

**Connected Guys: Endorsement of Masculine Honour Predicts More Frequent  
Contact with Members of Criminal Organisations**

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**Abstract**

Italian criminal organizations (COs) engage in contact with community members to assert their control over local populations in Southern Italy. According to intracultural appropriation theory, COs' presence in these regions is legitimised by values of masculinity and honour. Here, we test the role of these values in drawing people closer to COs, facilitating more frequent contact with COs' members. Study 1 ( $N_{T1} = 176$ ,  $N_{T2} = 170$ ) used a two-waves longitudinal design demonstrating that endorsement of masculine honour predicts more frequent contact with COs after five months. In contrast, results revealed no longitudinal effect of contact frequency on masculine honour endorsement. Using a cross-sectional design, Study 2 ( $N = 314$ ) extended these results by revealing an indirect effect of masculine honour on the tendency to see COs as embodying honour and respect (romanticisation), through more frequent contact with COs' members. Limitations, directions for future research, and implications of these results are discussed.

**Keywords:**

masculine honour, omertà, intergroup contact, cultural values, organised crime

Italian criminal organizations (COs) such as the *Mafia*, *Camorra* or *'Ndrangheta* are a transnational threat. These groups are involved in the trafficking of weapons, people and illegal drugs globally (Curtis & Karacan, 2002; Ruggiero, 1997; Sciarrone & Storti, 2014). However, despite their international reach, Italian COs are characterised by strong ties with their regions of origin, in Southern Italy (Paoli, 2004). In these regions, COs strive to exert power over the local communities (Toros & Mavelli, 2013). Thus, they must engage in contact with community members to assert authority and obtain respect (Schneider & Schneider, 2003). Research has yet to investigate the antecedents and implications of contact with COs' members.

Recently, research has started examining the values and ideologies that legitimise COs' presence among local communities in Southern Italy. This research has demonstrated that young adults and adolescents who endorse values of masculinity and honour also report lower intentions to oppose COs, a phenomenon known as *omertà* (Travaglino, Abrams, & Randsley de Moura, 2014; Travaglino, Abrams, & Russo, 2017). Here, we extend this research and address for the first time the question of the relationship between the values conducive to *omertà* and contact with members of organised crime. We draw on theories of honour and masculinity, organised crime, and intergroup contact and use a longitudinal and a cross-sectional study to investigate the association between individuals' endorsement of male honour-related values and frequency of contact with COs' members. We also explore a potential implication of contact with those members.

### **Honour and Masculine Values**

Honour is defined as the 'value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society' (Pitt-Rivers, 1965, p. 21). This is an important cultural code in many societies around the globe (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997; Rodriguez-Mosquera,

Manstead, & Fischer, 2002; Schneider, 1971; Uskul, Cross, Sunbay, Gercek-Swing, & Ataca, 2012). In societies where honour is a central concern, individuals must be able to promptly reciprocate insults, as well as kindness, from other people. They must also abide by a specific set of social expectations, and manage their reputation carefully (Leung & Cohen, 2011; Rodriguez-Mosquera, 2016; Uskul, Cross, Gunsoy, & Gul, in press).

Honour-related expectations vary according to the gender of the individual. For instance, women must display sexual modesty and loyalty to the family (Barnes, Brown, Lenes, Bosson, & Carvalho, 2014). In contrast, men must display the ability to defend their reputation, and retaliate with violence against offences and threats (Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012). These cultural expectations prescribe how men or women should behave in general (Barnes et al., 2012) and can be endorsed (or rejected) regardless of the individual's own gender (Travaglino et al., 2017).

In addition to interpersonal prescriptions, cultural values of honour may also play a key role in the regulation of intergroup relations in society (Travaglino et al., 2017). For example, in the context of Italian criminal organisations, groups such as mafia or camorra emphasise their adherence to honour and masculinity to gain consensus among those sectors of the population who endorse related values. Such values are central to criminal organisations because they promote the use of private violence and retaliation to resolve social conflicts.

Thus, values of masculinity and honour may foment distance between individuals and the official authorities. COs exploit this distance to gain social influence. In this paper, we investigate the new question of whether such values also steer individuals towards more frequent contact with members of criminal organisations, and explore a potential implication of such contact.

### **Criminal Organisations and Intracultural Appropriation Theory**

Italian COs are illegal bodies characterised by a multiplicity of different goals, including economic accumulation and the exercise of power over the community (Paoli, 2003; Toros & Mavelli, 2013). Membership of COs grants affiliates very high status. When affiliates are within the boundaries of ‘their’ territories, they are able to assert their authority over large strata of the population (Travaglino, Abrams, Randsley de Moura, & Russo, 2015).

COs gain legitimacy by portraying themselves as the embodiment of honour values of masculinity and reciprocity (Schneider & Schneider, 1994). According to *Intracultural Appropriation Theory* (ICAT; Travaglino et al., 2017), social actors such as COs seek and obtain legitimacy by appropriating and using cultural values shared in the population. COs’ affiliates define themselves as *men of honour*, and emphasize the importance of values such as *self-reliance* (i.e., never ask help from law enforcement agencies) and *reciprocity* (e.g., retaliation against insults; distribution of favours and resources to the population). To the extent that these are important cultural values in Southern Italy, COs’ presence becomes acceptable and public opposition less likely.

COs’ strategical exploitation of masculine honour-related values becomes apparent in their use of the code of omertà. Omertà involves the categorical prohibition of collaboration with law enforcement agencies, regardless of whether one takes part in, observes, or is even victim of a crime. It implies that self-reliance and the capacity to resolve disputes without involving the authorities makes individuals worthier of respect (Schneider & Schneider, 1994).

