



## **DEFENSE MECHANISMS EMPLOYEED ADOPTED TEENAGERS IN *FAR FROM THE TREE* (2017) BY ROBIN BENWAY**

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### **Abstract**

This research to see the extent of Robin Benway's novel *Far From the Tree* (2017) raises the issue of defense mechanisms. The defense mechanism refers to characters who face problems with their status as adopted children. The three teenage characters in the novel experience different problems because they are adopted by different families. This analysis is related to the theory of psychoanalysis put forward by Phebe Cramer (2008). The use of theory was based on the interpretation in the text and context of the novel. The data was collected from the quotation in the novel. The data collection was in the form of sentences and paragraphs. This research is qualitative research. In this study, the defense mechanism was examined in the novel *Far From the Tree*. The results showed that the character of adopted adolescents uses defense mechanisms as a form of self-protection from the problems they face.

**Keywords:** *defense mechanism, adoption, teenager*

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Defense mechanisms are one of the important studies to discuss because defense mechanisms are one form of self-defense carried out by a person. Novels analyzed by researchers show that defense mechanisms are able to protect a person from the problems they are facing. This literature review provides evidence of defense mechanisms. In this study, the defense mechanism focused on adopted adolescents who are protagonists in novels. Defense mechanisms are one of the important studies to discuss because defense mechanisms are one form of self-defense carried out by a person. Novels analyzed by researchers show that defense mechanisms are able to protect a person from the problems they are facing. This literature review provides evidence of defense mechanisms. In this study, the defense mechanism focused on adopted adolescents who are protagonists in novels.

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Research on defense mechanisms has been discussed by several researchers. For example, Nur Wahyuningtyas (2014), other researchers such as Rayes Syahran (2018), all of the studies above discuss and examine the defense mechanisms carried out by characters on literary works.

The key concept of this research is the adolescent self-defense mechanism. In literary works, self-defense mechanisms can be represented in phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. It shows the point of view and tone of the literary view through the narrator or characters in the literary text. According to Friedman (2006), the defense mechanism is a form of defense carried out by the ego to distort reality in order to protect itself. Defense mechanisms are one of the issues discussed in this novel.

Bartens (2006) says "a defense mechanism is a strategy used by a person to prevent id urges to handle ego and superego stress with the aim of reducing anxiety and stress." The quote reveals that defense mechanisms are a way that a person can reduce anxiety about the problems they experience.

Previous research has also discussed defense mechanisms in literature. This thesis shows that in conjunction with these works it can serve as a reference for understanding defense mechanisms. The character in this novel shows that he is able to face the problems he is facing by using defense mechanisms, both consciously and unconsciously.

Previous studies have shown how characters overcome the problems they face with defense mechanisms in the novel *Far From the Tree* (2017). The research focuses on how to survive using defense mechanisms. Maybe many have discussed this topic in previous novels, but in the context of the novel *Far From the Tree* (2017), defense mechanisms occur when characters want to protect themselves from the problems they face.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was conducted using psychoanalytic theory and using the concept of defense mechanisms from Phebe Cramer (2008). Data collection is taken as a quote in the novel *Far From the Tree* (2017). collecting data in the form of sentences and paragraphs. This research is a content analysis. The data analysis technique used in this study is a qualitative technique in which the researcher interprets and understands the text and content analysis.

In this study, data were gathered from Robin Benway's novel *Far From the Tree* (2017) using the following procedure:., read the novel *Far From the Tree* (2017) by Robin Benway several times. Second, sorting and collecting data related to defense mechanisms by characters in the novel *Far From the Tree* (2017) by Robin Benway. Third, identify data related to defense mechanisms experienced by characters in *Far From the Tree* (2017) by Robin Benway using defense mechanisms in psychoanalytic theory. Finally, analyzing data related to defense mechanisms in the novel *Far From the Tree* (2017) by Robin Benway.

This research is content analysis research. The data analysis technique used in this study is a qualitative research technique where the researcher interprets and understands the text and content analysis. This study uses psychoanalytic theory to uncover defense mechanisms. Psychoanalytic theory helps researchers analyze data.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the defense mechanisms formed by adopted adolescents in the novel *Far From the Tree* (2017) by Robin Benway. In this analysis, the defense mechanism refers to the protagonist character. The fictional device used in this analysis is the character. These characters receive a defense mechanism due to their status as adopted children. According to the novel, it is told that the protagonist uses defense mechanisms to protect themselves from the problems they face with their status as adopted children.

