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INTRODUCTION

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In the seventies, the most powerful metaphor for relationships between women was that of sisterhood. This obtained not only in the women's liberation movement, but also in the contexts of educational organizations and therapy centres. Real mothers were rare animals, or had to pretend to be, if they wanted to be part of the scene. The role of mothers was primarily symbolic, limited to psychotherapists' couches or therapy groups for women.

In the nineties, there is a revival of interest in the metaphor of the mother-daughter relationship. This revival is undoubtedly linked to a growing consciousness that differences between women are part of every-day reality at work, if not at home; especially differences in age and power. The female pioneers of then are now confronted with a new generation of women who, biologically speaking, could be their daughters. The older, professional women find younger women looking to them for advice, attention and empathy. Women teachers, therapists and bosses see themselves treated as symbolic mothers, supposed to offer the same, or even more, care and protection than real mothers ever could. Frequently, the 'nominal' mothers do not know how to turn dependence into in(ter-)dependence, and often cannot cope with the emotions that charge these processes. If they do not offer the desired support, they will be blamed for it. If they do offer it, they sometimes find themselves blaming or persecuting the clients, students or employees involved for not being grateful enough. The other side of the coin is that the younger women are not always conscious of their positions as symbolic daughters, and are equally unable to unravel the emotional and social bind in which they are caught. The end may even be a situation of merged depression; of mutual powerlessness, reproach and criticism. Or, in another scenario, a situation wherein both parties are hurt by prevalent insensitivity and numbness, caused perhaps by mutual efforts to avoid conflicts.

A better understanding of the dynamics between mothers and daughters could be helpful in understanding the dynamics between women in general, not only in the family, but also in the context of management, education and therapy. The relationship between mothers and daughters is seen as an archetype of real and symbolic generation differences between women. However, the usefulness of the mother-daughter metaphor for acquiring insights and dealing with the emotional problems involved is restricted by a number of severe theoretical limitations and gaps. Until recently, relationships between women were usually described from a 'male' perspective. This implies a great emphasis on heterosexuality, a lot of attention for the mediative function of the father, and an almost unconditional belief in the necessity of autonomy as a state of adulthood. All this happened at the expense of understanding lesbianism, the mediative function of the mother, the inevitability of human interdependence, and the joy of connection. The theories are also biased towards stressing the active, intervening side of motherhood, and the passive, submissive side of daughterhood - thus adhering to the image of an adult and a juvenile; perhaps even offender and victim. In general, the problems of the daughter are met with much more compassion than the problems of the mother.

This book provides analyses of many aspects of mother-daughter relationships that were hitherto neglected or ignored. It starts from the premise that daughters and mothers both take an active part in shaping their relationship. That is why the term 'daughtering' is put forward, along with the term 'mothering'. If mothering can be defined as actions and activities related to the role of mothers (usually conceived of as daily care of the young - looking after them, raising them in an intense and emotional relationship), daughtering must be understood as all the actions and activities inherent to the role of daughters. Therefore, daughtering implies being involved in an originally dependent relationship involving being cared for by older or more powerful people. However, the concept does not define how this care is received: whether the recipient wallows in it, welcomes it, tries to reciprocate, or resist it. This emphasis on the active, intervening side of daughterhood facilitates the articulation of the problems of mothers from a 'motherly' point of view. An underlying theme in daughtering and mothering is also exposed: the spontaneous development of female subjectivity as opposed to intervening practices managed more or less consciously, arranged more or less intentionally and professionally by 'established' female subjects. Finally, the psychological paradigm behind theorizing on the development of female subjectivity is reanalyzed and revalued, and connections are made to the general psychological theorizing on becoming a subject, in particular by Jordan.

The following sections offer a multidisciplinary collection of essays on daughtering and mothering introduced by extensive examinations of current theory and the role of these new insights, by

Schreurs, Woertman and van Mens-Verhulst. The contributions stem from clinical, developmental, social and cultural psychology, and from cultural anthropology. They refer to family, therapy and teaching practices, involving a total of three debates on the development of female subjectivity.

One debate concerns the sexual dimension of female subjectivity and the role of the mother therein. The assumption that sexuality in girls awakens during the Oedipal period and that father is the first sexual object is challenged. Lykke argues that the mother is the first object of their daughters sexual feelings. This neglect of erotic feeling in girls for their mothers stems from a taboo on homosexuality. Moreover, mothers play an important role in the experiences of the body and sexuality during adolescence and adulthood, as is illuminated by Flaake and Sayers. Flax stresses the development of sexual identity as a continuous lifelong process.

A second debate centres on contextual influences on mothering and daughtering. A major issue here is which people or events are deemed indispensable in intervention in the assumed symbiosis of mothers and daughters if a daughterly connection with the 'external' or 'real' world is to be established. Should it be an outsider, a male, a critical moment of discovering 'the' sex difference; or do women themselves fulfil this function, as mothers, (girl)friends, teachers and therapists? Inspiring analyses are offered by De Kanter, De Waal, Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg, Gilligan and Rogers, Orbach and Eichenbaum, and Surrey.

A third debate challenges dominant ideas on motherhood and female adulthood. It questions notions on the one and only 'good' way of mothering, and even the idea of 'good-enough-mothering'. The argument posed here is that the mothering ideal should actually be mistrusted because it keeps alive infantile fantasies, and supports relations of dominance between classes, races and cultures. The contributions of Sayers, Leira, Krips, Groen, and also Gilligan, Surrey and Flax offer an insight into some of these previously hidden functions of mothering.

Against the backdrop of these three debates, questions are raised on the inadequacy of the language available to support thinking about daughters and mothers. New concepts and distinctions are proposed, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly.

In several chapters (Leira and Krips, Groen, and also Flax) endeavours are made to reflect upon attributions made too easily and too obviously from a white, North-European and Anglo-American point of view. These contributions attempt to combat an unrealistic geographical and cultural centrism in the theorizing on daughtering and mothering. However, the presented texts here will unavoidably be 'coloured' by the social backgrounds of the twenty authors and editors. Actually, we are all white, professional women, ranging from 30 to 52 years old. Among us are at least 13 'real' mothers, biological and non-biological ones, hetero- and homosexual-oriented, and we are mothering nine daughters, aged between two and 20, along side an unknown number of sons.