In line with ICAT and the notion of omertà, research demonstrates that individuals (males or females) who endorse male honour-related values are less likely

to express intentions to oppose COs collectively. This relationship is explained by lower vicarious shame about COs' wrongdoings (Travaglino et al., 2015), more positive attitudes towards the group (Travaglino et al., 2014), and lower support for social change vis-à-vis the presence of COs in the territory (Travaglino et al., 2017). Importantly, research also shows that other facets of honour such as prescriptions about female behaviour and subjective concerns for reputation are not associated with individuals' perception of COs (Travaglino et al., 2017), supporting the idea that values of masculinity uniquely legitimise COs' predatory presence in the community.

### **Omertà and Contact with Members of Criminal Organisations**

Omertà is central to COs' ability to perpetuate their control, avoid prosecution and exert power. Community members who are aware of COs' activities seldom report their crimes to the police, or publically oppose COs (Travaglino, et al., 2014). This is because such actions would represent departures from omertà, would entail a loss of respect, and trigger violent retaliation from criminal groups, or even other members of the community (Paoli, 2003).

But is there a relationship between the values conducive to omertà and the physical presence of members of COs within the community? Masculine honour-related values play an important part in legitimising these groups (Travaglino et al., 2014). Here, we propose that endorsement of such values may also be associated with more frequent experiences of contact with COs' members.

**Intergroup contact theory and culture.** Experiencing positive encounters with an outgroup member improves attitudes towards individual outgroup members (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and such attitudes may then generalise to the entire outgroup (Pettigrew, 2009). Positive intergroup attitudes resulting from intergroup contact is a well-established social psychological finding, which has been

proved to be effective across a wide range of different groups and targets (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

Intergroup contact is, thus, an important *situational* framework to understand intergroup attitudes (Jackson & Poulsen, 2005; Turner, Dhont, Hewstone, Prestwich, & Vonofakou, 2014). Recently, research has extended this framework by examining the role of *individual differences* in intergroup contact and their effects on attitude change (Boccatto, Capozza, Trifiletti, & Di Bernardo, 2015; Hodson & Dhont, 2015; Dhont & Van Hiel, 2009; Jackson & Poulsen, 2005; Turner, et al., 2014; Vezzali, Turner, Capozza, & Trifiletti, in press). These individual differences include personality traits (FFM; McCrae & Costa, 1999), and social attitudes (Sibley & Duckett, 2008), such as social dominance orientation (SDO; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1998).

This research has theorised and demonstrated that individuals' traits and social attitudes may influence the contact situations which are sought out or experienced. For instance, individuals with authoritarian traits are less likely to engage in contact with outgroup members (Pettigrew, 2008). Moreover, intergroup contact seems to be especially effective for those individuals who have higher levels of social dominance (Hodson, 2011; Hodson & Dhont, 2015). Experiences of positive contact may even contribute to reduce levels of SDO in individuals (Dhont, Van Hiel, & Hewstone, 2014; Shook, Hopkins, & Koech, 2015).

This research has yet to examine the relationship between individuals' endorsement of cultural values and frequency of contact. Personality traits and social attitudes play a critical role in the experiences and effects of intergroup contact. It is therefore plausible that cultural values play a similarly important and instrumental role.

Culture is a fundamental component of individuals' psychological life and affects individuals' intergroup behaviour (Triandis & Trafimow, 2003). Broadly speaking, culture refers to a system of shared meanings and practices, of assumptions about the world, norms, beliefs and 'habits about sampling the environment' (Triandis, 2001, p. 908). Cultural values provide a way for individuals to organise information about social reality and distinguish what is appropriate from what should instead be avoided (Brewer & Yuki, 2014; Mendoza-Denton & Mischel, 2007). These values may be endorsed (or contested) to a different degree by individuals in society (Leung & Cohen, 2011). Therefore, we contend that they may contribute to individuals' assessment of whether engaging in contact with members of a specific outgroup is appropriate.

**Contact with members of criminal groups.** Intergroup contact theory may provide important insights about the relationship between communities and criminal groups (cf. Alleyne & Wood, 2012). However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has examined the role of contact in the context of criminal groups. There is only indirect evidence about the importance of contact between members of the community and members of criminal groups (Akerlof & Yellen, 1994). For instance, criminological evidence indicates that the presence of criminal groups in the community may contribute to the socialization and diffusion of criminogenic attitudes and values (Spergel, 1995; Sutherland, 1937; see Wood & Alleyne, 2010 for a review). Whilst the presence of criminal groups within the community does not guarantee a direct contact interaction, anthropological observations of COs in Southern Italy indicate that affiliates carefully cultivate contacts and relationships with members of the community to obtain respect and preserve their power (Schneider & Schneider, 2003). This evidence suggests that COs' social standing is



contingent upon intergroup contact between COs' members and the wider community.

### **Overview of the Studies and Hypotheses**

In this paper, we present two studies investigating the association between individuals' endorsement of male honour-related values and their frequency of contact with members of COs. Study 1 uses a two-wave longitudinal design and investigates the direction of this association. According to ICAT, COs portray themselves as the embodiment of values of honour and masculinity to gain consensus and legitimacy among the population. ICAT implies that endorsement of such cultural values makes these groups more acceptable and therefore predisposes individuals to pursue situations in which they can engage in contact with their members. This suggests the existence of a longitudinal association of male honour related values at Time 1 with frequency of contact at Time 2.

