present a theoretical framework to understand male farmer suicide in an economically—and climatically—challenged environment, drawing on the sociological work of Durkheim (1897/1951), Giddens (1984) and Warren (1991). They propose that a variety of economic, physical and psychosocial shocks create disorder and unpredictability in the individual's socially-constructed world. This results in a nihilist state where subjective experience can't be reconciled with shared interpretive frameworks. A sense of shame and social withdrawal are associated with this rupturing of subjectivity. In its extreme, this state can result in an inability to function, a collapse of identity and nihilistic suicide (Hogan et al., 2012).

Thomas Joiner (2005) takes another view of suicide and proposes that a combination of capacity for self-injury, social disconnection and self-perceived ineffectiveness or burdensomeness leads to an acquired ability to suicide. Farmers are commonly subjected to practices involving repeated exposure to injury (both through personal injury and working with livestock) and the frequent use of firearms (National Rural Health Alliance, 2009). Joiner (2005) proposes that through repeated exposure to injury and other dangerous experiences, individuals become habituated to such experiences and develop the capacity for self-injury (see also Gallagher & Sheehy, 1994). In the farming context, this habituation may arise through the frequent use of firearms for hunting and livestock euthanasia as well as the exposure to suicide deaths or deaths by other causes. It may also be compounded through the regular experience of work-related injury and the chronic experience of physical pain (Brumby et al., 2011). In addition to the capacity for self-injury, social disconnection and feelings of ineffectiveness are also required to acquire the capability to suicide (Joiner, 2005). In the farming environment, a number of factors may contribute to feelings of social disconnection including social and geographic isolation, a tendency for self-reliant attitudes and lone work patterns. The cumulative impact of

uncontrollable events such as natural disaster, climate change, market forces and regulatory requirements may result in psychological distress and feelings of ineffectiveness. While farmers are used to achievement through sheer hard work, the impact of these external forces cannot be altered through hard work and farmers' roles may be perceived as less influential.

Bryant and Garnham (2013, 2014) also described the influence of uncontrollable external forces on the path to suicide, in this case the contemporary neoliberal political economy in which support from the state has been withdrawn. Bryant and Garnham's (2014) theoretical discussion of farmer suicide arose from their belief that the common perception of the individual as the locus of suicide restricts the exploration of structural and cultural influences on suicide. Instead of viewing suicide in terms of mental illness and psychological stress, Bryant and Garnham (2014) focus more on the social processes that could potentially underlie the distressed reaction. In response to economic and political conditions, farmers may physically survive through hard work and 'tightening the belt', but consequently pay an emotional toll for this survival. When farmers' autonomy, economic conditions and ability to farm are constrained and there is a shift from a position of pride to one of shame (Bryant & Garnham, 2014), suicide becomes 'an act of agency to exit the industry and a statement of resistance' (Bryant & Garnham, 2013, p. 8). This avenue of theorisation shows little consideration, however, for suicides that may appear unrelated to economic or political conditions.

In response to concerning rates of suicide in rural areas, Stark and colleagues (2011) built upon the framework of the Cry of Pain/Entrapment model of suicide risk (Williams & Pollock, 2001) to place rural suicide in an economic, cultural and social context—a similar goal to that of Bryant and Garnham (2013, 2014). This model was designed for use at a policy development and service delivery level. The first component of the model is the occurrence of stressors, both general and rural specific. Among these rural specific stressors, Stark and colleagues list several that have been described already in this literature review including social isolation, rural

restructuring and political/social exclusion. The second component of the model is the perceived ability to cope with or escape the problem. In rural areas, the existence of attitudes of self-reliance, stoicism and stigma were all thought to reduce the ability to escape, especially when combined with the unavailability and inaccessibility of formal support services. The use of informal support networks was seen as a key component of coping. The third component of the model is the decision to self-harm. In the rural context, Stark and colleagues (2011) suggested that feelings of burdensomeness (as in Joiner's 2005 theory) and exposure to suicide may mean suicide becomes perceived to be a viable option. The final component is the likelihood of death. This recognises the availability and use of highly fatal means, such as firearms in the Australian context, and the relative availability of an emergency response if death was not immediate. While clearly useful in a service provision context, this model is not clear on the mechanism of action that leads to the decision to self-harm.

Albrecht and colleagues' (2007) theory of psychoterratic distress arose in recognition of the negative relationship observed between individuals and their support environment. Two specific forms of this distress have been described as nostalgia and solastalgia (Albrecht, 2008; Albrecht et al., 2007). Nostalgia describes the distress caused by separation or forced removal from the support environment—in the case of the current thesis, this being the family farm environment. Solastalgia, on the other hand, describes the distress exhibited by people who remain within their support environment but face the lived experience of profound environmental change due to factors such as drought or mining damage. This unwelcome change has been described as threatening 'their sense of place, their identity, physical and mental health and general wellbeing' (Albrecht et al., 2007, p. S96).

Accidental death

There have been two disparate streams of focus in the literature on accidental death in rural farming communities. The first includes research relative to accidental death in general rural populations. While these investigations do not highlight the heterogeneity of their sample, there is a high likelihood that the mortality rates outlined would include members of the farming community. The second research stream focuses specifically on farming-related fatalities—those occurring on-farm or during the process of conducting farm work (often including bystander deaths). The research from each of these streams will be examined. However, in the absence of any research combining this focus into one encapsulating all accidental deaths within farming communities, the ability to draw encompassing conclusions from any of this research is limited.

Accidental death in rural populations

This section will outline and critique the research on accidental death in general rural populations. Elevated risks have been identified in rural areas including rising rates of fatality due to vehicle crashes, fire, drownings and poisonings (not drugs) with increasing remoteness (Henley, Kreisfeld, & Harrison, 2007). The number of road traffic crashes are consistently identified as elevated in rural areas and frequently approach almost four times the national fatality rate (for example Henley & Harrison, 2009) and the rate for those living in major cities (Ballestas et al., 2011). Further, local residents account for the majority of these deaths (Tziotis, Roper, Edmonston, & Sheehan, 2006). Alcohol-related fatalities are seven times higher in rural areas when compared with an urban area (Czech, Shakeshaft, Byrnes, & Doran, 2010). Drownings have been reported as rising with increasing remoteness, with rates (per 100,000 population) in remote and very remote areas at up to three times that in major cities (Ballestas et al., 2011; Henley & Harrison, 2009; Henley et al., 2007). Poisoning by drugs deaths were not influenced by remoteness (Henley et al., 2007). Rather, it is poisonings by other substances (including alcohol,

agricultural chemicals, motor vehicle exhaust gas, petroleum products, food and toxic plants) which rise with increasing remoteness (Henley & Harrison, 2009; Henley et al., 2007), varying from three to six times the national rate in very remote areas (Henley & Harrison, 2009; Henley et al., 2007). Other studies, however, found no difference in poisoning rates relative to remoteness (Ballestas et al., 2011). Death through exposure to smoke, fire, flames, heat and hot substances has been measured at up to 7.6 times the rate in major cities for very remote areas (Henley & Harrison, 2009; Henley et al., 2007; Strong, Trickett, Titulaer, & Bhatia, 1998).

Limitations of accidental death in rural areas research

The research identifying the elevated rates of accidental death in rural areas has a number of limitations. Generalizability is limited by the blend of national and state-based studies and the heterogeneous samples, particularly within state-based studies. The use of various data sources—ranging from national mortality data bases (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2003, 2007; Henley & Harrison, 2009; Henley et al., 2007; Strong et al., 1998), to state-based hospital data (Ballestas et al., 2011) and road authority data (Czech et al., 2010; Tziotis et al., 2006)—also limits generalizability. Mortality data is supplemented by a range of other data to compensate for limitations in availability and quality (Ballestas et al., 2011). While this may improve the ultimate quality of the data, it does restrict generalizability. Generalizability of findings is also restricted by inconsistent classification of remoteness. Study populations have been variously classified by the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area (RRMA) (Strong et al., 1998) and ARIA+ classifications (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2007) as well as by distance from a capital city and population density (Tziotis et al., 2006). These inconsistencies result in an inability to compare data not only between studies, but also between different locations. Further inconsistency arises from varied reporting of cause of death—whether the underlying cause of death or multiple cause of death approach to data collection (Ballestas et al., 2011). Low

population numbers—and correspondingly low absolute numbers of deaths—in very remote areas of Australia have two distinct impacts. The first requires caution when interpreting the significance of the results (Henley et al., 2007). The second has resulted in rates being suppressed—and therefore not reported—to maintain confidentiality (Henley et al., 2007). Finally, and particularly in light of the current study, no accidental death data reported in these studies identified farming communities as a heterogeneous high-risk group within the rural population.

Farming-related accidental deaths

This section will focus specifically on the research exploring farming-related accidental deaths. Satisfactory records of accidental injury or death in rural industry did not exist until late last century (Fragar et al., 2008). Commencing in the early 1980s, farming-related fatalities were investigated as part of a broader investigation of work-related fatalities in Australia (Erlich et al., 1993). This focus has changed over time from one of farming as an occupation to one where the farm is viewed as a working environment (Franklin et al., 2000), resulting from the cessation of the collection of occupational statistics by the ABS from 2002. Accidental occupational farm deaths are most prevalent among ageing males (Day, Boulter, & McGrath, 1999; Erlich et al., 1993; Herde & Lower, 2011; Lower & Herde, 2012). These deaths frequently involve tractors (Day, 1999; Miller & Fragar, 2006) and increasingly, quad bikes (Fragar et al., 2008). Recent media reported rates of on-farm death show quad bike fatalities now outnumber tractor incidents (Herde & Lower, 2013; Lower, Munro, & Peachey, 2014). Within the general population, quad bike fatalities peak among young (15-29 years) males, with over two thirds of these occurring on a farm (Clapperton, Herde, & Lower, 2013). This pattern will no doubt influence the demographic trends of farming-related fatalities. Deceased farm workers were most likely to have been working alone and found by co-workers, relatives, or those who were both co-worker and relative

(Franklin et al., 2000). Bystander deaths on farms commonly involve young children (Erlich et al., 1993), who are also dominant in drowning and—increasingly—quad bike fatalities (Herde & Lower, 2011; Lower & Herde, 2012). The majority of these children are residents on the farm (Mitchell, Franklin, Driscoll, & Fragar, 2001).

In more recent years, farming-related fatalities have been identified as generally decreasing (Franklin et al., 2000; Herde & Lower, 2011), a pattern explained in a number of ways. Declining tractor deaths are attributed to national safety programs and the installation of roll over protection (ROP), both retrospectively and as part of the manufacturing of all new tractors (Franklin et al., 2000). Despite the implementation of safety features on many tractors, there remains a commonly adopted practice of retaining at least one ‘old’ tractor on the farm for ‘odd jobs’. These tasks frequently have the greatest risk of resulting in injury (Miller & Fragar, 2006). Reducing tractor-related fatalities are also explained by drought and economic decline resulting in lower productivity, reduced tractor usage and consequently lower fatality rates (Coleman, Fragar, Morton, & Winter, 1996). As drought conditions ease it will be interesting to see if death rates increase.

Limitations of farming-related accidental death research

The research outlining farming-related accidental deaths has a number of limitations. First, there is no distinction between farming populations according to remoteness. For example, farming may be conducted in very remote areas (in the case of large-scale cattle properties) as well as on the fringes of urban areas (in the case of market gardening). Second, research data were originally collected for the purposes of coroners’ inquiries and not to examine epidemiologic aspects of agricultural fatalities. Changes to the collection procedures of coroners’ data (Franklin et al., 2000) impact comparability of results over time. Further restricting comparability over time are changes to occupational coding (Herde & Lower, 2011), the change in focus from accidental

deaths as an outcome of occupation to one of environment (Franklin et al., 2000) and the omission, in early data (Erlich et al., 1993), of a number of modes of death that were later found critical in calculating overall farming-related accidental deaths (Franklin et al., 2000). Third, varying data sources resulted in the exclusion of some sample sub-groups from some research. Children were excluded from one Victorian study (Day et al., 1999), despite the high death rates among the very young (Erlich et al., 1993; Mitchell et al., 2001). Members of the forestry and fishing industries have been included in some samples (Australian Safety and Compensation Council, 2009) yet excluded in others (Day et al., 1999). This restricts comparability further. Fourth, farm-fatality research has so far expressly excluded any consideration of suicide (Erlich et al., 1993; Franklin, 2007; Franklin et al., 2000). This exclusion is confusing given the link identified between suicide and farming within Australia (Miller & Burns, 2008; Page & Fragar, 2002) and internationally (Booth et al., 2000; Sarma & Kola, 2010; Stark et al., 2006). The exclusion of suicide from farming-related deaths is justified 'due to the difficulty of deciding if they were work-related' (Franklin et al., 2000, p. 374). However, these deaths continued to be excluded 'even if there appeared to be some direct connection with work' (Franklin et al., 2000, p. 48). Despite this conscious exclusion, some suicides may still be included as accidental deaths due to suicide reporting error, as was discussed previously. Fifth, definition use has been inconsistent, particularly around what constitutes a farm and a farm worker (Franklin et al., 2000). Reclassification of farms in 1990 (Franklin et al., 2000) and 2006 (Herde & Lower, 2011) led to an increase in the number of recognised farming establishments. This not only influences the calculation of rates of death per establishment, but also eradicates any true influence of reducing farm (and farmer) numbers due to factors such as ongoing drought and economic decline. Definition inconsistency also influences motorbike fatality reporting, with fatalities not always specified as involving two or four-wheel bikes (Day et al., 1999). Finally, many of the data management limitations for accidental death are similar to suicide.

Chapter summary

This chapter commenced with a description of rural Australians, identifying a significant number of challenges posed to health and wellbeing. However, rural Australians cannot be considered as homogeneous and a more specific focus was made on one segment of this broader population—rural farming communities. The literature created a picture of this group as existing in a distinctive contextual environment, particularly those involved in family farming. The psychological, social and geographical setting was described as having significant influence over the arrangement of work and life. This posed particular challenges for this segment of rural Australia, moulding complex patterns of attitude, behaviour and risk. The literature identified farming families as being vulnerable to exposure to loss as an outcome of farming-related challenges—such as climate and economic pressures—as well as loss due to suicide and accidental death. Despite various data limitations, rates of both suicide and accidental death were described as elevated in rural farming areas, therefore suggesting a heightened potential for farming families to be exposed to such events. The following chapter will review the available literature that informs our understanding of how farming families may be impacted by such suicide and accidental deaths.

Chapter 3: Bereavement following suicide and accidental death

The importance of understanding the contextual precursors to suicide and accidental death in farming families has been outlined in the first chapter of this literature review. In responding to these heightened mortality risks, it is equally important to understand the process of bereavement following such death. To understand bereavement from suicide and accidental death it is first necessary to understand the broader models of bereavement theory. This section will initially explore how grief and bereavement have been viewed over time, including an investigation of the literature examining the differences—or similarities as the case may be—between bereavement generally and bereavement specifically by suicide or accidental death. Finally, the literature relating to suicide and accidental death in the social context of farming families will be explored and critiqued.

General theories of grief

The questions asked in bereavement research have developed over time from what defines a ‘normal’ grief pattern (and recognising that pathological variants do sometimes occur), to why most people come through bereavement relatively unscathed—albeit permanently changed (Rosenblatt, 2007)—yet others suffer lasting distress and health issues (Parkes & Prigerson, 2010). Building on this is whether it is possible to predict those likely to encounter complicated grieving patterns (Parkes & Prigerson, 2010). While approaching these questions, bereavement theory developed from one of distinct linear stages of grief through which one must sequentially pass (Kubler-Ross, 1969), to ‘phase’ models (Bowlby, 1980; Parkes, 1998; Sanders, 1993) that view grief as a more passive process to be endured (Worden, 2008), although not necessarily in a

rigidly sequential format (Parkes, 1998). Contemporary models now perceive grieving as a multidimensional, active process involving tremendous interpersonal variability (Worden, 2008). This process is complicated by the interplay of individuals, families, significant others and immediate and broader societal influences (Anderson, 2010; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2007).

Worden's (2008) 'tasks' view of grieving reflects the multidimensional influences and interpersonal variability of grief as a fluid process over which the bereaved has some influence. The four tasks of bereavement include accepting the reality of the loss, processing the pain of grief, adjusting to a world without the deceased and establishing an appropriate continuing emotional bond with the deceased while moving on with life (Worden, 2008). While some order is suggested, tasks need not necessarily be approached sequentially and can be revisited multiple times (Parkes & Prigerson, 2010; Stroebe, Folkman, Hansson, & Schut, 2006; Worden, 2008).

Recognising variability in bereavement

Increasingly, there has been a move away from universal models of bereavement to focus on the individual experience of grief within a social context. This includes recognition of a range of interdependent factors influencing the process of grief including: the relationship with the deceased; the nature of the attachment with the deceased; the nature of the death; historical antecedents; personality variables of the bereaved; social variables; and, concurrent secondary stressors (Stroebe et al., 2006; Worden, 2008).

The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement

Stroebe and colleagues (1999) developed the Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement as a way of describing how individuals come to terms with the loss of someone close to them. The model suggests that individuals undertake both loss- and restoration-oriented coping in varying proportions as determined by individual and cultural differences. Loss-

orientation describes dealing with stressors relative to the loss-experience itself (for example, crying over the death of a loved one). This form of processing is expected to be most dominant in the early days of bereavement. Restoration-orientation deals with stressors relative to life moving forward (for example, learning new tasks that the deceased may have previously carried out). Adaptive coping is seen as an oscillation between these types of stressors, allowing individuals to face their grief as well as take time off from the pain of grief (Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

Grieving styles

The experiences and expressions of grief and the adaptations to loss are clearly not homogeneous (Doughty, 2009). Traditionally, variation has been attributed largely to the influence of gender (Corr, Nabe, & Corr, 2006). More recently, there has been a shift from viewing grief patterns as either male or female. Doka and Martin (2011) perceive masculinity–femininity as a continuum that exists within and between individuals. So too do grieving patterns exist on a continuum. While reaction to loss may be impacted by gendered expectations and norms, it is not determined by it (Doka & Martin, 2010; Doka & Martin, 2011).

Intuitive and instrumental grief

To avoid the confusion and error associated with labelling grief according to gender, Doka and Martin renamed grieving styles as ‘instrumental’ and ‘intuitive’, and differentiated these according to cognitive or affective modalities (2010). Intuitive grief is exemplified by a greater reliance on the affective domain and less on the cognitive domain. In this pattern of grief, profound feelings of pain are commonly expressed through crying and the need to share inner experience with others (Doka & Martin, 2011) and can continue to be experienced for many years after the loss (Martin & Doka, 2000). Instrumental grief is exemplified by a greater reliance on the cognitive domain and less on the affective domain. The greater intellectualisation of grief is

reflected in activity and a preference for discussing problems as opposed to feelings (Doka & Martin, 2011). Commonly, people experience a blend of these two styles.

Dissonant grief

The blending of grief styles can be complex and has the potential to complicate the grieving process. Dissonant grief is recognised when there is a clash between the bereaved person's experience and expression of grief—'these grieverers are not only expressing grief differently than it is experienced; they are truly at war with themselves' (Doka & Martin, 2011, p. 43). The most common example of dissonant grief is where an intuitive griever feels bound to quash the affective experience of grief. Doka and Martin (2011) describe this in the context of male grieverers where societal norms of behaviour are at odds with an intuitive pattern of grief, a pattern that may be expected given the contextual understandings of farming family members. Less is understood about how dissonance is resolved (Doughty, 2009). Recognition of the concept of dissonant grief reiterates the importance of understanding bereavement as a socially-constructed experience, which is discussed in the next paragraph.

Mancini and Bonanno (2011)—in a summary of their research to date—describe a number of possible reactions within the diverse reactions to bereavement. They identified 50-60 per cent of bereaved individuals as 'resilient'—displaying stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning relatively quickly following a death. Approximately 20-25 per cent of those bereaved were described as 'recovering' and, although displaying more acute and persistent levels of distress initially, they gradually returned to their former level of functioning (Mancini et al., 2011). A much smaller group of 10-15 per cent endured incapacitating distress taking years to resolve and were described as suffering 'complicated grief' (Mancini et al., 2011). Further, while the absence of notable distress following bereavement has previously been thought to be a disordered form of grieving (Bowlby, 1980; Wortman & Silver, 2001), contemporary research has

attributed this to resiliency (Bonanno, 2009) or circumstances where death may represent the end of a difficult situation (Genevro, Marshall, & Miller, 2004).

Resilience

Resilience in bereavement refers to an ability to prevail over the destructive forces that took the life of the deceased while maintaining a consistent pattern of low distress over time (Kristensen et al., 2012). As bereavement involves reconstruction of meaning, resilience must be considered within the socially-constructed norms, beliefs, values and cultural dynamics of farming communities. It is necessary to understand how these may influence farming families' coping styles, their response to stress and distress, the nature of their social support, and the ultimate course and outcome of their bereavement experience (Bell, 2011). Research suggests that resilient individuals are more accepting of death, believe more clearly that the world is just, and, as a result, so may require less adjustment to their assumptive world during bereavement (Bonanno et al., 2002).

Within farming communities, resilience in times of adversity has been examined as a process with three critical elements: stance, context and processes (resources and strategies) (King et al., 2011). Stance reflects a person's identity, their social location and social roles and differs between farm men and women. A male farmer's stance is strongly related to their role in the farm business, whereas a female's stance is more diverse and strongly influenced by family relationships (King et al., 2011). Both the microsphere of the farm and family and the broader social context heavily influence resilience patterns (King et al., 2011). Strategies for developing and maintaining social capital and relationships are key for building resilience, as are being able to disengage and place things in perspective (King et al., 2011).

Complicated grief

A small proportion of bereaved people struggle to progress through the ‘normal’ process of grief, leading to complicated grief or other pathology (Parkes & Prigerson, 2010). There is no clear dichotomy distinguishing ‘normal’ from ‘complicated’ grief but rather a continuum of effect (Holland, Neimeyer, Boelen, & Prigerson, 2009). Two main categories of complicated grief have been described: prolonged grief and delayed or distorted forms of grief (Parkes & Prigerson, 2010). Prolonged grief disorder is a recently developed but well-researched construct—now included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)—involving the presence of chronic grief and disabling distress in addition to a range of other phenomena experienced for more than six months at a disabling level (Prigerson et al., 2009).

Should the grieving process become problematic, a range of deleterious effects for bereaved people have been identified including heightened morbidity and mortality risks (Andriessen, 2009; Bell, Stanley, Mallon, & Manthorpe, 2012; Brent, Melhem, Donohoe, & Walker, 2009; Joiner, 2005; Jordan & McIntosh, 2011c; Krysinska, 2003; Sugrue, McGilloway, & Keegan, 2013; Sveen & Walby, 2008). In particular, heightened suicide risk in those bereaved has been identified (Agerbo, 2005; Latham & Prigerson, 2004; Pitman et al., 2014; Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2007). There are, however, also opportunities to reassess life following bereavement. Positive outcomes of grief are often associated with resilience and posttraumatic growth may be experienced by those bereaved.

Posttraumatic growth

Posttraumatic growth suggests that people exposed to even the most traumatic experiences can, over time, perceive some positive outcomes (Dyregrov et al., 2011; Leenaars et al., 2010; Muller & Thompson, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Wilson & Marshall, 2010). This has been described as occurring in five general ways: experiencing the emergence of new possibilities;

changed relationships with others; an increasing sense of personal strength; a greater appreciation for life; and, altered existential and spiritual orientations (Groos & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2007). While sometimes difficult to acknowledge the positive outcomes of loss (Dyregrov, Plyhn, & Dieserud, 2012), such growth is frequently represented through activism and helping others avoid similar pain (Pietilä, 2002; Ratnarajah & Maple, 2011). The quality of social connections before and after the death has been found to influence the likelihood of growth. If good relationships can be maintained or improved, growth may be possible (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

Socially-constructed grief

Increasingly, the framework from which bereavement is viewed is that guided by social constructionism. While grief appears to be accepted as a human universal (Archer, 2001), a social constructionist view of bereavement suggests great variability in the form and expression of such grief and moves beyond the individual experience in isolation: ‘Every death is unique, and cultures, families, and lives are complex, with many competing shoulds, values, needs and demands’ (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 294).

Grief is experienced individually and collectively through a range of complex and interdependent interactions with others in the immediate and broader social world (Attig, 2001). Parkes (1998) described the components impacting the process of grief as including the urge to reflect, cry, and search for what is lost; and, the conflicting urge to look forward, explore the newly emerging world, and discover what can be preserved from the past. He stressed the importance of the social and cultural pressures that influence how these urges are expressed or inhibited (Parkes, 1998). Socially-constructed bereavement is

not only about death but also about gender relations, the place of work in people's lives, political power, social status, the meaning of things, etiquette, proper ways to eat and to dress, health, and innumerable other things (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 295).

A complete explanation for any bereavement experience would only be achievable if we knew everything that preceded it—which is clearly impossible. It is not possible to fully understand all human behaviour, nor is it feasible to identify major factors of influence in every case of bereavement. It is conceivable, however, to learn something about the influencing factors that may have a role in most cases and can play a major part in some bereavement experiences (Parkes & Prigerson, 2010). The contextual factors affecting an individual's experience of grief must not be omitted or deemed extraneous, but rather held in as much regard as the experience of grief itself (Breen & O'Connor, 2007). Despite its acknowledged importance, there remains a dearth of research considering bereavement as a socially-constructed experience (Begley & Quayle, 2007; Smith, Joseph, & Nair, 2011).

How is bereavement following suicide and accidental death different?

Research has provided substantial support for the individual variability of bereavement. The question as to whether bereavement following different modes of death varies has not been so definitively answered, but has been the focus of research for several decades (for example Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a; Kristensen, Weisæth, & Heir, 2012). Varying conclusions have been reached with the research described as complex, contradictory and often difficult to interpret (Andriessen & Kryszynska, 2012; Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). Few quantitative differences in bereavement have been found in much of the research comparing suicide and accidental death (Bolton et al., 2013; Cleiren, Grad, Zavasnik, & Diekstra, 1996; Dyregrov, Nordanger, & Dyregrov, 2003;

Hibberd, Elwood, & Galovski, 2010; Murphy, Johnson, Wu, Fan, & Lohan, 2003; Murphy, Tapper, Johnson, & Lohan, 2003; Range & Niss, 1990). While more variation has been identified when comparing externally caused death with natural death (Kristensen et al., 2012; Sveen & Walby, 2008), the conclusions are still far from consistent (Feigelman, Jordan, & Gorman, 2009).

Qualitative differences in bereavement following suicide and accidental death

Recent research suggests that insufficient evidence exists for any quantitative differences in bereavement following varied causes of traumatic death (considered to be sudden, unexpected and often violent) (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). Instead, qualitative differences have been noted (Feigelman, Jordan, et al., 2009; Jordan, 2001; Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). These elements include meaning making and feelings of guilt, responsibility, rejection/abandonment (Botha, Guilfoyle, & Botha, 2009; Dyregrov et al., 2012), anger and blame (Jordan, 2001; Sveen & Walby, 2008), and shame and stigma (Bailey, Kral, & Dunham, 1999; Harwood, Hawton, Hope, & Jacoby, 2002). Social interactions, particularly within the family system, have also been identified as varying with the mode of traumatic death (Cerel, Jordan, & Duberstein, 2008; Jordan, 2001).

Within the small, tight-knit social circles and intimate working and living relationships of family farms, it is expected that exposure to a suicide or accidental death would be likely should a death occur. What is unexplored, however, is the likely outcome of that exposure, specifically, who will be significantly impacted by that death and who will not, and what influences this effect. The following sections will consider the literature relating to the qualitative elements of bereavement that distinguish suicide and accidental death in addition to other characteristics of a death that may influence bereavement.

The drive to understand the ‘why’ of death is considered a key element of grieving (Neimeyer, 2001). While it may be relatively straightforward to find explanation and meaning in

the death of an older person following an extended illness (Worden, 2008), this is not always the case for suicide and accidental deaths. During this search for explanation, denial of the cause of death may be a feature, particularly for suicide (Dunne & Dunne-Maxim, 2009). The persistent search for meaning and explanation is common for those bereaved by sudden, violent or traumatic deaths (Currier et al., 2006; Holland, Currier, & Neimeyer, 2006; Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a; McIntosh & Kelly, 1992). The inability to find meaning has been associated with a greater intensity of grief (Currier et al., 2006; Holland et al., 2006; Keesee, Currier, & Neimeyer, 2008). For many suicide deaths, the 'why' is unknowable and the bereaved must settle for the possibility that the complete story will never be known (Dunne & Dunne-Maxim, 2009). Consequently, the question may change from 'why?' to 'what for?', which suggests that while the suicide cannot be explained, it may still be viewed as meaningful (Lindqvist, Johansson, & Karlsson, 2008).

Guilt, associated with death through external causes, can be felt in terms of what one did, didn't do, might have done, and so on (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). With suicide particularly, guilt is a prominent feature (Bell et al., 2012; Groos & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013; Schneider, Grebner, Schnabel, & Georgi, 2011b), although research has not consistently identified a difference between suicide and other modes of death (McIntosh & Kelly, 1992). Guilt compounds and reinforces the social withdrawal common following suicide. This has been described independently of whether the bereaved experiences a perception of blame from others, or whether blame is actually attributed by others (Sudak, Maxim, & Carpenter, 2008).

Stigma has been defined as 'an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated' (Goffman, 1986, p. 5) and the 'social disapproval of individuals or groups due to a discredited characteristic that distinguishes them from others' (Suicide Prevention Australia, 2010, p. 4). Stigma is described as 'the single most important factor which complicates suicide bereavement [and is characterised by] exclusion, rejection, blame or devaluation' (Dunne & Dunne-Maxim, 2009, p. 605).

While stigma is a reaction more often noted for suicide (for example Cvinar, 2005; Dyregrov et al., 2012; Sveen & Walby, 2008; Trimble, Hannigan, & Gaffney, 2012), there is evidence of its existence following accidental death (for example Feigelman, Gorman, & Jordan, 2009; Zinzow, Rheingold, Hawkins, Saunders, & Kilpatrick, 2009). There remains no definitive answer as to whether those bereaved by suicide are more stigmatised than those bereaved by accidental death (Sudak et al., 2008). Where present, stigma may result in social withdrawal and avoidance of the rituals that generate support from others (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). The shame and stigma associated with suicide has also been linked to: the avoidance of discussing the event with others (Groos & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013; Maple, Plummer, Edwards, & Minichiello, 2007); hiding emotion and pain from public view (Sugrue et al., 2013); lying about the cause of death (Range & Calhoun, 1990; Sudak et al., 2008); refusing to acknowledge the possibility of posttraumatic growth (Smith et al., 2011); and the withholding of emotional support (Farberow, Gallagher-Thompson, Gilewski, & Thompson, 1992; Ratnarajah & Maple, 2011). Stigma can also result in disenfranchised grief—an empathic failure between the bereaved and their social network resulting in feeling offended, wounded or abandoned (Feigelman, Jordan, & McIntosh, 2012). Stigma—as an outcome of death through suicide and accidental death—has subsequently been associated with complications of grief, depression, and suicidal thinking (Feigelman, Gorman, et al., 2009).

Self-isolation following bereavement has been identified as a strong predictor of psychosocial distress (Dyregrov et al., 2003). In contrast, those with good social support networks have lower levels of complicated grief and depression and demonstrate a more positive mood (Dyregrov et al., 2012; Van der Houwen et al., 2010). Caution has been advised, however, with some links questioned due to the existence of concurrent influences that have not been controlled for (Hibberd et al., 2010). Social connection is widely recognised as a positive influence on resilience (Windle, Bennett, & Noyes, 2011).

Social support can act as both a buffer to moderate the challenges of bereavement, and as a healing mechanism through the offering of sustained care (Dyregrov et al., 2012). It has been suggested that it is the perception of social support as available—as opposed to whether support is actually received—that influences a person’s ability to successfully move through the bereavement process. This perception varies according to how the death is viewed in one’s broader and immediate cultural narrative (Wendel & Wicks, 2012). Peer support from others who have experienced a similar loss has been identified as a particularly important influence on the bereavement process (Dyregrov et al., 2012; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007), as has support from within the family context. However, the offer of support by self-invited professionals has been viewed more critically, often felt to be poorly timed and inappropriate for the needs of the bereaved (Lindqvist et al., 2008).

The availability of social support varies significantly. As a reaction to suicide in particular, some families may become splintered; some may become closer, while others may experience some combination of the two (Bell et al., 2012; Feigelman et al., 2012). Sources of social support vary between those bereaved by suicide and accidental deaths, with a lesser reliance on the immediate family in favour of the broader social network described following suicide bereavement (Seguin, Lesage, & Kiely, 1995). The presence of dependent family members has been described as having a moderating effect on the suicide ideation of bereaved mothers—with the care of others taking precedence over the opportunity to either alleviate their own suffering or reuniting them with their lost child (Agerbo, 2005; Harper, O'Connor, Dickson, & O'Carroll, 2011). However, some mothers of suicide victims have expressed their inability to be present for their surviving children due to their continuing pain (Harper et al., 2011; Sugrue et al., 2013). Other suicide-bereaved families seem to display no unique difficulties when compared to families exposed to other modes of death (Cerel, Fristad, Weller, & Weller, 2000).

When social disintegration does occur, those surrounding the bereaved may withdraw out of uncertainty and discomfort (Trimble et al., 2012). Social withdrawal may also be self-inflicted due to feelings of guilt, stigma and shame on the part of the bereaved (Cerel et al., 2008; Jordan, 2001; Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). This can be both a way of saving the bereaved from revealing their emotions unwillingly, and a munificent act to protect others from witnessing their true emotional state (Smith et al., 2011).

Feelings of rejection or abandonment by the deceased have been pronounced as unique to suicide bereavement (Harwood et al., 2002; Hibberd et al., 2010; Jordan, 2001; Sveen & Walby, 2008). However, this may reflect the assessment methods used (Hibberd et al., 2010). Other quantitative research has found little difference in levels of rejection between suicide and accidental death, although levels were higher than those reported following a natural death (Feigelman et al., 2012).

Anger directed towards the deceased has been identified as a prominent emotional response following traumatic death, particularly for suicide (Cerel, Fristad, Weller, & Weller, 1999). This anger has been associated with feeling deceived by the deceased, a deception that denied the bereaved the opportunity to provide support (Lindqvist et al., 2008).

Blame—both from external sources and self-blame—is a noted outcome of suicide and accidental death. Self-blame and feelings of responsibility for failing to identify and prevent the death prior to its occurrence has been identified particularly for suicide deaths (Bell et al., 2012; Cerel et al., 2008; Schneider et al., 2011b; Shahtahmasebi & Aupouri-Mclean, 2011). The need for social networks to affix blame has also been noted, particularly following suicide, threatening social cohesion and family functioning (Cerel et al., 2008). The broader community, through both direct accusations and innuendo, reinforces the conflict within families (Dunne & Dunne-Maxim, 2009).

Relief has been noted following the death of someone with whom a relationship has been troublesome or disruptive (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). While not a feature of all deaths, suicide has often been recognised in this way (Clark & Goldney, 2000; Feigelman, Jordan, et al., 2009; Jordan, 2001). Relief can reflect both the end of a troubled relationship and a relief that the deceased no longer suffers the psychological pain associated with the lead up to suicide (Dyregrov et al., 2012; Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a; Maple et al., 2007; Seguin et al., 1995). This sense of relief is often associated with guilt at being ‘glad’ about the death (Dunne & Dunne-Maxim, 2009), and is not easily admitted (Lindqvist et al., 2008).

Activism is a common feature of suicide bereavement (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a) and has a therapeutic value in enhancing meaning making and adding to a sense of re-empowerment (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). Activism is explained as a way of making something positive come out of a death while also assisting with the prevention of future deaths (Begley & Quayle, 2007; Muller & Thompson, 2003; Ness & Pfeffer, 1990; Range, 1998; Shahtahmasebi & Aupouri-Mclean, 2011). Examples of this include initiating or joining support groups and participating in suicide research.

Characteristics of a death that influence bereavement

The focus of contemporary bereavement research is becoming less on the mode of death and more on the characteristics of that death. This includes the suddenness of the death, the associated level of violence or trauma and the level of expectedness/preparedness for the death. Not surprisingly, the relationship between the bereaved person and the deceased is also thought to have a critical impact on bereavement. Each of these characteristics will be discussed in the following sections.

The shock and disbelief associated with suicide and accidental death has been likened to any sudden, unforeseen event that cannot be undone, and is associated with multiple causes of

sudden, unexpected death (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). This can result in an ‘unreal’ perception of the death and lead to complications in bereavement (Van der Houwen et al., 2010), challenging the bereaved’s ability to cognitively and emotionally accept their loss (Worden, 2008).

Suddenness, combined with a lack of experience or a conceptual framework to relate to the death event, results in feelings of disempowerment and hopelessness (Lindqvist et al., 2008).

When a suicide or accidental death is considered ‘preventable’, an assault on the bereaved’s assumptive world occurs (Worden, 2008). Consequently, coming to terms with and ‘making meaning’ of the death becomes more difficult (Currier et al., 2006; Neimeyer, 2005; Neimeyer, Sandler, & Ayers, 2002). The search for responsibility can result in feelings of guilt and self-recrimination on the part of the bereaved (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a), resulting in obsessive thoughts and delayed acceptance of the death (Dunne & Dunne-Maxim, 2009). Recrimination—following a death perceived as preventable—can also be directed outwardly, with blame placed on others (Worden, 2008).

Violence, a notable component of many suicides and accidental deaths, can increase the trauma reaction of the bereaved, particularly where they have witnessed the death or discovered the body (Brent et al., 1993; Callahan, 2000). Violent deaths have been identified as increasing the risk of depression, posttraumatic stress and complicated grief outcomes (Armour, 2007; Currier et al., 2006; Green et al., 2001; Murphy, Johnson, Chung, & Beaton, 2003; Rynearson, 2006). In rural farming communities, such outcomes likely to occur as suicide deaths within this context are frequently the result of firearms (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000; National Rural Health Alliance, 2009; Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2010), whereas accidental deaths are regularly caused by traumatic means, such as tractor-related incidents and other vehicle accidents (Day, 1999; Fragar et al., 2008; Henley & Harrison, 2009; Henley et al., 2007; Herde & Lower, 2011; Lower & Herde, 2012; Miller & Fragar, 2006). For farming family members exposed to such violent deaths, adverse posttraumatic reactions seem likely.

Death by illness often involves a degree of expectedness, allowing for a level of psychological preparation or anticipatory mourning (Rando, 2000). In contrast, when death is sudden—as for many suicides and accidental deaths—in addition to complicated grief reactions (Maple et al., 2007; Mitchell, Kim, Prigerson, & Mortimer, 2005; Van der Houwen et al., 2010), a heightened level of shock and a prolonged or delayed period of acceptance can result (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011a). Not all traumatic deaths are unexpected, however. Some suicide deaths have been expected for some time, following prior suicide attempts or periods of mental illness (Bell et al., 2012; Feigelman, Jordan, et al., 2009; Maple et al., 2007; Reed, 1998). Those anticipating a suicide may have had opportunity to prepare for the death (Sugrue et al., 2013), allowing them to develop a rationale for the death and a means of adjusting to the world without the deceased (Maple et al., 2007; Wojtkowiak, Wild, & Egger, 2012). In the case of unexpected suicide deaths, the bereaved are more frequently preoccupied with the search for ‘why?’ than in deaths where the risk of suicide is evident beforehand (Lindqvist et al., 2008).

While expectedness may benefit the meaning making process, there is also an association with increased guilt and self-blame, given an accompanying perception of preventability (Feigelman, Jordan, et al., 2009). There is a possibility that these outcomes may also be identified following some accidental deaths to which farming families are exposed. Given the recognised heightened risk-taking behaviour of farmers (Bourke, 2003; Courtenay, 2000; Franklin et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2008), death may not always be completely unexpected.

The relationship connecting the bereaved and the deceased—and the resulting impact on bereavement—has received increasing attention. The focus has moved from one of kinship relationships (Cleiren, Diekstra, Kerkhof, & van der Wal, 1994; Dyregrov et al., 2003; Mitchell, Kim, Prigerson, & Mortimer-Stephens, 2004; Murphy, Johnson, & Lohan, 2003; Rubin, 1993; Shneidman & Cain, 1972; Wijngaards-De Meij et al., 2008), close psychological connection (Brent et al., 1993; Mitchell et al., 2004) and ‘loved ones’ (Andriessen, 2009; McIntosh, 1993;

Zinzow et al., 2009) to a more encompassing and complex view which incorporates all of these relationships (Andriessen & Krysinaka, 2012; Berman, 2011; Hibberd et al., 2010; Jordan & McIntosh, 2011b; Zinzow et al., 2009). The essential feature of bereavement seems related more to self-perceived closeness to the deceased than to a specific type of relationship (Cerel, Maple, Aldrich, & van de Venne, 2013; Cerel et al., 2015; Dyregrov et al., 2012).

Particular aspects of the nature of relationship have been identified as impacting the process of bereavement. Relationships with a history of conflict or unfinished business can result in complications of bereavement (Feigelman, Jordan, et al., 2009; Worden, 2008). Highly dependent relationships may also make adjusting to the death difficult (Worden, 2008). Parents who have lost a child to suicide appear to have significant difficulty with bereavement (Lindqvist et al., 2008). Mothers, in particular, have shown a deep sense of affinity with the pain their child must have suffered in order to suicide (Sugrue et al., 2013). For farming families, where dependence on a small circle of relationships is high (Frank et al., 2004), bereavement may be adversely impacted.

What is known about bereavement in farming families following suicide and accidental death?

While there is a growing body of Australian research exploring the outcomes for farmers and farming families exposed to farming-related loss (as described in Chapter 2), no Australian research that explores the outcomes of farming families exposed to suicide or accidental death has been identified. A small body of North American research is limited to an examination of outcomes following accidental farm deaths (Robertson et al., 2006; Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993, 1993-1994; Scheerer & Brandt, 2001). There has only been one identified Australian study of

rural suicide bereavement. However, this research focused on youth and did not consider farming families in any way (Bartik, Maple, Edwards, & Kiernan, 2013a, 2013b).

The North American literature concerned with farming families considers the impact of farming accidents. Qualitative themes emerging from this literature included emotional anguish, challenged relationships, families struggling with change, organisations struggling with the loss of a member and loss of knowledge and skills (Robertson et al., 2006). Despite the difficulties posed by bereavement, new challenges and opportunities for activism in the deceased's honour were valued (Robertson et al., 2006). Religious faith was also a positively-viewed component of bereavement and contributed to a perception of inevitability of farming fatalities through accepting the death as God's will (Robertson et al., 2006). More negative aspects of bereavement following a farm fatality include a loss of privacy and a sense of indebtedness to supporters (Robertson et al., 2006).

Rosenblatt and Karis (1993) also conducted qualitative investigations following accidental farm deaths. While social support was similar to any other family death, a distinct element was the assistance with the labour requirements on the farm—although this was short-lived (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993). The increased workload tended to fall back onto the family, along with substantial and immediate economic pressures, and on multiple occasions resulted in the liquidation of the farm property and change of residence (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993, 1993-1994). Residential relocation also emerged in an effort to avoid the scene of the death. A substantial burden of responsibility fell to the sons of deceased male farmers, generally with failed outcomes and often amounting to feelings of lost traditions and broken future dreams (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993). The subsequent selling of the family farm often contributed to family estrangement (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993-1994). Issues of insurance and litigation placed further burdens on the farming families, at times creating a family schism (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993). In half of the 21 families interviewed by Rosenblatt and Karis (1993), at least one member accessed mental health

services following the death, despite the perceived inadequacy of rural services. Time limitations, service knowledge and availability, and family willingness to access mental health services were limiting factors to farming families seeking help with their bereavement (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993). Male farmers showed less willingness to talk about the death (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993-1994). Attribution of blame—either of another family member or self-blame—was associated with social distancing of the kinship relationship following the death. Self-blame contributed to suicide among family members of the deceased (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993-1994). Blame also contributed to splits between in-laws and ‘blood’ relatives in multigenerational farming families (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993-1994). Family distancing was exemplified by self-withdrawal of the bereaved and their unavailability to other family members (Rosenblatt & Karis, 1993-1994).

In a qualitative study of farming widows, Scheerer and Brandt (2001) described widows feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility of becoming the primary decision maker and having to make changes based on the needs of their remaining family (over and above finances). Widows found ongoing labour support through nearby extended family and their children, although unsolicited advice was unwelcome and untrustworthy (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001). While increased workload and responsibility was stressful, women adjusted and learned to cope with their limitations. Some women expressed a desire to continue farming out of a loyalty to their deceased husband and family traditions (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001). The colocation of work and home provided inescapable reminders of their husbands’ accidental deaths and led to incessant vigilance when it came to farm safety. The unrelenting demands of farm-work also meant that widows were unable to leave to deal with their grief (Scheerer & Brandt, 2001). However, it appeared that none of the widows chose to leave the farm (although the authors did admit they were unable to contact some families which may suggest they had relocated). Professional assistance with bereavement was rarely sought. Rather, the wider community (not specifically described as other females)

provided emotional support and assistance with farm tasks. Distraction from grief was also found through 'keeping busy'.

While some of the experiences faced by farming families bereaved by accidental death may be common to other bereaved groups as well, there are others that are likely to be unique to their context. From the research described above, challenges involving labour demands, intergenerational issues and the colocation of work and home were commonly experienced across all farm studies and would seem to be characteristic of this population. Given that research to date has been limited to accidental death bereavement, how these findings compare to the impact of suicide within farming communities remains unknown.

Limitations of suicide and accidental death bereavement research

Current general bereavement theory is largely derived from the experiences of North American, white, middle-class, mature-aged women bereaved through the death of a husband from natural causes (Breen & O'Connor, 2007), thus limiting its applicability to suicide and accidental death. Various other limitations have been described in the specific context of bereavement research following suicide or accidental death including:

- A shortage of longitudinal studies (Handley, Inder, Kelly, Attia, & Kay-Lambkin, 2011; Jordan, 2001; McIntosh & Jordan, 2011).
- Small sample sizes (McIntosh & Jordan, 2011; Miers, Abbott, & Springer, 2012; Muller & Thompson, 2003; Pfeffer, Karus, Siegel, & Jiang, 2000; Robertson et al., 2006; Scheerer & Brandt, 2001; Schneider, Grebner, Schnabel, & Georgi, 2011a; Trimble et al., 2012).
- Convenient samples (McIntosh & Jordan, 2011; Sveen & Walby, 2008) that are not representative of the broader population (De Groot, De Keijser, & Neeleman, 2006; Glick,

Weiss, & Parkes, 1974; Maple & McKay, 2012, June; Muller & Thompson, 2003; Trimble et al., 2012).

