CYBER-INDIGENEITY: URBAN INDIGENOUS IDENTITY on FACEBOOK

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Abstract

This paper addresses understandings and theorising of identity in cyberspace. In particular, it focuses on the construction, maintenance and performance of urban Indigenous identities on the contemporary internet social space, Facebook.

Introduction

> We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism (Foucault, 1995, p. 217).

The Indigenous use of Facebook reflects to some degree the instruments of Indigenous identity confirmation and surveillance, which operate in the "real" world of Indigenous community networks. Of interest to this article is what Michel de Certeau calls "ways of operating", that is, the uses made by consumers of various mechanisms for purposes removed from, or different to those intended by producers (de Certeau, 1984, pp. xi-xxiv) and the effects of these uses in maintaining vigilance or discipline on subjects who identify as Indigenous. The aim is to open up for discussion the production of these effects in cyberspace to inform a broader interest in how contemporary Indigenous identities are produced at this historical juncture namely where identity for Indigenous people assumes various cultural formations and where the attendant struggles that inform identity production are subject to a range of historical considerations.

Facebook functionality: Communication, social networks, and cyber communities

Facebook is an online networking site. It allows users to create their own profile and to link to, and view other profiles. Facebook has experienced exponential growth in membership in recent years. Current membership at the time of writing stands at 400 million worldwide (Facebook, 2010). The site has attained worldwide popularity and is a "household name" in everyday popular culture with approximately 200 million people logging onto Facebook daily.

Once a user creates a profile on Facebook, the site can be used to join groups or add friends, which are then displayed on their site for others to view. Facebook is a communication tool, but it also functions to create, and (re)present to others a public identity and to attract similar profiles as part of a broader network or community. The core functionality of Facebook is that users have the ability to connect with others ("friends") and form or belong to groups who are similar or have similar interests. Joinson notes

that online social networks may provide users with "social capital" (2008, p. 1028).

Social networking sites provide a platform for members to rekindle a sense of community. On such sites, there are possibilities for new communities to be formed by people who have not met in the material world. Cyber communities on Facebook offer intimacy and distance at the same time in what Anderson refers to as "engaging but along a narrow slice of life" (1995, p. 13). Membership with online communities is about a commonality of interests and a sense of "shared consciousness". It can be thought of as imagined in the sense Benedict Anderson refers to as something that exists in the daily imaginings of national subjects as an "imagined community" (1983, p. 6).

However, unlike imagined communities, Facebook is not a disembodied space or an imagined social sphere that has no real substance as a community. It is real in that it is composed of communities generated by real bodies that compose, interact, wrangle and communicate with one another. It is real also in terms of the actual connections it provides for interaction, correspondence, making links, and participating in other forms of technology (e.g., texts, phone conversations) that are set up as other possibilities for kinship on Facebook. Robins asserts:

> Under conditions of virtual existence, it seems possible to recover the values and ideals that have been lost in the real world. Through this new medium it is claimed, we shall be able to construct new sorts of community linked by commonality of interests and affinity rather than by accident of location (2000, p. 88).

Miller and McDaniels, (2001, p. 199) invoking the film Star Trek, suggest the space is a potential "Final Frontier", a futuristic space that will overtake the "new frontier" that is cyberspace. Similarly McCormick and Leonard (2007, p. 110) comment, "cyberspace has been touted as the new frontier, the wave of the future ungoverned by cultural expectations and physical reality". Taylor and Spencer disagree, claiming, "this new world lies alongside our everyday experiences and we may already be part of cyberspace" (2004, p. 237). These approaches to understanding cyberspace are indicative of current explorations into its usage.

Cyber identities

Facebook provides a space where a subject can publicly express who they are or who they are connected to for public scrutiny, as they choose or determine. Robins argues that in "this new techno reality … identity will be a matter of freedom and choice" (2000, p. 79) and that, in what he calls an "artificial reality", a subject's physical appearance, for example, will be "completely composable". A composable virtual identity is an attractive option for people who have been held hostage to very rigid notions of who they should be, and how they should look and act. In cyberspace, there is no necessity that a virtual identity be "accurate" in relation to the subject, that the persona that is "uploaded" for public viewing has the potential to meet the subject's desires. These views are commonplace as exemplified by Robins who argues, "[T]he exhilaration of virtual existence and experience comes from the sense of transcendence and liberation from the material and embodied world" (2000, p. 79).

