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Defense Mechanisms in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*: How Catherine Earnshaw Deals with Egocentricity

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Abstract

One of the crucial things in the novel is the personality of the character. Analyzing novel characters is an interesting approach in literary research. This study aims to determine the personality of Catherine Earnshaw, who is the protagonist of the novel Wuthering Heights. Catherine Earnshaw's personality, egocentric tendencies, and defense mechanisms are the main issues in this research. This study reveals the character description of Catherine Earnshaw, the kinds of egocentrism she experiences, and how she handles it with her defense mechanisms. This research belongs to library research which applied the qualitative research method. In addition, there are two types of data sources, namely primary data from Emily Bronte's novel Wuthering Heights and secondary data in the form of books, journals, and official sites related to research. This study applies Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalytic which shows three personality structures, namely the id, the ego, and the superego. The results show that Catherine Earnshaw has an egocentric tendency with five types, including egocentric memory, egocentric myopia, egocentric righteousness, egocentric blindness, and egocentric immediacy. In dealing with the tendency, Catherine balances with defense mechanisms in the form of denial, identification, repression, and rationalization.

Keywords: *defense mechanism; egocentric; psychoanalytic; Wuthering Heights novel*

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Introduction

Character is one of the main components in the novel besides the storyline, setting, theme, etc. One of the highlights of the characters in literary work is the different and unique personality proposed by the author. Character is a fictional character which is one of the intrinsic elements of the novel; the author can create character traits as a manifestation of the author's personal perspective, opinions, and messages to be conveyed in the novel (Baudry, 2017). Moreover, in the novel *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Bronte highlights the psychological deviations of the characters, aspects of social pressure, mental issues, strong

emotional depictions of the psychological state of the characters make *Wuthering Heights* filled with gothic elements in the story (Gorsky, 1999).

The study focuses on the issue of the defense mechanism of a certain character named Catherine Earnshaw dealing with her egocentricity in *Wuthering Heights* novel. Sharma et al. (2019) postulate that defense mechanisms are reactions produced unconsciously by the ego because of the contradiction between the desires of the id and the reality that is considered moral values and social norms. (Baumeister et al. (1998) state the defense mechanism produced by Sigmund Freud shows the central point in the ego's defense of instinct or desire produced by the id, which cannot admit by the ego.

Furthermore, Piaget defines egocentrism as the incapacity to differentiate among different people's mind and self-abstinent excusing (Nissa, Khoirun; Masturah, Alifah Nabilah; Faisal, 2019). Likewise, In the book 'The human mind; how it learns, how it mislearns' (Elder & Richard, 2004), the motive of egocentric is to gain self concerns and victimize the desires, rights and necessities of others. Whereas, from the point of view it can be explained that 'seeing myself as the center does the way to get what I want'. The researcher pointed out Catherine Earnshaw as the object of this study. Catherine is a protagonist figure in *Wuthering Heights*. Catherine Earnshaw's life in the novel is full of complex stories about her love story, the sacrifice of life, and her psychological problems.

Wuthering Heights is a novel by Emily Bronte under the pseudonym 'Ellis Bell'. *Wuthering Heights* is a novel that shows a series of social, economic events and a dark romantic love story (Balola & Ibrahim, 2017). The dark love story, social class, and hatred are the highlights of the story in the novel. Likewise, there are two facets of involvement that are built in the novel. First, the names of the houses *Wuthering Heights* and Trusschross Grange. Both of them have contrasting stories and atmospheres. Second, *Wuthering Heights* novel is a representation of gothic romance which contains emotional and sad stories (Özkara, 2011). Despite, Emily Bronte uses the weather as a manifestation of the depiction of the story in the novel, it makes the story more real and aesthetic in accordance with the clues for describing the characters and their characteristics (Tytler & Tytler, 2016)

In order to investigate Catherine Earnshaw's egocentric tendency and defense mechanisms, this study applies the Freudian psychoanalytic approach generated by Sigmund Freud, an Austrian Neurologist. (Syawal & Helaluddin, 2018) explains the human mind proposed by Sigmund Freud has three conscious characteristics, including conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. Later, to complete the mental state of the individual, Freud also added three aspects of structural personality, namely id, ego and, superego or also known as tripartite of personality. Therewith, in the approach of Freudian psychoanalytic deals with literary products from the author, one of the observations is about the personality of the characters in literary work, because sometimes readers of written literature can make literary figures as role models (Aras, 2015).

