



## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Dedications**

I dedicate this research to my beloved family, all my friends, relatives, and my binomial partner, Fatima, for their constant encouragement and belief in me.

I also dedicate my work to all the mothers of Gaza, whose profound strength and resilience embody hope in the face of adversity.

*Djedjiga*

I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved parents, who, with love and effort, have accompanied me throughout this process, always believing in me and helping make my dreams come true.

To my sisters, who encouraged me to achieve such success and honor. To my extended friends, relatives, and my binomial partner, Djedjiga, for their encouragement and faith in me..

*Fatima*

## **Abstract**

This research is a comparative study of Elizabeth Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001). The aim of this work is to explore mother-daughter relationships in both narratives, focusing on the challenges and resolutions within these dynamics. The theoretical framework is grounded in Carol Gilligan's and Nel Noddings' Care Ethics Perspective. The findings reveal that maternal figures and their daughters face significant challenges, such as past traumas, communication breakdowns due to generational differences, and the influence of social judgments and community expectations. Additionally, the research highlights the processes of healing and transformation that occur through open communication, mutual understanding, and social solidarity. Overall, the study suggests that care ethics provides a critical framework for understanding the complexities of these relationships, illustrating how emotional labour fosters resilience and strengthens connections in mother-daughter dynamics.

*Key Words:* Mother-Daughter Relationships – Care Ethics – Healing – Empathy – Social Support  
- Challenges - Resolutions - Elizabeth Strout – Sue Monk Kidd.

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## **I. Introduction**

Family is often considered the cornerstone of society, serving as a primary support system where individuals find love, emotional support, guidance, and a sense of belonging. It shapes our values, beliefs, and experiences, playing a crucial role in our development and overall well-being. Within the family unit, individuals first learn how to navigate relationships, understand societal norms, and develop their identities. Families can take various forms, but at their core, they provide a space where love, care, and nurturing thrive, helping individuals navigate the complexities of life.

Within this family unit, the mother often assumes a central role, acting as a primary caregiver, advisor, and source of unconditional love. She embodies nurturing qualities that guide her children through life's challenges, providing both security and comfort. The mother's influence is profound, shaping not only the physical well-being of her family but also the emotional and moral foundations essential for a child's growth and development. This maternal role is pivotal not only in family dynamics but also in contributing to the broader social fabric. The mother often forming the pillar of familial relationships, particularly with her sons and daughters.

Recognizing the mother's crucial role in shaping both family and social structures, many female writers have explored the complexity and significance of mother-daughter relationships. Among these insightful American novelists, Elizabeth Strout and Sue Monk Kidd are particularly drawn to the theme of maternal bonds as a means of exploring the intricacies of human connections. Their novels, Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) explore this dynamic, portraying how maternal relationships, with all their challenges and transformative power, can profoundly impact an individual's journey toward identity, healing, and self-understanding.

Our research is driven by an interest in exploring how mother-daughter relationships are depicted in these two novels, emphasizing their emotional depth and complexity. Both authors share similar cultural backgrounds yet they offer unique perspectives on familial bonds. Through the lens of care ethics, this research aims to reveal the deeper insights these works provide regarding the potential for growth, understanding, and emotional healing within mother-daughter relationships. By examining the narratives crafted by Strout and Kidd, we seek to understand how their portrayals contribute to a broader conversation about the significance of maternal connections in shaping both individual lives and fostering emotional healing within mother-daughter relationships.

#### **a) Review of the Literature**

The mother-daughter relationship is one of the most intricate and profound connections in human experience, and both *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) by Elizabeth Strout and *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) by Sue Monk Kidd explore the complexity inherent in that relationship. These novels have been the subject of several critiques from various perspectives.

First, *Amy and Isabelle* has been analyzed from various angles, including its exploration of social issues such as isolation, shame, and societal expectations. In the article “The Social Strains of Small-Town Life: Isolation and Judgment in Strout’s *Amy and Isabelle* (2015) by Dr. Laura Bennett, the critic examines how the novel portrays the pressures and constraints of living in a close-knit community. Bennett argues that the suffocating atmosphere of the small town exacerbates the characters' sense of isolation and magnifies their struggles, stating:

The social scrutiny that Amy and Isabelle face serves as both a catalyst for their internal conflicts and a barrier to their reconciliation. In the small-town setting, every action and perceived misstep is subject to intense observation and judgment, which amplifies the feelings of shame and inadequacy experienced by both characters. This external pressure forces Amy and Isabelle to internalize society's expectations, leading to a heightened sense of isolation and misunderstanding between them.(p. 34).

This perspective highlights how societal norms and the fear of judgment profoundly influence the characters' interactions and self-perceptions, leading Amy and Isabelle to conform to the town's expectations, which prevents them from openly communicating and addressing their issues.

Another critique of *Amy and Isabelle* focuses on Isabelle's role as a working mother and how it affects her relationship with Amy. In the article "*Balancing Work and Motherhood: The Struggles of Isabelle in Strout's Amy and Isabelle*" (2012), Dr. Rachel Miller explores how Isabelle's job at the mill shapes her identity and impacts her connection with her daughter, Amy. Miller argues that Isabelle's role as a working single mother adds pressure and contributes to her sense of inadequacy and frustration. This work environment, dominated by dull routines and strict expectations, leaves Isabelle feeling trapped and unable to devote the emotional energy needed to nurture her relationship with Amy. The critic states,

Isabelle's constant battle to maintain her job while raising her daughter alone serves as a reflection of the larger societal expectations placed on women, making her more prone to bouts of impatience and anger, which in turn widens the emotional gap between her and Amy (p. 62).

This perspective reveals how the challenges of balancing work and motherhood contribute to the tension and misunderstanding between Isabelle and her daughter, further complicating their journey toward reconciliation. Isabelle's job at the mill not only demands long hours and physical effort but also leaves her emotionally drained, making it difficult for her to connect with Amy on a deeper level. The stress of trying to maintain financial stability as a single mother often manifests in moments of impatience and harshness.

Like *Amy and Isabelle*, Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* has been the focus of numerous critiques. The novel has been critically analyzed from various perspectives, including the profound impact of race on mother-daughter dynamics. In the article "Navigating Race and Motherhood: The Bonds Between Lily and Rosaleen in *The Secret Life of Bees* (2016) by Dr.

Emily Thompson, the critic explores how Lily's relationship with Rosaleen transcends traditional roles, emphasizing the influence of racial identity on their bond. Thompson argues that Rosaleen's strength and resilience in the face of racial discrimination serve as a maternal force for Lily, stating: "In a society that marginalizes them, the bond between Lily and Rosaleen becomes a source of empowerment, illustrating how maternal love can flourish even amid systemic oppression"(p. 77). This analysis underscores how their relationship exemplifies the complexities of love, support, and survival across racial lines.

Another perspective is presented in the article "Sisterhood and Racial Identity in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*" by Dr. Lisa Montgomery, published in 2014 in the *Journal of American Literature and Culture*. In this analysis, Montgomery examines the relationships between the Boatwright sisters -August, May, and June-and their role as maternal figures in Lily's life. The author writes that these relationships are deeply rooted in the historical experiences of Black women in America, highlighting how their nurturing approach provides Lily with the emotional guidance she desperately needs. Montgomery asserts,

The Boatwright sisters' collective maternal influence helps Lily navigate her own identity crisis while simultaneously celebrating the cultural legacy of Black womanhood. Each sister embodies unique traits that contribute to Lily's understanding of strength, resilience, and identity. [...] Together, these maternal figures not only support Lily through her personal journey but also instill in her a profound appreciation for the rich history and cultural heritage of Black women. This interconnectedness reinforces the notion that motherhood extends beyond biological ties, highlighting the significance of communal support in shaping one's identity and fostering a sense of belonging" (pp. 112-118).

This perspective emphasizes the significance of community and solidarity among women of different backgrounds as a means of fostering healing and understanding in mother-daughter relationships.

## **b) Issue and Working Hypotheses**

From the above review of the literature, it is clear that Elizabeth Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) have been analyzed individually from various perspectives. However, no attention has been given to a comparative study of these novels through the lens of care ethics. This research draws on the work of prominent care ethicists Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, specifically Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982) and Noddings's *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), to explore the challenges and pathways to resolution within the mother-daughter relationships depicted in both novels.

Our hypothesis centres on identifying the possible affinities and divergences between *Amy and Isabelle* and *The Secret Life of Bees*, particularly in relation to how past trauma, communication breakdown, and societal judgment impact these relationships. Set in same cultural and temporal contexts, both novels offer insights into how empathy, open communication, and mutual understanding can facilitate healing and transformation in mother-daughter bonds.

To support our analysis, we employ the care ethics framework, as it emphasizes empathy, compassion, and relational dynamics. This investigation aims to address the gap in existing research by exploring how these themes manifest in both novels, ultimately highlighting the transformative power of care ethics in addressing familial challenges.

## **c) Methodological Outline**

This research follows the IMRAD method. The work begins with an introduction in which the problem is identified. It is followed by a brief overview of the literature on the two novels. The next section is devoted to methods and materials. In the methods section, we adopt the Care Ethics Perspective approach developed by Nel Noddings and Carol Gilligan. The materials

section comprises the synopses of the novels and biographies of the two authors. In the results section, we focus on the findings of the study. The discussion is divided into two main parts. The first addresses the complexities of the challenges and tensions in mother-daughter relationships in Elizabeth Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001). The second part explores the pathways to resolution in the novels. The research concludes with a summary of the key findings and a reflection on the broader implications, as well as suggestions for future research.