Sites such as Facebook, then, provide avenues for representation of previously "unrevealed", "unshared" aspects of identities, or the extension of a particular aspect of identity into a public space with potential for building or enlarging the sense of belonging to a community. That is, the representation of aspects of an individual identity can be given expression in order to intersect on the basis of common interests with others. But at the same time such sites also provide potential possibilities for misrepresentation or indeed invention and re-invention of identity, that is, of "faking" it.

Indigenous identities on Facebook

Facebook is for many Indigenous users a site where they can explore identity, both their own and others. It is a vehicle for agency in self-representation that offers opportunities to shed skin, so to speak, and don a new "cyber-skin", a mode of Indigenous identity that moves between the spaces of computer-generated identities as an embodied subject actively creating an identity. At the same time, the "real" identity that moves into the virtual space is not so much disembodied, but absent from "real" space in the sense that readers cannot see a physical "self" even though this platform assumes a "face" and a body. The donning of "skin" is a useful metaphor as it connotes the multifarious possibilities for identity construction among those who are not "visibly" Indigenous; the invisibility of skin can be brought to the surface for recognition by others. The metaphor of "skin" also refers to kinship ties, country, naming, totems and the plethora of social relations that identify the traditional locatedness of Indigenous identities. Facebook provides possibilities for extending community, for establishing connectedness and cultural belonging, through networking aspects of pre-contact culture, language, the sharing of practiced rituals, information about kin or mobs that may have been lost, photographs, stories and so on.

While academic discussion about Indigenous identity *per se* is an ongoing burgeoning field of inquiry (Oxenham et al., 1999; Paradies, 2006; Lumby & McGloin, 2009), inquiry around Indigenous activity in cyberspace and Indigenous

cyber identity appears to remain unchartered waters, despite the growing cyber community of Indigenous users. Indigenous Australians have more often been discussed in terms of our disadvantage in the digital world (Nathan, 2000). However, even a decade ago, Indigenous uptake of technologies was being remarked upon in the affirmative rather than the negative. For example, Nathan argued that "the web is positively transforming representations of Indigenous Australians" (2000, p. 45), where almost half the internet sites related to Indigenous people were [a decade ago] delivered by Indigenous people or organisations. Similarly, Christie suggested that the internet may provide an avenue where Indigenous peoples can produce "richer representations of themselves" (2001, p. 46) asserting, "there is much to be hoped for there with Aboriginal kids completely fearless in their interactions with computers" (2001, p. 46). Christie saw the internet as a site that will open opportunities for Indigenous people in all locations to "speak for themselves" (2001, p. 47) by "uploading" their stories, images and anything else they would like to display (2001, p. 47). He suggested the internet provides more freedom to Indigenous people as publishers of their own stories in a space that doesn't limit participation. It is difficult to find ongoing academic discussion around the continuing uptake of digital technologies by Indigenous Australians in the interim. However, the rapid advances in mobile technologies and the uptake of these by Indigenous youth in particular, can be evidenced in many communities. While this is not to suggest there is no digital divide, it is to counter any assumptions that Indigenous people may have little interest in the possibilities of technology and cyberspace.

In terms of self-representation Facebook is becoming a popular vehicle amongst urban Indigenous people particularly, to build, display, and perform Indigenous identities. For example, some sites express their intention to:

> …bring us together. Aboriginal people have been displaced and an online group will, I hope strengthen our community. So please post your events, art, music, political views, ideas about social justice, yarn about anything you are proud of or want to share (http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=4992214175).

Many Indigenous Facebook users have a cyber profile proclaiming who they are or who they want to be and use this site as a key self-presentational tool to communicate their Indigeneity to the cyber community of online users. Facebook is a platform where Indigeneity can be displayed and enacted, performed and repudiated.

Issues emerging from a study of Indigenous Facebook users

So how do some Indigenous users use Facebook as a tool for corroborating identity? The discussion being opened up in this paper emerged from data derived from interviews undertaken as part of my larger doctoral research thesis that explores constructions of Indigenous identity. Twenty-six current or graduated Indigenous university students, and who maintain Indigenous profiles on Facebook were interviewed. The study is therefore limited and does not purport to generalise beyond these limits. It is also important to state that this paper does not report the study in full but rather highlights some central issues which emerged.