An additional hypothesis can be derived from criminological observations that individuals are more likely to develop criminogenic attitudes due to exposure to individuals who are carriers of such norms (Sutherland, 1937). This implies that the more frequently individuals experience contact with members of criminal groups (such as COs), the more likely they are to endorse masculine values of omertà. This suggests a longitudinal association of frequency of contact at Time 1 with masculine values at Time 2. Both these hypotheses are tested in Study 1.

Study 2 extends results from Study 1 by exploring a potential implication of contact with members of COs. Specifically, Study 2 uses a cross-sectional SEM model to investigate whether there is a significant indirect effect of masculine honour-related values through higher frequency of contact with COs' members on the tendency to see COs' members as 'men of honour', and COs as worthy of respect and

part of the region's history, what we define as the tendency to romanticise COs (see Larke, 2003).

The positive effect of intergroup contact experiences on the perception of the outgroup is supported by a wide body of literature (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). Moreover, research examining the indirect effects of individual difference variables on the perception of the outgroup supports the notion that contact will form an indirect path from honour to the romanticisation of COs (Boccatto et al., 2015; Jackson & Poulsen, 2005; Turner et al., 2014). For example, previous research focussing on personality factors such as openness to experience and agreeableness has shown that these traits predicted reduced anti-outgroup prejudice *via* favourable intergroup contact (Jackson & Poulsen, 2005).

COs' members portray themselves as the embodiment of masculinity and honour, and invest energy and resources to behave in line with the dictates of the honour culture (Paoli, 2003). We therefore argue that more opportunities for contact with COs' members, driven by endorsement of masculine values, may play an important role in increasing individuals' tendency to see this group as matching the ideals of masculinity and honour. Moreover, such a match may represent a key step towards gaining legitimacy and social influence *vis-à-vis* those who support these values. Thus, there should be a significant positive indirect effect of masculine honour on the tendency to see the group in a more romanticised way via increased frequency of contact with COs' members. This hypothesis is tested in Study 2.

In both studies 1 and 2, we test the hypotheses using samples of adolescents from a southern Italian region (Campania). Adolescents are an especially important target group to examine the relationship between male honour-related values and contact with COs' members. There is evidence that engagement in criminal activities

is much more prevalent in adolescence compared to other life periods (e.g., Agnew, 2003). According to Emler and Reicher (1995), this is because adolescents may use delinquency to signal their rejection of the institutional order when they first encounter it, while building a reputation for toughness in front of their peers.

Importantly, the presence of COs within the community may strengthen the relevance of such dynamics because COs' provide young people with an alternative social order to the institutional one. Thus, interactions with COs' members may generate fascination among young people and may even foster criminality among them. This is because displaying the capacity for physical violence and the ability to commit petty crimes may be perceived as a way to impress the local camorra boss and therefore acquire status among peers (Allum, 2001; Travaglino et al., 2015). It is therefore important to examine the shared cultural value that may prompt adolescents to engage in more frequent contact with members of criminal organisations.

## Study 1

### Method

**Participants and procedure.** Participants for this study were recruited in a school in Southern Italy situated in an area with high density of Camorra, the Neapolitan mafia. Time 1 (T1) data were collected in January 2014 and consisted of 176 people ( $M_{age} = 16.17$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ; (79 males, 84 females, 13 unreported). Participants were asked to take part in another study in May 2014. The Time 2 (T2) sample consisted of 170 people ( $M_{age} = 16.46$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ; 88 males, 81 females, 2 unreported). Of the initial 176 participants, 45 (25% circa) did not take part in the T2 study. Moreover, the T2 study included 39 additional participants who had not taken part in the T1 study.

Across data collection sessions, participants completed the study in their classrooms. Two researchers (a male and a female) approached each classroom and asked permission from the teacher to distribute questionnaires. Participants were reminded that participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants generated a personal code to enable them to withdraw their data while maintaining anonymity. This code was also used to link responses across time waves. Following data collection, participants were debriefed about the nature and scope of the study.

**Materials.** Measures were included in a larger questionnaire focusing on organized crime and cultural values (see Travaglino et al., 2014 and Travaglino et al., 2015). Questionnaires were in Italian. Throughout the research, COs were referred to as ‘Camorra’, the local mafia group. Note that the Time 1 measure of HIM was published in Travaglino, Abrams, Randsley de Moura and Russo (2014) and the Time 2 measure of HIM was published in a separate article (Travaglino, Abrams, Randsley de Moura, & Russo, 2015). Neither of these publications included analyses of longitudinal data nor associations between HIM and intergroup contact with members of criminal organisations. Thus, this study is independent of prior publications mentioned above.<sup>1</sup>

***Honour ideology for manhood (HIM).*** In line with previous research (e.g., Travaglino et al., 2017), participants’ endorsement of male honour-related values was measured using the HIM scale (Barnes et al., 2012). This scale includes sixteen statements (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) measuring individuals’ endorsement of male physical violence in honour-threatening situations (e.g., “A man has the right to act with physical aggression toward another man who flirts with his wife”) and perception of qualities that should define a real man (e.g., “A real man

never leaves a score unsettled”). The scale taps ideological rather than subjective approval of violence and can therefore be answered by both male and female participants (Barnes et al., 2012). The scale had high internal consistency,  $\alpha_{T1} = .87$  and  $\alpha_{T2} = .92$ .

**Frequency of contact.** Contact with members of COs was measured using the item ‘Indicate how often you have contact with members of the Camorra in your everyday life’ (1 = *never*, 7 = *very often*).

