For the Love of Family: A Mafia Lens on Love and Commitment

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Abstract

The themes of love, commitment and honour are explored within the context of the American Mafia. In most capitalist-focussed conventional organizations managers acquire assets and income through exchanges, through wages, direct operations and build cultures and cultural norms (Friedman, 1970). The authors argue the Mafia organization has similarities and differences to conventional organizations, differences being in how money is acquired and in ethical behaviours which could be described as counter to what is the expectation of conventional organizations. Parallel to the Christian Ten Commandments, baptism and initiation rituals existing within the Mafia are drawn that provide insights into Mafia values that guide behaviours. Honour as a key Mafia value is argued in this article as being a misnomer, being more reflective of dishonourable values of revenge, fear and punishment. Love and commitment within Mafia families including roles of women are examined. It appears that love for family appears secondary to primary commitment to the Mafia Family. This paper contributes to literature on the Mafia in highlighting how 'love' and virtues are relative terms from which unethical acts can be justified within Mafia codes of behaviours. Also highlighted is that organizations valuing vice can survive and sustain if shrouded in secrecy rather than transparency. In the Mafia organization as in conventional organizations, codes of behaviours and commitment central to all money-making organizations are a key to survival.

Keywords

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