## **II- Methods and Materials**

### **a. Methods**

To achieve the purpose of this dissertation, we will rely on the moral theory known as the ethics of care, developed in the early 1980s by feminist philosophers Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings. This ethical framework emphasizes the significance of interpersonal relationships and the ethical importance of care, empathy, and nurturing in human interactions. It arose in response to traditional moral theories that prioritize abstract principles like justice and autonomy, which often overlook the complexities of real-life relationships and the emotional dimensions of ethical decision-making.

#### **a.1- Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982)**

In *In a Different Voice* (1982), Carol Gilligan introduces the concept of care as a vital aspect of moral reasoning, emphasizing the importance of relationships and empathy in ethical decision-making. Gilligan highlights how traditional approaches to ethics often neglect the relational context of moral dilemmas, arguing that a care perspective values the interconnectedness of human experiences. Through her research, she underscores that moral development is deeply intertwined with relationships and interdependence, advocating for an ethical approach that listens to the “voice of care” evident in women’s experiences. Gilligan argues that care is frequently undervalued in ethical discussions, especially in patriarchal contexts that privilege autonomy and impartiality over empathy and connection, stating, “The moral problem is not one of justice but of care” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 83).

Gilligan’s care ethics framework also highlights how past trauma can significantly hinder one’s ability to form caring relationships. Trauma often leads to a profound sense of disconnection

from both oneself and others, hindering the capacity for empathy and care, which are central to Gilligan's model of moral development. She articulates this impact clearly, stating,

The recurrence of trauma and the memory of past injuries can create a sense of disconnection, not only from others but also from oneself. This sense of disconnection hampers the ability to care, both for oneself and others, because it engenders a feeling of isolation and distrust. It is through the process of recognizing and addressing these wounds that the capacity for care can be reclaimed, promoting healing and re-establishing the potential for empathy and relational understanding. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 142).

Gilligan's insight here suggests that healing from trauma requires acknowledging and addressing these painful experiences. By doing so, individuals can restore their capacity for empathy and care, which allows them to rebuild meaningful and nurturing relationships. This process reinforces the importance of care as a pathway toward reconnection and ethical development, demonstrating that care ethics offer a vital perspective on overcoming trauma and developing open human connection.

#### **a.2 Nel Noddings' *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984)**

Similarly, Nel Noddings builds on and expands Carol Gilligan's work in *Caring: a Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984). She deepens the exploration of care as a feminine ethic with a focus on the importance of direct, personal relationships. Noddings defines two roles in a caring relationship: the "one-caring" and the "cared-for," each with different but connected responsibilities.

Noddings distinguishes between two types of caring: "caring-for," which involves direct engagement, and "caring-about" which focuses on nurturing values and intentions. She also acknowledges a duty to care about distant others, though she maintains that it is impractical to care-for everyone when direct relationships are absent.

In her later work, *Starting from Home* (1988), Noddings expands her views by discussing social issues. Within the framework of care ethics, she emphasizes the importance of relationships, community, and social contexts in moral education and ethical decision-making. Society plays a significant role in shaping our ability to engage in caring practices. She believes that addressing social issues requires an understanding of the interconnectedness of individuals within their communities and societies. Noddings advocates for an ethics of care that prioritizes empathy, compassion, and responsiveness to the needs of others, rather than judgment or disadvantage perpetuated by social structures.

## **b- Materials**

### **b.1- Biography of Elizabeth Strout**

Elizabeth Strout, born on January 6, 1956, in Portland, Maine, is an esteemed American novelist celebrated for her profound exploration of small-town dynamics and complex human emotions. Raised in Maine and New Hampshire, Strout's upbringing deeply influenced her literary themes. After earning her J.D. from Syracuse University College of Law, she practiced briefly before pursuing her passion for writing. Strout's breakthrough came with her first novel, "Amy and Isabelle" (1998), which garnered critical acclaim and was adapted into a television movie (2001). She achieved international acclaim with *Olive Kitteridge* (2008), winning the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and inspiring an Emmy-winning mini-series. Her subsequent works, including *The Burgess Boys* (2013), *My Name Is Lucy Barton* (2016), and its sequels, continue to explore intimate family relationships and personal growth against richly textured backdrops. Strout's literary achievements have solidified her as a masterful storyteller, captivating readers with her evocative prose and insightful portrayals of human resilience and vulnerability.

## **b.2- Biography of Sue Monk Kidd**

Sue Monk Kidd was born on August 12, 1948, in Sylvester, Georgia. She attended Texas Christian University, graduating in 1970, and later pursued creative writing through courses at Emory University and Anderson College. Additionally, Kidd participated in writing programs at Sewanee, Bread Loaf, and other writers' conferences, enriching her literary skills and perspectives. Her educational background and diverse experiences contribute to the depth and breadth of themes explored in her writing, which spans spiritual essays, memoir, and internationally acclaimed novels.

Sue Monk Kidd, born and raised in Sylvester, Georgia, initially focused on spiritual and feminist themes in her writing before transitioning to fiction in her forties. Her debut novel, *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002), became a global phenomenon, spending over 2 years on the New York Times bestseller list and winning numerous awards. Kidd's subsequent novels, including *The Mermaid Chair* (2005), *The Invention of Wings* (2014), and "The Book of Longings" (2020), have also garnered critical acclaim and commercial success, each exploring profound themes through compelling storytelling. Beyond fiction, Kidd co-authored a memoir with her daughter and has penned spiritual essays and inspirational works. Inducted into literary halls of fame and honored with prestigious awards, Kidd's work continues to resonate widely, translated into multiple languages and adapted for stage and screen.

## **b.3 - Synopsis of *Amy and Isabelle***

*Amy and Isabelle* (1998) by Elizabeth Strout, tells the story of a complex mother-daughter relationship, set in the small town of Shirley Falls, Maine. The novel explores the lives of Isabelle Goodrow, a reserved and introspective single mother, and her rebellious teenage daughter, Amy. The relationship is stained by secrets and misunderstandings, showcasing how silence can strain connections but also how honesty and vulnerability pave the way for healing.

Isabelle struggles with her own past and the constraints of her life, feeling trapped in a mundane existence. She is optimistic for Amy, but their differing personalities create tension. As Amy begins to assert her independence, she gets involved within a relation with her teacher, which leads to conflict and misunderstandings between her and Isabelle. The mother confronts Amy own buried secrets and regrets, while Amy grapples with her emerging sense of self and desires.

Through a journey of forgiveness, acceptance, and honesty, mother and daughter gradually rebuild their fractured bond, learning to communicate and understand each other's perspectives. Set against the backdrop of a tightly-knit community divided by class and secrets, *Amy and Isabelle* explores the complexities of family dynamics, the consequences of secrecy, and the transformative power of honesty and forgiveness.

#### **b.4- Synopsis of *The Secret Life of Bees***

*The Secret Life of Bees* (2001), by Sue Monk Kidd, tells the story of Lily Owens, a young girl navigating the challenges of adolescence in South Carolina during the racially charged 1960s. The novel explores Lily's complex relationship with her abusive father, T. Ray, and her deep longing to understand the truth about her deceased mother.

Haunted by her past and seeking escape, Lily runs away with her black caregiver, Rosaleen, who faces her own struggles with racism and oppression. They find refuge with the Boatwright sisters August, May, and June who run a thriving beekeeping business. This nurturing environment offers Lily a new perspective on love, loss, and resilience.

As Lily learns about the significance of bees and their communal nature, she begins to confront her own identity and the impact of her mother's absence. She is eventually forced to face the painful truth that, as a toddler, she accidentally killed her mother with a gun during a

confrontation between Deborah and T. Ray. This revelation adds to her deep feelings of guilt and loss.

The relationship with the Boatwright sisters becomes a source of strength and guidance, illustrating the bonds formed among women facing adversity. Through a journey of self-discovery, forgiveness, and acceptance, Lily gradually reconciles her past, learns the power of love, and forges a new understanding of family. Set against the backdrop of a divided community, "The Secret Life of Bees" explores themes of motherhood, race, and the transformative power of connection, ultimately celebrating the resilience of the human spirit.

### **III- Results:**

This section of our work presents the key findings and results from our in-depth exploration of the challenges and resolutions in mother-daughter relationships in Elizabeth Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001). Our analysis is grounded in a care ethics perspective, drawing on the theories of Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, particularly their works *In a Different Voice* (1982) and *Caring: a Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984).

From our exploration of the two works, we have observed that both Elizabeth Strout and Sue Monk Kidd belong to the same country, American culture, and generation. As a result, they share common themes and concerns. A thorough analysis of *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) reveals that both authors address the universal theme of mother-daughter relationships, making their works highly comparable. This theme extends beyond biological ties to include mother figures and surrogate maternal bonds. These relationships, whether biological or formed through nurturing connections, highlight the profound impact that motherly love, guidance, and support have on shaping a daughter's identity and sense of self.

Our analysis has revealed that both Strout and Kidd carefully construct their characters to illustrate how trauma, generational differences, and social judgment profoundly affect mother-daughter dynamics. Through their narratives, they show how past traumas create emotional barriers and misunderstandings, preventing open communication between mothers and daughters. Generational differences further complicate these relationships, as differing values and expectations lead to conflicts and misunderstandings. Moreover, societal norms and judgments shape how mothers and daughters perceive themselves and each other, often intensifying feelings of guilt, shame, or inadequacy.

