



## **Dedication**

*To my mother Nadia, for her unwavering support, love, and guidance throughout every step of this journey.*

*To my fiancé, Djilali, for his endless encouragement, patience, and belief in me, even during the toughest moments.*

*To my sisters Amel and Sandra, for being my pillars of strength and always reminding me to stay grounded.*

*And to my friends, for their companionship, understanding, and constant motivation.*

*I am forever grateful for each of you.*

**Siham**

*I dedicate this work to my family whose support has always been valuable and to all my friends.*

**Kenza**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is a comparative study between *Not Without My Daughter* (1987) by the American writer Betty Mahmoody and *Room* (2010) by the Irish- Canadian writer Emma Donoghue. The central issue of this comparison is to demonstrate how the sacrifice of motherhood is presented in both novels at different periods of time. The study focuses on the essential role of motherhood, and the challenges mothers faced to survive and protect their children during their isolation from the outside world and after their freedom. To accomplish our goal, we have adopted a theory developed by Nancy Chodorow: *The Reproduction of Mothering Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978). The analysis demonstrates the two novels that share similarities in order to show the negative effects of oppression on individuals and the ability of Betty and Ma to protect their own child and overcome difficulties. In addition, it shows how two stories can produce similar perspectives.

**Keywords:** Role of motherhood, challenges, gender roles, economic dependency, lack of father involvement

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## General Introduction

There is a strong connection between mothering and sacrifice. Motherhood is a challenging role with many responsibilities. Being a mother can mean sacrificing one's own needs and desires to focus on the needs of one's children. Betty and Ma made efforts and sacrifices to provide comfort for their children. A mother's resilience serves as a protective barrier during difficult times, and her happiness reflects her child's small achievements. To illustrate, when Betty Mahmoody arrived in Iran, she found the society very different from the USA. She experienced significant culture and being surprised by the strict codes for women, such as the requirement to wear a chador covering most of the body. One striking example about how Ma insists on maintaining a daily schedule that includes physical activity, storytelling and education this structure shields Jack from psychological trauma of captivity and helps him grow with a strong sense of safety and stability.

This dissertation studies *Not Without My Daughter* as an autobiographical memoir. It tells her real life experience of being trapped in Iran with her daughter Mahtob by her abusive husband. In contrast, *Room* is not based on true story directly; it is adapted from Emma's Donoghue fictional novel, which was inspired by real-life cases of captivity and abuse, such as the Fritzl Case in the United States. In this dissertation, we have raised the representation of motherhood as a main theme that focuses on the important role of motherhood and the challenges that she will confront while protecting her child. In addition, we are going to focus on Ma and Betty, the main characters representing the essential role of motherhood, and show the challenges that they confront by protecting their children from a husband and a kidnapper and help them survive in their confinement for years. For example, Betty and her daughter did not receive support from the society to secure their rights as foreigners in Iranian society, and Ma and her son faced challenges integrating with family and others after their escape. To

accomplish this, we would seek help from the theory that is *The Reproduction of Mothering* by Nancy Chodorow.

## a- Review of the Literature

The fictional novel and the autobiographical memoir have been criticized by several reviewers in relation to these issues. For instance, Both A. Sam Steven and Maja Mugerle offer critical views on *Not Without My Daughter*, raising doubts about how fair and balanced Betty Mahmoody's story really is. Steven has mixed feelings as a reader, he understands and respects Betty's heroism and emotional journey, but he thinks the writing is not effective and feels more like a memory than a story happening in the moment. He also feels that the people in the book, especially Betty's husband's family, are shown in a very negative way, making it hard to connect with any character (Steven, 2019). Mugerle looks at the book from a cultural point of view, saying it supports Western stereotypes about Iran during a time of political conflict. She questions whether the story is truly objective and points out that Betty's daughter, Mahtob, is shown as a quiet, passive figure, which helps Betty appear as the sole hero. Both critics believe that although the book is powerful, it gives a limited view of a complex situation and may lead readers to have a narrow or misleading understanding of Iranian culture (Mugerle, 2018, pp.39-51).

Both Dr. Oliver Johnson (2021) and Sarah Blackwood (2015) offer critical perspectives on *Room* that question the novel's representation of trauma, though they focus on different aspects of its portrayal. Johnson problematizes the ethical implications of fictionalizing suffering without personal experience, warning that such portrayals risk perpetuating stereotypes and inaccuracies about trauma, particularly in Donoghue's depiction of captivity. Similarly, Blackwood analyzes the novel from a feminist standpoint, arguing that *Room* reinforces damaging stereotypes about motherhood and female suffering by centering Ma's identity predominantly on maternal sacrifice, thereby obscuring her individual trauma and agency. Together, their critiques illuminate a tension in *Room* between the responsibilities

of imaginative storytelling and the potential reinforcement of cultural stereotypes. While Johnson emphasizes the ethical duty to represent trauma authentically, Blackwood highlights how the novel may uphold patriarchal narratives about women's pain. Both critics raise essential questions about how *Room* navigates the complex terrain of trauma fiction, inviting further discussion about the balance between empathetic engagement and critical representation in narratives of suffering.

Another critique by Beth Wren that argues:

“The character of Ma was somewhat of an enigma to me. Shown only through Jack's eyes, at times I loved her as unconditionally as Jack does, and at other times I did not agree with her, or could not understand her reasons or methods of coping with the situation. I really think that was the point, though. She is a real woman placed in a horrifying and unique situation and she reacts in good ways and in bad ways, and she is above all, human and flawed and doing the best she can. Even through Jack's distorted eyes we are able to see her as more than just a mother, as a person in her own right and it is for this reason why Donoghue makes such true and perceptive observations about motherhood, even in the most extreme of situations” (Wren, 2016, Para5).

## **b- Issue and Working Hypothesis**

From the review of literature presented, we can argue that both novels have been evaluated as a positive and negative works by literary critics. *Room* was criticized and seen as a writing about someone else's suffering and 'misogynistic' exploration of female suffering. *Not Without My Daughter* has also received a lot of criticism. It is criticized and viewed as provocative due to its depiction of Iranian culture; it also focuses on its controversial main character Betty, who challenges the Iranian oppressive cultural norms, throughout her tragic journey and provoke her desire for protection and freedom.

Although these two novels are criticized by other reviewers, later on both novels earned a valuable position. In the present study, we make an attempt to compare these two selected novels that, according to our knowledge, no other similar study had been conducted. Even though they come from different cultures, time periods, and places, we aim at analyzing them

and find similarities. The main purpose of this study is to show that both novels have similarities and focus on a common concern, which is to expose the essential role of motherhood, and her sacrifice and strength to protect herself and her child from male abuse, dominance and violence. To attain our goal, we rely on Nancy Chodorow: *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978).

### **c- Methodological Outline**

Our work will be divided into three main chapters. In the beginning, we have a General Introduction in which we gave general ideas about the sacrifice of motherhood and her essential role for her child by referring to Emma Donoghue's *Room* and Betty Mahmoody's *Not Without My Daughter* characters and how society treated them. We have chosen Nancy Chodorow's theory feminist sociologist and psychoanalyst, in order to refer to some writings of the work to discuss the issue and Working Hypothesis Section. We use the book *The Reproduction of Mothering* to analyse and understand the sacrifice of motherhood and her important role in child's life. The Results section presents the key findings of our research. In the Discussion, we focus on the maternal role, the challenges to traditional motherhood, and the intersection of gender roles, family, and society, using characters from both novels to illustrate these themes. Finally, our dissertation ends with General Conclusion that restates different issues in this research.

## I. Methods and Material

### 1-Methods

To analyze our research topic on the sacrifices of motherhood within patriarchal domination in both *Not Without My Daughter* (1987) and *Room* (2010), we used Nancy Chodorow's theory *The Reproduction Mothering* (1978). Our research is based on several concepts deriving from the theoretical structure developed by Chodorow. She is an American sociologist scholar; and psychoanalyst. She was born on January 20, 1934, in New York. Through her psychoanalytic perspective, she aims to expand our understanding of how gender is created by both mother-child relationship and wider societal norms and values.

Through her psychoanalytic works, she argues that the mother-child relationship is fundamental in constructing gender roles, emphasizes the various ways women experience motherhood in today's society. Chodorow adds,

This book analyzes women's mothering; and in particular; the way women's mothering is reproduced across generations. Its central question is how do women today come to mother? By implication, it asks how we might change things to transform the sexual division of labor in which women mother (Chodorow, 1978, p.4).

Chodorow's argues that the process of how women become mothers today is rooted in the dynamics of the mother-child relationship; and the influence of societal norms and values play a crucial role in defining her roles as a mother. She highlights the profound impact of mother-child relationship on the child's development. She states: "The infant's mental and physical existence depends on its mother and the infant comes to feel that it does" (Chodorow, 1978, p.78). In other words, a mother's role involves both safeguarding her children and allowing them the freedom to fully develop as individuals.

For Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* is shaped by women's independence in raising their children without relying on a husband, especially under challenging circumstances. She stresses: "The exclusive responsibility of women for children exacerbates

conflicts about masculinity in men” (Chodorow, 1978, p.213). She believes that when women are responsible for care giving children, it increases conflicts among men; this situation reinforces traditional gender roles. Chodorow aims to convey the idea that the mother-child relationship plays an essential role in shaping identities of the next generations. She states: “they in turn have difficulties in experiencing themselves as separate from their own children” (Chodorow, 1978, p.212).

Chodorow mentioned in *The Reproduction of Mothering* how women are economically dependent to their man. She says: “Women in our society are primarily defined as wives and mothers, thus in particularistic relation to someone else, whereas men are defined primarily in universalistic occupational terms” (Chodorow, 1978, p.178). This quotation argues that our society often sees women primarily as wives and mothers, while men are defined by their jobs. This makes women financially dependent on men because they are often not in paid jobs. When women focus on family care, they have less time for paid work. This means they earn less money. Men, who are usually the main breadwinners, have more financial power.

