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## Kya's PTSD and Defense Mechanism as Represented in Delia Owens' *Where The Crowdads Sing*

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### ABSTRACT

This descriptive qualitative study aims to identify the types of causes of post-traumatic stress disorder and to reveal how the defense mechanism experienced by Kya as the main character of the novel *Where the Crowdads Sing*. Sigmund Freud's psychological theory of defence mechanism is applied in this study. The data of this research are narratives, paragraphs, and dialogues of Delia Owen's *Where the Crowdads Sing* that indicate the causes of post-traumatic stress disorder and the defense mechanisms used by Kya. The findings showed that Kya experienced post-traumatic stress disorder due to causes such as domestic violence, abandonment, bullying, isolation, rape, and murder. In addition, the defense mechanisms used by Kya in overcoming the causes of post-traumatic stress disorder and survival are Kya employs denial to deal with the truth of the traumatic event she went through; sublimation to redirect her negative energy or focus on more productive and beneficial activities; and projection to project her own emotions onto other people, perceiving her own motivations or feelings in their actions. These defense mechanisms help Kya to adjust to difficult situations and find ways to survive due to the trauma she experienced.

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## Introduction

Literature is a kind of human personal expression that takes the shape of experiences, feelings, ideas, passions, and beliefs expressed by individuals in the form of captivating, concrete images created by language (Gazali et al., 2021). One of the many literary genres that create models with the meaning of life is the novel. These lengthy narrative works feature a number of contrived characters and events. Character portrayals can be linked to human personality and serve as a reflection of psychological issues, such as trauma.

Trauma is a psychological condition that arises from events in a person's life. Emerging trauma may have its origins in childhood trauma that persists into adulthood. It has an impact on people's social, mental, emotional, and physical health and leaves behind deep, permanent scars. Traumatic experiences often result in significant psychological symptoms, affecting an individual's quality of life. This symptom can become a problem called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A person suffering from PTSD may find it difficult to mature and avoid circumstances that might endanger their life. An extremely stressful experience, or sequence of events, like a rape, abuse, or war, can cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is a typical reaction from normal people to an unusual circumstance (Schiraldi, 2009). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder will certainly cause some symptoms that will be experienced by the sufferer.

There are three PTSD symptom groups in the sequence in which they logically occur; **1) Event Reexperienced.** Nightmare are a typical way for people to relive their tragedy. The dreams may represent the trauma metaphorically, for example, by showing themes of danger, saving oneself or others, being trapped or pursued by monsters, or dying. Alternatively, they may be quite realistic repeats of the traumatic event. One especially distressing way of reliving the terrible incident is through flashbacks. It's as if having a flashback, as if you've traveled back in time and experienced a traumatic event. Flashbacks are usually recollections of things seen again. But they can also entail feelings, actions, or sensations (Schiraldi, 2009). **2) Arousal.** Severe overall bodily arousal and/or arousal after exposure to internal or external stimuli are characteristics of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A severe trauma has made the nervous system more sensitive. Thus, two outcomes are possible. The nervous system overreacts to even little stresses, raising general arousal. Difficulties falling or staying asleep, twitching, moving, and/or waking up without enough sleep are all signs of troubled sleep. Anger can manifest itself in a variety of ways, such as breaking objects, yelling, flying off the handle, harsh criticism, or impatience. When one is still struggling to gain control over unwanted memories, it might be difficult to focus or recall things. Symptoms of hypervigilance include feeling vulnerable, being afraid of many things, finding it difficult to relax in a secure location, being afraid of repetition, expecting disasters, scanning quickly, keeping an eye on



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one's surroundings, carrying a weapon or numerous weapons, and being overly protective or controlling of loved ones (Schiraldi, 2009). **3) Avoidance and Numbing.** People with PTSD make a valiant effort to avoid any reminders of the event since the intrusive thoughts and the arousal that goes along with them are so unpleasant. They could decline to discuss it. They may suppress memories, sensations, or visions of the incident. They may steer clear of things that trigger memories, such as people, places, activities, or mementos. Some people may decide to live alone in an effort to avoid frightening situations. To escape their unpleasant emotions, some people abuse drugs or work excessive hours, while others choose to completely block off their emotions (Schiraldi, 2009). It makes sense to want to dull memories when they are so terrible. But one cannot dull happy memories without numbing unpleasant ones as well. To numb unpleasant sentiments, one must repress all emotions. As a result, folks who suffer from PTSD frequently shun even enjoyable activities, such as relaxing, traveling, having babies, and engaging in hobbies (Schiraldi, 2009).