The second major finding, informed by the care ethics perspective, has revealed that healing and transformation in mother-daughter relationships are attainable through open communication, empathy, and community support in both novels. In *Amy and Isabelle*, moments of vulnerability and honesty between Isabelle and Amy gradually lead to reconciliation and a stronger bond. Their journey demonstrates how the willingness to confront painful truths, despite the discomfort, can create a path toward mutual understanding and acceptance. As they begin to communicate more openly, they break down the emotional barriers built over years of misunderstanding, leading to a more authentic and compassionate relationship.

Similarly, in *The Secret Life of Bees*, Lily's interactions with the Boatwright sisters, especially August, offer her the maternal guidance and nurturing environment she desperately needs. Through their empathy, wisdom, and acceptance, they provide Lily with the support to confront her trauma and gradually develop a sense of identity and self-worth. The community created by these maternal figures enables Lily to explore her emotions and feel valued, which ultimately helps her heal from her past.

These narratives demonstrate that, despite the considerable challenges posed by trauma, generational differences, and societal pressures, mother-daughter relationships can experience profound healing and transformation. By examining these challenges, both authors highlight the intricate nature of mother-daughter dynamics, underscoring the importance of empathy, healing, and understanding. The characters' experiences reveal that unresolved trauma often creates emotional barriers that impede connection; however, moments of vulnerability and honesty open the door to healing. When mothers and daughters engage in sincere dialogue, they can begin to break down these barriers. Furthermore, the role of maternal figures providing unconditional love and support emphasizes how empathy and understanding can bridge

emotional gaps through ethical care practices. Ultimately, both authors promote a transformative approach to these relationships through a care ethics perspective, emphasizing the importance of care, compassion, and empathy in confronting tensions and difficult truths. This approach fosters forgiveness, personal growth, and a stronger connection between mothers and daughters.

#### **IV. Discussion**

In this part, we will focus on the mother-daughter relationship in American society as presented by Elizabeth Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001). Both narratives offer significant insights into this dynamic. The first chapter addresses the main challenges and tensions faced in mother-daughter relationships, highlighting Strout's and Monk Kidd's depictions of these complex and strained connections. The second chapter is concerned with the pathways to resolution and ethical healing presented in these stories. Our goal is to shed light on how Strout and Monk Kidd offer solutions and foster reconciliation through a care ethics perspective. Since the primary focus of the discussion is the mother-daughter relationship, we will borrow principles from care ethics to deepen our analysis.

##### **Chapter One: Challenges and Tensions Faced in Mother-Daughter Relationships:**

In this chapter, we explore the intricate dynamics of mother-daughter relationships. We will analyze the impact of past trauma, which often reverberates through generations, shaping emotional responses, behaviours, and relational patterns. We will examine how Next, we will explore how generational differences affect the way mothers and daughters communicate. These generational divides can lead to conflicts or misinterpretations if emotional needs or perspectives are not properly understood or addressed. A key aspect of this analysis is to demonstrate how the lack of empathy negatively affects the mother-daughter relationship, creating emotional distance and leading to restrictive communication, which further widens the emotional gap between them. Understanding how external pressures, such as societal norms, cultural values, and community scrutiny, can place additional strain on these delicate bonds by imposing unrealistic expectations or exacerbating internal tensions.

### **A. The Impact of Past Traumas:**

Past trauma can have a profound and lasting impact on individuals, influencing their relationships, behaviours, and overall well-being. Trauma experienced by mothers, whether from their own childhoods or later in life, can disturb their parenting styles, emotional availability, and ability to effectively nurture their children. Similarly, children's traumas can lead to trust issues, emotional reserve, or heightened sensitivity, complicating interactions with their mothers.

The emotional repercussions of past trauma resonate deeply in the characters of *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001), where it disrupts both familial dynamics and personal identities. In both novels, the characters' experiences with past trauma profoundly shape their lives and interactions. The following section explores how these traumas impact the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of the characters, illustrating the far-reaching consequences these painful experiences have on their relationships and sense of self.

In the first novel, *Amy and Isabelle* (1998), the mother, Isabelle's unresolved traumas and insecurities profoundly shape her interactions with Amy leading to a strained and complex dynamic. Isabelle's hidden past, particularly her affair with a married boss and her experience as a young, unwed mother, fills her with guilt, shame, and a deep sense of isolation. Instead of confronting these painful emotions, Isabelle chooses to repress them, allowing her unresolved trauma to influence how she raises Amy. This avoidance creates an emotional distance between mother and daughter, directly stemming from Isabelle's inability to face her past.

Pierre Janet, a pioneer in trauma studies, suggests in his article *The Dissociation* (1989) that trauma leads to fragmented consciousness. He believes that traumatic memories are not integrated into a person's narrative memory, leading to symptoms like flashbacks and dissociation. He says,

The experience of trauma creates a disturbance in the individual's mental life, leading to a split in consciousness. Memories of the traumatic event are not properly integrated into the individual's narrative identity; instead, they exist as isolated fragments. These memories can resurface in the form of intrusive recollections, flashbacks, or dissociative states, where the individual feels disconnected from their thoughts, emotions, or sense of self. This lack of integration not only complicates the individual's understanding of their past but also profoundly affects their relationships with others, as the trauma creates barriers to emotional connection and communication. (Dissociation, 1989, p.06)

Isabelle's affair with a married man serves as a pivotal trauma in her life, creating a deep-seated conflict that she struggles to articulate. As Janet notes, traumatic memories often exist as isolated fragments; this is evident in how Isabelle grapples with her past. She exhibits signs of dissociation, wherein her unresolved feelings about her affair inhibit her ability to engage meaningfully with Amy. In a critical moment; Isabelle's guilt becomes clear when she reflects on her own past in comparison to Amy's growing feelings and desires. Strout (1998,p.78) writes, "Isabelle knew that Amy had no idea of the depths of shame that lived inside of her. She had spent her life carefully constructing a wall around it, but all it took was Amy's actions to make it crack." This quote highlights how Isabelle's unresolved trauma from her own intimate experiences leads her to overreact when she sees Amy exploring her identity.

Isabelle's trauma becomes most evident when she tries to control Amy's behaviour, especially concerning her personal growth and self-discovery. Her strictness is not only about protecting Amy; it is more about controlling any situation that reminds her of her own past mistakes.

Dr. Roy Lubit, in his work on *The Effects of Early Trauma*, explains that childhood trauma can result in serious mental health issues later in life, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. He notes that,

Trauma in children can lead to the development of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as to a variety of other psychiatric disorders, including depression, generalized anxiety disorder, panic attacks, borderline personality disorder, and substance abuse in adult survivors of trauma (Lubit et al., 2003, p. 130).

Isabelle sets high expectations for Amy, hoping her daughter will avoid the same mistakes she made. This is illustrated when Isabelle reflects, “She kept thinking of how Amy had crossed that line, how quickly, with no regard for the consequences” (Strout, 1998, p. 7). Her fear of seeing her past reflected in Amy drives her to impose strict rules and discipline, punishing her daughter not only for her actions but also for stirring Isabelle’s unresolved pain and unhealed wounds.

After discovering Amy’s relationship with Mr. Robertson, Isabelle’s fury erupts. Unable to contain her anger, she lashes out, shouting at Amy with harsh words, expressing a mix of rage, disappointment, and fear. This outburst exposes how deeply Isabelle’s trauma still affects her, as she accuses her daughter of ruining everything. In a moment of raw vulnerability, she screamed, “Amy. Don’t you understand? You’re just like... you’re just like I was” (Strout, p. 172). Nancy Chodorow’s work, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), provides insight into this dynamic by explaining that mothers often project their unresolved issues onto their daughters, seeing them as extensions of themselves. Isabelle’s fury toward Amy reflects this idea, as her unresolved trauma resurfaces when she sees her daughter making similar choices. Chodorow’s theory helps explaining why Isabelle’s reaction is so intense, driven by her own unhealed wounds.

Isabelle’s trauma is not only rooted in her past mistakes but also in her fear of seeing those mistakes reflected in Amy. Unconsciously, she projects her own fears and failures onto her daughter. Viewing Amy as a reflection of her own past drives Isabelle to impose strict rules, punishing her not just for her actions but also as a painful reminder of her own failures.

The mother’s refusal to confront or share her past with Amy leads to constant miscommunication and judgment. Instead of initiating an open dialogue, she assumes that Amy will repeat her mistakes. This dynamic creates a profound emotional distance between them,

and later in the novel, reconciliation becomes possible only when Isabelle begins to face her own pain.

Isabelle's harsh criticism, exemplified by her words, "You always make things worse. Why can't you ever do anything right?" (Strout, 1998, p. 135), underscores how deeply her unresolved trauma impacts her ability to empathize with Amy. This critical stance reveals Isabelle's failure to recognize Amy's own struggles, instead viewing her daughter as a reflection of her own past failures. Consequently, Isabelle's inability to offer support and compassion exacerbates the strain in their relationship. Dr. Roy Lubit, a noted expert on trauma, argues that "unresolved childhood trauma often leads to emotional dysregulation and difficulty in forming healthy relationships, as individuals may unconsciously project their own pain onto others." (Lubit and al, 2003.P132). Carol Gilligan's concept of relational trauma in *In a Different Voice* (1982) is relevant here, as she explains how past traumas can shape mother-daughter relationships. Isabelle's intense reaction to Amy reflects her unresolved pain, as she projects her own past mistakes onto her daughter. Gilligan argues that such responses stem from a fear of repeating one's painful history, leading to cycles of fear and control, which explains Isabelle's outburst and her need to prevent Amy from making similar choices.

