



Every Day is a Box for the Reaper Crew: The Quest for Death Transcendence and Conflicting Moral Virtues in Sons of Anarchy?

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Abstract

This paper offers an analysis of the FX television series Sons of Anarchy (SOA) through the lenses of Terror Management Theory (TMT) and Moral Foundations Theory (MFT). TMT asserts that, in order to mitigate death anxiety, people merge their identities with something larger and more powerful than their corporeal selves. The violent behaviors of the shows' protagonists are presented as illustrative of the kind of death denying defense described in TMT. In addition to graphic violence and pervasive death imagery, another central element of the show is its complex and ambiguous portrayal of morality. The moral ambivalence created by SOA is explored from the perspective of MFT, which asserts that morality is influenced by the interaction of six distinct moral senses. The behaviors of various SOA characters and the reactions of viewers are presented as a function of the reciprocal influence of these central elements of mortality and morality.

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