### 1. Experienced by Adopted Teenagers

#### 1. Loneliness

Loneliness is an attitude that feels alienated from a group, or not loved by the perimeter. It's upsetting not to be able to express concerns privately and separately from those around you. According to Rahman (2013), loneliness is an anxiety that is felt at a time when social relations are not going well.

“You did,” Rafe said. “You know you did. And nobody has an easy life, Grace. Not me, definitely not you. I mean, you had a baby at sixteen, right? But your life’s not ruined.” “I don’t have any friends,” Grace said, and now she was crying again. “Nobody texts me or calls me or stops by to say hi.” Grace said.”

*(Benway: p.118)*

This quote reveals the loneliness experienced by Grace. After Grace had a baby and did not return to school, Grace felt lonely even though she already had a baby. It is clearly visible when Grace says, "Nobody texts me or calls me or stops by to say hi." It is clear that none of the friends of Grace that are to see her after she has this baby.

Another example of loneliness is :

*“He liked the quiet of those mornings, how he could skateboard down the Street without worrying about dodging slow tourists ortoddler making a sudden break from their parents. He liked being alone without anyone around him. The aloneness felt more like his choice that way. It was easier than feeling alone while surrounded by people, which was how he always seemed to feel once the rest of the world started to wake up, before reality settle d in and the fog blanket was melted away by the sun.”*

*(Benway : chapter 1, page 22)*

This quote reveals that Joaquin is very fond of solitude. This is because of the frequent changes of adoptive parents that make Joaquin calmer if you feel alone. Because, according to him, it's better if he himself had to meet people and then left back.

## **2. Loss Self-Esteem**

Self esteem is a very important in the formation of personality. Baumeister (2003) said that the person lose self-esteem will consider himself useless. People who lose self-esteem will bring up the stereotype of its own against themselves or is always giving a bad rating over something that happened to them. As seen in the following quotation:

*“Sometimes Joaquin wondered if he had been the worst baby in the world if his own mother didn't even want to come to see him”*  
*(Benway :, p.22)*

This quote shows that the character Joaquin experiences a loss of self- esteem. This is because of the thoughts that make him lose self-esteem. Look at the quote "if he is the baby of the worst in the world." This makes Joaquin think that he is the baby of the worst in the world, and this is the reason that his birth mothergave himself to other people and doesn't want to see him.

## **1. Hard to Trust New People**

Trust is an expectation that is expected by one person towards another in the conduct of social relations. In which there are risks associated with that hope. According to Wachdi (2003), when a person has to trust others, they will be afraid of being betrayed and let down by that person. Hardin (2004) says someone's trustworthiness towards other people depends on the person. Moreover, Huichol (2012) said that if someone has put a sense of trust in us, then we are responsible for not disappointing the person. As seen in the following quote:

*“And the truth was that he wanted to call Linda and Mark Mom and Dad. He wanted it so bad that he could feel the unspoken words sear his throat. It would be so easy to just say it, to make them happy, to finally be the kid with a mom and dad who kept him.*

*They weren't just words, though. Joaquin knew, in a way that he knew every true thing, that if he spoke those two words, they would reshape him. If those words ever left his mouth, he would need to be able to say them for the rest of his life, and he had learned the hard way that people could change, that they could say one thing and do another. He didn't Mark and Linda would do that to him, but he didn't want to find out, either.”*

*(Benway : Chapter 1, p.25)*

This quote reveals that the character of Joaquin makes it very difficult to trust new people. Background Joaquin is often abandoned by her adoptive parents, making it difficult for her to accept a new person coming back into her life. Look at the quote above. Mark and Linda love Joaquin so much, but Joaquin shouldn't be too quick to choose both of them as adoptive parents because Joaquin is still afraid if she will be left behind.

## **2. Defense Mechanism**

Defense mechanism is a way that humans use to reduce the anxiety caused by events that are not expected to be subconscious. and the defense mechanism of this function for self-defense when the man faces a bad situation on a continuous basis.

### **a. Projection**

In this section, the researcher discusses the projection made by adopted teenagers as their defense mechanism to avoid the problems that occur to them. According to Cramer (2003), a way to remove thoughts or feelings from people and a place to connect them with other people or something more clearly. Projection is a defense mechanism used to protect oneself from the consciousness of those mentalities that are not good.