- Samples limited by age, gender or relationship with the deceased (McIntosh & Jordan, 2011).
- Samples include varying time since death and fail to consider this during analysis (McIntosh & Jordan, 2011; Pfeffer et al., 2000).
- A predominance of female participants (Cerel et al., 2013).
- Research limited to an exploration of kinship relationships (Groos & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013; Kitson, 2000; Maple et al., 2014; Maple & McKay, 2012, June; Scheerer & Brandt, 2001).
- Limited recognition of emotional closeness, irrespective of kinship (McIntosh & Jordan, 2011).
- Limited exploration of the experiences of non-bereavement support service users (Maple et al., 2014; Sugrue et al., 2013; Wojtkowiak et al., 2012), of particular concern for this thesis where farming family members have been identified as reticent to access mental health services (see Chapter 2).
- Limited recognition of Indigenous populations, cultural diversity and rural samples (Dyregrov, 2011; Maple & McKay, 2012, June; McIntosh & Jordan, 2011; Shahtahmasebi & Aupouri-Mclean, 2011).

Australian suicide research in particular provides a valid example of the limitations of bereavement research. Within Australia, bereavement is a relatively recent focus of suicide research and has, to date, examined metropolitan populations (Wilson & Marshall, 2010), the impact of parental suicide on remaining children (Ratnarajah & Schofield, 2008) and parent

survivors of child suicide (Maple, 2005). The only rurally-focused Australian research known considers the suicide bereavement of youth (Bartik et al., 2013a). This limited focus results in an inability to draw meaningful conclusions applicable to other heterogeneous populations. While the current research cannot respond to every limitation outlined, many will be addressed and the others recognised for their limiting properties.

Rationale for current study

In order to fully understand bereavement following suicide or accidental death, it is important to understand the diversity of both cause of death (Cleary & Brannick, 2007), and the characteristics associated with that death (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011c). It is also necessary to build detail in heterogeneous populations within, and in addition to, those already studied (Dyregrov et al., 2003; Handley et al., 2011; Hjelmeland, 2010; Schneider et al., 2011b). Exploring heterogeneous populations enables a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers and enablers influencing support-seeking patterns, the risk factors for poor grief outcomes and the potential pathways to resilience and psychological growth in unique, culturally-influenced groups. Such perspectives would also assist with developing interventions to build on the natural coping strategies of populations in context (Dyregrov, 2011). By understanding different contexts, it would be possible to develop both appropriate and acceptable responses to loss. Community involvement in bereavement research is particularly important to increase generalizability beyond treatment-seeking and in-patient participants (Handley et al., 2011). Community samples also allow public health approaches to be informed by research within those populations that postvention strategies are designed to target (Andriessen & Krysinska, 2012; Handley et al., 2011).

One population where an established risk pattern of suicide and accidental death has been identified are those in rural areas (McKay, Milner, Kolves, & De Leo, 2012), particularly farming communities (Lower & Herde, 2012; Miller & Burns, 2008). Given the elevated mortality risk following suicide and accidental death (Li, Precht, Mortensen, & Olsen, 2003; Stroebe et al., 2007)—particularly suicide (Agerbo, 2005; Ajdacic-Gross et al., 2008; Jordan & McIntosh, 2011c; Pitman et al., 2014; Stroebe et al., 2007; Sugrue et al., 2013)—it is critical that we learn more about bereavement following such modes of death in order to develop support that is perceived as both appropriate and acceptable.

Chapter summary

This chapter commenced with a description and critique of the literature pertaining to general grief theories, from ‘stage’, ‘phase’ and ‘task’ models of bereavement, through to a growing focus on individual differences in the experience of grief. Patterns of resilience, complicated grief and posttraumatic growth were highlighted. How individuals come to terms with loss was exemplified by an explanation of the Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement, and varying patterns of grief recognised within a socially-constructed framework.

The focus of the chapter tightened from one on general grief to one examining the literature on bereavement following suicide and accidental death. While evidence is scarce for any quantitative differences between these modes of death, several qualitative differences have been suggested. The focus then progressed to grief differences—not determined by mode of death, but by the characteristics of the death, including the suddenness of the death, the associated violence or trauma, the level of expectedness of/preparedness for the death, and the nature of the relationship with the deceased.

Further narrowing the focus of the chapter led to an exploration and critique of the literature highlighting what is specifically known about the bereavement experience of farming families impacted by suicide and accidental death. This literature is limited to research exploring the effect of accidental death on North American farming families. Finally, this chapter highlighted the methodological limitations of the bereavement literature to date.

The combined assessment of the literature in chapters two and three justified a rationale for developing a contextualised understanding of bereavement following suicide and accidental death for members of Australia's farming families.

The following chapter (Chapter 4) will detail the theoretical rationale for the methods used to undertake this research and achieve the aim of understanding how Australian farming families experience the suicide and accidental death of someone close to them.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter will outline and justify the methodological approach used to best address the purpose and aims of this research. Following a reiteration of the study aims, the research process will be outlined according to the model described by Crotty (1998). This model describes research elements that progressively direct and inform one another: epistemology, theoretical framework, and methods. The first (and broadest) element is the social constructionist epistemology, or theory of knowledge, from which the research will be viewed. The second level is the narrative inquiry theoretical framework providing context and grounding for the qualitative methodology. The third element of the research process is an outline of the study methods, including the use of in-depth interviews, the justification and process of thematic analysis and the importance of recognising reflexivity in the research process. Completing this chapter is a discussion of the ethical issues considered in designing this research.

Statement of aim and research questions

As highlighted in Chapter 1 of the literature review, Australian farming families live and work in distinctive geographical, psychological and social contexts. Within this distinctive structure, suicide and accidental death occur at higher rates than in the general Australian population. However, the impact of these deaths on those connected to the deceased either intimately or within a community remains unknown. Therefore, as outlined at the end of Chapter 3, this study seeks to understand how Australian farming families experience the suicide and accidental death of someone close to them.

Research questions

The specific research questions are:

- Who are Australia's farming families? How do they live? How do they die?
- How do farming family members experience loss following suicide and accidental death?
- How does the farming family context influence this bereavement?

A social constructionist epistemology

Research inherently involves epistemological questions about the nature of knowledge and knowing (Morgan, 2007). These questions are concerned with establishing a philosophical grounding and prescribe what knowledge is possible and whether this knowledge is both sufficient and valid (Crotty, 1998). This research has been designed assuming a social constructionist epistemology—a belief that all knowledge, and hence all meaningful reality, is dependent upon human practices. Knowledge is constructed, developed and transmitted in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and cannot be described or experienced in isolation from the individual experiencing it (Crotty, 1998). This philosophical grounding is an ideal position from which to understand rural farming families' bereavement experience. As highlighted in the literature review, rural farming families live and work in distinctive contexts. From a social constructionist epistemology, this will necessarily influence how farming family members experience grief, construct their bereavement narrative and attempt to make meaning of their loss. As Owens and colleagues (2008) explained, it is impossible to disentangle a bereavement narrative from the context in which death occurred and the impact of that death on the lives and identity of those remaining.

The perspective of social constructionism¹ originated as an attempt to come to terms with the nature of reality (Andrews, 2012), and stems from a broad shift away from a logical empiricist and logical positivist account of meaning and knowledge (Schwandt, 2000). This shift changed the goal of research from one of piecing together individual discoveries contributing to a body of knowledge that grows closer and closer to the ‘truth’, to one where knowledge and meaning is purported to be socially-constructed, consensually validated and relative to time and place and culture (Patton, 2002). As outlined in the literature review, the bereavement experience has been increasingly considered as unique for each individual, with no one ‘truth’ as to how this is experienced. Bereavement, particularly that resulting from suicide or accidental death, is thought to be variously influenced by a multitude of interacting factors including the characteristics of the death, the relationship with the deceased and the availability of social support. In combination with the contextual elements of rural farming communities, this makes a social constructionist perspective particularly applicable to this area of study.

Social constructionism is particularly relevant when considering bereavement where differences in response to a death are being increasingly acknowledged and explored (Worden, 2008). Traditionally, much of bereavement research has involved the relentless pursuit of commonalities while avoiding representation of the complexities and messiness of actual situations and differences within social life, going so far as to label variability as ‘noise’ (Clarke, 2003). As described in the literature review, bereavement research has largely ignored the broad influences of cultural norms, rurality and gender, let alone considered the individual circumstances of participants’ lives. A social constructionist view of suicide and accidental death bereavement requires exploration of this complexity while making sense of and interpreting this experience within the context of life and work as a member of a farming family (Breen, 2006). Why grief exists—and how it is experienced, normalised and pathologised—must be considered

¹ Various researchers have used a plethora of different terms to encompass this epistemological stance (as

as socially-constructed (Walter, 2006). How individuals define the meaning of loss, who is mourned, and how intensely grief is experienced are all influenced by the cultural environments in which people exist (Doka & Martin, 2002). As Owens and Lambert explained of research participants' narratives of suicide loss: 'informants draw on a stock of images, metaphors, motifs and symbolic representations that are available to them collectively and culturally' (2012, p. 351).

Different cultural groups will display different socially acceptable actions and reactions to grief and an individual's bereavement pattern is influenced by how they are allowed to grieve or respond to loss by society (Buras, 2007). This will also influence patterns of disenfranchised grief, where a loss is not socially recognised (Fowlkes, 1990) and determine judgment relative to complicated grief, where society dictates whether a particular behaviour is viewed as pathological (Fulton, Madden, & Minichiello, 1996). This is particularly important following suicide deaths where stigma is common and likely to impact the experience of bereavement. Within Australia's rural farming communities, the response to bereavement must also be considered in a context—as described in the literature review. In rural farming contexts—where people (particularly males) are expected to be tough and self-reliant—traditionally protective norms are under challenge; social networks are limited and tightly entwined; and, levels of anonymity are low.

The exploration of bereavement in this research can be described in terms of both first-degree and second-degree constructions: '[t]he constructs of the social sciences are, so to speak, constructs of the second-degree, that is constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene' (Schutz, 1962, p. 59). This understanding reflects the social, geographical and psychological contexts of farming families. It illuminates the factors impacting on social processes and by social processes and appreciates the variability of each individual's bereavement experience and its narrative expression. However, it also recognises the researcher's co-construction of a participant's reality.

Challenges of a social constructionist epistemology

Adopting a social constructionist perspective is accompanied by a number of challenges with implications for research design, management and the consideration of outcomes. The first of these is the human tendency of reification—accepting how we view things as how they actually are (Crotty, 1998). While, as individuals we take our own ‘reality’ and ‘knowledge’ for granted, as a researcher it is important to maintain awareness that individuals within a social context may take quite different ‘realities’ for granted. For example, ‘realities’ within the contexts of Australia’s rural farming communities are different from urban farming communities, regional towns and urban cities. Therefore, it is the researcher’s obligation to explore whether the difference in bereavement ‘realities’ can be understood in terms of these differences in context (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The decision to use in-depth interviews allows for deep and individually tailored exploration of each individual’s unique realities.

Sedimentation—the multi-layering of interpretation of meaning—is the second challenge for deconstructing and understanding bereavement. This reinforces the importance of the research process (Crotty, 1998). It is not a matter of mirroring ‘what is there’ but understanding meaning as a culturally, historically and temporally effected interpretation of reality (Crotty, 1998). Through following a narrative inquiry framework, where meaning making is central, facing the challenges of sedimentation becomes part of the analytical process.

A narrative inquiry theoretical perspective

Having determined a social constructionist epistemological position, this research has been further guided by a narrative inquiry framework. This, in turn, provides justification for the research design and method of exploration and thematic analysis. Narrative inquiry is particularly

suitable for exploratory bereavement research as it allows for the gathering of richly detailed data with an ultimate focus on understanding in context.

In its broadest form, the term ‘narrative’ has been used to refer to any data in the form of natural discourse or speech (Polkinghorne, 1995). A more focused understanding of narrative or ‘narrative inquiry’ has a strong grounding in a social constructionist epistemology, and goes beyond the goal of celebrating lengthy autobiographical accounts or reproducing observation and takes as its objective the investigation of the story itself (Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2012). Narratives provide a means of reflecting and transmitting the socialised and cultural values of farming communities (Polkinghorne, 1988). A narrative inquiry framework enables the derivation of themes from beneath the representational ‘surface’ of the story relayed, providing a deeper understanding of both an individual’s narrative and how it relates to other narratives within a sample.

Elliot (2005) stresses the importance of the social nature of narratives. They are strong cultural currency with powerful effects (Squire, 2008). Narratives convey the historical and social context in which bereavement takes place and in which the narrative was constructed, as well as acknowledging the audience for whom it was produced (Beitin, 2012; Phoenix, 2008; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Narratives are unlikely to produce an exact account of the bereavement experience, nor is this their aim (Riessman, 1990). Instead, they are coloured by the meanings attached to experience. Ultimately, narrative inquiry attends to the research relationship, the unfolding interview conversation, the position of the story within the conversation, the influence of the setting, the historical and cultural context and all of the other dimensions that shape a speech act (Carter & Bolden, 2012; Riessman, 2012). By focusing on narratives within this thesis, it was possible to investigate participants’ stories, how they were structured and what they represented. Interpreting narrative within this broader context allows the researcher to uncover the broader

social discourses—often unrecognised and taken for granted—and answer questions such as: *How was the story told? What does the story mean? What can this tell us about the rural farming family context and how this context shapes the account of life, death and bereavement?*

Challenges of narrative inquiry

As with all methodologies, challenges in narrative inquiry come at all stages of the research process. While it was important to allow the participant to set the mode, time and place of an interview most convenient and comfortable for them (Talmage, 2012), this was viewed as more than just the logistics of interviewing. Instead, what took place around the logistics of the interview was acknowledged as an influence on the social construction of reality (Herzog, 2012). Everything occurring between the participant and myself before, during and after the interview was an integral component of the interview and the resulting co-created narrative. Wherever possible, significant effort was put into developing rapport with the participants prior to and during the interview process. Participants were made aware that they were free to make contact after the interview should they have any further information to share—an opportunity to which several people responded. Detailed records of all interactions were kept so as to consider this in addition to the interview data collected.

The challenges of narrative inquiry were evident throughout the data collection. Within the interview itself, active listening was a critical dimension requiring the researcher to listen attentively, provide feedback and clarify experience (Lillrank, 2012). Through this recursive process there was opportunity to explore experience, convey respect and value for the participant's experience and understand the emotional labour of the narrative itself, whilst also managing oneself as a researcher (Lillrank, 2012). Given both the inability of language to encapsulate the complexity of experience and the discomfort some participants felt in expressing emotion, the process of active listening was also used to encourage (and explore) participants' use

of figurative expression and metaphors to understand the latent content within these stories (Polkinghorne, 2007). The emotional challenge of exploring the sudden and violent experience of bereavement is a concern for both the participant and researcher (Gilbert, 2002) and will be discussed in depth in the section on ethics later in this chapter.

The detail and richness so valued in narrative data also comes with intensive demands on researchers' time and labour (Riessman, 1990, 2008), particularly during the analysis phase (as described later in this chapter). This necessarily limited the number of participants in this study. For members of farming families, the traditional socialised behaviours were reflected in some participants' difficulty in telling a story that threatened their stoic image. While this reinforced the need to examine and describe what was missing from the narrative as well as what was clear, it also required balancing with the obligation to remain true to the stories of those sharing them, and to avoid fragmentation in the process of retelling them (Gilbert, 2002). Given the co-construction inherent in narrative inquiry, it was important to recognise the historical perishability of narratives. The cross-sectional data generated from these stories of bereavement reflected the reality for members of farming families at that moment in time only, and within the context in which the narrative was constructed.

Research methods

The explanation of the methods used in this research is divided into sections describing sampling, recruitment, data collection, data analysis and data reporting.

Sampling

Sampling decisions in this study were based on a critical examination of the empirical and theoretical literature to date, in combination with the practical considerations of conducting

doctoral research. Given the exploratory nature of this research, sampling aimed to invite information-rich participants to proactively contribute (Patton, 2002). The resulting public recruitment strategy allowed participants to approach me on their own volition, a method deemed the most ethical way to conduct bereavement research (Steeves, Kahn, Ropka, & Wise, 2001) and one that sought representation beyond those already seeking support. This sampling method also avoided making an arbitrary decision as to an appropriate time span since death to engage participants (Sugrue et al., 2013)—participants came forward only if they felt ready, whether this was six months or 25 years after the death.

The criterion sampling strategy (Polkinghorne, 2005) for this qualitative research was performed in a purposive manner, by focusing on only suicide and/or accidental bereaved individuals who were also members of farming families (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). Sampling was conducted on the basis of:

- Age of 18 years and over.
- Self-identified farm family membership. It was not a requirement for participants to be actively farming. What was of particular interest was that participants were from a farming family and, as a consequence, had been exposed to the culture and patterns of socialisation within this context.
- Self-identified exposure to a death by suicide and/or accident. As explained in Chapter One, it was of greater importance in this research focus to explore the experience of suicide or accidental death bereavement as perceived by the participant, not necessarily determined by a formal legal process. The fact that these participants proactively volunteered their stories allowed for a rich and detailed picture of the bereavement experience.

- Residential location in either a) Victoria's western, northern and central regions, eastern South Australia and southern New South Wales, or b) New South Wales' New England region. These areas were selected based on the existing high community standing of the National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH) (area a) and the University of New England (UNE) (area b), and broadly similar patterns of farming and identified incidents of deaths by suicide and accidental death.

Recruitment attempted to address the traditional dominance of female participation in bereavement research by focusing on engaging male participants (although not to the exclusion of females). This was achieved through advertising the research in male dominated arenas such as Men's Sheds and rural football clubs (see Appendix 6). Recruitment also included a rural media release (see Appendix 5) and advertisements on the NCFH and UNE Collaborative Research Network websites. Links to research information were also promoted through social media. The process of recruitment generated interest and assistance from a number of rural 'champions' who spread the research information throughout their own personal and industry networks. Receiving information from a trusted source (or sometimes multiple sources) had the most positive impact on participant recruitment. Such broad based recruitment aimed to reduce some of the limitations described by Maple and colleagues (2014)—as summarised in Chapter 2 of the literature review.

Sample size in qualitative interview research has been much debated, with ranges varying according to different research design strategies (Beitin, 2012) and various criteria unsupported by empirical argument (Mason, 2010). While 'theoretical saturation' is the commonly used justification for adequate sample size, the operationalization of this concept has been poor (Beitin, 2012). Saturation has been defined as the point in data collection or analysis when new material produces minimal or no change to the identified themes, and has been subsequently estimated as amounting to 12 interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). However, without a structured interview schedule, data saturation remains a moving target depending on the content of the

discussion (Guest et al., 2006). A review of 560 PhD theses using qualitative interview data found a mean sample size of 31, although narrative inquiry studies were not specifically identified in this assessment (Mason, 2010). Definitive sample size requirements may never be possible given the huge variation within qualitative research projects. The number of participants in the current study reflected the concern for equitable gender representation of subsamples across two geographical zones. These requirements were balanced with the pragmatic boundaries set by the nature of a PhD project including limitations on time, funds and available personnel. The sensitive nature of this research, within a yet to be explored population—described in the literature as stoic and reticent to speak about emotional issues—also limited the available sample size to those who were willing and psychologically able to share their stories. In research undertaken in Ireland by Weafer (2014), members of the farming community expressed greater discomfort in discussing death and dying in comparison to other communities. While previous Australian suicide bereavement research found urban participants to be very willing to share their experiences (Wilson & Marshall, 2010), no such research has focused on or included members of farming families.

Recruitment

Twenty-four participants (10 male, 14 female) completed an interview. One additional participant withdrew her participation prior to the interview due to changed personal circumstances. Seven individuals (five males, two females) made contact with me about participating but did not meet the eligibility criteria. Four females made initial enquiries but did not make further contact or participate. Three people (one male, two females) contacted me after I had completed data collection and agreed to be contacted in the future should further research be conducted. Individual participant profiles are presented in Chapter 5 and a summary of participant details is presented in Table 5.1.

Data collection

When farming family members made initial contact by phone or email, a participant information pack was sent out with detailed information of what was required to participate in the study (see Appendix 3). This also included contact details for the researcher, all members of the supervision team and the UNE's Human Research Ethics Committee, to enable people to seek further information if required.

Allowing two weeks for participants to receive and consider this information (unless the participant proactively responded sooner), further contact was made by the researcher to determine their continued willingness to be involved. Arrangements were then made for completion of the consent form (see Appendix 4) and the interview. Any financial burden for participation was minimised through the donation of a mobile phone and call costs by Telstra Countrywide². This also allowed for potential participants to send a brief text or voice message enquiry—at minimal cost—to which I could then respond.

In-depth qualitative interviews

In-depth interviews were the chosen method of collecting rich qualitative data. This method provided a complementary foundation from which thematic analysis could explore the complex underlying conceptualisations of the bereavement narratives.

A relatively unstructured interview format was particularly appropriate for participants who may not readily articulate emotionally conflicted knowledge (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). The interview process allowed participants to articulate their bereavement experience at their own pace and own way and—as was observed particularly for some male participants—often by a circuitous route. Interviews with males (excluding the single email interview) took, on average,

² Rural telecommunications service provider in Australia

127 minutes; females (excluding the single combined email/phone interview) took, on average, 79 minutes (see Table 5.1 for detailed times). The relatively unstructured process allowed for further gentle probing and clarification throughout the interview process. Several participants had been impacted by multiple deaths and it was left to each participant to decide how much they wished to focus on each death.

Individual interviews were conducted over a period of ten months from July 2013 to May 2014. During one interview, a participant's wife accompanied him on the journey to the interview and sat with us in my office due to bad weather outside. However, she offered little comment unless asked a direct question. While the degree to which her presence influenced the content of the interview is unknown, the participant remained very candid in his conversation—to the point of admitting he was sharing information that he had never previously shared, even with his wife. By interviewing individuals as opposed to groups, there was a greater freedom for openly sharing information without fear of an impact on participants' relationship with others in their social network (Beitin, 2012). Individual interviews, therefore, allowed for more cohesive and fully explored bereavement narratives than those involving more than one participant (Maple, 2005).

In the past, in-depth interviews relating to mental health in rural Australia have commonly been conducted face-to-face (Alston & Kent, 2004; Judd, Jackson, Fraser, et al., 2006). However, the emotional, and possibly confronting, nature of the bereavement experience meant that people might have been more comfortable discussing their experiences in another format. It was decided to offer a range of interview modes from which participants could select (email, face-to-face or telephone) in order to achieve the best possible data quality (Riley & Hawe, 2005). This also gave access to a wider geographical area of study, not necessarily limited by the logistics of travel. The potential sample was, therefore, expanded from merely accessible participants to relevant participants (Flick, 2009).

Twenty-four participants contributed via 11 face-to-face, 11 phone, one email/phone combined and one email interview. These details are provided in Table 5.1. The duration of face-to-face and phone interviews ranged from 25 minutes to almost four hours, with most lasting around 2-2.5 hours. All interviews utilised the same semi-structured interview format.

Face-to-face interviews

Where face-to-face interviews were selected (practically limited only by geographic proximity), the participants determined where the meeting took place. Seven participants chose to meet in their own home, three at my National Centre for Farmer Health office and one in a café located in a town along the participant's commuting route to the family farm. One participant who lived interstate was prepared to wait for several months until I could travel the 1300 kilometres to his home. When visiting participants in their home, meetings would generally begin with informal conversation, often about my journey or the farming property. If coming from home, I brought a home-baked cake as a gesture of my appreciation. When away from home, I arranged to bring lunch for us both. This allowed for some informal rapport building prior to our formal conversation.

Phone interviews

Phone interviews were most often selected due to participants being a considerable distance away or due to participants' limiting work commitments. On two occasions (with Karen and Brendan), a prior face-to-face meeting had occurred. This interview mode provided significant flexibility in how the interview was arranged, sometimes being in the late evening and, for one interview (Stephanie), spread over two sessions to allow for the demands of childcare. Again, interviews generally began with small talk, although for a lesser duration than when meeting face-to-face.

Email interviews

Qualitative interviews have traditionally been conducted face-to-face or over the phone. Within this project, email interviews were also provided as an option. This additional interview mode was chosen in response to the practical challenges posed by PhD research; the geographic dispersion of the sample population; the ongoing expansion and improvement of Internet access in many areas of rural Australia; and, the sensitive nature of bereavement research.

From our communications throughout the interview period, it was clear that one participant (Isaac—see Chapter 5) would not have participated other than by email. As a self-described ‘reclusive’ personality and ‘slow thinker’, Isaac particularly valued the opportunity to reflect on the accuracy of the email text (James & Busher, 2007, 2012).

While only two participants opted for an email interview, several participants who contributed primarily via phone or face-to-face also used email to make initial enquiries and provide follow-up comments after the interview. This information was frequently sensitive and something they had deliberated for some time before sending. In some situations, email became a means of providing information participants had not been ready to disclose during the initial interview. Email text was used for analysis for the email interviews.

Interview questions

The semi-structured interview schedule (used with all participants independently of interview mode) was designed to develop a richer understanding of the bereavement experience within the context of life and work as a member of a farming family (see Appendix 2). The aim of these questions was to represent participants holistically—as people rather than problems to be solved—and to identify bereavement within a broader personal and farming community story (Sosulski, Buchanan, & Donnell, 2010). Interviews commenced with open-ended, grounding

questions around farm family membership (for example, *could you tell me a bit about yourself as a member of a farming family?*) and help-seeking (for example, *what sort of problems in your life are you likely to ask for help with? What limits you from getting help when you need it? What things make you more comfortable when asking for help?*), and then progressed to ask about the bereavement experience. A broad question about the experience of bereavement then allowed the participant to self-direct the discussion as much as possible; the story unfolding in their own words (*you have told me that [name or description of relationship] died by [suicide/accident]. I would like to talk with you about the experience of this loss. Perhaps you could begin with telling me about the time before the death, and then your journey since this time*). This broad question was based on similarly framed questions used previously during in-depth bereavement interviews (Dyregrov et al., 2003; Maple et al., 2007; Ratnarajah & Schofield, 2008). Depending on the detail shared, this broad question was followed by prompts and more focused questions using a recursive technique (Dyregrov et al., 2011; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995). This was designed to clarify and explore in greater detail issues such as expectedness and preparedness (for example, *can you tell me about life before the death?*), resilience (for example, *how has your life changed since the death?*), social support (for example, *how have others in your family reacted to the death?*) and posttraumatic growth (for example, *how have you changed as a person since the death? Could you tell me about any positive things that have come out of your bereavement experience?*). Questions were also asked to clarify meaning and expand upon previous comments (for example, *you talked about...can you tell me more about that? What did you mean when you said...? Can you give me an example of that?*). The interview concluded with a request for further information the participant felt would assist me to understand their bereavement experience (for example, *tell me about anything you think I should know to better understand your experience of bereavement*) and a further offer to answer any questions participants had. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were audio-recorded.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was the chosen method by which to understand participants' bereavement narratives. At its most general, thematic analysis involves an examination across a data set to discover repeated patterns of meaning. This allows for the capture of something important in the data relative to the research questions, potentially providing a rich, detailed and complex understanding of narrative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The flexibility of thematic analysis allows for its use in a range of theoretical frameworks. Congruent with a social constructionist epistemology and narrative inquiry framework, the process of thematic analysis is able to reflect the construction, development and transmission of knowledge in and out of interaction between human beings and their worlds (Crotty, 1998). By utilising thematic analysis at a latent (as opposed to semantic) level, this approach allows for an exploration of the underlying ideologies, ideas, conceptualisations and assumptions beneath the surface of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is particularly important when acknowledging that bereavement for farming families—like other elements of life and work—is experienced within different social, psychological and geographical contexts. What is articulated in the data is, therefore, recognised as underpinned by broader assumptions, structure and meaning and acknowledges the social constructionist epistemology of this research. Thematic analysis from this perspective 'seeks to theorise the socio-cultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 14). Thematic analysis is an active process, recognising not only the social context in which knowledge is formed and conveyed, but also that the researcher plays an active role in mining the themes from narrative stories—a key element in a narrative inquiry framework. In addition to understanding the themes within individual stories, this analytical process also allows for a richer understanding of how these stories are formed, relayed and linked within the broader social environment. This provides an understanding of

individual stories of life, death and bereavement, as well of patterns of meaning detected across a number of stories.

Braun and Clark (2006) stipulate the need for a thematic analysis to include an account of what was done and why. The analytic process for this thesis applied Braun and Clark's guidelines in the following six steps:

1. **Becoming familiar with the data:** The data from face-to-face and phone interviews was transcribed by the researcher from audio recordings into a written form as the first stage in an interpretative act (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition to what was said, the transcription included the noting of non-verbal communication such as significant pauses, sighs, expressions of emotion such as laughter and tears, and other non-verbal behaviours noted throughout the interview. This provided a richer understanding of the story told.
2. **Generating initial codes:** Transcripts were read and re-read. Manual line-by-line coding was systematically conducted with notes written in the margins of the transcript. A list of codes was produced for each participant (see Appendix 9 for an example of this).
3. **Searching for themes:** The lists of codes were sorted into potential themes within a (vast) spreadsheet. This spreadsheet was organised with participant names down the vertical axis and potential themes across the horizontal axis. Transcript extracts were then collated within the spreadsheet. Themes were sorted into different levels, with sub-themes being drawn together in the spreadsheet under main themes. Colour coding of text extracts was used to differentiate between sub-themes.
4. **Reviewing themes:** Themes were reviewed for coherence as well as how well the set of themes represented the entire collection of narrative data. Participant narratives

were revisited to see whether the themes made sense and whether they encompassed the meaning of the narratives shared. Where data remained unexplained by the themes, this lack of fit—and how it could be explained relative to (or contrasting with) existing themes—was considered. This ‘mismatch’ often added greater depth and understanding to the narrative picture.

5. Defining and naming themes: Vignettes were written about each of the themes, drawing together participant quotes and the researcher’s analytical narrative in order to identify what was of interest and why (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
6. Producing the findings chapters: Vignettes were developed into chapters and rewritten, rearranged and re-examined as a whole (several times) to ensure they presented a meaningful and compelling argument in response to the research questions.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an important consideration in social constructionist framed research. A reflexive approach is one in which the role of the researcher, relevant aspects of the researcher’s identity, and details of the interaction between the researcher and participants make up an important component of the data (Elliot, 2005). The explicit, self-aware reflection and analysis involved in reflexivity increases both richness and integrity of understanding while also informing and revealing the processes of knowledge production (Finlay, 2012; King & Horrocks, 2010). This approach is particularly important in narrative inquiry, where the interpretation of the narrative is strongly influenced by the researcher. It was necessary, therefore, to recognise how the researcher’s own situation contextualised the order of this study and how previous experiences resulted in ‘seeing’ only part of the picture presented (Gilbert, 2002). The reflexive focus within this research led to a multistage journaling process. This included recording details of every encounter with participants. This occurred from first contact through to the process of arranging

the interview, with particularly detailed notes following each of the in-depth interviews. Notes were also kept on any subsequent contact with the participant. Journaling also formed the basis for an exploration of the researcher's own position within the research, and how this changed during the development of the project (see Appendix 1). These journal entries were an acknowledgement of how self-characteristics were important in understanding the recruitment process, the data collection and the interpretation of that data.

The importance of considering reflexivity has also been raised in the context of the participant. This includes questions the respondent asks during the interview and how they present themselves and their identities in relation to the researcher (Foley, 2012); their use of body language during a face-to-face encounter (Finlay, 2012); and the degree to which they provide access to their story during an interview (Cook, 2012). Maintaining an awareness of how stigma impacts the interview process is important in a reflexive approach, both through the management of a participant's prior encounters and by avoiding further stigmatisation through the practice of the interview itself (Cook, 2012). This meant being aware of how participants had encountered enablers or barriers to previous expression of their bereavement narrative.

Data organisation and reporting

The data from this thesis will be presented in a way that best answers the research questions. The findings will commence with a chapter of participant profiles (Chapter 5). Following this will be three further findings chapters (Chapters 6-8). Each of these chapters has been structured to integrate the results and the discussion around one of the three main themes. The findings will then be drawn together in a final concluding chapter (Chapter 9) highlighting the implications of the research.

In order to ensure data clarity and consistency of meaning, a number of conventions have been adopted throughout this thesis. Direct participant quotes will be represented in *italics* and,

when not in the body of the text, will be followed by the participant's name in (round brackets). Where data was originally gathered in a written form—for example, as part of an email—the text will be represented in its original form. Wherever there was a requirement for a bridging phrase or a correction of spelling to facilitate meaning, this will be represented by the use of [square brackets]. Emphasis of speech—for example, when spoken loudly or stressed by the participant—will be represented by *underlined italics*.

Ethical considerations of bereavement research

This research provided an avenue for participants to share their experiences of bereavement through suicide and accidental death. Given the high degree of stigma frequently associated with deaths by external causes, particularly suicide, in farming communities (Judd, Jackson, Fraser, et al., 2006), participation provided the bereaved with an occasion to speak openly and without restriction about their experiences, an opportunity that was highly valued by participants. The expression of experience allowed for a cathartic reappraisal of bereavement and helped to facilitate acceptance, meaning making and growth (Groos & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013). Several suicide and bereavement studies have reported a range of positive outcomes for participants engaging in research, identifying participation as cathartic, healing, and a positive experience (Biddle et al., 2013; Dyregrov et al., 2010; Moore, 2012; Rivlin, Marzano, Hawton, & Fazel, 2012). Similar outcomes have been identified for studies conducted via email (Gibson, Boden, Benson, & Brand, 2014). Other participants have expressed more altruistic motivations and anticipated that, through participating, they would be able to reduce the future suffering of others (Dyregrov et al., 2010; Finlay, 2012; Leenaars et al., 2010). Participants have found renewed meaning in their lives by assisting others and many have volunteered ongoing assistance with research (Wilson & Marshall, 2010).

In a wide-ranging review of emotional reactions following research participation, Jorm and colleagues (2007) discussed the outcomes of a number of bereavement studies including those exploring suicide and accidental death. While some participants reported short-term feelings of stress, distress and being upset as a consequence of their research participation, the vast majority of participants in all reviewed studies found benefit, insight or something positive as the ultimate outcome of their participation. Those reporting distress also frequently had a positive evaluation of their research participation, suggesting that while there may be distress at the time of participation, participants may also experience benefit from expressing their stories of a traumatic event (Biddle et al., 2013; Jorm et al., 2007). This research was designed to engage only participants who were prepared to proactively choose research involvement without a direct approach by the researcher. Participation remained voluntary and participants were free to cease their involvement at any stage. Participants were assured that any contribution they made to the research would remain confidential.

It was important to recognise individual variation in the emotional response to bereavement and avoid assumptions about what makes a participant vulnerable (Foley, 2012). Consequently, all interviews ended with the immediate provision of the contact details for Lifeline as well as how to locate in-person services within their local community (see Appendix 8). Each of the email communications had these details included as an attachment. Phone interviews were concluded with the contact details for Lifeline and further support information was either emailed or posted. However, it was left to each respondent as to how they utilised this information. By providing this information, support was made directly available to the participant should the interview have triggered emotional or traumatic memories. There was also an open and clear commitment made to the psychological, emotional, physical and social wellbeing of the participants (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). This was reinforced by the researcher's commitment to

call a trained social worker for participant support if it was required (Lakeman & Fitzgerald, 2009).

Researcher self-care was also an important consideration within the research design (Lakeman & Fitzgerald, 2009), particularly given the emotionally demanding topic of suicide and accidental death bereavement (Lillrank, 2012). This was a concern both as part of the interviewing process and during the intense and saturating process of transcription and analysis of emotionally challenging data. Before data collection commenced, arrangements were made for the researcher to have regular face-to-face, phone and email contact with supervisory staff. The researcher's base at the National Centre for Farmer Health provided a support network of a supervisory staff member and research colleagues. Formal counselling was also made available, although the researcher did not feel the need to draw on this support.

Ethical approval

The University of New England's Human Research Ethics Committee granted ethics approval (No. HE 13-047) (see Appendix 7). The prolonged ethics approval process—requiring a resubmission including reference to existing research—reflected recent concerns posed by Moore and colleagues (2013) about suicide bereavement research and ethical review. The concerns included ethical review boards expressing apprehension and placing restrictions on research without an understanding of the evidence supporting the safety of such research.

Chapter summary

This chapter outlined and justified the methodological approach used to best address the purpose and aims of this research. This encompassed three research elements that progressively directed and informed one another: epistemology, theoretical framework and methods. The

broadest element was the social constructionist epistemology from which the research was viewed. The next level was the narrative inquiry theoretical framework, providing context and grounding for the qualitative methods. This third element of the research process outlined the in-depth narrative interviews and the process of thematic analysis used to make meaning of the narrative data collected. Completing this chapter was a discussion of the ethical issues considered in designing this research.

Chapter 5 presents a series of individual participant profiles designed to provide the reader with an understanding of the participant, the person who died and the context in which the death occurred.

Chapter 5: Participant Profiles

This chapter presents a series of participant profiles of each of the farming family members involved in this research. Each profile is headed by the participant's chosen pseudonym and is presented in the chronological order in which participants were interviewed. The deceased person is also referred to by a pseudonym, generally chosen by the participant. Where other people are mentioned, pseudonyms are also used. The purpose of the participant profiles is threefold. They allow the reader to develop some understanding of:

1. The participant;
2. The person(s) who died; and,
3. The context in which the death occurred.

As explained in the previous chapter, within the text, participants' own words are identified through the use of *italics*. This will continue throughout the rest of the thesis, with participants identified by their pseudonym in (round brackets) at the end of each quote. Further detail on each participant has been included in a table at the end of this chapter (see Table 5.1) to allow the reader to quickly refer to each participant's details. Participant emphasis has been demonstrated through *underlined italics*. Inclusions by the researcher to aid understanding have been included in [square brackets] within participant quotes.

Hickock

I travelled with some trepidation (as this was my first interview) the two hours to see Hickock on the family farm where he had lived since infancy and now lived with his wife. One son also lived on the other side of the farm, in Hickock's childhood home. The weather had been

very wet and the journey up the long driveway was treacherous. The house was weathered and had a number of old cars to one side: future projects of Hickock's son. Inside the house were boxes and paperwork piled on most surfaces, reflecting Hickock's significant involvement in agripolitics until recent times. Hickock sported an untrimmed beard, long hair and a pet hair covered jumper (courtesy of a pair of socks mistakenly added to the wash). He walked with difficulty due to degenerative farming injuries and the effects of a stroke left undiagnosed for several weeks.

Hickock was raised with the significant responsibility of keeping tabs on his alcoholic father and bringing him home from the pub after his day at primary school. His parents' excessive involvement in the community—*at expense to their own family*—led to a strong sense of self-reliance—*you depend on yourself don't you?* The brutal discipline of secondary boarding school led to many a *power struggle* between him and the Catholic brothers, and his mental toughness frequently won out—*you have either got to be weak or tough in this world. God help if you're not*. During his teenage years, Hickock's family endured increasingly hard farming times and he felt obligated to forego his dream of an agricultural college education in order to keep things afloat at home on the farm. He increasingly inherited the decision-making responsibilities.

In narrating his story, Hickock described many challenging life events including numerous seasons of drought, flood and crop failure. The loss of the family home, much of the farming equipment, and almost his family were caused by bushfire in the 1980s. Less than a decade later, financial disablement—as an outcome of his mother's stroke and subsequent death—resulted in ongoing constricted finances and strained family relationships still present when we spoke. In the years between his mother's stroke and her subsequent death, Hickock's father, Duckshooter, died by suicide. He described this as a sad event, but one that had less of an impact than the financial debilitation caused by his mother's stroke. Despite life's challenges being paramount in his narrative, he remained optimistic—*how do you look at your future? You believe there is*

something worth keeping on tomorrow isn't it [...] I have always been optimistic about what hopefully we can achieve and what we want to get.

Peggy

I spoke with Peggy in her home on a small family farm. She and her husband worked off-farm and lived on a property with a focus on lifestyle rather than purely income. Countless photos of family and friends (frequently taken in a farm setting) were displayed through the home. Peggy and I sat at one end of a long dining table adjacent to the kitchen where there was a substantial collection of children's artwork from over several years displayed on the walls.

Peggy had an incredibly strong involvement and positive connection with family farming since childhood—*[we were] just one of those families, we had done stuff together all our lives and we just got on very well.* She was raised by parents who displayed traditional roles, with Dad farming and Mum demonstrating *total comfort and care* for her children, which continued into their adult lives. As a child, Peggy preferred to be outside on the farm with her brothers and father. This connection continued to be a positive one for Peggy throughout her young adult years while living in the city for work.

Peggy's life did not maintain the idyllic patterns she recalled from her childhood. The accidental death (either by drowning or electrocution—it was never fully determined) of her 27 year-old brother Harry while overseas occurred alongside the stressors of threatened bankruptcy and the impending breakdown of her first marriage. With her life in turmoil, she described feelings of anger towards her brother for dying—his death had stripped her of the right to choose to end her own life. Given Harry's death, Peggy felt unable to expose her family to the trauma of a second death. Her response to Harry's death affirmed her connection to the farm: *I just wanted to be on the family farm.*

While Peggy was still not comfortable expressing her own vulnerability, or seeing it expressed by others within her family, she encouraged the expression of vulnerability in others who had been impacted by similar tragedy: *It's made me such a better person to talk to others.* Her connection to farming remained unhindered by the experience of bereavement and was something she strived to pass on to her own young children—*we are still absolutely lovers of the land and lovers of family and friends.* These strong connections also kept her connected to Harry.

Jane

Jane chose to come into my office on the day of the interview as she was in town on other business. I had previously met Jane socially and found her to be friendly yet reserved. I am ashamed to say I had almost no previous knowledge of her having lost both her father and sister in traumatic circumstances. I don't recall it being spoken about. Living in a rural community, there is the danger of assuming you know people's story, even if indirectly. It became clearer to me, when I spoke to Jane, that this is not necessarily the case—we don't necessarily know everything about everyone. Further, some things are rarely spoken about. Jane did, however, feel comfortable to share her story with me in the 'safe space' created by the research interview.

Jane, like several other participants, described life growing up on the family farm as *a dream childhood*. She left the farm after high school to study teaching in a major city. She went on to live, work, and marry in the city. Jane never expected to return to country life until her father, Arthur, was killed in a tractor accident on the farm. Jane described Arthur's death as a great shock and life-changing in many practical ways. However, when we spoke 28 years after his death she felt able to emotionally accept it, given his status as a parent and hers as a young adult at the time: *we all lose our parents in the fullness of time. It's somehow more acceptable.*

Following the death, Jane and her husband returned to the district, and later the family farm, with

Jane passing on her love of the farm to her own children. This was only tarnished by the fact that her father was not able to continue the intergenerational connection with his grandchildren.

In the years following Arthur's death, Jane's sister Virginia suffered worsening depression. She was eventually unable to sustain work in the city and returned to the farm to live with Jane and her family. Virginia also assisted Jane in the care of their mother, who was now dying of a painful and virulent form of cancer. Within a year of diagnosis, Jane's mother died. Jane described Virginia as particularly impacted by the death of *her last grounding person*, someone from whom she had received long-standing support. With declining health, Virginia spent the next two years alternating between time spent on the farm and periods in hospital and other treatment facilities. Jane's relationship with Virginia shifted from a close friendship where Jane had *idolised* her older sister to one in which Jane became Virginia's carer. For some time, Virginia told her doctors that *the only thing that stopped me from taking my own life is Jane and the kids*. Unfortunately, *in the end it wasn't enough*. In hindsight, Jane described feeling unable to control the ultimate outcome of Virginia's illness: *it was like we were on a train to this one destination, but we couldn't get off, we couldn't stop the train*.

Fearful of the impact Virginia's death would have on her children, Jane pleaded with her sister not to take her life at home on the farm. One December day, Jane returned from work with her 11-year-old daughter Lydia to find Virginia's body hanging in the garage. Jane was torn between shielding Lydia—*who was very, very close to Virginia*—from trauma and wanting to check on Virginia. Jane found that knowing Lydia had witnessed the death was the hardest part of suicide bereavement: *I think that doubled the trauma for me [...] the trauma of the death I think will be with me until the day I die*. While Jane said that most people were of the belief that she had been strong through her experiences of loss, inwardly she did not feel this. However, this was something only those closest to her were aware of: *I would say for two years [...] I was not good at all [...] I am pretty good now [after] six years*.

George

George's participation in my research almost didn't happen. In response to a local newspaper article, he phoned me twice, but left no message. George almost gave up trying to make contact. Sometime later, he phoned again and we chatted. He very quickly told me that he had been impacted by numerous suicides and accidental deaths within both his personal life and his former role as a police officer, but it was only once we met face-to-face that he admitted feeling comfortable enough to openly describe how this affected him. George was a solidly built man with a brusque manner, admitting he took pride in his neat and clean appearance. We met at my office on a cold, wet day and George's wife joined us to get out of the weather, but sat back and only commented when asked a direct question.

George, a seventh-generation farmer, grew up on the family farm run by his father, Judd, and his grandfather. They were *old-generation* farmers—*hard-working* and *well-respected*—who would never have dreamed of talking about their emotions—*my father wouldn't come and talk to a woman like you, [my] Grandad, no way known*. George's relationship with his father was *really close* and revolved around their shared interest in farming, hunting, and fishing. As the farm couldn't support three families, George took to driving trucks and then joined the police force, returning to the district to help his father when his grandfather grew ill.

George felt little control over an ongoing assault of traumatic deaths that he perceived to plague him, in both his work as a police officer and in his involvement in the local farming community. This was compounded by his ongoing contact and connection with the families of the deceased through living and working in a small community. George received the news of his father's death while on duty and, assuming it was a heart attack, accepted it calmly. When informed that it was a suicide, he reacted violently.

Although describing poor financial decision-making as a reason for many farmer suicides, he struggled to accept this as the motivation behind his father's death. He felt he should have been able to see signs of the impending suicide. George's ultimate inability to *handle that death anymore* resulted in his resignation from the police force. Leaving *due to ill health* led to his *disease* status among many in the force and the local community and a long road back to feeling valued in his community once again.

When telling his story he wanted it to be clear that he was *not looking to get sympathy*, he was *not seeking*. Instead, he saw himself as an *enigma* whose long-term exposure to trauma could be of help to others: *it's not me I am coming here for*.