## Results and Discussion

**Preliminary analyses.** Intercorrelations among variables, means and standard deviations are summarized in Table 1. The correlation between frequency of contact and male honour-related values was significant and positive, indicating that individuals who endorsed these values were also more likely to report more frequent contact with COs’ members.

We tested for selective attrition and missing data mechanism conducting a MANOVA on the T1 measures included in this study, including Age and Gender. There was no significant multivariate,  $F(4, 157) = 0.67, p = .61, \eta_p^2 = .02$ , or univariate  $F_s < 2.16, p_s > .14, \eta_p^2 < .01$  significant effects, suggesting that data were missing completely at random (MCAR). In addition, we ran a MANOVA on the T2 measures comparing participants who only took part in the T2 study with participants who took part to both waves. There was no multivariate,  $F(4, 164) = 0.71, p = .59, \eta^2 = .02$ , or univariate,  $F_s < 1.68, p_s > .20, \eta_s^2 < .01$  effects, indicating that there was no significant difference on these key constructs across these two groups. As a further test of the missing data mechanism, we performed a Little’s (1988) MCAR test on the T1 and T2 variables included in the study. The test was not significant  $\chi^2(5) = 4.78, p = .44$ , providing further evidence for the MCAR assumption. Thus, all participants

from T1 and T2 were included in the following analyses using the full information maximum likelihood approach (FIML). This approach uses all the information available in the dataset to estimate the parameters and produces more reliable and less biased estimates when data are missing completely at random (Enders, 2010; Little, 2013).

Analyses described below were conducted using the software R and the package lavaan (Rosseel, 2012). Because the frequency of contact variable was not normally distributed, analyses described below were conducted using robust standard errors.

**Measurement model.** Before examining our hypotheses, we tested the assumption of measurement invariance across time waves (i.e., longitudinal measurement invariance; see Little, 2013). Longitudinal measurement invariance implies that the constructs can be meaningfully compared across time points. To improve reliability and decrease measurement error, the sixteen items for the HIM scale were parcelled in four parcels of four items each (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). Parcels were constructed using the item-to-construct balance method (Little et al., 2002). This method consists of specifying a single construct model and then averaging across items with the highest (across time points) item-to-construct loadings and items with lowest (across time points) item-to-construct loadings. This method allows for the creation of balanced parcels.

To test longitudinal measurement invariance, we specified three different models with different degrees of constraints. To determine whether the assumption of invariance was tenable,  $\Delta$ CFI was used to compare the different models (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002; Little, 2013). A difference in CFI lower than .01 indicates that the assumption of invariance is supported (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

First, we tested a longitudinal measurement model including all latent and observed constructs from each of the two data points. No constraints were placed on the parameter estimates and residuals of parallel indicators were allowed to covary across time points (i.e., configural invariance). The model had adequate fit,  $\chi^2(26, N = 216) = 44.36, p = .01, CFI = .985, RMSEA = .057, SRMR = .027$ . Next, this model was compared with a model with correspondent factor loadings constrained to be equal across measurement waves (i.e., weak invariance). This second model had adequate fit,  $\chi^2(29, N = 216) = 48.96, p = .01, CFI = .984, RMSEA = .056, SRMR = .037$  and  $\Delta CFI = .001$ , supporting the assumption of weak invariance. Finally, we compared the weak invariance model with a model with estimated intercepts of correspondent indicators constrained to be equal across measurement waves (i.e., strong invariance). The model fit the data adequately,  $\chi^2(32, N = 216) = 50.50, p = .02, CFI = .984, RMSEA = .052, SRMR = .038$ , and  $\Delta CFI = 0$  providing support for strong measurement invariance. Because measures and constructs can be meaningfully compared across time waves, we tested our hypothesis using a longitudinal panel model.

**Longitudinal panel model.** To investigate the relationship between masculine honour and frequency of contact with organized crime in the Southern Italian context, we tested a longitudinal panel model. The model included auto-regressive paths, to control for the prior level of each construct, and cross-lagged paths to test relationships between constructs across time points. Constructs' residuals were allowed to covary within each time point to control for associations between variables. In addition, analyses controlled for gender and age by specifying paths from these variables to T1 and T2 constructs. Following Little (2013), and to avoid overcontrol (i.e., discarding variance randomly associated with both the covariate and

the construct of interest), covariates paths were pruned when they were not significantly or marginally ( $p > .10$ ) related to the constructs. Note that the results described below are virtually unaltered if the covariates are not added to the model, or instead the paths are not pruned from the model. The model is summarized in Fig. 1.

The model fit the data well,  $\chi^2(42, N = 216) = 58.28, p = .049, CFI = .988, RMSEA = .042, SRMR = .029$ . Controlling for the auto-regressive paths, the relationship between frequency of contact at T1 and male honour-related values at T2 was not significant,  $\beta = -.02, SE = .06, p = .72$ . In line with ICAT, male honour-related values at T1 significantly predicted frequency of contact at T2,  $\beta = .19, SE = .15, p = .025$ . Importantly, specifying a model which included no path from frequency of contact at T1 to male honour-related values at T2 did not significantly worsen the model,  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = .011, p = .74$ . In contrast, specifying a model with no path from male honour-related values at T1 to frequency of contact at T2 significantly worsen the model,  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 5.11, p = .02$ .

The results supported the hypothesis derived from ICAT that individuals who endorse male honour-related values are more likely to experience higher frequency of contact with members of COs. In contrast, there was no evidence in this sample for the hypothesis that higher frequency of contact leads to the reinforcement of omertà-related values.

