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## Redefining “Luck” As Ego - Defense Mechanism Of Main Character In Luck (2022) Movie

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### ABSTRACT

Freud's psychoanalysis provides useful insights into how characters deal with internal conflict and emotional distress together. This study explores the animated film *Luck* (2022) through the perspective of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, with a particular emphasis on the psychological ego defense mechanisms. Freud's structural model of the human mind, which includes the id, ego, and superego, offers a framework for comprehending the character's ongoing misfortune. Sam, the protagonist, struggles with her insecurities and emotional problems, and her misfortune represents internal psychological conflicts. Sam's defense mechanisms, which include projection, displacement, and rationalization, protect her from emotional pain while fueling her desire for luck. The id fuels her desire to protect her friend Hazel from loneliness, whereas the ego helps her cope with failures through displacement and rationalization. The superego eventually leads her to self-acceptance and emotional maturity. The analysis redefines luck in the film as a metaphor for Sam's psychological journey, showing how she progresses from unconscious instinct to moral clarity, ultimately portraying luck as an expression of personal resilience and self-discovery.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literary analysis is an intellectual exploration that invites readers to delve beneath the surface of a text and find layers of meaning embedded within its narrative. It goes beyond simple storytelling by encouraging audiences to actively participate in interpreting and building the meaning of a work. In this context, psychoanalytic theory, particularly Sigmund Freud's ideas, provides an effective tool for deciphering hidden meanings within a story or revealing deeper insights into the author's intentions (Lye, 1996). Freud's psychoanalytic model divides the human mind into three core components: the id, superego, and ego, each of which is motivated by unconscious desires that shape human behavior and perception.

In the animated film *Luck* (2022), the protagonist's persistent misfortune serves as a compelling platform for applying Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The character's constant bad luck throughout the movie can be interpreted as a manifestation of her psychological struggles, particularly her defense mechanisms against underlying insecurities and

unresolved emotional issues. Freud's structural model, which includes the instinct-driven id, the morally guided superego, and the reality-based ego, offers a useful lens for investigating how these unconscious forces influence the character's decisions and emotional responses.

Several studies have used various theoretical frameworks to analyze different films and literary works, providing a diverse foundation for analyzing the animated film *Luck* (2022). The *Semiotics of Luck: Interpreting Visual Metaphors in Animated Film* employs Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to identify the symbolic meanings behind visual metaphors, such as the four-leaf clover and the widespread use of green, which represent cultural notions of luck and fortune. This is consistent with the symbolic analysis conducted in *Luck*, in which visual cues play an important role in advancing the narrative. Similarly, the study of Sam and Bob Utterances in *Luck Movie: A Study of Speech Act Analysis* uses Searle's theory of illocutionary acts, revealing how directive and assertive speech acts dominate character interactions, reflecting the characters' intentions and the impact of dialogue on plot progression. This linguistic focus complements psychological analyses found in works such as Neil Gaiman's *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, which uses Freud's psychoanalytic theory to uncover defense mechanisms that help characters deal with internal conflict. This same theory is used in studies such as *Ego Defense Mechanism in Fight Club and The Invisible Man*, which examine repression, denial, and sublimation to explain the protagonist's reactions to anxiety. On the other hand, this analysis focuses on how the interaction of these three elements influences the protagonist's journey, revealing the deeper psychological conflicts she faces. Her seemingly endless bad luck represents her internal battles, particularly her desire for fulfillment and the struggle to balance her impulses with societal expectations. By interpreting the character's experiences through the perspective of Freud's id, superego, and ego, we can see how her unconscious defense mechanisms, such as projection, displacement, and denial, protect her from emotional pain.

Through a psychoanalytic approach, the film *Luck* becomes a rich narrative exploring the human psyche, where *Luck* (2022) itself is redefined as a symbol of the protagonist's psychological defense. Her quest for good fortune mirrors her deeper need for emotional resolution and personal growth, illustrating how the character's internal world shapes her external reality. According to Sigmund (1894, 1896) he noted several ego defenses which he refers to throughout his written works. They are, denial, regression, projection, reaction formation, repression, displacement, intellectualisation, rationalization and sublimation. When the main character unconsciously uses these three elements as part of his ego defense mechanism. The constant misfortune that befalls her is more than just a plot device-it symbolizes deeper psychological processes relating to her sense of self, insecurities, and emotional struggles. This perspective not only deepens our understanding of the film but also highlights the complex relationship between unconscious desires and personal development. This research focuses on redefining as ego defense mechanism that she experiences.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychoanalysis is a science developed by Sigmund Freud based on her experiences treating patients with mental illnesses. The theory addresses personality, consciousness, anxiety,