In consort with the *Wuthering Heights* novel, the previous study is divided into three kinds, the biographical author issue, the linguistic units, and the character issue. Newman (2018) has been observing *Death and Its Consequences in Wuthering Heights.* The author found that Emily Bronte's background, who lost loved ones as a child, influenced the writing of the novel with the character traits of dying one by one; it also affected the diction of the writing, which tended to the words death and murder, thus adding to the emotional impression in the novel.

Furthermore, from the linguistics unit, there is a study conducted by Dino (2018) entitled *The Themes of Evil and Revenge in Wuthering Heights a Novel by Emily Bronte*. The author uses text and thematic analysis and the results find that the theme of crime is produced from the tendency of revenge, the human nature such as egoism of the characters big up the series of mischief in the story. Afterward, there is a study about character issues raised by Balola & Ibrahim (2017) that investigates *The Portrayal of Heathcliff's Character in Wuthering*

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Heights. The study uses an analytic description approach that focuses on the main character named Heathcliff, who is described as a naive child at the beginning of the story but then represented as a major evil in the *Wuthering Heights* novel. The previous studies which mention above one similarity with this research is the object of research namely *Wuthering heights* novel. However, what distinguishes this research from the previous study is the theory or approach used, the characters studied, and the issues raised in the research that has not been studied before.

In accordance with the previous study, this study aims to analyze three main cases: 1) the description of Catherine Earnshaw's personality; 2) the causes that make Catherine Earnshaw become an egocentric person; 3) the defense mechanisms used by Catherine Earnshaw to balance her egocentricity.

Methodology

This research is qualitative research, which means that data is obtained through analyzing instead of statistical data. Pursuant to Aspers & Corte (2019), qualitative research focuses on the process of making a difference with various phenomena using new concept analysis. The object of this research is the novel *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë which was released in 1847. The researcher uses primary data and secondary data in this study, primary data is gained through the novel *Wuthering Heights*, while secondary data is acquired through journals, publication articles, theses, the internet and other sources related to novels.

The data collection in this study uses note-taking technique. The steps in collecting data include reading the novel to understanding the core of the story and the problems in the novel to find issue, selecting important data in the form of quotations and narratives in novels, taking notes to collecting data, categorizing the data that is suitable for research, the last is evaluating the data and making conclusions according to the analysis. Moreover, in analyzing data, it is used three techniques from Miles and Huberman (1994) which are data reduction which is selecting, simplifying, and focusing on the data that relate to the issue, the second one is data display including develops the study with the various valid data as the evidence, and the third is conclusion drawing and verification including to cross-check data that has been conducted so that can be coherence between results and issues.

Results and Discussion

Catherine Earnshaw's Background of Life

Catherine Earnshaw is described as the daughter of the Earnshaw family. A family who lives in a house called *Wuthering Heights* in Yorkshire, England. Catherine has an older brother namely Hindley Earnshaw. Catherine is depicted having a charming look, it is indicated in the narrative below.

> *A wild, wicked slip she was but she had the bonniest eye, the sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish* (Brontë, 1847, p. 52-53).

On the statement above, it is described physically and manner that Catherine is a naughty girl, but she has a charm with a sweet smile and pretty eyes. Moreover, The Earnshaw family life took a bit of a change when Mr. Earnshaw travels to Liverpool and brings home a black boy named Heathcliff. It is shown in the text below.

> *from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling in the house* (Brontë, 1847, p. 48).

In the quotation above, Heathcliff is known to have caused several problems at the house. For Catherine, he is only a gypsy boy, and she does not want to share a room with him.

Catherine Earnshaw's Social Relation

Social Relation between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff

Catherine Earnshaw hated Heathcliff when he first arrived, but they quickly bonded because their ages were not that far apart, Catherine grew closer to Heathcliff, and the two of them also became naughty children. After Mr. Earnshaw death, Heathcliff was tortured by Hindley Earnshaw, at that time Catherine helped Heathcliff's work and taught him to read.

