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Anonymity and the Online Public Sphere

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This project examines the effect of anonymity on online discourse, specifically regarding political polarization. I contend that the anonymous nature of online discourse divides the online public. Current scholarship on the internet’s effect on deliberation is divided, but it often ignores or fails to examine in depth the anonymous or pseudonymous nature of most online discourse. I agree with scholars who argue that the current state of the internet promotes the formation of strong group identities. This project uses the psychological model the social identity model of deindividuation effects to further claim that when online discussion occurs anonymously, these group identities lead to increased political polarization.