



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

**A FINAL PROJECT**

**In Partial Fulfillment of The Requirement for  
S-1 Degree Majoring American Cultural Studies in English Department  
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University**

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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer states truthfully that this final project is compiled by him without taking any results from other researchers in S-1, S-2, S-3 and in diploma degree of any universities. In addition, the writer also ascertains that he does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned.

Semarang, June 2016

Ricky Nugraha Kusuma

## MOTTO AND DEDICATION

*“Originality is nothing but judicious imitation.”*

**-Voltaire**

*This final project is dedicated to  
my beloved parents and  
to everyone who helped me accomplish it.*

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The writer realizes that this final project is far from perfection. Thus, he will be glad to receive any constructive criticisms and recommendations to make this final project better.

Finally, the writer expects that this final project will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn something about explicit study in the movie and this essay.

Semarang, June 2016

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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 analyse 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

# 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.

The largest movie industry which has produced many good movies is located in Hollywood, America. American movie industry has been in existence since there was American movie in around 1890's. This was the period where movie industry had advantages of new industry practices and had quickly grown not only to become an important popular media but also one of the greatest industries in the world.

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. Fictional movies have a clear narrative structure, while documentary and experimental movies do not have narrative structures (Pratista, 2008:4). Each movie has different themes like friendship, family, morality, and motivation. A strong theme in a movie will give the audience a lasting impression and it will make the movie better. One of those movies with a strong theme is *Nightcrawler* by Dan Gilroy which was released in 2014.

*Nightcrawler* is a fictional movie which has a background theme about motivation. The main character in the movie, Louis Bloom, is portrayed as a man with charming outlook and highly motivated which sometimes lead to the ambitious trait. He 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.

## 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. One night, he is caught by an officer while trying to break off a chain link fence in a train yard. The officer accuses him of trespassing and wants to see some ID. Lou shows the ID to the officer, then suddenly he attacks the officer and steals his watch. Lou takes the broken up fence to a scrapyard and sells the fence. After he gets the money, he rides his car on the road and spots a terrible car crash. He watches Joe Loder, a local videographer, is recording video footage for a local news broadcast and asks him about being a videographer. Interested to be a videographer, he buys a police scanner and a cheap video camera recorder from selling the bike that he stole. 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 dead bodies in the house. He brings this footage to Nina and she seems very happy with this video. Nina has to negotiate the price of the footage with Lou because it is really expensive. They make a deal with certain conditions. All of the footages she buys from him must be credited under Lou's new company named Video

Production News. He also wants to be introduced to Nina's team to start developing his personal relationship.

The video that later aired in the news make detective Frontieri comes to the station and demands to have the footage as it is an evidence, but Nina refuses to give the footage. Lou actually holding some information about the suspects, but he has another plan to keep the information from the police. Lou and Rick find the suspects and follow them to a restaurant. He calls the police that he sees the suspects and one of them has a gun. The police officers arrives, then the suspects begin to shoot as soon as they realize that the officers want to arrest them. The scene changes into a deadly car chase between the police and the suspects in the streets. Two officers, the suspects, and Lou's partner dead in that incident. Detective Frontieri later interrogating Lou about the scene at the restaurant that caused police officers and his partner killed. Frontieri knows that he withheld information about the suspects. Lou said that he does not know anything about it. The detective insists him to tell truth, but he keeps saying that he does not know anything. Then, he is left free to walk because the police officer 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.

### **3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

In analyzing the character Louis Bloom in *Nightcrawler* movie, this essay uses the intrinsic aspects which includes theories of narrative aspects and cinematic aspects. This paper also uses Abraham Maslow's theory of needs to analyze the extrinsic aspects in the movie. The use of these theories to strengthen 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 an important element in a movie. Character is the personalization or the appearance which is played by the actor or actress in a movie. Abrams (1998:32) defines character as follows:

Characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the dialogue—and from what they do—the action.

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. The description of the character can be analyzed by the physical and physic appearance.

### **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) defines character as follows:

The plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects... Plot and character are therefore interdependent critical concepts.

Plot is also known as the foundation of a story with the characters and settings. The function of plot is to organize information and events in a logically. Plot focuses attention on the important characters and their roles in the story. It creates a desire for the viewers to follow the story and makes them curious to know what happens next.