neurosis, dreams, and emotional motivation. Freud defined human personality as consisting of three main elements: the first, id is the most basic and instinctive part of the mind. The id is the most primitive aspect, responsible for bodily needs, desires, and urges, and it operates under the pleasure principle, which seeks immediate gratification (Schacter, Gilbert, Nock, & Wegner, 2020). The second, superego contains internalized moral values obtained from parents and society that guide a sense of right and wrong (Cherry, 2020). Individuals develop their superego by absorbing values or rules from a variety of figures who play a role, influence, or have meaning for them. Individuals' superego activities, particularly when they conflict with the ego, show as certain emotions such as guilt and regret. On the other hand there are ego, develops to interactions with the outside world, helping us in navigating life's practical challenges and mediating between the id and superego (Schacter, Gilbert, Nock, & Wegner, 2020), and seeks to meet the id's needs in an appropriate social and reality-based manner. The imbalance of the personality structure will form ego defense mechanisms which are an important concept in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, describing the individual's unconscious ways of dealing with internal conflicts and anxieties caused by the tension between the id and superego. These mechanisms help individuals deal with painful realities and maintain psychological stability by distorting or denying certain aspects of reality. can be defined as a set of defense mechanisms used to protect oneself from emotional pain, frustration, or disappointment. This is because imagination allows people to change desires, and thoughts that cannot be realized in real life (Anshori, 2011).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This article uses a qualitative approach, which aims to describe and illustrate existing phenomena and can produce subjective data. The researcher uses a psychological approach to analyze the id, superego, ego and repression as a form of self-defense contained in the film *Luck* (2022). To collect data, researchers took several steps in collecting research data. The process starts with watching the film to understand the content of the film. Then, key scenes and dialogues were collected. Next, relevant data was identified and classified into themes. Finally, the data was reduced to focus on the aspects that were important to analyze.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Psychological Aspects of the Main Character Id

The Id is the most basic and instinctive part of the mind. The principles of the Id are desire, satisfaction and pleasure. Freud also calls the id "true psychic reality" because the id represents the inner world of subjective experience and does not recognize objective reality (1993). In this case, the first finding that shows that Sam's id is strong is seen when Hazel failed to be adopted, seeing that Sam was sad and tried to find *luck* and then gave it to Hazel so that Hazel would not feel the same as her. When Sam ate a piece of bread while looking for ways to get lucky she met a black cat and told her all her frustrations today while sharing her piece of bread with the black cat. in the dialog as follows:

Sam : *"Sorry, I didn't tell you first part"*

*"My friend Hazel could have been one step closer to getting adopted today, but it didn't happen."*

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*"Her weekend visit got canceled,"*

*"Which probably doesn't sound like a big deal, but believe me, it is."*

*"You only get so many chances to find a forever family, and the older you get, the harder it is. She meeting a new couple on Sunday. If I could just give her a little good luck ...But you can't give someone something you've never had."*

*"Still, If I could, and if good luck was something you could actually hold in your hand, I'd give it all to Hazel. So that maybe she could find her forever family and not end up alone like me, sitting on a curb, talking to a cat."*

*Luck, (12.36 - 13.30)*



*Picture 1. Sam talks to the black cat*

In the case of Sam, her Id is reflected in her emotional response to Hazel's failed adoption opportunity. Sam's deep desire to prevent Hazel from experiencing the same feelings of loneliness and rejection that she endured illustrates how her instincts drive her actions. Sam's inherent need to change Hazel's fate aligns with the principles of the Id, which are centered on desire and the quest for pleasure, or in this case, the relief of emotional pain. She instinctively feels compelled to "fix" Hazel's situation by seeking something external luck to alter the outcome.

One of the clearest moments where Sam's Id dominates is when she sets out to find luck for Hazel. Rather than accepting Hazel's situation as something beyond her control, Sam is motivated by the Id impulse to act and make things right immediately. Her desire to protect Hazel from feeling the same abandonment she herself has felt throughout her life drives her to embark on a mission to find luck.

This particular dialogue also reveals a deeper psychological defense mechanism at play Projection. Sam is not only concerned about Hazel's future but is projecting her own fears of loneliness and rejection onto Hazel's situation. Sam's statement, *"If I could just give her a little good luck... But you can't give someone something you've never had,"* demonstrates her unconscious projection of her own insecurities and emotional struggles. Sam's inability to provide Hazel with luck mirrors her own perceived lack of fortune, reinforcing the idea that she is projecting her unresolved issues onto Hazel. By focusing on Hazel's situation, Sam avoids confronting the painful truth of her own emotional reality, allowing her Id to push her toward finding an external solution, rather than dealing with her internal emotional struggles.

Sam's aim in doing so was to protect Hazel from the bad luck and loneliness that she herself had experienced throughout her life. Sam feels that if she can bring Hazel luck, her

little friend will have a better chance of being adopted and finding a family, something she has always failed to achieve. Indirectly, Sam's actions are also his attempt to give meaning to her own life and overcome the loneliness and sense of helplessness she feels. By helping Hazel, Sam hopes to make up for her disappointment with her own life.