## Study 2

### Method

**Participants and procedure.** Three hundred and fourteen participants from a different Southern Italian school took part in the study (152 males, 154 females, 8 unreported). The mean age was 17.50 ( $SD = 1.50$ ). Data were collected in school



classrooms using paper-and-pencil self-administered questionnaires. Participation in the study was voluntary.

**Materials.** Measures were included in a larger questionnaire focusing on organized crime and cultural values. Responses were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) unless differently noted in the following text. Where relevant, a mean score for each construct was computed by averaging the relevant items. Questionnaires were in Italian. As in the previous study, throughout the research, COs were referred to as ‘Camorra’, the local mafia group. Note that the measure of HIM in Study 2 was published in Travaglino, Abrams, and Randsley de Moura (2014). In the current article, we present for the first time the association between HIM, frequency of contact with members of criminal organisations and tendency to romanticise criminal organisations.

**HIM.** Participants completed the same scale as in Study 1 (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The scale had high internal consistency,  $\alpha = .91$ .

**Frequency of contact.** As in the previous study, contact with criminal organizations was measured using the item, ‘Indicate how often you have some form of contact with members of the Camorra in your everyday life’ (1 = *never*, 7 = *very often*).

**Tendency to romanticize criminal organisations.** Tendency to romanticize COs was measured using the following items, ‘In general, men who belong to the Camorra have a high sense of honour’, ‘Camorra is an important part of the region’s history’, ‘Camorra is highly respected by people who live in Campania’ ( $\alpha = .71$ ; cf. Larke, 2003).

## **Results and Discussion**

Table 2 describes intercorrelations among variables, means, and standard deviations. Replicating results from Study 1, there was a significant correlation between HIM and frequency of contact. There was also a significant correlation between HIM and tendency to romanticise COs. Individuals who endorsed male honour-related values also reported more frequent contact with members criminal organization. Higher frequency of contact was also associated with a more romanticized view of criminal organizations.

**SEM model.** To explore a potential implication of contact with members of COs, we tested the hypothesised indirect effect of male honour related values on the tendency to romanticize COs through frequency of contact with COs members. Specifically, we tested a SEM model in which masculine honour predicted tendency to romanticise through contact (see Fig 2). Age and gender were added as covariates in the model to control for their effects. As in Study 1, in order to improve reliability, the sixteen items for the HIM scale were parcelled in four parcels of four items each using the item-to-construct balance method (Little, et al., 2002). Analyses were performed with R and lavaan using robust standard errors.

The model fit the data adequately,  $\chi^2(27, N = 314) = 67.51, p < .001$ , CFI = .96, RMSEA = .073, SRMR = .041. Stronger endorsement of male honour-related values was associated with higher frequency of contact with criminal organisations,  $\beta = .26, SE = .010, p < .001$  and a tendency to romanticise COs,  $\beta = .37, SE = .09, p < .001$ . Frequency of contact predicted tendency to romanticize criminal organisations,  $\beta = .28, SE = .05, p < .001$ . Individuals who had more frequent contact with members of criminal organizations, also reported a more positive view of this group. As predicted, the indirect effect of male honour-related values via frequency of contact on tendency to romanticize criminal organisations was significant and positive,  $\beta =$

.07,  $SE = .03$ , 95% CI = .02 to .13. These results support the idea that there is an indirect effect of male honour-related values on tendency to romanticize criminal organisations via frequency of contact with members of organized crime.

### **General Discussion**

In this article, we presented two studies investigating the association between endorsement of male honour-related values and frequency of contact with members of criminal organisations in two adolescent samples from a Southern Italian region. Drawing on previous research on the presence of criminal groups within the community (Schneider & Schneider, 2013; Spergel, 1995) and on theories of honour (Barnes et al., 2012), omertà (Travaglino et al., 2017) and intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), we contended that endorsement of male-honour related values would be associated with more frequent contact with members of COs. Results from two studies provided evidence in support of this contention.

In Study 1, we used a two-wave longitudinal design to examine the direction of this relationship. In this study, we tested the two hypotheses of whether masculine values of omertà predispose individuals to more frequent contact with members of criminal organisations or, vice-versa, that values are strengthened following more frequent contact with members of such groups. The former hypothesis was based on ICAT's analysis of the relationship between culture and COs (Travaglino et al., 2017), whereas the latter was derived from criminological observations about the impact of the presence of criminal groups on individuals' values (e.g., Spergel, 1995).

In line with ICAT, results from Study 1 demonstrated that individuals who endorsed male honour-related values at T1 were also more likely to report more frequent contact with members of Camorra (the Neapolitan organised crime group) at T2. In contrast, frequency of contact at T1 did not predict endorsement of male

honour-related values at T2. This result provides important insights of how cultural values may legitimise, and perhaps make more acceptable, contact with members of groups such as COs.

Study 2 provided further evidence of a positive relationship between endorsement of male honour-related values and frequency of contact with members of organised crime groups. In addition, Study 2 extended results from Study 1 by exploring one of the potential implications of more frequent contact with COs' members. Specifically, we tested the hypothesis that there would be a positive indirect effect of male honour-related values on the tendency to romanticise COs via frequency of contact with COs' members. Findings were consistent with this hypothesis. In line with ICAT and results from Study 1, individuals who endorsed male honour-related values more strongly were also more likely to report more frequent contact with COs' members. This created an indirect effect of male honour-related values on tendency to romanticise COs through contact with COs' members. Seeing COs as embodying the ideals of honour and respect may then increase the social legitimacy of these groups, and their influence.