*“They agreed to meet every Sunday—that was their plan. When they meet, Maya plans to rent a place to meet her two siblings. But, Her money was on Grace bailing first. That girl seemed nervous all the time. “Typical only child” Maya said. Used to have everything for herself, not wanting to share. Then she felt terrible for thinking that about someone who had only ever been nice to her.”*

*(Benway: chapter 1, p.98)*

From the quote, it can be seen that the projection is a defense against him. Maya doesn't want anyone to redeem the money, but Grace still redeems the money for Maya. Maya felt bad for Grace, just because Grace often did her good. Then Maya projects that the taste is not good for Grace. Look at the time Grace redeemed money for Maya, then Maya said, "Typicall only child used the money to have everything for herself, not wanting to share." This quote reveals that the Maya didn't want Grace to redeem the money. Therefore, the virtual blame status of Grace as the only son that uses the money for himself and can't share it.

### **b. Denial**

In this section, the researcher discusses character denial as a defense mechanism to overcome the problems they experience. Denial occurs to deny the person's bad reality. According to Cramer (2003), a person tends to use the word "no" in the perception of thoughts and feelings as a form of rejection. . It can be seen in the following quotation:

*“That's stupid,” Maya snapped. “why do we even want to find her? she gave us away. She gave Joaquin to strangers. But that was almost eighteen years ago,” Grace protested. “ She was basically my age, right? Or Joaquin's age? She was just a kid! Maybe she wants to know how we're doing. I mean....” She paused before adding, “I'm sure she still loves us. “Grace said”*

*(Benway: chapter 1, p.61)*

This quote reveals that Grace wants to meet his biological mother. But the second brother did not want to meet with the birth mother. Maya thinks that her biological mother is not concerned with them because she has given them to fosterparents. But Grace denied it, with the reason that it had already happened eighteenyears ago. Grace performs denial of the sayings of Maya because Grace is convinced that his mom still loves them and wants to meet with them.

Another quotation that explains denial is:

*“Their dad wanted Maya and Lauren to start going to therapy, too. “Why?” Maya had asked. “We're not the ones with the drinking problem.” Privately, she thought that was yet another result of her mother's selfishness: she was the one with the drinking problem, so why did Maya need to waste a hour of her week in therapy?”*

*(Benway, p.200)*

This quote reveals that Maya ordered denial of the request from her father. When a person refuses to accept reality or fact, this is referred to as denial. As seen in the quote, "we didn't have a drinking problem." This quote is the defense of the Maya against her. The denial Maya feels is a form of self-protection from the selfishness made by his mother, which becomes the reason he has to go to therapy.

## B. Repression

Repression is the ego's most powerful defense mechanism. Repression is present in the form of buried feelings of anxiety, threat, hope, and a will that is not in accordance with expectations. Cramer (2006) asserts that repression aims to reduce something that causes anxiety and does not take into account past emotional or traumatic experiences. Furthermore, Minderop (2010) says that repression is a mechanism used to relieve anxiety by suppressing impulses or desires, or it can be said to suppress or hide feelings. It can be seen in the following quotes:

*"Maya didn't really remember a time when her parents weren't fighting. When she and her sister, Lauren, were younger, it was done behind closed doors, muffled voices and tight smiles the next morning at breakfast. Over the years, though, the quiet words became raised. Then came the shouting, and finally screaming.*

*The screaming was the worst, shrill and high-pitched, the kind of noise that made you want to cover your ears and scream right back.*

*She would jump for the remote and turn up the TV volume until it was too hard to tell what was louder, who wanted to win the noise battle more. "Would you turn down that TV?" her dad had yelled more than once, and it felt so unfair. They had only turned it up because he was too loud in the first place."*

*(Benway : chapter , p.15)*

This quote shows that the Maya had a defense mechanism repress with fear of their parents and how to choose to hide in the room and close the door. Then look at the sentence: *"The screaming was the worst, shrill and high-pitched, the kind of noise that made you want to cover your ears and scream right back. She would jump for the remote and turn up the TV volume until it was too hard to tell what was louder, who wanted to win the noise of battle more."* This quote reveals that Maya was very uncomfortable hearing the quarrel that was started by her parents. Therefore, he used virtual repress to calm his fear and turn the TV sound up loud so she didn't hear the quarrel that was started by her parents.