They grew up teenagers together and promised each other to live wild and rough, as stated in the following sentence.

> "*They both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages"* (Brontë, 1847, p. 58).

The quotation above shows that both Catherine and Heathcliff choose to have a wild life into adulthood. this is due to the bitter experience that has been obtained so far with the harsh treatment of Hindley Earnshaw, the agreement is like revenge for not obeying the rules that bind them.

Social Relation Between Catherine Earnshaw dan Edgar Linton

Edgar Linton, the first child of the Linton family, owned the Thruscross Grange house, a distant neighbor of the Earnshaw family. Catherine Earnshaw becomes close after the incident with Catherine being bitten by the Linton family's pet dog. Catherine at the time was being treated and staying for several weeks at Thrusscross Grange. The closeness between Edgar and Catherine is getting closer because Edgar and his sister Isabella Linton sometimes visit *Wuthering Heights* and vice versa Catherine also visits Thruscross Grange. It is indicated on the narration below.

> *Catherine had kept up her acquaintance with the Lintons since her five-weeks' residence among them* (Brontë, 1847, p. 84).

The statement above shows that since living at Thrushcross Grange to rehabilitate from pain in her leg, Catherine has continued to visit the house and has become closer to the Linton family. Meanwhile, Edgar Linton who loves Catherine, eventually proposed Catherine to become his wife.

Social Relation between Catherine Earnshaw and Nelly Dean

Nelly Dean is a helper to the Earnshaw family, Nelly is also Catherine's childhood friend. Apart from taking care of the home and the necessities of the Earnshaw family, Nelly is also a story-sharing friend of Catherine, she tells everything about her problems, as follows.

> *'Nelly, will you keep a secret for me?' she pursued, kneeling down by me, and lifting her winsome eyes to my face with that sort of look which turns off bad temper, even when one has all the right in the world to indulge it* (Brontë, 1847, p. 98).

Catherine will ask to Nelly to give her advice on her problem. Even after Catherine married Edgar Linton, Nelly also takes care of Catherine's household life and also takes care of Catherine when she is experiencing a mental illness.

Structural of Catherine Earnshaw's Personality

Catherine Earnshaw's Id

Sharma et al. (2019) mentions that *id* is the origin physical needs of human which include instinctual impulses, preferences, and wishes, id only focus on achieving pleasure and reducing suffering without thinking about outer conditions. Additionally, Kenny (2017) states that *id* is the place withinside the unconscious human realm and distinct from the conscious mind. Catherine acts freely as she pleases and orders others to do as she orders, as stated in the following excerption.

> "*In play, she liked exceedingly to act the little mistress; using her hands freely, and commanding her companions"* (Brontë, 1847, p. 53).

The assertion above represents that Catherine has a tendency to need to grasp while gambling together along with her friends. Acting like a mistress, ordering and hitting her pals can deliver happiness to Catherine according to her id's wishes.

Catherine Earnshaw's Ego

Ego serves to activate defenses as components for dodge contradictions (Gelbard & Bruckner, 2012). In addition, (Kenny, 2017) mentions that the ego is a system that requires protection from the subconscious because the defense process produced by the ego is in a subconscious state. In this case, little Catherine

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speaks dirty and rude with a purpose, it is because her father is too disciplined, and Catherine's ego does not accept it, she only relies on her id. Likewise, when Catherine returns to *Wuthering Heights* after recovering from her illness, she prepares to meet Heathcliff. But after seeing Heathcliff dirty and ugly, Catherine laughs at Heathcliff. It can be seen through the following text.

> *'I did not mean to laugh at you,' she said; ... If you wash your face and brush your hair, it will be all right: but you are so dirty!'* (Brontë, 1847, p. 67).

In the text above, Catherine's ego thinks she should not touch Heathcliff even though she misses Heathcliff, Catherine is arrogant and verbally belittles Heathcliff.