Amy, on the other hand, feels increasingly suffocated by her mother's controlling behaviour. The weight of Isabelle's expectations and emotional distance causes Amy to become rebellious and resentful. Strout captures Amy's frustration in a key scene, "It was as though her mother's fears were a cage, locking her in and preventing her from living her own life" (Strout, 1998, p. 47).

In this passage, Elizabeth Strout vividly conveys the profound impact of Isabelle's controlling behaviour on Amy. The metaphor of a "cage" illustrates how Isabelle's fears and expectations confine Amy, limiting her personal freedom and self-expression. This confinement creates a

barrier that Amy struggles to overcome as she attempts to break free from her mother's trauma-driven control.

By keeping her trauma locked away, Isabelle's unresolved suffering leads her to impose unrealistic expectations on Amy. This creates a cycle of tension and misunderstanding that could have been avoided through open communication and self-reflection. By not addressing her own pain, Isabelle becomes overly controlling and rigid, striving to shape Amy into the ideal daughter who avoids her own past mistakes. This behaviour aligns with Nancy Chodorow's observation in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), where she states, "Mothers project their own desires and fears onto their daughters, often enforcing strict boundaries in an attempt to protect them from repeating their own painful experiences" (Chodorow, p. 81). Isabelle's unhealed wounds and refusal to confront her trauma prevent her from understanding Amy's needs, fostering emotional distance and ongoing frustration in their relationship. The emotional distance between them reveals how Isabelle's trauma shapes her parenting style, contributing to the ongoing frustration and disconnect in their relationship.

In the second novel, Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001), the theme of past trauma profoundly shapes the protagonist, Lily Owens, influencing her development and quest for self-discovery. Lily's experiences with her mother's death and her strained relationship with her father create a complex background of emotional conflict that drives her narrative. These traumatic events not only define Lily's character but also shape her journey toward healing and self-realization.

As a daughter, Lily Owens' trauma begins with the death of her mother, an event she perceives as partly her fault. This perceived responsibility weighs heavily on her, as the memory of her mother's death becomes a significant emotional burden. Even though Lily was only four years old at the time, she continues to carry guilt. This guilt is poignantly captured in her reflection,

“I worried about my mother and wondered if she was thinking about me right now” (Monk Kidd, 2001, p. 14). Such a reflection emphasizes the profound impact of her early trauma on her emotional state and sense of self.

This guilt is compounded by the fact that Lily has fragmented memories of her mother and the circumstances of her death. These fragmented memories leave her with a hazy and incomplete recollection of her mother’s final moments. Lily’s struggle with these unclear memories is evident when she reflects, “I could remember nothing about what happened that day except the sound of a scream and the sight of my mother’s blood-streaked face” (Monk Kidd, 2001, p. 23). This lack of clarity intensifies her feelings of guilt and inadequacy, leaving her grappling with a disturbing and persistent sense of responsibility. Her struggle to recall these memories shows the deep emotional turmoil she endures, further complicating her path to understanding and reconciliation with her past.

The traumatic event of her mother’s death casts a long shadow over Lily Owens’s life, profoundly shaping her self-perception and emotional landscape. This deep trauma instills in Lily a pervasive sense of guilt and unworthiness, leading her to believe that she is somehow responsible for the tragedy. The theme of past trauma is woven into Lily’s every action, influencing how she views herself and her place in the world. The emotional weight of her mother’s absence is palpable, particularly in her desperate attempts to preserve the few mementoes she has of Deborah. Lily carries a small tin box containing her mother’s photograph, gloves and a picture of the Black Madonna, clinging to these items as symbols of the love and connection she so desperately hopes existed. These objects embody Lily’s fragile link to her mother, offering a bittersweet connection to a past she longs to understand. The photograph, especially, becomes both a comfort and a source of pain, representing the only tangible piece of her mother left, yet constantly reminding her of the emotional void Deborah’s death created.

Through these mementos, Lily seeks not only to remember her mother but also to heal the wounds left by the unresolved trauma that has haunted her life.

Lily's emotional struggles are compounded by the harshness and emotional neglect from her father, T. Ray Owens, whose abusive behaviour reinforces her feelings of worthlessness. His constant criticism and lack of affection instil in Lily a deep sense of inadequacy and guilt, leading her to believe she is unworthy of love or care. As Lily reflects, "I could never do anything right in his eyes. The absence of his affection left me feeling like I was missing something crucial, like I was unlovable" (Kidd, 2001, p. 145). This quote underlines how T. Ray's emotional distance exacerbates Lily's internalized guilt and trauma. The interplay between her mother's traumatic death and her father's mistreatment fosters a turbulent emotional environment that significantly complicates Lily's journey toward healing and self-acceptance. Throughout the novel, Lily's exploration of remorse, shame, and her deep yearning for maternal love drives her interactions with maternal figures. These relationships become central to her quest for healing and understanding, as she seeks to reconcile her past traumas and find a sense of belonging and self-worth.

Dr. Judith Herman (1998, 122), known for her work on trauma and recovery, particularly regarding the psychological impact of trauma, argues,

Trauma destroys the social systems of care, protection, and meaning that support human life. She suggested that care ethicists should consider the profound impact of post-traumatic shame and guilt on individuals, as these states affect various psychosocial dimensions such as self-perception, emotional regulation, personal identity, and vulnerability to mental health issues.

In the context of care ethics, as articulated by Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, the narrative highlights the profound impact of trauma on Lily Owens's emotional and relational development. Gilligan's emphasis on the importance of relationships and empathy underscores how Lily's guilt and feelings of unworthiness stem from her strained paternal relationship and disrupted maternal bond. Noddings's focus on care as a fundamental ethical practice further

illuminates Lily's quest for healing through maternal figures, as these relationships offer opportunities for empathetic support and understanding. The interplay of past trauma and lack of parental care exacerbates Lily's emotional turmoil, demonstrating the crucial role of nurturing relationships in addressing trauma and fostering self-worth.

### **B-Affected Communication within Generational Differences:**

Communication is fundamental to human relationships, facilitating understanding, empathy, and connection. It allows individuals to share their thoughts, emotions, and experiences, building a foundation of trust and mutual support. However, generational differences can significantly shape the dynamics within familial relationships, particularly influencing communication patterns and the ability to foster mutual understanding within the context of motherhood. When barriers to effective communication arise, they can lead to significant challenges and tensions, especially in mother-daughter relationships.

In her work *In a Different Voice* (1982, 122), Carol Gilligan explains that women's sense of self is deeply connected to their relationships. This foundational idea from Gilligan is crucial in analysing how relational dynamics shape communication patterns, especially between mothers and daughters and how they perceive and engage in communication. She highlights potential generational shifts in relational dynamics and self-conception. She declares that, "For women, the self is defined in relation to others. The patterns of communication that characterize their relationships reflect this relational sense of self, which is often in stark contrast to the more individualistic perspectives emphasized in traditional psychological theories." (Gilligan, 1982, p. 128)

Through the lens of care ethics, the narratives of *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) vividly illustrate how generational disparities affect communication and how

open dialogue can bridge the gap between different generations. These stories show that obstructed communication can lead to strained and dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships, emphasizing the importance of honest and empathetic interactions.

In *Amy and Isabelle* (1998), the generational differences between Amy Goodrow and her mother, Isabelle, create significant communication barriers. Isabelle, shaped by her experiences as a single mother in a conservative small town, communicates with Amy in an authoritative manner, driven by her deep-seated need to protect and guide her daughter. This stems from her own unresolved trauma and her desire to shield Amy from making similar mistakes, while adhering to societal norms. She believes that by enforcing rigid boundaries, she can protect Amy from the pain she herself experienced.

Isabelle's authoritative communication is evident in the way she closely monitors Amy's behaviour, especially her interactions with men. This strict attitude becomes particularly clear when she discovers Amy's romantic involvement with her teacher, M<sup>r</sup>. Robertson. Isabelle reacts with anger and disappointment, fearing that Amy is repeating her own past mistakes. Concerned that Amy's actions will damage her reputation and future, Isabelle's inability to engage in open dialogue only worsens the gap between them. Rather than trying to understand Amy's feelings, Isabelle responds with anger and retreats into silence, reflecting her old-fashioned values and reliance on control instead of empathetic communication.

Strout writes, "There were moments she wanted to take Amy's face in her hands and scream, 'Don't you understand what's happening?' But Isabelle did not scream; she had been taught to stay quiet about things like that" (Strout, 1998, p. 236). This quote captures Isabelle's internal struggle. Her desire to guide Amy conflicts with her deep-rooted belief that certain topics, especially sexuality, should not be openly discussed, even with her daughter.

The ineffective communication between the two generations of Isabelle and Amy is intricately linked to their emotional distance, serving as both a cause and a consequence of their growing separation. Isabelle's attempts to guide and control Amy through strict rules and moral teachings, rooted in her own fears and conservative values, lead to a communication breakdown. Instead of engaging in open, empathetic dialogue, Isabelle's traditional approach alienates Amy, who feels increasingly stifled and misunderstood. As the narrative illustrates,

It seemed to Isabelle that her daughter was always angry at her, always pushing her away. Isabelle tried to keep her safe, tried to teach her how to behave properly in a world that would not be kind to a girl who didn't follow its rules. But Amy was insistent on making her own way, on speaking her own mind, and Isabelle felt as though she was losing her (Strout, 1998, p. 45).

