

# HIERARCHY OF NEEDS IN DAN GILROY'S *NIGHTCRAWLER*

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## ABSTRACT

*Nightcrawler* is a crime-thriller movie directed by Dan Gilroy. The movie is about an ambitious videographer who sells violent footage of accidents and brutal crimes to the local news TV. The focus of this study is to analyze the motivation of Louis Bloom, the main character in the movie, using Abraham Maslow's theory of needs. This theory is illustrated in a shape of five layered pyramid which represents every need that must be fulfilled by human. Those needs are physiological needs, safety needs, love or belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. The result of the discussion shows the five phases of theory of needs reflected in Lou's life.

Keywords: Movie, Theory of Needs, Motivation, Cinematography, Narrative

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Movies are considered as a source of popular entertainment and also a solid medium for giving influences to people these days. Movie basically is a literary work which is transformed into motion pictures and it reflects social conditions that happens in society. This makes movies become famous all over the world and become a global popular culture.

Movies can be divided into two forming element, narrative element and cinematic element. Those two elements are interacted to each other (Pratista, 2008:1). Generally, there are three categories of movie: documentary, fictional, and experimental. *Nightcrawler* is a fictional movie by Dan Gilroy which was released in 2014. The main character in the movie, Louis Bloom, is portrayed as a man who will do anything to get whatever he wants, no matter it is good or bad. His motivation to do anything is one of the interesting aspects in the movie to be analyzed.

In this paper, the movie is discussed using narrative and cinematic aspects. The writer also analyzes the motivation of the character Louis Bloom using Abraham Maslow's theory of needs. Theory of needs is illustrated in a shape of a pyramid which consists of five layers. Each layer is a phase that someone should exceed to achieve the main goal. The result of the discussion shows the true motivation of Louis Bloom in this movie.

### **1.2 Purpose of the study**

There are two objectives in this study. The first objective is to analyze the narrative and cinematic aspects of the movie. The second objective is to study the motivation of Louis Bloom in the movie using Abraham Maslow's theory of needs.

### **1.3 Scope of the study**

In analyzing this movie, scope of study is needed in order to limit and help the writer to discuss the objective in focus. The focus of the study is on the motivation that changes Louis Bloom's life.

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## **2. SYNOPSIS**

*Nightcrawler* is an American neo-noir crime thriller movie written and directed by Dan Gilroy in 2014. It tells about Louis (Lou) Bloom, played by Jake Gyllenhaal, a jobless man who will do anything for money. He is interested to be a videographer when seeing a videographer gathering video of a car crash. Lou hires an assistant named Rick to help him

navigate the city streets, and they start selling footages to a local TV producer named Nina. One night, there is a call for robbery in a wealthy neighborhood. Lou comes to the scene of a deadly home invasion before the police. He sees two men running away from the scene. He goes into the house and starts filming the scene. He brings this footage to Nina and make a deal with certain conditions to establish his new company named Video Production News.

Lou actually holding some information about the suspects from the police and he has another plan. Lou and Rick find the suspects and calls the police that he sees the suspects. The police officers arrives and it goes chaos. Two officers, the suspects, and Lou's partner dead in that incident. Detective Frontieri later interrogating Lou about that. Frontieri knows that he withheld information about the suspects, but Lou keep saying that he does not know anything about it. Then, he is left free to walk because the police does not have enough evidence to arrest him. After that, Lou establishes his own company named Video Production News with news vans and three interns.

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### **3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

In analyzing the character Louis Bloom in *Nightcrawler* movie, this essay uses the intrinsic aspects and extrinsic aspects in the movie. The use of these theories to strenghten the discussion about the motivation of character Louis Bloom.

#### **3.1 Narrative Aspects**

Andrew states, "The study of cinema has consequently been bound up with the theories of narrative" (1984:76). Based on the statement before, the narrative aspects can also be apply in analyzing any movie. There are several elements of narrative aspects in a movie, but only character and plot elements which are used in this paper.

##### **3.1.1 Character**

Character is the personalization which is played by the actor or actress in a movie. Character is the indicator of a person in a movie that helps the viewer to know about the story and the problem which happens in the story (Abrams, 1998:32).

### **3.1.2 Plot**

Plot is another important element in a movie. Plot is a sequence of interrelated actions which experienced by the main character and it occur from beginning to end (Abrams, 1998:224).

## **3.2 Cinematic Aspects**

Cinematic aspects in movie is also known as cinematography. According to Brown (2011:1), the term cinematography is from the Greek roots meaning "writing with motion". The techniques like shot size or hot scale is the most important aspect of framing and composition in movie.