### **Intergroup Contact, Culture and Criminal Groups**

Results from these studies are consistent with ICAT's central proposition that cultural values may bestow groups with legitimacy. COs portray themselves as the embodiment of honour and masculinity. To the extent that individuals endorse such values, COs become more acceptable, and contact with COs' members more likely.

Longitudinal and cross-sectional evidence from this research provide support for the idea that cultural values may play an important role in steering individuals towards more frequent contact with outgroup members. Few studies have so far investigated the relationship between individual differences and frequency of contact

longitudinally (Dhont et al., 2014; Vezzali et al., in press). These studies have shown that individual differences at T2 are predicted by frequency of contact at T1. For instance, Dhont et al (2014) demonstrated that SDO levels were reduced following more frequent positive contact with outgroup members. In addition, Vezzali et al (in press) found that frequency of contact was associated with subsequent lower levels of agreeableness.

Somewhat inconsistent with this evidence, in the present research, endorsement of cultural values of masculinity and honour at T1 predicted frequency of contact with COs' members at T2. In contrast, the effect of frequency of contact on subsequent levels of masculine honour was non-significant. This evidence suggests that cultural values may be especially important in the *selection* of situations in which the interaction with outgroup members can take place (cf. Jackson & Poulsen, 2005), rather than being shaped by the interaction. This evidence is compatible with the idea that culture provides individuals with information about what is appropriate and what should be avoided in their (social and physical) environment (Brewer & Yuki, 2014). Future research should investigate the interplay between personality and culture in the context of intergroup contact, across different societies and groups.

This research also contributes to our understanding of the dynamics of contact in the context of illegal, criminal groups. Intergroup contact theory states that contact with outgroup members enhances liking toward the outgroup. This theory was first developed to address prejudice against racial and ethnic groups. Importantly, it was initially hypothesised that intergroup contact would be effective at stimulating positive intergroup attitudes only when the two groups have equal status, share common interests or goals, and when contact is supported by institutional authorities (Allport, 1954). However, recently, a meta-analysis established that the effects of

contact can emerge across a much broader range of different groups and settings (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). This analysis demonstrated that contact is effective at improving attitudes towards the outgroup even when those four conditions are not met. For instance, researchers have tested the effect of contact with age-based groups (e.g., older people; Drury, Abrams, & Swift, 2017), the mentally ill (Angermeyer & Matschinger, 1997), and between the public and the police (Eller, Abrams, Viki, Imara & Peerbux, 2007).

In this research, we show for the first time that intergroup contact theory may also be used to understand the interplay between the community and criminal organisations such as the Camorra. Criminologists have described circumstances in which members of the community become more sympathetic to members of criminal groups rather than the authorities (Akerlof & Yellen, 1994). In addition, COs' members invest heavily in cultivating strong ties with members of local communities to ensure control of the territory and compliance to *omertà* (Schneider & Schneider, 2003). They may exert a particularly strong attraction on adolescents and young people who may construe interaction with COs' members as a way to signal their own toughness and as opposition against the institutional order (Emler & Reicher, 1995). Such relationships are not only based on fear, but often stem from the social embeddedness of, and legitimacy granted to, these groups (cf. Travaglino et al., 2017).

Consistent with these ideas, this research demonstrates that contact between members of the community and members of COs is also associated with a more romanticised view of these groups. Young adults and adolescents who experience more frequent contact with COs' members are also 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. In other words, contact with COs'

members may foster social norms that make these groups more acceptable and admirable.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This research has presented two studies examining the association between cultural values of masculinity and honour and contact with COs. We provided evidence for the idea that such values are associated with more frequent contact with members of COs. Results were consistent with intracultural appropriation theory, and are the first to demonstrate the importance of cultural values in intergroup contact.

This research is nonetheless affected by some limitations. First, the measure of frequency of contact used in this study consisted of a single item. The use of single-item measures may, in some circumstances, increase measurement error. However, the item used in this research measured a concrete and relatively unambiguous construct because it recorded how often individuals had contact with members of the Camorra in their daily lives. Moreover, in Study 1 we used a conservative test of the hypotheses involving robust estimation of standard errors. Nonetheless, future research should use multi-item scales to measure individuals' frequency of contact with COs' members.

Another potential limitation of this research concerns the length of time between different measurement waves in Study 1. In this study, measurements taken at distance of five months showed that endorsement of cultural values at T1 longitudinally predicted frequency of contact at T2, whereas frequency of contact at T1 did not predict endorsement of cultural values at T2. This evidence is consistent with the idea that culture provides individuals with information about what constitutes an appropriate environment. However, the idea that more frequent contact with COs' members affects, and perhaps reinforces, cultural values of honour and masculinity

cannot be completely ruled out yet. More studies, using multiple measurement points and wider time spans between waves are needed to examine the relationship between frequency of contact and cultural values.

A limitation of Study 2 is the cross-sectional nature of the design. In this study, we used a SEM model with latent variables to explore a potential implication of contact with COs' members. Results revealed an indirect effect of masculine honour on the romanticisation of COs through frequency of contact. It should be highlighted that this indirect effect is a *necessary but not sufficient* condition for a mediation process (see Fiedler, Schott, & Meiser, 2011; Lemmer & Gollwitzer, 2017). Thus, results from these analyses provide pivotal but inconclusive insights into the potential repercussions of young people's frequency of contact with COs' members. Future research should use a longitudinal design to examine the implications of contact more rigorously.