Another quotation is:

*“What if we want to live with Dad?” Maya asked. She wasn't even sure she wanted to, but she felt the overwhelming need to put herself in between them, to see which one of them would tug her closer. To know if either of them would fight to keep her after trying so hard fifteen years ago to get her.”*

*(Benway: p.77)*

This quote reveals that Maya is afraid if her parents divorced and left him because she knows that she is the child's adoption. Repression is an attempt by the individual to get rid of things that cause anxiety, and this is done by Maya. Therefore, the Maya do the repression. By the way, they want to stay together with their foster father. This is done in Maya as an attempt to avoid losing her adoptive parents and also because Maya wants to see how far the desire of her adoptive parents against him has come, like fifteen years ago when he was adopted.

Another quotation is:

*“Maya didn't tell her parents much about going to meet Joaquin, mostly because she didn't want to answer questions about it. Her parents were super into discussing everything. It made Maya feel anxious, the way she was supposed to put her emotions into words, like it was an easy thing to do. Lauren was good at it, being able to say whatever was on her mind so that other people could understand, but for Maya, it was like describing colors: the sunset pinks and reds of first love, the stormy blues that clouded her brain when she was hurt or angry.”*

*(Benway : p.81)*

This quote reveals that Maya has anxiety. This could be caused by the lack of attention his mother gave him. The quarrels of his parents made Maya close up, and it was difficult to express themselves. Maya represses his anxiety about the questions that are often asked by his mother in a way that never tells anybody what is perceived and what will be done. It can be seen

*“Because I think you did lie to me!” she yelled.  
“I think you lied and said that you wanted to break up, but I think you just got scared, that you ran away because it was easier than being left again “Birdie said””*

*(Benway: p.111)*



The quote above reveals that the character "Joaquin" is described as having trauma in his past. He becomes a very sensitive person, does not easily trust others, and it is difficult to say how he feels. Joaquin is afraid of losing Birdie, Joaquin forms self-defense by avoiding conversations with Birdie, Joaquin never tells his past to Birdie, this is done by Joaquin so he doesn't lose Birdie like he has lost other people before. Joaquin establishes a repression defense mechanism that aims to avoid his anxiety of losing Birdie.

Another quotation is:

*“For days after meeting up with Maya and Joaquin, Grace was a mess.*

*She felt on edge, sleep deprived, and overcaffeinated. She kept dreaming of Peach in her little sailor outfit, sailing away on a boat, crying as lustfully as she had the day she had been born, and Grace couldn't get to her, couldn't reach out, couldn't hold her baby.*

*She woke up gasping, her arms outstretched, the sound of Peach still ringing in her ears.*

*Grace knew what it was, of course. She was convinced that she had chosen the wrong parents for Peach, that Daniel and Catalina wouldn't stay together and that they would divorce, just like Maya's parents had.”*

*(Benway: p.151)*

This quote expresses the anxiety of Grace about the survival of her child after adoption. Repression is a way that is developed by the ego to protect themselves and that they are not aware of, can enter through a dream. This is the same as that experienced by Grace, who is not conscious of his fear for his son because another person entered through a dream that made him feel anxious if his son did not get a better life.

#### **e. Razionalization**

According to Cramer (2008) rationalization is used to reduce excessive disappointment when someone fails to achieve something. Rationalization describes unacceptable behavior. Rationalization also arises when individuals pretend to assume that the good is bad, or that the bad is good. According to experts in psychology from the University of California, rationalization acts as a mechanism that aims to remove the anxiety, danger, or emotions we do not want. According to Sraker (2000), if something is difficult for us to accept, then we will find logical reasons why it can happen. It can be seen in the following quotations:

*“That's stupid,” Maya snapped. “why do we even want to find her? she gave us away. She gave Joaquin to strangers. But that was almost eighteen years ago,” Grace protested. “ She was basically my age, right? Or Joaquin's age? She was just a kid! Maybe she wants to know how we're doing. I mean....” She paused before adding, “I'm sure she still loves us. “Grace said””*

*( Benway : chapter 1, p.61)*

The above quote is a form of rational thought by Maya to avoid disappointment with her biological parents. Maya's rational thinking says that if her parents give her to someone else, then that means he doesn't want the existence of that child. Therefore, the Maya did not want to find out where his real parents were, so he didn't get a lot of disappointment. This is the effort made by the Maya to prove that the behavior makes sense, is considered to be rational, and that BSA was accepted by his brother. despite having the grace to deny it by claiming that his parents still loved him