The causes of post-traumatic stress disorder, which are divided into three groups. In general, recovering from purposeful human causes is more challenging than recovering from unintended human causes. The least complicated and usually having a quicker resolution than the other categories are acts of nature (Schiraldi, 2009). 1) Human, malevolent, and purposeful behaviors like emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, violent crime, domestic violence, bullying, seeing a homicide, or hearing death threats can all be considered deliberate causes in humans. 2) Accidents and technological catastrophes are examples of unintentional human causes. There include car crashes, unclear catastrophes, industrial disasters, fires, burns, explosions, stadium and sports building collapses, and bodily injuries from surgery or loss of body parts. 3) Natural catastrophes, often known as acts of nature, can include things like hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, fires, and more.

Complex in nature, PTSD affects a person's mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Intense fear and anxiety are frequently experienced by victims along with horrific flashbacks that are triggered by insignificant things. Problems with falling asleep, having nightmares, and having constant anxiety impair sleep and make other symptoms like weariness and irritation worse. Emotional numbness brought on by PTSD makes it impossible for sufferers to experience joy or take pleasure in past passions. Relationships are harmed and self-esteem is generally reduced when sudden, intense wrath and intense guilt strike. Trauma survivors frequently steer clear of situations that could rekindle their worry and panic. Loss of interest in once-preferred activities leads to social isolation and worsens depression. Comprehensive professional care and therapy using a variety of



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methods, such as social support, medicine, and psychological therapies, are necessary for PTSD.

In the field of literature, psychological aspects refer to the approach used to understand and analyze the mental and emotional states of characters as well as writers. This includes the need to explore characters facing conflicts and managing their emotions. The way to reduce psychological problems like trauma is called the defense mechanism. Defense mechanisms are psychological processes that are employed to deal with challenging circumstances, handle disputes, and protect their functioning from the disruption of upsetting, unpleasant, and inappropriate thoughts, feelings, and experiences. These processes are frequently followed by a behavioral reaction (Perrotta, 2020). Defense mechanisms help individuals cope with trauma by protecting the ego from intense emotional pain. This process allows an individual to maintain psychological balance and function effectively in daily life. However, excessive or unhealthy use of defense mechanisms can lead to significant distortions of reality and affect an individual's mental health.

Freud identified different types of defense mechanisms used by individuals to cope with anxiety and distress. There are types of defense mechanisms by Sigmund Freud such as repression, denial, reaction-formation, rationalization, sublimation, regression, projection, and displacement. These defense mechanisms play an important role in understanding how the human mind works and how individuals respond to stressful situations. Defense mechanisms help individuals cope with trauma by protecting the ego from intense emotional pain. This process allows an individual to maintain psychological balance and function effectively in daily life. However, excessive or unhealthy use of defense mechanisms can lead to significant distortions of reality and affect an individual's mental health. Freud identified different types of defense mechanisms used by individuals to cope with anxiety and distress. There are types of defense mechanisms by Sigmund Freud such as repression, denial, reaction-formation, rationalization, sublimation, regression, projection, and displacement. These defense mechanisms play an important role in understanding how the human mind works and how individuals respond to stressful situations. **1) Denial.** Personal factual views often stem from a psychological process called denial, not from an objective assessment of the likelihoods (Bardon, 2019). Denial to defensive mechanism is the act of refusing to commit to the (claimed) implicature of what one has expressed. It is commonly used in response to accusations of hurtful speech (Boogaart et al., 2021). In this instance, denial rejects the existence of serious sickness, money troubles, addiction, and other issues. Denial was used by Kya as a defense mechanism to protect herself from the painful and emotionally unbearable reality. Denial allowed Kya to refuse or avoid full acknowledgment of the traumatic events she