The case being illuminated in this paper, as an entry for further exploration, is that Facebook acts as a modern site for kinship connectivity and continuity; many users express a sense of communality with other online users. But as well, through these communities, Facebook provides a means for both confirming Indigeneity by embracing some users, and denying Indigeneity by imposing penalties on others for "faking" or being perceived to be faking. While providing some evidence of this assertion, this paper is more explicitly focussed on revealing the various modes of surveillance and self-surveillance that are deployed in the attempt to regulate and "fix" identity. Following Foucault (1995), my analysis of interviews with these Indigenous Facebook users is interested in how Facebook functions as a platform that "establishes calculated distributions" (Foucault, 1995, p. 219) by imposing discipline and eradicating confusion about who can or cannot present or represent as Indigenous. Many approaches to the theorising of cyber identities are in some instances useful as starting points (Joinson, 2008; Miller & McDaniels, 2001; McCormick & Leonard, 2009; Taylor & Spencer, 2004). However, in terms of understanding the techniques of surveillance and discipline, Foucault's work offers an intellectual "toolbox" (1974, p. 523), useful to flesh out the data to understand how discipline and surveillance operate to control and regulate Indigeneity both from within the domain of cyberspace, and from without.

In the opening up of discussion from this study, there is an interest to further understand how cyber identities for Indigenous people move between the space of computer-generated identities, from embodied on-line subjects, to the space of the real where face to face (f2f) interaction requires a different discourse for self-representation. That is, what of the effects in the "real" world for users who sign particular ways in the cyber world and/or use this to produce and circulate particular recognised forms of Indigenous identities? And what

of the effects for those who may not "choose" to affirm Indigenous cultural identities in cyberspace but might, for example, "choose" to make use of technologies to unsettle the "fixity" of Indigenous identities? This is a particular concern, perhaps, for Indigenous people who are also inserted into a relatively confined set of social relations and networks in "real" Indigenous communities and for whom contests around identity are part of the everyday experience of being Indigenous.

Performing and surveilling Indigeneity on Facebook

On Facebook, it is not just a matter of "being" Indigenous; it is also a matter of "doing" Indigeneity. In other words, the performance of Indigeneity is necessary for the subject position to be taken seriously, and for recognition to occur in a meaningful way. And the performance requires knowledge of the terrain or "tools" that will enable recognition. These include, but are not limited to, knowledge of particular types of language, membership of organisations, participation in certain causes, the sending and receipt of recognisable Indigenous iconography, imagery, the posting of political statements and the knowledge of particular community organisations, structures and practices. Political causes can include issues such found on the internet such as, "Stop the NT intervention", "Indigenous health inequality in 25 years", "Say stop to racism, Stolen Generation – Bringing them back home and iconography can be signifiers of Indigeneity that also declare political affiliation. This study revealed that "doing" Indigeneity on Facebook requires on-going attention and effort to maintain self-representation and recognition, to ensure the endorsement of Indigenous status. A profile on Facebook, through the above affiliations provides a way of confirming Indigeneity, and some participants stated that they consciously organised profiles to ensure they communicated Indigeneity. These are "ways of operating" that instate recognisable codes for identification, signifiers that speak to Indigeneity and its establishment as a cultural formation in the cyber domain. In addition, icons can be sent to "friends" as "gifts" and can thus serve as an acknowledgment or endorsement of Indigeneity.

The Facebook function of "friends" plays a critical role in this endorsement of status. As one example, one participant stated that he filtered friend requests, accepting Aboriginal friends more often than non-Aboriginal friends. He also commented that he had "friended" a girl he had gone to school with, not because of any pre-existing relationship but because she was Aboriginal:

> [W]ell on Facebook there is all these clubs and stuff. I joined another one the other day … I just added this girl, I remember her from school, this Aboriginal girl … I didn't really have much close contact with her at school but it just sort of reaffirmed, me, in a sense, my identity in a sense of being Aboriginal because I've got all these Aboriginal friends wanting to know me and stuff (2009, pers. comm., Interview 15).

The sanctioning of Indigenous cultural identity by "friends" is possibly quite unique in the varied usages Facebook enjoys. "Friends" act as surveillers, confirming or denying identity according to rules that are internalised by subjects who know that identifying carries with it the onus of "proof". The detail of this internalised knowing is located in the toolbox, a receptacle of cultural signifiers, nuances, and bric-a-brac that constitute the "minute disciplines", "panopticisms of every day" (Foucault, 1995, p. 223). As the participant above astutely discloses, Indigeneity requires validation by as many as possible. So, because Facebook works to increase "friends" exponentially, a user can "collect" a number of potential verifiers.