Dorothy

Dorothy was an elderly lady living in a regional town a couple of hours away. We arranged for me to visit her at home. The front rooms mirrored a carefully tended garden and were strikingly decorated with antiques and framed family photos—very much a showpiece. This was at odds with the more private rooms at the rear, which were much more lived in. Dorothy was very welcoming and we sat together at an antique timber dining table, her position affording a view of framed photographs of family members, to whom she referred throughout our conversation.

To begin with, Dorothy was very quick to veer away from sensitive topics; for example, finishing statements with *but never mind* or *anyway, we won't talk about that*. As the interview progressed, she became more open to talking about the traumatic episodes within her life. The imminent prospect of moving into retirement care, combined perhaps with my visit, stimulated nostalgic reflection. During the interview, Dorothy talked about, and produced, various items, letters, and news clippings from her past.

Dorothy was *a farm girl* who grew up on *top properties*, breeding *stud sheep and cattle*. Her father was *very fussy, very picky*. Her mother was *a brilliant lady* and very socially-involved: *it was nothing for her to talk to the Governor*. Dorothy trained as a nurse in the city, where she met her first husband. In hindsight, she described him as attracted by her good breeding and family *money*. Dorothy and Ed moved interstate to a farm of their own and had three children. They both worked hard, but the marriage soured when Ed did *a bit of meandering* with *other women*. Dorothy moved into town, working numerous jobs to support her children and taking in boarders for extra income. The support from close friends—*some of the girls [...] are still around now*—helped her through difficult times.

Her oldest son Ron continued to work on the farm with his father, who forbade him from having contact with Dorothy. Ron struggled to meet his father's expectations—*he had a tough time [...] his father didn't give him one ounce of credit for anything he did*. Dorothy avoided all contact with Ed—*I couldn't bear him*—and when Ed took his own life she felt it barely impacted her: *in the end I couldn't care less*. Ron remained in the district and was *very close to his Mum*. She described Ron experiencing marital difficulties, suffering a breakdown and wanting to live with her, but believed *that's not right that he should do that [...] I am not going to break up a marriage*. She felt it was up to Ron and his wife to sort out their own difficulties. One afternoon, she dropped past Ron's house and *found him on the bed. He had shot half his head off [...] I knew he was very close but I didn't think he would do it*. While Dorothy shouldered some of the blame for the death—*I should have done more*—realistically she thought it would not *have made much difference [...] I think I would have only made it worse if I kept digging in there all the time*. Ultimately, Dorothy blamed Ron's death on his involvement with his father, whose suicide death had occurred 12 years prior. The impact of Ron's suicide was starkly different to that of Ed because of her emotional closeness to him. The loss was made greater as Ron had been the only child who had lived geographically close to her: *I did miss him*.

Maureen

Maureen first contacted me by email but was happy to chat in any of the offered formats. Her email proficiency and busy schedule led me to suggest we try an email conversation, allowing her to take manageable ‘bites’ at the conversation when able. To build rapport, I sent some background information about myself to accompany the first email questions. Two months passed without contact and I began to question our choice of an email conversation. On the day I sent a gentle reminder, Maureen wrote straight back with an apology and long detailed reply. Although her emails were incredibly detailed, they continued to arrive at long intervals and, with the demands of a data collection deadline looming, we mutually decided to complete the conversation over the phone seven months after our initial communication. The phone call was very successful, as we had developed a good rapport through the emails.

Maureen was a fifth-generation farmer with a *real affinity* for her childhood property given its multigenerational connections. Growing up on a dairy farm in the 1950s was *a fairly lonely time*, and the family *rarely socialised except to the local church on Sunday and visiting [...] grandparents*. She was bullied at primary school and found solace in *an imaginary world of storybook characters*. As a young teenager, Maureen went to boarding school in the city—*this I loved*—and made *long term connections to friends*. She returned to the family farm after she married—*a move we have never regretted*—where her husband Sean learnt the farming trade from Maureen’s father and two brothers. They soon bought their own farm—initially in *an awful state*—and rehabilitated the land over 20 years. While this property did not hold the long-term family connections of her childhood farm, the legacy that came with leaving *the land for those to come later in much better condition than when we found it* provided its own *strong connection to the land*.

Maureen's brothers set up a local stock carting business to supplement the family farm income. Donald, the oldest, *was on the top deck loading sheep when he was arced from a power line overhead, thrown off the crate to the ground and killed.* A legal battle with the electricity company meant the family were unable to donate Donald's organs; something Maureen's father *didn't ever recover from.* Maureen *always felt this was cruel [and] unnecessary [...] but outside of our control.* The farm was eventually split between Donald's wife and Maureen's younger brother, and the family relationships remained *very close.*

Maureen had *a very close relationship* with her youngest son Daniel through a *very difficult childhood [...He] had given us absolute hell when he was a kid, but had grown up to be a fantastic bloke.* Daniel was determined to *join the Navy and pestered them until they took him!* He suffered a football injury that ultimately led to his application *for a discharge on health grounds,* starting *a saga that only ended with his death.* Daniel set off travelling *for a great adventure,* during which he was introduced to *Free Diving. He drowned while diving alone.* The first notification Maureen had *was from the people on the island who had found him* and she still did not know what really happened. While Daniel was travelling, Maureen had kept in touch via Facebook: *I guess vicariously I had been travelling with him.* After his death, Facebook—*my lifeline since his death*—became the only medium through which she could contact Daniel's friends about what had happened. Through this Maureen developed many new friendships *all over the world,* with Daniel's close friends, now *like sons to me.*

Jessica

Jessica heard about my research from a friend who had provided her support after her brother's suicide death. Being a mother of school-aged children and working from home in the family business, Jessica felt that an interview during school hours over the phone would suit her best. As the first participant to choose a phone interview, I was a little apprehensive. I need not

have worried; Jessica spoke openly and appeared to have thought deeply about her response to bereavement.

Jessica was raised in a *traditional* farming family. Her father was very *old school* with strong opinions on both farming and family, and *ruled the house* with a strong hand; her mother was *the dutiful wife*. Jessica was *brought up to be a bit of a tough nut* and *loved hanging around with [her] brother, Alex*. Being with him around the farm was *so much more fun than playing inside with stupid dolls [laughter]*. Alex's marriage to a woman from outside of farming, with *very different visions*, led to a distancing in his relationship with Jessica. During this time, Jessica's *coping mechanism was to withdraw instead of trying to endure*.

Jessica described Alex as strongly connected to his family and the farm; however, his desire to *build an empire and give his kids a better life* meant that *he was too busy working and didn't know his kids*. Alex's wife could not cope with this, and so she took the children and left. To Jessica, this demonstrated that *she [was] not a farmer's wife [...] when you marry a farmer, you marry the lifestyle [laughter]*. Alex was *absolutely devastated*. The strain was exacerbated by torn family loyalties: *for Alex there was a triangle of trying to please Dad and his wife*.

A few months later, Alex sustained *very severe head injuries* after a motorbike accident on the farm. On returning to the farm following months in rehabilitation, it became increasingly apparent that Alex and his estranged wife and children existed in very different worlds: *his family had run off and didn't want anything to do with him*. He also struggled with managing farm life: *he wasn't able to process what he was going to do tomorrow, let alone next week and the week after. He was just too proud to ask people for help*. Ultimately, living became *all too hard for Alex*, and he took his own life. Jessica's immediate reaction upon hearing of her brother's death was one of relief that he was no longer struggling.

Despite the sadness that came with bereavement, *the loss has also brought about lots of other good things [...] He has opened our eyes up to look at things in a different light.*

Louise

Louise contacted me after following a Twitter link to information about my research. Although working in the city in a public service position at the time we spoke, Louise grew up on a family farm and hoped to return at some point with *greater involvement* in running the farm. Participating in my research was a way that Louise felt she could contribute to suicide prevention efforts, something she had been searching for since her father's death 12 years earlier. She preferred to chat over the phone due to work and study commitments, so I phoned her on a Sunday morning.

Louise was the eldest of four girls and described many benefits to growing up on a family farm, from childhood independence and the *freedom of being able to have horses and go riding and play down the river*, to the *valuable life skills* and responsibility learned through working as part of a farming family. It was a lifestyle she hoped to pass on to her own children one day.

Louise was *the closest to Dad* of all her sisters, but was sheltered from her parent's marriage troubles and her father, Phillip's, poor mental health: *there was obviously a lot more going on than what we were sort of aware of as kids [...] It was all a bit kept away from us I guess.* When her father died by suicide (when she was 16), the family stayed on the farm and her mother juggled fulltime work while managing the farm (with the help of an employee) and raising her daughters, determined to get them all through private school. Following Phillip's death, Louise was angered to learn that her grandfather had also suicided, something that had *never [been] talked about—it was only after Dad passed away that my uncle [...] told us that our grandfather had committed suicide as well, and the circumstances around that.* Louise

determined that she would never try to hide her family's history of suicide from her own children: *they will know the truth from the beginning.*

Jack

I met Jack, an agricultural consultant, when he came to the National Centre for Farmer Health to ask for our support with a rural suicide and men's mental health awareness event—the same event where I met Karen, Rob and Brendan. He was very forthright in his manner and when the topic of my research was raised he volunteered then and there to participate. This threw me, as I was unprepared, both mentally and practically, for an interview at such short notice. After some rapid organisation of my office space (and some reorganisation of my headspace), we spoke for almost two-and-a-half hours.

Jack was the second eldest of four children growing up on a family farm: *we grew up as all equal and by the time you are 16 you make your own decisions and live your life.* He was taught to *live and die by [his] own decisions [...] so [was] geared up to look after [him]self.* Despite their independence, the family were close knit and spent a lot of time together, both on and off farm. He described his parents more as mates than parents in the traditional sense of *older parents and respect and pecking order and all that sort of crap that goes on in families.*

Although challenged by dyslexia, Jack *loved* his secondary boarding education where he and his middle brother *fitted in.* At 16, he embraced his independence and *packed up and went overseas* to work in agriculture. In contrast to himself, Jack believed his youngest brother by five years, Fred, did not fit into the boarding school environment. The traits that allowed him to excel as a farm family member clashed with those expected of a boarding school student. For example, Fred may not have been able to *read the bloody phone book*, but he was *exceptionally good* at practical tasks, had *brilliant people and memory skills*, and he would *stand up for what was right*,

whatever it took. Fred's decision to stand up for others was unappreciated by the staff at school when it led to Fred hitting a bully at school: *the system crunched on him*.

While Jack was overseas for the second time, Fred (aged 15) returned home from boarding school and *made a really clean job of shooting himself*.

When we spoke, Jack, now a father of a 15-year-old son himself, was set on protecting his family and others from enduring the pain he suffered over the preceding 25 years.

Simon

Simon responded to my request for participants having read about my research both on social media and in an industry newsletter. We arranged to meet at a café in a town close to the family farm, a property he had managed since the death of his father because of a farming accident almost two years earlier. I arrived first and found a quiet corner of the café. Simon had the same idea and found me easily.

Simon was the third-generation to work the family farm. He grew up *in a very traditional family where Mum was extremely reliant on Dad for everything [...] the husband provides and takes care of everything*. Simon was close to his father, who actively supported him achieve his horse riding goals through his teenage and young adult years—*he contributed so much to those things*—and then worked with him in running the farm business. Simon had spent several years working in agricultural business both in Australia and overseas, yet had always intended to return to work on the family farm full-time, so had maintained a strong involvement. His living arrangements away from the farm had been chosen to accommodate his wife's career requirements.

Prior to 70-year-old John's sudden death, he and Simon had been working towards the goal of Simon returning to the farm, seeking *outside help* from a *local consultant* to set up a

management plan. Simon described his father as a resourceful and pragmatic man who was self-reliant and committed to the farm. While Simon felt ready to take on *more responsibility*, John *didn't really want to relinquish any responsibility at that point still*, an issue of some contention. The accident meant that Simon was *hurled into that succession plan a little bit earlier than anticipated*.

Without any outside labour on the farm, John was working on his own when he suffered a head injury in *a fall from an auger*. He continued working for several hours but, when *he started to get a bit of a headache*, he took himself into hospital and collapsed into a coma shortly after. Although he remained on life support for several days, the family came to the realisation that *there wasn't going to be an outcome* and turned off the machines. Knowing that John would not have wanted to live on in an incapacitated and dependent state made the decision easier for Simon to accept.

Stephanie

My original contact with Stephanie came after I heard the tail end of a radio interview with a passionate farmer proactive in promoting the emotional wellbeing of rural people. She sounded like she would be a great 'community champion' for my research, so I tracked her down and emailed to ask if she could circulate the information about my research through her rural networks. She was very willing to do this, but it was only through follow-up contact made some months later that she told me of her father's death and volunteered her own participation in the study via a phone interview. When we spoke, she had been back running the family farm with her husband and young children for a few years and was heavily involved in her local community, promoting a healthy food culture and supporting local agricultural development.

Stephanie was born into the fourth-generation of family farming and had an *awesome upbringing* in a *perfectly normal family*. Her *Mum was never the maternal one*, so her father,

Andrew, was *really a hands-on sort of Dad* and provided much of the primary care for Stephanie and her sister Selena. While Stephanie couldn't *remember that much* of her younger childhood, she recalled camping trips and spending a lot of time with her Dad on the farm. As a young teenager, she left the farm for boarding school, which she loved.

When Stephanie received the news of her father's death, she immediately assumed it was due to a shooting accident. She had *no idea* that he had been suffering depression for years prior to his death. She later learned that depression had also plagued her paternal grandfather. In the time following the death, Stephanie heard about troubling succession disputes around the family farming properties that she felt contributed to her father's decision to suicide.

Isaac

Isaac emailed me to participate in the study and, as a *slow thinker*, preferred to chat via email rather than over the phone. This gave him both a *record of my responses* and an opportunity to change his views *if I become aware of different information or circumstances change*. These initial contacts summed up my overall impression of Isaac over our three-month period of communication, as someone with a pragmatic and inquiring mind who thought deeply about his responses—not just what he wrote but how he would write it: *I have been trying to decide whether to write a detailed response or something a bit more minimalist*. He had a quick, dry wit and often had me laughing while reading his emails, which seemed to arrive at all times of the day and night complete with links to YouTube, discussion groups, and other people's PhD theses.

Isaac was not born into a farming family, but chose to pursue the lifestyle *largely to satisfy my reclusive tendencies and hopefully earn a reasonable living*. He took on the challenge optimistically: *my financial and knowledge shortcomings were not impediments which I took too seriously at the time*. Unfortunately, a combination of the usual *vagaries of farming*, loss of off-

farm employment—the all important cashflow—and his wife Clara's increasingly poor health led to his declining success as a primary producer.

Over time Isaac's relationship with Clara gradually *changed from being a partner to being a companion and assistant and finally a carer—It is like watching grass grow or paint dry, you finish in a different place from where you started but you don't notice the journey.* Isaac and Clara had, on a number of occasions, discussed *do not resuscitate directives and assisted suicide agreements*, but they *couldn't decide on agreed parameters* for these arrangements. While caring for Clara, he suffered a period of extreme back pain. Although he *tried to put up with it [...] in the hope it would improve*, eventually it became necessary to call *the ambulance*, which resulted in his hospitalisation for a number of weeks. Clara remained at home, under the care of her daughter who was *not really able to fully provide the assistance she needed*. Clara was *not prepared to return to a hospital or local care facility*. She ended her own life while Isaac remained in hospital. Isaac felt *relieved* at being absent from home, knowing that *I couldn't do anything and had to pass the buck* to his young adult children to deal with the post-death arrangements:

Inwardly, I was somewhat emotional and preferred to keep it that way. I would not have been able to do that if I was not absent [...] When out and about or in company, I prefer to be in complete control of my emotions [...] I have always been or tried to be like this. (Isaac)

Karen

Karen was keen to contribute to my research, although somewhat difficult to pin down with her frantic farming and community schedule. When we did finally chat, I initially felt it might be necessary to exclude her as she had said she had not had someone close to her die by a suicide or accidental death. While Karen described herself as not personally bereaved by suicide, her involvement in suicide prevention and the promotion of mental health awareness meant that

she had witnessed first-hand the impact of suicide bereavement and *thought about it a lot*. Karen's situation represented the 'ripple effect' of suicide death. Her inclusion was an important recognition of the broader impact that suicide death has on the community, beyond those considered close to the deceased.

Karen was born into *a very strong farming background*, the second child of five. Her paternal grandmother and uncle had both suffered with very serious depression, and her uncle lived with them throughout her childhood following the death of her grandmother, his carer. At the time, mental illness was *something to be ashamed about* and Karen's grandparents had *swept it under the carpet* to avoid anyone thinking *there was a problem*. Karen's mother became the primary carer for her uncle and was supported by their local GP with whom she had *a very good relationship*. Given the nature of *what she was dealing with*, Karen's mum was *very good to talk to us about any hard conversation*. Karen felt she has carried this through with her own family—*I am really conscious to do that with my kids, too*.

Karen's strength of commitment to family was extended to include her involvement in the local community, which provided *good switch off time* from the everyday stresses of farming. Without this opportunity, *it just consumes you*. She demonstrated this respite as an invaluable way to 'escape' from the pressures of farming:

I think the biggest thing about farmers is that farming is who they are. If something goes wrong, then they have failed. So farmers feel that what they do is what they are. (Karen)

Karen's pace of life sounded frenetic. Although her four young adult children were all either working or away at school or university—an absence she found *really difficult* and *anti-motivating*—her days and evenings were filled with farm work, off-farm work and community

commitments. Her pragmatic approach permeated all areas of Karen's life, from farming tasks and raising a family, right through to planning holidays from the farm:

I think in farming you have to have that down time, you have to have it [...] We are quite strategic about it Alison [...] you have to set those times up and you have to do it [...] You have to want to do it though. (Karen)

Paul

Paul initially contacted me via email to offer his participation but was unsure whether he fit the criteria, as he was no longer actively involved in farming. He came from a background of family farming *into time immemorial*, and worked in the agricultural sector for many years before he immigrated to Australia from England. I travelled to speak face-to-face with Paul on his rural lifestyle property about five hours from my home. The setting was idyllic; the house and mown lawns encircled by bush and peppered with the sounds of native birds feasting in fruit trees and a nearby bird feeder. We sat on a balcony with a distant view of the sea and ate the lunch that I had brought for us both. Paul was *a detail-minded person* and our meeting spanned over four hours as a result of his desire to be clear in his explanations.

Paul believed his father felt rejected as his mother *clung on to me* after his birth, and *consequently I spent the rest of my time while he was alive [...] subject to his bullying and intimidation*. His father left the family farm when Paul was young and started an agricultural engineering business, a trade Paul also learnt as a child when forced to help his father. Paul and his father did not have *a very good working relationship*, with Paul becoming *more and more useful* and his father suffering from *professional jealousy*. His father's *violent* behaviour led to Paul leaving the family business. Almost 10 years later he migrated to Australia with his wife, Kath, and their young family.

Paul described Kath's worsening struggle with mental illness, and the agonising and confusing years of Kath vacillating between wanting him gone and desperately needing his support. As tough as things got, Paul felt tied to his home and chose not to leave.

It was five years from *the first signs [...] that there was something wrong* until Kath's suicide, and for four of those years Paul *didn't understand what was going on*. He described Kath making numerous suicide threats and at least one attempt at suicide. Although accustomed to *play[ing] the hand that has been dealt me*, Paul's own mental health was under threat: *all through this time I was suicidal*. Once Kath had been given a diagnosis of a mental illness, Paul felt he instantaneously switched from being *a victim* to regaining a sense of purpose as a carer. While Kath's behaviour towards Paul remained *the same [...] all [his] suicidal stuff went*.

Our meeting concluded with Paul taking me on a walk through the property to show me the dam where Kath died and the plaque marking the place where he had buried half of her ashes.

Rob

Rob had heard about my research, but wasn't sure whether his experiences fit the participation requirements. His wife first approached me and spoke with some passion about Rob's experiences of loss in the last few years. I assured her that what Rob had to share would be greatly appreciated. He caught up with me later that day; we spoke briefly and agreed to catch up in coming weeks. Our first meeting at the farm was cancelled due to pressing farm jobs. I drove the hour out to Rob's farm a week later to chat. A family home as well as a place of work, I passed the neatly rowed pairs of assorted sized shoes and boots near the back door into a newly renovated kitchen—big and little feet well kitted out for farm work. We spoke over mugs of tea and an assortment of home-baked biscuits, the noise of his volunteer fire brigade pager chirping regularly in the background.

Rob had grown up several hundred kilometres away on his family's farm, the fourth-generation to farm that land, and the only son of three children. He attended a private school in a regional town, *with basically no one involved in agriculture*, then returned to work with his father and re-established a social network with people sharing an interest in farming. He married a farming woman and, in the ensuing years, had two children. Rob's father decided to retire without a succession plan in place. Rob was left to run the farm, yet wasn't paid enough from the farm *to survive* and had to simultaneously work an off-farm, full-time carpentry job.

In addition to dealing with an unresolved succession, within a space of 18 months, Rob experienced the deaths of four male friends: two by suicide and two from farming-related accidents. The first suicide was a *cocky*³ from a neighbouring property. Rob described marital trouble and financial stress where his mate *just reached the end of his tether* and hung himself. The second suicide death was Mick, a fellow tradesman and *pretty good mate*. Rob described a *similar scenario* of family break down and financial pressures leading to depression, failed attempts at self-medication with alcohol, and Mick's eventual hanging death at home. While Rob could *understand the corner they were backed into*, he still couldn't *get why they did what they did*. At the time of Mick's death in particular, Rob was not only juggling two jobs in *the middle of spring* but had just welcomed the birth of his second child: *it was chaos*. Rob's focus on family, farm and work meant that he felt distracted from thinking too much about the death. Rob's close mate Anthony was the next to die. He had been in a *similar situation to Rob*, with his work on the family farm unable to sustain him and his wife, and he was working off-farm driving trucks. On one of his runs, *he just put the truck up under a power line. And you don't get two chances at that*. Death by electrocution was immediate. The suddenness of the death, and similarities to his own situation, made Rob realise that *life can just disappear from beneath you*. A short time later Rob's neighbour was *fencing and he had an accident with a hydraulic post driver*, dying from

³ Colloquial term for farmer

complications some weeks later. Rob helped out by keeping the farm running alongside other members of the local community.

The deaths prompted Rob's decision to secure a future for his own family. Despite the help of a Rural Financial Counsellor—the only outside professional help Rob had ever used—they were unable to resolve the succession issues. Following the example of farming friends, Rob and his wife left the family farm:

I have pretty much wiped them [...] I gave them 11 years of my life and walked away with very little after a lot of years. So, yeah. Decided to cut my losses (laughter) and move on with my life. (Rob)

Neville

Neville lived alone on a farm in the North West Slopes region of NSW, assisted in his work by eight dogs. The house was a simple weatherboard structure accessed by a sandy track through rough scrub. Inside, the house reflected his time-poor status and his self-acknowledged priority of farm work over housework. The kitchen was chaotic, but Neville admitted he had made a concerted effort to wash some dishes and remove the cobwebs from one corner of the heavily festooned living area. We took our tea outside to the covered veranda. The farm fronted a major truck route and we struggled at times to hear each other over the roar of the big rigs going past a couple of hundred metres away through the scrub. The dogs were housed some distance away but contributed to the noise by way of a steady stream of barking in response to my unfamiliar voice, much to Neville's frustration. Neville seemed to enjoy the opportunity to talk and proved to be quite outspoken, with strong opinions that he was very happy to share.

Neville was born with ‘bat ears’⁴ (surgically repaired when he was 40), and other unspecified physical problems requiring surgery in early childhood. He was bullied due to his physical differences: *normal relationships [were] extremely difficult to impossible*. Neville attended an agricultural high school, studied farm management at agricultural college, and returned to the family farm. He *immediately clashed* with both his mother—who he described as *mad and bad and addicted to try and control everything [himself included]*—and his father—who he said had *never been the full twenty cents in the dollar and never been capable of telling the truth*. At the age of 19, Neville described being *manipulated* by his family, resulting in him being *hospitalised, misdiagnosed [as mentally ill] and mistreated*. This *trouble continued for years* until the *community health centre bec[ame] involved and discovered there was nothing wrong with [him]*. Despite facing so much adversity, Neville described himself as *a very determined person with true strength of character*.

Following agricultural college, Neville worked for his father on a property near to the family farm that Neville described as unsuitable for farming. He described his father and brother, Trevor, as colluding and lying to him about the farm’s viability: *it was cruel, deceitful and my livelihood was at stake. And it was a bastard of an act*. Neville made the decision never to speak to his brother again, although *I just thought that, I didn't say it*. Walking away was both a way of avoiding situations over which he had little control and a way for him to demonstrate what he believed to be an *appropriate* image.

Trevor’s suicide came eighteen years after Neville’s decision to cease all communication with him. In surmising what led to the death, Neville described Trevor as unable to *cope*, *vulnerable*, and subject to bullying. Despite others’ opinions, Neville believed Trevor had *never really suffered from depression*. This extended to his disbelief in mental illness generally as a

⁴ Also known as prominent or protruding ears, this is a condition arising as a result of lack of cartilage.

factor in *rural crisis*, preferring to attribute farmer suicidality to factors that related to more practical issues like drought or family breakdown.

Note: Crystal, Anna, Bonnie and Eliza all came to this research via their participation in a rural mental health study. Within that study they had mentioned they had been bereaved by either a suicide or accidental death and had volunteered their participation in further, related research.

Crystal

I visited Crystal in her home on the outer edges of a regional town. The house and garden were only a few years old and very neat in appearance. Crystal welcomed me in just as her sister was leaving. Her husband was pottering around in the back yard while we chatted over a cuppa. Crystal was a Jehovah's Witness, which kept her busy outside of her work and family commitments. Crystal described herself as *bossy* and *a control freak. I micro manage my family down to the enth degree*. Despite being legally blind and with limited independence, Crystal did not identify as someone who was vulnerable. While she was accustomed to asking for help, her response to challenge reflected her pragmatic nature: *I am not an emotional person [...] I am a pretty forthright, direct person. So I don't expect people to guess what my problem is*.

Crystal had married into a dairy farming family about 30 years earlier. Although she loved many aspects of the lifestyle that came with farm life—such as *having space* and *growing your own animals*—prolonged drought and associated financial stress meant that *when we had our own farm, there wasn't a lot of joy*, leading to her husband suffering a bout of depression. Despite selling their herd, they were made bankrupt several years later. The family moved to employment on a commercial/research dairy farm on the outskirts of a major city. They were there as *a family unit on our own*, having left their extended family to make the move. Crystal found that being

employed to run a farm allowed her children all of the benefits of a farming lifestyle without the pressures of contributing to a family farming business: *they kind of had the best of both worlds.*

One day while on his way home from school, her eldest son of three children, Ben (aged 6), was hit by a car and killed while crossing a busy road unaccompanied. Ben's accident was the family's first experience with death and, although Crystal has since been impacted by a number of deaths, *that was the worst [...] it really impacted our immediate family instantly, because he was a child.*

Anna

Anna and I spoke one evening after work over the phone. Anna was a single woman, the daughter of a refugee father from Eastern Europe who had come to Australia with his family. Anna's grandfather had turned to farming when his engineering qualifications were not recognised in Australia. Her father continued the farming tradition until the farm was sold through compulsory acquisition to make way for development when Anna was a teenager. The first eight years of Anna's life were spent growing up on this poultry farm and she remembers the time with great fondness: *I loved it.* While Anna described her family's involvement in farming as *all about making money*, she went on to describe her own *major legacy* as being left with *a better understanding about how connected we are to the land and food production.* She felt *great respect* for the land and an *obligation to be custodians for the next generation.*

Anna was exposed to suicide in her late 20s while she was engaged to be married (she had since divorced). Her fiancé's sister, Bridget, was a *scary, very defensive* younger woman who Anna was completely intimidated by: *I was afraid of her.* Anna described Bridget as suffering from mental health issues while in an abusive relationship: *she was very reticent in seeking help. She could talk about her problems when she was drunk. But otherwise she would refuse any help.* Anna had heard stories about Bridget's *erratic behaviour* and had witnessed marks *around her*

neck where she tried to strangle herself. Anna and her fiancé encouraged Bridget to leave her boyfriend—who was causing the angst—and live with them, but *we couldn't convince her.* About a week later she was found dead, hanging. At the time Anna perceived Bridget's decision to suicide as brave. However, when we spoke her perception of the death had changed to one of great tragedy and missed opportunity.

Bonnie

Bonnie and I first spoke when I was on a university campus, a couple of hours from her home. However, given that this was during school holidays, it didn't work for her to chat face-to-face at this time. We arranged to chat over the phone a week later. Bonnie grew up in a small rural community in *the sort of family where no one talked about things [...] you don't talk about that because that might upset someone. You don't talk about your feelings.* She married into a multi-generational farming family and had two children of her own. When her father-in-law retired, the farm was sold as the income generated couldn't support two families. Bonnie and her husband Rick remained in the area given the availability of agricultural contracting *work* and a preference *to bring our children up in a rural environment.* As *country people*, Bonnie described her family as having no interest in city life, preferring the experiences and community environment of rural living.

While Bonnie spoke comfortably about seeking help with practical issues such as with the children's education and farm finance, she described her husband's *embarrassment* when *going through depression and was sort of embarrassed that people would know.* While they did seek professional help, this was with a doctor in a town some distance away.

As soon as I raised the topic of her cousin Darren's suicide, Bonnie broke down in tears. It was as though she had been anticipating getting to this point in the conversation. She took a minute or two to regain her composure and maintained this throughout the rest of our

conversation. Bonnie and Darren *were quite close*, even more so after his mother died following a long illness *15 or 20 years before* Darren's own death. She used to see him *almost every day in the summer time* when she took her children to the local swimming pool where he worked. *A bit of a larrikin*, he was one of *the last people you would think would commit suicide*. She learned over the phone that he had died after *an argument with his partner*. There was *no indication that he was suffering that way*, and Bonnie described the family as carrying *a lot of guilt for a long time; that they didn't know what was going on*.

Eliza

The considerable geographic distance between Eliza and I limited us to a phone conversation. This was the first time that I felt a face-to-face interview would have been more beneficial as I initially found it difficult to engage with Eliza. While she demonstrated emotion through her voice, her language was noticeably unemotional and it was difficult to gauge what this meant over the phone. She admitted struggling to answer broad open questions (for example, 'So if we could talk about [your grandfather's death] and your experience of that loss. Perhaps if you could start with the time before the death and leading up to the death and then your journey since that time'). I made sure I was very specific in my questioning wherever possible (for example, 'how old were you at the time that he died?' 'So tell me about the day that it happened, when you found out'). She also described having problems with her memory, associated with bipolar disorder, which limited what she could tell me about her grandfather's suicide and the impact that this had had on her, which was a source of frustration for her.

Eliza grew up on a farming property as an only child in *a pretty unhappy household*. She learnt from a young age to look after herself. Now with a family of her own, she occasionally asked her husband for help with *work-related* issues, [but] *I don't generally ask for help with anything else much*.

Eliza and her husband had taken on increasing responsibility in the management of the farm as her husband's parents input *diminished*. Eliza's main role was administrative, while also providing support for her husband with practical tasks during busy periods. At the time we spoke, Eliza had a social circle *considerably smaller than most people*, centring on her immediate family and some close friends. However, each offered their own unique contribution to her life and reflected a range of shared interests from boarding school to farming: *I don't need to have 55,000 friends who pretend like they are all my best friend when none of them really are.*

Before his death, Eliza had a particularly close relationship with her grandfather. He was *the person that [she] had the most trust in of [her] entire family*. Ronald *struggled* with having to depend on others in the aftermath of a serious farming accident that restricted his mobility. This meant that their time together was spent inside talking or occasionally driving around the property. While Ronald's connection to the farm was through the vegetation, Eliza's connection was *all about animals*:

Cotton or broad acre farming doesn't interest me one single bit. I would rather live on the moon [...] It has got to have animals involved. That's my connection to the land. (Eliza)

Shortly before Eliza gave birth to her son (now 14), Ronald took his own life— *the first time I had really lost a human*. While there had been no indication of any intention to suicide, Eliza told me she *wasn't surprised* and struggled to explain her feeling of a previous *sixth sense* about his death. Ronald's death occurred during a period of Eliza's life when she was struggling with her own mental health. She perceived it to be one of the triggers that led to her bipolar diagnosis, although she did not explain to me how this transpired.

Brendan

When Brendan and I first met, he chose not to read the participant information sheet, instead accepting the study based on my verbal outline of the study to a bigger group. After receiving his consent to participate, it took some time to reengage with Brendan, which, in hindsight, was not surprising considering he was in the process of selling his farm and getting married. We finally caught up one morning over the phone.

Brendan grew up an only son with three *much older sisters* on the family farm. He described his childhood as *a bit strange* given that his sisters were all away at school and his dominant childhood memories were of being *alone on the farm*. As *the only boy*, he *knew that one day I would end up back on the farm*. As a *typical teenager*, Brendan described having *a lot of friends* and being *really involved in my sport*. He enjoyed his transition to boarding school, particularly the social connection it brought. On his *ex-weekends*⁵ from boarding school he would bring friends home and *always help down on the farm [...] I have always been a hard worker*.

While on summer holidays on *the 3rd of February 1985*—Brendan was very clear on the date—after a day of *motorbike riding*, Brendan and his mate Shane *went out and shot a few galahs*. The two boys were *just mucking around* and Brendan was carrying the gun with *the barrel up instead of pointing towards the ground*. Brendan described Shane alerting him to another bird, whereon he turned and the gun went off. A bullet wound through the neck killed Shane. The horror of this time has stuck in Brendan's mind and he described it to me with vivid clarity: *I actually haven't really told anyone this before [...] it was pretty traumatic I guess*. Despite the trauma, it was business as usual on the farm: *The next day, after the accident, Dad got me to help him put a sheep trough in. Thinking it would help take my mind off things*. Within five days of the death, Brendan was sent back to boarding school.

⁵ An abbreviated form of exeat weekends—a period of leave from boarding school

Jeanette

Jeanette was a no-nonsense, older woman who spoke candidly. She had come across some media about my research and was openly unhappy that she had not been made aware of my study earlier. Having heard of her interest, I tried to make phone contact. It took several months of back and forth conversations—sometimes over the phone and other times she would just spontaneously and fleetingly drop past my office when in the area—before we confirmed a time to chat over the phone. I approached the conversation with some trepidation, but was pleasantly surprised at the ease with which it progressed.

Jeanette had *been in a farming family all [her] life*, adopting a traditional gender role: *we led a very busy life helping*. She was very involved in her children's activities and spent time caring for her grandchildren in their younger years. She continued to contribute strongly to her local community through local politics, volunteer services and fund raising: *I really haven't had time to be idle*.

Jeanette described her oldest son Samuel in glowing terms: *he was very successful [...] he was involved rurally in a lot of things. And he was considered successful by his peers and those around him*. She felt he was destined for success beyond farming as well, *if he had been allowed to be alive today*. As a young man, Jeanette described Samuel's determination: *he worked on a farm where evidently the boss was an absolute dragon [laughter]. I mean, he worked and worked and worked [...] the other guy gave up [...] But Samuel put up with it*. Jeanette also described Samuel as a skilful farmer: *he was making a great, great job of it [...] he was one of the top farmers of the district*.

While his farming success was undeniable, his marriage was not a *success* and was perceived as such from the very first day when his wife encouraged her brother to damage Samuel's car as a wedding day prank. Jeanette believes it was at this point that *he lost the trust* in

his wife. However, Jeanette felt *his honour was better than just ditching [his marriage] straight away [...] He tried to make it work. Very hard.* After several years, Samuel finally gave up trying to make things work and left the marriage, resulting in a difficult relationship with his children. Jeanette felt this defeat was unprecedented for Samuel and that he experienced a deep sense of failure.

Jeanette believed those around him did not expect Samuel to be emotionally vulnerable—*they thought he was above that, that he couldn't have cared less. But it hurt him deeply.* Although she encouraged him to *forget it, don't worry, rise above it*, she wondered whether this was the right thing to say. Jeanette's description of events suggested a sense of impotence at the whole situation: *we all used to look and think, 'oh god, what is going to happen next' and we watched by and thought 'oh help' and didn't know quite what to do with it.*

Jeanette described Samuel's death—following a declaration to his new partner that he was *best out of the way*—as a shock to most people. Yet, as one of the few people Samuel confided in, Jeanette was less surprised: *when they had said he had taken the gun and gone off with it, I knew exactly what had happened.*

Lou⁶

Lou was a passionate young woman, a farmer and mother of two small children, who had just found out she was pregnant again when we spoke. She contacted me towards the end of data collection having seen an article about my research in an industry magazine and wanted to share with me the story of her uncle's suicide less than a year earlier. While I was happy to travel the two-and-a-half hours to her home, she was content to chat on the phone. We spoke as her son

⁶ Despite the similarity to the pseudonym Louise—whose participant profile was presented earlier in this chapter—the need to stay true to the wishes of the participant when selecting their pseudonym led to a decision to keep these names in their original unchanged form.

slept and she accompanied her small daughter on a walk around the farm, visiting the ducks and chooks, and eventually ending up at the wool shed where the lambs were being marked.

A child of a fifth-generation farming family, Lou grew up on a grazing property aware that things were *pretty tough*. She described her father as *being made to go back to the farm*, something Lou felt he had *always resented*. In contrast, Lou's family farming husband Eric *has a really positive attitude [...] because he chose to farm..* With a young family, Lou's involvement in the farm work was limited, but she continued to juggle the administrative needs of the business.

The suicide of her uncle Greg completely shocked Lou. Her image of Greg as a *fun loving, easy going [...] person [...] who] never seemed to worry about all the airs and graces and [...] was always very frugal and just spent smartly* was shattered—I guess I feel like I didn't really know him. The first indication of something wrong came when Greg had a *breakdown. He couldn't do anything. He just lay there. He just kept saying 'we're doomed, we're doomed'*. The news of his long hidden financial dire straits came to light and Lou described Greg's belief that he had *let [the family] down* in an irreparable way. He couldn't bear to have to deal *with people and [talk] to them about it*. Lou believed he felt *embarrassed, even though [Lou perceived it as] a very unusual situation and it was very much out of his control*. The family rallied to support Greg. His son returned home to *help out with all the work on the farm*, and his daughter returned to live at the farm *to help and just be there*. As Lou described, Greg continued to say to his wife *'I need help, I need help, I need more help'*, and was admitted to a psychiatric facility where *he just thought, 'oh god, I can't, don't tell me this is what they think I am'*.

Lou felt that inpatient care was counterproductive for farmers like Greg: *it will make them feel worse. They are with other people who are there for other reasons [...] and here they are just trying to do the right thing in life, just make a living and feed the country and just make you feel like they are insane*. However, when Greg was discharged from hospital, he took his own life a few days later at home.

Cameron

Cameron rang me a couple of days after I had reached my data collection cut-off date. Our initial conversation was brief as his remote location, and the fact that he was out driving on the farm, meant we had a very poor mobile phone connection. I realised that the suicide of Cameron's business partner had been mentioned to me twice before, although not yet described within my research. This death seemed to capture the public's interest, due both to its unexpectedness and the prominent position the deceased held in his community. Cameron and I arranged to chat over the phone one evening the following week.

As with other participants, Cameron described a childhood that encouraged independence and a love of farm life. His own children had had less involvement in the farm, having grown up through drought—*I didn't like taking them out in that anyway. Cause the country blew away and it was terrible*—and in a far more mechanised environment: *when we were kids...there was never the tractors and all that. We have always been scared of running our kids over with tractors and trucks*. Cameron's family had a long history of farming, forming a three-generation-long partnership with another family almost a century earlier—*we have just stuck at it*. The current farming generation was based around the sons of the two families who grew up alongside each other, went to boarding school together, and eventually continued on the farming partnership. The partnership was based on *an extraordinary amount of trust* cemented by shared geographical isolation—*my wife often says you are sort of stuck with your friends when you live in this country, because there is no one else*—and a shared interest in farming.

Cameron saw no warning signs preceding his business partner Adrian's suicide five months prior to our conversation. He was quick to assume Adrian's risk-taking behaviour had led to the death. Yet, in *hindsight*, Cameron spoke of what he felt were some telling indications of Adrian's plans. Outwardly, Adrian appeared fine—*he was like a million bucks*. However,

Cameron identified patterns in Adrian's behaviour over the long term that confirmed his plan to end his own life—he *had made the decision he was going to go some time ago and he worked towards ticking all the boxes*. This involved finishing off a series of outstanding farm tasks and securing the future for his family. Cameron was perplexed about the reasons behind the suicide. While *people just automatically assume financial trouble with suicide*, he was certain this was not the case with Adrian:

It just blows me away that someone can kill themselves when, when things in a lot of ways couldn't be better [...] It really can't get much better, financially.
(Cameron)

Instead, he believed that the difficult relationship Adrian had with his father and brother, and a loss of connection between Adrian and his daughter, who had left for boarding school, may have *had a bit to do with it*, along with his excessive work schedule.

The table below (Table 5.1) provides a summary of each interview, the participant details and the nature of the death to which they were exposed.

Table 5.1: Summary of participant details

Participant pseudonym	Interview format*	Age	Gender	Deceased's pseudonym	Relationship to deceased person(s)	Cause of death	Time since death
Hickock	F	69	Male	Duckshooter	Son	Suicide	25 years
Peggy	F	49	Female	Harry	Sister	Accident	20 years
Jane	F	50	Female	Arthur	Daughter	Accident	28 years
				Virginia	Sister	Suicide	6 years
George	F	59	Male	Judd	Son	Suicide	20 years
Dorothy	F	82	Female	Ed	Ex-wife	Suicide	22 years
				Ron	Mother	Suicide	10 years
Maureen	E, P	62	Female	Donald	Sister	Accident	28 years
				Daniel	Mother	Accident	1 year
Jessica	P	40	Female	Alex	Sister	Suicide	2 years
Louise	P	28	Female	Phillip	Daughter	Suicide	12 years
Jack	F	44	Male	Fred	Brother	Suicide	25 years
Simon	F	39	Male	John	Son	Accident	1 year, 10 months
Stephanie	P	32	Female	Andrew	Daughter	Suicide	17 years
Isaac	E	62	Male	Clara	Husband	Suicide	2 years, 6 months
Karen	P	47	Female	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Paul	F	67	Male	Kath	Husband	Suicide	1 year, 6 months
Rob	F	38	Male	Anthony	Friend	Accident (3 other deaths described in interview)	8 years
Neville	F	59	Male	Trevor	Brother	Suicide	12 years
Crystal	F	44	Female	Ben	Mother	Accident	19 years
Anna	P	41	Female	Bridget	Sister-in-law to be	Suicide	20 years
Bonnie	P	39	Female	Darren	Cousin	Suicide	12 years
Eliza	P	37	Female	Ronald	Granddaughter	Suicide	12 years
Brendan	P	43	Male	Shane	Friend	Accident	29 years
Jeanette	P	75	Female	Samuel	Mother	Suicide	11 years
Lou	P	31	Female	Greg	Niece	Suicide	11 months
Cameron	P	48	Male	Adrian	Business partner	Suicide	5 months

*F=face-to-face, E=email, P=phone

Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the participants who informed this study. These were 24 individuals who self-identified as members of farming families and had previously experienced the suicide or accidental death of someone close to them.

The next three chapters present the findings of this research, comprising three main themes. The first theme—presented in Chapter 6—is ‘life, risk and death in context’. This highlights the context in which participants experience life and death, and how this shapes a set of socialised perceptions and behaviours common across the participant group. The second theme—presented in Chapter 7—is ‘making sense and moving forward after loss’. This theme demonstrates how participants’ socialised perceptions and behaviours influence their journey of grief, particularly how they make sense of the death and move on with life after a suicide or accidental death. The final theme—presented in Chapter 8—is ‘connection to place/farming’. This theme illuminates participants’ connection to the place or activity of farming as an integral part of life and how this impacts, and is impacted by, the bereavement journey.

Chapter 6: Understanding life and death within the farming context

From a social constructionist perspective, the context in which people are immersed and socialised has great bearing on how experience is shaped, perceived and understood (Patton, 2002). The relevance of this context to participants' experience of suicide and accidental death became increasingly apparent throughout the thematic analysis of the interview data gathered in this research. This chapter (Chapter 6) and the following findings chapter (Chapter 7) will highlight this influence through the presentation of a series of interconnected themes linking the farming context with perceptions of life, death and the subsequent experience of bereavement.

The data in each of the findings chapters will be presented using participants' voices followed by an analysis and discussion about how this relates to the existing literature. Within the text, participants' own words are identified through the use of *italics*. This will continue throughout the rest of the thesis, with participants identified by their pseudonym in (round brackets) at the end of each quote. Further detail on each participant has been included in a table at the end of Chapter 5 (see Table 5.1) to allow the reader to quickly refer to each participant's details.

The current chapter will present and discuss the data relative to two main themes. The first theme exposes how the farming family context influences participants' worldview in relation to life and death. This cultural norm appears different to the worldview of mainstream Western culture (but may demonstrate some similarities to other cultural groups). There were two key features spoken about by participants that contribute to this contextually situated worldview. These subthemes comprise an acceptance of risk and death, and a strong connection to place. The acceptance of risk and death was situated within a context of frequent and unsanitised exposure to

farming practices that normalised risk and desensitised the experience of death, particularly of livestock. The connection to place moved beyond a simple connection to physical land, to incorporate the people, community and activities associated with farming. The concept of connection to place will be explored further in the discussion in light of the psychoterratic theories of Albrecht (2008).

There is heightened exposure to suicide and accidental deaths within the farming family context—due to higher rates of death in both general rural and farming populations (Andersen et al., 2010; Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2007; Herde & Lower, 2011; Miller & Burns, 2008; Page & Fragar, 2002). This chapter will go on to highlight a second main theme from the data, demonstrating that—when such deaths occur—the context in which they are experienced means that these deaths are often not the worldview shattering events frequently suggested in the bereavement research to date (Currier et al., 2006). Instead, many participants were able to make sense of these events in a way that was consistent with their worldview. When such deaths occurred outside of the familiar farming context, however, this appeared to challenge participants' ability to make sense of the loss and there was a greater risk of their worldview being shattered. This second theme will be examined in the discussion relative to existing understandings of suicide and accidental death bereavement in Western culture.

