

Identity integration in Steven Spielberg's *Catch Me If You Can* (2002)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the four types of identity integration and the affection to the main character in Steven Spielberg's film *Catch Me If You Can* (2002). It elucidates the psychological illness that led to the main character's multiple identities in the film. Identity is a complicated topic these days, and it has become one of the most debated topics. Frank William Abagnale Jr., the primary character in this story, is a promising young man with complicated family concerns. As a result, various issues during Frank's adolescence contributed to his psychological condition. The research is a psychoanalytic analysis that employs Erik Erikson's (1902) psychological theory as well as Warren Buckland's (1966) and Timothy Heiderich's cinematographic language. The findings show that Frank William Abagnale Jr. suffers from a psychological condition. His symptoms of identity disintegration are primarily due to a family situation that he was dealing with at the time of his adolescence, and it has an impact on his future. He must impersonate other people's identities in order to overcome his breakdown. As a result, Frank William Abagnale Jr., the movie's main character, is insane since he gets millions of dollars before he is nineteen.

Keywords: identity integration; psychoanalysis; adolescence; fraud; cinema

INTRODUCTION

At the moment, determining one's identity is a difficult task. What is known as identity can be described in a variety of ways. Personal characteristics or attributes that cannot naturally be stated in terms of a social category, according to James Fearon (1999). In some settings, specific categories might be regarded as "identities," even if no one considers them to be important to their identity. Identity, according to Erikson, is a "*developing configuration or structure, arising from consecutive ego syntheses and resyntheses during the life span*" (Kroger, 2015). Many elements influenced identity, including social background, family, friends, and school. The structural aspects of the social milieu have a significant impact on individual career development (Neuenschwander & Kracke, 2011). Adolescents build identity (Marcia, 2001), which means that when someone investigates something, they will learn something about commitments that they have never known before. Identity formation is also influenced by childhood (Marcia, 2001). Because we are socially connected, and our continual experience of being recognized within these interactions matters most for who we become, someone may have different forms of identities till he died in that instance (Kerpelman & Pittman, 2018). It is not a problem to have numerous social identities (Cheng et al., 2008). In some cases, an individual's identity may conflict with that of a group of people (Cheng et al., 2008).

According to Janusz Kaminski in an interview with John Pavlus at American Cinematographer, this study looked at the portrayal of identity integration in a film based on the memoirs of Frank William Abagnale Jr. with a 1960s background setting (*American Cinematographer: Catch Me If You Can*, 2003). The original narrative, written by Frank William Abagnale Jr. and published in 1980, was adapted into a film directed by Steven Spielberg and released in December 2002 with the same title. The screenplay was written by Jeff Nathanson. Tom Hanks plays Carl Hanratty, an excellent FBI agent, and Leonardo DiCaprio plays Frank William Abagnale Jr., the primary character. The film received a number of accolades, including: BAFTA Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role, National Society of Film Critics Award for Best Supporting Actor, BMI Film Music Award, Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Director, Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Actor in a Supporting

Role, Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Score, ADG Excellence in Production Design Awards - Contemporary Film, Movie Award for Best Score (Catch Me If You Can, n.d.-a).

Catch Me If You Can (2002) tells the narrative of a young guy who struggles with family and social challenges, which have a significant impact on his psychology and identity. Frank was noted as a gifted young guy who struggled with his family's finances. His father had a tax issue with the banks, and his mother divorced him (Abagnale, Jr., 1980). Frank's life began to crumble, so he resolved to save his family by fleeing home to earn some money. He discovered that making money was difficult when he lacked privilege. One day, he noticed a Pan Am pilot flanked by a lovely stewardess who was personable and well-liked by all.

Frank 'wants' to be a pilot and goes out of his way to learn everything he can about them, including taking the Pan Am pilot's outfit (Abagnale, Jr., 1980). He forges Pan Am payroll checks while impersonating an aircraft pilot. Frank had already earned four million dollars before he was nineteen by impersonating a pilot, doctor, Assistant Attorney General, and forging checks from those professions.

He rose to become America's greatest and youngest impostor. After a four-year manhunt conducted by Carl Hanratty, the FBI apprehended him. During Frank's arrest, Carl produced a fraud check from his new case and showed it to him. Frank could tell right away that the check was a forgery because of his years of experience as a check counterfeiter. He also knew exactly where the phony component was. Carl persuaded the FBI to let Frank work in the FBI's bank fraud units, and he worked with Carl for years, developing a close bond with him.