In addition, future research may also combine longitudinal and experimental approaches to test causal relationships between variables. For instance, interventions to reduce endorsement of male honour-related values may be used to test their effects on subsequent contact with COs' members. Moreover, future research should examine the association between the tendency to romanticise COs and the legitimisation of COs' activities, as well as the psychological mechanisms underlying this association.

A key direction for future research is the relationship between cultural values of honour and masculinity and other aspects of contact with COs' members. In this research, we used a measurement of contact *frequency*. However, research on intergroup contact has demonstrated that the *quality* of the interaction (i.e., positive or



negative) with outgroup members is a stronger predictor of attitudes towards the outgroup, compared to frequency (Drury, Hutchison, & Abrams, 2016).

Interestingly, the positive relationship between contact frequency and tendency to romanticise COs found in Study 2 indicates that the instances of contact predicted by male honour-related values have a positive valence. This finding suggests that such cultural values should play no role in predicting experiences of negative contact with COs' members. Future studies should therefore, investigate the articulation between male honour-related values and experiences of positive and negative contact with COs' members.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

This is the first research to investigate the antecedents and the implications of contact between members of the community and members of criminal organisations in the Southern Italian context. Results show that young people and adolescents who endorse values of masculinity and honour may orbit closer to COs, and engage in more frequent contact with their members. These results have implications for educative programmes aimed at preventing young people's involvement with such groups.

Several antimafia interventions aimed at 'risk youth' often focus on 'keeping the kids off the street'. Such interventions are likely based on the implicit principle of limiting young people's exposure to, and direct contact with COs' members. Relatively fewer interventions and analyses directly target, or address the issue of, cultural values (cf. Patterson & Fosse, 2015). Yet, as this research suggests, cultural values of masculinity and honour may play a key role in steering individuals towards contact with COs' members. This contact could then increase individuals' fascination

for these groups. Therefore, educators should take those values into account and devise creative solutions to tackle them in their programmes.

More in general, values of masculinity and honour may also be critical to understand what drives some individuals to engage with other criminal actors, including terrorist groups and gangs. These groups often emphasise the importance of masculinity and status among their members, and may thus become particularly attractive to individuals who consider these values important. Such attraction could in turn open the way to increased radicalization, or delinquency. More research is needed to test these implications.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> A full list of items as well as published data (including variables used in this article) are available at the following link <http://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/01.01/34>.

Demographic variables have been omitted to preserve participants' and schools' anonymity. Some measures have not been published because they contain information that the authors intend to use for exploratory purposes.

Table 1. Correlations, means and standard deviations between the variables in Study 1 at Time 1 (T1) and Time 2 (T2).

		1	2	3	4
<i>T1 Masculine Honour (1)</i>	T1	-			
	T2	.77*** (131)			
<i>T1 Frequency of Contact (2)</i>	T1	.39*** (174)	-		
	T2	.31*** (131)	.48*** (131)		
<i>T1 Age (3)</i>	T1	.01 (163)	.16* (162)	-	
	T2	-.13 (129)	.10 (129)	.75*** (128)	
<i>T1 Gender (4)</i>	T1	-.45*** (167)	-.35*** (167)	-.09 (165)	-
	T2	-.54*** (170)	-.30*** (170)	-.14 (169)	-
<i>M</i>	T1	4.38	1.55	16.17	-
	T2	4.34	1.98	16.46	-
<i>SD</i>	T1	1.01	1.22	0.65	-
	T2	1.14	1.77	0.71	-

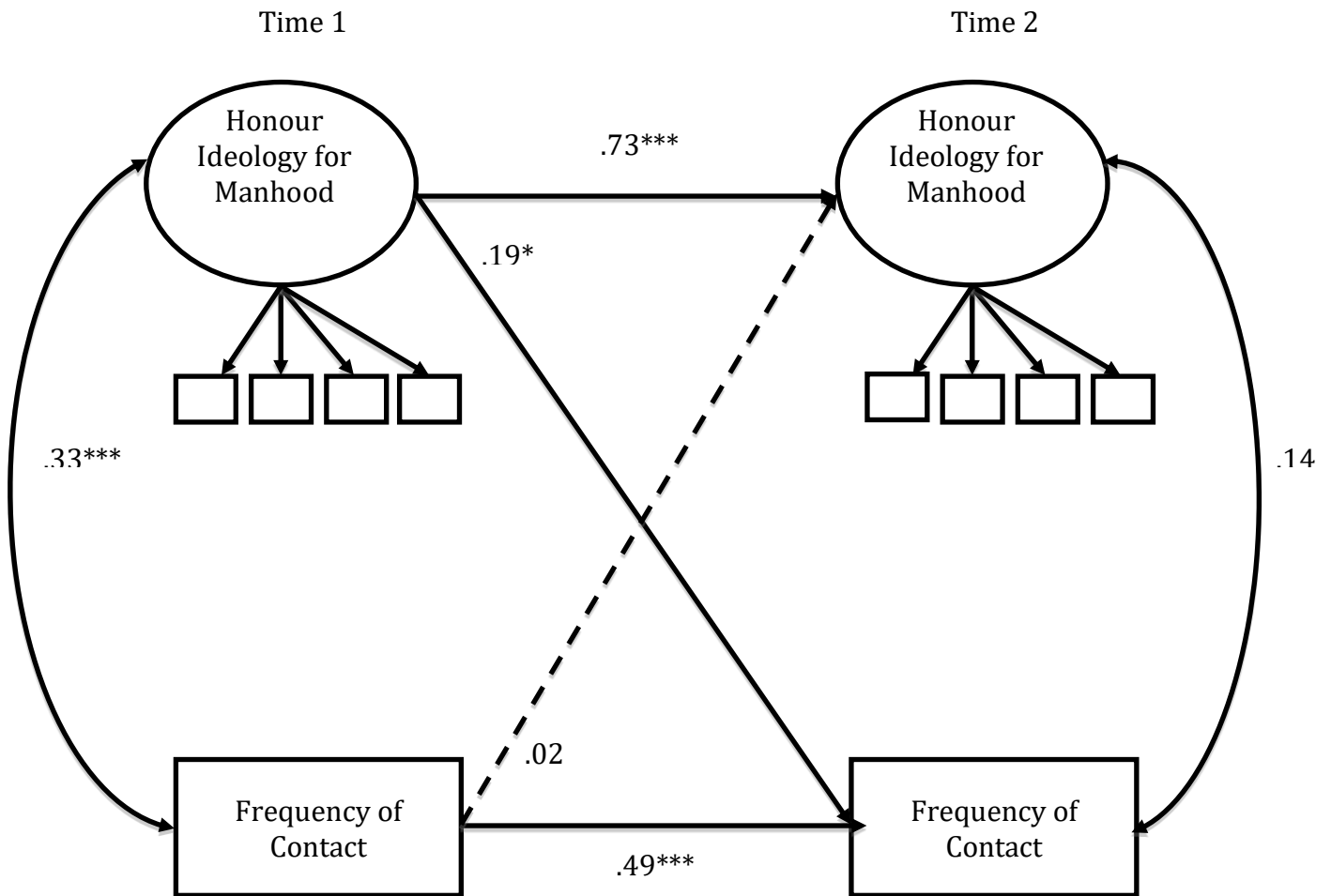
Note: \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ . Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female. The sample size for each bivariate correlation is shown in brackets.