Theme 1: A worldview shaped by the farming context

Throughout the analysis process it became increasingly clear that the context in which participants were immersed played a powerful role in shaping their worldview. This farming family context was complex and multifaceted and was influenced by a range of interconnected social, psychological and geographical factors. For the great majority of participants—who were born into a farming family—the influence of the farming family context was present from birth

and shaped a worldview that was both reinforced by the example of the generations that preceded them, and then communicated and demonstrated to the next generation. Peggy exemplified the development of this generationally linked worldview particularly well when describing both the influence of the example of her parents—*It's what I always saw, my parents giving and doing for others. So you just have that in you*—and her influence on shaping the worldview of her children. She described much of the impetus behind her own small family farm as being able to pass the connection to farming on to her own children. As she explained:

We have a farm. A very small farm but it is a lifestyle farm [...] we use it for lifestyle for our kids. So we have lots of bonfires in the paddocks. Lots of swimming in the dam [...] And they are skidding behind vehicles like we did. And it is just a fantastic lifestyle. And they just love it here. (Peggy)

There were two subthemes of this worldview that emerged from the data, each of which will be presented in the following sections: ‘acceptance of risk and death’ and ‘connection to place’.

Acceptance of risk and death

Participants were introduced to risk from a very young age: children contributed to the high labour demands of tasks such as shearing, lamb marking⁷, mulesing⁸ and mustering. These tasks involved close contact with unpredictable livestock in confined spaces, often while working with live vaccines, sharp tools and other dangers. Motorbikes and quad bikes were ridden—often without helmets—and the use of firearms was commonplace from a young age. Brendan exemplified this when he described his childhood access to firearms:

⁷ A process performed on young lambs involving castrating of rams, tail docking, ear tagging, and vaccination.

⁸ Cutting away wool-bearing skin from around the rear of a sheep in order to reduce fly strike.

Back then there were no gun regulations or anything. I mean, as a little kid I used to go out with a 22 [rifle], out there shooting cockies or shooting rabbits or whatever. Guns and ammunition was all just laying about, readily available I suppose. (Brendan)

Many of the tasks described in the data have previously been identified as contributing to high rates of farming-related injury (Safe Work Australia, 2013). However, as children, these tasks were not seen through a risk framework. Instead, they were perceived as enjoyable activities where everyone worked together to achieve a common goal, as Cameron described:

All our farming operations, like the shearing and that stuff, was all scheduled around holidays. We never, I never saw any of that as work. That was just all fun, you know. (Cameron)

All children were actively involved in farm tasks. Peggy far preferred farm tasks to anything available inside the home:

We were like the three boys and we were always down the paddocks together [...] I lived outside on the farm and I begrudged coming into the house. I just wanted to be on the land and outside. I was always on the farm. (Peggy)

Louise also described her active involvement in the farm tasks with her father when she was still a child:

During the holidays I would always want to be outside doing something with him rather than be in the house. Um, yeah, I guess I was his 2IC [second in charge] in the paddock. (Louise)

The freedom that came with growing up on a farm encouraged the exposure to risk. In addition to the dangers of farm work, both female and male participants described unsupervised ‘play’ from a young age involving vehicles, horses, farm dams, rivers and firearms. This was not

only limited to their childhood, but was actively encouraged in their own children in the present day. Where injury did occur, it was described as a ‘badge of honour’ to be worn with pride and to be woven into stories told with humour. Combining alcohol with other forms of risk taking (for example, while riding a motorbike without a helmet) was also considered a release, as Jessica described when relaying a story about her brother and sister:

They would quite often just cut loose and they would be free. And they would get drunk as skunks and [...] And that was their release and their, I don't know, their way of just forgetting about the whole world and just having a bit of fun. (Jessica)

Participants’ perceptions of risk and death were strongly influenced by their practical, goal-directed focus—getting the job done required taking risks. Male and female participants became accustomed to risk, injury and accidents as everyday occurrences when faced with the daily challenges of farming. Risk taking behaviour was so inherent in farming life that the danger was often unrecognised or normalised. To the contrary, the farming environment was perceived as safe and child-friendly, as opposed to the dangers and negative influences of life in a town environment. As Louise—seemingly oblivious to the risks associated with farming life—described of her own childhood and her hopes for her future children:

I wouldn't want to bring kids up in the city myself [...] Cause I think, yeah, there was never any risk of us um, you know, climbing out the window, and go and meet up with our friends and go drinking or partying when we were teenagers. Cause we were 20 kilometres from town. So, it wasn't really, you know, your parents didn't have to be policemen. (Louise)

The risks Louise perceived for kids who lived in town were unfamiliar in the farming context and consequently perceived as more dangerous.

Where participants did acknowledge risk, it was often spoken of with some level of acceptance, as though risk, injury and even death were a *fait accompli*. This was generally spoken about in the context of accidents. Preventability was less spoken about. Instead, it seemed that male and female participants accepted risk—there would always be those who died, and there was little that could (or would) be done to eliminate this. Karen spoke of the deaths of young men on rural roads as something that had come to be expected:

You know, as you are growing up, you always have the car accidents and that sort of thing. (Karen)

Cameron acknowledged the sustained presence of risk on farm when he described having insured his life against the significant possibility of an accidental farm death. As he explained:

There's plenty of dangerous stuff that goes on. It has never been beyond the realms of possibility that someone could get killed. (Cameron)

Along with this acceptance of risk came cumulative exposure to death—most often from birth—while working with livestock, maintaining animal husbandry practices, adopting pest reduction practices and producing your own food. Participants described a sense of acclimatisation to death through a process of repeated exposure. As Isaac explained:

I feel reasonably well balanced as far as death and dying go. I attribute that [...] to the fact that I have had livestock around me and as a general rule, if you have livestock, you also have dead stock for a variety of reasons. The complaint now is that we seem to be developing a generation which does not know where meat or milk comes from, except from the supermarket, but they are also completely separated from birth and death as natural processes. (Isaac)

The repeating cycle of life, with death being a critical part of this, surrounded participants while living and working on a family farm. These processes were un-sanitised and viewed simply

as another task on the family farm. In many ways, participants portrayed an expectation of, and a sense of preparedness for, life and for death. Risk, life and death were everyday reality within the farming family worldview, an accepted part of getting the job done. This sense of preparedness for death in the expected order of farming life went on to shape participants' acceptance of death when it occurred outside of this 'expected' order, particularly when it occurred in a familiar context where the worldview remained unchallenged. The way in which participants demonstrated an expected death is different to that which is normalised in mainstream Australian society, where dying at old age is the expected norm. Rather than being the natural order of everyday life that participants were familiar with—occurring in the natural order of survival of the fittest at any stage of the lifecycle—death in mainstream Australia is expected when it comes as an end to a long and full life.

Connection to place

The second subtheme contributing to the worldview shaped by the farming family context was one of connection to place. This connection included an element of geographic location, while also incorporating the activity of farming, the immediate social network and the broader community. In this way, connection to place was represented by a network of interconnected elements.

Geographic location

Being immersed in an environment that entwines elements of both work and living meant that participants developed a strong bond with the geographic location and the tangibility of the family farm itself. Peggy described a therapeutic bond to the family farm, a geographic location that she could return to periodically for emotional solace. This was particularly important while she was living and working away in a major city. As she described:

I'd come home and then I'd have to go out around the farm. I would usually ride my horse around. I had to do that. Just to get around the farm. Yeah. I needed that dose. (Peggy)

Even those who were no longer living on the original family farm continued to nurture a connection to place or farming. This could be a move to a rural subdivision that continued to allow them to have a small number of livestock, or a garden containing plants transplanted from the original farm garden. Even Dorothy—who lived in a rural town on a suburban-sized block—kept two chickens in her backyard to remind her of the farm and stop her from going *crackers*.

Paul anticipated a bleak future if he was ever forced to leave his rural property. His therapeutic connection to home provided:

a bit of an anchor for me. Cause I just love nature, love the quiet, solitude. (Paul)

One of Paul's greatest fears was having to leave his property. This fear first surfaced when he and his wife were experiencing marital problems while she battled with poor mental health prior to her suicide. As he explained:

The biggest thing with me was that if we were going to break up and I was going to have to leave here and spend my, the rest of life in some little place somewhere. Away from my workshop. Away from this. I mean my whole life, my whole being, lifestyle is going to change. Do I want that? No I don't. I would rather be dead. (Paul)

For these participants, a particular geographic location was an important element of connection to place and influenced how they perceived their world.

Connection to the activity of farming

While the particular location contributed to the connection to place for some participants, this connection often stretched beyond a particular location to encompass a broader connection to the activity of farming. Simon explained this about his father:

There was nothing else that he ever wanted to do. Dad really didn't have any other outside interests [...] the farm was it and a bit and all he ever wanted to do [...] For the last 20 years I suppose, there was an element of perhaps geographic location of the farm. And the notion that his parents started there and he built it up over time what they started. There was certainly an element of that involved. But it was also farming per se. [...He] always had just a strong connection with farming and the land. (Simon)

This element of connection to place—while often very strong—was sometimes difficult for participants to clearly elucidate. While the activity of farming itself was physical, participants' connection to it was on a deeper emotional level. Rob tried to explain this when explaining why he had chosen to continue farming rather than pursue a career as a carpenter, for which he was trained. As he struggled to explain:

It [farming] is just is one of those things if it gets you, it gets you [...] I don't really know what it is. It's not the lifestyle [...] It's more than that. Um, whether it's, when you have grown up with it, I don't know—it's not that you appreciate it, you accept it I suppose. (Rob)

Participants rarely described looking beyond farming to other lifestyle and employment possibilities. In contrast, farming was most often described as an integral part of life. Lou described farming as *all [her husband] wanted to do*. Stephanie summarised her father's connection to farming as his *heart and soul*. Similarly, Jessica described her brother's bond with

farming as *everything to him*. Farming, as an occupation and a way of life, was described as an integral element of connection to place by these participants.

Connection to immediate social network

Connection to place was also found through a connection to the immediate social network. This network—whether family or close friendship—represented shared experiences and interests and a sense of unspoken support and security. It was generally unnecessary to ask for help within this network. Instead, there was an underlying assumption of a united effort to face any challenges set before them. Louise described this in the context of her own family, explaining that life in a farming family depended on the whole family pulling together—including children—to get the job done:

It's not Mum and Dad working and the kids at home playing. It's a whole, whole family effort [...] You know, the fact that we had chores and jobs to do. (Louise)

Dorothy described a similar team effort to family farming, working hard together with the aim of achieving common goals. As she explained:

I used to work hard on the farm. Phew. It was nothing for me to walk miles with cattle. I didn't mind it. I quite enjoyed it. Cause it was all hopefully going in the same pot. (Dorothy)

For Peggy, the combined efforts of her and her husband made facing challenges manageable. Working together to achieve goals and manage challenges was something deeply embedded in her worldview. As she explained:

I don't know if that's how we were brought up or what. But it is just that feeling still in me now. Oh, we will be right. We will manage. We will manage. We will

work at, and you and your partner manage together. So, the two of you. We often think, if we do that and you do that and I will do that, we will manage. (Peggy)

At different life stages, this immediate social support came in different forms. During the teenage years, participants often found support from boarding school peers. While Brendan sometimes found his early childhood a lonely experience—with his much older siblings away at school—he found a substitute support network during his early boarding school years. As he explained:

I had three older sisters [...] They all went away to boarding school. Um, and so I found well, most of my childhood that I can really remember was just being alone on the farm. And then in 1984 I actually went away to boarding school myself [...] That was really good because you were always surrounded by a lot of mates and that sort of thing. We used to come home on ex weekends. Always bring friends home. You know, things were really good. (Brendan)

Stephanie also described a strong peer support network developed at boarding school, providing her with a sense of stability and shared understanding:

School was fantastic. Like I went to college in [town] and they were brilliant, you know. Everyone was. Because I guess I was in a boarding house, I had already formed a really good group of friends and had a really good group of friends who were really supportive. (Stephanie)

The support network developed at boarding school could be carried forward in to the next stage of adult life, as Louise explained:

I wasn't a boarder but I was at a boarding school, an all girls' school. You become so close to those people [...] You go from being a kid at Grade 7 to almost being an adult. And the people you go through that with, you know, you are really, really

close to. And a group of us get together now [ten years later]. It's like we never left. (Louise)

At other stages of life, participants' immediate networks drew on other sources of support. The support of this immediate network was frequently unspoken and relied on a bond of mutual understanding and a combined focus. Hickock described varying sources of support within the different stages and facets of his family farming life:

My father, we sort of, we had 30 years of history about running this farm and you talked about all these things [...] I mean I probably didn't talk to him about my children a lot. I mean, I talked to my wife about the children. But the farming, and the duck shooting. (Hickock)

For Hickock, his father was his 'farming' support, whereas his wife was his support network when it came to raising the family. This blended network encompassed the multiple generations frequently present in family farming, drawing on a range of shared experiences and interests, and providing differing types of support depending on the demands of the challenge at hand.

A loss or significant change to the immediate support network could have a significant impact on participants' lives. As Hickock explained:

Well, all of a sudden, you don't have that person with their intimate knowledge of your life to talk to. (Hickock)

Without the presence of his father, Hickock found he had to develop a new style of relationship with his wife, relying on her support where—in the past—he would have looked to his father. As he explained:

And so, you don't have that sort of relationship anymore, that you have got to go and broaden the other one [...] So you suddenly become much more reliant on your own partner, don't you? (Hickock)

Stephanie described feeling a loss of shared knowledge and support when she left the immediate social network of boarding school for the relative anonymity of university in a big city:

Things did fall apart for me I think, when I went off to university. And I lost that really stable kind of, you know, that boarding school [where] everyone knew what had happened, everyone knew my story. I didn't have to tell it to anyone. And I had that really safe environment. And then I went away to uni, to college. And it was like I had to start all over again. (Stephanie)

A breach of the trust and reliability underpinning the immediate support network bonds was viewed very seriously. When Rob felt let down by his father during the succession arrangements on the family farm, he felt used, let down and cheated by his father. As a result, he severed his ties with the farm and his family. As he explained:

I am the oldest son of a fourth generation [farming family]. I'd have been fourth generation. Well I was fourth generation I suppose. I walked away. [My father] basically retired but didn't really tell anyone he was retiring. And left me with 100% of the labour [...] I did all the books, all the budget work, all that sort of stuff. All the taxation stuff. All that, he didn't do any of that. Didn't take any of that burden off me or anything like that. (Rob)

There was an unspoken expectation and understanding that these bonds would be reliably upheld and, where this was not the case, participants spoke of fractures in the immediate network. Neville explained his decision to never speak to his brother again when he felt betrayed by his dishonesty towards him. Neville relayed a story about his father handing him control of an unviable section of the family farm, trying to convince him that all the land needed was more fertiliser. When his brother sided with his father against him, Neville vowed never to speak with his brother again. As he explained:

It was a game. He [Neville's father] wanted his farm down the road and I was to have this farm up here. All I would need to do was crop it and put more fertiliser into it. Well I am not stupid. I wasn't going to have a bar of it. What the rotten bugger [his brother] did was he ganged up with him [...] I thought you lying bastard. I just thought that, I didn't say it. And I never spoke to him again.

(Neville)

Participants placed high value on the trust, reliability and support of immediate social networks where significant consequences occurred if these were lost, damaged or undermined.

Connection to the broader community

The social element of connection to place as part of a farming family was more than just the immediate support network. This connection expanded to include the broader farming population. Participants' connection to the broader community emanated out of a need for small communities to rally together to get things done. As Karen explained of her own small town upbringing:

I enjoy being part of my community, because that's who I am. That's who I have been brought up to be [...] The town where I am from has about 60 people. When they have an event or something like that, everybody did it. Everybody had to be involved. (Karen)

This element of connection to place contributed to a worldview of looking beyond your own immediate needs to the needs of other individuals and the broader community. Peggy described developing this worldview while growing up and observing the actions of her parents. As she explained:

I have had the rural community life. So I have watched my parents, I have watched my mother cook and cook and cook and cook and take food right around the district for years. And she still does [...] It wasn't just always deaths. It was difficulties, and Mum was in the kitchen. And that was her way of everything. Whereas Dad's way with the fires, or if someone had a sore back. Dad and those guys used to get teams together [...] So, it's what I always saw my parents giving and doing for others. So you just have that in you. (Peggy)

Jack also spoke of the need to put other's needs before your own as being an important and valued part of his upbringing on the family farm:

[There was] a built in responsibility that our family had been brought up with: always look after someone who can't look after themselves. So look out for others instead of just being worried about yourself. (Jack)

The connection with the broader community was one demonstrated by example and passed down through the generations. Just as Jack had learnt these values during his childhood, he endeavoured to instil this worldview in his own children. As he explained:

I am happy to put the kids through Catholic school and belt a bit of religion into them. But I would much rather them see me stop and pick up a hitch-hiker and bring them home and give them a feed and a bed and send them on their way tomorrow than sit in front row at church and talk about being a good bloke. Um, so acting and living in an honourable way to help other people, not just yourself. (Jack)

In demonstrating this example for his children, Jack emphasised the active nature of this connection to the broader community. Once again, the underlying purpose of this connection

emanated from the purposeful need to get the job done. Good intention was one thing, but the real value was in taking action to achieve a task or conquer a challenging situation.

Remaining in rural farming communities—even when the family farm had been sold—provided participants with a continuing ability to instil a sense of connection to the broader farming community within the next generation. Bonnie described the importance of maintaining connection with the farming community when they sold the family farm and had to choose a new place to live. While the farming environment provided her husband with the security of employment, their decision to remain a part of the rural farming community was also due to the added benefits for her children. As highlighted in the previous subtheme (acceptance of risk and death), a rural farming community was seen as a ‘safe’ place in which to raise children. Bonnie’s statements expanded on this to include the broader farming community as providing her children a sense of place and belonging. As she explained:

We stayed here because this was where the work was and we wanted to bring our children up in a rural environment [...] We are thankful that we did make that decision. [Had we left], we would have lost the country lifestyle. And our children being part of the community and knowing lots of people. We would have lost a lot of our history here [...] We have educated our children on who owns what farm, who used to live there, what the history of [the area] was. (Bonnie)

Bonnie’s story demonstrated that connection to the broader community meant not only the people around you, but also the people who had come before you and the people who were still to come. ‘Community’ encompassed a multitude of generations, past and future.

The broader farming community provided not only a sense of history and social connection, but also a vital source of knowledge and support in the face of challenges. While rarely actively asking for help, participants were able to draw on the shared knowledge and

expertise and the shared experiences of their community in order to get the job done. Rob, while not a *big seeker of help from outside*, still described the tendency to share ideas among his farming mates. As he explained:

You see them [farming mates] as an equal, who have a few ideas about stuff maybe [...] Do you reckon this would work? Have you done something? And that's usually when I am going to them, when they've done, it might not be the exact same thing that I am looking at, but they've something in a similar vein. (Rob)

Karen spoke in a similar way. While she was quick to avoid seeking help on personal issues such as her own health—I have a tendency of not going to the doctor—she highly valued the support, experience and knowledge of her peers in the farming community and recognised this as being key to the survival of her family's farming business in a period of drought. As she explained:

They [a group of farming peers] were the first people I went to when we were in strife. And they were fantastic to me [...] They were people that are, you know, they are experienced. They are on the farm, so they understand. They understand what you are going through. And we have had a long relationship. (Karen)

Participants often described the connection to, and support of, the broader community as something that was built up over a long period. As George explained of the relationships he most valued within his community:

I put faith in people I've had experience with and they have been good [...] some I have had experience with that's given me good advice or I have built a trust over a long time. (George)

Connections were built up over multiple generations, with connection to the broader community also being 'inherited' from previous generations. Stephanie described this in relation

to the support she received in running the farming business. These relationships had been built up over time, from years before when her mother had been running the farm. The services these people provided was complimented by the strength of the relationship Stephanie had with these people. As she described:

We have got a lot of really supportive friends. And a really good network of you know, different people. And Mum's friends too, that we can call on. She has got a really good network as well. (Stephanie)

The strength of connection to place—with it's combination of elements—gave participants a willingness to endure the constant challenges posed by farming life, as well as the strength and support to face them. The connection to the place and activity of farming, and the immediate and broader social network, was a valued and necessary element in meeting the demands of family farming life.

Theme 2: How suicide or accidental death impacts participants' worldview

The first theme extracted from the data presented a worldview situated within the farming family context. This second theme explores the effect of exposure to suicide or accidental death on the preservation of this worldview. The persistent search for meaning and explanation is believed to be common for those bereaved by sudden, violent or traumatic deaths (Currier et al., 2006; Holland et al., 2006). When faced with suicide and/or accidental death, participants frequently demonstrated a need to understand and explain the death in a way that fit with their worldview. In exploring how this meaning making process impacted participants' worldview, two subthemes were identified. The first subtheme explains how many participants were able to rapidly make sense of the death in a way that allowed their worldview to remain intact, eliminating the persistent and ongoing need to ask why? In contrast, the second subtheme

highlights how—when death occurred outside of the familiar farming context—there was a greater potential for participants’ worldview to be shattered.

When my worldview remains unthreatened

When death occurred in the familiar context of family farming, many participants were able to make sense of the death in a way that allowed their worldview to remain intact. An acceptance of risk and death and the importance of connection to place continued to underpin these participants’ efforts at meaning making.

Given the inherent acceptance of risk and injury on family farms, accidental death was instinctively perceived as the likely, and acceptable, cause of death when participants learned of an unexpected death of someone close to them. This made sense to them in the context of family farming. Consequently, some suicide deaths were initially assumed by participants to have been caused by an accident, rather than self-inflicted. When Stephanie first heard that her father had died, she immediately assumed an accidental cause. As she explained:

When they told me that he died, that he had been shot, I thought he had just been shooting a rabbit and that it had been an accident. Like that was my first thought. That he must have been rabbit shooting and he got shot. (Stephanie)

Cameron came to a similar rapid conclusion, knowing that his business partner frequently drove around the farm on the motorbike without a helmet:

I never thought for a minute that he would have killed himself. I thought, he was dangerous on a motorbike, and I thought he has come off his bike or done this or done that. (Cameron)

For participants, there was a sense of familiarity associated with an accident. As highlighted by Theme 1, risk on farms was everywhere, an inherent part of the farming context.

The acceptance of risk meant that this cause of death was to be expected and less likely to be seen as preventable. Making an assumption of accidental death allowed for these participants to make sense of the death in a way that maintained the integrity of their worldview. For Stephanie and Cameron, however, their assumption of an accidental death was incorrect. Suicide was the cause of death in both of these situations. On learning of suicide as the cause of death, however, both Stephanie and Cameron were still able to make sense of the death in a way that preserved their worldview. These participants were able to understand the death as resulting from a loss of connection to place. As Stephanie described:

There are so many factors that are involved with the farm, I guess. That led to him ultimately taking his life [...] He always had the dream of farming with his brothers [...] The long and the short of it is that the older brother ended up with all of the farm [...] And so that was a big factor in his, it was one of the final straws when he realised that that was never going to happen [...] They were actually going to sell the farm, just before Dad died. And I think that was one of the final triggers as well. (Stephanie)

Stephanie only learned of her father's depression after his death; she had never noticed it and it had never been spoken about before. Given the relative lack of effect of the depression on the perception Stephanie had of her father, she drew more heavily on her father's loss of connection to place in making sense his death. She perceived her father as losing his connection to the physical site of family farming as well as his brothers—an integral part of his immediate social network. Stephanie was able to understand her father's suicide death in a way that was both supported by, and supportive of, her worldview. As she explained:

I was able to accept why it had happened and never blamed Dad and never kind of, never had any of those ideas like: 'What a coward he was' and 'Why did he leave

us' and anything like that [...] I was able to kind of comprehend it I think.

(Stephanie)

Cameron, when we spoke only a few months after his business partner Adrian's suicide death, drew on his understanding of the need to remain connected with the immediate support network. Having grown up and worked together for many years in a two-family farming partnership, Cameron was amazed that Adrian could take his own life in a time of such prosperity. In hindsight, however, he looked back and described two key elements that he believed contributed to Adrian's decision to take his own life: his relationship with his father and brother, and the recent loss of his daughter to boarding school. Each of these related to connection to place. As Cameron explained about Adrian's relationship with his brother and father:

Adrian could be the biggest bastard to his younger brother and his father [...] as in, just treat them like dirt [...] I figure he must have just hated himself for what he had done every day, to his brother and his father [...] I think he spent his life running from this other person, you know? This guy that came out and treated his father like shit and his brother like shit. (Cameron)

He also spoke about the impact of Adrian's daughter leaving home:

[His daughter] had gone to boarding school about 2 weeks before. And I kind of think that had a bit to do with it. Because she was like his right hand man. Do you know what I mean? I am sure it's a bit of a struggle, not that I have got there yet, when your last child leaves, I am sure it's a bit of a struggle for some people. Um, which I think it was for him. (Cameron)

Cameron perceived the loss and damage to Adrian's immediate support network to be too great a burden for him to bear, no matter how prosperous the farming business was at the time.

Despite his wife's long-term battle with diagnosed mental illness, Paul made sense of her suicide death relative to her loss of connection to her immediate social network. He described her increasing wellness as providing her with a sense of clarity about how much damage she had caused to her family relationships. As he explained:

Towards the end of Kath's life, she was saying to the girls, she was saying I am beginning to remember, I have ruined this family. So it was negative, a realisation that she had never said before. And I believe that that dawning did come over her and it pushed her over the edge. (Paul)

Jeanette drew on her son Samuel's loss of connection with both his immediate social network and his broader farming community network in making sense of his suicide death. She described an acrimonious marriage break-up as resulting in Samuel having his children *turned against him*. Although Jeanette described Samuel as a highly successful farmer, he could not succeed in building a relationship with his children. As she described:

He was usually able to succeed in what he did. But he could not succeed with the children turning against him. And he had a nightmare with them [...] Everything he tried to do, it was turned the other way. So, he felt he failed I think, in that way. Totally failed. And that's why he is not here today. (Jeanette)

Contributing further to Samuel's decision to end his life was his loss of connection to the broader community. Jeanette described his divorce as resulting in people taking sides and Samuel losing several friendships:

[The town] turned against him. His peers, his age group [...] He talked about so-and-so doesn't care for me. Half of the district doesn't care for me. You know, they have all got me in the gun because I have done the wrong thing by doing what I have done. (Jeanette)

Jessica perceived her brother's suicide death as the outcome of an assault on both his immediate social network and his connection to the activity of farming. With his wife and children gone, and his ability to continue farming independently under serious threat following his motorbike accident, Jessica perceived her brother's decision to take his own life as something that made sense from her worldview:

I get, I get it. And, you know, if he can't manage his farm, what else did he have? What else would have kept him alive? If his two loves were his family and his farm. So it just, for me it just, um, not that he was a hero or anything. But it just makes sense to me. (Jessica)

Jessica described this reaction as an immediate response on hearing of Alex's suicide death. Not only did she see his ability to contribute effectively to keeping his farm going as greatly restricted by a head injury, she also recognised that he had lost his immediate support network in the break-up of his marriage. As she explained:

They were just the first things that came into my head. It wasn't the, um, there was no 'Oh, no, why?' and things. It was sort of like a sigh [big exhale]. He was so peaceful now. He doesn't have to worry. [That was] the gut feeling that I had straight away. (Jessica)

Eliza also drew on her grandfather's loss of connection to the activity of farming following a farming accident as a contributing factor to his suicide death. Having sustained a serious leg injury, he was no longer able to farm and was predominantly housebound, despite Eliza's efforts at trying to keep him engaged. As she explained:

He sort of was not able to do a whole lot. So it was mostly just sit inside and talk. Occasionally we would go for a drive in the ute around the property. Look at the grass. Look at the green. He liked looking at grass. (Eliza)

Hickock was another participant who rapidly made sense of his father's suicide death and was able to accept his father's decision to take his own life in a way that was consistent with his worldview. He described his father, Duckshooter, as blind, deaf and struggling with incontinence, resulting in his inability to continue contributing to the running of the family farm. Compounding this was the fact that Duckshooter no longer had the responsibility of caring for his wife, as she had recently entered a nursing home. In this way, Hickock made sense of the death by recognising his father's loss of connection to his support network and to the activity of farming.

Jane saw one of the contributing factors to her sister Virginia's suicide death as being her loss of connection to the farm in the months prior to her death. Until that time, Jane had described the farm as a place that enhanced Virginia's mental wellbeing, providing her with therapeutic benefit when she was struggling with her depression:

The farm was the one place she really always loved to come home to [...] It had always been a really good place for her. She kept saying, whenever they put her in hospital, she would say 'I need to be home, I need to be there' [...] She would say 'the only place I can get better, the place I need to be is at home on the farm'.

(Jane)

With the devastation from drought and insect plagues, however, Jane believed the poor state of the farm contributed to Virginia's deepening depression and her ultimate decision to take her own life. The place that Jane associated with their *dream childhood* had never looked worse and Jane couldn't help but think this had some bearing on her sister's death. As she described:

It was a shocking summer. It was hot and we had not a blade of grass anywhere. The dam had been empty for two years. There was no water. Normally, when we had grown up, always in this beautiful lush garden, lovely spot. And yet, that particular year, it was like, and then, and then we had had a bloody grass hopper

plague had come through. Stripped everything off the, even the roses, even the jolly lemon tree. They stripped everything. So, honestly, the place had never looked worse. And I always thought, 'Oh Virginia', you know, if we could have got through that summer and got to when we had finally got some rain and things had looked better, maybe she would have felt better. (Jane)

These participants were able to make sense of their loss in a way that preserved their worldview. Accidents were to be expected and there was a level of preparedness for such loss. Understanding death as the result of a damaged connection to place—whether with the activity or place of farming, or with the immediate or broader social network—was also understandable. This connection was seen as a key component of the farming context and to be without it was a huge psychological loss.

The threat of a shattered worldview

In contrast to the previous subtheme, when death happened outside of the familiar farming context, there was greater potential for participants' worldview to be shattered. Outside of this familiar context, participants were without a referential framework within which to understand and make sense of the death. When Peggy learnt of her brother's presumed drowning death while he was on an overseas trip, she struggled to make sense of this. The accident did not happen within the farming context where risk was expected and accepted. Nor could she make sense of the death relative to a loss of connection to place. This shattered her worldview. Peggy described a conversation she had with her deceased brother some months after his death when her marriage was breaking down. Her own death would have made sense in her worldview—as she saw her own immediate support network as crumbling—but not that of her brother. As she recounted:

I remember on my 30th birthday, which was the next birthday I had. Screaming at the grave, saying: 'What have you done? Why have you done this? My god, I am

the one who should be dead, not you [speaking loudly]'. Cause I was having problems with my marriage and everything. And I was thinking: 'Why? Why? You did this and if anyone had to go it was me [speaking loudly]'. (Peggy)

In contrast to Peggy, while Maureen also described the drowning of her son in similarly unknown circumstances to Peggy's brother, she did not demonstrate a shattered worldview. Perhaps this was because she was able to understand her son's death within a similar contextual framework to that of a farming accident. Maureen described her son's lifestyle as being an inherently risky one. This commenced with his years in the military as a Special Forces clearance diver and was followed by his training as a free diver. As she explained:

As he had been a Navy clearance diver he loved diving but was keen to do it without using air so was learning to Freedive. This is a very dangerous thing to do. (Maureen)

Maureen also described Daniel's connection to this role as similarly intense as other participants described those involved in farming. His role in the navy was one Daniel had been determined to do since his teenage years and he had made considerable efforts and personal sacrifices to achieve this. He demonstrated a strong connection to his role as a military diver. As she explained:

When Daniel was first accepted for the Navy we had real doubts that he would cope but having made up his mind he did very well [...] He had always joined the navy to be a Clearance Diver but it took a long time to persuade the powers that be. He persisted and eventually was allowed to do the application test. (Maureen)

Because of this understanding and acceptance of risk, and perception of a strong connection to the activity of diving, the death—although outside of the referential farming context—remained consistent with Maureen's worldview. The referential framework with which Maureen made

sense of this death was synergistic with the farming context and hence, complimentary to her worldview.

While Peggy's experience of the loss of her brother in an overseas drowning accident identified a literal example of a death occurring outside of the family farming context, this was exemplified in the data in a more figurative sense also. Jack struggled to make sense of his young brother's suicide death. His worldview was shattered when he perceived the reasons for Fred's death as counter to what he believed about the farming context. As he explained:

And Fred got into strife cause he belted up some kid that was three years older than him for picking on a little kid. He thought it was wrong [...] he ended up in trouble and, um, there was a couple of events like that where, in our family, he had done nothing wrong. He had done everything right. He had seen something that wasn't right. It was a kid being bullied at school and he had sorted it out. Looked after the kid and then the system crunched on him [...] He had brilliant people skills [...] He was getting harped on at school but he could relate to anyone. And he would help anyone out [...] So that was the brother I knew. And I was very proud of him. (Jack)

Jack saw Fred's actions as demonstrating a very strong connection to people and community. His behaviour in looking out for others, and looking beyond his own needs, was exactly what fit with Jack's own worldview. That such behaviour contributed to his decision to take his own life made no sense to Jack, thus shattering his worldview. While this had a dramatic impact on Jack's life, the experience of a suicide or accidental death making no sense and, consequently, having an effect of shattering participants' worldview, was a rare occurrence within this sample.

Discussion

The themes around the farming context extracted from the data challenge the general understanding of suicide and accidental death as deaths that are likely to shatter the bereaved person's worldview. Conceived as 'violent' or 'traumatic' losses, these deaths have previously been thought to 'undermine survivors' fundamental beliefs about themselves and their larger world' (Currier et al., 2006, p. 403), and result in a higher likelihood of patterns of complicated grief (Keese et al., 2008). For many participants in this sample, however, making sense of the death was achieved through relating the underlying circumstances of the death to the family-farming context within which they were inherently familiar. In such cases, participants were able to incorporate this into their existing worldview and maintain the integrity of their fundamental beliefs.

The theme of frequent exposure to, and acceptance of life, risk and death, demonstrated that farming-related accidental deaths were not always unexpected in the farming family context, as they are often explained as being in mainstream Australia (Breen, 2006). In fact, accidental deaths were so expected that, at times, this was the immediately (if incorrectly) assumed cause when a participant learned of a sudden death, as with Stephanie and Cameron, even though the deaths were self inflicted. In many respects, participants demonstrated a significant degree of preparedness for such deaths. This concept of preparedness has been discussed previously in the literature in the context of suicide. Maple and colleagues (2007) identified that parents who anticipated the suicide death of their child were able to make sense of the death—as unwelcome as it may have been—in a way that was consistent with their worldview. Preparedness has not, however, been discussed previously in relation to accidental death, most likely given the assumption that accidental deaths—by their very nature—are unexpected events. The closest parallel to be drawn with preparedness in the literature regarding accidental farming deaths is the

fatalism associated with a strong religious belief discussed in the North American literature (Donham & Thelin, 2006; Robertson et al., 2006). However, while this may explain an acceptance of death, this belief does not necessarily translate to preparedness.

Similar to accidental death, many participants in this research demonstrated an ability to make sense of suicide death in a way that did not challenge their worldview. They frequently did so by making sense of the death within the farming family context of connection to place, describing suicide death as understandable given its attribution to a disconnection from place. Some participants—like Paul and Cameron—made sense of suicide as a disconnection from the immediate social network. For others—like Jeanette—this disconnection was understood to be from both the immediate social network and the broader community network. Several participants, including Eliza described understanding suicide as an outcome of disconnection from farming. More frequently—as with Stephanie, Jessica and Hickock—there was a combination of social and farming elements of connection to place that participants drew on to make sense of suicide death. While not anticipating the death, these participants were rapidly able to accommodate the death within a worldview shaped by the farming context where connection to place was of significant importance. In doing so, these participants were not beset by the persistent ruminating about ‘why?’ the death occurred, as is often highlighted in the suicide grief literature (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011c).

The evidence of preparedness for accidental death identified within this farming family sample has ramifications for how bereavement is understood in the broader population. This suggests it cannot be assumed that all accidental deaths—and, for that matter, all suicide deaths—will be understood and experienced similarly. In the broader Australian population, bereavement following accidental death does not demonstrate this preparedness (Breen, 2006). On the contrary, death is ‘expected’ when it happens in old age, hopefully after a long and full life. In this society, death is seen as intrusion—an ending of life—not as a part of it. Death is ‘expected’ when it

happens to an elderly grandparent, not when it happens to a child or someone considered in the prime of middle age. There is a sense of injustice associated with death when it occurs outside of old age.

Death and life are treated in distinctly different ways in the broader Australian society. As part of the many commonly observed social rituals in the broader population, including birthdays and Christmas celebrations, it is life that is commemorated. When we hear of a new birth, we send gifts and celebratory messages of congratulations. Living a long life (in former colonial countries) is celebrated—reaching the age of 100 results in a congratulatory telegram from the Queen—regardless of the quality of life being lived. Death, on the other hand, is often feared and an event to be postponed for as long as possible. In Australia, our understandings of health are focused on prolonging and extending life. Anything deemed to end a life by choice—whether that be via abortion, euthanasia or suicide—is shrouded in controversy and morally laden argument.

There is a sense of foreboding about the end of life. The topic of death is one regularly avoided in conversation, to such a degree that the result has been a proliferation in the popular media of ‘how to’ guidelines and instruction on raising a conversation about death (The Conversation, 2015). This perpetuates the belief that death is a difficult and unusual concept. In contrast to our celebration of life, when we hear of a death we send messages of condolence, we share in people’s sorrow, although often at a distance. When a death occurs, the focus of the funeral ritual tends still to be on remembering the life of the deceased, rather than commemorating the death.

Across much of Australian society, the tangible is highly valued. We constantly strive to understand what is knowable. While life is lived out in full view, death remains a mystery. What comes after life is left to the imagination and the generation of myths, folklore and religious dogma. We make attempts to account for death and what this may involve; yet within our society

and our way of knowing, our understanding of death remains elusive. The fear of this unknown prevails.

The socially-constructed understandings of death in the broader Australian society are quite different to those developed within the farming context where death is an expected part of the life cycle. In livestock farming, a stillborn lamb in a set of triplets corresponds to a greater chance of survival for those remaining. Culling of infertile ewes ensures the viability of the flock in future seasons. Survival of the fittest is very much in evidence. In cropping, it is only towards the end of life that the valuable seed can be harvested from crops such as canola, wheat and barley. Death has value in this context. For most farming families, the butchering and consumption of their own livestock provides them with food and income. Death is an accepted and necessary part of life. Within the farming context, therefore, suicide and accidental death are experienced from a very different foundation of understanding to many in the broader Australian population.

The data presented reinforces the need to recognise differences in bereavement following suicide and accidental death due not only to individual differences, but also to differences in the context in which such death is experienced and understood. Canetto and Lester (1998) describe the explanation of suicidal behaviour as, in itself, a social construction. The data from this research support this explanation. The way in which participants understood and made sense of death, situated within a contextually shaped worldview, reflects the very core of social constructionism—that knowledge is constructed, developed and transmitted in and out of interaction with human beings and their world (Crotty, 1998). Acknowledging this, death cannot be described, understood or experienced in isolation from the social world and the individual experiencing it.

What is also of particular interest in this research is the concept of connection to place and how it influences participants' understanding of death in the farming context. Within the existing

body of literature, environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht theorises on the strength of the connection with the physical landscape and sheds light on the possible distress resulting from damage to this connection (Albrecht, 2005; Albrecht, 2008; Albrecht, 2010; Albrecht et al., 2007).

This theory includes the concept of psychoterratic illness:

Psychoterratic illness arises from a negative relationship to our home environment [...] The negative relationship involves a loss of identity, loss of an endemic sense of place and a decline in wellbeing. Conversely, an enduring and positive relationship to a loved home environment delivers the benefits of a strong endemic sense of place and enhanced well-being (Albrecht, 2010, p. 217).

Within this broader concept of psychoterratic illness, Albrecht describes ‘solastalgia’ as originally emanating from people’s witnessing of the environmental damage caused by mining and power production in New South Wales. The word has its origins in the concepts of solace—connected to the provision of comfort when faced with distressing events—and desolation, associated with the concepts of loneliness and abandonment (Albrecht, 2005). The term solastalgia was used to explain the loss of solace or comfort that individuals living in these areas of New South Wales were experiencing as they witnessed the damage to their environment. Although still technically ‘at home’, ‘[s]olastalgia is the pain or sickness caused by the loss or lack of solace and the sense of desolation connected to the present state of one’s home and territory’ (Albrecht, 2008). Albrecht (2005) suggests that solastalgia results in a profound sense of isolation and lack of control over the source of distress. This reflects the experiences described by some participants in this thesis. While solastalgia can lead to generalised distress, it can also ‘escalate into much more serious health and medical problems such as drug abuse, physical illness and mental illness (depression, suicide)’ (Albrecht, 2005, p. 46). The most poignant moments of solastalgia are believed to occur when individuals experience the negative transformation of a loved environment, an environment that was often tied up with family and history (Albrecht,

2005). This theory sheds an interesting light on how some participants came to make sense of suicide death, in particular. Jane's understanding of her sister's suicide death provides a strong example of solastalgia. In drawing on the damage to the family farm wrought by drought and insects as a contributing factor to Virginia's decision to take her own life, Jane drew this connection between the physical environment and psychological distress. Yet, a damaged connection to the physical environment was not the only way in which participants came to perceive the link between suicide and place.

This research expands our understandings of connection to place for farming families beyond one only of connection to the physical land itself (as Albrecht described). The thematically-analysed data described in this research demonstrates that connection to place expands to also include connection to the people, community and activities of farming. This broader concept of connection to place frequently predated the birth of participants—as was reflected in the associations developed over numerous generations—and resulted in a rich source of history. This connection to place provided a place for people to live and raise their families in conditions where home and work were closely entwined, forming a bond that encompassed so many elements of life. Not only did this connection provide a home, a source of food and income, a means of ongoing financial security and a legacy to pass on to further generations, it also encouraged a worldview where life is perceived as being about something bigger than themselves.

As highlighted earlier in this section, participants drew on a broader understanding of connection to place in order to make sense of suicide death. The expanded understanding of connection to place developed in this research has a bearing on how suicide risk is understood within rural farming communities, suggesting the necessity to look beyond a connection to the physical farming environment and include the activity of farming and the immediate and broader social network in which this activity takes place. Participants frequently described suicide as an outcome of these additional elements of connection to place. Stephanie described her father's

choice to die as one that was heavily influenced by the breakdown of his relationship with his brothers. This immediate network of support provided unspoken support and unity as well as shared knowledge, experience and history. Without this, people were exposed to the necessity of having to actively seek help from outside, something that was unfamiliar. Paul made sense of his wife's decision to suicide as an outcome of her damaged connection with the family. Not only did he describe Kath's recognition of the loss of connection, but also the guilt at believing that she had been the cause of this damage. To become disconnected with the immediate network through circumstances was one thing—a level of unpredictability was to be expected in the farming context. In contrast, to have been the cause of this disconnection was worse. Cameron also talked about this in relation to Adrian's connection with his father and brother. The acknowledgement and guilt associated with how he had treated his immediate support network was seen as a contributing factor to the suicide. Albrecht (2007) considers solastalgia as an outcome of damaged connection to place resulting from uncontrollable external causes, such as mining or drought. What is not considered in his theory is when the damaged connection is perceived as caused by the self. It would seem from the data here that a disconnection with the broader concept of place caused by the self may have an exaggerating effect on the experience of solastalgia.

The connection to place illuminated by this research reaches beyond our current understanding of suicide death. It also has a bearing on how we understand the impact of accidents and their potential ramifications—including suicide risk. Within the thematic data that emerged here, participants described farming accidents as contributing to the risk of suicide. Eliza and Jessica were two notable examples, describing the injuries sustained in farming accidents as resulting in a loss of connection to the activity of farming. This, in turn, was identified as a contributing factor to suicide. The psychological outcome of farming accidents can also contribute to an expanded understanding of Albrecht's theories on psychoterratic distress. Participants perceived the disconnection from place—through a physical inability to farm—as contributing to

psychological distress. This again suggests a broader range of factors influencing connection to place. For these participants, it was the activity of farming that was perceived as particularly important. Even though the farm itself remained unchanged, these individuals were perceived as unable to meaningfully engage in its operations. This resonates with Albrecht's (2005) theory of solastalgia as involving distress not because place was 'lost' but that it was being transformed. For these farmers, it appears that the transformation occurring was not to the farm itself, but in their relationship with the farm. They were no longer perceived to be able to utilise their inherent action-oriented approach to achieve the tasks of farming. Getting the job done was now beyond their capabilities.

Albrecht (2005) described the sense of powerlessness associated with this place-based distress. This was also evident in participant's descriptions of those who took their own lives following a farming accident. Jessica described the lack of control Alex had—unable to plan for a day, let alone the months ahead that was required in farming. Drawing on Albrecht's (2005) understandings of solastalgia, when unable to engage in the activity of farming these individuals lost their ability to derive solace from their connection to place. They experienced a sense of isolation about their inability to have an impact on the situation that caused their distress. These farmers were so used to being able to face challenges and overcome them in a practical goal-directed fashion. The injuries sustained from a farming accident, however, left them in a debilitated state over which they had no control. With the activity of farming being such an integral part their connection to place, a loss of connection led participants to a perception of psychological distress in those they were close to. In turn, this provided participants with a way of making sense of their loss in a way that fit with their worldview.

As Albrecht stated: '[A]ny context where place identity is challenged by pervasive change to the existing order has potential to deliver solastalgia' (2005, p. 45). Within this research, this challenge extends beyond a disconnection to the geographical site of farming, to also include a

disconnection from the activity of farming and the support networks that surround this activity. This suggests a need to focus more deeply on the potential outcome of farming accidents and reassess how victims of such events are supported through not only the physical recovery process, but through the psychological impacts as well.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the themes highlighting participants' perceptions of life, risk and death and how this perception, in combination with a strong connection to place, shaped a worldview that was situated within a farming context. The data presented demonstrated that—given exposure to suicide or accidental death—the context in which death was experienced meant that these deaths were often not the worldview shattering events suggested by the literature to date. This has bearing on how we appreciate preparedness for accidental death, beyond that described in the literature relative to suicide; how we account for the influence of the context in which death is experienced and understood; how we recognise connection to place as being more than the physical land itself; and, the bearing this has on how we understand injury outcomes and suicide risk in rural farming communities. Connection to place can be understood through Albrecht's theoretical concept of solastalgia.

The following chapter will add further detail by highlighting the influence of the farming context on participants' experience of bereavement following a suicide or accidental death.

