

# Example by StudyDriver

Source: <https://studydriver.com/psy-into-the-wild/>

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## Psy into the Wild Example

Into The Wild, traditionally a book written by Jon Krakauer, was produced into a movie based on a true story and directed by Sean Penn. Fresh out of college, pressured to move on to law school by his parents, protagonist Christopher McCandless, later re-names himself Alexander Supertramp and ventures out on his own with few supplies having burned his money and social security card. A true existentialist, he leaves behind all superficial constructs of society in an effort to move into the wild of Alaska where he sees nature as the only thing stripped of lies and fallacies. He shows great interests in following the paths/ideologies of his literary heroes, Thoreau, London, and Tolstoy.

Once Chris makes it to Alaska the conditions are tough and the food is scarce in the winter. In a mistake of eating poisonous seeds, Chris McCandless dies. The importance of Chris' age is substantial in understanding the theories behind his decisions and what makes his story so relatable to young adults. He was a high achieving student graduating from a well-established college, born into a middle-class family, but still was not happy and clearly suffered from internal conflict. Although viewers do not see Chris' childhood or adolescence on the screen there is still a lot to infer and pick up on. In one theory, his parents could be seen as the reason he wants to escape

from convention.

From an objective viewpoint, Chris has a low social desirability despite being down to earth and seemingly genuine. This viewpoint is shared with his parents and shown through disappointment and confusion directed by facial expressions and tone of voice. For example, when his parents gifted him with a new car for graduation he replies, Why would I want a new car. Are you worried what the neighbors might think? These things, things, things. I just don't want anything. Most kids would be thankful, but not Chris, he was fed up with the superficial society he was living in.

His parents were always concerned with money and financial stability rather than the more simple things he was interested in like happiness and simplicity. However, the stage of life his parents are in compared with his own can support their different ideologies but I don't think either party acknowledged the others. In Erikson's Theory of Development, assuming Chris' parents are between the ages of forty-five and sixty-five their psychosocial crisis would be generativity versus stagnation. They are basically focused on finishing raising their kids and doing well in their job, this could very well be why they are worried about finances and encouraging Chris to go to law school so that in the end he would be able to support them.

On the contrary, Chris' psychosocial crisis is intimacy versus isolation. In brief, this is the period of time where people tend to look for stable relationships and if they fail feelings of loneliness and isolation can occur. Because Chris has an existential view on life, he is trying to avoid intimate relationships even though it seems to go against his nature. For example, the hippie couple he befriends, Bob and Jan Burres, the older man who saw Chris as a son, Ron Franz, and close friend and work partner, Wayne Westerberg. Figuratively, this makes for a good story because by avoiding intimate relationships he very literally died in isolation. However, it was very well possible when Chris was finished with his adventure in Alaska he would have found his way back to some of these people and resolved some of his intimacy vs isolation conflict. Proof for this is in the postcards he continuously sent Wayne on his trip and his promise to Ron that when he would return he would consider getting adopted by him.

The person Chris confided in and got along with most was his sister, possibly because they were closest in age

and in the same intimacy versus isolation stage. His sister breaks out in a short monologue saying, It was inevitable that Chris would break away and then when he did he would do it with characteristic immoderation. It's kind of ironic for someone looking to live their most simple life, breaking down what their essentials are, would have to go to the extremes by donating all their savings and break off all ties with friends and family. She continues, I understood what he was doing. That he had spent four years fulfilling the absurd and tedious duty of graduating college, and now he was emancipated from that world of abstraction, false security, parents and material excess, the things that cut Chris off from the truth of his existence.

His parents, schooling, and economic status all support the external attribution theory. Chris is seen to believe that it is these external factors stopping him from achievement rather than his internal characteristics or flaws. This could very possibly be true, however, the audience will never truly know his final thoughts because he died alone and isolated. Most of the evaluation of Chris' psychology will be cognitive, his internal mind struggle, and social-emotional development, his belief that relationships were stopping him from discovering what is essential. Although his journey took a physical toll on himself it was what he neglected the most and indubitably led to his demise. We see this through the visual representation of the leather belt Ron Franz gives to Chris. As his journey continues he loses weight and had to go to the tighter notch and when he reaches Alaska he starts having to puncture his own holes, showing his physical deterioration.

Chris McCandless is a good subject to evaluate intimacy versus isolation in Erikson's Theory of Development because of his quite literal death and physical deterioration in an isolated place. His parent's relationship was the starter of the idea of what he did not want to be and want to escape. The audience can not only see how he encompasses the external attribution theory but how he neglects attribution of any of his internal conflicts to his own characteristics.