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experienced, thus providing temporary protection from deep emotional pain. **2) Sublimation.** Change the id impulses themselves is the process of sublimation. Instinctual energy is then redirected into other channels of expression, which are deemed acceptable and admired by society. Sublimation is an advanced psychoanalytic technique that highlights the limits of desire's power to shape social reality and opens the door to defining reality in terms other than those it conforms to (Ku, 2021). Sublimation is used by Kya as a defense mechanism to divert unacceptable or overly painful emotions and urges into positive and constructive activities. In Kya's case, sublimation manifests through her love for nature and her deep knowledge of the ecosystem around her. **3) Projection.** Projection is the act of projecting negative or uncomfortable feelings onto someone or something. For instance, we may choose to act cruelly toward someone even if we know it is improper and immoral because we think they deserve it. This type of activity is intended to improve our appearance (Setiawan et al., 2021). Projecting the disturbing urges onto others is another way of defending oneself. Projection is used by Kya as a defense mechanism to cope with emotions and urges that are difficult to accept or face directly by transferring these feelings to others. In Kya's context, projection helped her manage the fear, anger and distrust caused by her past trauma.

In the geographical context of North Carolina, as depicted in the novel *"Where the Crawdads Sing,"* the region is described in very detail and with a lot of nuances, creating a rich background and a profound atmosphere for the story. North Carolina is a state in the southeastern part of the United States. The country is close to the Atlantic Sea region to the east. The story in the novel *Where the crawdads Sing* tries to describe the vast and remote paradise surrounding Barkley Cove becoming the center of Kya's life, providing a wild yet beautiful environment in which he grew up and learned to survive. The diverse flora and fauna, from flying birds to dense grapefruit, creates a vivid and dynamic picture of nature.

In addition, the beaches and the sea surrounding the marshes add another dimension to the narrative, with waves blowing and white sand reflecting sunlight, giving place to many important moments in the story. The hot and humid North Carolina weather, as well as the frequent storms that come suddenly, also played an important role, adding to the challenge and the dramatic atmosphere of Kya's journey. Through these descriptions, Delia Owens managed to capture the geographical essence of North Carolina, making it more than just a background, but an integral element that shapes the characters and the story.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher intends to analyze the novel entitled *Where the Crawdads Sing* to find out the psychological problems of the main character. *Where The Crawdads Sing* is a novel written by Delia Owens, a



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writer and also a zoologist published in 2018. Kya as the main character also experiences trauma. The story takes place in two different eras: the first takes place when Kya was a child in 1952 and the second when Kya was an adult in 1969. Kya has lived alone and isolated since she was six years old and was abandoned by her mother and siblings. She was not provided with the ability to do daily activities or even education. They were a family living in a swamp. Growing up in a lower-class family and not having any neighbors, Kya had to accept that she never knew what life was like out there. Far from the city, she lives in North Carolina, a US state located on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

Living close to the beach, Kya made it a place to play with seagulls, calm down, and remember her mother. As a teenager she was in a relationship with Tate Walker, a local boy who helped Kya understand nature and opened the door to her education until Kya became a published author on the beauty of the marsh. Happiness was shattered after the appearance of Chase Andrew, a young man from the town of Barkley Cove, they had a brief relationship until Chase Andrew finally raped Kya. Kya experienced acts of violence and coercion that occurred as a result of Chase's actions.

Chase falls to his death with evidence of a red thread in Kya's possession that makes Kya the prime suspect due to her strangeness and isolation Kya's trial takes a drastic turn when she is incriminated with Chase's murder while she is confined to jail for two months. With the help of her lawyer, she managed to convince the jury that she was innocent of Chase's death. Kya's acquittal became her turning point to stay alive to find peace and freedom in the marsh, away from the life that brought so much suffering and denial of what Kya had experienced (Owens, 2018).