Chapter 7: Bereavement in the farming context

The themes from the data presented so far—in Chapter 6—have highlighted that the farming family context in which each participant was immersed and socialised shaped the way they perceived life and death and were connected to place. This context also moulded their perceptions of suicide and accidental death. This chapter presents a third theme from the data, where participants’ experience of bereavement following a suicide or accidental death demonstrates a complex mix of contextually-influenced—yet individually-experienced—differences between participants. The first subtheme highlights how bereavement experienced within the farming family context did not appear to conform to (Western) gender expectations. All participants experienced exposure to a farming family context, a context that was highly influential in shaping their pragmatic approach to life and bereavement. Participants were farmers first, and it was this that grounded their socialised patterns of behaviour, rather than gender alone. The pragmatism demonstrated by participants has been conceptualised as an action-oriented, goal-directed set of perceptions and behaviour in which ‘getting the job done’ was the primary concern, requiring an attitude where looking beyond your own needs and being part of something that was bigger than yourself was paramount. The data around this subtheme will be presented, and then further explored, in the discussion relative to the framework of Brannon’s ‘Masculinist Blueprint’ (1976).

The second subtheme to be discussed in this chapter delves further into the data about participants’ connection to the farm—first highlighted in Chapter 6 as one of the facets of participants’ context-driven connection to place. This subtheme shows how the farm required continuing attention, irrespective of a death occurring. In light of this, the connection with the farm was a necessity for maintaining the viability of the farming business. The outcome of this connection had both positive and negative aspects. For some participants, a rapid return to work

provided a welcome escape from the emotional pain of grief, while for others the connection to the farm reinforced this pain and developed a negative therapeutic affect. The data exemplifying this subtheme will be presented and then the mechanisms of this connection to the farm will be examined in the discussion in light of Stroebe and Schut's Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement (1999).

For many participants, connection to the farm—while seen as a necessity and either an escape from, or reinforcement of grief—also demonstrated a source of continuing bonds with the deceased person. Even where the tangible nature of this family farming connection was challenged, most of these participants were still able to adapt and develop new forms of enduring connection between 'farm' and the deceased person. The data demonstrating the link between the connection to the farm and continuing bonds will be presented, and the nature of these connections explored further in the discussion relative to Klass' (1996; 2001) theory on continuing bonds.

Theme 3: How suicide and accidental death are experienced within the farming family context

The themes explored in Chapter 6 presented a farming context and resulting worldview that was strongly geared toward 'getting the job done', independent to the risks involved. Important components of participants' life and work in the farming context were: drawing on the unspoken support of those around you, looking beyond your own needs, and pulling together as a community with an action- and solution-focused approach to challenge. The first subtheme explores how this worldview was drawn upon in the response to bereavement and—in doing so—further revealed the elements of pragmatism demonstrated by participants.

A pragmatic response to suicide and accidental death bereavement

Similar to how they perceived life and death, participants reported an action- and solution-oriented approach when faced with bereavement. This was demonstrated following the deaths of close family members as well as more indirectly connected community members. Hickock described his response to his father's death as though he was ticking off a list of tasks that needed to be achieved, as challenges to be faced. He felt a sense of responsibility and self-imposed expectation. While not necessarily enjoying the challenges posed, achieving the tasks was more important. Within a worldview of looking after other's needs before your own, he saw this as his obligation. As he described:

[I] did all the proper things. I kept my family secure [...], helped my sister organise, talking to the lawyer about it and what I should do. Um, and dealt with the police and then you had to clean up the mess [...] And I guess that's the way I have always approached everything. That doesn't mean you are happy with it. That's sort of like heat in the kitchen, when the going gets tough, you've got to do it, somebody's got to do it. (Hickock)

Overall, the broader community tended to be described as rallying to provide practical support: volunteering help with farming tasks, providing food, and various other practical tasks. Rob described himself as being part of this effort when his neighbour died in a farming accident:

And the community rallied around her. Like there was other people in the country that jumped in and finished the water reticulation system for her. Half a dozen people just got organised for a couple of days and we ran poly pipe and we set up troughs and we did all that sort of stuff. (Rob)

Jane described herself and her immediate family as being the recipients of this community-driven, practically-focused support following her father's death in a farming accident and, later, her sister's suicide death:

We had wonderful, wonderful friends. And through all of these deaths and tragedies, the local community, the community is just unbelievable. And they just wrapped their arms around you and come in and helped take over the farm jobs and cook your food and do anything that is needed and take care of everything.

(Jane)

While others may have been quick to volunteer practical assistance, emotional support was less commonly described. Opportunities to talk about the death were generally limited to the immediate social network, if allowed at all. While Jeanette described everyone in the district providing practical assistance following her son's suicide death, she found very few people who were willing to talk with her about Samuel after his death. As she explained:

Every single person brought a casserole after Samuel died. I have no idea who they were or where they came from [but] people didn't like to talk about it. I would mention Samuel as a topic of conversation and the subject changed. Even with my friends. (Jeanette)

While Jeanette described a need to talk about Samuel following his death, not everyone demonstrated a desire to talk, generally due to the risk of this provoking emotion in themselves and others. Although practical support was consistent with participants' goal-directed and 'get the job done' worldview, emotion was seen as something that was distracting from this focus. Crystal described her avoidance of becoming too emotional. She was uncomfortable with the sense of lack of control and unpredictability this caused her. As she explained:

I don't allow myself probably to get too emotional one way or another. I don't allow myself to get too wrapped up in an emotional situation. I don't get too happy and I don't get too sad, I don't get too angry. So I don't allow myself to ever go to the extremes of perhaps what my emotional self could take me [...] you still like to know that people will react in a predetermined way that they have acted to other situations. (Crystal)

Peggy also described a need to manage her emotion during her brother's funeral in order to be able to achieve the tasks she believed were required of her on the day. As she described:

Harry's godmother came and I could see her crying, getting out of the car. And at the time I was crying. But suddenly, nuh, I wasn't crying. I am out there saying, 'oh come in, come in' and being the strength person. (Peggy)

In Peggy's world, as for other participants, being in control of your emotions was necessary in order to 'get the job done'. Even amongst her family members, Peggy described having to be like soldiers when dividing up her brother Harry's possessions in order to achieve the task. Emotion was seen as something that would impede the process. As she explained:

So being soldiers, it was just, no one wanted to fight. And you didn't even want to say—say someone took a tape that you thought: 'oh, I would've loved that'—you didn't say, 'oh, OK'. Cause that was too much, that was too much emotion. So you just shut up. And we just divvied them up. I have no recollection of what I took, what anyone else took. We just went bang, bang, bang. Done [...] And then it was like, phew [...] you know, we've got through that. (Peggy)

A practical, action-oriented focus took precedence over one based on emotion. While admitting that he missed his father and was deeply saddened by his loss, it was a familiar path for Hickock to move on from his father's death in a practical and goal-directed way. As he described:

In many ways, life was a bit simpler, one less person I had to worry about looking after. (Hickock)

In isolation, this comment may seem emotionally cold, yet for Hickock this was just a simple statement of fact. Having faced so many challenges during his long farming life (he was in his late 60s when we spoke), a focus on action was prioritised over emotion.

‘Getting on with things’ was a common response to bereavement following suicide and accidental death. When Crystal’s father encouraged the family to go on a holiday after the funeral, Crystal chose to face her grief head-on rather than seek a distraction. As she described:

It was easier just to stay. And work through the process, rather than having to go away and then having to come back to it all [...] I am the kind of person who just gets on with it. (Crystal)

In choosing to face her loss, Crystal focused on the daily practical tasks required to keep the family home running. This was not an avoidance of, or distraction from, her grief. Instead, this was a focus on the secondary consequences of loss, rather than the loss itself (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Responding in this way was how she had become accustomed to facing challenges as a member of a farming family. Dorothy described a similar pattern of response when her son Ron took his own life. Keeping busy running a small business, and keeping life going as a single parent, provided a welcome focus within the pain of losing her son. As she explained:

I didn't have much time to be sitting down wiping my nose or eyes or something. (Dorothy)

Focusing on the practical tasks of living and caring for her family was a familiar way of responding to a challenging situation.

When faced with the suicide or accidental death of someone close to them, participants frequently adopted an approach of positively framing their loss. Making the best of things

provided them with a way of coping with their loss, yet there was often also a purposive element to positive framing. Challenging situations were seen as a learning experience, an opportunity for personal growth. Seeing challenges in this way meant that participants could ‘get on with life’, and were better armed to respond to future challenges. As Peggy explained:

My expression is always, you will never get over it, you have to get on, [...] what you need to do is get on with life as best that you can, and try and have a positive life. (Peggy)

Being able to positively frame the death was often described as a way of paying tribute to what were perceived as the deceased person’s wishes. As Jane described:

I try not to act that way [worrying about her children] because I know, certainly, um, that neither Mum, Dad or Virginia would want us to act that way [...] I believe in living a good life (laugh). Because I think, who knows, something could happen tomorrow and I might not be here. (Jane)

Paul also demonstrated this purposive positive framing, determined to take action for the wellbeing of his family, his immediate support network. For him, dwelling on the negative would have been letting his children down. He felt compelled to stay positive and look beyond himself to the needs of others. As he explained:

I think the central thing was I have got to make a success out of a tragedy. This can't all be bad. I have got to somehow squeeze some good out of this. And the only way I could do it, and this was thinking about my girls and my family [...] It sort of gave me the incentive to be strong and try and adapt. (Paul)

Jessica chose to frame Alex’s death in a positive light, hoping to learn from the experience. This was a familiar and natural process for her. As Jessica described:

For me, there is not a lot of questioning [...] the whole 'whys' and 'how come's' and 'what ifs', is just not going to change the situation or bring them back [...] it makes you worse because you aren't able to move on from things, from the experience. If you can try and turn it around and try and see some of the good things that do come out of it. I am a great, huge, huge, believer that everything happens for a purpose [...] I hate saying that my brother is dead but it brought good. Um, he has opened our eyes up to look at things in a different light. (Jessica)

Learning from experience was a feature of several participants' bereavement following suicide or accidental death, as previously described in the context of farming challenges in Chapter 6. As Hickock described about his father's death and several other farming-related challenges he had faced:

It's how you deal with those experiences. Whether they, not if they are good or bad but if you learn a lesson from them. (Hickock)

In addition to learning from your own experience, learning from the example of older generations was also a feature of participants' response to loss. Maureen positively framed the example of her mother's practical response to loss as one that was more conducive to getting on with life:

Mum coped very well; she is very pragmatic [...] My Mum is quite amazing having coped with my brother's death, [my son's] death and now my Dad's death. And she is really coping extremely well. I think she is a very philosophical lady and she just, that's the way life is, you know. We have just got to get on with it. (Maureen)

Maureen likened her own reaction to that of her mother, when her brother, and later her son died: describing herself as *getting on with life [and] adapting*. Similarly to Maureen, Stephanie favourably described her own practical coping style after her father's suicide death, also much

like that of her mother. Emotion and ‘getting on with the job’ seemed at opposite ends of the spectrum. As she explained:

I am a lot more like my Mum. She is very practically minded. She is very, you know, she doesn't let things kind of get to her I guess. She just sort of gets on with things. And she is not an emotional type of person. (Stephanie)

The data highlighted in the previous paragraphs demonstrated a notably pragmatic reaction to loss following suicide or accidental death. This reflected the experience of both male and female participants. This pragmatism comprised a goal-directed, action-focussed response, with a tendency to manage emotion in order to avoid being distracted from achievement of these goals. The bereavement experience was positively framed and seen as an opportunity for learning, either from experience or from the example of those around them. This pragmatic response to death was reflective of participants’ broader worldview, developed within the farming context.

The connection to farm following bereavement

For participants still living on the family farm, staying connected to the farm was unavoidable. In spite of death, life on the farm had to continue to maintain the viability of the business. Cameron described returning his focus to the family farm within a couple of days of Adrian’s death. As he explained:

It was time to move on, you know [...] we have got big farms and it just can't stop. We just had to get on. There wasn't time to just stop and go into a depression over it. We just had to get on. (Cameron)

Daily farming tasks could not be delayed, even in the context of sudden death. The demands of an ongoing work schedule took precedent over time out for grieving. Even the additional tasks associated with a death had to be fitted within the farming schedule. Hickock

described having to speak to the police and his lawyer, and having to arrange for his family to be informed of the death, in addition to the ongoing requirements of farming:

And I mean then, you've got your business to keep going as well [...] and then at the same time, as I said, you are trying to start harvesting potatoes. (Hickock)

Even where participants were no longer working on the family farm, this perception of tasks 'having to be done' could be transferred into other aspects of daily life, fostering a task-oriented perception and a need to get on. Crystal described caring for her remaining children as a necessity following Ben's death:

Still having two children, you still have to go through daily life. You know, people still need to be fed, you have still got nappies to change and all that sort of... (Crystal)

Connection to farm as a positive following bereavement

Although a necessity, the orientation to achieving tasks offered by the farm was generally a welcome one. Participants found familiarity and comfort in focusing on the goal-directed, practical requirements of agriculture. This reaction to a challenging situation was something that fit with their worldview, as Simon exemplified:

I dealt with it a bit in keeping things going, keeping things, that work element of it, relatively normal. Nothing had changed. Not letting it interrupt that side of things [...] I knew what Dad would have wanted as far as keeping things ticking along on the farm. That helped me deal with the immediate day-to-day stuff [...] I have probably dealt with it in a relatively practical manner I suppose [...] that's probably part of my nature to be practical [...] I also think that's what Dad

wanted me to do. I certainly understand having some grief there but not to dwell on it too much. And get on with life. (Simon)

For Simon, being saddened by his father's death was to be expected, as long as grief did not get in the road of getting the job done. Eliza explained her reaction to her grandfather's death in a similar way, acknowledging a place for sadness but not allowing this to stop her from achieving her daily tasks:

Just because you still get emotional about something [her voice breaking with emotion], it doesn't mean it's affecting your life. (Eliza)

While the death had affected Eliza's life, it did not impede her from getting on with what needed doing, and so she described it as having little impact on her.

Rob found solace in actively assisting his neighbour's wife in the running of the farm. He joined with a number of community members to run his neighbour's farm for several months until his neighbour's wife was able to take over. This provided Rob with an opportunity to volunteer help. It was also an avenue of practical, goal-directed action that he was familiar and comfortable with:

I was involved. I was doing. (Rob)

Jeanette also described the welcome practical focus that family farming presented. The daily routines of running a farming business allowed Jeanette and her husband to continue on with life, in spite of her description of an enduring sense of numbness after her son Samuel's suicide death. She explained that her husband *retreated to the office*, throwing himself back into the familiarity of the farming business.

Having been socialised to avoid an emotional response to challenging situations, these participants were able to draw on the familiar patterns of actively running the farming business as

a means of distraction. Getting on with the job provided them with a focus that was bigger than themselves.

However, being denied this ongoing connection to farm following a death was described as particularly difficult. Jessica's family were denied access to the family farm in the wake of her brother Alex's death when the farm was legally passed on to his estranged wife. This denial of connection to the farm left them with a sense of 'unfinished business'. Jessica described needing that connection, and the familiar routines and rituals it provided, to be able to have some 'closure' following the death. As she explained:

When Alex passed on, all Dad wanted to do [was to] have closure and finish the sheep off [...] He wanted to sort through all the sheep and send the last sheep on the truck and farewell in that way [crying]. Um, and he wasn't even allowed to do that [...] For Dad that was just like a real kick in the guts. (Jessica)

Here, Jessica described both physical and emotional connections. The practical tasks of caring for and selling the sheep provided a familiar goal-directed focus. This activity also represented an emotional tribute and a way of farewelling Alex.

Peggy struggled following the sale of the family farm some years after Harry's death. The farm had provided her with an enduring source of 'therapy' and solace that she had drawn upon—and been drawn to—throughout the 40 years of her life to that point. The family farm had also come to be associated with Harry's memory. As Peggy explained:

I think that being on a farm is very therapeutic. And with death, I suppose it is how you feel about farms. But we just walked out in those paddocks and we went and hugged trees and we just wandered through our big garden and, it was home. We just went home, and it was Harry's. It was just a big beautiful place to be. And when we sold it, you know, that was hard. Because we had a big plantation that

everyone had contributed to [...] People gave us lots of roses so we made an actual, brand new area. We had roses everywhere, but we made a Harry rose garden and a massive Harry plantation [...] When that time came to sell, it was a huge, huge, emotional upheaval. Because it was such a chopping off of so many different things. (Peggy)

Peggy felt that this loss of connection to the family farm threatened her continuing bond to Harry.

A positive connection to the farm was described as a means of continuing bonds for a number of participants. The association between connection to the farm and the ongoing relationship with the deceased had multiple elements. For many participants, this brought together the physical elements of the farm with an emotional connection to the deceased. Jessica demonstrated this when talking about all of things she observed in the rural and farming landscape and how these related to her memories of her brother Alex:

I notice little things like the beauty of a crop. Or I might see the wheel marks through a crop and think, oh, I wonder who is on that journey. Or, wouldn't Alex love to be driving through that crop. Even as we are talking now, there is cockies that are, um, screeching outside. Alex hated cockies and he would always want to shoot them (laugh). So it's just all the little things, there are lots of little things out and about that remind me of Alex [...] There is not a day goes by that there is something, generally outside, that makes me think of him or reminds me of him [...] I find a lot of those things very comforting. (Jessica)

Jane described a strong positive bond between the farm and her memories of both her father and her sister. She later built a memorial garden for Virginia that strengthened this positive connection even further. The fact that these deaths occurred on the farm did not impact Jane's

long-term positive connection to either the farm or her family members who had died there. As she explained: *we still love being on the farm.*

While Stephanie spoke of being reminded of her father everywhere at the family farm, there was a site where she felt particularly close to him. While ‘the hut’ was the location of his death, it was also a place on the farm that had positive historical associations. This had been the place where her parents had begun their farming life together. ‘The hut’ provided an ongoing connection to numerous elements of Stephanie’s connection to family farming, in addition to her father’s death:

He went into 'the hut' [to die]. Which is actually where Mum and Dad, um, they lived in the hut on the farm when they were building the house. And that's where he went to die. And I often go in there and, you know, you do really feel connected to him. It's quite powerful. Its not like, you know, you can see it in a morbid kind of way, a sad way, or you can see it in a 'its nice to be close to him' way as well. Depends how you look at it really [...] It's just nice. And it feels like he is there. It feels like he is everywhere at the farm. (Stephanie)

The connection to the farm was, therefore, greater than just to the person’s memory. It was also a means of connecting to the person’s life in the years before the loss. Peggy described her life on the family farm as similar to the way she felt Harry would have chosen to live:

He would have loved that we live here in our life. Cause he was a very gentle sort of person. And we, when we are out on our farm and we are just wondering in our paddocks and we are lighting our bonfires, and we are planting our trees, that is all Harry. That is all calming, nice stuff that he would love. (Peggy)

Participants at times described a connection to the deceased that was directly linked to the activity of farming. Jack and Fred had planned a future of farming together before Fred took his

own life. Jack described bringing the memory of his brother along with him as he carried on with farming life, which encouraged him in his efforts to ‘get the job done’. As he stated:

I just carry my little brother on my shoulder and get it done. (Jack)

This pragmatic outlook was also reflected in other participants’ associations between connection to the farm and the ongoing relationship with the deceased. For some, this outlook strongly reflected the intergenerational bonds of family farming. In this way, the deceased continued to have a guiding presence in the participant’s life. Simon described this about his ongoing relationship with his father:

He has had such an influence in bringing me up to make um, decisions or choices.

I mean, I suppose there are things on the farm that are probably quite heavily influenced by that. And I think that will probably continue to be so. (Simon)

Stephanie also described the activity of running the farm as providing a connection with her father:

I love that we are now there and we are doing it and we are running the farm and that was his dream. And we are making it successful and it is going well [...] I think that is really special that we are able to carry that on. (Stephanie)

In this way, Stephanie felt she was successfully following in her father’s footsteps, carrying on where he left off.

When connection to farm becomes a negative following bereavement

As shown in the paragraphs above, a number of participants found comfort and a source of continuing bonds in their connection to the farm following a suicide or accidental death. For a small number of participants, however, a suicide or accidental death had a negative impact on their connection to the family farm. While they retained a physical connection to the family farm

following bereavement, this once-positive connection became tainted with a negative affect: a decaying of the sanctuary they had once drawn from their connection to place. For both Jane and Brendan, this was an immediate outcome of the event impacted by the particularly traumatic nature of the death to which they had been exposed. For Isaac, this occurred as a result of an accumulation of factors—including Clara’s death—that gradually transformed his connection to the farm into one of financial and emotional burden. The persistence of this negative affect varied for participants depending on the circumstances.

For Jane and her daughter Lydia, the shed on the farm where Virginia took her own life was a striking reminder of the trauma of witnessing the death in the days after the death. Both Jane and her daughter were unable to enter the building and tolerate the distress of reliving the trauma associated with event. As Jane described:

I couldn't even go into the shed, nor could Lydia [...] So the community came and demolished our shed [laugh] and that was good. (Jane)

The traumatic nature of Brendan’s loss resulted in a strong negative affect in his connection with the family farm, transforming a place in which he had found sanctuary into one that continually reinforced his psychological distress. For many years following the accidental shooting of his mate, Brendan suffered flashbacks of the event while trying to get on with the everyday tasks of farming. He described experiencing visions behind his welding mask, constant reminders of the horror of the death despite his attempts to deaden the pain of the trauma through alcohol and hard work. He was constantly reminded of the death each time he passed the sheep trough that he and his father installed the day after the shooting; the bullet hole in the farmhouse wall remained, as well as numerous other symbols around the farm that he had come to associate with the death event. His memory of the incident remained crystal clear more than two decades later, as he narrated the event in minute detail. This detail had remained implanted in his mind; the research interview provided Brendan with his first opportunity to voice the specific details of

what happened all those years earlier. This negative connection between the family farm and Shane's death not only reinforced the trauma associated with the event, but also denied Brendan a powerful source of sanctuary in his life and a potential means of moving forward after traumatic loss.

Isaac experienced a series of losses in his life, culminating in the suicide death of his wife Clara. He had chosen to enter farming in his adult life (not having been born into a farming family), believing that it would offer him the solitude and peace he sought and giving him the opportunity to leave his children a meaningful legacy. Having experienced a series of droughts and financial losses—combined with the demands of caring for Clara as her health declined—the farm became increasingly unviable and gradually turned from a source of sanctuary to one of financial and emotional burden. As he explained:

Generally every farmer plans to leave the land in better heart and a successful enterprise for the next generation or owner. Sadly, things do not always go according to plan [...] This is possibly the most distressing thing [...] I decided [...] to stop all farming activities. (Isaac)

Isaac described the continuing decline of the farming business as beyond his control:

It is a bit like being on a runaway train, at the beginning, when you might have some opportunity to react, you are either too slow, don't recognise what is happening or simply hope the situation will improve. Soon the train is travelling too fast and you are just a helpless passenger waiting for the inevitable wreck. (Isaac)

Isaac felt he had lost all opportunity to find sanctuary in the farm when Clara died. In contrast to others who were able to pragmatically focus on keeping the farm running after being

faced with the death of someone close to them, Isaac missed this opportunity for purposive activity when Clara died. As he described:

The time that I would spend for Clara is now replaced by doing nothing [...] I guess I have spent so long looking after Clara and not doing other jobs that I find it difficult to do the other jobs. It seems strange, but I can't explain it any better.
(Isaac)

Isaac had had little opportunity to miss the activity of farming prior to Clara's death as his focus was on actively caring for her. His damaged connection to the farm became more apparent once Clara was gone. For Isaac, the farm had become little more than a financial burden and something he tried hard to dissuade his children from continuing on with. When we spoke, Isaac did not seem to envisage any other solution than to sell the property and move on, although he had no firm plans in mind. Breaking the enduring ties to a connection to place/farming often proved difficult, despite the ongoing negative affect of maintaining the connection.

Although some participants lost the sanctuary of a connection to place/farming when the connection became tainted, they were often—over varying periods of time—able to disconnect from this negative impact. For some participants who experienced a loss of sanctuary so deeply linked with their connection to place/farming, disconnecting from this negative affect was relatively simple. For Jane, although the farm shed itself was negatively connected with the death, this adverse association did not extend beyond the shed to include the farm. Once the shed was removed, any negative connection between the farm and the trauma of Virginia's death disappeared: Jane's sense of sanctuary in her connection with the family farm was restored. As she explained:

I guess both my love of the farm where we live has never changed. And yet, I know people have said to me I couldn't stay there. You know your father died there and

your sister died there [...] But, for me, they are there very much. I have a very strong sense that it is there that they are. (Jane)

For other participants, disconnecting from a negative connection to place was a greater struggle. Brendan's constant reminders of trauma were more broadly connected with the family farm; the removal of a shed, or some other individual reminder of the traumatic death, was not enough. In contrast, the removal of a row of trees linked to Shane's death proved an ongoing reminder of the trauma Brendan experienced as a result of the death. Having endured almost three decades of the farm being perceived as a source of trauma and pain, Brendan finally made the decision to leave the farm. However, it proved to be a powerful avenue for him to begin to adjust to a life after Shane's death, as he explained:

I had to leave that farm, because I was reminded of it everyday. I mean, I'd sit there and watch tele[vision] at night. And the tele[vision] was just under the window that the bullet went through. You know, it was just a constant reminder. (Brendan)

It took Brendan more than 10 years to decide to break the connection and sell the farm, following his return to run the farm on his own. It meant severing a connection to the land that had been upheld for many generations and would now be unavailable for generations to come:

I was actually nervous at first about doing it. I don't know, you sort of feel like you are tied to the place. You owe your parent's something [...] I want[ed] to hand it down to my sons. You know, five years ago, if anyone asked me why I was working the farm, I said, you know, to hopefully, hopefully be able to build it up to be able to retire comfortably and hand it down to my sons. (Brendan)

Even though Brendan's connection to place was damaging his wellbeing, his connection to the farm had not always been a negative one and breaking this tie, although necessary, was not

easy. He justified his decision to sell the farm as one based on practical considerations—to both himself and his father. Brendan had both the language and the socialised behaviours to support this response, as opposed to either the language or the socialised behaviour consistent with an emotional explanation. He described a decision based on evidence of the farm's financial unviability rather than on his diminishing capacity to cope with persistent trauma.

In disconnecting himself from the family farm as a source of negative therapeutic affect, Brendan was able to begin the process of getting on with life without Shane's death being a primary focus. As he explained:

The funny thing is now, now I am not living on the farm [...] it's been weeks since I have actually thought about my accident. And I guess that's probably the biggest thing. (Brendan)

Leaving the farm also provided him with an opportunity to develop a less conflicted continuing bond with Shane. After 30 years, he felt ready to start moving on with his life:

I went to the cemetery and visited his grave. That's the first time I have been there since the day he was buried. I sat and had a bit of a cry and had a bit of a chat with him and said it's time I moved on with my life and left him behind. I guess everything I was doing in my life I was sort of doing it for two people. Trying to make up for his death. And then when things sort of didn't go my way, the only way I could make up for it was be dead myself. And that was just my thinking for the last 30 years. I only went to his grave once [...] but that was enough to put a little bit of closure on it I guess. (Brendan)

Not all participants continued to find sanctuary in their connection to place/farming following bereavement. Removing or disconnecting from this source of negative therapeutic

affect allowed participants to begin to move on with life and develop more positive continuing bonds with the deceased.

Discussion

Participants in this research were all exposed to the context of farming, shaping a similar worldview of life, risk, death and connection to place, independent of gender. When exposed to the death of someone close to them, participants' understanding of the event was influenced by their contextually situated worldview, and individual experiences. While participants experienced individual differences in their exposure to, and experience of, suicide and accidental death, these differences did not appear to be determined by gender. In contrast, they seemed more heavily influenced by their contextually situated worldview. The non-gendered nature of the bereavement experience can be more clearly highlighted through the framework of Brannon's Masculinist Blueprint (1976).

Bereavement as a non-gendered experience

Brannon's blueprint (1976) was originally created as a way of understanding the 'male' role. Contemporary conceptions of gendered patterns of behaviour, however, recognise differences beyond those strictly determined by sex and would be more likely to conceive of these as 'masculine' behaviours. Within the blueprint, Brannon highlights a number of elements that he suggests as comprising masculine socialised patterns of behaviour. A number of the framework's elements, however, can be located within the farming narratives of male and female participants, regardless of gender. This is exemplified by the blueprint's three elements; 'No Sissy Stuff', 'The Sturdy Oak' and 'Give 'Em Hell'.

The concept of ‘No Sissy Stuff’ denounces all that is considered feminine, including emotional openness and vulnerability (Brannon, 1976). In this research, both male and female participants demonstrated this pattern of avoidance. Emotional openness was rejected as something that risked participants’ ability to pragmatically ‘get the job done’, risking confusion and distraction from tasks. Neville described this in relation to making decisions, while Crystal believed that demonstrated emotion would result in unpredictable and unreliable behaviour. Hickock also spoke of high levels of emotion as associated with an impression of lunacy. Emotional expression was not entirely absent, however it was carefully managed—kept for safe moments of privacy, or with someone who had a shared understanding and shared experience. George described leaving the room when he felt himself becoming emotional. Dorothy described allowing her emotion to surface when she was alone. Emotion was often only expressed in situations where there was someone else known to be in control of their emotion and, hence, in control of the situation. Crystal described her and her husband taking it in turns to be emotional, reflected in her explanation of only crying in bed at night. Peggy described the need for someone to always be in emotional control.

Brannon (1976) described ‘The Sturdy Oak’ as representing a certain style of self-reliance, determination and a sense of mental and physical toughness represented by a stoic, imperturbable persona. Quoting Peter O’Toole from the film *Lawrence of Arabia*, Brannon (1976) explains ‘The Sturdy Oak’, saying: ‘[O]f course it hurts (as a match burned into his finger tips), the trick, you see, is not to care that it hurts’ (p.25). Peggy demonstrated this aura of imperturbability in the description of herself as a soldier, impassively dividing up her deceased brother’s belongings.

Within this sample, both men and women expressed a willingness to help others but rarely asked for help themselves, conditioned to manage life’s challenges. Hickock spoke about the necessity of facing challenges, whether he liked it or not. His farming context required ‘The Sturdy Oak’ to get the job done. Being part of a family farming business required many of the

attributes described within this element of Brannon's blueprint. This was reflected in the necessity of dealing with the ongoing and relentless challenges posed by weather and the '24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year' nature of farming. This unremitting pattern permeated work and life, with little opportunity to walk away, regardless of what other challenges were posed in life.

Participants endeavoured to demonstrate a positive framing of even the most debilitating events fit with the toughness and determination described in Brannon's blueprint. Jane described herself as having a lucky life despite the loss of her father to a farming accident, her mother to cancer and her sister to suicide. Paul was determined to see something positive come from his wife's suicide death. Both male and female participants demonstrated this imperturbability in not allowing challenges and the potential for risk to restrict them from achieving their goals in a pragmatic fashion. Peggy exemplified this with her attitude of not 'getting over' things, but 'getting on' with life. Cameron took this approach following his business partner's suicide death, in just having to get on with things. Even when experiencing an internal feeling of uncertainty, it was important for participants to demonstrate this sturdy image—to themselves as well as to those around them. The focus was on being able to continue to respond to the demands of farming, regardless of how challenging this was. Lou described a fear of being seen as not coping behind her reasoning for not asking for help when she was struggling to balance her farming and family roles. Karen explained a similar fear resulting in her general avoidance of visiting the doctor. This would identify her as not coping—to herself as much as to others. Louise described her tendency to wear a mask to present what she felt was an appropriate image. The farming context encouraged this. Keeping up with the demands of farming life while framing challenges in a positive light was only possible when avoiding the distractions posed by emotion. In this way, being a 'Sturdy Oak' demanded an avoidance of 'Sissy Stuff'. These two elements of the blueprint were entwined within this sample.

‘Give ’Em Hell’ is the third of the elements of Brannon’s Masculinist Blueprint, demanding a sense of aggression, daring and risk-taking (1976). Although not generally in an aggressive manner, female and male participants demonstrated an acclimatisation to risk through their involvement in farming-related tasks from a young age. Brendan described the availability and accessibility of firearms from a young age. Jane and many others described their childhood involvement in working closely with livestock and farming equipment. This inherent pattern of risk supported the overarching pragmatic drive of farming family members. Taking risks—whether through handling livestock or using a firearm—was an accepted part of farming life and a necessary means for getting the job done.

While there has always been a strong focus on farming as a gendered institution—with ‘male farmers’ and ‘farmer’s wives’ playing very different roles—it appears that, within this sample, the expression of bereavement was not demonstrated along gender lines. Instead, participants’ response to loss was shaped by a shared exposure to a farming context that encourages a pragmatic response to life’s challenges. Brannon describes vast differences in the socialisation patterns of males and females from a very early age (Brannon, 1976). However, the data from this research demonstrates that all participants growing up in a farming family were significantly involved in farming tasks, encouraged in their practical, goal-directed pursuits, socialized to volunteer help rather than ask for help themselves, and discouraged from becoming emotionally distracted. They experienced similar exposure to risk as part of everyday life and were similarly exposed to life and death as just another part of farming. Exposure to this context from such a young age meant that all participants demonstrated this response, whether they experienced bereavement during their teenage years (like Stephanie and Louise) or as an adult.

From a social constructionist perspective ‘gender does not reside in the person, but rather in social transactions defined as gendered’ (Courtenay, 2006, p. 148). Given the similarity of social transactions to which participants were exposed—through life, death and exposure to risk—

combined with how they similarly made meaning and sense of these experiences, it would appear that gender has less of an influence on the perceptions of life and death and the expression of suicide and accidental death bereavement. It is not that participants grew up outside of, or without, gendered norms. Rather, it is that these norms did not appear to shape participants' expression of grief according to the gendered patterns presumed to date. In their work on gender, culture and suicidal behaviour, Canetto and Lester (1998) describe many contextually influenced gender scenarios of suicidal behaviour. They also highlight the many 'exceptions to the rule' when examining the contextually influenced differences in gendered patterns of suicidal behaviour across Western industrialised countries:

While the gender paradox of suicidal behaviour is the dominant pattern in countries for which data are available, one can find numerous variations and exceptions. Exceptions are found not only across nations, but also within countries [...] when one considers specific ethnicities, age groups, professions, or settings (p. 170).

It is justifiable to assume that these underlying factors would also generate differences in the expression of grief following such loss. Given this, we need to look beyond the dominant cultural scripts of how bereavement is, or should be, experienced and recognise the influence of context in shaping the experience of grief and how this is expressed.

Doka and Martin (2010; 2011) have previously raised concern over the gendered conceptualisations of grief. They highlighted the gendered assumptions about grief, describing common conceptions of the feminine pattern of grief as involving emotional expression and the active seeking of social support and help from others. In contrast, masculine grief was emphasised as involving active, problem-solving ways of grieving with a muted emotional response. Each of these grief styles was presumed to correspond with a single gender. From these described grieving styles, participants in this research would be identified largely by their masculine style of

grieving, regardless of their gender. As Doka and Martin suggested, however, this labelling is confusing and perpetuating of stereotypes. The labels themselves are stereotyping and can result in a lack of appropriate understanding and support. Rather than being determined by gender, however, Doka and Martin (2011) propose that the experience and expression of grief are shaped by the individual's adaptive strategies. In the case of participants in this research, a farming context shapes the development of cognitive adaptive strategies to ensure that challenges are faced with a mindset of getting the job done. These adaptive strategies in farming life were translated into participants' response to bereavement.

As an alternative to a gendered perspective of grief, Doka and Martin (2011) described a continuum of grieving with an intuitive style at one end and an instrumental style at the other. These styles were proposed as a way of understanding how individuals experienced, as well as how they expressed, grief. Intuitive grief involves an affective rather than a cognitive expression of grief. Grief is comprised of profound and spontaneous expressions of painful feelings. Within instrumental patterns of grief, a dominant cognitive response occurs. Affective expression of pain is tempered. Instrumental grievers are more likely to channel the energy generated by bereavement into activity (Doka & Martin, 2011). Within this framework, participants in this research demonstrated a tendency toward an instrumental pattern of grieving. This reflects the data showing participants channelling their grief into keeping the farm going and the family cared for, as opposed to an outpouring of emotion.

Understanding bereavement within the Dual Process Model of Coping

Participants' grieving styles can be further understood when examined in light of Stroebe and Schut's (1999) Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement. This model describes an oscillation between loss-oriented coping and restoration-oriented coping. Loss-oriented coping deals with aspects of the loss experience and can include rumination about the deceased, about

life as it was before the death, and the events and circumstances around the death event. Both Jack and Brendan narrated examples of this rumination as they struggled to make sense of their loss. Jack spoke of carrying his brother with him on his shoulder, while Brendan spoke of being conscious of living his life as much for Shane as for himself.

For most participants, however, as they made sense of the death in a way that was consistent with their worldview, loss-oriented coping was not a dominant feature of bereavement. In contrast, restoration-oriented coping deals with secondary sources of stress associated with the loss and represented the dominant pattern of bereavement among participants. This pattern of coping was demonstrated by participants as focusing much more on dealing with the practical outcomes of loss, while still allowing for periods of focusing on the emotion of the loss itself. This process of ‘oscillation’ between a dominant restoration-oriented coping and loss-oriented coping was particularly exemplified by participants’ connections to their farms, with Simon, Cameron, Maureen, Hickock, Jeanette and Rob all describing a particularly strong focus on keeping the farm business running. As part of these connections, however, participants still experienced reminders of their loss, which led them to periods of loss-oriented coping. For example, while Simon’s primary focus was on the farming business, he experienced feelings of deep sadness at the loss of his son’s future relationship with his now deceased grandfather. In other participants, a restoration-oriented pattern of coping was dominant—although still demonstrating some oscillation towards loss-oriented coping. These included:

- Dorothy who focused on financially supporting her family, yet took moments alone to feel sad about her loss;
- Hickock as he sorted out the potential legal ramifications of his father’s death but was still saddened by the loss of his confidante;

- Crystal who concentrated on the need to care for her remaining children while taking time to cry at night;
- Paul as he figured out what to do with his deceased wife's garden and ensured his own wellbeing to avoid worrying his daughters, but still needed reassurance that he could not have done more to prevent his wife's death; and,
- Stephanie who actively educated herself about the challenges to mental wellbeing to prevent further suffering in her immediate networks, yet questioned her own self-worth given that her father chose death over being with her.

While some of the restoration-oriented tasks associated with connection to farm were unavoidable—the farming business had to be attended to in order to survive—they also represented a way of channelling grief that was consistent with the farming context very soon after death. Consistent with Brannon's 'The Sturdy Oak' (1976), responding to challenges as they arose was a reflection of toughness, determination and imperturbability. This represents a different pattern of grieving to that which Stroebe and Schut (1999) describe as expected in Western populations. Rather than a dominant loss-orientation that gradually reduced to be replaced by a dominant restoration-oriented coping style, most participants described an immediate dominant pattern of restoration-oriented coping. This was not a deficient or pathological means of coping, however. In contrast, for most participants this was an adaptive pattern of coping that was consistent with their worldview and fit within the context of farming.

Not everyone coped in a way that demonstrated a rapid adaptive pattern of coping. Those—like Jack, Brendan and Peggy—who struggled to make sense of their loss described feeling besieged by a loss-oriented pattern of coping. In their worldview, challenge was not supposed to be experienced in this way. The extreme emotion was unfamiliar and unpredictable and they were not equipped with the tools to deal with it. Avoiding the 'Sissy Stuff' and being

‘The Sturdy Oak’ was beyond their capabilities when confronted with this loss. Peggy described continued patterns of disturbing dreams, Brendan had traumatic flashbacks, while Jack feared the unfamiliar and uncontrollable emotion he was experiencing would damage his business. Such affective expressions of grief were unfamiliar to participants and to those within their support networks.

While the necessity of keeping the farm going encouraged restoration-focused coping, this connection also resulted in frequent oscillation back to loss-oriented coping for participants who developed a negative connection to the family farm. For Brendan and Jane, this was the result of repetitious reminders of the pain and trauma of loss. Brendan experienced this each time he looked at the water trough he and his father had installed in the days after Shane’s shooting death. Jane experienced this every time she saw the shed where Virginia had taken her own life. It was only through the removal of this negative connection that participants were able to take ‘time off’ from the pain of grief and shift towards more restoration-oriented coping. For Jane this happened within a few weeks of her sister’s death. The demolition of the shed restored the positive connection Jane had with the farm and released her from the constant reliving of the trauma of Virginia’s death. For Brendan, despite describing throwing himself into work—ordinarily perceived as restoration-oriented coping—he appeared to be continually drawn back to a pattern of loss-oriented coping, reliving the pain and emotion of loss. It was only once he resolved to sell the family farm that he felt able to turn his focus to restoration-oriented coping. The affective nature of loss-oriented coping was unfamiliar within the farming context. Not only was this unfamiliar for participants, but also for their immediate and broader support networks. This meant that the support needed for participants experiencing a pattern of loss-oriented coping was often not forthcoming. Brendan felt he had no support offered to him in the wake of bereavement, while Jeanette and Jane both described people around them not wanting to discuss the death when they

felt the need to talk. This focus on the emotional pain did not fit within the restoration-oriented, pragmatic response to challenge that people had been socialised for.

Participants recognised that their restoration-oriented pattern of coping following suicide and accidental death was different to what may be expected and—while they felt reacting this way had allowed them to cope well with loss—may be judged negatively by the broader population. Simon thought that others might view his restoration-oriented coping style as hard and hungry. Stephanie and Jessica wondered whether they had experienced grief ‘correctly’, speculating whether they may one day experience a delayed onset of emotional outpouring. Crystal summarised this confusion of what appropriate grieving was when she explained:

Bereavement is an odd thing to observe. People either think you are too sad or you are not sad enough. It's the way it goes. So probably people would think that I am somewhat uncaring I guess, because of how I have handled it. Because I am not overly emotional. (Crystal)

Conversely, participants such as Jack—who felt overwhelmed by a pattern of loss-oriented coping—also thought others may judge his reaction poorly. In this case, it was a fear of being judged negatively by others in the farming community for failing to conform to a restoration style pattern of coping. Jack feared his reaction to loss would be seen as being unable to cope and he feared the demise of his contracting business as a result.

The stories shared by participants highlight that there are many layers to what is constituted as ‘good’ grief, and that this is delineated by the context in which grief is experienced and expressed. In many Western contexts, the dominant conceptions of ‘good’ or ‘normal’ grief as requiring an emotional outpouring still persist. This was even expressed by participants within the farming context, where emotion would ordinarily be seen as disruptive or confusing one’s ability to get the job done. Breen and Connor (2007) speak of the ‘paradox’ of conceptualisations

of grief. On one hand, they describe the growing emphasis on individual differences in the experience of grief—with this research providing support for this relative to the influence of the farming context. On the other hand, they describe the commonly-held perceptions (as well as the continuing debate in the literature relative to pathological forms of grief) of what delineates ‘normal’ grief from what is not ‘normal’. This research supports the need to look beyond strict delineations of normal, abnormal and pathological grief to understand the multiplicity of factors that shape the way that grief is experienced, expressed and responded to within its social context.

Highlighting the similarities and differences in the response to bereavement demonstrated by this sample—whether through Brannon’s (1976) masculinist blueprint, Doka and Martin’s (2010) continuum of grieving styles or Stroebe and Schut’s (1999) Dual Processing Model of Coping with Bereavement—reiterates the importance of understanding the context in which death is experienced. There is no one way in which grief is, or should be, understood or experienced:

Although grief is essentially a universal human reaction to loss of a significant other, cultural prescriptions impact on the way that grief is manifested (Stroebe & Schut, 1999, pp. 220-221).

Support for bereavement as a contextually influenced process can be further strengthened by relating the thematic data emerging from this research with current understandings of continuing bonds, particularly with respect to participants’ connections to their farms.

Extending the understanding of continuing bonds

During most of the twentieth century, the dominant (Western) grief models spoke of the need for bereaved individuals to sever the bond with the deceased in order to be able to successfully form new relationships and move on with life (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). This perception of grief was based on a worldview that stressed the separateness or independence of

individuals from one another (Klass et al., 1996). Within these grief models, there was no room for an understanding of people as living in an interdependent web of social relationships, as has been identified for the farming family participants described in this research. In their work on continuing bonds, Klass and colleagues (1996) recognised not only the interdependence of people, but also the tendency for this to persist even in the absence of one of the individuals. Following on from this, the continuing bonds model of grief called for a shift in ‘focus from the end of the living bond to the place of the inner representation of the dead or absent person in the inner world of the survivor, and on the place of the inner representation in the survivor’s social world’ (Klass et al., 1996, p. 355). This makes sense in the light of participants’ grief experiences as being heavily influenced by the social context in which they exist. However, the data presented in this research suggests there is more to understanding continuing bonds than social connection. It appears that—within the farming context—the geographic element of connection to farm (a connection to a physically-defined and tangible space) and the individual characteristics that develop within this context, must also be considered if there is to be a comprehensive understanding of continuing bonds within this sample.

Participants demonstrated a strong connection to farm as part of their worldview (as described in Chapter 6)—a worldview that had significant bearing on their continuing relationship with the deceased. As Peggy stressed, *you don’t get over it, you get on*. For participants, part of ‘getting on’ was the development of a continuing relationship with the deceased person. This was strongly linked to the ideas of ‘No Sissy Stuff’ and ‘The Sturdy Oak’. For numerous participants, this continuing relationship was strongly linked with an enduring connection to the family farm. Like Klass’ (1996) recognition of social interdependence, connection to the farm can also be understood as an interdependent relationship, with the farm providing income, lifestyle and a sense of connectedness, but only through the input of the farming family (often over several generations). The connection to the family farm was, therefore, an ongoing life story of which the

death was one part. This connection was developed long before the death and persisted on into the future. In essence, participants had continuing bonds with the family farm. When participants—like Simon, Paul, Stephanie, and Jeanette—were able to maintain a positive connection to the farm, this provided a means of also developing a continuing bond with the deceased person. For these participants, the family farm in its entirety, or sometimes the site of the death itself, became a place of peaceful reflection, of drawing strength from what had been achieved by the deceased during their farming life. For Simon, Stephanie and Jeanette, the ongoing labour of farming became a tribute to the memory of the deceased, a way of continuing on their love of farming. The continuation of this bond was often described as happening very quickly after the death. For other participants—like Jessica and Peggy (in the years between the sale of the family farm and the purchase of her own small farm)—having the physical connection to the family farm removed meant that there was a loss of the continuing bond with the farm. This was reflected in a delay or interruption in Jessica and Peggy’s ability to develop continuing bonds with the deceased. It was only through the process of developing a new continuing bond to farm (for example, when Peggy and her husband purchased their own family farm and when Jessica developed this bond via her own rural property away from the family farm) that this interconnected and continuing bond to the deceased could be restored. In this way, a new—but contextually familiar—physical space provided a source of continuing bonds. The nature of these continuing bonds consequently reinforced participants’ own attachment to place/farming, creating an ongoing cycle of connectedness and continuing bonds.

