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**Emerging Voice: Exploring the Experiences of Mothers
Bereaved by Suicide within the Socio-cultural
Context of Aotearoa**

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fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of Master of Arts
in Psychology at
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(Ngāti Rangitihi, Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Pikiao)

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Abstract

The youth suicide rate in Aotearoa has risen rapidly since the late 1980s with 19.3 deaths per 100,000 in 2011. Māori youth suicide is 2.4 times higher than that of Pākehā youth. Loss through suicide potentially triggers intense feelings of sadness, anger, worthlessness, heartache and vulnerability in survivors. This thesis reports original research that brings understanding to the experience of mothers who have experienced the loss of their child in adolescence or early adulthood. A qualitative methodology, phenomenological research guided by Māori principles and values, and *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face) semi-structured conversational interviews were utilised to gather data from both Pākehā and Māori mothers. The intention of phenomenological research is to locate Aotearoa mothers' knowledge at the centre of the research, and in doing so enables an atmosphere of respect and understanding to occur for all the mothers involved. The stories of mothers who have lost a child through suicide were examined for aspects of resiliencies, social support, and effects of the experience of suicide on relationships during the process of recovery. The devastating emotional effect of suicide on the mothers and their families resonated throughout their narratives. What was evidenced through the analysis was the influence of socio-cultural constructions of mothering and suicide on the burden of responsibility felt by mothers. The research enabled an understanding that some forms of social support were not necessarily experienced by mothers as conducive to recovery and wellbeing following loss of their child to suicide. In addition, the analysis exposed the devastating intergenerational harm perpetuated by the 'code of silence' surrounding suicide, revealing the necessity for psychology to challenge responsibly the validity of maintaining the silence.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved eldest son, Mark Adrian Cooper, who came home and stood unwaveringly by my side after the suicide of his brother Hamish. His story is yet to be told.



“The greatest glory in living
lies not in never falling,
but in rising every time we fall.”
(Mandela, n.d.)

¹ Koru – symbolic of growth, strength and peace.

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Whakataka te hau ki te uru
Whakataka te hau ki te tonga
Kia mākinakina ki uta
Kia mātaratara ki tai
E hi ake ana te ātakura, he tio, he huka, he hauhu
Haumi e! Hui e! Taiki e! ²

Ko Te Arawa te waka
Ko Ruawāhia te maunga
Ko Tarawera te awa
Ko Ngāti Rangitahi te iwi
Ko Ngāti Whakaue me Ngāti Pūkiao ngā hapū
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Ko Diane Lee Conway ahau ³

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² A karakia to centre this study.

³ This study is on mothers' experiences, therefore this pepeha acknowledges my matrilineal whakapapa.

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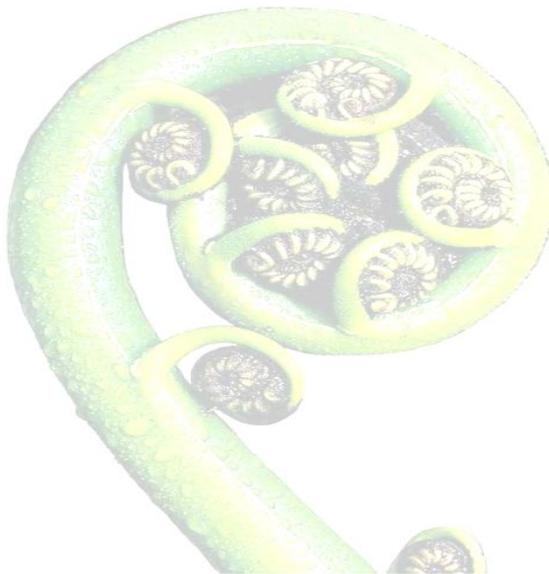


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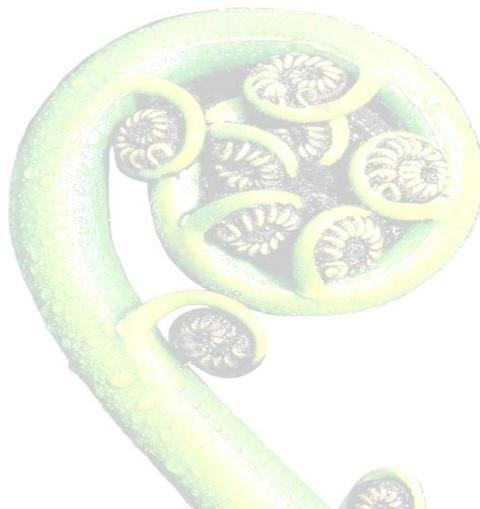
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Glossary of Māori Words⁴

Aotearoa	New Zealand
aroha	love, sympathy, compassion
aroha ki te tangata	respect people
atua	supernatural being, god
awhi	cherish
haka	to dance, perform
hakari	feast
hapū	subtribe
hinengaro	mind, psychological
Hine-nui-te-pō	Goddess of night and death, ruler of the underworld
hura kōhatu	unveiling of the headstone
iwi	tribe
kai	food, to eat
kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face
karakia	prayer, incantation
karanga	ceremonial call of welcome
kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata	do not trample on the prestige of the people
kaumatua	elder
koha	offering, gift, donation
korowai	cloak
kōrero	talk, conversation, discourse, storying
mana	status, a supernatural force within a person, place or object. <i>Mana</i> goes hand in hand with tapu, one affecting the other
manaaki	to support, protect, hospitality

⁴ Moorfield, J.C. (2005). *Te Whanake Te Aka: Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index*. New Zealand: Pearson Education New Zealand.

manaakitanga	to share, hospitality, kindness
mana wahine	the power of Māori women
manuhiri	visitor, guest
Māori	indigenous person of Aotearoa New Zealand, normal
marae	courtyard – the open area in front of the <i>wharenuī</i> . Often includes the complex of buildings around the marae
mauri tau	to be calm
mihimihi	to greet, acknowledge
mokopuna or moko	grandchildren
noa	unrestricted, ordinary
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent, other
Papa-tū-ā-nuku	Earth mother and wife of Rangi-nui – all living things originate from their union
Rangi-nui	Sky <i>atua</i> and husband of Papa-tū-ā-nuku, from which union originate all living things
rongoā	remedy, medication, tonic
takahi whare	ritual cleansing of the home of the deceased
tāne	male, man
tangi	to cry, to mourn
tangihanga	weeping, crying, funeral rites for the dead
tapu	sacred, protected, restricted
tātai	geneology
te Ao Māori	the <i>Māori</i> world
te Ao Pākehā	the <i>Pākehā</i> world
te whetū	the star
tikanga	procedure, custom
tinana	body, self, the main part of anything
titiro	to look
tohunga	expert, skilled person
tuku wairua	sending on of the spirit

tūpuna	ancestors
tūrangawaewae	a place where one has rights to reside
urupā	cemetery, graveyard
wāhine	woman, female
wairua	spirit, soul
whakamā	to be ashamed, embarrassed
whakapapa	genealogy, lineage
whakapiki tangata	empowerment
whakarongo	listen
whakarunga	integration
whakataukī	proverb, to utter a proverb
whakawhanaungatanga	get to know one another
whānau	family group, extended family
whareniui	meeting house
whenua	land, belonging