In addition, Chodorow explores the theme of lack of father’s involvement in child-rearing in which she explains the consequences of the father who does not participate in care giving to his child. She argues:

A boy must attempt to develop a masculine gender identification and learn the masculine role in the absence of a continuous and ongoing personal relationship to his father (and in the absence of a continuously available masculine role model (Chodorow, 1978, p.176).

In this quotation, Chodorow argues that boys often develop their masculine identity without a stable and close relationship with their fathers. Because of this, they must learn to be masculine more consciously, often by rejecting femininity instead of learning from a present male role model. In comparison, girls form their gender identity through constant emotional

connection with their mothers, which gives them a clearer and more personal model. Since boys do not have the same kind of relationship with their fathers, their understanding of masculinity becomes more distant and strict. This situation reflects a larger social pattern, where fathers are often not involved in caring for children, which affects how boys grow and relate to others.

Analyzing the two novels *Not Without My Daughter* and *Room* might help us observe that they have similar themes and concerns, as it is developed in Chodorow's theory, these common points make our work easier in defining the role of mothers in society in order to protect their child's identity and provide the care and love they need as children. In addition, there is the theme of early mothering which is an important one according to Chodorow. The theory of Chodorow explains how the challenges to traditional motherhood, as women's economic dependence on man and the lack of father involvement, can be really challenging to the mother in order to assume alone the emotional and psychological side of her child. Finally, Chodorow highlights how the intersection of family and gender roles that demonstrates how family dynamics and societal expectations shape women's and children identities.

## **2-Materials**

This part of our work contains the brief summaries *Not Without My Daughter* (1987) and *Room* (2010) and the biographies of the two novelists.

### **2-1Biography of Betty Mahmoody**

Betty Mahmoody is an American author and public speaker. Best known for her book, *Not Without My Daughter*, which was subsequently made into a film of the same name, it was also nominated for the Pulitzer prize. She is the president and co-founder of One World: For

children, an organization that promotes understanding between cultures to offer security and protection to children from two cultural marriages. Mahmoody married Sayyed Bozrog (Moody) an Iranian originally from Iran who was based in the United States with whom she had a daughter named Mahtob. In 1984, they went to Iran for a fifteen days trip, and that is when her pain began. The story centers around an American mother trapped in Iran who wants to return to the United States with her daughter, Mahtob, refusing to leave without her which shows how strong a mother's love is. Her autobiographical book *Not Without My Daughter* demonstrates her harrowing, suffering to keep her daughter, and recounts her struggle against oppressive circumstances to attain liberation. Due to her role as a sacrificing mother, she became known in various countries particularly in her native America. After Betty Mahmoody's book gained publicity, her husband also released his version of the time in a book titled *Lost Without My Daughter*. Even Betty's daughter has released a book titled *My Name Mahtob* published (Bookxpert.2018, August 12).

## **2-2 Biography of Emma Donoghue**

Emma Donoghue is an Irish-Canadian author of novels, plays and screenplays, born in Dublin on October 24, 1969. After earning her PHD from the university of Cambridge. Donoghue is by now one of the most renowned female voices of contemporary Irish culture. She currently lives in London, Ontario with her Canadian partner and their two children. *Room* (2010) is her latest, much acclaimed novel. The book is the complex story of the love between him and his mother, a theme decidedly new to Donoghue (Fantaccini & Grassi, 2011, pp.397-400). More recently, as in *Room* (2010), Donoghue balances the sensationalistic turn of her imagination with the more conservative theme of motherhood, one of her newer interests and personal themes. Yet most of her plots and characters are inspired by real case studies, whether from police records and newspapers or the lesbian popular press. *Room* was

inspired in part by the case of Elisabeth Fritzl, an Austrian woman who was held captive and sexually abused by her father for 24 years, resulting in the birth of seven children. The novel is told from the perspective of a five-year-old boy who recounts the experience of being kept prisoner in a small room with his mother before finally being freed and released into the world. *Room* won the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and was named one of the *New York Times Book Review's* 10 Best Books of 2010. A film adaptation by Irish director Lenny Abrahamson, from a screenplay by Donoghue, won the People's Choice Award at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival and became a critical and box office success. It went on to earn Donoghue numerous accolades for her screenplay, including a Canadian Screen Award and an Independent Spirit Award, as well as BAFTA and Academy Award nominations (Mulvihill, 2017, para.9).

## **2-3 Summary of *Not Without My Daughter***

*Not Without My Daughter* is a gripping memoir by the American author Betty Mahmoody. The story begins in 1984 when Betty agrees to accompany her Iranian husband with her daughter to Iran. What was supposed to be a two-week vacation turns into a nightmare from which escape seems almost impossible. As Betty tries to adapt to her new life in Tahrán, she discovers the abuses imposed on women in Islamic society. She is imprisoned in Moody's family home and her husband becomes aggressive, and violent to both. After this, she decided to take her daughter away and cut any contact with her family in America. Betty's desperation develops as she comes to understand that escaping might be her only chance to protect her and her daughter's freedom and return to U.S.A. Moody has no objections to Betty's leaving, but he refuses to let her take their daughter with her. She refuses to leave without her young daughter risking everything; she seeks help from the underground network of citizens who sympathized with her conditions. The journey towards freedom is not without

challenge. Along the way, Betty and Mahtob confront traumatic experiences that test their resilience and threaten their very survival. Betty and her daughter finally succeed to get out of Iran after enduring numerous conflicts, demonstrating courage, determination particularly their journey through Turkey.

## **2-4 Summary of *Room***

The story begins on Jack's fifth birthday, with him as the sole narrator, allowing us to experience the room through his perspective. For Jack, the room represents his entire world. It contains four walls, a wardrobe where he sleeps, a sink, a bed, a television, a rug, a shelf with a few books, a drawer, and a rocking chair. Ma was abducted seven years ago while she was in college. After Jack was born, she used all her strength to give him as good a life as possible, introducing organization and variety into their confined existence. She creates a strict daily routine to ensure Jack feels happy and secure in the room. All that Jack knows about their captor, Old Nick, is that he comes at night to bring groceries, sleeps with Ma, and takes out the trash. Jack never fully sees Old Nick, only catching glimpses through the door of the wardrobe where he hides when Old Nick visits Ma. Despite all of Ma's efforts for Jack, she realizes that life in the room will not be enough for him forever because he needs to know the outside world and live with his family in a safe home. When she learns Old Nick has lost his job, she becomes worried about their safety and devises an escape plan that requires Jack's courage. As they practice for the escape, Ma begins to reveal the truth about the world beyond the room, which Jack struggles to understand. The plan involves Jack pretending to be dead so Old Nick will take his body to the woods. Once outside, Jack escapes from the truck and alerts the police. After, Ma is rescued, and they are both taken to a mental health clinic for medical and psychological treatment.

However, adjusting to life outside the room proves difficult for both Ma and Jack. Ma realizes how unprepared they are for the real world. Jack finds the outside world overwhelming, filled with too many people and real things, and even wishes to return to the room. Ma's family also struggles with accepting Jack, as he is a reminder of the assault their daughter endured. Ma faces intense media examination, and after a deep emotional television interview, she overdoses on pills and nearly dies. While she recovers, Jack stays with his grandmother, which is challenging since he has never been apart from Ma. However, the time with his grandmother helps Jack adjust to life outside the room. Once Ma recovers, she takes Jack back to the room for closure, allowing him to say goodbye to the things he once loved. They then move to an independent living residence, where they aim to begin a new chapter of their lives.

## II. Results

In this section of our work, we have reached the following results from our comparative study of Mahmoody's *Not Without My Daughter* (1987) and Donoghue's *Room* (2010), in which we explored the issue of the sacrifice of motherhood as a case of study. For this reason, we find that the feminist sociologist and psychoanalyst theory of Nancy Chodorow developed in her book *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) is suitable to our study, since it has revealed the psychological and social processes that perpetuate the idea that women are naturally suited for mothering, which impacts both women's roles in the family and society's broader expectations of gender.

This comparative study has shown that although the two stories were published in distinctly different times, cultures and nations, they share common objectives. Both of them explore themes of captivity, survival, and the powerful relationship between mother and child. Both stories highlight the resilience of women facing extreme circumstances, emphasizing the lengths a mother will go to in order to protect and provide for her child. Moreover, they analyze the challenges to traditional motherhood concerning women's economic dependency on man and the lack of father's involvement in child-rearing.

In addition, Donoghue's novel

“is inspired by the true story of Elisabeth Fritzl, an Austrian woman who endured emotional and sexual assault while imprisoned by her father in his basement for 24 years. She eventually bore him seven children who were imprisoned with her until rescue. In Donoghue's story, *Room* is home to Jack, but a prison to his Ma, who has been held captive for 7 years” (Rachel, 2014, para.1).

And Mahmoody's memoir autobiography was derived from her own experience of life, but this does not prevent them to share the same idea about motherhood and the human capacity to endure harsh circumstances and for the struggle for autonomy in the face of oppression. Finally, they transmit the extraordinary strength of the human spirit in the face of extreme

adversity. They both convey how resilience, hope, and the love between a mother and her child can empower individuals to overcome difficult challenges.

### **III. Discussion**

This section contains three chapters that further explore the topic of our research is the representation of motherhood in *Not Without my Daughter* and *Room*. The first chapter is about the Mother-child relationship in the two novels. The second one deals with the challenges to Traditional Motherhood. The concluding chapter focuses on the intersection of gender, family and society in *Not Without My Daughter* and *Room*.

#### **Chapter One: The Mother-Child Relationship in *Not Without My Daughter* and *Room***

This chapter is about the relationship between the child and his mother presented in the autobiographical memoir and the fictional novel. It is about the essential role of the mother for her child and how the early mothering can affect the child in positive or negative ways and show the importance of maternal role in a child's life. In *Not without my Daughter* and *Room*, the fundamental role of motherhood is revealed.