The extract above highlights how Isabelle's rigid and controlling communication style contributes to the emotional distance between them. Isabelle's attempts to protect Amy by imposing her own strict rules and outdated moral guidance are intended to preserve her from potential harm and societal judgment. However, these actions are perceived by Amy as oppressive and stifling. Amy's resistance to her mother's control and her desire to assert her independence lead to feelings of anger and rejection. Her resistance and emotional detachment are direct responses to her mother's inability to listen and adapt to her needs. This strained communication further widens the emotional gap, as Isabelle perceives Amy's pushback as ingratitude, while Amy sees her mother's actions as oppressive. The cycle of ineffective communication thus deepens their emotional distance, making it harder for them to bridge the gap and understand each other's perspectives, ultimately reinforcing the rift in their relationship.

The lack of open and empathetic dialogue exacerbates the emotional divide. Isabelle's authoritative stance prevents her from openly understanding Amy's perspective and emotional needs. Instead of developing a space for mutual understanding, Isabelle's approach creates a

barrier that further alienates Amy. Consequently, Amy withdraws emotionally, feeling misunderstood and constrained by her mother's expectations.

This breakdown in communication and the resulting emotional distance create a vicious cycle: the ineffective communication drives them further apart, and the deepening emotional rift makes effective communication increasingly difficult. As both mother and daughter struggle to bridge the gap, their relationship becomes increasingly strained, with each unable to fully grasp the other's feelings and intentions.

In the context of care ethics, Nel Noddings builds on Carol Gilligan's ideas by emphasizing how intergenerational contrasts and emotional connections shape communication styles. Gilligan (1982) argues that women's ways of knowing and communicating are often undervalued, leading to misunderstandings and relational conflicts. This is evident in *Amy and Isabelle* (2001), where Isabelle's authoritative communication style, as Gilligan suggests, obstructs empathetic dialogue and deepens the relational gap. Both Noddings and Gilligan highlight that ineffective communication and a lack of empathy create a cycle of misunderstanding and emotional distance, making it increasingly difficult for the mother and daughter to connect and resolve their differences.

In *The Secret Life of Bees*, the theme of affected communication within generational differences is illustrated through Lily Owens' experiences. Her strained relationship with her father, T. Ray, her quest for a maternal figure, and her interactions with the Boatwright sisters reveal how gaps in communication styles and emotional expression deeply influence her connections with others. These dynamics not only drive Lily's journey of self-discovery but also form a critical lens through which the novel explores the challenges and opportunities of bridging generational divides. This analysis will delve into how these generational differences create

misunderstandings and conflicts, ultimately shaping Lily's growth and the broader narrative of the novel.

Lily Owens' relationship with her authoritarian father, T. Ray, is a poignant illustration of how generational differences can significantly impact communication. T. Ray, embodying the older generation's rigid and outdated values, communicates with Lily through harshness and emotional detachment. His abusive and punitive demeanour creates profound barriers to meaningful dialogue. This is illustrated when T. Ray forces Lily to kneel on grits as punishment; she experiences not only physical pain but also a deep sense of isolation, realizing that her father cannot offer her the love or understanding she needs. He belittles her, constantly reminding her, "You're just like your mother," turning Lily's desperate desire for maternal connection into a source of shame and confusion.

The difference in how Lily and her father see and handle things creates a significant emotional gap. T. Ray's old-fashioned and harsh ways of interacting with Lily make her feel more isolated and misunderstood. "He did not say anything to me, just turned around and went to the kitchen. I felt the silence press down on me like a wet blanket" (Kidd, p. 92). Lily's reflection illustrates the emotional distance between her and T. Ray. His silence and refusal to engage in meaningful conversation with Lily contribute to the communication gap and her sense of emotional neglect. The communication between them is characterized by a lack of mutual understanding and emotional connection, leading to a substantial emotional divide.

Adding to this emotional void in Lily's life is the absence of her mother, Deborah. This absence is not simply physical but profoundly emotional, creating a significant break in Lily's understanding of her identity. Throughout *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001), Lily is haunted by her mother's death, which occurred when she was just four years old. The lack of closure and the silence surrounding her mother's life create a deep well of confusion and longing within

her. As Lily says, “People who think dying is the worst thing don’t know a thing about life” (Kidd, 2001, p. 22). This reflects how the emotional abandonment she feels is more painful than death itself. The absence of effective communication about her mother, both with T. Ray and within herself, drives Lily to seek answers and emotional support elsewhere. In search of the truth, Lily embarks on a journey to Tiburon, where she finds refuge with the Boatwright sisters. The maternal warmth she receives from August Boatwright offers a stark contrast to the emotional emptiness left by her mother’s death and her father’s cruelty. Through their conversation, August encourages Lily to express her feelings and embrace her identity, fostering a sense of belonging. A vivid example of their relation when August teaches Lily about beekeeping, it becomes a metaphor for growth and patience, illustrating how love can nurture rather than control, the Boatwright’s supportive presence provides Lily with the maternal care and understanding she has been missing, demonstrating how effective communication can bridge emotional gaps and foster personal growth.

However, even as Lily finds solace and guidance from the Boatwright sisters, generational differences continue to present challenges. The sisters’ experiences and viewpoints, shaped by their own historical and social contexts, sometimes create barriers to full understanding and empathy, particularly August, as a Black woman who represents a generation deeply influenced by the realities of systemic racism, economic hardship, and the civil rights movement. Meanwhile, Lily, a young white girl, has lived a sheltered life in rural South Carolina with limited understanding of these social dynamics. Their perspectives on race and societal roles occasionally clash with Lily’s misunderstanding. August says: “Lily, it’s not something you need to be afraid of. People can’t be afraid of differences” (Kidd, p. 116). This quote shows how August tries to ease Lily’s discomfort with racial difference, but it also points to the gap in their experiences. For August, who has faced discrimination her whole life, racial awareness

is part of her daily reality. For Lily, this represents a new and uncomfortable confrontation with societal norms she previously accepted unquestioningly.

In conclusion, Lily's experiences highlight how generational differences in communication can lead to emotional distance, misunderstanding, and the perpetuation of trauma. Her strained relationship with T. Ray, her search for maternal connection, and her interactions with the Boatwright sisters collectively illustrate the impact of these differences on her emotional well-being and personal development. While Lily's journey underscores the potential for healing and connection across generational lines, it also reveals the persistent challenges that can arise from differing experiences and perspectives. Through Lily's story, *The Secret Life of Bees* poignantly explores the complexities of communication across generations and the profound effect it can have on an individual's growth and understanding.

M. Scott Peck's emphasis on the importance of time and attention in relationships, as expressed in his book *The Road Less Traveled* (1978), resonates deeply with the theme of generational communication gaps in Elizabeth Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001). Peck's quote, "The greatest gift you can give to others is your time and attention," highlights how the absence of active, attentive engagement can contribute to misunderstandings and emotional distance between mother and daughter, and between generations.

### **C- Social Judgment and Community Expectations:**

In each society, social judgment and cultural expectations shape people's interactions and define societal norms, influencing how individuals perceive and treat one another. From the perspective of care ethics, these concepts are deeply connected to the notion of building relationships, practicing empathy, and extending care for others.

In this context, Carol Gilligan argues that, “The ethics of care emphasizes responsiveness in relationships and emphasizes the importance of context in determining moral outcomes. This requires us to evaluate individuals not in isolation, but in the context of their relationships and the networks of care they are part of.” (*In a Different Voice*, 1982, p.29)

Social judgment is the evaluation and formation of opinions about individuals or groups based on societal norms, values, and expectations. It involves assessing behaviour and character through a lens influenced by collective standards and cultural context. Similarly, community expectations refer to the specific behaviours, beliefs, and norms that a particular community considers appropriate or desirable. These expectations guide individual actions and interactions, promoting a supportive and cohesive environment based on shared values and mutual respect.

In the realm of care ethics, social judgment emphasizes compassionate evaluation, considering individuals’ well-being and unique circumstances rather than rigid societal norms or abstract principles, with the aim of supporting and nurturing those being judged. It emphasizes understanding and connection. Community expectations are guided by principles of care and mutual respect, fostering a nurturing environment that prioritizes communal well-being and shared responsibility.

Viewed through the lens of care ethics, *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) illustrate the profound significance of care on individual lives and social interactions, particularly within the dynamic of mother-daughter relationships.

Both stories intricately explore the delicate balance between nurturing and societal conventions, displaying the tension between individual needs and familial expectations within these intimate bonds. They highlight the conflict between the characters’ needs and societal norms,

emphasizing how care can shape personal and communal relationships within these familial bonds.

In Elizabeth Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998), the strained relationship between Isabelle Goodrow and her daughter Amy is aggravated by the harsh judgment of their community. Isabelle, a single mother, faces criticism for her past relationship with a married man, intensifying the family's challenges and the already difficult dynamic with her daughter. The novel describes how Isabelle is subjected to judgment from her neighbours. When Isabelle's relationship with the married man becomes known, she is rejected by the community, reinforcing her outsider status and intensifying her struggles. Strout captures the harshness of this judgment in the following passage,

Isabelle walked down the street, feeling every eye on her. The whispered conversations behind closed doors, the looks that came her way, all were a constant reminder of the judgment she faced. It was as if the town had collectively decided she was unworthy of their respect or understanding." (Strout, 1998, p. 112)

This passage shows how the community's criticism not only makes Isabelle feel more alone but also makes her inner struggles worse, which puts more strain on her relationship with her daughter.

Meanwhile, Amy suffers from the repercussions of her mother's actions. At school, she endures bullying and ostracization, which highlights the cruel impact of societal judgment on her personal life. The lack of empathy from the community underscores how societal norms often take preference over compassion, leading to cycles of shame and isolation.