### **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". Cinematography embraces the entire methods and techniques that the cinematographers use to add meaning and content of the movie.

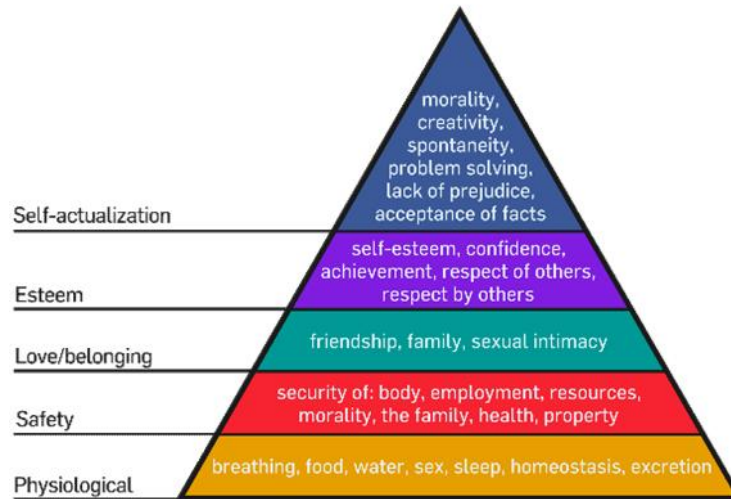
The techniques like shot size or hot scale is the most important aspect of framing and composition in movie. The distance between camera and subject determines size of the screen image and also affect the implied distance between the audience and the characters (Stadler and McWilliam, 2009:35.) It is clear that shot size determines the essential meaning that the audience will get.

### **3.3 Theory of Needs**

There are many interesting aspects from the movie that can be analyzed, one of those aspects is motivation. According to Ruch, motivation determine the direction of behavior and this change the individual's relation to his or hers environment (1967:376). Motivation starts with a physiological or psychological need that activates a behavior or a drive that is aimed at a goal. In every motivation, there is always one important component that drives the motivation. This important component is needs. Needs could be created if individual feels that there is imbalance between what he or she has and what is perceived both physiologically and psychologically (Siagian, 2012: 142).

In order to analyze the motivation of Lou in *Nightcrawler* movie, the writer uses Abraham Maslow's theory of needs. This theory is also called hierarchy of needs or pyramid of needs because this theory is presented in the shape of a five-layered pyramid. Sequentially from the bottom of pyramid, 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:





**Picture 3.1:** Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid

(Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham\\_Maslow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Maslow))

### 3.3.1 The Physiological needs

This is the very basic needs that are usually taken as the starting point of motivation theory which also known as physiological drives. These needs 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. If these needs are not met, the human body can not work properly. Undoubtedly these physiological needs are the most pre-potent of all needs. A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else. (Maslow, 1943: 4)

### 3.3.2. The safety needs

If the physiological needs are well sastified, 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. The safety needs

include job security, savings accounts, insurance policies, financial security, and health and well-being.

### 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 who reaches this phase will feel keenly as never before. They will feel lonely as the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. 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

Almost all of the people in society have a need or desire for a stable evaluation of themselves for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others. 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

This is the highest need among all of the needs in Maslow's theory. Even if all these needs are satisfied, a person may still often expect that a new dissatisfaction and restlessness will soon develop, unless the individual is doing what he is fitted for (Maslow, 1943: 10). Self-actualization is the desire to become what a person is capable of

becoming. This phase of need refers to what a person's full potential is and the realization of that potential.

Based on the explanation above, Maslow states that these basic goals are related to each other, being arranged in a hierarchy of needs. When a need is fairly well satisfied, the higher need emerges and encourages someone to achieve it. Maslow also adds that it is not always clear that the lower needs must be fulfilled one hundred percent before the higher needs emerge. Because in actual fact, most members of society who are normal, are partially satisfied in all their basic needs and partially unsatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time.

#### **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 below:

##### **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. Shot size is one of the cinematic aspects which chosen by the writer in analyzing *Nightcrawler*. 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. In the beginning of the story, Lou is introduced as a jobless man with charming outlook. He is willing to do anything to get money even though what he does can be categorized as crime.