Suicide or accidental death could also lead to a negative connection to farm—as demonstrated by Bill, Isaac and Jane. While some, like Jane, were able to remove the cause of this negative affect and restore a positive connection to the farm, others struggled to disentangle themselves from this source of negative therapeutic affect. These findings suggest that the nature

of continuing bonds within this sample extend beyond the deceased person to include connection to the physical space of the farm.

While previous literature has recognised the varying nature and prevalence of continuing bonds according to cultural norms, this has generally been through comparisons of significantly different eastern and Western cultures (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). However, the experience of bereavement in Western culture is by no means homogeneous in spite of some traditional assumptions of normative patterns of behaviour. The development and maintenance of continuing bonds within this sample emphasises this complexity of patterns of bereavement shaped by both social and geographical context.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a third theme from the data describing the contextually-influenced—yet individually-experienced—nature of bereavement for participants. The data within this theme first highlighted that expressions of bereavement did not appear to conform to (Western) gender expectations. Instead, they were shaped by a context that encouraged a pragmatic approach to life, death and bereavement. Participants were farmers first, and this grounded their socialised patterns of behaviour, rather than gender alone. This suggests a need to look beyond the dominant cultural scripts of how bereavement is (or should be) experienced, and recognise the influence of context in the experiences and expressions of grief. The second element of this theme extended the understanding of the importance of individual experience and context through the data on participants' connections to their farms. This highlighted that an ongoing connection to farm was necessary for maintaining the farm business, a connection that had positive and negative aspects relative to the experience of bereavement within the participant group. Connection to a farm also provided participants a source of continuing bonds with the

deceased person and extends the understanding of continuing bonds to one that encompasses a physical space.

The following chapter will discuss the implications of this research relative to the current understandings of grief and loss, and how this may be applied to tailoring the support provided to farming families experiencing suicide and accidental death. In closing, this final chapter will acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of this research, and present suggestions for future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Suicide and accidental death within the farming community have received increasing attention in recent decades as—from both an occupational and lifestyle perspective—mortality rates have been consistently described in excess of those in rural populations generally and the broader Australian population. Farmer suicide in particular has been in the public spotlight and linked with extreme climatic conditions and global market forces. The additional strain that these factors have put on Australia's primary producers has ignited a strong community response and subsequent reactions from government (however effective or ineffective these may be). Accidental deaths in farming communities—although thought to be reducing overall—still remain a concern, particularly those relating to unsafe vehicle use.

While policy, planning and service delivery is being developed in response to heightened risks of suicide and accidental death in rural farming communities, little is known about the effect of these deaths on those left behind. This research set out to understand how Australian farming families experience life, death and loss by suicide and/or accidental death, and how this might be affected by the context in which they live and work. The literature provides some evidence for the heterogeneity of rural Australians and highlights farmers and their families as living and working in distinctive psychological, social and geographic contexts. Given this, it was hypothesised that farming families' experience of suicide and accidental death bereavement might be different to the general population. A growing body of literature suggesting links between suicide and accidental death bereavement and heightened mortality risks—particularly an ongoing cycle of suicide risk—underpins the importance of addressing this knowledge deficit. This exploratory research was deemed an important precursor to the development of appropriate and acceptable support structures for rural farming communities impacted by such deaths.

This concluding chapter will commence with a brief summary of the rationale for, and methodology of, this research. Following this will be a summary of the findings and the implications of this research relative to the current understandings of grief and loss. How this new knowledge may translate to tailoring the support available to farming families bereaved by suicide and/or accidental death will also be discussed. Finally, an acknowledgement of the strengths and limitations of the research will be presented, along with suggestions for future research.

This research was designed from a social constructionist perspective within a narrative inquiry framework. The use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews allowed for a rich understanding of life, death and loss within participants' farming family context. Twenty-four narratives were collected and thematically analysed with the aim of understanding how Australian farming families understand life and death and experience the loss of someone close to them by suicide and/or accidental death, to address the research questions:

- Who are Australia's farming families? How do they live? How do they die?
- How do farming family members experience loss following suicide and accidental death?
- How does the farming family context influence this bereavement?

The questions guided the design of the study, and data exploring them were presented over two findings chapters—each presented as narrative data followed by an analysis and discussion as to how this fit within the existing literature—and are summarised below.

Summary of the findings

Chapters 6 and 7 presented a series of interconnected themes linking the farming context with perceptions of life, death and the subsequent experience of bereavement. Chapter 6 presented and discussed the data relevant to two themes. The first explored how the farming family context

influenced participants' worldview in relation to life and death. This highlighted a cultural norm that appears different to the worldview of mainstream Western culture. There were two notable contributions to this contextually-situated farming family worldview: an acceptance of risk and death, and a strong connection to place. The acceptance of risk and death was situated within a context of frequent and unsanitised exposure to farming practices that normalised risk and desensitised the experience of death, particularly of livestock. The connection to place encompassed a connection to physical land, but expanded beyond this to incorporate the people, community and activities associated with farming.

The second theme presented in Chapter 6 can be understood within a context of identified heightened exposure to suicide and accidental death in rural and farming populations. This theme highlighted that when such deaths occur the context in which they are experienced means that these deaths are often not the worldview shattering events frequently suggested in the bereavement research (Currier et al., 2006). Instead, many participants were able to make sense of these events in a way that was consistent with their worldview. When such deaths occurred outside of the familiar farming context, however, this appeared to challenge participants' ability to make sense of the loss and there was a greater risk of their worldview being shattered.

Chapter 7 presented a third theme from the data, demonstrating that participants' experience of bereavement following a suicide or accidental death was influenced by individual's context in several ways. The first subtheme highlighted how bereavement experienced and expressed within the farming family context did not appear to be influenced by (Western) gender norms. This was due largely to the fact that all participants experienced exposure to the farming family context, a context that was highly influential in shaping their pragmatic approach to life and bereavement. This pragmatism featured a goal-directed, action-focused response, with a tendency to manage emotion so as to avoid being distracted from achievement of these goals. The

bereavement experience was positively framed and seen as an opportunity for learning, either by experience or from the example of those around them.

The second subtheme further examined participants' connection to the farm. This subtheme showed how—irrespective of a death occurring—the farm required continuing attention. In light of this, the connection with the farm was a necessity for maintaining the viability of the farming business. The outcome of this connection had both positive and negative aspects. For some participants, a rapid return to work provided a welcome escape from the emotional pain of grief, while for others the connection to the farm reinforced this pain and developed a negative therapeutic affect. Connection to the farm was also demonstrated as a source of continuing bonds. For many participants, the family farm remained an ongoing bond with the deceased person. Even where the tangible and geographical nature of this family farming connection was challenged, most of these participants were still able to adapt and develop new forms of enduring connection between 'farm' and the deceased person.

Implications of this research

Recognising differences in the experience of bereavement

The results of this research assist in similarly highlighting contextually influenced differences in suicide and accidental death bereavement. Within this sample—whose worldview of life, death and risk had been shaped by the psychological, social and geographical farming context—the response to, and expression of grief and loss appeared to be different to what is expected within the broader Australian population. We cannot, therefore, assume that bereavement will be experienced similarly across Australia. Life and death will be experienced differently depending on context and the resulting worldview. Similarly influenced by context and worldview, we cannot assume that everyone will experience suicide and/or accidental death as a

sudden, unexpected event. Nor can we assume that the reaction to suicide will be one that necessarily shatters the worldview and leaves those bereaved ruminating about why the death occurred. Rather, we must look to the context—and the worldview shaped within it—for understanding of how death may be understood, bereavement experienced and grief expressed. Breen (2007, p. 209) highlights the importance and multiplicity of contextual factors in the experience of grief:

Grief is a unique experience that occurs within a historical, social, cultural, and political context, and our research endeavors need to recognize it as such. These contextual factors all affect an individual's grief experience and, as such, must not be omitted or viewed as extraneous variables. Instead, they need to be held in as much regard as the grief experience itself.

While broad, this description of contextual factors is not exhaustive, and should also include geographic elements of context in shaping the worldview and subsequent bereavement experience of those exposed to suicide and/or accidental death.

Recognising that the support needs of the bereaved will vary

This research has developed a rich understanding of the social and individual context in which bereavement is experienced and grief is expressed in farming families. There remains, however, a complex mix of contextually-influenced—but individually-experienced—differences between participants. In recognising these differences, it appears that not everyone will need assistance following bereavement. In addition, there is still no way to predict who it is that will need help. However, the knowledge gained from this research assists to break down some of the stereotyped conceptualisations of grief that have come to be expected in Western cultures, and provides a fresh perspective on loss, grief and resilience in a previously unstudied segment of the broader 'Western' population.

Implications for policy

While the primary focus of this research was on suicide and accidental death bereavement, significant insight was offered through participants' perceptions of factors leading to suicide risk. This suggests a need to recognise the multiplicity of factors that can lead to suicide within farming communities. The current pattern of government response to suicide in rural farming communities tends to be in the form of a reflex reaction to extreme climatic events and the resulting poor economic conditions. While there is no doubt that these stressors may well contribute to suicide risk, this is only one piece of the puzzle. There is a need for policy to also look to the less dramatic—but more insidious—issues in farming communities that threaten farmers' identified pragmatic focus and connection to place. Such issues include diminishing communities in rural farming areas, declining rural infrastructure, a breakdown of family connections as people move away for work or education, increasing mechanisation leading to more solo work patterns, the flow-on effect of farming accidents—all of which can also be experienced independently of poor economic conditions.

Implications for bereavement support and service delivery

The outcomes of this research support previous suggestions that not all bereaved individuals require formal support or intervention. Indeed, those participants who are able to make sense of loss in a way that is consistent with their pragmatic worldview should be allowed to process their bereavement without unnecessary and potentially damaging intervention (Mancini & Bonanno, 2006). Where support is required, appropriateness and acceptability—in the eyes of those with lived experience—are critical to achieving successful outcomes.

Of particular interest here is the tendency for participants to readily volunteer help, yet avoid asking for help themselves. This was evident for many participants in relation to farming

challenges, and even more pronounced in relation to emotional challenges. Previous literature ascribed the self-reliant tendencies of farmers facing challenging circumstances to the traditional isolation associated with rural and remote settlements, requiring farmers and their families to meet their own needs without outside assistance (Collins et al., 2009; Fuller et al., 2000). Contemporary issues in farming can build on this traditionally established pattern of self-reliance. As farm sizes continue to grow, increasing mechanisation reduces the need for human labour and rural services continue to decline, some farmers perceived a need to become ever more self-reliant. However, this was not always true of participants' experiences. Several participants described new opportunities for connecting with other like-minded farmers to solve practical farming challenges. In addition, some participants expressed a need for support following bereavement, yet were unable to access it in a form they felt was psychologically available or acceptable. This supports Brumby's (2013) conclusions that, whilst farmers may appear reluctant to engage in support, it doesn't mean they don't want to engage. What is important though, is that the context for engagement must be appropriate. While Brumby spoke of this in the context of farmer engagement around health, wellbeing and safety, it is equally appropriate when considering the impact of bereavement. Where support is required, those with a demonstrated understanding of both farming and bereavement must volunteer it. Mechanisms of support must be framed in a positive way and focus on practical, goal-directed achievement. While it is generally accepted that not everyone will need help following bereavement, some people will experience grief complications and require support of some kind. Therefore, the challenge is to establish appropriate means of engagement for those who continue to struggle to access help, despite recognition that support is required.

Informal support avenues

One way of supporting those who have been bereaved is by encouraging the development of informal support networks, through fostering a positive connection with family and community—drawing on the importance of a broader sense of connection to place. This is supported by recent research identifying a causal connection between community connectedness and wellbeing—with past community connectedness demonstrated to improve future mental wellbeing (Ding, Berry, & O'Brien, 2015).

Social connection can be encouraged through capitalising on shared interests and experiences. Avenues that encourage relationships between people who have a shared background and shared experiences (although, not exclusively shared experience of trauma) must be maintained and expanded. Developing regular social contact over time helps to reduce the social isolation that can arise through the self-stigma associated with suicide bereavement and facilitates opportunities for peer support on an increasingly deeper level (that is, bereavement). Participants described several successful avenues of social contact within their narratives, including Men's Shed (Australian Men's Shed Association, 2011), pastoral museums and suicide awareness-raising groups. It is interesting to note that the last of these—suicide awareness-raising groups—were initially more often perceived by participants as a practical way of raising funds and awareness and providing support to others rather than a means of seeking personal support. This remains consistent with the tendency identified in this research to volunteer help rather than ask for it. In actual fact, such involvement also eventuated in significant support for participants themselves. Considering this, opportunities for connection through community groups, service/sporting clubs and industry groups (all framed as acceptable involvement within the farming context) could all be appropriate avenues for indirectly gaining informal support.

Farming families facing the loss of a positive connection with the farm or the activity farming provides need to be supported to find alternative sources of positive connection. Within the general population, land may be perceived as ‘an objectively definable and fixed entity’ (Bourke & Lockie, 2001, p. 12). For many members of farming families, however, the socially-defined perception and value of land results in a distinctive connection to place and farming. For many participants in this research, this connection extended to encompass a therapeutic benefit and an ongoing and positive link with the deceased. While this is particularly important following bereavement, it should also be a consideration following other forms of farming-related losses including that associated with the environmental damage caused by drought, flood, bushfire and mining. The solastalgic response to these events has also been associated with significant psychological distress (Albrecht, 2008). Alternative sources of connection may be found through such things as Landcare activities or pastoral associations. There may be additional benefit found through the social connection with peers with shared interests and shared background. This could also tie in with farmers’ socialized pattern of volunteering help and be framed as a way to altruistically ‘give back’ and assist others after experiencing tragedy.

Formal support services

It is of paramount importance for future policy and service delivery that the development, implementation and evaluation of appropriate and acceptable formal support services—from the perspective of those with lived experience—is addressed. Importantly, where services were not perceived as appropriate or useful, participants in this research were less likely to attempt to access services in the future. This has also been identified in other recent research exploring help-seeking patterns among people who had either attempted suicide (SANE Australia & University of New England, 2015) or were bereaved by suicide (Pettersen et al., 2014/15). Encouragingly, research about mental health help-seeking among farming males has also identified that positive

experiences of seeking assistance facilitates further help-seeking behaviour (Roy, Tremblay, & Robertson, 2014). This emphasises the need for proactive, volunteered, community-based support services cognisant of the socialised and culturally-influenced context in which farming families live and work. Unfortunately, there is not yet a way to accurately identify those who do or will need help following bereavement (Cerel et al., 2014), which suggests the need for sustained, proactive outreach services which regularly offer ‘opt in-opt out’ assistance. Standby Response Services are an example that encompasses elements of this approach offered to a broader Australian population (United Synergies, 2015).

Framing support in a context that is cognisant of the worldview demonstrated by this sample is a necessary means by which to encourage help-seeking where required. Future policy development needs to pave the way for service delivery to develop, implement and evaluate support services to reflect this. As Judd (2006) suggests with respect to farming communities:

While stoic individuals tend not to define problems as illnesses, they also may actively seek to avoid situations where they will be encouraged to talk about their problems, thoughts and emotions. For such individuals, in addition to improving mental health literacy, mental health services may also need to be framed/described in such a way as to alleviate any concerns about admitting and dealing with emotions and problems (p. 775).

Men’s Shed—although not a service exclusive to rural farming areas—provides a positive example of this framing, with their motto ‘Men don’t talk face to face they talk shoulder to shoulder’ (Australian Men’s Shed Association, 2011). This reflects participants’ pragmatic focus and is likely to be perceived as an appropriate means of support.

Formal support services should be developed from existing networks of social connection where trust and established relationships already exist. The use of services identified as having an

existing ‘trusted helper status’ (Fuller, Kelly, Law, Pollard, & Fragar, 2009, p. 5) have been identified as the most effective way to link individuals with appropriate support. This also emphasises the need to build the capacity of existing services with an established rapport with the rural farming population to respond to levels of need. Hogan and colleagues reinforce the need for developing a ‘trusted person’s model of farmer engagement’ (2010, p. 132). This enables the development of a farming family member’s readiness to utilise support incrementally. Building rapport and trust over time will eventually lead to engagement about issues that may be stigmatising or perceived as a threat to their worldview (Hogan et al., 2012). Farmer-targeted services utilising this style of model include the Sustainable Farm Families™ Program (Brumby et al., 2009; Brumby, Wilson, & Willder, 2008) and Farmlink (Perceval et al., 2011). This model, when considered in the context of a peer-support framework, also capitalises on previous research suggesting that rural males—in line with their inherent pragmatism—will put themselves in an emotionally uncomfortable situation if they can see benefit in the personal outlay (Merritt & Turner, 2013). This is in line with this research’s findings with regard to individuals looking beyond their own needs to the needs of others.

Care must be taken in research, policy development and service delivery to avoid the promotion of gendered stereotypes in relation to the health, wellbeing and safety of farming family members. This research identified both males and females as demonstrating what are traditionally considered ‘masculinist’ patterns of behaviour. By its very nature, this term has gendered connotations. In reality, however, patterns of behaviour and expressions of grief were expressed on a continuum, independent of gender. Having warned against reinforcing inaccurate stereotypes of farming family members, it would be remiss not to recognise that socialised patterns of behaviour are strongly ingrained from a very young age and, consequently, are difficult to shift. The policy response to health and wellbeing challenges in rural farming communities must acknowledge the potential barriers to traditional support mechanisms used in

the broader population (Fuller et al., 2000). Given such barriers, there is a need for the development of strengths-based approaches that acknowledge contextual variation and the impact this has on shaping socialised behaviours. In contemporary literature, there is an increasing tendency towards interventions that accept the existence of stigmatising stereotypes—rather than attempting to alter stigmatising beliefs and attitudes—while at the same time building on positive coping skills (Mittal, Sullivan, Chekuri, Allee, & Corrigan, 2012). From a socially-constructed, strengths-based perspective, help-seeking in rural farming communities could be framed as an action-oriented, goal-directed response to challenge and a way of securing the wellbeing of those around you as a direct outcome of your own improved wellbeing. This also requires framing farmer health and wellbeing more generally to be a critical component of achieving farm business success (Brumby, 2013).

Building support capacity

The opportunities for appropriate and acceptable support identified within this research are currently being challenged by the changing nature of contemporary farming. Decreasing farm numbers, increasing farm sizes, increasing mechanisation, increasing patterns of solo work practices and reducing rural services all contribute to the limited availability of support, whether through formal or informal means. It is necessary to build the capacity of appropriate services—as determined through consultation with those with lived experience—with existing links of trust in rural farming communities in order for them to be able to support clients experiencing distress (Fuller et al., 2009). This includes general practitioner services, bush nursing centres and community health facilities. More targeted services include the Rural Financial Counselling Service, the National Centre for Farmer Health through its Sustainable Farm Families™ program (Brumby et al., 2009), Farmlink (Perceval et al., 2011), industry groups and farmers' federations. While these services are already responding to members of farming families experiencing

psychosocial distress, many are often under-resourced to do so adequately, or cover limited geographic regions. Service providers must be supported through appropriate referral pathways and the ongoing provision of adequate training and resources to face the physical and emotional challenges of supporting those in distress. As research has identified, farmers do want engagement around health and wellbeing (Brumby, 2013; Kavalidou, McPhedran, & De Leo, 2013). What this research emphasises is the need for this support to be both geographically and psychologically available and delivered in an appropriate and acceptable way, considered within the context of patterns of socialised and culturally influenced behaviours. People delivering services need to have some knowledge or experience of rural farming communities.

Given the ongoing decline of on-the-ground rural service services, innovative methods of bereavement support need to be explored. With growing levels of access to digital services for farm business purposes (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009b), online service provision for health and wellbeing must also be explored while maintaining consideration of the necessity for contextually appropriate and user-acceptable services. One example of this currently in the development phase is the Ripple Effect, an online intervention for farming men designed to reduce the self- and perceived-stigma associated with a lived experience of suicide (Kennedy et al., 2015). Given that not all members of farming families have access to online services, however, this support must be complimentary to—not instead of—on-the-ground services.

Implications for training and education

Workforce training

In order for support services to adequately respond to the needs of farming families, appropriate training that reflects the farming context is required. This could be facilitated through broad-based workforce training such as Agricultural Health and Medicine. Postgraduate

Agricultural Health and Medicine training originated in Iowa, USA (Donham & Mutel, 1982; Fisher & Donham, 2011), and has now been made available in Australia through Deakin University's School of Medicine (Deakin University, 2014). This training is designed for health and agricultural professionals including general practitioners, nurses, allied health practitioners, veterinary surgeons, agronomists and primary industry workers. The training details the health challenges (including mental health) currently facing agricultural workers, their families and communities in a manner reflecting the distinctive social, psychological and geographical context in which these people live and work. Variations of this training should be a prerequisite for those working in fields directly or indirectly involved in farmer health, wellbeing and safety (for example, rural financial counsellors).

Community education

In addition to training relative to health and wellbeing service delivery, much broader community-based education is required about the situational aspects of suicide common in farming communities. This is particularly important given that most participants in this research identified situational risk factors (such as family breakdown and disconnection from farming), rather than diagnosed mental health problems, as precursors to suicide. Community education must recognise this and focus on what risk factors to look for, what help is available and how best to access this help. This will provide a natural, community-based, gate-keeping strategy for those at risk.

Training and improved awareness about issues that impact the experience of bereavement is also required for the general public. There is a need to increase public literacy about grief, and break down the stereotype of 'good grief' as requiring either an emotive or a cognitive response. Contemporary research has long dispelled the myth of an emotive response as a necessary response to loss and now recognises a resilient response as a normative expression of the human

capacity to cope with traumatic events (Mancini & Bonanno, 2006). However, the public (and sometimes clinical) perception of an emotional response as constituting ‘good grief’ is pervasive (Breen & O'Connor, 2007). Several participants who demonstrated a resilient response to bereavement continued to doubt the validity and acceptability of their grief response, with some participants even anticipating and remaining alert to an eventual crash at some point in the future, where grief would necessarily overwhelm them. While it would be wrong to preclude the expression of emotion, it is just as wrong to advocate the emotional expression of grief as obligatory. The perpetuation of messages about the ‘correct’ expression of grief—whether that be emotional or cognitive in nature—contributes to some people’s experience of debilitating self-stigma following a lived experience of suicide or accidental bereavement.

Support requirements for injury/illness support

The perception by participants of the burdensomeness and disconnection that arises from incapacitating injury or illness suggests a need for an additional level of tailored support for those members of farming families sustaining debilitating injuries or illness. Not only must the physical effects be treated, the additional risk of suicide must be considered in the planning of ongoing, volunteered and holistic support. Rehabilitation must focus on developing strategies to maintain positive connections, encourage effectiveness of contributions and avoid a sense of burdensomeness.

Strengths and limitations of the study

Strengths

The rural farming family study population was a previously unexplored cohort with an identified heightened risk of both suicide and accidental death. A broad-based recruitment

strategy resulted in the study approaching a gender-balanced sample with over 40% male participation: a far more balanced sample than the majority of previous bereavement research (Feigelman, Jordan, et al., 2009; Maple et al., 2014; Ott, Lueger, Kelber, & Prigerson, 2007). The recruitment strategy also ensured that the sample was representative of a population beyond those actively involved in bereavement support-groups or those accessing clinical services. The sample included a broad range of bereaved-deceased relationships. Although many were kinship relationships, this ranged from spousal, siblings, offspring and more distant kinship relationships. Friends and work colleagues were also represented. The recruitment period spanned a 10-month period, thus enabling participation outside of the varied range of particularly busy farming periods (for example, harvesting over the summer months for cropping farmers or winter/spring lamb marking or shearing for livestock farmers).

The use of qualitative methods allowed for an in-depth and contextually-considered understanding of life, death and loss by suicide and accidental death. This approach resulted in a detailed and nuanced understanding of bereavement that would not have been possible through the use of quantitative methods. As Leenaars (2006) states: '[n]o statistics can capture the pain of the people' (p. 106). The study design, in the form of a relatively unstructured conversation, had additional benefits aside from the primary goals of this research. Participants frequently expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to talk openly and honestly about their bereavement experience, suggesting a therapeutic benefit to the research process. This supports similar findings in previous bereavement research. In addition to this therapeutic benefit, the inclusion of lived experience provides avenues to reduce stigma and opportunities to draw on the wisdom and experience of those directly impacted by bereavement (Suicide Prevention Australia, 2015). In spite of the experience of crisis, those with lived experience continue to offer many resources and competencies to bereavement research (Dyregrov, 2011).

Limitations

In spite of efforts to address as many of the previously identified limitations of bereavement research as possible, this study has its own set of limitations. The original study design aimed to explore the bereavement experience following all modes of externally caused death, including suicide, accidental death, homicide, misadventure and deaths by unknown cause or intent within a specific population: farming families. This decision was based on the premise that each of these external causes of death may potentially share features relating to trauma, levels of expectedness and preparedness, the experience of stigma and so on, that may differentiate them from the bereavement experience following a death by natural causes. The recruitment process was, however, only successful in attracting persons impacted by suicide and/or accidental death, so exploration was necessarily limited to bereavement following only these two external causes of death.

The recruitment strategy utilised within this research was carefully designed to overcome many of the criticisms of previous bereavement research. However, it too was not without its limitations. The requirement for proactive involvement by participants, although ethically responsible, may have required too much of some grief-stricken people and these potential participants may have been missed (Maple et al., 2014). Other potential participants may have felt a reluctance to share their story, whether due to stigma or other reasons (Maple, 2005). This research design was also unable to capture this group.

The study design had a cross-sectional focus that captured a snapshot of experience based on one moment in time only. This design was therefore unable to capture the longitudinal experience of suicide and accidental death bereavement. However, combating this limitation to some degree was the representation, across the sample, of a broad range of times since bereavement. These time periods ranged from a few months to over two decades. While variable

time since death has often been considered a limitation of bereavement research (McIntosh & Jordan, 2011), this appeared to have limited influence in the current research. Regardless of time since death, the context in which the death was experienced seemed to be the most significant factor in influencing the experience of bereavement.

Small sample sizes in qualitative research have been criticised for their failure to provide generalizability. However, the nature of qualitative research from a social constructionist perspective questions the validity of making all-encompassing claims. Qualitative data relays one perspective, at one point in time, providing a detailed, contextual and multilayered interpretation. There is no 'one' truth that can be applied to all. The results of this study emphasise the individual experience of bereavement as influenced by the social, psychological and geographical context, and questions the value of legitimacy of attempts to generalise broadly about the experience of life, death and loss. Rather, what can be generalised is the importance—across all populations—of recognising the interaction of a range of factors influenced by the context in which bereavement is encountered as providing the most meaningful understanding of experience.

The vast majority of the sample was of Anglo-Saxon heritage (with only Anna describing being born of Eastern European migrant parents), and frequently originated from multiple generations of Australian farming families. While this provided valuable insight into the context of long-established rural family farming, the study outcomes failed to represent the experience of non-Anglo-Saxon migrant farming families (particularly first-generation), or those of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (a cohort for whom traumatic death is particularly prevalent).

Data about the death event and its precipitating factors (particularly for suicide) was limited to the perceptions of participants. While the motivating factors for suicide are ultimately never completely known, there may be more accurate ways to assess suicide motivation within farming communities.

Recommendations for future research

Further understanding of the expression of contextually influenced behaviour

In recognising the non-gendered patterns of socialised behaviours in this sample, there may be further implications for the broader field of health research, including help-seeking. Help-seeking behaviours are frequently explored along gender lines (Herbst, Griffith, & Slama, 2014; Roy et al., 2014). The data presented in this research suggests that it would be valuable to explore help-seeking patterns relative to cultural or societal norms, as opposed to gendered norms, which may be incorrectly assumed.

The use of an arbitrary gender line also acts to exclude up to 50% of the population from consideration in research. This compounds the problem, previously noted in Chapter 2, in both suicide and accidental research, where females—due to their small absolute numbers in rural and remote areas—are often neglected from further research. Examining populations along societal norms or cultural lines, as opposed to purely gender lines, would help rectify this problem. This consideration must continue to be balanced with the disproportionate representation of females in bereavement research and ensure an equitable representation of both male and female voices of lived experience.

A deeper understanding of patterns of suicide in farming families

Farmer suicide is frequently considered in the light of challenging climate or financial failure. The narratives shared within this research challenged this perception on many occasions. Future research could endeavour to understand further the precipitating factors for farmer suicide and how this interacts with the worldview of farming families. While the perceptions of those bereaved by suicide have provided a rich array of data from which to begin to understand these

suicide risk factors, further research involving members of farming families who have attempted suicide or experienced suicide ideation would contribute greatly to the knowledge base in this area.

Further understanding of farming families within a contextual framework

This research underlines the importance of context in shaping the experience and expression of bereavement. The contextual framework developed here could be used to further understand a range of other health and wellbeing issues in the rural farming population. This framework could also be used when developing and evaluating interventions aimed at appropriately supporting members of farming families in crisis, whether due to bereavement or other psychologically challenging life events such as natural disaster or succession planning. The shared contextual elements demonstrated in this participant group could be examined across a larger Australian farming sample. This has the potential of developing responses that are appropriate for a much wider sector of the rural Australian farming population.

The application of this contextual framework may also assist in interpreting the findings of other Australian farming research. The positive framing of challenges demonstrated within the narratives of this research is interesting in light of a study conducted by McLaren and Hopes (2002). In their study, the overall finding suggested people from rural areas reported having more to live for than those in urban areas, in contradiction to the increased suicide rates in rural areas. When these findings were examined more closely, rural residents (although not exclusively farming family members) reported greater self-perceived coping than urban residents. Consideration of these findings within the contextual framework posed by this research suggests that it may be participants' positive framing rather than a measurement of coping itself that may explain the conclusions drawn by McLaren and Hopes (2002). This tendency for positive framing may also explain Judd and colleagues' (2006) reporting of farmers as more psychologically

healthy than non-farming rural residents, despite the identification of elevated suicide rates. The significantly higher levels of ‘positive affect’ that farmers (versus non-farmers) reported in Judd’s study supports this suggestion.

Further understanding of the farming context described within this sample could be gained through its application to Australian farming families that vary from those studied here. While there were patterns of similarity identified in the farming context of these participants, it was also stressed that individual differences would influence the experience of this context. It would be valuable to expand the investigation of this context into first generation migrant farmers, itinerant farming workers and those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander. Within these groups, factors of significant influence in the current sample (for example, connection to place) may be perceived differently.

Understanding bereavement relative to other traumatic experiences

Several participants described a range of traumatic experiences throughout their lives in addition to bereavement through suicide or accidental death. Given the context of participants, traumatic events with a practical impact appear to have a different level of impact than those that, while personally challenging, have less debilitating practical implications (for example, on the running of the farm business). Further exploration of how bereavement compares with other traumatic incidents in farming families is warranted. This is particularly important given the often highly integrated nature of life and work on a farm, and where succession decisions or the impact of natural disaster can have such a considerable and long-lasting impact on the ongoing viability and existence of farms and family members’ lives.

Support for farming families

It was interesting to note that no participants spoke of attending formalised bereavement support groups, despite several participants describing the therapeutic value of talking to people with shared experience. In contrast, both international and Australian bereavement research (Breen & O'Connor, 2009; Breen & O'Connor, 2011) has frequently relied on participation from members of support groups (see Maple et al., 2014 for numerous international examples). While this may reflect the uniqueness of the current sample, it may also reveal something about rural support groups, and/or the limited availability of these supports in rural Australia. Further research is required to understand the availability and utilisation of support groups in rural areas and whether there is the potential to create peer support groups appropriate for the unmet support needs of farming family members bereaved by suicide and accidental death. This is of particular importance given that several participants spoke of experiencing many years without appropriate support, despite a desire and willingness to accept help if deemed appropriate.

Summary

The focus of this research was to understand how Australian farming families experience loss following suicide and accidental death. In order to do so, it was imperative to develop an appreciation of who farming families were and how they experienced life and death within its geographical, psychological and social context. Participants' pragmatic worldview—shaped by the family farming context in which this was situated and incorporating a strong connection to place—appears to fundamentally influence the understanding of life and death, the experience of bereavement, the expression of grief and the continuing bond with the deceased.

References

- ABC Rural. (2011). Farmers depressed by drought could take years to recover. Retrieved July 9th 2012, from <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/201106/s3233397.htm>.
- Agerbo, E. (2005). Midlife suicide risk, partner's psychiatric illness, spouse and child bereavement by suicide or other modes of death: A gender specific study. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 59(5), 407-412. doi: 10.1136/jech.2004.024950
- Ajdacic-Gross, V., Ring, M., Gadola, E., Lauber, C., Bopp, M., Gutzwiller, F., & Rössler, W. (2008). Suicide after bereavement: An overlooked problem. *Psychological Medicine*, 38(5), 673-676. doi: 10.1017/s0033291708002754
- Albrecht, G. (2005). 'Solastalgia': A new concept in health and identity. *Philosophy Activism Nature*, 3, 41-55.
- Albrecht, G. (2008). Solastalgia: The origins and definitions. *Healthearth*. Retrieved 17th July, 2014, from <http://healthearth.blogspot.com.au/2008/01/solastalgia-history-and-definition.html>.
- Albrecht, G. (2010). Solastalgia and the creation of new ways of living. In S. Pilgrim & J. N. Pretty (Eds.), *Nature and Culture: Rebuilding Lost Connections*. London: Earthscan Ltd.
- Albrecht, G., Sartore, G. M., Connor, L., Higginbotham, N., Freeman, S., Kelly, B., . . . Pollard, G. (2007). Solastalgia: The distress caused by environmental change. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 15(1 suppl), S95-S98.
- Alford, K. A., Cook, J. F., & Conway, P. (2012). Conclusion: Rural families, another element in the mosaic of diversity. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 15(5), 461-463. doi: 10.1080/10522158.2012.721120

- Alston, M. (1997). Socio-cultural factors and family farming. In J. Lees (Ed.), *A Legacy Under Threat? Family Farming in Australia*. (pp. 99-120). Armidale: University of New England.
- Alston, M. (2012). Rural male suicide in Australia. *Social Science and Medicine*, 74(4), 515-522.
- Alston, M., & Kent, J. (2004). Social impacts of drought: A report to NSW Agriculture. (pp. 1-129). Wagga Wagga: Centre for Rural Social Research, Charles Sturt University.
- Alston, M., & Kent, J. (2008). The big dry: The link between rural masculinities and poor health outcomes for farming men. *Journal of Sociology*, 44(2), 133-147. doi: 10.1177/1440783308089166
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association.
- Andersen, K., Hawgood, J., Klieve, H., Kolves, K., & De Leo, D. (2010). Suicide in selected occupations in Queensland: Evidence from the state suicide register. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 44(3), 243-249. doi: 10.3109/00048670903487142
- Anderson, H. (2010). Common grief, complex grieving. *Pastoral Psychology*, 59, 127-136. doi: 10.1007/s11089-009-0243-5
- Andrews, T. (2012). What is Social Constructionism? *Grounded Theory Review*, 11(1), 39-46. Retrieved from <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2012/06/01/what-is-social-constructionism/>.
- Andriessen, K. (2009). Can postvention be prevention? *Crisis*, 30(1), 43-47. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910.30.1.43
- Andriessen, K., & Krysinaka, K. (2012). Essential questions on suicide bereavement and postvention. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 9(1), 24-32. doi: 10.3390/ijerph9010024

- Archer, J. (2001). Grief from an evolutionary perspective. In M. Stroebe, R. Hansson, W. Stroebe & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement Research: Consequences, Coping and Care*. Washington DC: APA.
- Armour, M. (2007). Violent death. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 14(4), 53-90. doi: 10.1300/J137v14n04_04
- Arnautovska, U., McPhedran, S., & De Leo, D. (2013). A regional approach to understanding farmer suicide rates in Queensland. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 49(4), 593-599. doi: 10.1007/s00127-013-0777-9
- Attig, T. (2001). Relearning the world: Making and finding meanings. In R. A. Neimeyer (Ed.), *Meaning Reconstruction and the Experience of Loss* (pp. 33-53). Washington: APA.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2000). Suicides in Australia 1921-1998 (Cat. No. 3309.0). Retrieved November 6th, 2001, from [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/B677BAE5E1AC97E5CA2568BD0012ECBC/\\$File/33090_1921_to_1998.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/B677BAE5E1AC97E5CA2568BD0012ECBC/$File/33090_1921_to_1998.pdf).
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003a). Australian social trends - living arrangements: Farming families. Retrieved August 3rd, 2012, from <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/ABS@.nsf/7d12b0f6763c78caca257061001cc588/cdcd7dca1f3ddb21ca2570eb00835393!OpenDocument>.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003b). Australian Social Trends, 2003 (Cat. No. 4102.0). Retrieved August 3rd, 2012, from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyReleaseDate/2356424C275E3E45CA256EB400035395?OpenDocument>.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2008). Australian Social Trends, 2008 (Cat No. 4102.0). Retrieved August 3rd, 2012, from

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features62008?OpenDocument>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009a). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008 (Cat. No. 4714.0.55.005). Retrieved July 16th, 2012, from <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4714.0MainFeatures112008?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=4714.0&issue=2008&num=&view=>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009b). Use of the Internet on Farms, Australia, 2007-08 (Cat. No. 8150). Retrieved February 18th, 2013, from <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/8150.0Main+Features12007-08?OpenDocument>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011a). Australian Social Trends March, 2011: Health Outside Major Cities (Cat. No. 4102.0). Retrieved June 16th, 2012, from [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/LookupAttach/4102.0Publication25.03.114/\\$File/41020_HealthOMC_Mar2011.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/LookupAttach/4102.0Publication25.03.114/$File/41020_HealthOMC_Mar2011.pdf).

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011b). Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2009-2010 (Cat. No. 3218.0). Retrieved July 3rd, 2012, from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3218.0~2009-10~Main+Features~Main+Features?OpenDocument>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (November 2013). Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly (Cat. No. 6291.0.55.003). Retrieved March 13th, 2014, from <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6291.0.55.003Nov2013?OpenDocument>.

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. (2001). Measuring Remoteness: Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) Appendix A. Retrieved February

- 15th, 2012, from <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-historicpubs-hfsocc-ocpanew14a.htm>.
- Australian Institute of Health & Welfare. (2003). *Rural, Regional and Remote Health: A Study on Mortality*. Canberra: AIHW. Retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442467526>.
- Australian Institute of Health & Welfare. (2007). *Rural, Regional and Remote Health: A Study on Mortality (2nd edition)*. Canberra: AIHW. Retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442468054>.
- Australian Men's Shed Association. (2011). What is AMSA? Retrieved February 17th, 2015, from <http://www.mensshed.org/who-is-amsa/.aspx>.
- Australian Safety and Compensation Council. (2009). Compendium of Workers' Compensation Statistics Australia, 2006–07 (pp. 1-94). Barton, ACT.
- Baeseman, Z. J. (2009). A comparison of Wisconsin's suicide rates by urbanization and sex. *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, 108(2), 94-98. Retrieved from https://http://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org/_WMS/publications/wmj/pdf/108/2/94.pdf.
- Bailey, S. E., Kral, M. J., & Dunham, K. (1999). Survivors of suicide do grieve differently: Empirical support for a common sense proposition. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 29(3), 256-271.
- Ballestas, T., Xiao, J., McEvoy, S., & Somerford, P. (2011). *The epidemiology of injury in Western Australia, 2000-2008*. Perth: Department of Health WA. Retrieved from http://www.health.wa.gov.au/trauma_system_and_services/documents/epidemiology_of_injury_2000_2008.pdf.

- Barlow, C. A., Jeannette, W. S., Chugh, U., Rawlinson, D., Hides, E., & Leith, J. (2010). An evaluation of a suicide bereavement Peer Support Program. *Death Studies, 34*(10), 915-930. doi: 10.1080/07481181003761435
- Barr, N. (2014). *New entrants to Australian agricultural industries – Where are the young farmers?* Canberra: RIRDC Retrieved from <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/14-003>.
- Bartik, W., Maple, M., Edwards, H., & Kiernan, M. (2013a). Adolescent survivors after suicide: Australian young people's bereavement narratives. *Crisis, 34*(3), 211-217. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910/a000185
- Bartik, W., Maple, M., Edwards, H., & Kiernan, M. (2013b). The psychological impact of losing a friend to suicide. *Australasian Psychiatry, 21*(6), 545-549. doi: 10.1177/1039856213497986
- Baume, P. J., & Clinton, M. E. (1997). Social and cultural patterns of suicide in young people in rural Australia. *The Australian Journal of Rural Health, 5*(3), 115-120.
- Beard, J. R., Tomaska, N., Earnest, A., Summerhayes, R., & Morgan, G. (2009). Influence of socioeconomic and cultural factors on rural health. *Australian Journal of Rural Health, 17*(1), 10-15. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1584.2008.01030.x
- Begley, M., & Quayle, E. (2007). The lived experience of adults bereaved by suicide: A phenomenological study. *Crisis, 28*(1), 26-34. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910.28.1.26
- Beitin, B. K. (2012). Interview and sampling: How many and whom. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Bell, C. C. (2011). Trauma, culture, and resiliency. In C. C. Bell, S. M. Southwick, B. Litz, D. Charney & M. J. Friedman (Eds.), *Resilience and Mental Health Challenges Across the Lifespan* (pp. 176-188).

- Bell, J., Stanley, N., Mallon, S., & Manthorpe, J. (2012). Life will never be the same again: Examining grief in survivors bereaved by young suicide. *Illness, Crisis and Loss*, 20(1), 49-68. doi: 10.2190/IL.20.1.e
- Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Doubleday.
- Berman, A. L. (2011). Estimating the population of survivors of suicide: Seeking an evidence base. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 41(1), 110-116. doi: 10.1111/j.1943-278X.2010.00009.x.
- Biddle, L., Cooper, J., Owen-Smith, A., Klineberg, E., Bennewith, O., Hawton, K., . . . Gunnell, D. (2013). Qualitative interviewing with vulnerable populations: individuals' experiences of participating in suicide and self-harm based research. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 145(3), 356-362. doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2012.08.024.
- Bolton, J. M., Au, W., Leslie, W. D., Martens, P. J., Enns, M. W., Roos, L. L., . . . Sareen, J. (2013). Parents bereaved by offspring suicide: A population-based longitudinal case-control study. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 70(2), 158-167. doi: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2013.275
- Bonanno, G. (2009). *The other side of darkness: What the new science of bereavement tells us about life after loss*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bonanno, G. A., Wortman, C. B., Lehman, D. R., Tweed, R. G., Haring, M., Sonnega, J., . . . Nesse, R. M. (2002). Resilience to loss and chronic grief: A prospective study from preloss to 18-months postloss. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83(5), 1150-1164. doi: 10.1037//0022-3514.83.5.1150
- Booth, N., Briscoe, M., & Powell, R. (2000). Suicide in the farming community: Methods used and contact with health services. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 57(9), 642-644. doi: 10.1136/oem.57.9.642

- Botha, K.-J., Guilfoyle, A., & Botha, D. (2009). Beyond normal grief: A critical reflection on immediate post-death experiences of survivors of suicide. *Advances in Mental Health*, 8(1), 37-47. doi: 10.5172/jamh.8.1.37
- Bourke, L. (2001). Rural communities. In L. Bourke & S. Lockie (Eds.), *Rurality Bites: The Social and Environmental Transformation of Rural Australia* (pp. 118-128). Annandale: Pluto Press.
- Bourke, L. (2003). Toward understanding youth suicide in an Australian rural community. *Social Science and Medicine*, 57(12), 2355-2365.
- Bourke, L., & Lockie, S. (2001). Rural Australia: An introduction. In L. Bourke & S. Lockie (Eds.), *Rurality Bites: The social and environmental transformation of rural Australia*. (pp. 1-13). Annandale, NSW: Pluto Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and Loss (Volume 3): Sadness and Depression*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brannon, R. (1976). The male sex role: Our culture's blueprint for manhood, and what it's done for us lately. In D. David & R. Brannon (Eds.), *The forty-nine percent majority: The male sex role*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Breen, L. J. (2006). *Silenced voices: Experiences of grief following road traffic crashes in Western Australia*. (PhD), Edith Cowan University.
- Breen, L. J., & O'Connor, M. (2007). The fundamental paradox in the grief literature: A critical reflection. *Omega*, 55(3), 199-218.
- Breen, L. J., & O'Connor, M. (2009). Acts of resistance: Breaking the silence of grief following traffic crash fatalities. *Death Studies*, 34(1), 30-53. doi: 10.1080/07481180903372384

- Breen, L. J., & O'Connor, M. (2011). Family and social networks after bereavement: Experiences of support, change and isolation. *Journal of Family Therapy*, *33*(1), 98-120. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6427.2010.00495.x
- Brent, D., Melhem, N., Donohoe, M. B., & Walker, M. (2009). The incidence and course of depression in bereaved youth 21 months after the loss of a parent to suicide, accident, or sudden natural death. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *166*(7), 786-794. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.2009.08081244
- Brent, D., Perper, J., Moritz, G., Friend, A., Schweers, J., Allman, C., . . . Balach, L. (1993). Adolescent witness to a peer suicide. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *32*, 1184-1188.
- Browning, S. R., Westneat, S. C., & McKnight, R. H. (2008). Suicides among farmers in three Southeastern States, 1990-1998. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health*, *14*(4), 461-472. Retrieved from http://uknowledge.uky.edu/epidemiology_facpub/8.
- Brumby, S. (2013). *Farm work and family health: A study on farming family health across selected agricultural industries in Australia*. (PhD), La Trobe University, Bendigo, Australia. Retrieved from <http://arrow.latrobe.edu.au:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository/latrobe:37275>.
- Brumby, S., Chandrasekara, A., McCoombe, S., Kremer, P., & Lewandowski, P. (2011). Farming fit? Dispelling the Australian agrarian myth. *BMC Research Notes*, *4*, 89-89. doi: 10.1186/1756-0500-4-89
- Brumby, S., Kennedy, A., & Chandrasekara, A. (2013). Alcohol consumption, psychological distress and physical health in farming communities - an Australian study. *Journal of Rural Health*, *29*(3), 1-9. doi: 10.1111/jrh.12001

- Brumby, S., Willder, S., & Martin, J. (2009). The sustainable farm families project: Changing attitudes to health. *Rural and Remote Health, 9*: 1012. Retrieved from <http://www.rrh.org.au>.
- Brumby, S., Wilson, B., & Willder, S. (2008). *Living longer on the land: sustainable farm families in broadacre agriculture*. ACT: RIRDC.
- Bryant, L., & Garnham, B. (2013). Beyond discourses of drought: The micro-politics of the wine industry and farmer distress. *Journal of Rural Studies, 32*, 1-9. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2013.03.002
- Bryant, L., & Garnham, B. (2014). The fallen hero: masculinity, shame and farmer suicide in Australia. *Gender, Place and Culture, 22*(1), 67-82. doi: 10.1080/0966369X.2013.855628
- Buras, N. (2007). *The social construction of loss and grief: Experiences of coastal Louisiana residents*. (Master of Arts (Sociology)), University of New Orleans.
- Burrows, S., Auger, N., Gamache, P., & Hamel, D. (2013). Leading causes of unintentional injury and suicide mortality in Canadian adults across the urban-rural continuum. *Public Health Reports, 128*(6), 443-453. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3804088/>.
- Caldwell, T. M., Jorm, A. F., & Dear, K. B. (2004). Suicide and mental health in rural, remote and metropolitan areas in Australia. *Medical Journal of Australia, 181*(7 Suppl), S10-14. Retrieved from https://http://www.mja.com.au/journal/2004/181/7/suicide-and-mental-health-rural-remote-and-metropolitan-areas-australia?0=ip_login_no_cache%3D52358f75476c555262d39bf9b133cb55.
- Callahan, J. (2000). Predictors and correlates of bereavement in suicide support group participants. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 30*(2), 104-124.
- Canetto, S. S., & Lester, D. (1998). Gender, culture, and suicidal behaviour. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 35*(2), 163-190.