##### **1. The Maternal Role and the Effects of Early Mothering in *Not Without My Daughter***

In the following section, we study the connection between a child and their mother. It is a general concept that can be studied in different cultures and time periods. In Betty Mahmoody's *Not Without My Daughter*, it illustrates the relation to the mother and the mothering relation including the Maternal Role and how the mother acts and takes care of her child despite the painful conditions.

###### **a. The Maternal Role in *Not Without My Daughter***

In her book *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Chodorow presents a comprehensive theory on how the maternal role figures the relationship between mother and daughter.

Chodorow believes that the relationship between the two is more important in shaping their identity because a daughter's identity is connected to her mother's identity. Chodorow says:

Women get gratification from caring for an infant, analysts generally suggest, because they experience either oneness with their infant or because they experience it as an extension of themselves. The basis for "good-enough" early mothering is "maternal empathy" with her infant, coming from total identification with it rather than (more intellectual) "understanding of what is or could be verbally expressed" about infantile needs (Chodorow, 1978, p.42).

Through the quote, the mothers find satisfaction based on their unity with their child. When they perceived it, they find the true version of themselves; it is like a reflection of their personality and experience. The value of this deep emotional connection is found in maternal empathy, because it represents the ability to understand and share the feelings, needs of others. This capacity is based on various relationships, among them categories of care such as the mother-child relationship.

In *Not Without my Daughter*, Betty Mahmoody is represented as the protagonist. Being a good mother is who rides with her child into their new development stages, new interests, highs, lows and her love is unconditional despite puzzling behaviours, unexpected reactions, and lots of interests. Her role in the novel is highlighting the resilience of maternal love; the principal subject is to assure the happiness, safety of her daughter because the only reason of her existence. As the author, Lisa-Jo Baker said: "Motherhood is hard. Motherhood is glorious. Motherhood is hard" (Baker, 2014, p.10). She is illustrated as a naïve and trusting woman who knows the true value of being united as a family. The transition to motherhood can be considered as an important development event in a woman's life; no other event in life involves such a variety of experience including pain, emotions, and acceptance of new advantages. Betty writes:

For the first of her life she was a happy, chatty child with a zest for life and a warm relationship with me, with her father, and with her bunny, a cheap flatten, stuffed animal about four feet tall emblazoned with white Polka dots on green background (Mahmoody,1987, p.3)

Mahmoody illustrates the relationship with her daughter. Mahtob is characterized by profound love and support. Seeing her daughter as a source of immense joy that is characterized by affection and caring connection. This proves that a mother prioritizes the well-being of her family members, especially when she made a decision to accept the trip to Iran; this selfless act is referred to as maternal sacrifice. By describing Mahtob as a “chatty child” (Mahmoody, 1987, p.3) during her early years, for this reason she wants to protect her. The author highlights her sacrifice to present her lack of independence because of her motherhood under the patriarchal society, recognizing that her daughter was unaware of the harsh realities of their situation. Mahtob’s relationship with her father also influences her motivations to not separate her daughter from her father.

The maternal role is again shown by Betty Mahmoody, from her reaction to defend her daughter, while accepting the domestic violence from her abusive partner. She realized that the family life she had once imagined was no healthy reality for her and her daughter Mahtob. She dedicated herself to keeping such a decision for protection because she saw her place was not in Iran, which pushed her husband to change his behaviour in a dangerous way.

Betty Mahmoody writes:

Mahtob ran to me and buried her head in my lap. We shared out pain, not merely the physical bruises, but the deeper ache that lurked inside. We cried and gasped for breath, but neither of us was able to speak for many minutes. My body felt like on huge bruises. Moody’s blows had raised two welts on my head so large that I worried about serious damage (Mahmoody, 1987, p.92).

In the above quotation, Betty’s maternal role as a protector and caretaker is highlighted during their shared experience of fear. In this moment, both Betty and Mahtob are physically and emotionally wounded; they find comfort in each other’s presence because their union is the source of their courage and survival. The act of her daughter burying her head in Betty’s lap symbolizes a deep trust and reliance on her mother for security during their suffering together.

However, the silence after their cries demonstrates a profound bond, where words are insufficient to express their pain.

Betty thinks only about her daughter's needs and her safety, and forgets herself that shows her resilience, determination, and her status as a mother to strengthen their relationship. "What if Moody really did kill me?" "What would become of Mahtob? Would he kill her too" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.94). The quotation shows that the child can be viewed as a representation of the struggles faced by women because it shows the worth of women, which is nearly nonexistent in Moody's society ruled by patriarchy. Mahtob is a major symbol *in not without my daughter*. It reflects Betty's search for independence. She says: "to save Mahtob's life, I would have to place her at risk, even though those risks had been freshly demonstrated" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.93).

We can notice that Betty shows the concept of sacrifice expressed by her sense of superiority in motherhood; in order to reinforce the traditional maternal role, suggesting that self-sacrifice is an essential aspect of being a mother. As a mother, planning for the daughter's well-being, even potential risk is a critical aspect of a mother's role. This significant act demonstrates the extent to which a mother will go to secure her daughter's safety and liberation. This transforms Betty into a symbol of maternal heroism in the face of danger.

Chodorow's theory suggests that these sacrifices are not personal decisions but are influenced by societal norms that characterize motherhood as a role marked by commitment. She offers a theoretical foundation for comprehending the way that a mother enjoys the role of caregiver, illustrating how the care giving role can be a source of joy. She states:

Many mothers and infants are mutually gratified through their relationship, and many mothers enjoy taking care of their infants. Still, when we say that the mother-infant relationship has been exclusive, mutual, and special, this means different things from the child's point of view than from its mother's. For the child, the relation to its mother is its social experience and guarantees its psychological and physical development (Chodorow, 1978, p.86).

Nancy Chodorow's quotation highlights that the relation between mother and her child is reciprocal. She would emphasize the crucial influence of mother child relationship in shaping gender roles and emotional development. Mothers are often seen as the primary caregivers, guiding and ensuring their children's safety. Her work promotes a comprehension of maternal roles, similar to the experiences of Betty in her novel.

### **b. The Effects of Early Mothering in *Not Without My Daughter***

Chodorow's theory illustrates the profound attachment that develops between an infant and its mother, highlighting the mother's role as the primary caregiver. This influence begins in infancy and continues throughout infant's life, because the infant learns to trust and depend on her. Chodorow argues:

In a society where mothers provide nearly exclusive care and certainly the most meaningful relationship to the infant, the infant develops its sense of self mainly in relation to her. Insofar as the relationship with its mother has continuity, the infant comes to define aspects of its self (affectively and structurally) in relation to internalized representations of aspects of its mother and the perceived quality of her care (Chodorow, 1978, p.78).

According to her, it is believed that a secure attachment allows the infant to explore the world with confidence, knowing he have a safe protective environment to return to. In the quotation, the word "relationship" (Chodorow, 1978, p.78) is crucial in supporting her argument. This connection influences how the children perceive themselves and their place in the world.

The categories of heroines that Betty Mahmoody portrays in her novel reflect her own resilience and responsibility taken on her young age as a mother. From the moment a young woman becomes a mother, she assumes the care of her daughter and the duties while she is attempting to control a foreign and oppressive society. This connection enables Mahtob to find comfort in the mother's presence. Betty says: "Mahtob withdrew even further from her father. Each night she cried herself to sleep" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.93). In this quotation, Betty

describes the heart-breaking fear of her daughter toward her father who transformed into a source of terror and insecurity; this bad view was taken when he was aggressive against her mother. When Mahtob cried every night, this highlights a deep attachment, true love and loyalty she had to her mother. She proves that the mother should play both roles toward her daughter when the father is minimally involved in parenting responsibilities.

The effects of early mothering show that a mother develops with her daughter; she continues her life together because she considers her as her other half. As Mahtob grows older, she becomes not just Betty's child but also her trusted companion, with whom she can share her fears, hopes and dreams. Betty understands the importance of ensuring her younger daughter's safety during childhood to secure a better future for her. The moon in the novel serves as a symbol of hope, resilience for the younger mother; this reflects the protective instincts of a mother, and the crucial nature of their journey. Betty writes: "Sometimes at night I stood out on the balcony, looking at the moon, thinking as big as this world is, there is only one moon, the same one for Joe and John, mom and dad, as for me, it was the same moon Mahtob saw. Somehow it gave me a sense of connection" (Mahmoody, 1987, pp.209-210). From this quotation, we notice that the moon serves as a metaphor for Betty Mahmoody's isolation and struggle against oppression in Iran for her need for comfort and stability, proving that even when a mother marries young, she still desires the presence of her mother and family.

The moon in the novel symbolises the universal truth that mother's need for her own mother's love and support knows no bond. Betty neglects the name Moonlight and replaces it with "Mahtob is my sunshine" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.4) because her daughter is her source of light and hope in the darkness of a repressive society. By calling her daughter sunshine, Betty emphasizes the profound love and connection they share, which becomes her source of

strength. This shift in identity from “Moonlight” to “sunshine” symbolizes Betty’s transition from a passive state of despair to an active role as a protective mother.

This connection reflects Chodorow’s idea that daughters imitate the mother’s emotional responses and relational awareness. She argues:

The infant’s mental and physical existence depends on its mother, and the infant comes to feel that it does. It experiences a sense of oneness with her and develops a self only by convincing itself that it is in fact a separate being from her. She is the person whom it loves with egoistic primary love and to whom it becomes attached. She is the person who first imposes on it the demands of reality. Internally she is also important (Chodorow, 1978, p.78).

From this quotation, we can see that the effects of early mothering are linked to the mother’s own experiences and actions during the early stages of motherhood. Because the mother deeply loves her child unconditionally, these experiences help shape the daughter’s emotional and psychological development.

