Case Study # 2

The Italian Job

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**Introduction**

In the move The Italian Job we see various examples of some of the concepts around motivation, emotions and perception that we discussed in Organizational Behaviour. In this case study, we will be using characters and scenes from the movie as a way of exploring some of those concepts. We will be discussing Social Identity Theory, Perceptual Errors, Maslow’s Hierarchy, McClelland’s Needs and Emotions, Moods and Attributes.

**Perception**

In this section I will be discussion the topic of perception largely using Charlie Croker as an example. I will be using his status as the leader of his gang and describe his internal locus of control. I will then use the entire gang as an example of the perceptual error false consensus on how they perceived another gang member.

***Question 1: Social Identity Theory***

Social Identity Theory is defined as a person’s sense of whom they are based on the social groups that they belong to. These social groups are an important source of pride and self-esteem as the groups someone belongs to gives them a sense of social identity or belonging to the social world. Further, through grouping together, people who belong to an in-group will seek out negative aspects of an out-group as a way of enhancing their self-image. Local examples of social identity theory are seen in political circles (Alberta NDP or United Conservatives) the sports teams we cheer for (Edmonton Oilers, Calgary Flames) or even which post-secondary institution that someone might enroll in (NAIT, MacEwan, U of A, U of C etc.)

In the movie the inside job, we see Social Identity Theory in the character of Charlie Croker. His in-group is the gang of thieves that he has assembled and he identifies himself as the leader of his group. Charlie is the one that picks the jobs, comes up with the plans, organizes the team and comes up with the resources needed to accomplish their objectives. Without Charlie, this team does not get formed.

***Question 2: Internal or External locus of control***

Locus of Control is an individuals belief system regarding the causes of their experiences and which factors that person attributes to their success or failure. This belief system is divided into two categories, internal or external. Someone with an internal locus of control is more likely to attribute success to their own efforts and abilities while someone with an external locus of control will attribute their success to external factors such as luck, fate or possibly a higher power. A person with a strong internal locus of control is more likely to be motivated and learn either as a desire to succeed or from their failures. However, a person with an external locus of control will not be as likely to make the effort needed to learn.

Upon examining the movie, I found that Charlie Croker had a strong internal locus of control. He was very confident in his ability to make a plan, to bring people together and to execute that plan knowing full well that it would work. Throughout the duration of the movie, he never doubted in his own ability to get things done, even after he was double-crossed by Steve.

***Question 3: Perceptual Error (False Consensus)***

The perceptual error “False Consensus” happens when a belief or opinion is assumed to be held by everyone in a group when in fact there could be significant dissent.

We see this in the Italian job when the entire gang has the belief that everyone is on board with the plan to steal the gold and split the money evenly. However this does not turn out to be the case as Steve displays a great deal of dissent when he double crosses the gang, tries to murder them all and keep the gold all to himself. It never seemed to occur to the gang that this was a possibility as they were caught completely off guard be Steve’s betrayal.

**Emotions, Moods and Attributes**

In this section I will be using the character John Bridger to describe emotional intelligence and provide examples of where his daughter Stella Bridger displayed intense emotions.

***Question 1: Emotions, Moods and Attitudes***

Emotions are a complex reaction pattern involving three different elements (experiential, behavioral and physiological) by which an individual to deal with a significant matter or event. Emotions are very brief episodes experienced towards an object, person or create a sense of readiness and occur quicker before thinking and cognition.

Moods are short-lived low intense emotional states that dispossess someone to emotionally respond in a certain way.

Attitude is a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior.

In the Italian Job, Stella Bridger displays the most intense emotions, specifically when she is on her date with the villain Steve. He murdered her father which causes her to have a poor attitude towards him and also puts her in a very distressed mood. This makes her unable to contain her emotions and blow her cover causing the situation to escalate very quickly.

***Question 2: Emotional Intelligence***

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

Close to the beginning of the movie, John displays emotional intelligence in how he speaks and interacts with Charlie. He asks, Charlie how he is doing and when Charlie replies with “Fine” John calls him out and encourages him to relax his emotions.

**Motivation**

In this portion of the case study I will be discussing Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and McClelland’s Needs. I will be using the character Steve to discuss Maslow’s Hierarchy and the character Lyle to discuss McClelland’s needs.

***Question 1: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs***

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a charted set of human requirements that are important for an individual to achieve complete development and self-actualization. Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed this theory in 1943 and he defined the need into 5 categories that he prioritized on a pyramid (Physiological, Safety, Love/Belonging, Esteem, Self-actualization).

All of the physiological needs appeared to have been met for all of the characters. However when we climb the pyramid we start to see where Steve started to prioritize his needs. He placed a high priority on his own security as he had a nice house with security guards and dogs as well as an expensive safe to secure all of his gold. He displayed a need for love when he started flirting with “Becky” (Stella Bridger in disguise) his internet repair tech. I feel that he wasn’t very concerned about his self-esteem or what others thought about him. Steve was definitely not seeking out approval from anyone else he just wanted the gold. He did however seem to take pride in his own sense of achievement that could have boosted his overall self-esteem and sense of confidence.

***Question 2: McClelland’s Needs Theory***

David McClelland proposed in his theory that an individual’s specific needs are acquired over time and shaped over their life experiences. He categorized those needs into three classes, achievement, affiliation, or power. People with a need for achievement desire to accomplish challenging goals through their own effort, they tend to work alone and tend to take on tasks with moderate risk.

People with a need for affiliation seek approval from others, tend to avoid conflicts, conform to others wishes and will actively try to support others or smooth over workplace conflicts. People with a need for power want to exercise control and maintain a leadership position. McClelland pointed out two types of people who have a need for power. Those with a “personalized power” that enjoy power for its own sake and use it to advance personal interests and those who want “socialized power” so that they can use it as a means to help others.

Lyle was a character that seemed to have a high nAch (need for achievement) he didn’t particularly display a high nAff (need for affiliation) and also showed a low nPow (need for power). He was a techie/programmer who loved to challenge himself by hacking complicated systems like the transit grid and gloated when he accomplished this task with relative ease, he seemed to enjoy showing off his amazing skills as a programmer. He claims to have developed the original software program Napster and seemed to lament his lack of recognition for developing the software as opposed to the amount of money he could have made. Though he was happy to be part of the team, he tended to enjoy working alone and didn’t necessarily need to be around everyone to fulfill his role.

**Conclusion**

As we have discussed, The Italian Job shows some great examples around Perception, Emotions/Emotional Intelligence and Motivations. Charlie Croker was seen to have a strong internal locus of control and believed largely in his own abilities to plan a heist and put a team together. He also identified strongly with the gang that he put together. We talked about the false consensus that the gang had when they believed that everyone was on board with the plan as it was and failed to perceive that Steve would betray them.

We also talked about Stella Bridger’s extreme emotional state when she was at dinner with Steve, the murder of her father and how her attitude and mood contributed to her emotional response. John Bridger displayed a strong sense of emotional intelligence when he was able to read Charlie’s nervousness before their big heist and calm his nerves.

Finally, we talked about Steve’s needs based on Maslow’s theory and went through Steve’s need for security, love and intimacy and how he met his needs based on esteem. Finishing off with Lyle’s need for achievement as a programming mastermind.