The kids at school had started calling her names—"the daughter of the fallen woman" was a favorite. Amy tried to ignore them, but it was impossible to escape the cruel whispers and the way people looked at her. Every day felt like an assault on her sense of self-worth." (Strout, 1998, p.145)

Amy's feelings in this situation reflect a profound sense of isolation, shame, and emotional vulnerability. Being labeled "the daughter of the fallen woman" by her peers is more

than just a cruel nickname, it is an attack on her identity and self, worth. Amy's attempt to ignore the taunts indicates her desire to detach from the hurtful words, but the constant whispers and judgmental stares make it impossible for her to escape the stigma associated with her mother's reputation. This daily barrage of cruelty leads to an internal struggle, as Amy feels trapped by societal judgment and her sense of worth becomes eroded. The experience leaves her feeling devalued, judged, and disconnected, amplifying her insecurities and reinforcing the generational pain and misunderstandings that already exist in her relationship with her mother.

Likewise, the second novel, *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd explores themes of social judgment and cultural expectations, particularly against the backdrop of the 1960s American South. The novel examines how societal norms around race and gender significantly impact the characters' lives, shaping Lily Owens' journey.

Firstly, Lily's perception of herself and her mother is heavily influenced by societal judgments. She internalizes the stigma surrounding her mother's mental illness and the circumstances of her death. These external judgments fuel Lily's feelings of inadequacy and abandonment, leading her to adopt a sense of unworthiness. A telling moment occurs when Lily overhears gossip about her mother's mental state and supposed abandonment. This reinforces Lily's belief that she is somehow to blame or unlovable, further deepening her sense of self-doubt. As Lily reflects, "People would whisper behind my back, 'There's that girl whose mother ran off and left her'" (Kidd, p. 42). This assimilation of societal judgment is one of the driving forces influencing Lily's evolving sense of identity and her journey toward self-acceptance.

In *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, Marianne Hirsch's says,

The daughter's sense of guilt often arises from an internalization of societal expectations and judgments about maternal roles, resulting in a distorted self-perception that intertwines blame and unworthiness, which can significantly affect her sense of identity" (Hirsch, 1989 p. 127)

This quote aligns well with the way Lily internalizes societal judgments about her mother, reinforcing how external pressures can shape feelings of guilt and self-doubt within the mother-daughter dynamic.

Moreover, the racial tensions of the Civil Rights era add another layer of social judgment, particularly regarding Lily's interactions with the Boatwright sisters, who are African American women. Her initial hesitations about forming connections with the Boatwright sisters highlight her personal prejudices. However, as she engages with them, she learns that love transcends race and societal norms. This is especially evident in moments where August emphasizes the importance of love and community, encouraging Lily to see beyond societal expectations. August teaches her that familial bonds can be formed through shared experiences and emotional support rather than simple blood ties.

These societal expectations shape Lily's understanding of maternal love and influence her relationships with the maternal figures she encounters throughout the novel. Through her interactions with the Boatwright sisters, Lily learns to challenge societal norms and embrace the complexities of maternal relationships, highlighting the central views of care ethics, empathy, responsiveness, and interconnectedness, in directing the intricacies of human connection.

As Nel Noddings in his work *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984) states, "To care is to feel oneself in the other, to be moved by their suffering and joy, and to recognize that one's own well-being is intertwined with theirs" (Noddings, 1984 p. 98). This perspective emphasizes the importance of mother relationality in Lily's journey toward self-acceptance and her evolving understanding of love and community.

Such societal failure seen in both American novels lead to comprehend the necessity of care ethics, advocating for empathy and compassion, to sail the interpersonal and maternal

relationships and overcome challenges and cultural expectations. Carol Gilligan in her exploration of care ethics in her work *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982), she discusses how empathy and attentiveness are central in guiding a complex relationships, especially female and maternal experiences. She argues that societal norms often fail to recognize the value of caring and relational dynamics, making care ethics an essential framework for addressing these gap and failures. By adopting care, ethics challenge societal expectations, fostering more compassionate and empathetic relationships. This approach offers a pathway to healing and understanding, especially in strained interpersonal and maternal bonds. What we will be shown in the second chapter through Strout and Kidd narratives.

## **Chapter Two: Pathways to Resolution: Ethical Healing**

In exploring the theme of healing, transformation coupled with open communication and mutual understanding, along with social solidarity, we delve into how interpersonal relationships serve as catalysts for personal growth and communal resilience.

Rooted in care ethics, this analysis draws attention to empathy, compassion, and mutual support as foundational elements to overcoming challenges and encouraging understanding within human connections. By examining these points, we reveal how individuals and communities move through adversity, reconcile differences, and cultivate environments where empathy and collective well-being flourish through authentic dialogue and mutual support.

Through this lens, we illuminate the ethical dimensions of caregiving, interpersonal dynamics, and the interconnectedness that defines human experience, particularly within mother-daughter bonds. This context allows us to explore how healing, followed by effective transformation, combined with open communication, mutual understanding, and solidarity contribute to the characters' growth and the nurturing of their relationships.

### **A. Healing and Transformation**

From a care ethics perspective, which places emphasis on the interconnection between individuals that arise within mother-daughter relationships and mutual responsibility, we can explore how these basics unfold and contribute to the characters' growth within transformation and understanding by healing themselves and their relationships.

In the context of care ethics, healing and transformation are closely linked to the practice of care itself. The caregivers facilitate healing by attending to the needs of others, such as daughters, with empathy, compassion, and support in their journey toward positive change.

Healing refers to the process of restoring wholeness, whether it be physical, emotional, or relational. It involves addressing wounds, nurturing growth, and promoting well-being. Transformation, meanwhile, involves profound and lasting changes in individuals or communities. This can include shifts in attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives that lead to greater flourishing and harmony.

Nel Noddings, in her book *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, emphasizes the transformative power of caring relationships. She argues:

Caring involves the caregiver stepping out of her own personal frame of reference to fully understand and empathize with the experiences and needs of the care receiver. The caregiver's care is present in her acts of caring, and these acts have the potential to create profound changes, influencing not only the care receiver, who feels valued and supported, but also the caregiver herself, who grows and transforms through the process of providing care. (Noddings, 1984, p. 14).

From a care ethics perspective, the mother-daughter relationships in *Amy and Isabelle* by Elizabeth Strout (1998) and *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd (2001) are fertile ground for exploring themes of healing and transformation. Through their narratives, both stories display how care ethics play a crucial role in cultivating healing and reconciliation in complex familial bonds.

First, in *Amy and Isabelle* (Strout, 1998), the theme of healing and transformation within the mother-daughter relationship is intricately woven with elements of forgiveness, acceptance, and reconciliation, which are foundational elements in the realm of care ethics.

Isabelle, characterized by her overprotective and strict nature, stemming from her own past traumas, initially creates tension with Amy, leading to resentment and distance between them.

As the story progresses, Isabelle starts to reflect on her parenting style and realizes that her own insecurities have prevented her from seeing Amy as an individual. A turning point occurs when Isabelle admits her fears to Amy, saying: "I didn't want you to make the same mistakes I did,

Amy. That's why I tried to protect you" (Strout, 1998, p. 274). This confession is significant, as it marks Isabelle's first step toward vulnerability, an essential component of care ethics, which emphasizes empathy and relational understanding (Noddings, 2003).

The relationship begins to transform. Isabelle becomes more empathetic. After this moment of confession, Isabelle gives Amy more space to express herself. "Isabelle stopped trying to control Amy's every move, and instead, she began to listen, to really listen, without judgment" (Strout, 1998, p. 310). Considering the work of psychologist Carl Rogers, who highlights the importance of listening and empathy in relationships, in *A Way of Being* (2001), Rogers states, "When someone really hears you without passing judgment on you, without trying to take responsibility for you, without trying to mold you, it feels damn good... When I have been listened to and heard, I am able to re-perceive my world in a new way and to go on" (Rogers, 2001, p. 116). This insight supports how Isabelle's choice to listen to Amy without judgment allows their relationship to transform, creating a space for Amy to feel understood and to express herself more freely, ultimately facilitating healing and growth in their bond.

This shift in behavior mirrors the care ethics principle that emphasizes the importance of responsiveness and attentiveness in nurturing relationships. Carol Gilligan, who also focuses on the importance of empathy and listening in nurturing relationships, in her book *In a Different Voice* (1982), she notes "The capacity to listen, to enter into another's experience without judgment, is central to the ethics of care and forms the foundation for understanding and relational growth" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 62). This reinforces how Isabelle's decision to sincerely listen to Amy without judgment is considered a key in transforming their relationship. By renouncing control, Isabelle opens the door for reconciliation, enabling both characters to heal from the emotional scars they carry.

In a similar attitude, Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) explores the healing and transformative power of care ethics within the context of a mother-daughter relationship. The novel centers on Lily Owens, the young girl who is haunted by the guilt and the memory of her mother's death and her fraught relationship with her abusive father, T. Ray.

Lily's journey towards healing begins when she finds refuge with the Boatwright sisters—African American beekeepers—particularly August Boatwright, who becomes a maternal figure by offering her a nurturing environment of unconditional care. An important moment that demonstrates August's role as a surrogate mother occurs when she comforts Lily after she confesses the truth about her mother's death. Overwhelmed by guilt and fear of rejection, Lily receives compassion and understanding from August, who reassures her by saying, "There is nothing perfect... There is only life" (Kidd, 2001, p. 256). This statement helps Lily realize that her mistakes do not define her and that she is still worthy of love. August's compassionate response allows Lily to confront her guilt and begin to forgive herself, illustrating how care and empathy play a crucial role in her emotional healing.