The category of women that Betty represents in her novel highlights her role as a protective mother. Her early mothering experiences significantly impact Mahtob’s development within a repressive environment, especially as Mahtob witnesses her mother’s suffering and recognizes that she is the only one advocating for her well-being. A loving mother never really thinks about choosing between her life and her daughter because real happiness is near her daughter. Betty’s love for her daughter is what drives her actions. Betty claims: “I would die in the mountains separating Iran and Pakistan, or I would get Mahtob safely back to America” (Mahmoody, 1987, p.350). From this quotation, we deduce this strong focus on her daughter’s life over her own highlights how becoming a mother at a young age can change a woman’s priorities. Her own wants and needs become less important than those of her daughter. Choosing to prioritize her daughter is not just a decision for Betty; it is a natural response that comes from the instinct to care and protect her daughter.

As Mahtob matured, the impact of her early experiences with her mother continues to be significant. Mahtob's own journey shows how early mothering can shape a child's development and future choices. Betty's support in embracing their Iranian roots and recognizing her father's good qualities was a key in helping Mahtob navigate her complex feelings, illustrating how early mothering can guide a child.

## **2. The Maternal Role and the Effects of Early Mothering in *Room***

In the following section, we study the connection or the relationship between a child and their mother. It is a larger concept that can be studied across different cultures and time periods. In *Room*, it illustrates the maternal role and the effects of early mothering explaining how the mother acts and takes care of her child, despite the conditions of their confinement.

### **a. The Maternal Role in *Room***

The maternal role is influenced by various factors. At First, we have cultural expectation which tells about societal norms and values that shape the definition of a "good mother". Then, the personal beliefs are the individual attitudes and experiences which inform how a woman interprets the maternal role. Finally, the family structure that means the presence or the absence of other caregivers can affect the mother's responsibilities (Chodorow, 1978).

Chodorow's theory argues that mothering provides women with a unique sense of gratification that is different from any other human relationship. She states:

They suggest that women get gratification from and fulfill maternal role expectations at a fundamentally different level of experience from that of any other human relationship. Mothering requires and elicits relational capacities which are unique. Analysts emphasize the mother infant relationship provides gratification as well as infant, and that good-enough mothering is done through empathy, primary identification, and experiencing the infant as continuous with the self and separate (Chodorow, 1978, p.85).

The above quotation shows the importance of the mother-child relationship in shaping a child's psychological development. It emphasizes that this relationship is special because of

the deep emotional connection between mother and child. This connection allows both growing and benefiting from each other. In the context of psychological theorists like Nancy Chodorow's, mothers traditionally were seen as the primary caregivers, responsible for raising children and passing on gender roles. Today, people have different ideas about parenting. They believe that both mothers and fathers can be good caregivers, and that parenting roles can be more flexible (Chodorow, 1978).

The novel centers on a young woman named Ma, who is held captive in a small, windowless room with her five-year-old son, Jack. The Fritzl case served as an inspiration to the author to write the story. Donoghue's primary focus is not on the crime itself but rather on the universal themes of childhood, maternal love and the complex relationship between parent and child. Through Jack's innocent perspective, the story explores the psychological and emotional impact on the characters, and the firm love of a mother.

In *Room*, the characters are presented primarily through the unique perspective of Jack, the five-year-old narrator. This narrative choice significantly influences how we perceive and understand the characters. Jack is presented as an innocent, curious, and resilient child; his narration reveals a limited understanding of the world, shaped by his confinement. Jack's entire world revolves around Ma, highlighting the intense mother-child connection. It is said by Jack that: "I'm in Bed with Ma sleeping tight" (Donoghue, 2010, p.3).

This quote shows Jack's dependency on Ma and his closeness to her. The phrase "sleeping tight" indicates a feeling of safety and comfort, which contrasts with the reality of their captivity. This juxtaposition is a theme that the author explores throughout the novel. Donoghue begins with a scene that might seem normal to many readers, but slowly she reveals the unusual circumstances as the story progresses. As we can notice from the novel,

Jack's narration offers a unique perspective on motherhood, often idealizing Ma and portraying her as all-knowing.

Jack says: "Ma knows everything except the things she doesn't remember right" (Donoghue, 2010, p.03). This quotation shows how Jack see his mother as all-knowing and capable, but the sentence "except the things she doesn't" indicates the limitations of Ma's knowledge and abilities, anticipating the challenges they will face. The quote adds emotional complexity to Ma's character, suggesting an internal struggle with her memories and experiences. And by presenting a statement that is believable and contradictory, Donoghue encourages the reader to question, interpret, and understand the story and its characters. In *Room* the word education plays a crucial role in Ma's maternal responsibilities. Despite their confinement, Ma seeks to provide Jack with a comprehensive education, presenting the educational aspect of the maternal role in extreme circumstances.

Ma creates a daily routine that includes educational activities. Jack says: "We do Phys Ed which is running back and forth and jumping and sometimes push-up city" (Donoghue, 2010, p.36). In this quotation Jack is describing his physical education (Phys Ed) class. The activities he mentions are common exercises often included in physical education programs. The phrase "Push-up city" (Donoghue, 2010, p.36) is a playful term, likely coined to make the exercise more attractive to Jack. This demonstrates Ma's effort to make their confined life look normal as possible for a child. The use of 'we' suggests that Ma participate in these activities with Jack, showing her active involvement in his physical development and her effort to lead by example. Ma also teaches Jack social skills about manners and social norms.

Jack says: "We always say please and thank you, that's just good manners" (Donoghue, 2010, p.54). This quotation shows that maternal role extends beyond physical care to include social and cultural education. Although Jack has limited social interaction, Ma is preparing him for potential future social situations. From a maternal role perspective, this

quote illustrates several key concepts of mothering; the mother as an educator, as a moral guide, as a protector and as a culture bearer. Ma tried her best to accomplish her role as a mother, by giving her child the knowledge he needs, and she tried to teach him the various fields of life that he will use outside of that room.

### **b. The Effects of Early Mothering in *Room***

Nancy Chodorow generally agrees with the positive effects of early mothering. Her theory emphasizes the crucial role of the mother-infant relationship in shaping the child's psychological development. She argues that a nurturing and responsive mother can develop a secure attachment, which has long-term benefits for the child's emotional and social well-being. However, it is important to note that Chodorow's theory also acknowledges that the quality of early mothering can vary and that the negative experiences can impact a child's growth. Chodorow claims:

The character of the infant's early relation to its mother profoundly affect its sense, its later object-relationships, and its feelings about its mother and about women in general. The continuity of care enables the infant to develop a self—a sense that “I am.” The quality of any particular relationship, however, affects the infant's personality and self-identity. The experience of self-concerns who “I am” and not simply that “I am” (Chodorow, 1978, p.78)

In this quotation, Chodorow highlights how the infant's early experiences with their mother significantly shape their sense of self. A secure attachment to the mother can develop healthy relationships in adulthood. The infant's early experiences with their mother can also shape their gender identity and their perceptions of women in general. The passage emphasizes the importance of continuity of care in the infant's early development. A consistent and stable relationship with the primary caregiver is important to develop a sense of security and trust.

The character Ma in *Room* is portrayed as an example of early mothering; her role became more important because of their difficult situation. Ma is a great mother to Jack. She

takes care of him, understands his feelings, and makes him feel safe. This shows the importance of early mothering, when a child needs their caregiver for support. Ma's early mothering helped her to create structured routines for Jack, which provided him a normal development for early childhood and well-being. Donoghue writes:

We have thousands of things to do every morning, like give plant cup of water in Sink for no spilling, then put her back on her saucer on dresser. Then we play with Melted Spoon and Labyrinth and Building Block Tower and jigsaw and Drawing. Then we have Phys Ed, which is running back and forth and sometimes Spring Jack and Track, where I run around Bed. Then we do Breathing and Meditation (Donoghue,2010, p.4).

This quotation shows how the activities mentioned, such as playing with toys, doing puzzles and drawing, are designed to stimulate Jack's intellectual growth and encourage learning. The physical activities like running and jumping help to ensure Jack's physical health and growth. The routine also provides a sense of structure and consistency, which can contribute to Jack's emotional well-being and stability. Ma worked actively to soften the negative effects of captivity and provide for her child a normal and secure environment.

This demonstrates the profound impact of early mothering on a child's development, even under the most challenging conditions. In many cases, early pregnancy results from a combination of personal and social factors. As Salusky (2013) explains, "For the majority of young mothers, a number of factors converged and contributed to first pregnancy. Participants discussed family dynamics, stage of involvement with a romantic partner and love as influencing their decision to engage in unprotected sex that eventually resulted in pregnancy" (p. 7). However, Ma's experience contrasts with this narrative, she did not choose to become a mother under such circumstances. Instead, she was kidnapped, held captive in a small shed, and became pregnant as a result of repeated abuse by her captor. Despite the trauma and lack of agency in her situation, Ma's commitment to protecting and nurturing her child highlights the resilience and depth of maternal love.

Ma tried her best to take care of Jack after he was born. She created a safe and loving place for him, and she tried to find hope in difficult times. Ma and Jack shared a very strong attachment in that room. She says: “Scared is what you’re feeling. Brave is what you’re doing” (Donoghue, 2010, p.198). This quote shows how Ma helps Jack process his emotions, providing a secure base for him to explore his feelings. Ma was a protector and a provider for Jack. He claims: “In the world I notice persons are nearly always stressed and have no time” (Donoghue, 2010, p.131). The quote demonstrates that Jack’s entire understanding was shaped by Ma, and shows the need for emotional support and understanding in a stressful world. Ma and Jack’s attachment provides a source of comfort and security, helping them to cope with the challenges and anxieties of the outside world. After they went outside of that Room, Jack had a fear of separation from his primary attachment figure. Ma says: “In the world there’s accidents waiting to happen. You might fall anytime”(Donoghue,2010,288) This quote claims that Jack must learn to form attachment with others, while Ma navigates the renewal of previous relationships. The fact that they feel safe and supported together helps them deal with their fears about the outside world.

