# Argumentative essay on Catch me if you can, the film

## Addictive nature of deception

## Introduction

Developed in 2002, Catch me if you can is a biographical crime film that reveals the psychological development of a con artist. The film demonstrates the factors that sustain cons and habitual liars. Directed and co-produced by Steven Spielberg, the plot in the movie follows the life of Frank Abagnale, a young man who perfects the art of deception and grows to become a successful con whose primary crime was check fraud. The film's depiction of Frank Abagnale provides a practical look at the life and psychology of frauds and liars. The story shows an ordinary young man change his life progressively to become an addicted con who even deceives for the mere thrill of the process. The film thus demonstrates that deception is both a game and art that morphs into addiction because of its immense psychological effects on the development of an individual.

In his theory of the social life, George Hebert Mead argued that the self, which is a crucial aspect of human identity, is not biological but arises from social interaction with other members of the society (Little, Understanding society). Steven Spielberg’s film provides a practical demonstration of the theory as the plot follows the life of a young man who becomes a criminal because of the dysfunctional relationship he had with other members of the society. He perfects the con and before long is an addicted con artist who makes a fortune from the art. The life of Frank Abagnale reveals underlying psychological developments as the boy morphs into a chronic liar who deceived his way out of every situation.

Franks criminal career begins at the tender age of sixteen. Frank lives with his successful father who he later learns is a chronic alcoholic when his parent's divorce. The alcoholic nature of his father leads Frank to begin keeping wrong company within the neighborhood. At one time, Frank steals a car. His father bails him out and later buys him a car when turned sixteen. The car, an old Ford contributed to Frank’s eventual downfall. Frank developed a love for promiscuous women and was in a perpetual need for money to sustain the women and his expensive lifestyle. Frank used a gas card to defraud his father $3,400. By the time he was seventeen, Frank had conned his way into acquiring a pilot’s uniform and forging an FAA document. He deadheaded across the country while withdrawing illegally in hundreds of banks. He became a doctor in Georgia and a parish prosecutor in Louisiana. Some of his aliases in the process included Robert Conrad, Frank Williams, Frank Adams and Robert Monjo among others.

Frank’s life provides a practical demonstration of Mead’s theory of the social life. Before his parents divorced, Frank was a normal child with ambitions of a lawful and successful life. His successful father was his greatest model. However, his life changed when he changed his social circle and began spending time with the wrong children in the neighborhood. The wrong company led to a shift in his mindset. He changed his social and cultural values as he began pursuing short-term gratifications in life. His desire for expensive lifestyle and the beautiful, promiscuous women became an addiction that he needed to sustain. A major theme in the film is the effect of broken homes in the upbringing of children. A troubled childhood has drastic effects on the life of a person. The disenfranchised family led the fourteen-year-old Frank to delinquent behaviors as he sneaked into movies and swiped candies thus providing a springboard for his career in crime.

Abagnale explains that what began as a survival tactic soon morphed into a game. He enjoyed the thrills of being a con and always on the run as he strived to evade the law enforcement agencies. He explained, “I was an opportunist, so when I saw an opening I asked myself, “Could I get away with that?” Then there was the satisfaction of actually getting away with it” (Moore, Huffingtonpost,). The explanation demonstrates his maturation in deception. At the stage, his mind has accepted the fraud and the inherent isolation as part of his life. Erik Erickson in his stages of psychological development asserts that between the age of thirteen and nineteen people develop fidelity. Instead of developing an identity for himself, Frank undergoes role confusion owing to the wrong company. He thus accepts his fate as a fraud and must endure the ramifications of subsequent stages.

Between the ages of twenty and thirty-nine when Erikson explains that people develop love and intimacy, Frank Abagnale acquires isolation. He enjoys being on the run and cannot settle down in any meaningful relationship. While masquerading as a doctor Frank Canners, he falls in love with Brenda. However, he readily abandons her at the slightest hint that she could be colluding with law enforcers to help apprehend him. Frank thus lives a solitary life in which he enjoys eluding police officers. His love and affection towards Carl Hanratty, an FBI bank fraud agent and a lead investigator in the case typify his loneliness. In one instance, Frank calls Carl to apologize for duping him. Carl realizes that Frank called him because he was lonely that he was the only one Frank could call. The scene demonstrates the adverse psychological effects that deception had in Frank’s life and subsequent upbringing.

Developments in the final scenes of the film reveal that Frank’s deception developed into an addiction. After convincing the FBI, Carl secures Frank a deal that allows him to work for the bank fraud department. Despite his new life and a shot at freedom, Frank misses the thrills that characterized the chases. He even attempts to fly again as a pilot of an airline. Fortunately, Carl finds him and reminds him that he must take up the job offered by the FBI since no one is after him anymore. The following Monday, Carl waits apprehensively thinking that Frank could not show up at work. The ending credits of the film reveal that Frank would later make a successful career as he worked with the FBI and had helped catch some notorious frauds. The ending reveals that Frank worked in the same industry not because he had the expertise but because of the interest, he had nurtured in deception.

In retrospect, deception is a complex psychological phenomenon whose development mirrors the elements of the socialization theory proposed by Mead. The film provides a practical representation of theory by revealing Frank’s development to become a successful con artist. The social factors in his society and immediate family led to his development as a con. The film later reveals that deception exists as an exciting game and a self-sustaining cycle as Frank wishes to continue defrauding people just for the fun and thrills that characterize the process.

Works cited

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