Several studies have been done about the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* 2018. The research by discusses the main character's efforts to overcome difficulties by M & Vanitha (2023) combining ecology and psychology (ecopsychology) which helps create closeness between humans and nature to produce a healthy life. Meanwhile, research by Khotimah et al. (2023) finds out that the relationship between the aspects of physiology, sociology, and psychology affects the way of thinking, personality, and also behavior of the main character. These three dimensions can characterize the main character as a whole starting from physical characteristics, social conditions, and mental states. The similarity of this recent research to those researches lies in its object. The differences in this study to those researches lie in the topic, theory, and research focus. Therefore, the researchers are interested in analyzing Kya's psychological problems in the context of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and defense mechanisms based on Sigmund Freud to protect herself from the causes of traumatic experiences in order to achieve effective self-resolution for survival.



## Research Method

This research is a type of qualitative research using a descriptive approach. Descriptive qualitative method aims to provides a detailed description of a phenomena of event. According to Creswell (2009) qualitative research explores social or human problems through questions, data collection, inductive analysis, and interpretation, with a flexible structure for the final written report. The Primary data is the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*. This novel was written by Delia Owens and published in New York in 2018 by G.P. Putnam's Sons. The data used in this research are narrations, paragraphs, and dialogues in the novel. The secondary data of this research also includes many relevant documents, articles, books, journals, and web sources that have the same topic, object, or at least apply the same theories used by the researcher to provide information relevant to this research.

This research used these following steps in order to collecting data. First researchers read and understood the narrations, dialogues, plot, and characters in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens as the main source of data. The next step is to underline and select the data. After that, the collected data will be used in the data analysis process. The method of analyzing data, first step is reviewing the collected data related to the topic. In order to make it easier to list the data that has been collected, then classify the data based on the research problem. After classifying the data, researchers describe and analyze the data based on the theory used in this study. In this step, the researchers utilized Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and defense mechanism based on Sigmund Freud. Finally, the researchers concluded and determined whether the data was appropriate to answer the research problem.

## Discussion

The section is divided into two parts. First, identifying the causes of the main character, Kya, experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Researcher found six types of causes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by the main character in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*. Second, the researcher found several types of defense mechanisms used by the main character to overcome the causes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in *Where the Crawdads Sing*. Sigmund Freud's Defense mechanism theory, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and other component from chapter two are used to help answer the problems of the main character in this novel.

### A. The Causes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Experienced by Kya

#### 1. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is one of the causes of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Kya. Domestic violence is a part of an intentional human case (Schiraldi, 2009). Kya experienced several events that are categorized as causes



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of post-traumatic stress disorder, one of which came from her family. It happened when she was a child and she witnessed her father's cruelty to her mother and siblings.

“Ma and Kya were leaving the kitchen with their baskets of eggs and chocolate bunnies from the Five and Dime, just as Pa rounded the corner from the hall.

Yanking Kya's Easter bonnet from her head and waving it around, he screamed at Ma, “Whar ya git the money for these fancy thangs? Bonnets and shiny leather shoes? Them prissy eggs and chocolate bunnies? Say. Whar?”

“Come on, Jake, please hush. It's Easter; this is for the kids.”

He shoved Ma backward. “Ya out whoring, that's what. That how you git the money? Tell me now.” He grabbed Ma by the arms and shook her so hard her face seemed to rattle around her eyes, which stayed very still and wide open. Eggs tumbled from the basket and rolled in wobbly pastels across the floor.

“Pa, please, stop!” Kya cried out, then sobbed.

He lifted his hand and slapped Kya hard across the cheek. “Shut up, ya prissy-pot crybaby! Git that silly-looking dress and fancy shoes off ya. Them's whorin' clothes.”

She ducked down, holding her face, chasing after Ma's hand-painted eggs.” (p.189)

This quotation clearly depicts the violent events experienced by Kya's mother, and how Kya witnessed the violence. Kya's father suddenly appears and immediately lashes out verbally, snatching Kya's Easter bonnet and yelling at her mother. This shows the temperamental and violent nature of Kya's father, who immediately accuses his wife for no apparent reason. Kya's father not only verbally attacked her but also physically by pushing and shaking her mother. This show how frightened and traumatized Kya was by the violence that she had just witnessed and experienced. Due to the causes experienced by Kya, the traumatic experience triggered her behavior with symptoms of PTSD. In this case, the trauma symptoms that Kya experienced include flashbacks to the incident when her father was violent.