- Carrington, K., McIntosh, A., Hogg, R., & Scott, J. (2011). Safeguarding rural Australia: Addressing masculinity and violence in rural settings - framework and scope for secondary data analysis in a rural Australia context. Brisbane, QLD: Centre for Law and Justice, Queensland University of Technology.
- Carter, K. C., & Bolden, C. L. (2012). Culture work in the research interview. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cerel, J., Fristad, M. A., Weller, E. B., & Weller, R. A. (1999). Suicide-bereaved children and adolescents: A controlled longitudinal examination. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *38*(6), 672-679. doi: 10.1097/00004583-199906000-00013
- Cerel, J., Fristad, M. A., Weller, E. B., & Weller, R. A. (2000). Suicide-bereaved children and adolescents (II): Parental and family functioning. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *39*(4), 437-444. doi: 10.1097/00004583-200004000-00012
- Cerel, J., Jordan, J. R., & Duberstein, P. R. (2008). The impact of suicide on the family. *Crisis*, *29*(1), 38-44. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910.29.1.38
- Cerel, J., Maple, M., Aldrich, R., & van de Venne, J. (2013). Exposure to suicide and identification as survivor: Results from a random-digit dial survey. *Crisis*, *34*(6), 13-19. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910/a000220.
- Cerel, J., McIntosh, J., Neimeyer, R., Maple, M., & Marshall, D. (2014). The continuum of “survivorship”: Definitional issues in the aftermath of suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, *44*(6), 591-600. doi: 10.1111/sltb.12093

- Cerel, J., van de Venne, J. G., Moore, M. M., Maple, M. J., Flaherty, C., & Brown, M. M. (2015). Veteran exposure to suicide: Prevalence and correlates. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 179*, 82-87.
- Clapperton, A. J., Herde, E., & Lower, T. (2013). Quad bike-related injury in Victoria, Australia. *Medical Journal of Australia, 199*(6), 418-422. doi: 10.5694/mja12.11456
- Clark, N., & O'Callaghan, P. (2013). Australian farming families are here to stay. *Farm Policy Journal, 10*(3), 33-43.
- Clark, S., & Goldney, R. (2000). The impact of suicide on relatives and friends. In K. Hawton & K. van Heeringen (Eds.), *The International Handbook of Suicide and Attempted Suicide* (pp. 467-484). Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
- Clarke, A. E. (2003). Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn. *Symbolic Interaction, 26*(4), 553-576. doi: 10.1525/si.2003.26.4.553
- Clarke, M. (2009). *Farm Health and Safety Research Compendium 2009*. Canberra: RIRDC
Retrieved from <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/09-065>.
- Cleary, A., & Brannick, T. (2007). Suicide and changing values and beliefs in Ireland. *Crisis, 28*(2), 82-88. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910.28.2.82
- Cleiren, M., Diekstra, R., Kerkhof, A., & van der Wal, J. (1994). Mode of death and kinship in bereavement: Focusing on "who" rather than "how". *Crisis, 15*, 22-36.
- Cleiren, M., Grad, O., Zavasnik, A., & Diekstra, R. (1996). Psychosocial impact of bereavement after suicide and fatal traffic accident: a comparative two-country study. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 94*(1), 37-44.
- Coleman, R., Fragar, L., Morton, C., & Winter, K. (1996). *Profile of the health and safety of Australian farmers, farm families and farm workers*. Barton ACT: RIRDC. Retrieved from <http://www.aghealth.org.au/index.php?id=111>.

- Collins, J. E., Winefield, H., Ward, L., & Turnbull, D. (2009). Understanding help seeking for mental health in rural South Australia: Thematic analytical study. *Australian Journal of Primary Health, 15*, 159-165. doi: 10.1071/PY09019
- Commonwealth Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations. (2013). *Small area labour markets Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from http://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/small_area_labour_markets_text_only_june_2013.pdf.
- Congdon, P. (2011). Explaining the spatial pattern of suicide and self-harm rates: A case study of East and South East England. *Applied Spatial Analysis and Policy, 4*(1), 23-43. doi: 10.1007/s12061-009-9038-4
- Conrad, D. (2010). Social capital and men's mental health. In D. Conrad & A. White (Eds.), *Promoting Men's Mental Health*. Oxon: Radcliffe Publishing Ltd.
- Cook, J. F., Alford, K. A., & Conway, P. (2012). Introduction to rural families and reshaping human services. *Journal of Family Social Work, 15*, 351-358. doi: 10.1080/10522158.2012.721122
- Cook, K. E. (2012). Stigma and the interview encounter. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cooke, M., Mitrou, F., Lawrence, D., Guimond, E., & Beavon, D. (2007). Indigenous well-being in four countries: An application of the UNDP'S human development index to Indigenous peoples in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. *BMC International Health and Human Rights, 7*. doi:10.1186/1472-698X-7-9
- Corr, C. A., Nabe, C. M., & Corr, D. M. (2006). *Death and Dying, Life and Living*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

- Courtenay, W. H. (2000). Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: A theory of gender and health. *Social Science and Medicine*, *50*, 1385-1401. doi: 10.1016/S0277-9536(99)00390-1
- Courtenay, W. H. (2006). Rural men's health: Situating risk in the negotiation of masculinity. In H. Campbell, M. Bell & M. Finney (Eds.), *Country Boys: Masculinity and Rural Life*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Currier, J. M., Holland, J. M., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2006). Sense-making, grief, and the experience of violent loss: Toward a mediational model. *Death Studies*, *30*(5), 403-428. doi: 10.1080/07481180600614351
- Cutlip, A. C., Bankston, W. B., & Lee, M. R. (2010). Civic community and nonmetropolitan white suicide. *Archives of Suicide Research*, *14*(3), 261-265. doi: 10.1080/13811118.2010.494145
- Cvinar, J. G. (2005). Do suicide survivors suffer social stigma: A review of the literature. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, *41*(1), 14-21. doi: 10.1111/j.0031-5990.2005.00004.x
- Czech, S., Shakeshaft, A. P., Byrnes, J. M., & Doran, C. M. (2010). Comparing the cost of alcohol-related traffic crashes in rural and urban environments. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, *42*(4), 1195-1198. doi: 10.1016/j.aap.2010.01.010
- Day, L., Boulter, J., & McGrath, A. (1999). Hazard exposure among farmers in Victoria, Australia. *Journal of Occupational Health and Safety - Australia and New Zealand*, *15*(1), 53-60.
- Day, L. M. (1999). Farm work related fatalities among adults in Victoria, Australia: The human cost of agriculture. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, *31*(1-2), 153-159.

- De Groot, M., De Keijser, J., & Neeleman, J. (2006). Grief shortly after suicide and natural death: A comparative study among spouses and first-degree relatives. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 36*(4), 418-431. doi: 10.1521/suli.2006.36.4.418
- De Leo, D. (2007). Suicide mortality data need revision. *Medical Journal of Australia, 186*(3), 157-158. Retrieved from http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/186_03_050207/letters_050207_fm-4.html.
- De Leo, D. (2015). Can we rely on suicide data mortality? *Crisis, 36*(1), 1-3. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910/a000315.
- De Leo, D., Dudley, M. J., Aebersold, C. J., Mendoza, J. A., Barnes, M. A., Harrison, J. E., & Ranson, D. L. (2010). Achieving standardised reporting of suicide in Australia: Rationale and program for change. *Medical Journal of Australia, 192*(8), 452-456. Retrieved from <https://http://www.mja.com.au/journal/2010/192/8/achieving-standardised-reporting-suicide-australia-rationale-and-program-change>.
- De Leo, D., Svetcic, J., & Milner, A. (2011). Suicide in Indigenous people in Queensland, Australia: Trends and methods, 1994-2007. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 45*(7), 532-538. doi: 10.3109/00048674.2011.570310
- Deakin University. (2014). Graduate Certificate of Agricultural Health and Medicine. Retrieved January 23rd, 2015, from <http://www.deakin.edu.au/future-students/courses/course.php?course=H522>.
- Ding, N., Berry, H. L., & O'Brien, L. V. (2015). One-year reciprocal relationship between community participation and mental wellbeing in Australia: A panel analysis. *Social Science and Medicine, 128C*. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.01.022
- Doka, K. J., & Martin, T. L. (2002). How we grieve: Culture, class, and gender. In K. J. Doka (Ed.), *Disenfranchised Grief: Direction, Challenges, and Strategies for Practice* (2nd ed., pp. 337-347). Champaign, IL: Research Press.

- Doka, K. J., & Martin, T. L. (2010). *Grieving beyond gender: Understanding the ways men and women mourn*. New York: Routledge.
- Doka, K. J., & Martin, T. L. (2011). Grieving styles: Gender and grief. *Grief Matters: The Australian Journal of Grief and Bereavement*, 14(2), 42-45.
- Donham, K. J., & Mutel, C. F. (1982). Agricultural medicine: the missing component of the Rural Health Movement. *The Journal of Family Practice*, 14(3), 511-520.
- Donham, K. J., & Thelin, A. (2006). *Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for the Health Professions*. Iowa: Blackwell Publishing Professional.
- Doughty, E. (2009). Investigating adaptive grief styles: A Delphi study. *Death Studies*, 33(5), 462-480. doi: 10.1080/07481180902805715
- Dunne, E. J., & Dunne-Maxim, K. (2009). Why suicide loss is different for the survivors. In D. Wasserman & C. Wasserman (Eds.), *Suicidology and Suicide Prevention*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1897/1951). *Suicide: A study in sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Dyregrov, K. (2011). What do we know about needs for help after suicide in different parts of the world? A phenomenological perspective. *Crisis*, 32(6), 310-318. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910/a000098
- Dyregrov, K., Dieserud, G., Straiton, M., Rasmussen, M., Hjelmeland, H., Knizek, B., & Leenaars, A. (2010). Motivation for research participation among people bereaved by suicide. *Omega*, 62(2), 149-168. doi: 10.2190/OM.62.2.d
- Dyregrov, K., Nordanger, D., & Dyregrov, A. (2003). Predictors of psychosocial distress after suicide, SIDS and accidents. *Death Studies*, 27(2), 143-165. doi: 10.1080/07481180302892
- Dyregrov, K., Plyhn, E., & Dieserud, G. (2012). *After the suicide: Helping the bereaved to find a path from grief to recovery*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Dyregrov, K. M., Dieserud, G., Hjelmeland, H. M., Straiton, M., Rasmussen, M. L., Knizek, B. L., & Leenaars, A. A. (2011). Meaning-making through psychological autopsy interviews: The value of participating in qualitative research for those bereaved by suicide. *Death Studies, 35*(8), 685-710. doi: 10.1080/07481187.2011.553310
- Edmonston, C., Sheehan, M., & Siskind, V. (2009, November). "It's just the way it is out here ...": The role of 'remoteness' and 'context' in understanding and preventing rural road trauma. Paper presented at the 2009 Australasian Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference, Sydney, Australia.
- Elliot, J. (2005). *Using Narrative in Social Research*. London: SAGE.
- Erlich, S. M., Driscoll, T. R., Harrison, J. E., Frommer, M. S., & Leigh, J. (1993). Work-related agricultural fatalities in Australia, 1982-1984. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health, 19*(3), 162-167. doi: 10.5271/sjweh.1486
- Farberow, N. L., Gallagher-Thompson, D., Gilewski, M., & Thompson, L. (1992). The role of social supports in the bereavement process of surviving spouses of suicide and natural deaths. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 22*(1), 107-124.
- Feigelman, W., Gorman, B., & Jordan, J. (2009). Stigmatization and suicide bereavement. *Death Studies, 33*(7), 591-608. doi: 10.1080/07481180902979973
- Feigelman, W., Jordan, J., & Gorman, B. (2009). How they died, time since loss, and bereavement outcomes. *Omega, 58*(4), 251-273. doi: 10.2190/OM.58.4.a
- Feigelman, W., Jordan, J., & McIntosh, J. (2012). *Devastating Losses: How Parents Cope With the Death of a Child to Suicide or Drugs*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Finlay, L. (2012). Five lenses for the reflexive interviewer. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Fisher, E. L., & Donham, K. J. (2011). Agricultural medicine core course: Building capacity for health and safety professionals. *Journal of Agromedicine, 16*(2), 106-116. doi: 10.1080/1059924X.2011.560065
- Flick, U. (2009). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). New Delhi: SAGE Publications India.
- Foley, L. J. (2012). Constructing the respondent. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Fowlkes, M. R. (1990). The social regulation of grief. *Sociological Forum, 5*(4), 635-652.
- Fragar, L., Henderson, A., Morton, C., & Pollock, K. (2007). *The mental health of people on Australian farms: The facts*. Barton, ACT: RIRDC & ACAHS. Retrieved from <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/08-139>.
- Fragar, L., Pollock, K., & Morton, C. (2008). The changing profile of Australian farm injury deaths. *Journal of Occupational Health and Safety - Australia and New Zealand, 24*(5), 425-433.
- Frank, A. L., McKnight, R., Kirkhorn, S. R., & Gunderson, P. (2004). Issues of agricultural safety and health. *Annual Review of Public Health, 25*, 225-245. doi: 10.1146/annurev.publhealth.25.101802.123007
- Franklin, R. (2007). *Epidemiology of farm injuries in New South Wales*. (PhD), University of Sydney.
- Franklin, R., Fragar, L., & Page, A. (1999). *The health and safety of SA farmers, farm families and farm workers*. Moree: Australian Agricultural Health Unit. Retrieved from <http://www.aghealth.org.au/index.php?id=111>.

- Franklin, R., Mitchell, R., Driscoll, T., & Fragar, L. (2000). *Farm-related fatalities in Australia, 1989-1992*. Moree: ACAHS, NOHSC & RIRDC. Retrieved from <http://www.aghealth.org.au/index.php?id=111>.
- Fuller, J., Edwards, J., Procter, N., & Moss, J. (2000). How definition of mental health problems can influence help seeking in rural and remote communities. *Australian Journal of Rural Health, 8*(3), 148-153. doi: 10.1046/j.1440-1584.2000.00303.x
- Fuller, J. D., Kelly, B., Law, S., Pollard, G., & Fragar, L. (2009). Service network analysis for agricultural mental health. *BMC Health Services Research, 9*, 1-8. Retrieved from doi:10.1186/1472-6963-9-87
- Fulton, G., Madden, C., & Minichiello, V. (1996). The social construction of anticipatory grief. *Social Science and Medicine, 43*(9), 1349-1358. doi: 10.1016/0277-9536(95)00447-5
- Gallagher, A. G., & Sheehy, N. P. (1994). Suicide in rural communities. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 4*(3), 145-155. doi: 10.1002/casp.2450040302
- Garnaut, J., & Lim-Applegate, H. (1998). *People in farming*. Canberra: ABARE.
- Gartner, A., Farewell, D., Dunstan, F., & Gordon, E. (2008). Differences in mortality between rural and urban areas in England and Wales, 2002–04. *Health Statistics Quarterly, 39*(Autumn), 6-13.
- Genevro, J. L., Marshall, T., & Miller, T. (2004). Report on bereavement and grief research. *Death Studies, 28*(6), 491-575. doi: 10.1080/07481180490461188
- Gibson, S., Boden, Z. V. R., Benson, O., & Brand, S. (2014). The impact of participating in suicide research online. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 44*(4), 372-383. doi: 10.1111/sltb.12082
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society*. Oxford, UK: Polity Press Basil Blackwell.
- Gilbert, K. (2002). Taking a narrative approach to grief research: Finding meaning in stories. *Death Studies, 26*(3), 223-239. doi: 10.1080/07481180211274

- Glick, I., Weiss, R., & Parkes, C. M. (1974). *The first year of bereavement*. Canada: John Wiley & Sons.
- Goffman, E. (1986). *Stigma: Notes on the management of a spoiled identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Green, B., Krupnick, J. L., Stockton, P., Goodman, L., Corcoran, C., & Petty, R. (2001). Psychological outcomes associated with traumatic loss in a sample of young women. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *44*(5), 817-837. doi: 10.1177/00027640121956511
- Groos, A. D., & Shakespeare-Finch, J. (2013). Positive experiences for participants in suicide bereavement groups: A grounded theory model. *Death Studies*, *37*(1), 1-24. doi: 10.1080/07481187.2012.687898
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, *18*(1), 59-82. doi: 10.1177/1525822X05279903
- Guiney, R. (2012). Farming suicides during the Victorian drought: 2001-2007. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, *20*(1), 11-15. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1584.2011.01244.x
- Gunn, R. T., Langley, L. J., Dundas, S. J., & McCaul, K. (1996). *The human cost of work: A review of the occurrence and causes of occupational injury and disease in South Australia* (2nd ed.). Adelaide: South Australian Health Commission.
- Handley, T. E., Inder, K. J., Kelly, B. J., Attia, J. R., & Kay-Lambkin, F. J. (2011). Urban-rural influences on suicidality: Gaps in the existing literature and recommendations for future research. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, *19*(6), 279-283. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1584.2011.01235.x
- Hanigan, I. C., Butler, C. D., Kokic, P. N., & Hutichinson, M. F. (2012). Suicide and drought in New South Wales, Australia, 1970-2007. *Proceedings of the National Academy of*

- Sciences of the United States*, 109(35), 13950-13955. Retrieved from <http://www.pnas.org/content/109/35/13950.full.pdf>.
- Harper, M., O'Connor, R. O., Dickson, A., & O'Carroll, R. (2011). Mothers continuing bonds and ambivalence to personal mortality after the death of their child: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Psychology, Health and Medicine*, 16(2), 203-214. doi: 10.1080/13548506.2010.532558
- Harrison, J. E., Pointer, S., & Elnour, A. A. (2009). *A review of suicide statistics in Australia*. Adelaide: AIHW. Retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442468269>.
- Harvey, D. J. (2007). Understanding Australian rural women's ways of achieving health and wellbeing: A metasynthesis of the literature. *Rural and Remote Health*, 7: 823. Retrieved from <http://www.rrh.org.au>.
- Harwood, D., Hawton, K., Hope, T., & Jacoby, R. (2002). The grief experiences and needs of bereaved relatives and friends of older people dying through suicide: A descriptive and case-control study. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 72(2), 185-194. doi: 10.1016/s0165-0327(01)00462-1
- Haslam McKenzie, F. (2000). Where do people fit in the rural equation? In B. Pritchard & P. McManus (Eds.), *Land of Discontent: The Dynamics of Change in Rural and Regional Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.
- Hempstead, K. (2006). The geography of self-injury: Spatial patterns in attempted and completed suicide. *Social Science and Medicine*, 62(12), 3186-3196. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.11.038
- Henley, G., & Harrison, J. E. (2009). *Injury deaths, Australia 2004-2005*. Adelaide: AIHW. Retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442468284>.

- Henley, G., Kreisfeld, R., & Harrison, J. (2007). *Injury deaths, 2003–04, Australia*. Adelaide: AIHW. Retrieved from <http://www.nisu.flinders.edu.au/pubs/reports/2007/injcat89.pdf>.
- Herbst, D. M., Griffith, N. R., & Slama, K. M. (2014). Rodeo cowboys: Conforming to masculine norms and help-seeking behaviors for depression. *Journal of Rural Mental Health, 38*(1), 20-35.
- Herde, E., & Lower, T. (2011). *Farm injury related deaths Australia 2003-06*. Moree: ACAHS. Retrieved from http://www.aghealth.org.au/tiny_mce_fm/uploaded/fs_docs/farm_injury_related_deaths_australia_200306.pdf.
- Herde, E., & Lower, T. (2013). *Farm related injuries reported in the Australian print media 2012*. Moree, NSW: ACAHS. Retrieved from http://www.farmsafe.org.au/resources/document/11-02-23_18_23_Farm_Related_Injuries_2012_report_FINAL.pdf.
- Herzog, H. (2012). Interview location and its social meaning. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing.
- Hibberd, R., Elwood, L., & Galovski, T. (2010). Risk and protective factors for posttraumatic stress disorder, prolonged grief, and depression in survivors of the violent death of a loved one. *Journal of Loss and Trauma, 15*(5), 426-447.
- Hirsch, J. K. (2006). A review of the literature on rural suicide: Risk and protective factors, incidence, and prevention. *Crisis 27*(4), 189-199. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910.27.4.189
- Hjelmeland, H. (2010). Cultural research in suicidology: Challenges and opportunities. *Suicidology Online, 1*, 34-52. Retrieved from <http://www.suicidology-online.com/pdf/SOL-2010-1-34-52.pdf>.

- Hogan, A., Maguire, B., Russell, J., & Stakelum, P. (2008). The social wellbeing of rural Australians: A comparative analysis of agricultural workers in drought-affected areas and the Australian population using the Deakin Personal Wellbeing Index. Canberra: Bureau of Rural Sciences.
- Hogan, A., Scarr, E., Lockie, S., & Chant, B. (2012). Ruptured identity of male farmers: Subjective crisis and the risk of suicide. *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 27(3), 118-140. Retrieved from http://www.ag.auburn.edu/auxiliary/srsa/pages/TOCs/JRSS_vol27-3.htm.
- Holland, J., Currier, J. M., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2006). Meaning reconstruction in the first two years of bereavement: The role of sense-making and benefit-finding. *Omega*, 53(3), 175-191. doi: 10.2190/FKM2-YJTY-F9VV-9XWY
- Holland, J. M., Neimeyer, R. A., Boelen, P. A., & Prigerson, H. (2009). The underlying structure of grief: A taxometric investigation of prolonged and normal reactions to loss. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioural Assessment*, 31(3), 190-201. doi: 10.1007/s10862-008-9113-1
- Hunter, E. (2010). Comment: Suicide prevention in rural and remote communities - an ongoing challenge. *Life News*, 9. Retrieved from <http://www.livingisforeveryone.com.au/LIFE-News-Issue-9.html>.
- James, N., & Busher, H. (2007). Ethical issues in online educational research: protecting privacy, establishing authenticity in email interviewing. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 30(1), 101-113. doi: 10.1080/17437270701207868
- James, N., & Busher, H. (2012). Internet interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing.

- Johnson, J. M., & Rowlands, T. (2012). The interpersonal dynamics of in-depth interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing.
- Joiner, T. E. (2005). *Why People Die by Suicide*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Jordan, J. (2001). Is suicide bereavement different? A reassessment of the literature. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 31(1), 91-102. doi: 10.1521/suli.31.1.91.21310
- Jordan, J., & McIntosh, J. L. (2011a). Is suicide bereavement different? A framework for rethinking the question. In J. Jordan & J. L. McIntosh (Eds.), *Grief after suicide: Understanding the consequences and caring for the survivors* (pp. 19-42). New York: Routledge.
- Jordan, J., & McIntosh, J. L. (2011b). Suicide bereavement: Why study survivors of suicide loss? In J. Jordan & J. L. McIntosh (Eds.), *Grief after suicide: Understanding the consequences and caring for the survivors* (pp. 3-17). New York: Routledge.
- Jordan, J., & McIntosh, J. L. (Eds.). (2011c). *Grief after suicide: Understanding the consequences and caring for the survivors*. New York: Routledge.
- Jorm, A. F., Kelly, C. M., & Morgan, A. J. (2007). Participant distress in psychiatric research: A systematic review. *Psychological Medicine*, 37(7), 917-926. doi: 10.1017/s0033291706009779
- Judd, F., Cooper, A. M., Fraser, C., & Davis, J. (2006). Rural suicide: People or place effects? *The Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 40(3), 208-216. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1614.2006.01776.x
- Judd, F., Jackson, H., Fraser, C., Murray, G., Robins, G., & Komiti, A. (2006). Understanding suicide in Australian farmers. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 41(1), 1-10. doi: 10.1007/s00127-005-0007-1

- Judd, F., Jackson, H., Komiti, A., Bell, R., & Fraser, C. (2012). The profile of suicide: Changing or changeable? *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, *47*(1), 1-9. doi: 10.1007/s00127-010-0306-z
- Judd, F., Jackson, H., Komiti, A., Murray, G., Fraser, C., Grieve, A., & Gomez, R. (2006). Help-seeking by rural residents for mental health problems: The importance of agrarian values. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *40*(9), 769-776. doi: 10.1080/j.1440-1614.2006.01882.x
- Kavalidou, K., McPhedran, S., & De Leo, D. (2013). Farmers' contact with health care services prior to suicide: Evidence for the role of general practitioners as an intervention point. *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, *21*(1), 102-105. doi: 10.1071/PY13077
- Keesee, N. J., Currier, J. M., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2008). Predictors of grief following the death of one's child: The contribution of finding meaning. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *64*, 1145-1163.
- Kelly, S., Charlton, J., & Jenkins, R. (1995). Suicide deaths in England and Wales, 1982-92: The contribution of occupation and geography. *Population Trends*, *80*, 16-25.
- Kennedy, A., Brumby, S., Whitty, T., Haren, S., Koerner, D., & Fairleigh, A. (2015). *Understanding and responding to self-perceived suicide stigma in Australian male farmers: An innovative approach*. Paper presented at the The 28th World Congress of The International Association of Suicide Prevention Montreal, Canada.
- Kennedy, A., Maple, M., McKay, K., & Brumby, S. (2014). Suicide and accidental death in Australia's rural farming communities: a review of the literature. *Rural and Remote Health*, *14*: 2517. Retrieved from <http://www.rrh.org.au>.
- King, D., Lane, A., MacDougall, C., & Greenhill, J. (2011). Resilience in farm families: A constructivist perspective. *Public Health Bulletin South Australia*, *8*(1), 15-19.

- King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Kitson, G. C. (2000). Adjustment to violent and natural deaths in later and earlier life for black and white widows. *The Journals of Gerontology. Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 55(6), S341-351. doi: 10.1093/geronb/55.6.S341
- Klass, D., Silverman, P. R., & Nickman, S. (Eds.). (1996). *Continuing bonds: New understanding of grief*. Philadelphia: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.
- Klass, D., & Walter, D. (2001). Processes of grieving: How bonds are continued. In M. Stroebe, R. Hansson, W. Stroebe & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping and care*. Washington DC: APA.
- Kolves, K., Milner, A., McKay, K., & De Leo, D. (Eds.). (2012). *Suicide in rural and remote areas of Australia*. Brisbane: Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention.
- Kristensen, P., Weisæth, L., & Heir, T. (2012). Bereavement and mental health after sudden and violent losses: A review. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 75(1), 76-97. doi: 10.1521/psyc.2012.75.1.76
- Krysinska, K. E. (2003). Loss by suicide: A risk factor for suicidal behavior. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*, 41(7), 34-41.
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On Death and Dying*. London: Tavistock.
- Lakeman, R., & Fitzgerald, M. (2009). The ethics of suicide research. *Crisis*, 30(1), 13-19. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910.30.1.13
- Latham, A. E., & Prigerson, H. G. (2004). Suicidality and bereavement: Complicated grief as psychiatric disorder presenting greatest risk for suicidality. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 34(4), 350-362. doi: 10.1521/suli.34.4.350.53737
- Lawrence, G., & Gray, I. (2000). The myths of modern agriculture: Australian rural production in the 21st century. In B. Pritchard & P. McManus (Eds.), *Land of Discontent: The Dynamics*

- of Change in Rural and Regional Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, Ltd.
- Lee, E., Burnett, C. A., Lalich, N., Cameron, L. L., & Sestito, J. P. (2002). Proportionate mortality of crop and livestock farmers in the United States, 1984–1993. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, *42*, 410-420. doi: 10.1002/ajim.10131
- Leenaars, A. (2006). Suicide among Indigenous peoples: Introduction and call to action. *Archives of Suicide Research*, *10*(2), 103-115. doi: 10.1080/13811110600556624
- Leenaars, A. A., Knizek, B. L., Hjelmeland, H., Rasmussen, M. L., Straiton, M., Dieserud, G., & Dyregrov, K. (2010). Motivation for research participation among people bereaved by suicide. *Omega*, *62*(2), 149-168. doi: 10.2190/OM.62.2.d
- Li, J., Precht, D. H., Mortensen, P., & Olsen, J. (2003). Mortality in parents after death of a child in Denmark: A nationwide follow-up study. *The Lancet*, *361*(9355), 363-367.
- Lifeline Australia. (2009). No Suicidal Person Should be Left Alone: Lifeline Australia Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Suicide in Australia. Deakin ACT: Lifeline Australia.
- Lillrank, A. (2012). Managing the interviewer self. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Lindqvist, P., Johansson, L., & Karlsson, U. (2008). In the aftermath of teenage suicide: A qualitative study of the psychosocial consequences for the surviving family members. *BMC Psychiatry*, *8*. doi: 10.1186/1471-244x-8-26
- Lower, T., Fragar, L., & Temperley, J. (2011). Health and safety on Australian farms. Barton, ACT: RIRDC.
- Lower, T., & Herde, E. (2012). Non-intentional farm injury fatalities in Australia, 2003-2006. *New South Wales Public Health Bulletin*, *23*(1-2), 21-26. Retrieved from

- Lower, T., Munro, T., & Peachey, K. (2014). Farm related injuries reported in the Australian print media 2013. Moree, NSW: Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety.
- Macintyre, S., Ellaway, A., & Cummins, S. (2002). Place effects on health: How can we conceptualise, operationalise and measure them? *Social Science and Medicine*, 55, 125-139. doi: 10.1016/S0277-9536(01)00214-3
- Macquarie Dictionary Publishers Pty. Ltd. (2012). The Macquarie Dictionary Online. Retrieved May 1st, 2012, from <https://http://www.macquariedictionary.com.au>.
- Mancini, A., & Bonanno, G. (2006). Resilience in the face of potential trauma: Clinical practices and illustrations. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(8), 971-985. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20283
- Mancini, A. D., Bonanno, G. A., Southwick, S. M., Litz, B., Charney, D., & Friedman, M. J. (2011). Loss and grief: The role of individual differences. In S. M. Southwick, B. Litz, D. Charney & M. J. Friedman (Eds.), *Resilience and Mental Health: Challenges Across the Lifespan* (pp. 189-199). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maple, M. (2005). *Parental portraits of suicide: narrating the loss of a young adult child*. (PhD), University of New England, Armidale.
- Maple, M., Cerel, J., Jordan, J. R., & McKay, K. (2014). Uncovering and identifying the missing voices in suicide bereavement. *Suicidology Online*, 5(1), 1-12. Retrieved from <http://www.suicidology-online.com/pdf/SOL-ISSUE-5-1.pdf>.
- Maple, M., & McKay, K. (2012, June). *Understanding the lived experience of people bereaved by suicide: Who speaks to researchers and what do they say?* Paper presented at the 3rd Australian Postvention Conference, Sydney, Australia.

- Maple, M., Plummer, D., Edwards, H., & Minichiello, V. (2007). The effects of preparedness for suicide following the death of a young adult child. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 37(2), 127-134. doi: 10.1521/suli.2007.37.2.127
- Martin, T. L., & Doka, K. J. (2000). *Men don't cry...women do: Transcending gender stereotypes of grief*. Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel.
- Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(3). Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1428/3028>.
- McIntosh, J. L. (1993). Control group studies of suicide survivors: A review and critique. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 23(2), 146-161. doi: 10.1111/j.1943-278X.1993.tb00379.x
- McIntosh, J. L., & Jordan, J. (2011). Going forward: A research agenda for suicide survivors. In J. Jordan & J. L. McIntosh (Eds.), *Grief after suicide: Understanding the consequences and caring for the survivors* (pp. 507-522). New York: Routledge.
- McIntosh, J. L., & Kelly, L. D. (1992). Survivors' reactions: Suicide vs. other causes. *Crisis*, 13(2), 82-93.
- McKay, K., Milner, A., Kolves, K., & De Leo, D. (2012). Suicide behaviours in rural and remote areas in Australia: A review. In K. Kolves, K. McKay, A. Milner & D. De Leo (Eds.), *Suicide in rural and remote areas of Australia* (pp. 7-18). Brisbane: Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention.
- McLaren, S., & Hopes, L. M. (2002). Rural-urban differences in reasons for living. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36(5), 688-692. doi: 10.1046/j.1440-1614.2000.00807.x.
- McPhedran, S., & De Leo, D. (2013). Miseries Suffered, Unvoiced, Unknown? Communication of Suicidal Intent by Men in "Rural" Queensland, Australia. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 43(6), 589-597. doi: 10.1111/sltb.12041

- Merritt, S., & Turner, L. M. (2013). Creating better research spaces for narratives around male family relationships and identity: Guidance from rural Australian men. *Rural and Remote Health, 13*: 2462. Retrieved from <http://www.rrh.org.au>.
- Miers, D., Abbott, D., & Springer, P. R. (2012). A Phenomenological Study of Family Needs Following the Suicide of a Teenager. *Death Studies, 36*(2), 118-133. doi: 10.1080/07481187.2011.553341
- Miller, J., & Fragar, L. (2006). Farm machinery injury: Injury involving tractor run-over. Barton, ACT: RIRDC & ACAHS.
- Miller, K., & Burns, C. (2008). Suicides on farms in South Australia, 1997-2001. *Australian Journal of Rural Health, 16*(6), 327-331. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1584.2008.01011.x
- Milner, A., McClure, R., Sun, J., & De Leo, D. (2011). Globalisation and suicide: An empirical investigation in 35 countries over the period 1980-2006. *Health and Place, 17*(4), 996-1003. doi: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2011.03.002
- Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., Timewell, E., & Alexander, L. (1995). *In-Depth Interviewing* (2nd ed.). Sydney: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Mitchell, A. M., Kim, Y., Prigerson, H. G., & Mortimer, M. K. (2005). Complicated grief and suicidal ideation in adult survivors of suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 35*(5), 498-506. doi: 10.1521/suli.2005.35.5.498
- Mitchell, A. M., Kim, Y., Prigerson, H. G., & Mortimer-Stephens, M. (2004). Complicated grief in survivors of suicide. *Crisis, 25*(1), 12-18. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910.25.1.12
- Mitchell, R. J., Franklin, R. C., Driscoll, T. R., & Fragar, L. J. (2001). Farm-related fatalities involving children in Australia, 1989-92. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 25*(4), 307-314. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-842X.2001.tb00585.x

- Mittal, D., Sullivan, G., Chekuri, L., Allee, E., & Corrigan, P. W. (2012). Empirical studies of self-stigma reduction strategies: A critical review of the literature. *Psychiatric Services*, *63*(10), 974-981.
- Moore, M., Maple, M., Mitchell, A., & Cerel, J. (2013). Challenges and opportunities for suicide bereavement research: The experience of ethical board review. *Crisis*, *34*(5), 297-304. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910/a000191
- Moore, M. M. (2012). *Posttraumatic growth among parent survivors of suicide*. (PhD), The Catholic University of America. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1961/13188>.
- Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* *1*(1), 48-76. doi: 10.1177/2345678906292462
- Morse, J. M., & Niehaus, L. (2009). *Mixed Method Design: Principles and Procedures*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.
- Muenstermann, I. (2010). Where the crows fly backward and women explore their choices. *Rural Society*, *20*(s), 25-41. doi: 10.5172/rsj.20.s.25
- Muller, E., & Thompson, C. (2003). The experience of grief after bereavement: A phenomenological study with implications for mental health counseling. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, *25*(3), 183-203.
- Murphy, D. J. (2003). *Looking beneath the surface of agricultural safety and health*. St Joseph, Michigan: American Society of Agricultural Engineers.
- Murphy, S. A., Johnson, L. C., Chung, I. J., & Beaton, R. D. (2003). The prevalence of PTSD following the violent death of a child and predictors of change 5 years later. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *16*(1), 17-25. doi: 10.1023/a:1022003126168

- Murphy, S. A., Johnson, L. C., & Lohan, J. (2003). Finding meaning in a child's violent death: A five-year prospective analysis of parents' personal narratives and empirical data. *Death Studies, 27*(5), 381-404. doi: 10.1080/07481180302879
- Murphy, S. A., Johnson, L. C., Wu, L., Fan, J. J., & Lohan, J. (2003). Bereaved parents' outcomes 4 to 60 months after their children's deaths by accident, suicide, or homicide: a comparative study demonstrating differences. *Death Studies, 27*(1), 39-61. doi: 10.1080/07481180302871
- Murphy, S. A., Tapper, V. J., Johnson, L. C., & Lohan, J. (2003). Suicide ideation among parents bereaved by the violent deaths of their children. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 24*(1), 5-25. doi: 10.1080/01612840305307
- National Rural Health Alliance. (2009). Suicide in rural Australia. Deakin West, ACT: NRHA.
- Neimeyer, R. A. (2001). *Meaning reconstruction and the experience of loss*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Neimeyer, R. A. (2005). Defining the new abnormal: Scientific and social construction of complicated grief. *Omega, 52*(1), 95-97.
- Neimeyer, R. A., Sandler, I. N., & Ayers, T. S. (2002). Traumatic loss and the reconstruction of meaning. *Journal of Palliative Medicine, 5*(6), 935-943.
- Ness, D. E., & Pfeffer, C. R. (1990). Sequelae of bereavement resulting from suicide. *The American Journal of Psychiatry, 147*(3), 279-285.
- Ní Laoire, C. (2001). A matter of life and death? Men, masculinities and staying 'behind' in rural Ireland. *Sociologia Ruralis, 41*(2), 220-236.
- Nicholson, L. A. (2008). Rural mental health. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment, 14*(4), 302-311. doi: 10.1192/apt.bp.107.005009
- Ostry, A. S. (2009). The mortality gap between urban and rural Canadians: A gendered analysis. *Rural and Remote Health, 9*: 1286. Retrieved from <http://www.rrh.org.au>.

- Ott, C. H., Lueger, R. J., Kelber, S. T., & Prigerson, H. G. (2007). Spousal bereavement in older adults: Common, resilient, and chronic grief with defining characteristics. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 195*(4), 332-341. doi: 10.1097/01.nmd.0000243890.93992.1e
- Owens, C., & Lambert, H. (2012). Mad, bad or heroic? Gender, identity and accountability in lay portrayals of suicide in late twentieth-century England. *Cult Med Psychiatry, 36*(2), 348-371. doi: 10.1007/s11013-012-9259-x
- Owens, C., Lambert, H., Lloyd, K., & Donovan, J. (2008). Tales of biographical disintegration: how parents make sense of their sons' suicides. *Sociology of Health and Illness, 30*(2), 237-254. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9566.2007.01034.x.
- Page, A. N., & Fragar, L. J. (2002). Suicide in Australian farming, 1988-1997. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 36*(1), 81-85. doi: 10.1046/j.1440-1614.2002.00975.x
- Parkes, C. (1998). Coping with loss: Bereavement in adult life. *British Medical Journal, 316*: 856. Retrieved from <http://www.bmj.com/content/316/7134/856.1>.
- Parkes, C., & Prigerson, H. (2010). *Bereavement: Studies of grief in adult life*. New York: Routledge.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pearce, J., Barnett, R., & Jones, I. (2007). Have urban/rural inequalities in suicide in New Zealand grown during the period 1980-2001? *Social Science and Medicine, 65*(8), 1807-1819. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2007.05.044
- Perceval, M., Fuller, J., & Holley, A. M. (2011). Farm-link: Improving the mental health and well-being of people who live and work on NSW farms. *International Journal of Mental Health, 40*(2), 88-110. doi: 10.2753/imh0020-7411400205

- Pettersen, R., Omerov, P., Steineck, G., Dyregrov, A., Titelman, D., Dyregrov, K., & Nyberg, U. (2014/15). Suicide-bereaved siblings' perception of health services. *Death Studies, E-pub ahead of print*, 1-9. doi: 10.1080/07481187.2014.946624
- Pfeffer, C. R., Karus, D., Siegel, K., & Jiang, H. (2000). Child survivors of parental death from cancer or suicide: Depressive and behavioral outcomes. *Psycho-Oncology*, 9(1), 1-10. Retrieved from [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1611\(200001/02\)9:1%3C1::AID-PON430%3E3.0.CO;2-5/abstract](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1611(200001/02)9:1%3C1::AID-PON430%3E3.0.CO;2-5/abstract).
- Phoenix, A. (2008). Analysing narrative contexts. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Pietilä, M. (2002). Support groups: A psychological or social device for suicide bereavement? *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 30(4), 401-414. doi: 10.1080/0306988021000025600
- Pitman, A., Osborn, D., King, M., & Erlangsen, A. (2014). Effects of suicide bereavement on mental health and suicide risk. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 1(1), 86-94. Retrieved from [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(14\)70224-X](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(14)70224-X).
- Polain, J. D., Berry, H. L., & Hoskin, J. O. (2011). Rapid change, climate adversity and the next 'big dry': Older farmers' mental health. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 19(5), 239-243. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1584.2011.01219.x
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(1), 5-23.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 137-145. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137

- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 471-486. doi: 10.1177/1077800406297670
- Pollock, K. (2010). *The economic cost of farm-related fatalities and the perceptions and management of health and safety on Australian farms*. (PhD), University of Sydney.
- Pollock, K., Fragar, L., & Morton, C. (2007). Traumatic deaths in Australian agriculture. Barton, ACT: ACAHS & RIRDC
- Prigerson, H. G., Horowitz, M. J., Jacobs, S. C., Parkes, C. M., Aslan, M., Goodkin, K., . . . Maciejewski, P. K. (2009). Prolonged Grief Disorder: Psychometric validation of criteria proposed for DSM-V and ICD-11. *Public Library of Science: Medicine*, 6(8), 1-12. doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1000121
- Qin, P., & Mortensen, P. B. (2003). The impact of parental status on the risk of completed suicide. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 60(8), 797-802. doi: 10.1001/archpsyc.60.8.797
- Rando, T. A. (2000). *Clinical dimensions of anticipatory mourning: Theory and practice in working with the dying, their loved ones and their caregivers*. Champaign, Illinois: Research Press.
- Range, L. M. (1998). When a loss is due to suicide: Unique aspects of bereavement. In J. H. Harvey (Ed.), *Perspectives on loss: A sourcebook*. Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis.
- Range, L. M., & Calhoun, L. G. (1990). Responses following suicide and other types of death: The perspective of the bereaved. *Omega*, 21, 311-320. Retrieved from <http://ome.sagepub.com/content/21/4/311.full.pdf>.
- Range, L. M., & Niss, N. M. (1990). Long-term bereavement from suicide, homicide, accidents, and natural deaths. *Death Studies*, 14, 423-433. doi: 10.1080/07481189008252382
- Ratnarajah, D., & Maple, M. (2011). Learning from the bereaved by suicide in the face of stigma. In K. McKay & J. Schlimme (Eds.), *Making Sense of Suicide*. Oxfordshire: Inter-Disciplinary Press.

- Ratnarajah, D., & Schofield, M. J. (2008). Survivors' narratives of the impact of parental suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 38*(5), 618-630. doi: 10.1521/suli.2008.38.5.618
- Reed, M. D. (1998). Predicting grief symptomatology among the suddenly bereaved. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 28*(3), 285-301. doi: 10.1111/j.1943-278X.1998.tb00858.x
- Response Ability. (2009). Overview of suicide in Australia. Retrieved February 1st, 2012, from <http://www.responseability.org/site/index.cfm?display=134569>.
- Riessman, C. K. (1990). *Divorce Talk: Women and Men Make Sense of Personal Relationships*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). Narrative analysis. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 539-541): SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412963909
- Riessman, C. K. (2012). Analysis of personal narratives. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Case*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Riley, T., & Hawe, P. (2005). Researching practice: The methodological case for narrative inquiry. *Health Education Research, 20*(2), 226-236. Retrieved from <http://her.oxfordjournals.org/content/20/2/226.full>
- Rivlin, A., Marzano, L., Hawton, K., & Fazel, S. (2012). Impact on prisoners of participating in research interviews related to near-lethal suicide attempts. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 136*(1-2), 54-62. doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2011.09.009
- Robertson, S., Elder, K., & Coombs, R. (2010). Rural men's mental health. In D. Conrad & A. White (Eds.), *Promoting men's mental health* (pp. 57-73). Oxford: Radcliffe.
- Robertson, S. M., Murphy, D. J., & Davis, L. A. (2006). Social and emotional impacts of farmwork injuries: An exploratory study. *The Journal of Rural Health, 22*(1), 26-35. doi: 10.1111/j.1748-0361.2006.00001.x

- Rosenblatt, P. C. (2001). A social constructionist perspective on cultural differences in grief. In M. Stroebe, R. Hansson, W. Stroebe & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping and care*. Washington DC: APA.
- Rosenblatt, P. C. (2007). Recovery following bereavement: Metaphor, phenomenology, and culture. *Death Studies*, 32(1), 6-16. doi: 10.1080/07481180701741228
- Rosenblatt, P. C., & Karis, T. A. (1993). Economics and family bereavement following a fatal farm accident. *Journal of Rural Community Psychology*, 12(2), 37-51.
- Rosenblatt, P. C., & Karis, T. A. (1993-1994). Family distancing following a fatal farm accident. *Omega*, 28(3), 183-200. doi: 10.2190/HJG1-U9DU-MHWV-EWV8
- Rothaupt, J., & Becker, K. (2007). A literature review of western bereavement theory: From deathtaking to continuing bonds. *The Family Journal*, 15(1), 6-15.
- Rourke, J. (1997). In search of a definition of "rural". *Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine*, 2(3), 113.
- Roy, P., Tremblay, G., & Robertson, S. (2014). Help-seeking among male farmers: Connecting masculinities and mental health. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 54(4), 460-476. doi: 10.1111/soru.12045
- Rubin, S. (1993). The death of a child is forever: The life course impact of child loss. In M. Stroebe, W. Stroebe & R. Hansson (Eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement: Theory, Research, and Intervention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation/Department of Primary Industries and Energy. (1998). Missed opportunities - Harnessing the potential of women in Australian agriculture. Volume 1 Social Survey and Analysis. Canberra: RIRDC & DPIE.
- Rynearson, E. K. (Ed.). (2006). *Violent death: Resilience and intervention beyond the crisis*. New York: Routledge/Taylor and Francis Group.

