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**Study: Investigating the impact of online disinhibition  
on the behavioural effects of swearing**

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**DEBRIEF SHEET**

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Thank you for taking part in our study

As mentioned, swearing out loud has been found to increase pain tolerance and physical strength. However, it has also been found to increase the “risky” behaviours someone is prepared to take. The ‘Balloon Analog Risk Task’ you completed, in which you pumped a balloon, is actually a way of measuring your acceptance of risky behaviour. The more pumps you were prepared to make, the more risk you were prepared to take. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic research experiments have had to be conducted online. One consequence of this was that the behavioural effects of swearing seen originally failed to replicate to unsupervised online testing; but did replicate using supervised online testing. One explanation for this difference is online disinhibition, this is the psychological effect in which the anonymity of the internet, through a lack of contact with other people, alters a person’s behaviour by reducing the social constraints on what is considered acceptable behaviour. This study was manipulating the presence of the researcher, and the amount of anonymity you felt, to alter your level of online disinhibition to see what effect that changed had on results.

We asked you to complete the offensiveness rating because online disinhibition should make a swearword less offensive when repeated alone, than when repeated in front of another person. Equally, swearing in front of another person breaks a social cue, and thus the less online disinhibition present, the greater a person’s state anxiety should be when swearing.

If you are interested in finding out more about online disinhibition, take a look at the following study: Lapidot-Lefler, N., & Barak, A. (2012). Effects of anonymity, invisibility, and lack of eye-contact on toxic online disinhibition. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(2), 434-443. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2011.10.014>.

Your data will be kept confidential and securely stored, with only an anonymous number identifying it. Your consent form will be kept for 5 years, whilst the following data be preserved and made available in anonymised form, so that they can be consulted and re-used by others: average balloon pumps, offensiveness rating, and state anxiety score.

Once again, thank you again for your participation.

Dr Anthony Haffey and Christopher Dobson