

# Angry and disconnected people more likely to support Anonymous

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Credit: George Hodan/Public Domain

People who support hacking network Anonymous are more likely to be angry about perceived societal injustices and feel disconnected from the political process, new research by a psychologist at the University of Kent has shown.

Researcher Dr Giovanni Travaglino carried out two studies, in the UK

and US, to investigate [support](#) for Anonymous and establish why people held these attitudes.

He found that in both national contexts anger against the political system was the common factor in explaining the relationship between people's belief that they could or could not influence political affairs and their [attitude](#) toward Anonymous.

Those who took part in the two studies who reported feeling angry and powerless to change their political context were more likely to express their dissent vicariously, in the form of support for Anonymous, rather than engaging directly in the political processes (for instance, by voting or protesting).

This finding was consistent with what is known as 'Social Banditry' theory, whereby political grievances that cannot be otherwise voiced trigger anger against the political system, which in turn promote support for disruptive social actors, 'social bandits'.

Dr Travaglino, of Kent's School of Psychology, said the findings suggest that Anonymous are seen as 'social bandits' - the modern-day equivalent of figures such as Robin Hood or Jesse James who have traditionally been celebrated in local folklore as noble individuals who robbed the rich and gave to the poor.

The research also found that people who considered themselves to have an individualistic outlook were more likely to have a supportive attitude to groups like Anonymous.

In contrast, people with a collective view of society had stronger intentions to engage in direct political engagement, such as voting or participate in a public demonstration.

This finding reflects Anonymous' role as channel for an individualistic desire of revenge against the system, rather than a programme for collective and institutional social change and improvement.

The research, entitled Support for Anonymous and Vicarious Dissent: Testing the Social Banditry Framework (G. Travaglino) is published in the journal *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*.

**More information:** Giovanni A. Travaglino, Support for Anonymous as vicarious dissent: Testing the social banditry framework, *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* (2017). [DOI: 10.1177/1368430217722037](https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430217722037)

Provided by University of Kent

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