## **3.3 Theory of Needs**

In order to analyze the motivation of Lou in *Nightcrawler* movie, the writer uses Abraham Maslow's theory of needs. This theory is presented in the shape of a five-layered pyramid. Sequentially from the bottom it contains (1) physiological, (2) safety, (3) love or belonging, (4) esteem, and on the top is (5) self-actualization. The explanation is written below:

### **3.3.1 The physiological needs**

This is the very basic needs that includes the needs for air, water, food and the others. Physiological needs are the most important needs for every human; these needs must be met first. (Maslow, 1943: 4).

### **3.3.2. The safety needs**

If the physiological needs are well satisfied, there then emerges a new set of needs, which categorized as the safety needs (Maslow, 1943: 6). Safety needs are the needs for security and protection.

### 3.3.3 The love needs

If both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well satisfied, then there will emerge the love and affection and belongingness needs (Maslow, 1943: 9). The person will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general and feel the need to give and receive love.

### 3.3.4 The esteem needs

This next phase of needs include the need to be respected by others, need to be appreciated, and need to have power. The satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world (Maslow, 1943: 10).

### 3.3.5 The need for self-actualization

Even if all these needs are satisfied, a person may still often expect that a new dissatisfaction and restlessness will soon develop (Maslow, 1943: 10). Self-actualization is the desire to become what a person is capable of becoming.

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## **4. DISCUSSION**

This chapter discusses the intrinsic and extrinsic analysis in *Nightcrawler* movie based on the explanations in the previous chapter. The analysis of the movie is elaborated bellow:

### **4.1 Narrative Aspects**

In order to get the point of the story, it is necessary to analyze the character and plot which exists in this movie. This paper also uses shot size element. It has been chosen because it can be used to clarify the exact meaning of the movie and strengthen the analysis.

The main character in this movie is Louis Bloom. He is willing to do anything to get money even though what he does can be categorized as crime. Videographer is the proper job that he choose to fulfill his basic needs. The conflict arises when Lou has a footage of a brutal

home invasion in wealthy neighborhood. Climax of the movie happens when he sets up and manipulating a scene between police and suspected criminals in order to get a high valuable video which lead into brutal incident. Then he is interrogated by the police and accused for setting that brutal incident. Lou is freed because the lack of evidence. He also manages to build his own company. Based on the analysis, Lou has these manipulative, ambitious, and opportunist characters. The plot of the story explains the development of the character of Lou.

#### 4.2 Hierarchy of Needs in *Nightcrawler*

This part discusses the Lou's motivation in *Nightcrawler* movie using Abraham Maslow's theory of needs which has been explained in the previous chapter. The writer also uses the cinematic aspects in this part to strengthen analysis.

##### 4.2.1 The Fulfillment of Physiological Needs

It consists the needs for food, water, warmth, and the others. In order to fulfill those needs, Lou must have money to purchase them. He commits theft, stealing, and other dirty works. He spots a horrific car crash and catches some videographers gathering video footage for a local news broadcast. Convinced that this is a career he could achieved, Lou buys a video recorder. He steals a bicycle and sell it to the store to buy a police scanner and a cheap video camera recorder, as shown in the picture 1.1. In picture 1.2 it shows Lou gets his first money by selling a video he took from a brutal carjacking incident to Nina, a local TV news director. Lou continues doing his works and collects more money to fulfill his physiological needs.



Picture 1.1. 00:12:40  
Lou sells the bike that he stole



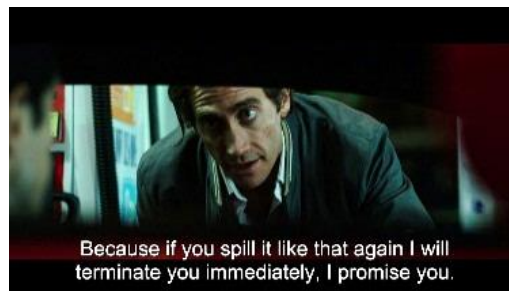
Picture 1.2. 00:19:54  
Lou gets his first payment

#### 4.2) The Fulfillment of Safety Needs

According to Maslow's theory of needs, the next phase after someone fulfilled his or her physiological needs is the fulfillment of safety needs. After his physiological needs are fulfilled, Lou also needs to fulfill his safety and security. Lou decides to hire Rick in order to help him while working. His jobs are listening to the police scanner, navigating the location and watching the car. As shown in the picture 4.2.1, Lou is interviewing Rick and explaining his job. The scene uses medium shot to capture the dialogue scene between the two characters. Lou also manipulates Rick for his own safety in case something bad happens to him. He uses Rick for his own advantage and treats him not as a co-worker, but more like his inferior. In picture 4.2.2, he shows his way to secure his valuable property. He goes mad and threatening Rick because Rick spills gasoline on his brand new sports car. It can be said that he does not respect Rick as a co-worker and all he cares about is himself and his precious things.