- Safe Work Australia. (2013). *Work-related injuries and fatalities on Australian farms*. Canberra: Safe Work Australia.
- Sanders, C. (1993). Risk factors in bereavement outcome. In M. Stroebe, W. Stroebe & R. Hansson (Eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement: Theory, Research, and Intervention* (pp. 255-270). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SANE Australia, & University of New England. (2015). *Lessons for Life: The experience of people who attempt suicide: A qualitative research report*. Sydney: SANE Australia.
- Sankaranarayanan, A., Carter, G., & Lewin, T. (2010). Rural-urban differences in suicide rates for current patients of a public mental health service in Australia. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 40*(4), 376-382. doi: 10.1521/suli.2010.40.4.376
- Sarma, K., & Kola, S. (2010). The socio-demographic profile of hanging suicides in Ireland from 1980 to 2005. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine, 17*(7), 374-377. doi: 10.1016/j.jflm.2010.08.010
- Sartore, G. M., Kelly, B., Stain, H. J., Albrecht, G., & Higginbotham, N. (2008). Control, uncertainty, and expectations for the future: A qualitative study of the impact of drought on a rural Australian community. *Rural and Remote Health, 8*: 950. Retrieved from <http://www.rrh.org.au>.
- Scheerer, A., & Brandt, V. (2001). Interviews with widows following fatal farming incidents. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health, 7*(2), 75-87.
- Schneider, B., Grebner, K., Schnabel, A., & Georgi, K. (2011a). Do suicides' characteristics influence survivors' emotions? *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 41*(2), 117-125. doi: 10.1111/j.1943-278X.2011.00024.x
- Schneider, B., Grebner, K., Schnabel, A., & Georgi, K. (2011b). Is the emotional response of survivors dependent on the consequences of the suicide and the support received? *Crisis, 32*(4), 186-193. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910/a000081

- Schutz, A. (1962). *Collected Papers* (Vol. 1, 11). The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Seguin, M., Lesage, A., & Kiely, M. (1995). Parental bereavement after suicide and accident: A comparative study. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 25(4), 489-499. doi: 10.1111/j.1943-278X.1995.tb00241.x
- Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat. (2010). *The hidden toll: Suicide in Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2008-10/suicide/report/index.
- Shahtahmasebi, S., & Aupouri-Mclean, C. (2011). Bereaved by suicide. *Primary Health Care: Open Access*, 1: 101. Retrieved from <http://omicsgroup.org/journals/bereaved-by-suicide-2167-1079.1000101.php?aid=2953>.
- Shiner, M., Scourfield, J., Fincham, B., & Langer, S. (2009). When things fall apart: Gender and suicide across the life-course. *Social Science and Medicine*, 69(5), 738-746. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2009.06.014
- Shneidman, E. (1969). Prologue: Fifty-eight years. In E. Shneidman (Ed.), *On the Nature of Suicide* (pp. 1-30). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Shneidman, E., & Cain, A. (1972). *Survivors of Suicide*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher Ltd.
- Skegg, K., Firth, H., Gray, A., & Cox, B. (2010). Suicide by occupation: Does access to means increase the risk? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 44(5), 429-434. doi: 10.3109/00048670903487191

- Smith, A., Joseph, S., & Nair, D. R. (2011). An interpretative phenomenological analysis of posttraumatic growth in adults bereaved by suicide. *Journal of Loss and Trauma, 16*(5), 413-430. doi: 10.1080/15325024.2011.572047
- Smith, K. B., Humphreys, J. S., & Wilson, M. G. A. (2008). Addressing the health disadvantage of rural populations: How does epidemiological evidence inform rural health policies and research? *Australian Journal of Rural Health, 16*(2), 56-66. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1584.2008.00953.x
- Sosulski, M. R., Buchanan, N. T., & Donnell, C. M. (2010). Life history and narrative analysis: Feminist methodologies contextualizing black women's experiences with severe mental illness. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 37*(3), 29-57. Retrieved from http://www.wmich.edu/hhs/newsletters_journals/jssw_institutional/institutional_subscribers/37.3.Sosulski.pdf.
- Speldewinde, P. C., Cook, A., Davies, P., & Weinstein, P. (2009). A relationship between environmental degradation and mental health in rural Western Australia. *Health and Place, 15*(3), 865-872. doi: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2009.02.011
- Squire, C. (2008). Experience-centred and culturally oriented approaches to narrative. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Stallones, L., Doenges, T., Dik, B. J., & Valley, M. A. (2013). Occupation and suicide: Colorado, 2004-2006. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine, 56*(11), 1290-1305. doi: 10.1002/ajim.22228
- Stark, C., Gibbs, D., Hopkins, P., Belbin, A., Hay, A., & Selvaraj, S. (2006). Suicide in farmers in Scotland. *Rural and Remote Health, 6*: 509. Retrieved from <http://www.rrh.org.au>.
- Stark, C., Riordan, V., & O'Connor, R. (2011). A conceptual model of suicide in rural areas. *Rural and Remote Health, 11*: 1622. Retrieved from <http://www.rrh.org.au>.

- Statistics New Zealand. (2012). Urban/Rural profile (experimental) classification categories. Retrieved May 14th, 2012, from http://www.stats.govt.nz/surveys_and_methods/methods/classifications-and-standards/urban-rural-profile-experimental-class-categories.aspx.
- Stayner, R. (1997). Families and the farm adjustment process. In J. Lees (Ed.), *A Legacy Under Threat? Family Farming in Australia* (pp. 121-145). Armidale: University of New England.
- Steeves, R., Kahn, D., Ropka, M. E., & Wise, C. (2001). Ethical considerations in research with bereaved families. *Family and Community Health, 23*(4), 75.
- Stroebe, M., Folkman, S., Hansson, R., & Schut, H. (2006). The prediction of bereavement outcome: Development of an integrative risk factor framework. *Social Science & Medicine, 63*(9), 2440-2451. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2006.06.012
- Stroebe, M., & Schut, H. (1999). The dual process model of coping with bereavement: Rationale and description. *Death Studies, 23*, 197-224.
- Stroebe, M., Schut, H., & Stroebe, W. (2007). Health outcomes of bereavement. *The Lancet, 370*(9603), 1960-1973. doi: 10.1016/s0140-6736(07)61816-9
- Strong, K., Trickett, P., Titulaer, P., & Bhatia, K. (1998). *Health in Rural and Remote Australia*. Canberra: AIHW. Retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=6442459024>.
- Sturgeon, R., & Morrisette, P. J. (2010). A qualitative analysis of suicide ideation among Manitoban farmers. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy, 44*(2), 191-207.
- Sudak, H., Maxim, K., & Carpenter, M. (2008). Suicide and stigma: A review of the literature and personal reflections. *Academic Psychiatry, 32*(2), 136-142. doi: 10.1176/appi.ap.32.2.136

- Sugrue, J. L., McGilloway, S., & Keegan, O. (2013). The experiences of mothers bereaved by suicide: An exploratory study. *Death Studies, 38*(2), 118-124. doi: 10.1080/07481187.2012.738765
- Suicide Prevention Australia. (2010). *Position Statement: Overcoming the Stigma of Suicide*. Leichhardt NSW: Suicide Prevention Australia. Retrieved from <http://suicidepreventionaust.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/SPA-Overcoming-the-Stigma-Of-Suicide-Position-Statement.pdf>.
- Suicide Prevention Australia. (2015). Lived Experience Network. Retrieved January 7th, 2015, from <http://suicidepreventionaust.org/project/lived-experience-network/>.
- Sveen, C. A., & Walby, F. A. (2008). Suicide survivors' mental health and grief reactions: A systematic review of controlled studies. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 38*(1), 13-29. doi: 10.1521/suli.2008.38.1.13
- Sveticic, J., McPhedran, S., & De Leo, D. (2013). Reviewing the revisions: What are the Australian Bureau of Statistics suicide figures really telling us? *The Medical Journal of Australia, 198*(9), 478. Retrieved from <http://www.mja.com.au/journal/2013/198/9/reviewing-revisions-what-are-australian-bureau-statistics-suicide-figures-really>.
- Talmage, J. B. (2012). Listening to, and for, the research interview. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Taylor, R., Page, A., Morrell, S., Harrison, J., & Carter, G. (2005). Social and psychiatric influences on urban-rural differentials in Australian suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 35*(3), 277-290. doi: 10.1521/suli.2005.35.3.277
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1995). *Trauma and transformation: Growing in the aftermath of suffering*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1996). The posttraumatic growth inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 9*(3), 455-471. doi: 10.1002/jts.2490090305
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (2007). Beyond the concept of recovery: Growth and the experience of loss. *Death Studies, 32*(1), 27-39. doi: 10.1080/07481180701741251
- The Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety. (2004). Child safety on farms: A guidance note. Retrieved 21st October, 2012, from <http://www.farmsafe.org.au/document.php?id=125>.
- The Conversation. (2015). Talking about death and dying. Retrieved 30th October, 2015, from <http://theconversation.com/au/topics/talking-about-death-and-dying>.
- Tonna, A., Kelly, B., Crockett, J., Greig, J., Buss, R., Roberts, R., & Wright, M. (2009). Improving the mental health of drought-affected communities: An Australian model. *Rural Society, 19*(4), 296-305. doi: 10.5172/rsj.351.19.4.296
- Trimble, T., Hannigan, B., & Gaffney, M. (2012). Suicide postvention; coping, support and transformation. *The Irish Journal of Psychology, 33*(2-3), 115-121. doi: 10.1080/03033910.2012.709171
- Tziotis, M., Roper, P., Edmonston, C., & Sheehan, M. (2006). *Road safety in rural and remote areas of Australia*. Paper presented at the 22nd ARRB Conference - Research into Practice, Canberra, Australia.
- United Synergies. (2015). Standby Response Service. Retrieved April 7th, 2015, from <http://www.unitedsynergies.com.au/program/standby-response-service/>.
- Van der Houwen, K., Stroebe, M., Stroebe, W., Schut, H., Van Den Bout, J., & Wijngaards-De Meij, L. (2010). Risk factors for bereavement outcome: A multivariate outcome. *Death Studies, 34*(3), 195-220. doi: 10.1080/07481180903559196

- Villa, M. (1999). Born to be farmers? Changing expectations in Norwegian farmers' life courses. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 39(3), 328-342. doi: 10.1111/1467-9523.00111
- Virueda, M., & Payne, J. (2010). Homicide in Australia: 2007–08 National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.
- Voaklander, D., Hartling, L., Pickett, W., Dimich-Ward, H., & Brison, R. J. (1999). Work related mortality among older farmers in Canada. *Canadian Family Physician*, 45(December), 2903-2910.
- Voyce, M. (1997). Inheritance and family farm ownership. In J. Lees (Ed.), *A Legacy Under Threat? Family Farming in Australia*. (pp. 199-212). Armidale: University of New England Press.
- Wakerman, J. (2004). Defining remote health. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 12(5), 210-214. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1854.2004.00607.x
- Walter, T. (2006). What is complicated grief? A social constructionist answer. *Omega*, 52(1), 71-79. doi: 10.2190/3lx7c0cl-mnwr-jkkq
- Ward, N. (2007). The culture of traffic safety in rural America. In Foundation for Traffic Safety (Ed.), *Improving traffic safety culture in the United States* (pp. 241-256). Washington DC: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.
- Warren, M. (1991). *Nietzsche and political thought*. MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
- Weafer, J. A. (2014). *Irish attitudes to death, dying and bereavement 2004-2014*. Dublin: Irish Hospice Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.lenus.ie/hse/handle/10147/333029>.
- Weaver, J. C., & Munro, D. (2009). Country living, country dying: Rural suicides in New Zealand, 1900-1950. *Journal of Social History*, 42(4), 933-961. doi: 10.1353/jsh.0.0186
- Wendel, M. B., & Wicks, R. J. (2012). *Primer on posttraumatic growth: An introduction and guide*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.

- Wijngaards-De Meij, L., Stroebe, M., Stroebe, W., Schut, H., Van Den Bout, J., Van Der Heijden, P. G. M., & Dijkstra, I. (2008). The impact of circumstances surrounding the death of a child on parents' grief. *Death Studies, 32*(3), 237-252. doi: 10.1080/07481180701881263
- Williams, J. M. G., & Pollock, L. (2001). Psychological aspects of the suicidal process. In C. van Heeringen (Ed.), *Understanding suicidal behaviour: the suicidal process approach to research, treatment and prevention* (pp. 76-94). Chichester: John Wiley.
- Wilson, A., & Marshall, A. (2010). The Support Needs and Experiences of Suicidally Bereaved Family and Friends. *Death Studies, 34*(7), 625-640. doi: 10.1080/07481181003761567
- Windle, G., Bennett, K. M., & Noyes, J. (2011). A methodological review of resilience measurement scales. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes, 9*: 8. Retrieved from <http://www.hqlo.com/content/9/1/8>.
- Wojtkowiak, J., Wild, V., & Egger, J. (2012). Grief Experiences and Expectance of Suicide. *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, 42*(1), 56-66. doi: 10.1111/j.1943-278X.2011.00070.x
- Worden, J. W. (2008). *Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner* (4th ed.). New York: Springer Publishing Company, LLC.
- Wortman, C. B., & Silver, R. C. (2001). The myths of coping with loss revisited. In M. Stroebe, R. Hansson, W. Stroebe & H. Schut (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping and care*. Washington DC: APA Publishing.
- Zinzow, H. M., Rheingold, A. A., Hawkins, A. O., Saunders, B. E., & Kilpatrick, D. G. (2009). Losing a loved one to homicide: Prevalence and mental health correlates in a national sample of young adults. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 22*(1), 20-27. doi: 10.1002/jts.20377

Appendix 1: The researcher and the research process

In recognising the impact of the researcher on the process and outcomes of research, acknowledgement of self-characteristics was important in understanding the recruitment process, the data collection and the interpretation of that data. Not only did I bring a social constructionist perspective, but also a multitude of ‘selves’ to the research process—mother, spouse, rural community member, researcher and student among them. Within the specific research context of bereavement, my ‘self’ was a complex blend of insider and outsider (Foley, 2012), perhaps most suitably described as a ‘fence sitter’ (Breen, 2007)—a position that will become clearer as you read my own story in the following paragraphs.

The insider/outsider dichotomy is more complex than it seems (Foley, 2012). Insider/outsider status is most frequently considered in terms of the level of shared experience of the research topic. However, other status measures, such as gender, education or socioeconomic status, may also contribute to the perception of an insider or an outsider (Foley, 2012). Farming status is another likely factor that may influence the insider/outsider relationship in this study. A participant’s view of me as an insider or an outsider will not automatically impact the quality or the utility of the interview. However, it may well shape the kind of narrative that unfolds (Carter, 2012). On the one hand, if I am perceived as an insider, participants may assume shared knowledge so elaborate less about their experience. In saying this, participants who see me as an outsider may provide a richer, more detailed description of their experience to improve my understanding of their experience. On the other hand, participants may be more comfortable speaking with me if they perceive me as an insider and so share greater detail of their experience. My insider/outsider status was also unlikely to be static throughout the research process.

How we see and understand the world and our experiences in it, develop as a result of changes both within us and changes in the world (Andrews, 2009). This was obviously going to include my increasing exposure to bereavement narratives as the project progressed. As a researcher I knew my own story would likely evolve through the process of undertaking this research and so I have documented my story in several stages.

Stage 1: Pre-data collection

I am a woman, born in 1973. While I grew up on the outskirts of Melbourne, I have spent over a decade living in Victoria's rural western district. Since 1996, I have lived—as a tenant and caretaker—on a farming property 12km out of the town of Hamilton with my husband and two daughters. This experience has exposed me to many of the benefits but considerably fewer of the perils of living and working on a farm.

Trained as a behavioural scientist, the past five years have been spent working for the National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH), initially on a project responding to alcohol misuse and associated mental health problems in farming communities. This role involved a blend of research, health professional training and face-to-face and phone interviewing of rural and remote nurses and farmers. Through both my work within the broader environment of the NCFH and my residential location in rural Victoria, I have developed a strong awareness of the high rates of accidental death and suicide, and the profound impact this has within small communities.

Having committed to undertake this project, my conversations with people have left me staggered at the frequency of anecdotally reported deaths, particularly suicides. Having lost two young female members of my own close-knit family—a niece (who was also my godchild) through suicide and a cousin through a freak single vehicle accident—I was painfully aware of the challenges posed by bereavement.

I was once asked by Jack Jordan, an eminent North American bereavement clinician and researcher, whether I considered myself to be a ‘survivor’. I struggled then, and still do, to come up with a decisive answer. I was emotionally shattered at the time of each death. I have frequent thoughts about the girls, particularly my niece, who was challenged with poor mental health for a number of years prior to her death. I also feel some level of guilt with regards to my niece (intellectually I know this is unwarranted but the emotion still persists). I have, however, always had a life to attend to which allowed me to emotionally ‘escape’ from the death. Geographical distance, my work, my study, my children and my husband have provided a means of escaping the pain that others in my family have been plagued with on an ongoing daily basis. Perhaps I am a ‘survivor’ in some sense, but there are others who have suffered—and will continue to be reminded of their loss throughout their lives—far more than me, hence my attraction to the term ‘fence-sitter’. I hope that, despite being one step removed from such intensely impacting bereavement, I may be able to empathise with participants. However, I never anticipate knowing how somebody else experiences their own unique bereavement.

Similarly, through my experiences living on a farm in a farming community, I can see how farming families live and work in distinctive geographical, psychological and social contexts. However, I have never been a member of a farming family and my knowledge is based purely on reading and listening to others' experiences; observation; hear-say; and, extensive research of other researchers' findings.

Since commencing my PhD candidature 11 months ago, I have worked to expand my bereavement knowledge beyond that of peer-reviewed and grey literature. I have attended a 2-day suicide bereavement conference; two suicide bereavement workshops; spoken to professionals with direct or indirect experience of working with bereaved people in rural areas; spoken with a number of people who have experienced suicide and accidental death; read personal accounts of

suicide and accidental death bereavement; and, maintained an ongoing focus on bereavement in print, on-line and social media.

Stage 2: After the first four interviews

I approached my first interview with Hickock (a 1.5 hour drive from home) with some trepidation. I was unsure as to how I would react emotionally to the interview content and apprehensive about whether I would be able to keep the interview going. My fear was unfounded as at no stage throughout the first four interviews did I feel that the interview stalled. I was also surprised to find I did not battle with my own emotional reaction when participants expressed their own sorrow through crying. My overwhelming feeling following each of the first four interviews was one of gratitude, privilege and appreciation that participants were so personally giving in telling their stories. I feel obligated to do justice in the retelling of the stories in a meaningful and relevant way.

Two of the interviews were held in my office and two in the participant's home. When in my office I was careful to make the environment as non-threatening as possible (for example, sitting along the desk rather than across it) and started the conversation with casual chat and a cuppa. During each of the interviews I focused my attentiveness and interest on the participant, deliberately choosing not to take many notes. I maintained eye contact and responded with appropriate 'hmmms' and other expressions of acknowledgement and laughed at funny moments. I asked a question when something was unclear. The interviews varied in my use of prompts with some participants responding better to more direct questioning and others comfortable in just telling their story with little interruption. I was surprised and honoured that some participants initiated a hug at the completion of the interview, particularly from George, who had reiterated his battle to contain any display of emotion throughout his narrative.

I still feel like a fence sitter, but acknowledge that my own experience of bereavement has made some of my participants feel more comfortable in telling me their stories. I have responded truthfully but briefly to any questions participants have had about my own experience, as I am conscious this is an opportunity for them to tell their own story; an opportunity like none they have had in the past. Each of the first four participants opted for face-to-face contact, and I feel that this format of interaction elicited an open conversation that perhaps would not have eventuated through other formats for these particular participants. George overtly expressed this. Although face-to-face was a successful format for these particular participants, I still believe that others in the future may find it more comfortable to communicate in other ways and I try to remain open to this possibility. Each of the participants enquired at different points as to the usefulness of their contributions in the interview. I was quick to reassure them that whatever they told me was very useful and entirely their choice.

My insider/outsider status still confuses me somewhat. I had had previous contact with the first two female interview participants, although I knew very little of their bereavement stories. I was somewhat hesitant to interview people I knew personally, wondering whether my status as an insider would influence the interview. I look back now and feel that, because I was not part of their intimate social network that had previous access to their bereavement experience, a significant component of the researcher-participant relationship remained.

I have found myself wearing an interview 'uniform'. While this was not a conscious decision initially, I was aware that how I presented myself might influence the process of the interview. Considering this, I have decided to continue wearing the same outfit to each interview, capturing a casual, 'farming' style of striped shirt, tan trousers or skirt and boots, with a vest during colder weather.

Stage 3: After the first ten interviews

Having now conducted (and transcribed and partially analysed) ten interviews, I am hyperaware of the impact of bereavement on people's lives. This has coloured my life beyond my research as well. I find now that even when I read a book for pleasure, it seems to have some reference to bereavement in it. Whether this has always been the case and I have now only become conscious of it, I don't know. When reading my children a story recently, there was a young girl whose mother had recently died. The child was really struggling with the resulting changes in her life. As I read the story, I found myself crying at her loss (my children were both perplexed and amused by this). I find it really strange that I have no trouble remaining composed during an interview yet cry when reading a children's story—bizarre.

I have, at this point, entered new territory in having conducted a number of telephone interviews. This took some adjustment as I found myself responding to participants unfolding stories by nodding encouragement, as I would have in a face-to-face interview. I felt the need to apologise to my first phone interviewee for doing this and subsequently was conscious of making my encouragement known verbally. I was pleasantly surprised at how well the telephone interviews flowed. I feared the absence of visual cues might hinder the clarity and flow of the interview. However, it soon became obvious that each participant had particular verbal cues indicating they had come to a point where it was appropriate for me to speak. I was also able to detect changes in emphasis and emotion through verbal cues.

I have been disappointed at the progress of my first (and only to date) email interview. While the two replies I have had to questions so far have contained some really rich data, they have been few and far between and have required quite a bit of prompting on my behalf. I understand the dilemma involved in balancing showing interest with risking being perceived as a pest when sending reminders. I perhaps err too far on the side of caution. I think that my greatest

disappointment with the email interview revolves around the fact that this would have been a format I would have chosen myself. I am, therefore, imposing my own standards on to the participant, which is unfair.

I am becoming more comfortable in probing and requesting clarification during the interviews, jotting down very brief reminders to myself to return to salient points. I still have a battle with nerves preceding each interview but find this dissipates quickly once the interview begins. Some interviews have proved more challenging than others. The most difficult has been with 80-year-old Dorothy who seemed to suffer from short-term memory loss and would very rapidly wander from the topic, which meant I had to constantly return to asking the same question 10 different ways. She seemed in no way to be bothered by this.

I am gaining confidence in speaking publically about my research, although I still struggle with people treating me as though I am an expert in the field, a position I feel I am yet to earn. I am starting to enjoy speaking about my research and can confidently answer most questions posed. I even find that people's questions are beginning to spark new thought pathways in my own mind, particularly with regard to the eventual applied outcomes of my research.

I find myself struggling at times not to become too involved in participants' lives beyond the interview. I feel some level of debt to participants who have given so much of themselves. I have become involved in an event raising awareness about male suicide following one participant's contribution. I have been very careful to ensure that this has occurred within my role at the NCFH, rather than as a personal involvement. This sense of indebtedness is also the case with others who have contacted me about the research but are not eligible to participate. I feel bad at having to tell them their stories aren't suitable for the research. I have found, however, that I can do small things for these people that make some difference in their lives. I have sent reading material to one man who has made further contact since, encouraging me to continue with my

work. Others I have simply been an ear for over the phone, giving them time to vent their frustrations and challenges.

I am still unresolved on my position as a fence sitter. I would say that my insider status is just enough to provide people with a sense of comfort in openly telling me their stories. I would also say that I feel I have experienced enough of the impact of bereavement to be truly empathic with people's stories.

Stage 4: Well into analysis

The recent completion of my data collection was a bittersweet milestone for me. Although engaging participants was a lengthy and challenging process, actually sitting down and hearing each participant's unique story was such a privilege. I felt as though they were giving me a piece of themselves that no one had been privy to before. I found myself wondering why people were willing to do this and now wish I had asked them what provoked their involvement in the research. I know I should have been pleased to finish my data collection, but I know that I will miss that direct connection with such special people. I still do, however, have ongoing contact with some participants. I met with Louise for dinner one evening when I was travelling in NSW. We had only ever spoken by email or over the phone and she initiated an invitation to meet face-to-face. I attended a suicide awareness event that Jack had been instrumental in organising. He spoke about my research during the five-day event and encouraged others to participate. We have had informal phone and email contact since then. George approached me a few weeks after our initial conversation and asked whether he could call me every now and then. I was gratified that he felt able to do this.

I never thought I would say that I would miss transcribing my interviews, as this has been a lengthy, back-aching process. But again, as I approach the end, I am thinking again how much I will miss the 'realness' of their experiences. Quite often I can hear their voices in my head as I

read over the transcripts again and again. Sitting with each interview and re-reading and re-listening to the recordings have taken so much longer than I expected. As I hear the voices I feel an increasing compulsion to maintain contact with people and respond to the needs expressed in their stories. The battle to maintain the division between researcher and counsellor/concerned friend is challenging and the boundary seems a bit blurry some days.

I have spoken about my research at a number of conferences and events. I recently spoke to a group of farmers in a district where opportunities for farming were disappearing and the local council was trying to build on the resilience of its local community. The broad topic of my talk was communication but I talked about this in the context of my research participants, using de-identified quotes as examples. Although the stories I shared were appreciated, a couple of people mentioned how confronting they found them. This surprised me for some reason and I realised that these stories that I had lived with for so long had become a part of me and although they deeply saddened me, they no longer shocked me. I was a bit distressed by this, thinking that if the stories no longer had that power over me, how would I be able to do justice to writing about them and making the difference that I had set out to make.

Stage 5: Completing the final stages of the thesis

I would describe this as the most difficult stage of the PhD journey. I no longer have 'comfort' tasks, like transcribing, to turn to when I run out of puff—they have now been completed. Now comes the hardest part: struggling to write about all this data in a way that respects and stays true to the story, while being coherent and meaningful for the person reading it and finding that ever elusive 'so what' factor. Most days I don't even know what it all means, how will anyone else ever have a chance? I think I have written about six or seven 'new' thesis plans, trying desperately to establish a flow and a way of addressing the research questions, while keeping in the data that I believe is most important to convey. Finally, as Myf puts it, I have my

elevator pitch. I feel confident writing to this new plan and feel that I can do justice to the data while also addressing the aims and research questions of my research. Looking back, it seems to make so much sense. Why does the process involved in achieving this clarity of thought have to be such an excruciating one?

While it is difficult to envisage life beyond the PhD, I continue to hear a voice from a distant corner of my mind: from Jack saying it will be up to me to 'drive' whatever comes from my research. I am starting to realise that this is very true. I am no longer the empty vessel I once was when I started my PhD. I now carry a great deal of knowledge about this topic inside my head. It is up to me to pass this on, disseminate this as widely as possible and translate my findings into action that can be evaluated. The first small step towards achieving this has started, having submitted my first grant application for funding to apply my findings. As I have said to many people who have asked me how I am getting on with my PhD: I am just chipping away...chip, chip, chip.

Appendix 2: Qualitative Interview Schedule

Grounding Questions

- Could you tell me a bit about yourself as a member of a farming family?
- How did you come to be a member of a farming family?
- Outside of farming, what other things are you involved in?
- What sorts of problems in your life are you likely to ask for help with?
- What limits you from getting help when you need it?
- What things make you more comfortable when asking for help?

You have told me that [name or description of relationship] died by [suicide/accident]. I would like to talk with you about the experience of this loss. Perhaps you could begin with telling me about the time before the death, and then your journey since this time

Expectedness⁹

- *Can you tell me about life before the death?*
- *Can you describe for me the events leading up to the death?*
- *Looking back, what can you recall from the time prior to the death that you think may have influenced the event?*

Resilience

- *How has your daily life changed since the death?*
- *How has your daily life stayed the same since the death?*
- *How would you say you have coped with bereavement?*

Social support

- *How do you believe others around you would view your coping with bereavement?*

- *How have others in your family reacted to the death?*

Posttraumatic growth

- *How have you changed as a person since the death?*
- *Could you tell me about any positive things that have come out of your bereavement experience?*
- *Can you tell me about the nature of the bond/relationship you had with (deceased's name) before they died?*
- *How would you describe your relationship with them now?*

Closing questions

- Tell me about anything you think I should know to better understand your experience of bereavement?
- Is there anything else you would like to ask me?

Appendix 3: Participant Information Form



Farming Families Wellbeing and Bereavement – Participant Information Sheet

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study exploring the ways in which Australian farming families experience and respond to the traumatic loss of someone close to them, and how this impacts upon their lives. To do so, we invite adult members of farming families who have experienced bereavement as a result of external causes (suicide, accidental death, homicide, or a death by unknown cause or intent) to share their experiences. We understand that this is an emotional and intensely personal experience. We would very much appreciate your assistance in sharing your experiences with the aim of developing community-informed responses and assistance for those bereaved in the future. Any information you choose to share will be highly valued. Your experience is unique and very important.

This project forms part of Alison Kennedy's PhD research at The University of New England, and is under the supervision of Associate Professor Myfanwy Maple (UNE), Dr Kathy McKay (UNE) and Associate Professor Susan Brumby (UNE/National Centre for Farmer Health).

HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED: As part of the Farming Families Wellbeing and Bereavement study, we invite you to first fill out a questionnaire of the "tick or select the box" type that is about how you feel now, about your childhood, some recent events in your life, your experience of loss and bereavement and about how you deal with unpleasant things that happen to you. This should take you around 45 minutes. You can either do this online or you can be sent a paper version of the survey. You will then be invited to share, in greater detail, your experience of loss and bereavement. This will be in the form of an in-depth conversation via email, telephone or, if travel distance permits, face-to-face. You will be free to choose the format that you are most comfortable with. The face-to-face or telephone conversation format would take about 2 hours of your time at a location suitable to you. These conversations will be audio recorded to assist with data accuracy. The email conversation would involve your response to approximately 10 emails over an 8-10 week period (less if you write very detailed emails). Phone contact will also be made half way through the email conversation to check how you are finding the process.

"This CRN project is supported by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education"



Some of the questions in this research ask about personal matters and loss. Although these questions are not designed to cause significant psychological or emotional stress, you will be reflecting upon events in your life that may be upsetting. If you feel that these questions will cause you considerable psychological or emotional stress, you might consider not participating in this research. You will be provided with information about available support services should you feel you need them following the interview. Should you indicate you are distressed at any stage throughout the research, the Principal supervisor (Dr Myfanwy Maple) will make contact to assist you with your support requirements.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY: We would like to assure you that any information you share will remain confidential at all times and your identity will be kept anonymous. While the information you share may be included in scientific publications, you will never be identified in any way.

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY: Your involvement in this study is voluntary and we respect your right to withdraw at any time. You may discontinue your participation at any time and do not need to provide any explanation. Should you withdraw from the study, all information provided to the research team will be destroyed.

STORAGE OF INFORMATION: Any information you choose to share in this study will be securely stored so as to maintain confidentiality. Hard copies will be kept in a locked cabinet in the research office. Electronic data will be kept on a password-protected computer. Only the research team will have access to the information. All of the information collected in this research will be kept at the University of New England for a minimum of five years after successful completion of this research as is required by the National Health and Medical Research Council, after which relevant computer files will be deleted and hard copy materials will be destroyed or shredded.

RESEARCH PROCESS: The aim of this research is primarily to inform the student's PhD thesis. The de-identified results of the research will be presented at conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals.

ETHICS: This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No. HE13-047. Valid to 13/06/2014).

"This CRN project is supported by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education"



CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS: Should you have any questions about taking part in this study, please contact Alison Kennedy on (03) 5551 8587 or 0499 752 130, email akenne31@myune.edu.au or contact any of the other members of the research team:

Associate Professor Myfanwy Maple: 02 6773 3661 or email: mmapple2@une.edu.au

Dr Kathy McKay: 02 6773 3443 or email: kmckay8@une.edu.au

Associate Professor Susan Brumby: 03 5551 8460 or email: susan.brumby@wdhs.net

COMPLAINTS: Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer:

Research Services
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351
Tel: (02) 6773 3449 Fax: (02) 6773 3543
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

FEEDBACK OF RESULTS: The outcomes of this study will be reported to the media and made publically available on the Collaborative Research Network webpage at the University of New England and the National Centre for Farmer Health webpage.

If, after reading this Participant Information Sheet or sharing your experiences through any stage of this study, you feel distressed, we urge you to contact your GP or local community health centre or alternatively call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 for counseling support.

*"This CRN project is supported by the
Department of Industry, Innovation, Science,
Research and Tertiary Education"*

Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form



Farming Families Wellbeing and Bereavement: Participant Consent Form

Have you read the information in the Participant Information Sheet and had any queries satisfactorily answered?

YES / NO

Do you agree to complete the Farming Families Wellbeing and Bereavement questionnaire?

YES / NO

Do you agree to participate in an in-depth conversation with the researcher either via email, telephone or, where possible, face-to-face?

YES / NO

Do you agree to have the conversation audio-recorded if it is conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone?

YES / NO

Do you understand that all information shared by you will be coded so you remain anonymous to all but the research team?

YES / NO

Do you understand that you may withdraw your participation at any time without providing a reason, and if you choose to do this, all information shared by you will be destroyed and not used in any manner?

YES / NO

Do you agree that some of the information you share may be used in a publication but that you will not be identified in any way?

YES / NO

Do you agree that your information will be kept on a password protected computer file for a minimum of five years and then be destroyed?

YES / NO

*“This CRN project is supported by the
Department of Industry, Innovation, Science,
Research and Tertiary Education”*



Farming Families Wellbeing and Bereavement: Participant Consent Form, cont.

Are you over 18 years of age?

YES / NO

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Phone:.....

*“This CRN project is supported by the
Department of Industry, Innovation, Science,
Research and Tertiary Education”*

Appendix 5: Media Release



Helping farming families affected by a traumatic death

June 2013

Researchers at the University of New England and the National Centre for Farmer Health are talking to adult members of farming families about their experience of loss through a death by external causes (suicide, accidental death, homicide and other deaths of unknown cause or intent).

By gaining an understanding of their experience, the researchers hope to develop a framework for understanding similarly bereaved farming families in future, and to help inform Government policy and procedure for use in health and community services to assist community members when a tragedy occurs.

Mrs Alison Kennedy, Associate Professor Myfanwy Maple and Dr Kathy McKay from UNE's Collaborative Research Network, and Associate Professor Susan Brumby from the National Centre for Farmer Health are seeking male and female adult members of farming families, who would be willing to share their experiences of the death of someone close to them through either suicide, accidental death, homicide or a death through unknown cause or intent.

Mrs Kennedy, a behavioural scientist, will be conducting questionnaires and interviews with participants as part of her Doctoral research. "Farming families work and live in a unique environment. Those closely affected by externally caused deaths are able to offer exceptional insight into the occurrence and impact of such loss within this context," she said, "allowing us to challenge assumptions, develop more appropriate prevention strategies, and understand the phenomenon more broadly. As externally caused deaths are unlikely to cease entirely, it is vital that we understand the experiences of those most closely affected, whose lives are changed forever."

Associate Professor Maple has conducted award-winning research over the past ten years that is helping to support those who have been bereaved through a death by external causes. "This project" she said, "is encouraging farming families to talk about their grief, and how the death of someone close to them has affected their lives. To date, responses to externally caused death in farming communities have primarily focused on prevention," she explained. "While preventative work is vital, such a focus ignores the experiences of those most intimately affected by a tragic death."

This research also has the personal support of Jock Laurie, the former head of the National Farmers Federation. In his role as NFF President, and formerly as President of NSW Farmers during

1



the height of the drought, Jock has seen firsthand the effect of prolonged drought, isolation and the lack of access to medical services on the farming community. He has witnessed the devastation that the loss of a family member - be it by suicide or an on-farm accident - causes families and rural communities. Jock believes research into this area is essential to help inform and shape policy development in this important area, and to ensure farmers and their families continue to receive the support and assistance they need.

Participation in this research involves the completion of an online survey questionnaire and an in-depth interview, which will be possible via email, telephone or, where suitable, face-to face.

The researchers said that all participants, and any information they provided to the research project, would be treated confidentially.

For more information on the project, or to discuss the possibility of participating in the questionnaire in another format, please phone Alison Kennedy on 0499 752 130 or at the National Centre for Farmer Health on (03) 5551 8587 or email akenne31@myune.edu.au

Other researchers involved in this project can also be contacted:

Associate Professor Myfanwy Maple at UNE on (02) 6773 3661
Dr Kathy McKay at UNE on (02) 6773 3443
Associate Professor Susan Brumby at NCFH on (03) 5551 8460

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No.HE13-047, Valid to 13/06/2014).

Appendix 6: Information sent to community groups



Are you an adult member of a farming family?

Have you lost someone close to you through suicide, accidental death, homicide or a death by unknown cause or intent?

Mrs Alison Kennedy, Associate Professor Myfanwy Maple and Dr Kathy McKay from The University of New England's Collaborative Research Network, and Associate Professor Susan Brumby from the National Centre for Farmer Health are seeking male and female adult members of farming families, who would be willing to share their experiences of the death of someone close to them by suicide, accidental death, homicide, or a death through unknown cause or intent.

Participation in this research involves the completion of a survey questionnaire and an in-depth conversation, which will be possible via email, telephone or, where suitable, face-to-face. All participants, and any information they provide to the research project, will be treated confidentially.

For more information on the project, please phone Alison Kennedy on 0499 752 130 or at the National Centre for Farmer Health on (03) 5551 8587 or email akenne31@myune.edu.au

Other researchers involved in this project can also be contacted:

Associate Professor Myfanwy Maple at UNE on (02) 6773 3661

Dr Kathy McKay at UNE on (02) 6773 3443

Associate Professor Susan Brumby at NCFH on (03) 5551 8460

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No.HE13-047, Valid to 13/06/2014).

*"This CRN project is supported by the
Department of Industry, Innovation, Science,
Research and Tertiary Education"*

Appendix 7: Ethics Approval Form



Ethics Office
Research Development & Integrity
Research Division
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 02 6773 3449
Fax 02 6773 3543
jo-ann.soizou@une.edu.au
www.une.edu.au/research-services

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: A/Prof Myfanwy Maple, Dr Kathryn McKay, A/Prof Susan Brumby & Mrs Kennedy Alison

School of Health

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: Death by external causes in Australia's farming communities: Contextualizing exposure and bereavement within farming families.

APPROVAL No.: HE13-047

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 13 June, 2013

APPROVAL VALID TO: 13 June, 2014

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address:
<http://www.une.edu.au/research-services/researchdevelopment/integrity/ethics/human-ethics/hrecforms.php>

The NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.



Jo-Ann Soizou
Secretary/Research Ethics Officer

Appendix 8: Services Information Sheet



How to access services if you feel emotionally distressed

Your local GP or community health centre

Your local GP and community health centre are key contacts for concerns about your mental and emotional health. If you have a GP already, arrange to see them as soon as possible and book a longer appointment to allow plenty of time to discuss your circumstances. If you do not have a GP you can locate one, or the community health centre in your area, by accessing the Better Health website at <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>

Lifeline 13 11 14

Lifeline is a free 24/7 telephone helpline offering support to anyone in crisis

Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467

The Suicide Call Back Service offers free 24/7 telephone immediate support and can provide ongoing support through up to six 50-minute telephone counselling sessions that will provide you with longer term support. The Suicide Call Back Service also offers online counselling. Registration for online counselling can be accessed at <http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au>

Other available health services

If you would like to find a professional or service in your area, you can search JIGSAW at <http://jigsaw.ontheline.org.au>. JIGSAW is an Australia-wide database of community services, and offers a geographical search facility. It has a comprehensive listing of a wide range of services, specialising in the areas of suicide prevention and mental health and wellbeing.

*“This CRN project is supported by the
Department of Industry, Innovation, Science,
Research and Tertiary Education”*

Appendix 9: Example of initial themes—Hickock

- Obligations
 - To help parents
- Lost/given up opportunity
 - Accompanied by unspoken and unexpressed resentment
- Long term connection with farming/the farm/the land/the home/the history of the area
- Lived in the same place all his life
- Financial hardship
- Forced to take on responsibility
- Inherited roles
- Stressful events
- Community involvement
 - Shift from high involvement to minimal involvement
- Excessive community involvement
- Lack of resources
- Social support
 - Family bonds
 - Strong relationship with his father
 - Highest priority
 - Friends
 - Support from within the farming community
 - Generosity and support towards friends/community members
- Traditional/established roles
 - High expectations of family
 - Gendered roles
 - To the exclusion of other roles
- Multiple roles
 - Difficult to balance all of the roles
 - Reliance on others to also fulfil their roles
- Legislative issues
- Accumulative stressors
- Learning from experience
 - Value of hindsight
- Succession planning
- Unanticipated events
- Care for family
- Physical ill health
- Employing others to meet labour demands
- Support role of females
- Demands of farming
 - Ongoing

- Seasonal
 - Reduced by improving technology
- Multigenerational issues
 - Problems
 - Learning/established history
 - Connectedness
 - Bonds an integral part of life
 - Working together
- Combined living/working; integration of work and life
- External advice
- Social networks
 - Farming
 - Non-farming
- Off-farm involvement
- Impact of aging
 - Wisdom comes with aging
 - Wisdom comes with experience/learning by experience
 - Increased feelings of vulnerability with aging
 - Reflection
 - Declining health
 - A fait accompli
 - Reducing peer social support network through death
 - Reflecting on unfulfilled future plans
 - Missing the third generation (grandkids) that contribute so much to the lives of peers
 - Position in the community
- “I was right”
- Health service resources
- Time poor
 - Demands on time
- Farm as a personal sanctuary
- Suicide event
 - Clarity of memory around the death event
 - Change in routine at the point of death was the alerting factor
 - No change in routine was identified/death was integrated in usual routine
 - Father shot himself with a shotgun in the farmhouse
 - First help sought from a male friend/neighbour who asked to contact Rose and then to a lawyer acquaintance to contact his sister
 - Planning of death was identifiable only in hindsight
 - Strategies for prevention were identified in hindsight
 - In describing the event, there was a focus on the practical implications as opposed to emotion
 - Utilized social networks immediately after the event
 - Shielding children from the trauma
 - Emotionally detached language used in the description of the event (despite expression of emotion through tears)
 - Exerted control in an otherwise uncontrollable situation
 - Stigma
 - Described an outburst of emotion in an otherwise detached state

- Element/expression of relief (not overtly expressed and did not reduce the sadness of the death)
- Glossing over of emotions
- Familiarity of death
- Expression of emotion attributed to aging and a physical condition
- Rumination over time about prevention in hindsight
- Impact of the death was measured in terms of practical disruption
- Don't talk about the suicide
- Uniqueness of suicide events
- Changed established roles
- Current relationship with deceased
- Not viewed as a traumatic event, but as a sad time
- Considered 'a fact of life' by HM and this reinforced to the children
- Site of suicide became a happy place
- Choice made to get on with life
- Geographic distance
- Persistence/stoicism
- Non-traditional decision making
- Family tensions
 - Wife's preference was for family harmony over financial entitlements p18
- Self reliance
 - A pattern established from a very young age
- Establishing priorities
- Rural v urban
- Resourcefulness/making the most of what is available
- Avoidance of emotionally sensitive issues
- Talk focuses on practical issues
- Social credit (or loss of)
- Escape from farming
- Escape from established social networks
- Unrealistic expectations
- Long-term stressors
- Balancing ideals and practicalities
- Financial assistance
- Barriers to assistance
- Resilience
- Requesting help (or not)
 - Help not asked for, rather it was presented
- Toughness
 - The importance of being tough
- Hope
- Getting on with it
 - Resigned to the fact
- Change from established roles
- Routine
 - Established
 - Stable elements in farming (adding some level of predictability), as opposed to the rest of life in which there are very few constants

- Changing
- Focus on practical skill building
- Access to/familiarity with firearms
 - Kids familiar from a young age
- Personal response to stressors (this would link with toughness, self-reliance, resilience, etc.)
- Unpredictability/instability of farming
- Marking the passage of time according to the occurrence of negative events (skimming over the positives)
- Putting stressors into perspective
- Present focused, not focussing too far into the future.
- Giving instruction
 - Importance of people listening to you (patriarchal)
- Strength of recollection about stressful events
- Reflection even during the stressful event
- Rumours
- Decision making during stressful events
- Patriarchal decision making
- Language used avoids displaying extreme emotion
- Suicide seen as an option to dealing with stressors
- Shunning unfair use of authority
- Synchronicity of the life story
- Protective mechanisms
- Emotion/emotional decision making linked to females
- A positive among all the negatives
- Analytical and practical focus
- Focus on barriers
- Quality of life
- Recognising and building on your own strengths
- Importance of reliability and keeping your word
- Values develop through exposure to a lack of values in others
- There is value in being exposed to challenges
- Frustration with red tape
- Looking at the positive aspects of stressful events
- Impact of farming on physical health
- Reflection
- Readjustment (and the pain experienced if you can't do this)
- Reassessment
- Issues not spoken about
- Regret
- Lack of anonymity
- Appreciative of what you have
- Unspoken doubts about father's proper behaviour
- Showed strength where his father was weak
- The "protector"
 - Highly motivated to protect family
- Feelings of helplessness

- Almost lost his son to a vehicle accident
- Experienced a number of suicide events, farm accidents and motor vehicle accidents
- Pattern of young men dying through accidents over time
- Not a risk taker
- Suicide events have been masked as accidental death