“Details of some of the bouts were sharp in her mind. Once Pa shoved Ma into the kitchen wall, hitting her until she slumped to the floor. Kya, sobbing for him to quit, touched his arm. He grabbed Kya by the shoulders, shouted for her to pull down her jeans and underpants, and bent her over the kitchen table. In one smooth, practiced motion he slid





the belt from his pants and whipped her. Of course, she remembered the hot pain slicing her bare bottom, but curiously, she recalled the jeans pooled around her skinny ankles in more vivid detail. And Ma crumpled into the corner by the cookstove, crying out. Kya didn't know what all the fighting was about." (p.55)

This statement clearly shows how Kya flashback the traumatic event of violence she experienced. One especially distressing way of reliving the terrible incident is through flashbacks. Kya clearly remembers how Pa attacked Ma so hard that Ma fell to the floor. This shows that she witnessed violence firsthand, which makes for a traumatic experience for a young child. Kya, in a state of fear and crying, tried to stop her father by touching his arm. This shows Kya's helplessness and hopelessness in the situation.

## **2. Abandonment**

An abandonment is the cause of Kya's PTSD. Abandonment is categorized as emotional abuse that comes from the (Schiraldi, 2009). Abandonment occurs when a kid is left without making arrangements for appropriate care or monitoring (Depanfilis, 2006). As a result, Kya was traumatized by these events, starting with her mother.

"Ma always looked back where the foot lane met the road, one arm held high, white palm waving, as she turned onto the track, which wove through bog forests, cattail lagoons, and maybe if the tide obliged eventually into town. But today she walked on, unsteady in the ruts. Her tall figure emerged now and then through the holes of the forest until only swatches of white scarf flashed between the leaves. Kya sprinted to the spot she knew would bare the road; surely Ma would wave from there, but she arrived only in time to glimpse the blue case the color so wrong for the woods as it disappeared. A heaviness, thick as black-cotton mud, pushed her chest as she returned to the steps to wait." (p.3)

Kya has been abandoned by her mother. Kya's mother was seen walking unsteadily, which could be a sign that she was emotionally unstable or under stress. Her mother continued walking without stopping or looking back, Kya was 6 years old at the time. Kya still did not understand what had happened to her mother. Kya's trauma began when her mother kept walking without stopping and did not wave to her. Kya expected her mother to wave as usual, but the reality was different. This shows that her mother's departure was not something Kya was used to or expected, so this incident traumatized Kya.

## **3. Bullying**



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Bullying is the cause of Kya's PTSD. Bullying can have a profound emotional and psychological impact on a person, especially if experienced over a long period of time or during childhood or adolescence. Bullying is categorized into physical and emotional violence (Schiraldi, 2009). Beyond ordinary incivility, bullying is a systematic and persistent kind of interpersonal hostility characterized by power imbalance, frequency, intensity, and duration. Bullying victims frequently experience insecurity and live in continual worry of another bullying episode. Their physical and emotional well-being may be impacted by this worry (Martin et al., 2016). Kya experienced bullying when she was a child, she was often nicknamed swamp trash by the surrounding community.

“Never mind her. You cain’t go blamin’ yo’ sins on somebody else, not even swamp trash.” (p.14)

The fact that Kya and her family are viewed as "swamp trash" is a reflection of how society views them. This term is a reflection of the shame and exclusion they endured, which exacerbated Kya's psychological suffering. Kya has emotions of isolation and worthlessness from an early age when those in her immediate vicinity utilize this name. This creates a situation where Kya is not only victimized, but also often perceived as a burden or hindrance to others. As a result, Kya grew up in a harsh and unsupportive environment, which exacerbated her trauma.

#### **4. Isolation**

Isolation is one of the often overlooked yet highly significant causes of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Isolation is the one part of emotional abuse (Schiraldi, 2009). When someone moves away from society due to personal choice or environmental circumstances, the sensation of isolation can worsen or even precipitate the onset of PTSD. This isolation is not only physical but also psychological, exacerbating the impact of Kya's trauma.