Mahmoody and Donoghue referred to a powerful reminder of the maternal role’s significance and the enduring strength of the mother-child relation. Even in the most extreme circumstances, mothers can provide love, support, and a sense of safety for their children. In addition, the characters of both novels serve as a model of early mothering. Despite their harsh conditions, it represents the importance of early maternal care for intellectual, physical and emotional growth and encouraged their children to maintain a sense of normalcy during their confinement.

## **Chapter Two: The Challenges to Traditional Motherhood in *Not Without My Daughter* and *Room***

In this chapter, we will analyze the difficulties faced by traditional motherhood as shown in *Not Without My Daughter* (1987) and *Room* (2010), highlighting the themes of Economic and family Dependence and the lack of father involvement in child-rearing. These stories demonstrate how society's beliefs about motherhood can create major challenges for women.

### **1. Economic and Family Dependence in *Not Without My Daughter***

In this following section we study Economic and Family Dependence, which plays a crucial role in shaping the challenges to traditional motherhood faced by women during their confinement. These challenges are also presented in the novel of Betty Mahmoody *Not without my Daughter*.

#### **a. Women's Economic Dependency on Man in *Not Without My Daughter***

In her book *The Reproduction of Mothering* Chodorow presents how women's economic dependency on men are established in their integration and psychological development. She claims:

Women's relatedness and men's denial of relation and categorical self-definition are appropriate to women's and men's differential participation in nonfamilial production and familial reproduction. Women's roles are basically familial, and concerned with personal, affective ties. Ideology about women and treatment of them in this society, particularly in the labor force, tend to derive from this familial location and the assumptions that it is or should be both exclusive and primary for women, and that this exclusivity and primacy come from biological sex differences. By contrast, men's roles as they are defined in our society are basically not familial (Chodorow,1978, p178).

In this quotation, we notice that families structure are based on how the men and women divide their roles to improve their quality of life. According to Nany Chodorow women are expected to focus on family responsibilities; this can make them financially dependent on men.

Betty Mahmoody's *Not Without My Daughter* portrays themes of economic and family dependence to represent her experience in Iran. Betty shares an equal partnership with her husband in U.S.A, but after moving to Iran, her husband becomes controlling which proves how economic authority can change the relationships. She highlights her dependence on him especially when Moody takes Betty's passports after arriving. She asserts "they will search your pores because you are American". He said "let me carry them. They are less likely to search me" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.2). From this quotation we learn that Betty controlled by external forces because of her identity and economic status. Her affect shows how she depends on others for support, highlighting the economic dependency of women on men.

In the novel women's economic dependency is shown when they cannot be financially independent, which demonstrates their need for support from their husband. This shows that the husband is the one who controls their situation Betty writes:

One morning as Zohreh prepared to take Mahtob and me shopping along with several other women relatives, Moody generously handed me a thick wad of uncounted rials. My special find that day was an Italian tapestry, about five feet by eight feet, that I knew would look gorgeous on our wall. It cost about twenty thousand rials, roughly two hundred dollars. By the end of the day I still had most of the money left, so I kept it for the next shopping trip. Moody was spending money so freely I knew he would not care, or even notice (Mahmoody, 1987, p.28).

This quotation reflects the significance of needing a man's support especially when she talks about her personal needs. When she says "I still had most of the money left". Betty shows that her independence is controlled; every part of her life is guided by someone else. She starts to understand women's economic dependence as she cares about her happiness and her daughter's. Betty through her character aims to represent a woman's desire to make her own choices and decisions to manage one's life, especially when she faces challenges in her motherhood in a foreigner country. These challenges made her regret some decisions made in different situations.

Betty wants to challenge women's economic dependency, saying, "I wanted something out of life perhaps a college degree, perhaps a career as a court reporter, perhaps my own business, perhaps who could tell? I wanted something more than dreary lives I saw around me (Mahmoody,1987, p.42). Using this quotation, we notice that Betty wants to express her individuality to modify the existing circumstances. During her trip, she wanted to be independent in her chosen career and to be in a clean and safe environment. Society focuses on women's dependence on men, who maintain traditional roles that limit women's independence. She says: "Soon, I Realized, I would simply accept my plight and drift away from my family and my homeland forever" (Mahmoody,1987, p.65). From the above citation, we see clearly that Betty sacrifices her life to take care of her family. When she accepts this situation, she moves away from her own life and becomes a housewife forever.

Throughout the narration, Betty struggles to save her daughter from an oppressive environment while facing financial difficulties. Her husband condemns her and she needs money to escape. She argues:

One day, obviously preoccupied with his own cares, he complained that he did not have time to accompany me to the market. "Run the errand yourself," he said. This, however, raised another issue. He did not wish me to have any money of my own, for money provided at least a limited freedom (He was still unaware of my private hoard). He instructed: "First, go find out the price. Then come back and I will give you the money and you can get it" (Mahmoody,1987, p.84).

That is to say when a woman is dependent on her husband, she finds herself without freedom to practice what she wants because she is under supervision and control of her husband. The fear that Betty would leave the country with her daughter made Moody have the negative thought which is to treat her as an enslaved woman.

## **b. Lack of Father Involvement in Child-Rearing in *Not Without My Daughter***

Nancy Chodorow's theory illustrates the lack of father involvement in child-rearing by the idea that fathers often prioritize providing financial support rather than engaging in active parenting. She comments: "Even when men and women cross into the other's sphere, their roles remain different. Within the family being a husband and father is different from being a wife and mother; as women have become more involved in the family; men have become less so (Chodorow,1978, p.179). From this citation, we can say that Chodorow illustrates the contradictory roles between parents. Mother focuses on her responsibilities as both a wife and a caregiver while the father prioritizes financial support than active care giving.

In *Not Without my Daughter*, Mahmoody explores a theme of lack father involvement in child rearing through her experience as an American woman trapped in Iran with her daughter. This demonstrates Mahtob's need for her father's presence in her life. Betty adds, "Moody had something in store for Mahtob, and he presented it to her in a characteristically unfeeling manner" (Mahmoody,1987, p.97). From this quotation we notice that Betty suggests that Moody's actions reflect a common issue where fathers prioritize financial support over emotional and active parenting. This situation makes her daughter feel neglected and insecure, showing how a lack of father involvement can lose her happiness and stability. Betty portrays that Moody is more focused on his job, neglecting his daughter's needs and improving his authority rather than taking her wishes into account. He blames Betty about their daughter's lack of education. She asserts "This is all your fault". Moody screamed at me. "You have done this to her. She is not a normal child anymore, you are too possessive with her" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.101). From this quote, we can say that Betty

describes her husband as the sole reason her daughter suffered during their escape, she says “I wanted to scream you are the one who turned her life upside down” (Mahmoody, 1987, p.101).

Furthermore, Betty has a terrible attitude toward Moody’s behaviour toward their daughter, especially when he bites her, which creates a feeling of fear. This biting is more than just a bad habit; it causes real emotional and physical harm. Betty is concerned because being bitten can make their daughter feel unsafe and scared, affecting her sense of security and well-being. Moreover, Mahtob is more attached to her mother because she appears to be her safe guard and source of happiness during times of sadness.

In *Not Without My Daughter*, Betty Mahmoody illustrates her daughter’s innocence while they imprisoned in Iran by her father. She highlights that communication between them is limited. She argues: “Mahtob stobbed and clang to her bunny. The cold awful truth was stunning and crushing. Was the real? Were Mahtob and I prisoners? Hostages? Captives of this venomous stranger who had once been a loving husband and father?” (Mahmoody,1987, p.39) This above quotation portrays the lack of father involvement in child- rearing, due to a father’s focus on work, can impact his daughter’s future. This absence is caused by her feeling confined within an oppressive society, especially when Moody decides to stay in Iran and focus on his job; he neglects the responsibility of caring for his daughter and ensuring her well-being. This neglect highlights the challenges the mother faces in caring for her daughter.

## **2. Economic and Family Dependence in *Room***

In this following section, we study Economic and Family dependence which plays a crucial role in defining the challenges to traditional motherhood faced by women during their confinement. These themes are factors in representing the role of woman’s liberation in *Room*.

### **a. Women's Economic Dependency on Man in *Room***

Nancy Chodorow argues that women depend on men for money because they are raised to take care of others. Since women usually handle child-rearing and household tasks, they have fewer chances to build careers or become financially independent. Chodorow claims:

Women's role in the home and primary definition in social reproductive, sex-gender terms are characterized by particularism, concern with affective goals and ties, and a diffuse, unbounded quality. Masculine occupational roles and men's primary definition in the sphere of production are universalistically defined and recruited, and are less likely to involve affective considerations. This nonrelational, economic and political definition informs the rest of their lives. The production of feminine personalities oriented toward relational issues and masculine personalities defined in terms of categorical ties and the repression of relation fits these roles and contributes to their reproduction (Chodorow, 1978, p.180).

This quotation explains how traditional gender roles lead to women relying on men financially. Women are usually seen as homemakers, focused on caring for family and relationships rather than making money. This limits women's chances to be financially independent. In *Room* by Donoghue, the traditional reliance on man as an economic provider is shown in her story of captivity and how the traditional motherhood did not change and she was obliged to be dependent of her kidnapper.

Wernicks (1995) notes that "housewives and mothers are frequently economically dependent on a husband or on the state" (p. 10), highlighting the structural vulnerability many women face due to traditional gender roles and economic reliance. Men are paid a fixed amount for their work. Women, however, have no right to a specific amount of money and depend on their husbands' generosity. Usually, this works out fine. Many working-class men give all their money to their wives. Educated couples often agree on how to manage their

finances. But the husband always controls the money, which means he controls both the financial and emotional aspects of his wife's life (Zueblin, 1909, p.609).