He is shown commits crime like cutting off chain link fence, striking an officer, and stealing bicycle. However, he still has a good intention to get a proper job. Videographer is the job that he choose to fulfill his basic needs. He does not always succeed to get a good video at the beginning, but he keep trying even though the other underestimates him. The problem is identified when his bad attitude strikes again even he is financially better than before. He commits dirty works again to get rid of his competitor by sabotaging the news van and then the van crashes like an accident. The conflict arises when Lou has a footage of a brutal home invasion in wealthy neighborhood. The police are looking for him and accuses him holding information about the suspects. 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. The scene turns into a massive car chasing and ends with several people become victims include police officers, the suspects, and Lou's co-worker. The falling action after the climax is when he is being interrogated by the police and he is accused for setting that massive incident. In the resolution of the story, Lou is freed because the lack of evidence. He also manages to build his own video production company.

Based on the analysis above, Lou has these manipulative, ambitious, and opportunist characters. From that explanation it can be inferred that Lou has many characteristics that make his proportion in the story substantial. The plot of the story explains the development of the character of Lou. The development character of Lou is important to analyze his motivation which is the main goal of this study.

## **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 uses five components in the pyramid of needs and applies those components into the character of Louis Bloom to reveal his motivation. The writer also uses the cinematic aspects in this part to strengthen analysis. The analysis of Louis Bloom motivation is elaborated below:

### **4.2.1 The Fulfillment of Physiological Needs**

This is the very basic need based on Maslow's theory of 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, instead of having a real job. He scraps metal junk, breaking off chain-link fence and sell it to the scrapyard. Lou also gets a fancy watch from beating private officer who caught him trespassing and breaking off chain-link fence. However, Lou has a good intention to get a job in the scrapyard, but the chief refused him with the reason that he does not want to hire such a thief like him. After getting the money, he rides his car on the street and spots a horrific car crash. He catches some videographers gathering video footage for a local news broadcast. Convinced that this is a career he could achieved, Lou gets the idea to buy a video recorder. He needs an extra cash, then he commits his dirty work again. 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. This scene uses medium shot to show the situation when Lou is selling the bike to the store keeper. He

shows his ability to manipulate people and manages to make a deal. 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. It also uses the medium shot to capture the situation when Lou and Nina starts to establish their professional relationship. Nina praises Lou's work which makes him getting more excited. She asks him to keep doing his works and bring any good video to her. 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

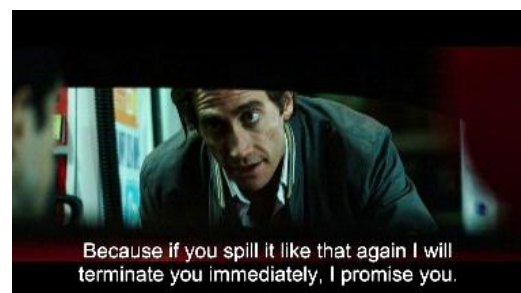
According to Maslow's theory of needs, the next phase after someone fulfilled his or her physiological needs is the fulfillment of safety needs. Safety needs consists of the security of body, employment, resources, morality, the family, health, and property. After his physiological needs are fulfilled, Lou also needs to fulfill his safety and security. Considering that he can not do this job alone, Lou decides to hire a man in order to help him while working. Then he hires a homeless man and desperately needs money named Rick. 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. It shows the expression of the two characters while talking to each other. Lou also manipulates Rick for his own safety in case something bad happens to him, but Rick does not know that he is being manipulated. 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. The scene uses close up shot to show the facial expression of Lou. He goes mad and threatening Rick because Rick spills gasoline on his brand new sports car. The facial expression shows that Lou is angry and serious when he says that he wants to terminate Rick. 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. It proves that the way he treats Rick is fulfillment form of his safety needs.