Catherine Earnshaw's Superego

Superego indicates the existence of perfection, thus, the superego works with a moralistic criterion that is permitted in society (Sharma et al., 2019). Furthermore, superego values are instilled in individuals through the people around them, especially parents, so that these individuals have benchmarks regarding community values (Kenny, 2017). Little Catherine who is so naughty and wild sometimes shows her guilt by crying and apologizing especially to the two helpers at *Wuthering Heights* namely Nelly and Joseph, as stated in the following quotation.

> *...and she laughed if I told her to say she was sorry for her faults, and beg to be forgiven* (Brontë, 1847, p. 53-54).

On the excerption above represents that little Catherine with her impolite personality sometimes feels guilty for her behavior and asks people to forgive her, that is an instance of her superego. Catherine also did not forget to sing a song to her father before going to bed, kiss his hand and say 'good night' to her father. According to Nelly's view, even though Catherine is a naughty girl, she never hated anyone.

Causes of Catherine Earnshaw's Egocentricity

Nissa, Masturah & Faisal (2019) mention that one element of the emergence of egocentricity is the worry, whether it is the worry of loss, worry of abandonment, or worry of rejection. People who felt abandoned will easily be fearful, to conquer this situation the individual will generally tend to take care of themselves. In their book 'The guide of the human mind; how it learns; how it mislearns' (Elder & Richard., 2004) suggests the division of egocentric nature which is divided into eight types, namely egocentric memory, myopia, truth, hypocrisy, oversimplification, blindness, immediacy, and absurdity. This study has found five types of egocentric experienced by Catherine Earnshaw, there are:

Egocentric Memory

Egocentric memory is one of the tendencies to overlook information that does not assist individual's idea and hopes, along only remember matters that support it (Elder & Richard., 2004). Catherine experiences egocentric memory in three situations. The first is when Heathcliff fled from *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine thought that she was the only one who was the most miserable, whereas, it was Catherine who hurt Heathcliff. The second, when Catherine had a fight with Edgar Linton, Catherine felt that she was always hurt, and said she would not take revenge, on the other hand, Edgar felt hurt because Catherine kept seeing Heathcliff. The third was when Catherine had a fight with Isabella Linton, the only sentence that Catherine brought up was because Isabella called her a manger dog.

Egocentric Myopia

Egocentric myopia is an egocentric represents narrow believing but pushes it to think absolutely from its own point of view (Elder & Richard., 2004). Catherine experiences egocentric memory in three situations. The first time when Catherine proposed to Edgar, Catherine had accepted but was still hesitant because, she chose Edgar only because of the prestigious and rich Linton family. The second is that Catherine loves Heathcliff but thinks if

she marries Heathcliff, then her dignity will demean. The third is that Catherine thinks if she marries Edgar Linton, she can use her husband's wealth to save Heathcliff.

Egocentric Righteousness

Egocentric Righteousness is a tendency to feel or consider that only oneself is right or has the correctness (Elder & Richard., 2004). Catherine runs into egocentric righteousness in two circumstances. The first was when she had a fight with Heathcliff and Edgar Linton, Catherine felt that she was the only one in the right and blamed everyone for behaving like the devil and only herself being miserable. The second is when finished fighting with Heathcliff and Edgar, Catherine tries to make the two people feel guilty by hurting her, considering they love Catherine very much.

Egocentric Blindness

Egocentric blindness is a tendency to disregard correctness that are opposite to the reliance of the individual (Elder & Richard., 2004). Catherine run into egocentric blindness in two conditions. The first time when she agreed to accept Edgar Linton's proposal, Catherine felt it was the best decision without thinking that she could hurt Heathcliff. The second is when Heathcliff visits Thruscross Grange after missing for years, Catherine is too enthusiastic to welcome and too adoring Heathcliff and makes Edgar as her husband jealous.

Egocentric Immediacy

Egocentric immediacy is an egocentric which conveys generalized feelings to be the same and overstate, so while crossing one or two pleasant or unpleasant conditions, everything will look like the same feels for the oneself (Elder & Richard., 2004). Catherine Earnshaw experienced egocentric immediacy in two situations. The first is when Catherine had fight with Edgar, Catherine generalizes her feelings hysterically saying that Edgar does not love her and does not get affection from the people around her. The second is when Catherine is sick, she suddenly thinks that she is the most miserable victim of Heathcliff and Edgar Linton.