### Psychological Aspects of the Main Character Ego

The ego in psychoanalysis operates based on the reality principle, which means that it seeks to fulfill the id's desires in a way that is realistic and in accordance with the demands of the external world (1993). The main character demonstrates the function of the ego as she tries to balance her desires with the reality she faces.

One of the clearest examples of the ego in action is when the main character finds the lucky penny but accidentally flushes it down the toilet. The id, driven by her desire for good luck, pushes her to cling to the penny as a solution to her problems. However, when she loses the penny, her reaction reveals how her ego attempts to manage the conflicting emotions of guilt, frustration, and hope. Instead of acknowledging her carelessness, she avoids the emotional fallout by focusing on the external event losing the coin rather than on her own actions. This is demonstrated in the dialogue:

Sam : *"Oohh, you're back."*

*"So remember I told you I wanted good luck for my friend Hazel for her visit tomorrow?"*

*Well, guess what? After you left last night, I found a lucky penny."*

*"That's right.. I found an actual lucky penny. And what did I do? I flushed it down the toilet."*

Bob : *"You did what? You flushed my penny down the toilet? What did you do that for?"*

Sam : *"You just talked."*

Bob : *(Shocked..)*

*Luck, (17.45 - 18.15)*



*Picture 2. Sam talk emotions of guilt to bob*

In this moment, the ego employs a defense mechanism known as displacement, where Sam redirects her frustration from herself to the penny and Bob. Displacement is a psychological defense mechanism where an individual shifts emotional responses, usually anger or frustration, from a source that feels threatening or too difficult to confront to a safer or less



threatening object or person. This scene exemplifies the role of the ego as it works to protect Sam from overwhelming feelings of guilt and failure. This enables her to maintain emotional equilibrium.

On the other hand, Sam showed another character of displacement which is rationalization to try to give a logical and acceptable reason for his failure. By saying, *"It's what I do,"* Sam rationalizes that her failure is an inevitable part of her. Sam also mentions that even though she is in the "luckiest place in the universe," she still finds ways to "screw it up." This shows that she is starting to rationalize that the source of the problem is not luck or external circumstances, but her own nature that always makes things worse, contained in this dialogue :

Sam : *"Well, you made the right choice. I make things worse. It's what I do"*

Bob : *"Sam.."*

Sam : *"You'd think I would have learned my lesson by now. To just lay down for once, stop trying so hard, stop sweating, like you said."*

Bob : *"I should never have said that."*

Sam : *"It's true. even here in the luckiest place in the universe, I still found a way to screw it all up, and that's how I know"*

Bob : *"Know what?"*

Sam : *"That it's not my bad luck that's the problem. It's just me. And there's no amount of good luck that can ever fix it."*

*Luck, (01.15.44 - 01.16.23)*

This rationalization continues when Sam says that *"It's not my bad luck that's the problem. It's just me."* In this statement, Sam blames himself entirely and tries to give a logical reason that no amount of luck can fix things, because according to him, the real problem is herself.

### **Psychological Aspects of the Main Character Superego**

In *Luck* (2022), the concept of superego plays an important role in shaping the protagonist's perspective on life and her experiences. The superego represents the internalized morals and values of society that guide the individual in distinguishing what is right and what is wrong. In this framework, the character's reflection serves as evidence of the superego's influence, especially through the defense mechanism of rationalization. This mechanism allows individuals to cope with disappointment and conflicting emotions by providing a logical explanation for their circumstances, thus providing emotional relief.

Sam : *"My new life is nothing like the one I pictured. It's better."*

*"Things don't always go as planned, of course. unless, well, you plan for them."*

*"In the end, you might say that bad luck led me to the luckiest thing in the world. or was it good luck? Whatever it was, I found my forever family. the kind that doesnt leave. they stick and i do it all over again to get here."*

*Luck, (01.35.54 - 01.36.36)*



Picture 3. Sam was with the family she had dreamed of

Furthermore, Sam concludes her reflection with, "Whatever it is, I found my forever family. A family that won't leave. They stayed and I did it all over again to get here." This part of her dialogue underscores the transformative power of her rationalization. By focusing on the positive outcomes of her journey, she reduces the emotional pain associated with her past and strengthens her sense of self-worth. The repetition of "I do it again" demonstrates her acceptance of both the good and bad in her life, which shows her growth and resilience. Through this process, Sam exemplifies the role of the superego in guiding his moral understanding, leading her to realize that despite facing adversity, she can derive meaning and strength from her experiences.