“Kya never went back to school a day in her life. She returned to heron watching and shell collecting, where she reckoned she could learn something. “I can already coo like a dove,” she told herself. “And lots better than them. Even with all them fine shoes.” (p.25)

From the quote above, Kya tries to isolate herself. Kya chose not to return to school after her humiliating experience. This is a form of social isolation, as she refuses to participate in social and educational activities that should be part of the lives of children her age. Kya chose to focus on solitary activities such as bird watching and shell collecting. The activities reflect her tendency to isolate



herself from social interactions. Kya's trauma began when she decided not to have contact with humans and chose to study with animals.

### **5. Rape**

This unpleasant experience caused Kya to develop post-traumatic stress disorder. It involves forcing sexual intercourse or other sexual acts on a person in a way that violates the victim's will and rights. Acts of sexual violence committed without the victim's consent can be called rape. Kya experienced rape as below.

“No, stop!” she screamed. Kneeling, he jammed his knee in her stomach, knocking the breath from her, as he unzipped his jeans and pulled them down.

She reared up, pushing him with both hands. Suddenly he slugged her face with his right fist. A sick popping sound rang out inside her head. Her neck snapped back, and her body was thrown backward onto the ground.  
“(p.219)

The data clearly shows the violence and attempted rape committed by Chase against Kya. Kya tries to run away, but Chase holds her tightly and injures her arm. This is a clear form of physical violence. Chase forces Kya to kiss without consent, which is a form of sexual abuse. Chase pressed Kya's stomach with his knee, making it difficult for her to breathe. This is an act of violence that causes physical pain. Chase opens his pants, showing his intention to perform sexual acts without Kya's consent. This physical injury is also likely to cause Kya deep psychological trauma.

### **6. Murder**

Murder can be one of the causes of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). In the event of a murder, whether as a survivor, witness, or even perpetrator, it can cause prolonged trauma. Therefore, when Kya became a suspect in Chase Andrew's murder, it was a very traumatic experience that could potentially lead to PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). The experience of being arrested and detained by the authorities can be very frightening for Kya.

“One of the boats whipped in front of her, and she rammed its side. Thrown back against the outboard, her neck jerked. The sheriff reached out and grabbed her gunwale, all of them wallowing in the churning wakes. Two men swung into her boat as the deputy said, “Miss Catherine Clark, you’re under arrest for the murder of Mr. Chase Andrews. Ya have the right to remain silent...” (p.211)



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The statement showed that Kya was in a difficult and panicked situation. This illustrates Kya's traumatic experience of being arrested by the police, with significant physical and emotional impacts. The police boat that suddenly appeared in front of Kya caused a loud crash, indicating a sudden and violent arrest. The physical impact of the arrest adds another layer of physical trauma to Kya's experience, in addition to the emotional trauma of the murder charge and police detention. This can be very emotionally disturbing. The traumatic experience made Kya even more distracted from social interactions while in prison.

## **A. The Defense Mechanism Helps Kya Overcome Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Survive**

### **1. Denial**

Kya employs the defense mechanism of denial to alleviate the post-traumatic stress disorder. The initial, transient phase of discomfort experienced by the person is known as the denial stage. This feeling will eventually give way to one of partial acceptance (Al Hakim et al., 2023). Freud conceptualized denial as a defense mechanism in the refusal to acknowledge disturbing aspects of external reality, as well as the presence of disturbing psychological (internal) events, such as thoughts, memories, or feelings. A person insists that an unpleasant or painful reality did not happen. Denial tends to refuse to accept reality or facts, acting as if the painful event, thought or feeling does not exist. This defense mechanism happened to Kya.

“Surely Ma would come back for her birthday, so the morning after the harvest moon she put on the calico dress and stared down the lane. Kya willed Ma to be walking toward the shack, still in her alligator shoes and long skirt.” (p.16)

The word “surely” shows Kya's strong belief that her mother will surely come back on her birthday. This is a sign of denial because despite evidence that her mother may not return. Kya remains confident and hopeful that her mother will return on her special day. Kya is wearing a calico dress and gazing towards the street, suggesting that she is physically and emotionally preparing to welcome her mother. This action reflects a strong hope and desire that her mother will appear on the street. The word “willed” shows Kya's hard work to make something impossible come true. This is a form of denial, where Kya has not fully accepted that her mother has left and may not return.