As previously indicated, this study will assess the literary work utilizing Erik Erikson's identity integration theory. The theory explained how to think about and develop the complexity of identity integration, which articulates multiple layers of integration (Syed & McLean, 2016). The main character in *Catch Me If You Can* impersonates multiple identities in a short period of time during his adolescence. Each type of integration grows and develops in relation to other crucial developmental tasks (Syed & McLean, 2016). Frank believes that each character he attempted to impersonate was the best version of himself at the time, allowing him to continue living and elude the FBI. Frank's adventure impacted his personality and altered his mental state, resulting in his current identity.

Several recent studies employed identity issues to reveal the compilation and issues related to the literary works helped the writer understand identity theory. Those studies are *The Representation of Malcolm River's Dissociative Identity Disorder in Identity Movie Directed by James Mangold* by Abdul Rohim & Indra Wibowo (2017) and *DID on Kevin Wendell Crumb Characters Split Movie* by Cicih Nuraeni & Trosahlan Silaban (2018). Rohim & Wibowo used the library research method to identify the identity issues in the movie. While Nuraeni & Silaban used different theories. They used psychoanalysis theory as a literary approach to reveal the issue. Both literary studies used similar ways to discuss the topic by attaching the movie scene, using cinematic and narrative aspects related to issues that have been discussed to help the readers understand the topic.

This study concerns four distinct forms of identity integration based on Erik Erikson's theory about identity integration and examines how Frank Jr.'s identity was influenced by his adolescence and find the connection between identities that he has with Frank's personality. According to (Syed & McLean, 2016), there will be four forms in analyzing identity integration: contextual, ego, temporal, and person-society. This article discussed several questions such as: How is identity integration depicted in *Steven Spielberg's Catch Me If You Can*? And how does identity integration affect the main character's personality?

METHOD

The analysis in this article was based on Erik Erikson's psychoanalytic hypothesis. According to Moin Syed and Kate C. McLean's article in the Journal of Adolescence titled Understanding identity integration: Theoretical, methodological, and applied challenges, the research looked at four types of identity integration: contextual, ego, temporal, and person-society (Syed & McLean, 2016). In addition,

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to examine the language of cinema in the film, this study used Cinematography Techniques: The Different Types of Shots in Film (Heiderich, 2012) and Film Studies An Introduction (Buckland, 2015). Frank William Abagnale Jr., the main character from *Catch Me If You Can*, is the individual who is evaluated utilizing these four forms.

The study studied the dialog between characters and movie language utilizing movie scripts and pictures from movie scenes as data sources to examine the language of cinema-related issues mentioned using the theory in this study. The writer began by seeing the film and reading the script multiple times until he or she grasped the theme, storyline, and tale. The next stage was to annotate the dialog and scenes in order to offer the readers an understanding of the relationship between the movie and the study's topics.

The investigation then moved on to the relationship between those four points and Frank's personality. The protagonist is a teen who is dealing with severe family concerns as well as bank issues. Frank resolved to flee and acquire some money in order to preserve his family, even if it meant becoming an FBI wanted man.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Contextual integration: multiple identity domains

In the movie, the main character tends to impersonate other people's identity to deal with a particular situation that he faced, which is called integration across context. Frank William Abagnale Jr. had several issues in his life, living in small apartments and an unharmonious family, not to mention that his father had tax problems. One day, he learned something from his father when they wanted to borrow a suit. It can be seen from the following scene:



Figure 1.1. (Spielberg, 2002, 00:13:57)

DARCY

I'm sorry. We don't loan suits, and we're not open.

As she closes the door, Frank Sr. takes a small GOLD NECKLACE OUT OF HIS POCKET, holds it up to the glass.

FRANK SR.

Is this yours, Darcy? I just found it in the parking lot?

Darcy stares at the necklace through the door.

14 EXT. - NEW YORK CITY. - DAB O 14

The Cadillac is parked somenh

Frank, now wearing a BLACK SUIT. (Nathanson, 2002: 13)

His father lies to Darcy to let him borrow a suit that is not supposed to allow to be borrowed. Nevertheless, Frank's father knew how to get a woman's heart by giving them some gifts. In this scene,

it was a gold necklace. From the angle shot, this scene is considered a medium shot where the audience sees all of the characters and how they interact with each other (Heiderich, 2012).