In the novel *Room*, it is shown how the character Ma and Jack were completely dependent on their kidnapper Old Nick. Ma is entirely reliant on Old Nick for basic necessities like food, water, and supplies. This is due to their captivity in a small, enclosed space that lacks access to the outside world. For example, Old Nick provides them with groceries and essentials during his nightly visits. Since Ma and Jack are confined in the room without any external connections or resources, they depend on him for survival. One piece of evidence for this Old Nick's job loss threatens their already limited access to supplies, highlighting the complete dependency Ma and Jack have on him for their basic survival. As Jack explains: "He's busy getting us foods and vitamins and stuff" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 69), a childlike observation that underscores the seriousness of their reliance on Old Nick, even for the most essential needs. This quotation shows The words busy and stuff make the situation seems less scary. Ma and Jack have no other choice but to rely on Old Nick for food. Ma tries to protect Jack from the terrible reality of their situation. Old Nick controls all of Ma and Jack's money, which gives him power over them.

In addition, Old Nick has control over the electricity and heat in the room. This gives him power over Ma and Jack. When Ma does not do what Old Nick wants, he turns off the electricity and heat to punish them. This shows how Old Nick controls their lives and that Ma is dependent on him for basic things like light and warmth. She claims: "My chest is thumping really loud. "How he's going to punish us?" "No he is already, mean. By cutting the power" (Donoghue,2010, p.26). This quotation demonstrates the way Ma and Jack are afraid of losing power because they depend on Old Nick for basic things like electricity and heat. When Old Nick turns off the electricity, it shows how much power he has over them. This is similar to how men in patriarchal societies can control women by controlling their access to

resources like money or housing. This makes it hard for women to be independent. In addition, Ma is in a position where she cannot independently seek medical help. Any illness or injury must be communicated through Old Nick, who decides what, if any, care they will receive. When Jack gets sick, Ma's anxiety is very clear. She has to beg Old Nick for medicine, showing that Jack's chance of getting better depends on whether Old Nick is willing to help.

This situation highlights how powerless she feels and the complicated nature of her relationship with him; she has to manage her fear of Old Nick while trying to protect her son. Old Nick claims: "I'll get him something stronger from the all-night drugstore" (Donoghue, 2010, p.39). This quotation shows the way Ma relies on Old Nick for everything, including medicine for her son, Jack. This dependence shows how her ability to take care of Jack is limited by her need for a man who has control over her life.

## **b. Lack of Father Involvement in Child-Rearing in *Room***

Chodorow's argument about limited father involvement in child-rearing highlights how boys face more challenges in developing their masculine identity compared to girls' development of femininity. Chodorow writes:

Because the first identification for children of both genders has always been with their mother, they argue, and because children are first around women, women's family roles and being feminine are more available and often more intelligible to growing children than masculine roles and being masculine. Hence, male development is more complicated than female because of the difficult shifts of identification which a boy must make to attain his expected gender identification and gender role assumption (Chodorow, 1978, p.174).

This quotation explains how children usually feel close to their mothers because they take care of them. Girls have an easier time understanding what it means to be a woman because their mother is also a woman. Boys have a harder time because they need to learn how to be a

man, but their fathers are often not involved in their lives. This makes it difficult for boys to understand what it means to be a man.

The father's absence has serious negative effects on children's development and future outcomes. Studies show that children who grow up without fathers are more likely to leave school, have less education, show disruptive or delinquent behaviour, earn less money as adults, have worse physical and mental health, and face higher chances of nonmarital childbearing and divorce later in life (Spielberger et al., 1985, p.2).

In *Room*, it is mentioned how Jack's father, Old Nick, is a bad father. He never takes care of Jack or shows him love. Ma hides Jack from him to keep him safe. Old Nick is mean and scary, and he makes Ma feel bad. Because of this, Jack does not have a real father figure. So, Jack has a limited understanding of male role as a father. He says: "In TV, there's lots of kids with no Ma, that's called orphans. But there's no kids with no Dad, that is why they are called Dad-is-the-head-of-the-family" (Donoghue, 2010, p.32). The quote says that Jack's statement reflects a patriarchal worldview, where the father is considered the essential figure in the family the head, so his logic assumes that without a father, the family structure is incomplete, whereas the absence of a mother, though tragic, is portrayed as more common or manageable. Therefore, Jack did not understand and feel the role of the father during his confinement with Ma, the only role he understood and felt is the role of motherhood.

In addition, Jack's mother, Ma, is the only one who takes care of him. She teaches him everything, even though they live in a small room. Ma makes sure Jack has a good routine and protects him from Old Nick, who is mean. Ma sometimes goes without food to make sure Jack has enough. She tries to be happy for Jack even when she is sad herself. These examples highlight how Ma embodies an extreme version of traditional motherhood, where the father's complete absence forces her to be Jack's sole source of care, education, and emotional

support. Her role extends beyond that of a typical mother, as she must provide Jack with a sense of reality, structure, and development within the confined world of Room. This is reflected in Jack's own perception of growing up. Jack says: "When I was a little kid I thought like a little kid, but now I'm five I know everything" (Donoghue, 2010, p.50).

This quotation explains how Jack thinks he knows everything because he only learns from Ma. Old Nick, his biological father, is entirely absent in a care giving role. Jack does not have a father to admire, so he does not understand what it means to be a man. He thinks men are always strong and severe, but he does not know that men can also be gentle and caring. So, Jack's understanding of the world is limited because he only knows what Ma has taught him. He lacks the diversity of experiences and perspectives that could come from having both a mother and a father involved in his guidance. His worldview is limited, though he does not yet recognize this because the only understanding of life comes from what Ma has created for him in *Room*.

In addition, Jack has trouble understanding what men are like because he only knows Old Nick, who is mean. When he meets other men who are nice and caring, he is confused. This is because he is used to men being scary and not involved in families. It takes time for Jack to learn that not all men are like Old Nick. He says: "Women aren't real like Ma is, and girls and boys not either. Men aren't real except Old Nick, and I'm not actually sure if he's real for real. Maybe half?" (Donoghue, 2010, p.18). This quotation demonstrates how Jack does not have a father to teach him what it means to be a man. He only knows Old Nick, who is a bad father. So, Jack is confused when he meets other men and does not understand how he is supposed to act. The absence of a father's nurturing presence means Jack does not understand how men typically contribute to family life, social situations, or the world at large.

He feels lost because his experiences are limited to a very narrow view, where his only male reference was Old Nick, a figure that was distant, abusive, and did not take care of him.

To conclude, both novels *Not Without My Daughter* and *Room* explores the themes of economic dependency and the Lack of Fathers involvement in child-rearing. It highlights how traditional societal structures often lead to women's economic dependence on man, limiting their opportunities outside the domestic sphere. It also emphasizes the importance of father involvement in child- rearing and the consequences of their absence.

## **Chapter Three: Intersection of Gender, Family and Society in *Not Without My Daughter* and *Room***

The third chapter of our dissertation involves an analysis about the autobiographical memoir and the fictional novel in relation to the intersection of gender, family and society. In this chapter, we will examine the characters that are developed in the same way by both authors. The purpose behind it, is to extend our understanding about gender roles and identity and show how characters could be an useful for better exploration to this theme in Mahmoody's *Not Without My Daughter* and Donoghue's *Room*. It is also about the analysis of the family dynamics and societal influence that exist in both novels.

### **1. Gender Roles in *Not Without My Daughter***

In this part, we analyze how gender roles influence woman and man and the way Betty Mahmoody through her novel *Not without my daughter* illustrates the negative effects of gender roles and expectations including the family dynamics and societal influence.

#### **a. Gender Roles and Expectations in *Not Without My Daughter***

Chodorow's theory on gender roles, particularly concerning the relationship between the mother and daughter, which correspond the themes explored in *Not without My Daughter*. Chodorow asserts for girls to form their feminine identity must identify their mothers. She adds:

The demands on women are often contradictory—for instance, to be passive and dependent in relation to men, and active and independently initiating toward children. In the context of the ego and object-relational issues I described in the preceding chapters, moreover, it is clear that mother-identification presents difficulties. A girl identifies with and is expected to identify with her mother in order to attain her adult feminine identification (Chodorow, 1987, p.177).

From this citation, we can say that Chadorow's theories illustrate the contradictory reactions that women confront regarding their gender roles. She highlights the way in which they are expected to be passive on men and being active with their children. She argues that for a girl to develop her feminine identity and understand her gender role, she must identify with her mother.

In *Not Without My Daughter*, Mahmoody explores the themes of gender roles and identity through her experiences as an American woman trapped in Iran. The story illustrates the big differences between how women are treated in the west and Iran, portrays a patriarchal society with oppressive laws that harm women by illustrating how this legal system reinforces male dominance and limits women's rights. She says: "He (Moody) for himself how Iranian women were slaves to their husbands; how their religion as well as their government coerced them at every turn; the practice exemplified by their insistence upon an antiquated and even unhealthy dress code" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.32).

In this quotation, Betty illustrates how Iranian women are enslaved by their husbands through oppressive laws. In her narrative, she described how Islamic laws cause extreme punishments; this situation highlights the intersection of gender and identity as Betty's identity as an American woman conflicts with the strict expectations placed on her and her daughter in Iran.

Mahmoody's experiences in Iran demonstrate how gender roles and identity are shaped by the constant fear of being slaves, kidnapped, both for herself and for her daughter. She worries that living in such a restrictive culture could erase Mahtob's connection to her American roots and values. This fear that her daughter might become Iranian drives her to become a strong protection for their freedom. She states: "Mahtob and I were American

citizens, even if Moody was not. We had rights. We only had to find a way to exercise those rights” (Mahmoody, 1987, p.65).

