

Social values of masculinity and honor fuel contact with mafia-type groups

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Adherence to masculine honour among young Italian men is a strong indication they are likely to engage in contact with the mafia-type groups, new research led by a University of Kent psychologist has shown.

The research, conducted by Dr Giovanni Travaglino, of the University's School of Psychology and Dr Libby Drury of Birkbeck, University of London, reveals that masculine honour-related values among young men in Southern Italy are likely to play a key role in steering them towards contact with criminal organisation members.

The findings may also prove useful in understanding why some individuals engage with other criminal actors, such as terrorist groups and gangs, and inform education programmes aimed at preventing young people's involvement with such groups.

Criminal organisations such as the mafia or Camorra emphasise their adherence to honour and [masculinity](#) to gain consensus among those sections of the population who endorse related values.

Previous research by Dr Travaglino showed that [young adults](#) and adolescents who endorse values of masculinity and honour also report lower intentions to oppose criminal organisations, a phenomenon known as omertà in Italy.

Now, in this latest research, Dr Travaglino studied a sample of

adolescents over a period of five months and found that participants who reported higher levels of adherence to values of masculinity and honour were more likely to gravitate to actual contact with members of criminal organisations.

The research also demonstrated that contact with criminal organisations is associated with a more romanticised view of these criminal groups. Young adults and adolescents who experience more frequent contact with criminal organisation members are more likely to perceive those members as 'embodying norms of honour and masculinity and as being more embedded within the social fabric of the region', the study found.

The research, entitled Connected guys: Endorsement of masculine honour predicts more frequent contact with members of criminal organisations (Giovanni A. Travaglino, School of Psychology, University of Kent and Libby Drury, Department of Organizational Psychology, Birkbeck, University of London) is published in the journal *European Journal of Social Psychology*.

More information: Giovanni A. Travaglino et al, Connected Guys: Endorsement of Masculine Honour Predicts More Frequent Contact with Members of Criminal Organisations, *European Journal of Social Psychology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/ejsp.2389](https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2389)

Provided by University of Kent

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