How Catherine Earnshaw Faces Her Egocentric Tendency

Maulidya (2018) conveys that one of the standards of coping with troubles is seeking out opportunities for second options, moreover, the elements that impact people in coping with troubles are incorrect moves and emotions that come up. Catherine in dealing with her egocentric tendencies, controls them in two ways, the first is feelings that follow her egocentricity and the second is defense mechanisms to balance her egocentricity.

Feelings That Follow Egocentric Tendency

Defensiveness

Defensiveness is a responsive behavior carried out by individuals when under pressure from outside in terms of the individual's weaknesses (Stamp et al., 1992). Catherine did defensiveness in two ways, the first when she was little, she denied her father who told Catherine to be a good child by asking her father back. It is indicated on the following narrative.

> *'Why canst thou not always be a good lass, Cathy?' And she turned her face up to his, and laughed, and answered, 'Why cannot you always be a good man, father?'* (Brontë, 1847, p. 54).

In the dialogue above, Catherine used her defense to prevent answering the question from her father, so she chose to ask the same matter back to her father. The second situation is when Catherine pinches Nelly's hand, Catherine tries to cover up the fact by saying that Nelly is a liar.

Anger

Anger is a main emotion having adjust functions connected to survival mechanisms that are psychological, biological and social nature (Novaco, 2020). In dealing with survival warnings, anger provides to deppress soreness, fear, and shame. One of the times when Catherine was angry with Edgar Linton for not visiting her when she was sick. It shows on the following text.

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> *'Ah! you are come, are you, Edgar Linton?' she said, with angry animation. 'You are one of those things that are ever found when least wanted, and when you are wanted, never!* (Brontë, 1847, p. 163).

The quotation above displays that Catherine is angry with Edgar through her facial expressions and by giving sarcasm that Edgar does not care about his wife.

Resentment

MacLachlan (2010) postulates that from an emotional point of view, resentment can be interpreted as an adaptive reaction to a situation that suppresses an individual, one way to express it is to act in a certain way to release disturbing feelings. Catherine run into this feeling when she felt belittled by Nelly, as follows.

> '*I hate you to be fidgeting in MY presence,' exclaimed the young lady imperiously* (Brontë, 1847, p. 88).

In the narration above, Catherine expresses explicitly hate at Nelly's presence when Heathcliff came to Thrusscross Grange, Catherine feels disturbed by Nelly's presence.

Depression

According to (Milne R. and Munro M., 2020) state that several indicates of depression such as sorrow, desperation, and lapse of interest in activities that can cause enjoyment. It deals with Catherine's psyche, starting when Heathcliff runs away from *Wuthering Heights* owing to Catherine's words. After the incident, Catherine had a prolonged fever, and doctors suggested the people around Catherine not to go against her desires. This keeps on even when Catherine was already married to Edgar when her wish was not satisfied, Catherine began to indicate depression. Catherine experienced a period of emotional change when her mental illness worsen. Aside, when Catherine's depression began to recur, she even gritted her teeth, tore out the pillow with her teeth, and was scared to see her reflection in the mirror. When she was sick, Catherine who was initially buffled turned into madness.

Defense Mechanisms Formed by Catherine Earnshaw

Freud defined the defense mechanism as the process by which the ego defends its existence by resisting aggressive impulses that invade the normative of ego (Baumeister et al., 1998). Defense mechanisms are also interpreted as a series of mental functioning which maintains the suffer of belief and has an effect on awareness in reality (Cramer, 2000). In addition, (Elder & Richard., 2004) state there are nine kinds of defense mechanisms including denial, identification, projection, repression, rationalization, stereotyping, scapegoating, sublimation, and wishful thinking. In this research, the researcher has found five defense mechanisms by Catherine Earnshaw in dealing with her egocentric tendencies, including:

Denial

Denial is an attitude of rejection of the real facts because of an unfulfilled self-perception (Warkey et al., 2020). Catherine did denial when she was baffled when Edgar proposed to her, at first she admitted to praising Edgar and try to hide her love for Heathcliff, but at last, she knew that what she did was wrong, as the following text.