On the first day at school, Frank got bullied by some senior students. They bumped him until his books fell, but Frank did nothing. When he entered the classroom, he saw students that bumped him earlier and managed to get them by pretending to be a substitute teacher. The scene is as the following:



Figure 1.2. (Spielberg, 2002, 00:19:27)

Frank walks toward the black writes his name on the board -- MR. ABAGNALE. HE SACK OF AN ERASER against the board to get the students a n.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Listen up, class. My name is Mr. Abagnale and I'll be your substitute today. Would somebody please tell me where you left off in your text book? (Nathanson, 2002: 20-21)

In the scene above, using close-up shot, Frank's figure was shot from behind and looked bigger than everyone in the class. It represents that Frank was superior and had a more significant impact on the scene (Buckland, 2015). The close shot to Frank's character also strengthens his presence (Heiderich, 2012). Everyone in the class did not believe him at first, but later, he acted like a teacher who believed the whole classroom. Frank also asked the student he bumped with to read phrases on the book in front of the class. It can be witnessed from the following scene:



Figure 1.3. (Spielberg, 2002, 00:20:31)

Listen up, class. My name is Mr. Abagnale and I'll be your substitute today. Would somebody please tell me where you left off in your text book?

GIRL

Chapter seven.

FRANK

Open your books to chapter eight, read quietly to yourselves. (Nathanson, 2002: 21)

Furthermore, by using close up and angles, he was amused when he saw a pilot walking down the street with few flight attendants around him. People praised him and saw him like an angel, everyone including Frank. The lighting in this scene shows that the pilot is brighter than everyone because the director wants the audience to focus on how the pilot figure looks (Buckland, 2015). On that day, he decided that he wanted to be a pilot to get all of those privileges. It can be seen from the following scene:



Figure 1.4. (Spielberg, 2002, 00:31:54)

FRANK (V.O.)

Dear Dad...I've decided to become an airline pilot. I've applied at all (Nathanson, 2002: 38)

He pretends to be a “real pilot” and steals the Pan Am pilot’s uniform to support his role as a pilot. Everyone is amused by his new appearance, a young pilot with a pretty face. He finally felt what he was never felt before, and people did not look him down anymore. Now, Frank could cash some checks without any trouble because people think that he is a Pan Am pilot. He started to make his pilot paycheck and earned thousands of dollars as time went by. Enjoy living as a “pilot,” Frank is addicted to his new behavior: impersonating identity. He learned that he could have a better life if Frank pretends to be someone else according to the social environment and benefits from the identities he impersonated. Besides money, Frank also gained knowledge and skills that will affect his personality and career in his future life.

Temporal integration: identities through time

After years of experience, Frank’s identity starts to be shaped. However, only temporal identity holds the combination of previous identities. Frank learned a lot of new skills and knowledge during his adolescence. Being a Pan Am pilot made him know about airlines and the paycheck system. He also improved his ‘acting’ skills, and even the senior FBI agent was fooled by him when he almost got caught in a hotel room. As the following scene:



Figure 2.1. (Spielberg, 2002, 00:52:33)

FRANK

Relax, buddy, you're late. My name is Johnson, Secret Service. Our boy just tried to climb out the window

--

my partner has him cuffed in the alley downstairs. (Nathanson, 2002: 67)

87 CONTINUED: 87

FRANK

You think the FBI are the only ones tracking this guy.

We've been following a paper trail for months, almost had him in New York.

Would you mind taking that gun out of my face, it makes me nervous. (Nathanson, 2002: 68)

Again, this shot uses a medium shot to show that even though they have a tense situation, Frank is still calm and considers it a normal conversation (Heiderich, 2012). He convinced the FBI agent that he was from another department that tracked this young man who cashed a fake check worth thousands of dollars. Frank pretended that he was the one who captured him first, while actually, Frank is whom the FBI is searching for. The way he talked was so calm, and he also gave some facts that proved he was not the wanted person, such as when another person was carrying someone into the car. Frank realized that it could be a good excuse and fact to support his temporary role as a "Secret Service agent." When Carl, the FBI agent, realized something suspicious with Frank, he had already run away.

5 CONTINUED: 5

INSIDE THE CELL

CLOSE ON FRANK ABAGNALE JR.

His face covered by a beard and matted black hair. Frank closes his eyes and starts to cough.

FRANK

Help me, please. I can't breathe...

