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Prospectus for Research Paper

Steven Spielberg’s film, “Catch Me If You Can,” artfully portrays Frank Abagnale Jr.’s fraudulent escapades. Frank Abagnale Jr. successfully poses as a teacher, an airline co-pilot, a doctor, and a lawyer. As if that was not interesting enough, he accomplished these feats all before he turned 19. Frank cashes the forged checks he makes from his different jobs. By the end of his counterfeiting career he already embezzled millions from banks using forged checks. Frank was able to get away multiple times because he was aware of his audience: Carl Hanratty (FBI Agent), young female tellers, nurses, and more. My research paper will analyze Spielberg’s film based on Frank Abagnale Jr.’s autobiography along with its cultural significance.

The book “Catch Me If You Can” is written in first person and at times in the film we hear Frank Abagnale Jr.’s voice narrating the story. What caught my attention was the way Frank Abagnale utilizes women in his hoaxes and how he always poses as authoritative figures in society. The patriarchal language and body language portrayed in the movie made me raise my eyebrows. Frank bribes the women in the movie with necklaces that he “found” on the ground to get his way. He even marries a nurse he just recently met to further his cause. Spielberg and Leonardo di Caprio did a great job at capturing Frank’s charm and ability to woe women. The women in “Catch Me If You Can” were the pinstripes on Frank Abagnale Jr.’s Yankees uniform.

I plan to explore the topic of women accomplices in history and the psychological aspects of Frank Abagnale Jr.’s actions. The FBI government website would be a useful source for looking up background information on famous crime duos such as Bonnie and Clyde: [**https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/history/famous-cases/bonnie-and-clyde**](https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/history/famous-cases/bonnie-and-clyde)Women played an important yet passive role in Frank Abagnale Jr.’s successful execution of his hoaxes. I would even go as far to say that without women Frank Jr. would not have been able to pull of his crimes.

The time period also helped Frank Jr. pull off his hoaxes. Bank forgery was fairly new in the 70s and the FBI did not take check forgery seriously as shown by the treatment of agent Carl Hanratty. In writing this paper, I will address the different gender roles of not only the 1970s but also in this “documentary” of Frank Jr.’s life. Were women more likely to get away with fraud and other crimes in the 70s? The close analysis of Steven Spielberg’s film will hopefully bring my audience a better understanding of how Frank Abagnale Jr. used women to accomplish his fraudulent escapades.