Another quotation about rasionalization is :

*“Their dad wanted Maya and Lauren to start going to therapy, too. “Why?” Maya had asked. “We're not the ones with the drinking problem.” Privately, she thought that was yet another result of her mother's selfishness: she was the one with the drinking problem, so why did Maya need to waste a hour of her week in therapy?” .....*

*““Dad's weird because he's afraid we're going to be cripplingly and emotionally damaged,” Maya replied, her pen between her teeth as she flipped back and forth between her physics textbook and her lab book. “Plus, dads are weird in general.” Maya said.”*

*(Benway, p.201)*

From this quote, it is seen that Maya is trying to explain behaviors that are not wanted by her father with the idea of the fact that he made himself by saying, "Plus, dads are weird in general." Maya said. Maya feels comfortable with the choice he made. Although consciously, he knows that is not true. Because not all dads think it's weird.

#### ***f. Displacement***

Displacement is the burst of emotions felt by a person against another person or other objects. Displacement occurs when a person's resentment against someone is transferred or "inevitable" to other people or other objects that are less harmful. It can be seen in the following quotes:

*"One minute, he's sitting with Maya and Grace, thinking about Mark and Linda, and then someone comes up to Grace, makes her tremble, calls her a slut, and Joaquin feels himself slipping into the white-hot space he's been spending years trying to get to. avoid. It would be a lie if he said it wasn't good to feel the boy's heartbeat in his arms, his breath short, his eyes wide open. It's a powerful thing to actually hold someone's fate in your hands, and Joaquin, I don't have such strength that. The problem with power, however, is that having it doesn't always make you a good person. Sometimes, it makes you a bad person. Joaquin ran until he hit the edge of the park that borders the mall."*

*(Benway : chapter 1, p156)*

This quote reveals that Joaquin was using displacement as a defense mechanism. Joaquin has been trying to chase people who say Grace is a slut, but she has not managed to get the person. Joaquin used other objects as a medium to vent his anger against the people who he was after the manner of kicking the edge of the garden. Another quotation explains about displacement :

Oh, yeah, Laur?" Maya said, and now she was standing up, too. "Tell me something. When Mom and Dad said they were getting divorced, did you wonder if they would still want you?"

*"What are you talking about?" Lauren shouted.*

*"Did you ever have to look at the pictures on that staircase and think, Do they hate me for ruining their perfect family? Am I the reason for all of this? Me and my freak existence? Let me guess, the answer to all of that is no. So don't try to make me feel bad for trying to find my space in this world, okay? Because you've never had to worry about yours!"*

*Now Lauren was crying in that terrible way she always did, but Maya was already turning on her heel and running upstairs.*

*She couldn't get far enough away, though. Not from herself. There weren't enough stairs in the world for that."*

*(Benway : p.233)*

This quote reveals that Maya is very frustrated due to the divorce of her parents. Displacement is the best way to channel the emotions and frustrations of others. And it is this which made Maya turn to Lauren by saying, "Have you ever seen pictures on the stairs and think, do they hate me for ruining their family's perfect? Am I the reason for all this? Me and my being? " Let me guess, the answer to all that is not. So don't try to make me feel bad for trying to find my space in this world, okay? Because you don't need to worry about yourself! " So make Lauren cry.

#### D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study raises the issue of defense mechanisms used by humans to address the problems they face. This defense mechanism serves to protect them from the problems they face. This is done by humans to escape from any difficulties they may experience. And this defense mechanism is a reaction that humans are not aware of in an effort to protect themselves.

In the novel *Far From the Tree* (2017) by Robin Benway, three adopted teenage figures carry out defense mechanisms to protect themselves from the problems they face. This defense mechanism can be seen when these adopted adolescents experience problems related to their status as adopted children. They perform defense mechanisms to protect themselves so that they can avoid the problem.

Based on the results of research on defense mechanisms in the novel *Far From the Tree* (2017) by Robin Benway, it can be concluded that of the seven defense mechanisms contained in the concept of Phebe Cramer, only five are found, including projection, denial, repression, rationalization, and displacement. These five forms of defense mechanism can be seen in the course of these three adopted adolescent figures who experience problems related to their status as adopted children with the help of this defense mechanism.

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