### **The Meaning of Luck based on Psychological Aspects of the Main Character**

Ego Defense Mechanisms are helpful to reduce or prevent negative emotions, specifically anxiety, from arising within someone when he or she experiences an uncomfortable situation (Khoirunisa & Rahayu, 2020; Martono, Rosa, & Azmin, 2015; Santoso, 2017; Syahrani, 2019). It always unconsciously arises to perform specific actions to protect oneself from being harmed mentally (Nurtjahyo, 2016; Purwaningrum & Haryati S., 2016). In psychoanalytic terms, Sam's understanding of luck develops as she navigates the interplay between the id, ego and superego.

Sam's id is driven by a deep desire to help Hazel avoid the same loneliness and rejection that she experienced. The defense mechanism that emerges here is projection. Projection is placing uncomfortable or unpleasant feelings on another person or object (Setiawan, Jayantini, Winarta, & Suwastini, 2021). For Sam, the *Luck* embodies her emotional need to make things right and change Hazel's fate. Her search for the fortune reflects the id's need to fulfill urgent desires: preventing abandonment and gaining emotional satisfaction through external means. "If I could just give her a little good luck... But you can't give someone something you've never had." She unconsciously projects her insecurities and emotional scars onto Hazel. Sam's fixation on giving Hazel good luck is not only about Hazel's future, but also a reflection of her unresolved inner pain. This kind of behavior is done to make us look better (Minderop, 2010).

In contrast, the ego works on the reality principle that seeks to satisfy the id's desires in a realistic way, balancing them with social norms and external reality. However, when reality presents obstacles, the ego uses defense mechanisms to manage the emotional impact

of frustration and failure. Sam's ego uses displacement, which is a way to move feelings of upset towards someone or something else (Minderop, 2010). This is seen when she loses her lucky penny. After losing the coin, Sam does not focus on her carelessness, but rather shifts the blame to external events, using the loss of the coin as protecting himself from self-blame. Sam's defense mechanism also uses rationalization, which means giving plausible reasons for one's actions (Minderop, 2010). This defense mechanism is to cope with his perceived failure. When she said, *"it's not my bad luck that's the problem. It's just me."* she convinces herself that no amount of luck can change her, and finds a logical reason for her failure, which allows her to come to terms with the fact that, in her mind, no amount of luck can change who she is. The ego uses this rationalization to soothe its insecurities, making it easier to accept failure. These two mechanisms protected Sam from the emotional burden of guilt and self-blame, helping her avoid a deeper confrontation with her sense of inadequacy.

The superego represents the internalization of societal and parental standards of right and wrong. Sam's superego emerges when she reflects on her life journey and how her experiences shape her moral understanding. In the movie *luck*, Sam rationalizes the positive outcomes of her journey, focusing on how bad luck led her to the "luckiest thing in the world", which is her eternal family. The defense mechanism of rationalization comes into play here again. By rationalizing her struggles as part of a larger journey that leads to a meaningful outcome, Sam reduces the emotional burden of the difficulties she is experiencing. This mechanism allows her to overcome the pain of her past and see her experiences as steps that ultimately lead her to the happiness she finds with her new family. The Ego Defense Mechanism unconsciously always appears to perform certain actions to protect oneself from being mentally harmed (Nurtjahyo, 2016; Purwaningrum & Haryati S., 2016). This shows the influence of the superego, which guides her towards acceptance and resilience.

Ego defense mechanisms play an important role in helping people manage with emotional distress and anxiety by subconsciously protecting them from mental illness. In Sam's case, the defense mechanisms of projection, displacement, and rationalization demonstrate how her id, ego, and superego work together to manage her deep insecurities, guilt, and fear of abandonment. Sam uses these mechanisms to navigate her emotional turmoil, eventually finding comfort in rationalizing her experiences as part of a meaningful journey toward a fulfilling life with her new family.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the movie *Luck*, Sam's psychological journey mirrors Freud's theory of the id, ego and superego, with each part of her personality revealing different defense mechanisms as she faces emotional challenges. Sam's id is driven by a deep desire to protect her friend Hazel from loneliness and rejection, projecting her discomfort onto Hazel. Her ego uses defense mechanisms such as displacement shifting the blame for her failures on external factors and rationalization, convincing herself that her setbacks are inevitable. Meanwhile, her superego shapes her moral reflection, guiding her towards resilience as she rationalizes the positive outcomes of her struggles, demonstrating emotional growth and acceptance. Together, these mechanisms protect Sam from deeper emotional pain, allowing her to overcome the



difficulties she faces. Luck is redefined not as a matter of chance or fate, but as a result of how Sam processes and resolves her inner conflicts. Luck becomes an expression of her inner journey-which moves from the unconscious and instinctive drives of the id, through the mediation of the reality-based ego, and ultimately to the moral and emotional clarity of the superego. Through this perspective, luck is a metaphor for Sam's self-discovery and emotional resilience.

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