

## Abstract

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**Title of dissertation:** Discarding the Veil of Anonymity – does flaming no longer need the protection of Anonymity as society becomes increasingly desensitised?

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As society continues to become increasingly dependent on the internet, we see shifts in how we use it regularly. Today, we are increasingly progressing towards a place where cyber users are frequenting less anonymous platforms. This, coupled with the fact that the online world can disinhibit us and make us numb to the aggressive acts we perform online such as flaming, raises the question: does the removal of anonymity as a protection have an effect on the flaming behaviour witness throughout cyberspace?

This paper aims to explore how hostile expressions of flaming remain higher on computer mediated communications than their face-to-face counterparts through the exploration of the online disinhibition effect. This theorises why online users behave differently online to their offline lives and appear to be less concerned with how their messages will be received when communicating online. However, as we have moved to more open, less anonymised platforms where our identities are readily accessible it cannot be said that anonymity remains the primary factor causing flaming in the online disinhibition effect. Although, anonymity affords some protection therefore allowing people to be disinhibited in cyberspace, now, as users appear to use less anonymised social networking sites and this disinhibition is becoming normalised which has led to a type of flaming activity that is easily traced back to our offline personas

The purpose of this is to offer insight in why people flame when online, even when the identities are much more visible on participatory social networking sites. The aim is to address the increased levels of flaming now that cyber users are performing these acts without the guise of anonymity.