That is to say, “being American citizens” (Mahmoody,1987, p.65) emphasizes belief and rights, they should be entitled to some rights and protection, regardless of the local laws or her husband’s Iranian nationality Betty’s statement highlights the tension between her identity, and the gender roles imposed by her husband. She argues:

He’ll beat me,” I cried. I pointed to Mahtob. “He’ll heat us !” Helen empathized, but she was simply powerless to help. “We’re being held in this house,” I said, trying again as large tears rolled down my cheeks. “We just managed to escape out the front door because everybody is sleeping. We can’t go back. He’ll lock us up. I’m really afraid what will happen to us (Mahmoody, 1987, p64).

In this quotation, we can notice that Betty is a victim, trapped by her husband. Betty faced physical and emotional abuse, she was imprisoned in a foreign country without duties and rights; which prove that woman be passive on man and being active with their children in order to protect their life. Moody’s authority that imposes and forces her wife to accept this situation. Due to gender inequality that psitions men in a dominant role. In *Beloved* Toni Morrison writes about masculine domination in which he suggested that: “Because he was a man and a man do what he would” (Morrison, 1987, p.242). Betty is obliged to accept Moody’s violence, but her primary motivation is to protect her daughter. She asserts “Moody was inconsolable his eyes grew dim and void; like those of so many other Iranians” (Mahmoody, 1987, p.36).

According to Betty words, which present a harsh reality and express a sense of emotional decline or loss in her husband. This imagery changes in his character to indicate his raising despair and detachment of their relationship. Furthermore, the violence committed by men against women is seen as normal and becomes part of their daily life. In addition, to

physical violence, psychological abuse is also depicted in the novel. Moody employs intimidation, threats and isolation to punish Betty by cutting her off from her friends and family. Through her writing, she illustrates how her husband treats her, demonstrating the challenges she faces in resisting and escaping. She says: “Mahtob and I ached to return to normally to sanity” (Mahmoody, 1987, p.32). Betty Mahmoody emphasizes their stability and identity they lost while being trapped in Iran. It illustrates her struggle to maintain her identity as an American woman and mother while facing the harsh realities of life in a foreign culture.

### **b. Family Dynamics and Societal Influence in *Not Without My Daughter***

According to Nancy Chodorow in her book emphasizes about the ideas of being a man or a woman are reinforced within families. These expectations influence how children develop and form their identities. Family dynamics play a key role in shaping these beliefs and behaviors in society. She adds:

Women’s mothering also reproduces the family as it is constitute in male-dominant society. The sexual and familial division of labor in which women mother creates a sexual division of psychic organization and orientation. It produces socially gendered women and men who enter into asymmetrical heterosexual relationships; it produces men who react to, fear, and act superior to women, and who put most of their energies into the nonfamilial work world and do not parent (Chodorow, 1978, p.185).

In this above quotation, Chodorow argues those women’s roles, as mothers are crucial in maintaining family structures within patriarchal systems. Men's feelings of fear or superiority toward women can make these inequalities worse, as their limited participation in parenting can negatively affect how children develop and reinforce their stability. She also highlights how family dynamics are closely linked to societal structures.

In *Not Without My Daughter*, the themes of family dynamics and societal influences are portrayed, that highlights the complexities of relationship between Betty Mahmoody and her daughter. Betty endures significant struggles. She considers her husband as the social major cause of the terrible atmosphere, particularly when she realizes she is a “foreign woman in a country” (Mahmoody, 1987, p.165) that is enemy toward America. Betty says:

Maag bag Amerika! In tahrán that night, as many as fourteen million voices were raised as one. Rolling from rooftop to rooftop, building to a crescendo, engulfing the populace in hypnotic frenzy, the crushing, debilitating, horrifying Chant Knifed into my soul (Mahmoody, 1987, p.67).

The above quotation reveals Betty’s struggle and her experience as a victim of harassment, particularly during a night in Tehran. She adds, “It means death to America” (Mahmoody, 1987, p.67). That is to say, this slogan, prevalent in Iran, serves as a reminder of her status as an American woman in an oppressive environment. In *Do They Hear You When You Cry* by Fauziya Kassindja argues: “these societal expectations encompassed their behavior, education, and future roles as wives and mothers. A particularly inhumane and brutal practice firmly rooted in these traditions was female genital mutilation. (kassindja, 1998, chapter 1)

Through the narrative, Betty illustrates her struggle against the patriarchal control exerted by society. This is evident when Mr. Azhar, the principal of Mahtob’s school, denies Betty to use the phone, accepting Moody’s orders. He tells Betty “We promised your husband that we would never let you leave the building or use the phone” (Mahmoody, 1987, p.69). This indicates that society neglects the rights of foreign women and refuse to assist Betty in her situation, Betty finds herself isolated and unsupported as the cultural norms in Iran control over women’s autonomy.

In that first week of imprisonment only Essey spoke kindly to me. One day while she and Reza were visiting, Essey, managed to get me aside for a moment. “I am really sorry,” she said. “I like you, but they have told all of us to stay away from you. We are not allowed to sit with you or talk to you. I feel

bad for what you are going through, but I cannot afford to get into trouble with the whole family (Mahmoody, 1987, p.52).

From this quotation, we can say that Betty's feelings of isolation and neglect within her family dynamics, highlights how her husband influence extends even in his absence. When Essey, who is visiting her with her husband, manages to speak to Betty, she expresses regret. Saying "I like you, but I can't talk to you" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.52). This statement highlights the oppressive atmosphere that Betty faced during her journey in Iran.

Additionally, Betty Mahmoody describes the significant contrast in how she and her daughter were treated as foreigners compared to native Iranian with her husband's family. She says: "I thought back to our visit to Rey a nightmarish top that ended with Mahtob receiving beating at the hand of her father why did the family have to drag Mahtob and me a long on their ridiculous pilgrimage" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.67). By this quotation, Betty reflects on a violence traumatic experience during a visit to Rey. She questions why the family subjected them to such a harrowing journey. This feeling highlights the oppressive family dynamics at play, where patriarchal authority neglects the well-being of both Betty and Mahtob.

According to Betty, wearing "Hidjeb" symbolizes the profound societal influence that shapes her American identity and interactions as a foreign woman in Iran. She writes: "My concern over the local dress code was forgotten as Hossein attacked the city traffic" (Mahmoody, 1987, p.10). From this quotation, one can say Betty's fear during the car attack because she felt like an outsider in a society that enforces the dress codes, particularly through the subject of wearing "Hidjab" which reflects cultural values that prioritize modesty and respect, which are different from the freedom Betty and her daughter had in America.

Further, Betty's observation criticizes a system that values tradition over the difficulties women face in navigating a society that separates the sexes. Betty adds: "When we

arrived, we were separated by sex. I followed the other women into an ante- room” (Mahmody, 1987, p.67). The above citation demonstrates the societal influence in Iranian culture; she highlights the codes and roots that exist in such society, reflecting a cultural structure that prioritizes traditional gender within society. In her book demonstrates the oppressive societal norms that view women as inferior, subjecting them to both physical and psychological violence. She also illustrates the oppressive culture of intimidation in which women frequently endure control abuse, as reflected in her own experience.

In theme of family dynamics, Betty argues: “The driver reached the front of the bus held out his hand. When I thrust the tickets at him, he grabbed my hand and held it firmly for an instant before she slid his own hand away slowly along with tickets” (Mahmoody,1987, p.250). That is to say the Iranian society gives men authority, which undermines the status of women. While it includes provision for equality, women often find themselves in a subordinate position, with limited autonomy and rights.

## **2. Gender Roles in *Room***

In the next part, we analyze how gender roles influence woman, man, and the way Emma Donoghue, through her novel *Room*, illustrates through Ma’s experience, that shows how women are burdened with unrealistic expectations to nurture and protect, even in extreme situations. It also reveals how traditional male roles can lead to control and dominance. Donoghue uses the story to critique how family dynamics and society reinforce these damaging roles.

### **a. Gender Roles and Expectations in *Room***

Chodorow’s theory is related to Donoghue’s characters in representing gender roles and how it can shape their identities according to societal structures. Chodorow writes:

Gender and gender-role identification processes accord with my earlier account of the development of psychic structure. They reinforce and replicate the object-relational and ego outcomes which I have described. Externally, as internally, women grow up and remain more connected to others. Not only are the roles which girls learn more interpersonal, particularistic, and affective than those which boys learn (Chodorow,1978,p.177).

This above quotation highlights Chodorow's argument which suggests that traditional gender roles are reinforced through the ways in which boys and girls are socialized and develop their personalities. Women's roles are often seen as more nurturing and relational, while men's roles are seen as more independent and instrumental. This can contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and inequalities.

This is reflected in Ma's role as the primary caregiver and emotional anchor for her son, even in captivity. As D'Acunto et al. (2020) explain, "Gender roles induce women and men to engage in different activities and to select into different environments in their daily lives. As a result, women and men have different experiences and are exposed to different signals about the economy" (p.1). This insight highlights how gender roles not only influence personal relationships but also shape broader life experiences, which Donoghue subtly critiques through the contrasting roles and expectations placed on her characters.

Jack's appearance conflicts with traditional gender expectations. The author claims: "You're not a girl, you're a boy," says Grandma "Look at that hair, though, it's ridiculous" (Donoghue, 2010, p.266). This quotation highlights societal expectations and gender norms. Grandma's statement reflects the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, particularly in terms of appearance. She is suggesting that Jack's hair is inappropriate for a boy, implying that boys should have short and masculine hair. This reinforces the idea that gender is a social norm with specific expectations and limitations.

In *Room*, the traditional division of labor based on gender is non-existent because Jack was participating in doing laundry. The author says: "We do Laundry and fold everything and

put it away” (Donoghue, 2010, p.27). This quotation shows Ma and Jack share the task of laundry without any gender-based division. This challenges traditional gender roles. For Jack, laundry is a normal part of life, not associated with gender. Ma teaches Jack life skills without considering traditional gender expectations. In their confined space, roles are based on necessity, not gender norms.