OUTSIDE THE CELL

Joe listens to Frank, who is coughing so hard he starts to choke.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Can't... breathe... (Nathanson, 2002: 6)



Figure 2.2. (Spielberg, 2002, 00:06:02)

At the beginning of the movie, he was captured in French prison right after Carl arrested him at a factory located at Frank's mom's hometown, Montrichard. Frank was shot behind bars in poor condition during this scene. The audience can see that he was suffering, supported by close-up angles and lightning that cut through the character means that the character is in turmoil (Buckland, 2015). Carl wanted him to be judged on America, so he visited Frank and checked his condition. He was found to almost dies due to inadequate and poor condition. Carl asked the officer to give Frank medical treatment as soon as possible. Frank was moved to another chamber, lying down in a bed while Carl tried to get him back to his nation by arguing with the head office. In the middle conversation, Frank was already escaped. Once again, he fooled the whole room full of police officers and FBI agents. Even though he could not run far away, he still escaped. This behavior represents his temporal identity that consists of his experience. His previous life phases influenced Frank's present identity. Besides, the social environment and parents also significantly impacted him. He used to be a quiet boy, and a few years later, he became one of the most wanted in the United States because of check forgery and caused a great loss for several companies.

SINCE HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON IN Z, FRANK HAS HELPED THE FBI CAPTURE SOME OF THE WORLDS MOST ALLUSIVE CHECK FORGERS AND COUNTERFEITERS. FRANK HAS ALSO DEVELOPED MANY OF THE SECURITY FEATURES THAT BANK USE TO PREVENT CHECK FRAUD.

(Nathanson, 2002: 161)



Figure 2.3. (Spielberg, 2002, 02:15:00)

The director used the establishing shot in this final scene to let the audience observe the relation between the main subject, Frank, and Carl, sitting on a desk discussing a new case and surrounded by co-workers in a busy office (Buckland, 2015).

At the end of the story, Frank is arrested by the FBI and given the punishment worth his crimes. Then, Carl saw something special about Frank, and it was his skills of knowing about fake checks and the probability of someone behind it. Years of experience made Frank become an expert. With just a

glance, he could tell if there were something wrong with that check, and he also exposed the material or what that check was made of. The FBI was interested in Frank's skill, so they decided to be a better person by working at the FBI in the same division as Carl. He had to work under Carl's supervision because Carl was the only person that knew Frank better than anyone. He managed to escape again, but Carl believed Frank was a good kid, so he let him go. As he expected, Frank returned to the FBI and started to cooperate with him, dealing with many checks' forgery cases.

Ego integration: time and context

Ego integration is the combination of both forms that has been discussed before: context and time (Syed & McLean, 2016). This form reflects how the character makes sense of their evolving coordination of multiple identity domains over time (Syed & McLean, 2016), in this case, Frank. According to Frank's problem or context, he realized that he had multiple identities and impersonated other identities when he met his father after becoming a "pilot.". It can be seen from the following scene:



Figure 3.1. (Spielberg, 2002, 00:45:19)

FRANK

I bought you a Cadillac. Frank motions to the car, holds up the keys.

K (cont' d) ission.

She goes an hour.

It bty speedometer. Frank Sr. (Nathanson, 2002: 58)

He could earn thousands of dollars without great effort, so he bought a new car for his father. Frank's appearance also changed: with the suit he wore during lunch at a fancy restaurant. His life was changed, followed by his personality. However, deep down inside, he was just a youth who loved his family and tried to make everything back to normal. He still remembered that his father used to have a Cadillac, so he bought him a Cadillac. He also asked about his mother, who left the house and left his father alone. Frank believed that he could help his father get her back by fixing their economic problem. Nevertheless, his father knew that it was useless to get their mom back because she already had new life, a new home, and a new family.

Another moment is when Frank found that he could make a phone call to the FBI office without getting in any trouble. He was at Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York; feeling alone and blue, Frank decided to call an FBI agent that he met before. In this scene, Frank was shot from a different angle, and it was called God's eye view, where the character was shot from a high angle and suggested the implicit meaning of helplessness (Buckland, 2015).



Figure 3.2. (Spielberg, 2002, 01:04:14)

“FRANK

Hello, Joe.

JOE SHAYE

Who is this?

FRANK

Johnson, Secret Service.

Joe sits up at his desk, grabs a pencil and paper.

JOE SHAYE

John Doe 2172?

FRANK

I've been trying to track you down for a couple of hours. Did you know that most people in the FBI have no idea who you are or what you do? (Nathanson, 2002: 73)

Frank calls the FBI agent (Carl/ Joe) by phone to connect with him after they met for the first time. After a short conversation, they start to know each other. Frank knew his capability. He knew that the FBI had hunted him, yet he still reached Carl's office phone to have a friendly short chat. Frank knew that at the moment, Carl would not be able to catch him because he could run away quickly. However, at the end of their conversation, he asked Carl to stop chasing him, saying that he was just a kid who wanted to live peacefully by making much money for him and his beloved family.