> *'HERE! and HERE!' replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead, and the other on her breast: 'in whichever place the soul lives. In my soul and in my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong!'* (Brontë, 1847, p. 100).

On the text above, it states that Catherine was trying to refuse that she did not love Heathcliff, she hid the fact and tried to express her belief that marrying Edgar was the best decision. The second denial is when Nelly advised Catherine about her fight with Edgar, but Catherine tried to conceal her faults and maintain her self-image by saying Edgar was childish and disorganized the conversation by praising Heathcliff.

Identification

Identification tends to imitate the characteristics of others as one's own, this can

increase one's satisfaction because they feel they have privilege or prestige in front of others (Elder & Richard., 2004). Catherine Earnshaw's identification is the way she dressed and conducted herself very dissimilar after she returned to *Wuthering Heights* from Thrushcross Grange. The silk clothes which she wore, the gesture and the manner are changed made it seem as she is part of an upper-class society like the Linton family. It is proven through the following narration.

> *I removed the habit, and there shone forth beneath a grand plaid silk frock, white trousers, and burnished shoes, and while her eyes sparkled joyfully* (Brontë, 1847, p. 65).

In the narration above, the identification made by Catherine was to show that she was not the wicked and wild girl anymore. She shows it with highlights of the silk dress and is well-mannered.

Repression

A repression is a form of intimidating concealment, feelings of anxiety, unwanted circumstances, undesirable wishes that disturb the subconscious (Warkey et al., 2020). Catherine shows this defense when Heathcliff accidentally hears all the bad objects Catherine has said about him while Catherine is speaking in secret with Nelly in the kitchen. Catherine unconsciously said right away that she forgot all the things she said to Nelly about Heathcliff. It is indicated on the text below.

> *'I wonder where he is I wonder where he can be! What did I say, Nelly? I've forgotten* (Brontë, 1847, p. 106).

Catherine, feeling lost to Heathcliff, pleaded unrighteously and had forgotten what she had said about Heathcliff in secret with Nelly. Catherine's annoying feeling made her forget what she was saying.

Rationalization

Anna Freud defines rationalization as a strategy used by looking for a logical motive for an action to test reality (Zepf, 2011). Catherine did rationalization when Heathcliff was locked up by Hindley Earnshaw so he could not take part in the party with little Lintons, but Catherine made the initiative to reassure Hindley, it can be seen through the narration.

> *I did not call her unfeeling long for I perceived she was in purgatory throughout the day, and wearying to find an opportunity of getting by herself, or paying a visit to Heathcliff, who had been locked up by the master.... In the evening we had a dance. Cathy begged that he might be liberated then as Isabella Linton had no partner her entreaties were vain* (Brontë, 1847, p. 74-75).

Catherine build an alibi because at the dance party Isabella Linton did not have a pair. Besides, Catherine's real reason was to escape Heathcliff from Hindley's punishment.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis that has been discussed in the finding and discussion section, the researcher concluded several conclusions. First, the character of Catherine Earnshaw in Emily Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights* is described physically as a naughty girl but has a charming face. Catherine was born in the Earnshaw family, the owner of Wuthering Heights home. Pointed from her social relationship with the people around her, Catherine Earnshaw indicates kind of a difference in behaving toward them. Catherine has two distinct sides to show, it is like an inconsistent attitude. The first one is her wild and savage side toward people closest to her, and the second one is the charm and elegance that she does in the Linton family.

Second, Catherine Earnshaw's egocentric tendencies are due to her feelings, wishes, and conception which approve herself according to her desires. This is what affects her mental condition and bad social relations with the people around her. Catherine Earnshaw's five egocentric tendencies are egocentric memory, egocentric myopia, egocentric righteousness, egocentric blindness, and egocentric immediacy.

Third, while facing her egocentric tendencies, Catherine Earnshaw will release feelings that will follow egocentric desires that

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do not satisfied in reality, Catherine Earnshaw's feelings include defensiveness, anger, resentment, and depression. Alongside, other efforts made by Catherine include forming an ego defense mechanism to deal with her egocentric tendencies, among which the defense mechanisms are: denial, identification, repression, rationalization.

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