### **2. Sublimation**

The sublimation mechanism as a way to overcome PTSD by doing more beneficial and productive activities to relieve pain she received. (Octaviani &



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Saraswati, 2016) stated that sublimation transforms potentially dangerous energy into something positive and helpful, making it one of the most beneficial and constructive protection systems.

“Earlier than usual, she got up the next morning when the tide was low, pulled on her overalls, and slipped out with a bucket, claw knife, and empty tow bags. Squatting in mud, she collected mussels along the sloughs like Ma had taught her, and in four hours of crouching and kneeling had two croker sacks full.” (p.62)

This quote shows how Kya uses sublimation to deal with trauma by collecting mussels. Kya wakes up early and prepares herself to collect mussels, which is a productive and focused activity. By doing this activity, she diverts her attention and emotional energy from the pain and loneliness she is experiencing. She spent hours in intense physical activity to collect shells, which shows how she diverted her emotions and energy into productive physical work. This activity provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, replacing feelings of loneliness or loss, by collecting mussels Kya can fulfill her need to survive on her own.

North Carolina is known for its extensive beaches, sloughs and marshes, especially in its coastal areas. Natural resources such as clams, oysters and other marine life are abundant in these places. Locals can gather seafood as a daily activity due to these geographical features. In addition to fulfilling personal needs for food and others.

### **3. Projection**

Kya uses projection mechanisms as a way to release her bad feelings and insecurities to others instead of her own feelings. As a defense mechanism, projection involves passing on unwanted traits or emotions to others. To reduce fear, projection works by allowing urges or desires to be expressed in ways that the ego cannot see (Anshori, 2011).

“The rock hit him hard on the shoulder.

“GET OUT OF MY LAGOON! YOU LOW-DOWN DIRTY CREEP! HOW’S THAT FOR TALK!” The screaming fishwife looked frantically for another rock.

“Kya, listen to me. I know you’re with Chase now. I respect that. I just want to talk with you. Please, Kya.”

“Why should I talk with you? I never want to see you again EVER!” She picked up a handful of smaller stones and slung them at his face.

He jerked to the side, bent forward, and grabbed the gunwale as his boat ran aground.



“I SAID, GET OUT OF HERE!” Still yelling but softer, she said, “Yes, I am with someone else now.” (p.161)

In the quote, Kya shows the use of projection as a defense mechanism when she blames Tate for her leaving. Kya feels deep anger and directs her feelings towards Tate by throwing stones. This is a form of projection as she deflects the anger and pain she feels towards the situation onto Tate, instead of facing her true feelings. Kya may be using projection to cope with deep insecurity and sadness. By blaming Tate and directing her anger towards him, she distracts from the feelings of hurt and internal conflict she is experiencing regarding their relationship ending. Projection allowed Kya to protect her self-esteem by shifting negative feelings onto Tate.

### **Conclusion**

After the analysis that has been carried out on Kya’s PTSD and Defense Mechanism as Represented in Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing*. Kya has PTSD caused by several traumatic experiences such as domestic violence, abandonment, bullying, isolation, rape and murder. All of these experiences Kya most dominantly experienced PTSD because of her family since she was a child. In adolescence she experienced PTSD because of her someone loved. After Kya experienced PTSD, Kya also showed symptoms of the effects of PTSD thus prolonging her trauma, flashbacks. In addition, these traumatic experiences created a heavy psychological burden for Kya, affecting her life and health emotionally and mentally.

The defense mechanisms identified by Sigmund Freud, such as denial, sublimation, and projection, played an important role in helping Kya overcome Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and survive. Kya employs denial to deal with the truth of the traumatic event she went through; sublimation to redirect her negative energy or focus on more productive and beneficial activities; and projection to project her own emotions onto other people, perceiving her own motivations or feelings in their actions. These defense mechanisms help Kya to adjust to difficult situations and find ways to survive due to the trauma she experienced. Since this research is limited to the character Kya as the main character who experiences post-traumatic stress disorder and how to overcome all the causes. Therefore, future researchers are expected to develop this analysis using the same topic or theory.



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