Dessa Shapiro

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### Film evaluation paper

The Alpinist is a documentary that follows the life and climbing achievements of Marc-André Leclerc, a 23-year-old solo climber from Canada. The film explores Leclerc's incredible talent and passion for climbing as he climbs the world's most challenging and remote mountain peaks. The film highlights Leclerc's unorthodox approach to climbing, characterized by his preference for solo climbing with no rope and little to no gear. He climbs a multitude of different mountains with different terrains. The film delves into the physical and mental challenges he faces, capturing the intensity, focus, and determination required to navigate treacherous terrains. At the beginning of the film, he climbs the Canadian Rockies, using ice picks and nothing else to climb overarching columns of ice and rock. At a point in the middle of the movie and film and directing crew lose a contract with Leclerc as he leaves to climb off on the hardest mountain in the world completely alone. This demonstrates Leclerc's sincere desire to climb, neglecting any fame or recognition. The Alpinist also features many interviews with Leclerc's friends, family, and other professional climbers. The other climbers are in awe of Leclerc, often commenting on how talented, courageous, and crazy he is for tackling these thought to be impossible mountains with no equipment, and completely alone. The film delves into the emotional and psychological aspects of Leclerc's journey, examining the impact of his choices on his relationships. It also raises questions about the balance between personal freedom and safety, and the profound drive that compels individuals like Leclerc to push the limits. Leclerc passed away at the age of 25 after he and his partner were struck by a storm while descending from the summit of the Mendenhall Towers Massif in Alaska.

The theme of rationalization in social psychology refers to the cognitive process through which people generate plausible explanations to justify their thoughts, actions, or decisions, in the face of contradictory evidence or moral dilemmas. It allows individuals to protect their self-esteem, maintain a positive self-image, and alleviate cognitive dissonance by reducing the tension caused by conflicting beliefs or behaviors. People resort to rationalization because of dissonance theory, which is “the idea that people find cognitive inconsistency uncomfortable and therefore try to find ways to relieve the discomfort.”(Gilovich et al. 2016) People are also motivated by rationalization to see the broader socio-political system where they live as fair and just. This is exemplified in observations that women sometimes report that they deserve lower pay than men doing the same work. As well as the fact that low-income groups don't always support more egalitarian economic policies over more standard ones. Another form of rationalization presents itself in Terror Management Theory(TMT), which is the theory that explains how people deal with the anxiety associated with the knowledge they will die in order to move forward in their life. The most common rationalization for TMT is denial, many people transition to believe that they will continue existing after their physical body fails to rationalize death. Others find comfort in the idea they will cease to exist in the world, relying on their values and family to live on for them, making them indirectly immortal. Some people hold onto their symbolic immortality by connecting to a broader culture, worldview, and set of values such as their faith, political and social ideals, a sport, or a social group. People become attached to the institutions and feel that to live through them they must be in good standing, when they feel as if they are truly part of the institution it raises their self-esteem and comfort regarding death. (Gilovich et al. 2016)

In the film The Alpinist, the social psychology theme of rationalization is evident in Marc-André Leclerc's actions and the justifications he offers for his risky climbing pursuits. Despite the dangers he faces, Leclerc engages in rationalization to reconcile his passion for climbing with the potential consequences. He uses Risk Justification to rationalize the risk he takes by emphasizing his experience, skill, and preparedness for each climb. He regards every climb with a nonchalant attitude, acting as if he isn't taking any risk, and convinces himself that he can handle the challenges. Leclerc demonstrates Terror management theory through his temporary experiences and beliefs that he will live on through nature, other climbers, and the sport of free solo alpine climbing. Many people and other climbers thought he had died, but when questioned about it he responded, "There's nothing else that makes me feel so alive." (Marc-André Leclerc). He rationalizes his fear of death by living for the mountains and the climb. He also uses self-image preservation and self-esteem to justify his actions. He presents himself as an optimistic independent climber who seeks personal growth, freedom, and fun. By framing his solo climbs as a pursuit of self-discovery and testing his limits, he portrays himself as a courageous and adventurous individual. This rationalization helps him maintain his self-esteem and perception of being a capable and accomplished climber. When he struggled in climbing a difficult mountain due to the harsh weather he kept a positive attitude and went to complete it the next day, reaching the summit easily. Leclerc views climbing as an intrinsic part of his identity and purpose in life. Despite the concerns expressed by his loved ones, he rationalizes his choices by arguing that climbing is the only thing that gives him a sense of purpose and life, which ultimately outweighs the risks involved. Leclerc understood the risks of climbing, knowing that despite his talents there could be unpredictable circumstances, but he didn't regret taking the risk and would not have regretted dying doing it, because climbing was his life.

The phenomenon of rationalization can have both beneficial and detrimental effects on individuals, society, and culture. Rationalization can be a useful psychological defense that can help people protect their self-esteem and maintain a positive self-image. It allows people to cope with cognitive dissonance by creating justifications or explanations for their thoughts, beliefs, or actions. When people are anxious or overwhelmed with something, rationalization can help them think more clearly and calm themselves. Rationalization can also aid in the decision-making processes by providing logical explanations or justifications for choices. People can make sense of their actions and adapt to new situations by finding reasons that support their behavior. This promotes personal growth and resilience in the face of challenges. Rationalization can have negative effects as well such as confirmation bias, where individuals selectively seek out and interpret information that supports their existing beliefs or justifications. It hinders critical thinking and prevents people from considering alternative viewpoints and hinders societal progress. Rationalization can also contribute to groupthink and stereotyping, people within a group may rationalize their shared beliefs or biases without critically examining them, reinforcing social divisions. In the context of US culture, rationalization can both reinforce and challenge cultural norms and values. It can reinforce cultural practices by providing justifications for traditions and customs. However, it can also hinder cultural progress by perpetuating outdated beliefs or by inhibiting the critical analysis of societal norms. When people in government power use unhealthy and harmful methods such as stereotyping to rationalize laws and policy it can lead to an increased amount of discrimination and prejudice towards groups of people.

In my own life, I have frequently used rationalization to improve my self-esteem or to make excuses. In school I still often try to rationalize when I get a bad grade or forget to turn something in, telling myself it was because I was tired or the teacher's lesson isn't clear when in truth I didn't put in enough effort or procrastinated. I find myself using rationalization as a safety net at times to remove any self-blame or self-hate. I can see the benefit it can have at the moment but from my personal experience, it causes problems when continuously used over time. During quarantine, I became very unpredictable with schoolwork and important tasks. But I always brushed it away and blamed some outside factor for my failures. When I went back to school in person I struggled for the first few months since I had let myself become familiar with a certain behavior and couldn't pull myself out of bad habits. If I had tried to recognize my shortcomings and been more self-aware instead of rationalizing bad behavior during my time in quarantine, I would have had more success in my schooling. In the future, I hope to be more self-aware in recognizing my faults and less quick to attribute my issues to others. Even when outside factors could be affecting certain issues I think it is still important to recognize my part in the problems and create a balance of positive and negative rationalization. On a broader scale, rationalizations affect the social systems in my community and country as a whole. People have a tendency to put themselves before others and that can cause a lot of conflict and blame. This can cause a lot of people to become defensive and turn to rationalize the things they are getting blamed for. A major example of this is the issues surrounding climate change, it is something that needs people's energy and attention to start seriously addressing. But people seem to be more focused on who caused the problems and blaming others than solving the problem. Although I believe rationalization can be beneficial to an individual, when there is wide-scale social rationalization people become divided and are hesitant to work cohesively towards positive goals. I look to foster this environment in my future and find ways to bring different people together.

References

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