Increasing on-line networks is referred to by Joinson (2008, p. 1031) as "social network surfing", a modern, corporate usage that describes the process of collecting or gathering "friends" for the purpose of sharing culture in this disembodied environment. But the Indigenous cyber domain relies on iconography, profiling, and ideally verification of status and "belonging" by having "friends" in the community. This badging, profiling, and be-friending is the "doing", the performance of proving Indigeneity in cyberspace as entry to community. Proof of Indigeneity is a requisite of entry into the real world of Indigenous communities in Australia. It depends on knowing who people are. The cyberspace performance, then, must anticipate scrutiny and surveillance as a condition of endorsement of Indigenous status. Indigenous people are well practiced in this in the "real" world.

Surveillance and self-surveillance: Watching "yourself" on Facebook

Surveillance, according to Zimmer, "encompasses a diverse range of activities and processes concerned with scrutinizing people, their actions, and the spaces they inhabit" (2008, p. 79). This calls to mind Foucault's analysis of Jeremy Bentham's model penitentiary, the Panopticon. Bentham's panopticon prison was designed to function as a round the clock surveillance machine. The idea, simply put, was that the prisoner would never really know when they were being surveilled and under the idea of constant surveillance the prisoner self regulates their behaviour. As Foucault states, "surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its actions" (Foucault 1995, p.201). For Foucault the

idea that the prisoner understands that they could be watched at any time is the important point for it is the internalising of this understanding that promotes self-surveillance.

Interviews with participants in the study revealed their awareness of the practices of surveillance and how they self-surveilled in anticipation. The below examples illustrate the tentativeness of some to claim Indigenous status if questions of authenticity will be raised. Others illustrate that invention goes a long way to deflect questions of authenticity. All examples highlighted in one way or another an exhausting demand for surveillance imposed on Indigenous subjects by Indigenous subjects.

For example, the following response, drawn from a selection of questions about online identity from one participant, illustrates the pressure of surveillance that leads to fudging or inventing aspects of identity:

A. Sometimes I invent some aspects or just go a bit further than the real situation.

Q. What do you mean by "invent"?

A. Well sometimes it's easy to get carried away with what others might expect, like how much I know about my mob and stuff like that, it's easier if people think you know all that stuff like where you are from and totems and stuff.

Q. Does it really matter when you are online?

A. Well, yeah, you still have to answer.

Q. Do you think it is easier if the question is asked online or face-to-face?

A. Definitely online.

Q. Why?

A. 'Cause you can think about the answer so you don't get like all flustered and say the wrong thing.

Q. Do you have an online identity?

A. Yeah I sometimes call myself [specific name] and other names like that.

Q. Do you use any images of yourself?

A. At first I used the Koori flag as a profile picture but now I have pictures of me.

Q. Why didn't you use your picture from the start?

A. You don't know what people might think 'cause I don't look Koori so they might think I am a faker but there are heaps of others who have fair skin too (2009, pers. comm., Interview 22).

The following participant gives a lucid example of the fear of being "caught out":

> Just joined [a particular group], feel apprehensive about it in case I shouldn't even though my family is from there I have never been and I feel almost like I am fraudulently claiming it since I haven't been (2009, pers. comm., Interview 23).

This same participant, who identified as Indigenous and was keen to embrace this but was of dual heritage, also illustrates awareness of what might be the result if her other heritage is on view. She stated her profile "isn't very Indigenous". She stated that she tends to join other groups and include more information on her profile that demonstrates the other aspect of her cultural heritage. The participant was concerned because she had not composed an identifiable profile that would communicate her Indigeneity. Once again, the internalised power of discipline makes itself clear: the woman finds an explanation to an Indigenous researcher necessary in order to avoid any possible accusations of non-Indigeneity that can be easily produced in situations of dual ancestry.

The participant, along with many who are trying to establish Indigeneity, understands that others may be watching and may object to her associating herself with a community in which she has never been part. The censoring of identity takes many forms but central to surveillance and self-surveillance is the fear of being publicly unauthenticated, for it is this fear that regulates behaviour. Needless to say, there are Facebook sites that discuss the phenomena and its relationship to theoretical perspectives of surveillance; many are trying to make sense of new technologies.

Watching others on Facebook: Virtual and real community surveillance

This study uncovered several instances where users were subjected to being "unfriended" or being denied "friending" or compelled to "friend" because of potential "offline" consequences. It confirmed that any hint of unauthenticity will produce penalties, as occurs in the "real" world. For example, in one case a participant was subjected to posts that questioned his identity by two people with whom the participant knew and interacted regularly. The participant stated they felt humiliated by the comments and had found that he had been "unfriended" by the two accusers. In another example a participant explained that she felt compelled to "friend" a certain person who had sent her a friend request. She explained to me that

this particular person was well known in the local Aboriginal community and had a large friendship list. The participant felt that if she denied his request it would be making a statement would have consequences in the "real world".