Kidd emphasizes the transformative power of care ethics through the ritual of beekeeping. The act of tending to the bees symbolizes the healing process, teaching Lily the value of patience, compassion, and interconnectedness. August explains the role of the queen bee, saying, "Every little thing wants to be loved" (Kidd, 2001, p. 92). Lily begins to internalize the idea that she, too, is worthy of love. Through these nurturing interactions, Lily starts to unearth the truth about her mother, learning that her mother was not perfect but human. This realization is central in Lily's journey toward self-acceptance, as it enables her to forgive both herself and her mother, thus starting to heal her emotional wound.

Overall, *The Secret Life of Bees* portrays transformation as a profound exploration of personal growth and resilience, illustrating how individuals can overcome adversity through nurturing relationships and self-acceptance. Lily's evolution from vulnerability to strength.

The healing and transformation in mother-daughter relationships in both novels are central to the narrative but differ in their dynamics and roles in the healing process. In Elizabeth Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998), the relationship is biological yet full of tension and unspoken resentments. Their shared history and mutual misunderstandings have driven them apart. Isabelle's overprotectiveness and harshness, stemming from her own unresolved issues and fears, create a barrier to Amy's emotional well-being. In this novel, the healing process is slow and painful, characterized by gradual realizations and the breaking down of emotional walls built over time, reflecting the complexities of mending a strained biological bond.

Conversely, in *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001), the mother-daughter relationship is more symbolic. Lily Owens finds a maternal connection with the Boatwright sisters, particularly August. This relationship, though not biological, is deeply nurturing and compassionate. Lily's journey involves seeking surrogate mother figures in the Boatwright sisters, who help her heal and find a sense of belonging and maternal love lost with her biological mother's death. August embodies an ideal caregiver, offering unconditional love, wisdom, and acceptance, which facilitates Lily's healing and growth. August said: "our mother is the place we come from. She's home, the place we're meant to go. Lily felt a stirring of hope; may be this was the place she was meant to go to find herself" (Kidd, 2001, p.140). "You've got to find a mother inside yourself. We all do. Even if we already have a mother, we still need to find this part of ourselves" (Kidd, p. 255). August's role as a caregiver helps Lily fill the emotional void left by her mother's absence. Ultimately leading Lily to realize that healing comes from within and that she can find strength and love even without a biological mother.

To conclude, the healing process in both novels is central to the narrative but differs in its dynamics, displaying the complexities of maternal relationships whether biological or non-biological. This empathetic family provides a more immediate and profound transformation, illustrating how non-biological bonds can often offer the emotional support and care necessary for healing, sometimes more effectively than biological ties.

From a care ethics perspective, Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings offer valuable insights into the complexities of maternal relationships, emphasizing the importance of empathy, care, and understanding in the healing process. Gilligan's perspective on care ethics in her work *In a Different Voice* (1982) highlights the significance of nurturing connections. She states, "The ideal of care is thus an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 62). This idea resonates with the healing journeys in both novels, where maternal figures whether biological or non-biological provide the compassion and support necessary for emotional growth.

Similarly, Noddings in her writings *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984) emphasizes the role of a caring relationship in fostering personal transformation, noting, "In a caring relation, the carer is engrossed in the cared-for, and this attention is the foundation of moral education and development" (Noddings, 1984, p. 19).

This aligns with how August's nurturing care and Isabelle's gradual emotional openness facilitate healing for Lily and Amy, respectively underscoring the varied pathways to healing and the diverse expressions of care ethics in literature.

## **B. Open communication and mutual understanding:**

In this section, we investigate the essential role of open communication in overcoming challenges and tensions within mother-daughter relationships in *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) by Elizabeth Strout and *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) by Sue Monk Kidd. Both novels explore the complex relationships between mothers and daughters, showing how unexpressed feelings and misunderstandings can lead to emotional distance and conflict. These unspoken issues create barriers that prevent true connection, making it difficult for the characters to understand each other and find common ground. Through the lens of care ethics, we examine how empathetic connections, respect for diverse perspectives, and genuine dialogue shape the characters' journeys of self-discovery, reconciliation, and empowerment.

In both *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001), the themes of open communication and mutual understanding are also central to the characters' journeys. These novels vividly demonstrate how empathic dialogue empowers individuals to overcome the complex relationships, confront past traumas, and build deeper connections, particularly between caregivers and care receivers in the context of motherhood. Through authentic conversations, the characters gradually break down barriers, embracing empathy and compassion as they heal and transform. By embodying these principles, the novels highlight the importance of addressing relational intricacies within families, ultimately fostering stronger, more nurturing bonds.

In Elizabeth Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998), the mother's initial reaction to discovering Amy's secret affair with her teacher, Mr. Robertson, is characterized by hurt and anger. This response stems from feelings of betrayal, fear for her daughter's future, and her own unresolved regrets and insecurities. When Isabelle confronts Amy, her strictness is evident, reflecting her desperation to protect Amy, as she asserts, "you have no idea how dangerous this is". (Kidd

,1998, p.67). This harsh approach deepens the barrier between them, pushing Amy further into isolation, misunderstanding grow .Their relationship becomes increasingly strained.This dynamic illustrates how Isabelle’s inability to express her own vulnerabilities exacerbates the distance between mother and daughter, highlighting the critical need for open communication. Ultimately, it is through empathy and understanding that they could potentially reconnect their fractured relationship.

However, as the story progresses, Isabelle begins to reflect on her own past and the emotional pain she has carried. Influenced by conversations with her work friend, she gains a new perspective on her relationship with Amy. Her colleagues share insights about parenting and the importance of empathy, promoting Isabelle to reflect on her own fears and recognize that her strictness may not support Amy effectively. Their experiences highlight the value of open communication and vulnerability, encouraging Isabelle to rethink her approach and paving the way for a more compassionate relationship with her daughter. This newfound awareness opens the door for a more empathetic approach, as Isabelle starts to soften her stance and seeks to understand Amy's feelings and experiences. The turning point in their relationship comes when Isabelle chooses to break the silence and initiate an open conversation with Amy.

Sara Ruddick, a figure in maternal ethics in her works *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* argues, “Maternal thinking is a discipline in which a mother constantly revises and rethinks her goals and strategies in response to the needs of her child, showing a deep commitment to adapting and understanding” (Ruddick, 1989, p. 24). This quotation emphasizes how Isabelle's evolving understanding and willingness to change reflect the adaptive and empathetic qualities central to maternal thinking, aligning with the care ethics perspective that values open communication and emotional connection.

This act of vulnerability is a significant step toward healing, as it allows both mother and daughter to express their emotions honestly and without fear of judgment. Through this dialogue, Isabelle begins to see Amy not just as a rebellious teenager, but as a young girl struggling with her own identity and emotions. When Isabelle expresses her desire to understand Amy's feeling, Amy responds by sharing her confusion and loneliness regarding the affair with Mr. Robertson. She says: "I didn't know who else to turn to" (Kidd,1998, p. 145). In this quotation, Amy reveals her vulnerability and her need for connection. She breaks down the walls she has built due to her shame and rebellion, and invites her mother into her emotional world, expressing a wish for a genuine relationship. This moment allows Isabelle to see the depth of Amy's struggles, promoting her to soften her previously harsh conduct.

In return, Amy starts to recognize the depth of her mother's love and concern, despite her strict exterior when Amy reflects on her mother's sacrifices and fears, she acknowledges that her mother's strictness comes from a place of love and concern. She understands that Isabelle's actions were driven by a desire to protect her from harm and disappointment. This insight allows Amy to see her mother in a more compassionate light, recognizing the sacrifices Isabelle has made for her.

By acknowledging each other's struggles, Isabelle and Amy begin to foster empathy, which helps them connect on a deeper level. This newfound understanding allows them to have more open and honest conversations about their feelings and experiences. As they share their fears and vulnerabilities, they start to break down the barriers that had kept them apart. This process ultimately leads to a stronger and more compassionate bond, where both mother and daughter feel supported and understood. They realize that they can rely on each other, creating a deeper understanding of their relationship and paving the way for a more supportive connection, arriving to healing and a more nurturing relationship.

Equally, In Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001), open communication and mutual understanding represents also basic themes that shape the characters' relationships and personal growth. The novel follows the life of the protagonist Lily Owens, who is seeking answers about her past, particularly regarding her mother. As she embarks on her journey toward healing, she forms deep connections with the Boatwright sisters, who take her in and provide a sense of belonging. Through their nurturing environment, Lily learns the importance of sharing her feelings and experiences.

At the beginning of the novel, Lily is burdened and troubled by the trauma of accidentally causing her mother's death with a stray bullet and the emotional neglect she experiences from her father, T. Ray. This lack of communication and understanding creates a void in Lily's life, driving her to seek solace elsewhere. Her decision to run away with her housekeeper, Rosaleen, marks the beginning of her quest for belonging and connection. This journey leads her to the home of the Boatwright sisters August, June, and May, who become her surrogate family and help her to confront the complexities of her past and her identity.

August, in particular, plays a vital role in Lily's growth. By embodying the principles of care ethics, demonstrating the importance of love, acceptance, and open communication. As a maternal figure, August nurtures Lily and creates a safe space for her to confront her past. When Lily struggles with the feelings of guilt and confusion about her mother, August gently encourages her to express her emotions. She says "You need to speak your truth", (Kidd, 2001, p.149)

In this quote, Kidd illustrates how August teaches Lily to accept her imperfections and reveal her feelings rather than hide from them. August explains to Lily the importance of accepting imperfection and building an openness to communication as a way to navigate life's challenges. She insists and says: "There is nothing perfect... there is only life."(Kidd,2001,p.165).