Table 2. Correlations, means and standard deviations between the variables in Study 2.

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Honour Ideology for Manhood (1)</i>	-				
<i>Frequency of Contact (2)</i>	.25***	-			
<i>Tendency to romanticize COs (3)</i>	.38***	.31***	-		
<i>Age (4)</i>	-.12*	.07	-.21***	-	
<i>Gender (5)</i>	-.36***	-.17**	-.14*	.05	-
<i>M</i>	4.06	2.02	4.22	17.50	-
<i>SD</i>	1.29	1.07	1.47	1.11	-

Note: \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .  $N = 314$

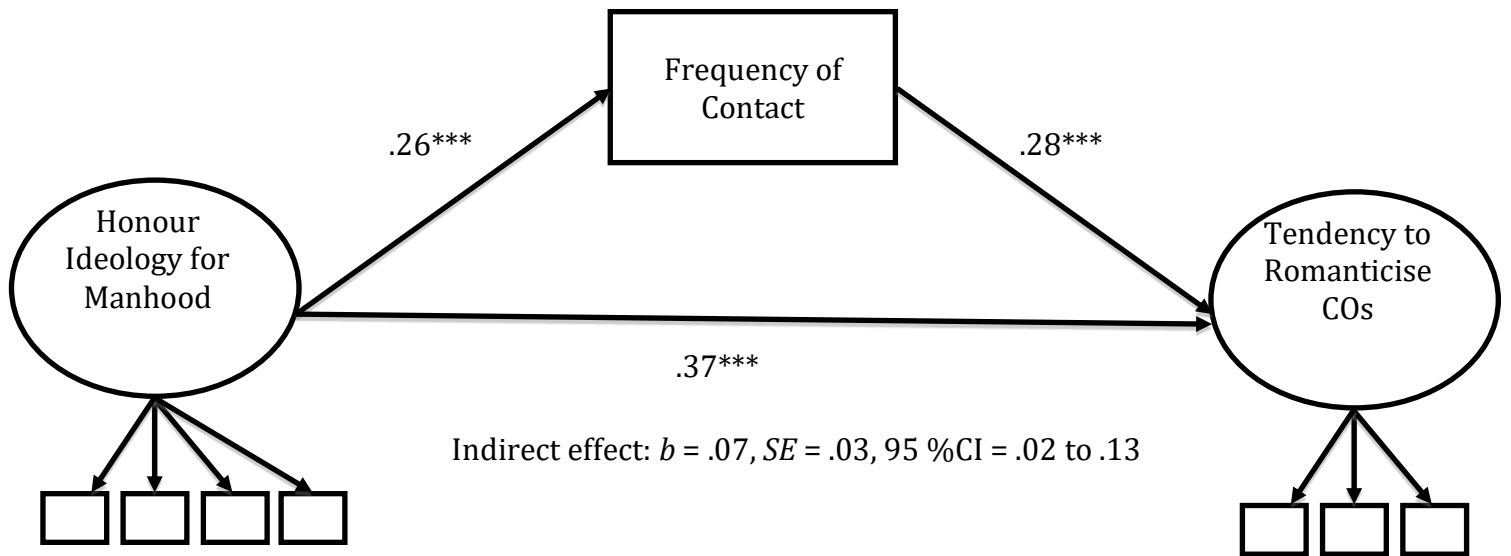
Figure 1: Simplified longitudinal panel model testing the longitudinal relationship between Masculine Honour and Frequency of Contact with COs' members in Study 1.



Note:

\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ . Dashed lines are non-significant path. Gender and Age are covariates in the model.

Figure 2: Simplified SEM model showing coefficients for the indirect effect of honour ideology for manhood on tendency to romanticise criminal organisations via frequency of contact with members of criminal organisations



Note: \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ . Gender and Age are covariates in the model.