"Friends" can also fail to endorse. The following participant shared with me her views on a potential "friend". She was concerned as to why another participant was requesting to be accepted as "friends" by numerous Aboriginal people and stated that she would not accept her:

> A. I am never going to friend her even though she is now friends with most people I know.
>
> Q. Why not?
>
> A. Because she is trying to become Aboriginal and she has no proof that she is and she has only just in the last few months become Aboriginal.
>
> Q. What do you mean "become Aboriginal"?
>
> A. She just started coming up here and hanging out, at first she didn't speak to anyone or join in now she is involved in everything and walking around in her Koori t-shirts and now she is Aboriginal (2009, pers. comm., Interview 5).

The function of "friends" on Facebook serves as a powerful device that transcends the boundaries between cyberspace and the "real" world. While users "unfriend" or deny someone for a variety of reasons, there is an interest in highlighting in this paper the instances when a user has been "unfriended" or denied for reasons associated with their Indigenous identity. Facebook users self surveil; they are continually mindful of how they represent themselves. Facebook users will at times bring with them their "real life" constraints. Arguably in the Indigenous context, this form of surveillance is a product of, and carried through from, real "everyday experience" of community surveillance of Indigenous identities. Contestation of Indigeneity as a regulatory device for social control or for contesting particular claims to resource access is well practiced (Peters-Little, 2000; Paradies, 2006). Many academics have discussed the "gatekeepers" who patrol the perimeter in regard to who can be Indigenous or indeed Indigenous enough in the "real world" (Oxenham et al., 1999; Peters-Little, 2000; Paradies, 2006). In the same way there are many cyber gatekeepers who patrol the virtual world. This study confirmed that Indigenous Facebook users are also constantly surveilling their "friends" and ***their*** "friends" reproducing in cyberspace what happens in the real world and vice-versa. So although Joinson (2008, p. 1028) notes that "social networking sites like Facebook can serve a surveillance function, allowing users to "track actions, beliefs and interests of the larger group to which they belong", for participants in this study some surveillance exceeded the boundaries of mere "tracking" to focus more on uncovering or exposing what are deemed to be self-inventions. This is a mirror of what happens in "real" Indigenous communities.

Discussion of some emerging issues

The research outlined in this paper reveals that while Facebook offers possibilities, and indeed, certain freedoms for creating identities, it also acts as a restraining force that regulates who can and who cannot "be" Indigenous, and indeed what it means to be Indigenous. On Facebook, members instate their own hierarchies of Indigenous identity which can be re-deployed "on the outside" ***if*** (and only if) they perform credibly in the Facebook sphere of activity. However, these possibilities for being Indigenous are also framed within the discursive boundaries of what constitutes Indigenous identity in the "real" world.

Joinson's (2008, p. 1035) suggestion that Facebook is likely to become a "key self-presentation tool rather than simply a way to 'keep in touch' with others" is validated in this research. This study suggests that for Indigenous users, it is very much a self-***re***presentation tool; users self-represent, or more explicitly, they construct, compose and build identities ***and*** the tools that allow for self-creation. This also supports de Certeau and the uses that subjects make of culture and the ways they create through "making do" recomposing space and reworking cultural artefacts for their own purposes (de Certeau 1984, p. xv). Facebook for many Indigenous users exemplifies a recomposition of space. But this study also highlights that in the Indigenous domain, it is a site of struggle where identities are being created in modern formations that draw from existing knowledge and from knowledge not yet understood. In this sense, Facebook offers possibilities for the emerging subject; it provides the tools for an "ideal Indigenous self" and the tools for the destruction of Indigeneity.

This study highlighted that while Indigenous "performance" of identity in cyber-space is continuous work, identity is affirmed passively for the main part by non-interrogation. In other words, affirmations are generally silent or reflected in numbers of "friends". However, the study also suggested that repudiations of identity are not generally so "silent". What the study also reveals is that to establish oneself as Indigenous on Facebook demands self-surveillance; conversely, to fail to do so and be "caught out" as fraudulently Indigenous incurs penalties. And so, following Joinson (2008), there is an offline aspect to Facebook that

Indigenous users ignore at their peril. While Bell and Kennedy (2000, p. 48) suggest that many users "experience the movement "into" cyberspace as an unshackling from "real life" constraints, this did not hold true for the participants in this study. The exception was in the sense of using Facebook to temporarily suspend those markers of ambiguous identity (such as dual heritage, light skin, recent discovery of Indigenous heritage, interrupted lineage) by establishing affiliations to all those markers of recognisable Indigenous identities. So for some, cyber-identification assists in unlocking the shackle of not being known or recognised which often regulates entry into the "real" world Indigenous communities.