Through their conversations and August's patient guidance, Lily learns the value of honest communication and the strength that comes from being supported in a loving environment, ultimately adopting her journey toward self-acceptance and healing. The process of open communication and mutual understanding in both *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) by Elizabeth Strout and *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) by Sue Monk Kidd, is central to healing and growth within mother-daughter relationships.

By embracing empathy and compassion, the characters in both novels bridge the emotional gaps that had once separated them. Their dialogues become spaces for healing, allowing past wounds to be addressed and new connections to be forged. These narratives emphasize that honest and empathetic conversations are vital for confronting past traumas and building deeper, more meaningful relationships, especially within the delicate dynamics of motherhood. Through these authentic exchanges, both novels highlight the possibility of recovery and change, reinforcing the importance of open communication in nurturing and repairing familial bonds.

In the context of care ethics, both *Amy and Isabelle* and *The Secret Life of Bees* accentuate the importance of nurturing relationships through open communication and mutual understanding. These novels suggest that true caregiving extends beyond addressing physical needs to include a deep sensitivity to emotional and psychological well-being. Isabelle's journey toward becoming a more empathetic mother in *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) mirrors the care and support that Lily receives from her surrogate mothers in *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001). In both stories, the empathic dialogue, communication, and mutual understanding raise growth and healing, enabling the characters to overcome their past traumas and build stronger, more resilient relationships.

The leading figures in developing care ethics assert that open communication and honest dialogue are fundamental to establishing and nurturing relationships in human, mother daughter, experiences. Gilligan proclaims how the activity of care is characterized by connection and relational exchange. She announces that genuine and nurturing conversations create the foundation for understanding and empathy between individuals, allowing people to engage with each other's needs and perspectives more meaningfully. These insights lead to more abstract principles and challenges in women's life. Nel Noddings expanded on this perspective in *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984) where she argued that ethical behavior is rooted in the commitment to care for others and that veritable caring requires understanding, communication and responding to the needs of others in a relational context. She stresses that "When we care, we consider the other's point of view, their objective needs, and what they are trying to accomplish" (Noddings, 1984, p. 24).

In the context of mother-daughter relationships, the care ethicists' emphasis on empathy, compassion, and interconnectedness provides a profound framework for understanding how these bonds can be nurtured and transformed. Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings' perspectives highlight that ethical behavior within these relationships emerges from the ability to genuinely listen, respond to, and care for one another's needs, rather than adhering to rigid expectations or societal norms. This framework is particularly relevant in examining how open communication and mutual understanding can facilitate healing and growth between mothers and daughters. The interconnectedness emphasized by Gilligan and Noddings suggests that the mother-daughter relationship is not just about individual identities but is defined by the ongoing exchange of care, attention, and understanding. This approach illuminates how ethical open communication and mutual understanding in these relationships are achieved through sustained acts of caring, reinforcing the idea that their connection is a dynamic, evolving process that flourishes through love, empathy, and open-hearted dialogue.

### **C. Social Support and Solidarity:**

Care is not just an individual responsibility but also a social practice involving the entire community, that come together to support each other, including the vital mother-daughter relationships that form the foundation of familial care. Everyone plays a part in creating a caring environment where individuals, particularly mothers and daughters feel valued and supported .Social support and solidarity are closely intertwined: social support can elevate a feeling of solidarity by facilitating a sense of belonging and shared experience among mothers, daughters, and their communities. Conversely, solidarity can enrich social support by providing a framework for collective action and mutual assistance, which is especially important in nurturing healthy mother-daughter dynamics. This interplay is significant for building strong, resilient communities capable of withstanding social judgment and promoting collective well-being. According to care ethicists, the mother-daughter relationships serve as a model for how empathy and compassion can be extended beyond the family, contributing to a more compassionate society. Nodding's, explains in her approach "The caring relation can provide a model for moral encounters in society, where the other is regarded as a subject worthy of our attention and care" (Nodding, 1984, p. 49).

By Recognizing the significance of mother-daughter relationships within the broader framework of social care, we will explore in both Elisabeth's strout's *Amy and Isabelle*(2001) and Sue Mon Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*, how these bonds are profoundly influenced by social support and community solidarity. The novels illustrate how the interactions between mothers and daughters shape their experiences of care, belonging, and resilience, featuring the vital role these relationships play in promoting overall well-being in community.

In *Amy and Isabelle* (1998), the theme of social solidarity and support deeply permeates not only the mother-daughter relationship but also the broader network of connections within their

community. Isabelle's journey to overcome societal judgment is deeply connected to social solidarity, as she gains strength and resilience through the supportive relationships she forms with others. Her co-workers at the mill, including Dottie and Fat Bev, offer her empathy, practical assistance, and understanding, standing by her, despite the town's condemnation. When Isabelle confides in them about her fears and insecurities, Dottie listens patiently and offers words of reassurance, saying, "You're not the only one who's made mistakes, Isabelle. We've all had our share of troubles" (Strout, p. 198). This expression of empathy helps Isabelle feel less isolated and condemned by the community. Fat Bev also shows practical support when she offers to help Isabelle with tasks outside of work, such as picking up groceries, demonstrating solidarity and a willingness to share Isabelle's burdens. These acts of kindness make Isabelle feel valued and supported, allowing her to find the strength to face her challenges.

Peggy. A Thoits(2011) in her study *Mechanisms Linking Social Ties and Support to Physical and Mental Health*. (2011) examines how social ties and support systems contribute to both physical and mental health .she says,

Social support contributes not only to the practical assistance and to emotional encouragement that individuals receive but also fosters a deeper sense of meaning, purpose, and belonging. These elements of support can act as a protective buffer against psychological distress, helping individuals navigate life's challenges and ultimately promoting more positive mental health outcomes" (Thoits, 2011,p.67)

This expanded version highlights how social support provides both practical and emotional resources, resonating with how Isabelle's connections with Dottie and Fat Bev help her build resilience against societal judgment in *Amy and Isabelle*. As result, Isabelle's relationship with her daughter Amy undergoes a profound transformation. Together, they confront adversity, which deepens their bond and illustrates the power of familial support.

Also the theme of social solidarity and support is intricately woven into the novel *The Secret Life of Bees* ( 2001) by Sue Monk Kidd , through the relationships Lily Owens forms with

characters such as Rosaleen and August Boatwright. As Lily grapples with her past and the search for belonging and maternal love, these relationships serve as sources of strength and guidance, highlighting the transformative power of compassion, empathy, and connection. Through her interactions with August, who becomes a maternal figure and mentor, and with Rosaleen, her surrogate mother figure, Lily learns valuable lessons about forgiveness, acceptance, and the power of female solidarity. Furthermore, the novel explores the broader theme of community and belonging, as Lily finds acceptance and companionship among the members of the Boatwright household and the surrounding community of Tiburon. This theme is mirrored in the way the bees in August's hives function as a community, working together with purpose and harmony. The bees' cooperative, interconnected system symbolizes the ideal of a supportive community, one that thrives on mutual care, responsibility, and shared goals. Just as the bees rely on one another for survival and growth, the relationships Lily forms with the women around her demonstrate the importance of nurturing bonds, relying on collective strength, and embracing solidarity. The symbolic use of bees and honey further underscores the themes of healing and community. As Sharon M. Harris in her work *Mothering and Healing* (1999) suggests, "The bees in Kidd's novel represent the collective care and nurturing that are central to Lily's healing process, demonstrating how individual transformation often requires the support of a compassionate community" (Harris, 1999, p. 214). Through this communal care, Lily learns to draw strength from those around her, gradually building the resilience to confront her painful past.

The *Secret Life of Bees* thus emphasizes the importance of nurturing relationships and the strength that can be found in communal bonds, ultimately affirming the resilience and interconnectedness of the human experience. The bee colony serves as a powerful metaphor for the interconnectedness of individuals within a supportive community where each member's contribution is vital for the well-being of the whole.

## **V. Conclusion:**

This comparative study of *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and *The Secret Life of Bees* (2001) has explored the intricacies of mother-daughter relationships through the lens of care ethics. Both novels highlight the profound impact of past trauma, generational differences, and societal judgment on the dynamics between mothers and daughters. These challenges often lead to emotional distance and miscommunication, underscoring the importance of empathy, open dialogue, and mutual understanding in fostering healthy relationships.

In addition to exploring the challenges faced by the protagonists, this research has also shed light on the pathways to healing and transformation within these mother-daughter bonds. By emphasizing care ethics, we see how relational dynamics, rooted in empathy and compassion, provide a critical framework for understanding the complexities of these familial relationships. The emphasis on emotional labor and active engagement is essential in overcoming the tensions that arise within these relationships.

This study contributes to the existing scholarship by offering a comparative analysis of these two novels through the perspective of care ethics, addressing a gap in the literature. The research demonstrates that while the characters in both narratives face significant obstacles, the potential for healing and connection remains possible through care, communication, and shared understanding.

Ultimately, this investigation affirms that care ethics serves as a powerful framework for examining mother-daughter relationships, illustrating how the principles of empathy and compassion can transform relationships and foster resilience in the face of adversity. Further research could expand on these findings by exploring how care ethics might be applied to other familial or interpersonal relationships in literature.

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