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DISCOURSES OF GRIEF: THE DEATH OF THE MOTHER

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DEDICATION

To my mother

Dorothy Amelia Manderson

ABSTRACT

This purpose of this study was to explore the grief of daughters on the death of their mothers. I interviewed fifteen women. This study draws on feminist post-structuralist insights into subjectivity as constructed in the interplay, and between socially available discourses. I identified three interrelated and co-existing discourses through which the metadiscourse of grief arose. These discourses were continuity, discontinuity and silencing. Two distinct patternings of the discourses were identified within the corpus of the text, and these seemed to be shaped primarily by the age of the woman when her mother died.

These discourses are considered and collated within the social/historical context in which medical and psychological notions of grief have been hegemonic, and other subordinated and lay discourses are emerging. I suggest the understanding of oneself as a daughter in grief changes over time. The women interviewed in this study showed a 'desire' not to 'get over it' and disconnect, but to incorporate a continuing bond with the mother. How this is achieved is explained.

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