However, self-surveillance and surveilling others is an everyday part of engaging with Facebook. Indeed, in general terms, not just Indigenous terms, Facebook is but a microcosm of the internet's potential as a modern phenomenon that is increasingly driven by the desire of users to watch, monitor, scrutinise and emulate. Facebook users can never be certain if they are being monitored or not at any given time. In fact it is an expectation that your "friends" or their "friends" will "visit" your profile and "see" your thoughts, your conversations, likes, dislikes, and how you present your identity. Users typically don't want to betray social or cultural norms so to some extent they fashion their profiles so as not to wander from what might be expected. This holds true for Indigenous users. For example, if a user wanted to ensure that their Indigeneity was known and accepted they would not make statements which conflicted with the majority of members: to be part of a group often demands complicity to the group's professed belief system. These regimes of self-surveillance are commonplace on-line but for Indigenous users arguably the stakes are high and flow into the real world where identity is core to sense of self and to social belonging and more imperative than any liberal conception of "choice".

While some may argue that the internet is a democratic site where views can be freely expressed, this study draws attention to an instance where self-surveillance acts as a potent regulator to instate narrowly prescribed sets of cultural protocols and mores. It also reveals how surveillance works, in Foucauldian terms to discipline and "regulate movements" or "clear up confusion" (Foucault, 1995, p. 219). In attempting to "fix" who can and cannot be Indigenous, Facebook users enact on one another a type of discipline that puts in place regulations and power structures, and sets up a technique whereby Cyber-Indigeneity can be clearly identified to oneself and others. Surveillance encompasses a diverse range of activities and processes concerned with closely observing people. These can include the use of specific speech modalities, or frames of reference, the act of silencing, or indeed, the invitation to "prove" a particular point of identification. Similarly to the "real world", being "fingered" on Facebook as fraudulent and publicly denounced can cause immense anxiety. And on this site a subject's transgression is indelibly recorded for all time. *The Los Angeles Times* featured an article by Vogelstein (2007) titled "The Facebook Revolution" where the impact of Facebook is described as becoming "the biggest, most valuable database in the world". Vogelstein (2007) suggests that:

> If you don't know what a Facebook page is, well, that's what it is: Your contact information, your picture, an e-mail in-box and a compendium of your likes and dislikes, all – and this is critical – verified by your friends and typically only viewable by them. You can easily create a fake identity on Facebook, or a real identity with fake credentials. But you either end up with no friends or get called out for lying.

I would argue that the rules of verification are even more censorial for Indigenous users of Facebook where issues of identity are foundational and where transgression can traverse the realm of cyberspace to the real spaces of community. The crossing of this boundary from the "unreal" to the "real" exacerbates fear of transgression; to be "seen" to be "faking it" in cyberspace clearly produces its own penalties. But clearly, ridicule, exclusion and other forms of punishment when transferred to real spaces can potentially invite more violent expressions of admonishment.

Conclusion

This study investigated a small group of Indigenous Facebook users and the ways they inscribed their Indigeneity in a cyberspace via this platform. Specifically, this study reveals both the enabling and constraining effects of power, exercised via the already circulating discourses and practices that signify Indigeneity, as a regulating force that also shapes Indigenous identity performance in cyberspace. While the findings cannot be generalised further than the participants, they do suggest entry points for further inquiry to understand how Indigenous subjects create and regulate identities in cyberspace. The tensions between the Indigenous desire for fixing "authenticity" and the Indigenous need to be open to self-representations that accommodate fractured and diverse experiences of being Indigenous were evident. Having researched and thought about issues raised in this paper, it is evident that there is much work yet to be done in this area. What is provided here is a starting point for further understanding of how

Indigenous subjects create identities in cyberspace. This is necessarily the case as this is a phenomenon that is unfolding as I write and will predictably be different in a relatively short timeframe. What can be understood, though, are the effects of power as a regulating force on fractured identities and the desire for "authenticity".

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INDIGENOUS STUDIES, INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE:
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Lynette Henderson-Yates & Darlene Oxenham (Eds.)

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TABLE of CONTENTS