This routine helps create stability and order. Ma demonstrates both feminine and masculine roles. Without exposure to societal gender norms, Jack’s understanding of roles is shaped by his experiences with Ma. She is unknowingly preparing Jack for life outside Room, where he will need to be capable of various tasks. This implies an equal sharing of responsibilities, contrasting with many traditional household dynamics. Old Nick fulfills a distorted version of the traditional male provider role. The author writes: “He's busy getting us foods and vitamins and stuff” (Donoghue, 2010, p.69). This quotation highlights that Ma is responsible for Jack's emotional and psychological well-being, while Old Nick is expected to provide for their physical needs. This shows the traditional gender roles that Ma and Jack are forced to follow, even in their extreme situation. The quote reinforces the societal expectation that men are the breadwinners and women are the caregivers. Old Nick also represents a harmful form of masculinity, using his physical and economic power to control and abuse.

Jack says: “When Old Nick creaks Bed, I always count fives on my fingers, tonight it’s 217 creaks” (Donoghue, 2010, p.46). This quotation illustrates the extreme power imbalance between Old Nick and Ma, challenging the expectation of male respect for female autonomy. It also suggests the emotional labour women often undertake to protect children from trauma. The scene implies male aggression and female submission, imitating harmful gender stereotypes. Jack’s counting reveals his innocent misunderstanding of adult sexual behaviour, highlighting how children adopt gender dynamics. The regularity of these events

suggests how abusive gender dynamics can become normalized. The indirect description mirrors societal tendencies to avoid discussing sexual abuse. The quote also implies Ma's resilience and the disruption of a feminine safe space by patriarchal violence.

## **b. Family Dynamics and Societal Influence in *Room***

Chodorow explores how the roles of wife and mother are closely connected and shaped by both family dynamics and societal expectations. Chodorow writes: "The definitional relatedness of being a wife and mother, and women's intrafamilial responsibility for affectively defined functions, receive further support from the way the family is related socially to the extrafamilial world" (Chodorow, 1978, p.178). This quotation demonstrates the mother's emotional labor caring for the children and maintaining relationships becomes central to family life. Society supports and expects this role, further defining a woman's identity by her duties as a wife and mother. This creates a cycle where women's familial responsibilities are deeply tied to both their relationships within the family and society's broader expectations of gender roles. Chodorow is highlighting how these roles are not just personal but are influenced and shaped by societal structures. This makes it difficult for women to separate their sense of self from their familial responsibilities. Women's roles within the family are seen as extensions of larger social norms that define their place both inside and outside the home.

Both Chodorow and Donoghue explore the significant role of families in shaping individuals' experiences and identities and emphasize the impact of societal expectations and structures on gender roles and family dynamics. Family dynamics encompass the patterns of interaction, roles, and relationships among relatives, shaped by a range of influencing factors. Since family members often depend on one another for emotional, physical, and financial support, the family unit can be a key source of either security or stress. When family

relationships are secure and supportive, they offer love, guidance, and care. In contrast, when strained, they can be marked by frequent conflicts, ongoing criticism, and overwhelming expectations (Jabbari et al., 2023).

Jack's character gives readers a special way to look at how society and families work. Reaching adulthood in *Room*, separated from the outside world, Jack's first experience of the outside shows how much our surroundings shape how we see things and act. This difference makes it clear how important our environment is informing our views and behavior. Jack says: "Outside has everything. Whenever I think of a thing now like skis or fireworks or islands or elevators or yoyos, there's always a thing in outside that's like it" (Donoghue, 2010, p.70).

This quotation shows how Jack's view of the world is quickly growing. Things he saw once only in TV or imagined are now real. He is making sense of his new information by connecting it to what he already knows, showing how we learn by building on what he already understand. The sentence "Outside has everything" (Donoghue, 2010, p.70) shows both his excitement and how overwhelming the world feels to him. In addition, by naming different objects, Jack also demonstrate how limited his life in Room was. As he discovers new things, he is also learning about the social rules and adapting to how people live outside.

Ma's character in *Room* is a strong example of motherhood in extreme conditions. Her role changes numerous during the story, starting as Jack's whole world, and provides him with care and education in *Room*, and the becoming a trauma survivor trying to adjust to life in society after they escape. She says: "I'm not good enough Ma" Jack replies: "You're the best Ma" She said to Jack: "Not anymore, Maybe before, when you were small, I was good enough Ma, but not anymore" (Donoghue, 2010, p.210). This quotation highlights Ma's self-doubt that shows heavy pressure society imposes on mother to be 'perfect', even in hard

situations. She is struggling to find a new identity as a mother outside Room, where her whole focus was on keeping Jack safe and helping him to grow. Even after escaping, she feels the burden of society's expectations to be an ideal mother. Jack's unconditional love "you're the best Ma" (Donoghue,2010,p.210) contrasts with Ma's self-criticism, showing the difference between what a child needs and a mother thinks she should do. This point highlights that there is no one 'right' way to be a mother, especially when facing such extreme circumstances.

The male character Old Nick goes beyond being just a physical threat; he also symbolizes the abusive power dynamics that can exist within families and society. His actions directly affect the psychological and emotional well-being of Ma and Jack, shaping their identities and family relationship. Jack claims: "When Old Nick creaks Bed, I listen and count fives on my fingers, tonight it's 217 creaks. I always have to count till he makes that gaspy sound and stops" (Donoghue, 2010, p.46). This quotation demonstrates how Jack, through his innocent perspective, normalizes and processes the abusive situation. Jack's counting reflects how trauma becomes a routine part of their lives, impacting his understanding of relationships, boundaries, and family dynamics. Through Old Nick, Donoghue critiques societal failures to protect those who are most vulnerable and shows how power and violence can infiltrate even the most private family spaces.

Grandma represents society's often misguided attempts to address and "fix" the trauma experienced by Ma and Jack. Her efforts to integrate them into regular society show the difficulties irregular families face in conforming to social norms. She claims: "I've been thinking, Jack. How about if we cut your hair? You'd look more like other boys" (Donoghue, 2010, p.265). This quotation shows Grandma's struggles to connect with Jack and understand his bond with Ma underscore the challenges faced by families that do not fit traditional norms. Her character illustrates the need for more empathy and flexibility in supporting families

dealing with trauma and unique situations. This suggestion by his grandma reflects an attempt to normalize Jack's appearance, which overlooks the deep psychological impact of his experiences. Donoghue uses these character representations to challenge our understanding of family, resilience, and societal norms.

After examining both novels, we notice that both authors explore the intersection of family and gender roles that demonstrates how societal expectations shape women's identities and children identities. Through the experiences of Ma and Betty, both novels reveal the devastating impact of captivity on the human psyche, while emphasizing the strength of the mother-child relationship. Central to both stories is the theme of resilience and resistance in the face of adversity, as the protagonists fight for their freedom and that of their children. Ultimately, these works provide valuable insights into the human cost of oppression and the enduring power of the human spirit, illustrating the complex relationship between personal struggles and large societal forces.

#### IV. General Conclusion

To conclude, *Not Without My Daughter* by Betty Mahmoudy and *Room* by Emma Donoghue are novels which share a common theme of maternal sacrifices despite differences in cultural setting and historical context. The portrayal of heroism in both narratives centred on motherhood emphasizes the similarities in their scene and characters, allowed us to appreciate and study both books.

The narratives styles used in both novels contribute to a deeper understanding of their commons themes concerning the challenges women face in safeguarding their children and the impact of family and societal norms on this struggle. In *Not Without My Daughter* and *Room* this exploration illustrates the role and status of mothers as sacrificial figures, who faced persistent oppression in various context.

Another common point in *Not Without My Daughter* and *Room* is the psychological and emotional consequences that reflect the obstacles faced by both mothers within patriarchal authority. Both authors present a realistic portrayal and image of these sufferings through the use of illustration and the role of characters. Furthermore, *Not Without My Daughter and Room* share the same theme concerning the challenges to traditional motherhood, which studies women's economic dependency. In *Not Without My Daughter*, Betty challenges the dependence that she has on her husband during their escape; the absence of financial support obliged her to stay. While Ma experienced confinement with a kidnapper, so she was obliged to be dependent on him in order to survive. Both stories show how the lack of father involvement affects the mother and her child in the way she takes care of the emotional, physical educational, nurturing, love and care by herself.

And the father is the provider; he thinks just about his job and money. So, this is an enormous traditional challenge to motherhood.

Gender roles and family dynamics are shared themes in both novels. Ma and Betty's experiences in and out of confinement illustrates how gender roles are constructed, reinforced, and sometimes challenged in extreme circumstances. Even though both novels share different stories but they have a lot of in common. The two novels, in conjunction with Chodorow's theories, emphasize the need for a more nuanced understanding of gender roles and family structures in both extreme and everyday circumstances. Finally, Chodorow's theory *The Reproduction of Mothering* presents the most influential and comprehensive theoretical framework to analyze these two novels because she mentioned several themes about motherhood, explained her point of view about the importance of motherhood in a child's life and how she gives everything to protect him and she criticized other theorists who does not share the same point of view.

While this study has contributed to a deeper understanding of the representation of motherhood through the lens of Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*, several avenues remain open for further exploration. Given the study's focus on a specific cultural and textual context, future research could expand the scope by examining representations of motherhood across different media forms, historical periods, or cultural settings. Comparative analyses involving non-Western perspectives, for instance, could offer a more intersectional understanding of maternal subjectivity. Additionally, integrating Chodorow's theory with contemporary feminist psychoanalytic or queer theoretical frameworks may provide more nuanced insights into the evolving constructions of motherhood. Finally, longitudinal studies of maternal representation in literature and popular culture could illuminate shifts in gender ideologies and caregiving roles over time. Such work would continue to build on the

foundation laid by this dissertation, reaffirming the relevance of Chodorow's theory while also extending its applicability in contemporary discourse.

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