Person-society integration: individuals in social contexts

This form of identity is focused on how social culture affects individual identity and shapes the way of thinking and perspective. Frank's father was one of the most supporting characters that affect Frank's personality and identity in this story. Frank loves him and tries to be a man like his father, with respect and honor. Upon Frank's acknowledgment, about was a life lesson from his father's experience, including how to read any situation and through with it, the principle of life where he could be anything or anyone but do not forget about who he was. This scene also uses God's eye view to implicitly tell the audience that Frank is just a kid that receives checks as his birthday gift from his father.

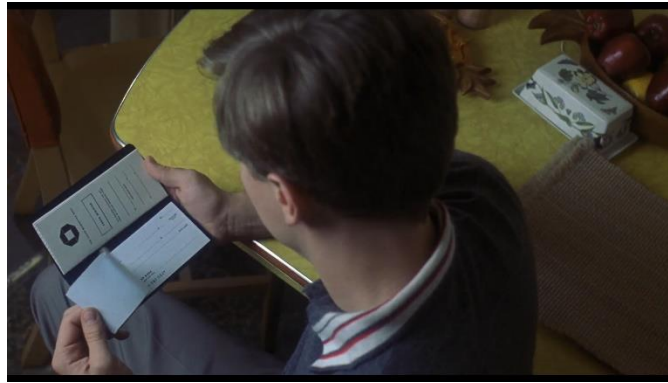


Figure 4 (Spielberg, 2002, 00:18:10)

22 CONTINUED: 22

FRANK SR. (cont'd)

I opened a checking account in your name. I put twenty-five dollars in the account so you can buy whatever you want. Don't tell you mother.

Frank slowly opens the CHECKBOOK, sees his name at the top of the first check.

FRANK

But they turned down your loan?

FRANK SR.

Yeab. They all turned me down.

FRANK

So why open a bank account with them?

FRANK SR.

Because one day you'll want something from these people -- a house, a car -- they have all the money. There's a hundred check ere, Frank, which means from i day on -- you're in. (Nathanson, 2002: 19)

Frank's insight about bank and the way he uses check as payment was taken from his father's background. Instead, Frank used this knowledge for his entire life in this story. He always uses bank checks every time he needs money. Frank also learned how to fake a check because it was easier to cash it out. Even when he changed his identity, he always had a check in his pocket.

Before he was arrested, he ran a considerable printing machine at a warehouse and printed a lot of fake checks. He used to make it by hand, but he already made it on a huge scale. Thus, it means that he could produce fake checks that can be cashed without any problem. Moreover, it was tough to identify whether the check was fake or not. For the rest of his life, he worked for the FBI and cooperated with many banks worldwide to make each check from every bank that was nearly impossible to be faked. Because Frank already knew everything about the check, from making it and analyzing it. He earns millions of dollars from that job. All of that because his father taught him how checks and banks work.

CONCLUSION

Erik Erickson's four forms of identity integration also reveal the cause for Frank's actions. Aside from temporal identity, all types of identity, starting with contextual, ego, and person-society, have revealed the details of Frank's disintegrating identities. Frank's copy behavior was explored in contextual integration, while Frank's inner psychology and interaction with society were discussed in ego and person-society. Temporal identity is a composite of all of Frank's identities that created his final form, an identity that holds all of Frank's prior identities and connects his past and future selves.

In this movie, the director also uses close-up shots and angles in this film to imply to the spectator that he is the central character. Aside from conversation and conduct, it can also convey Frank's feelings and build his character in this film. The close-up shot further accentuates Frank's expression in the film, as well as several of the characters he played. Frank also shot from God's eye

view in a few situations, reminding the spectator of how little and powerless Frank is in this enormous planet. He was simply a young boy with erratic emotions that influenced his demeanor. The way Frank was portrayed in this film allows the audience to sense the main character's emotions.

Frank's pain and strain from his fractured family contributed to his unstable mental state. He was fleeing his home to find a way to earn money so he could return to his family and his home by impersonating other people. He chose to become a pilot because he saw the enormous potential for earning a lot of money and having a lot of prestige in that field. He became a "pilot" a few months later and earned thousands of dollars by cashing fraudulent checks from the flight firm he "worked" for. Frank realized that changing his identity may be extremely beneficial to his life, so he began impersonating different professions such as doctor, teacher, and prosecutor. He altered his identity depending on the situation and situation he was in. That was his strategy of surviving in any situation. However, there are hazards in everything; in this case, the FBI judged his actions to be criminal.

After years, Frank turned into a professional in check fraud, made the FBI interested in his talent and skill, then asked him to work for them in fraud check units.

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