Picture 2.1 00:26:14

Lou is interviewing Rick



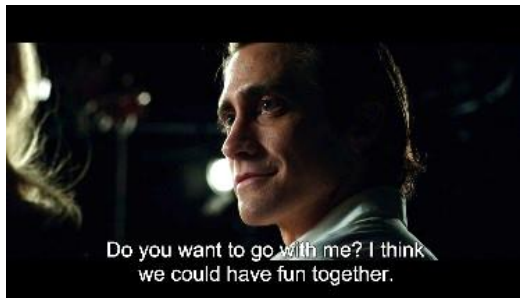
Picture 2.2 00:39:15

Lou threatens Rick

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

After his safety needs is fulfilled, the next phase according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the fulfillment of love and belongingness needs. Love needs are related to interactions with other people including the need for having friend, need for belonging, need for giving and receiving love. After spending quite a lot of time working together with Nina, Lou is falling in love with her. Then he asks Nina, who is older than him, to go out for dinner, like what is shown in picture 3.1. This scene uses close up shot to capture the expression of Lou. The expression shows that Lou really likes Nina. At first she does not want to go with an excuse that she does not date people she works with. Lou doesn't give up, he uses his tricky mind to force her. 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. The facial expression of Lou shows that he really wants to have a special relationship with Nina. In the conversation Lou also implies that he also wants to sleep with her. Of course Nina does not want that thing to happen, but Lou threatens Nina that he will stop selling video again to her. Nina renegoating with Lou, she offers him the opportunity to have an exclusive retainer, so he can learn the business from the inside and maybe start his own business. Although his needs of love and belongingness are not well accomplished, at least he has already expressed his feeling to someone special and he always tries to get her attention by giving good video footages.





Picture 3.1 00:43:42

Lou asks Nina to go out to dinner



Picture 3.2 00:51:19

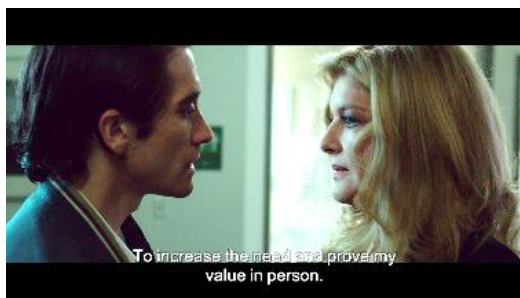
Lou wants to have a relationship with Nina

#### 4.4) The Fulfillment of Esteem Needs

The next phase of the Maslow's pyramid is the esteem needs. Although the previous needs is not well fulfilled, but it must not be satisfied one hundred percent for the next need to emerge. The moment after they have dinner at the restaurant, Nina becomes angry with Lou because he does not get the video that Nina wants, and it also makes Lou angry with himself.

According to Maslow, the need of esteem is the need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for selfrespect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others (Maslow, 1943: 10). By firmly based self-esteem, it really means that it is based upon real capacity, achievement and respect from others. Lou finds a way to prove that he is surely a valuable person to Nina. 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). Picture 4.1 uses close up shot to shows their facial expression while having the conversation. Lou's expression shows that he is very confident with this work and he believes this will gets him more opportunities. 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. His satisfaction shows that his needs of esteem are well fulfilled and he is one step closer to reach the top.



Picture 2. 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 willingness may be expressed as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. This description is compatible with what happens to Lou in the movie,

but before reaching this phase, Lou gets in some serious troubles. He gets in trouble with local police after selling that brutal home invasion video to Nina. Lou is accused for withholding an information and responsible for the incident that has happened between the police and the suspects from the brutal home invasion. He intentionally sets up the situation between police and the suspects, so he can get a video with high sales value. He also deliberately lets his partner get shot to death by the suspect, and he does not feel any guilt. However, he manages to escape from the accusation and he left free to walk because the police officer does not have enough evidence to arrest him.

Finally, he makes his own company getting bigger with three employees and two news vans, 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, the highest phase of hierarchy of needs of Abraham Maslow.



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, a jobless man 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 can not be separated from his ability as a fast learner and his motivation to fulfill his needs.

Abraham Maslow represents this hierarchy of needs in a pyramid which consists of physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. These are called basic needs, and they are related to each other. It 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, even though not all of the phases are fulfilled one hundred percent. However, 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. The way he takes to fulfill these needs is quite ambitious and lack of responsibility. He does not mind if what he does will give disadvantages to the other people or not. However, Lou has passed the five phases and reaches the highest phase of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It is also represents that everyone can become anything one is capable of, but without great responsibility and morality, the fulfillment of those needs may give bad impact to other people.

In addition, another interesting aspect of this movie which is not discussed in the paper is its critics towards electronic media, especially television. *Nightcrawler* criticize media these days and the people who run it from behind. They will do anything, no exception to immoral things, just to get high ratings and profit for themselves. This is the picture of media in the present days which is already deviated from its normal function to inform people, and now it is being used by some people to make benefits for themselves.

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