Picture 2.1      00:26:14  
Lou is interviewing Rick

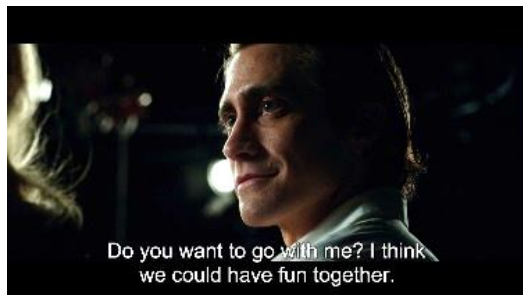


Picture 2.2      00:39:15  
Lou threatens Rick

#### 4.3) The Fulfillment of Love and Belongingness Needs

The next phase according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the fulfillment of love and belongingness needs. Lou is falling in love with Nina. Then he asks Nina to go out for dinner, like what is shown in picture 3.1. Nina finally agrees to go out dinner with Lou, but just as a professional courtesy. At the restaurant, Lou expresses his feeling to Nina, as shown in the picture 3.2. which uses close up shot. In the conversation Lou also implies that he also wants

to sleep with her. Nina does not want that thing to happen, but Lou threatens Nina that he will stop selling video again to her. Nina negotiates it with Lou, she offering help to start his own business. Although his needs of love and belongingness are not well accomplished, at least he has already expressed his feeling.



Picture 3.1      00:43:42  
Lou asks Nina to go out to dinner

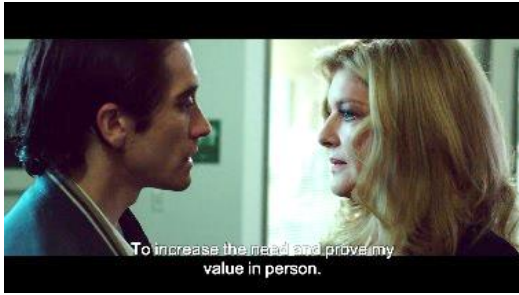


Picture 3.2      00:51:19  
Lou wants to have a relationship with Nina

#### 4.4) The Fulfillment of Esteem Needs

According to Maslow, the need of esteem is the need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others (Maslow, 1943: 10). Lou finds a way to prove that he is surely a valuable person. He gets the deadly home invasion video that will give many benefits to the news station and he says that he does this to increase the need and prove his value in person (picture 4.1). He charges high enough for the video, and he asks Nina to credits his works with the name of his own company, Video Production News. He also wants to meet Nina's team to start developing his own personal relationships as the owner of the company that he builds. He does this because he wants his hard work to be recognized by other people. Nina grants what Lou wants to introduce him to her team, and Lou seems to be very satisfied with it (picture 4.2.). In picture 4.2., the scene uses long shot to capture situation in the studio when Lou is being introduced to Nina's team.





Picture 1. 01:08:12

Lou says that he wants to increase his value



Picture 4.2. 01:13:14

Lou introduces his own company

#### 4.5) The Fulfillment of Self-Actualization Needs

Self-actualization needs is the last and the highest phase among those needs in the pyramid of needs. It refers to the need for self-fulfillment to the tendency for someone to become actualized in what he or she is potentially (Maslow, 1943: 10). This description is compatible with what happens to Lou in the movie, but before reaching this phase, Lou gets in some serious troubles. However, he makes his own company getting bigger, as shown in picture 5.2. The scene uses medium shot to capture the situation when Lou gives speech to his employees. This scene also captures the success of Lou's works. Lou also makes his work recognized by other people and even inspires them (picture 5.1.) It is proved that he can get whatever he wants and it also proves that he can reach his self-actualization needs.



Picture 4.5.1 01:48:25

Nina is impressed of Lou's works



Picture 4.5.2 01:52:39

Lou with his employees of his own company

## 5. CONCLUSION

*Nightcrawler* is a movie that tells story about Louis Bloom who will do anything to get what he wants. He accidentally meets his passion as a videographer and finally makes his own success. This success cannot be separated from his ability as a fast learner and his motivation to fulfill his needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is represented figuratively in this movie by the main character, Louis Bloom. Lou is able to maintain his way to fulfill his needs step-by-step. His motivation is revealed through the discussion in the previous chapter. His motivation is to change his life to be better and he also wants his hard work to be recognized by other people. This motivation followed with his desire to achieve or maintain the various conditions upon which these basic satisfactions lie or specify by intellectual desires. However, Lou has passed the five phases and reaches the highest phase of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It is represents that everyone can become anything one is capable of.

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