Social media does not create equal third spaces because it is mediated by cultural influences to reproduce social disparities that Indigenous communities face in the "real world".

In a technologically mediated society, Aboriginal peoples are embracing social media and digital engagement. The impact of the uptake of technology – such as mobile phones, smartphones, cameras, internet-connected devices and computers, and platforms such as Facebook and YouTube – is widespread, and largely undetermined, with some effects only beginning to come to light (Carlson, 2021 p.10). The advantages of social media for Indigenous peoples and communities are numerous and varied. Social media provides a platform for establishing and navigating one's identity, establishing and sustaining deep relationships with community and family, and for pursuing and providing mutual support (Carlson, 2021). However, social media does not create equal third spaces because it is mediated by cultural influences to reproduce social disparities that indigenous communities face in the "real world". This paper discusses the adverse experiences that Aboriginal peoples face and calls attention to the types of damaging content that Indigenous peoples are exposed to, such as the challenges and concerns of online communities, Indigenous identity, discrimination and white supremacy in the “real world” and online third spaces. While online identities are the result of cultural practices by genuine social individuals who do not share the same geographical domain, they are still subject to the same scrutiny and restrictions as they are in face-to-face encounters. (Carlson & Kennedy, 2021, p.4).

Social media sites serve as a platform for people to publicly declare who they are and who they are linked to for public examination, as they see fit. For Aboriginal peoples, social media is an important resource, linking people to community and culture, assisting in the identification of those at risk of self-harm or suicide and providing a powerful platform for political activism (Carlson & Kennedy, 2021, p.1). Social media has altered the way we interact by allowing us to instantaneously connect with thousands, if not millions, of people. Social media has even had a role in precipitating key revolutions, and its use has increased dramatically in recent years, particularly in 2020 as a result of the global pandemic. It appears that enormous power comes with great problems when it comes to social media. Identity and race misrecognition is a challenge that Aboriginal peoples face in the “real world” that has transpired into the online spaces. There are multiple concerns about social media’s potential how they contribute to the perpetuation of racial norms, and their ability to foster racist and colonial discourse. Third spaces have been envisioned as places of protest, where dominating and normative worldviews can be questioned. New media is frequently thought to have this decolonising potential as well, especially for people who are socially, culturally, or politically marginalised. (Pennington, 2018). For Aboriginal peoples, identifying as Aboriginal on social media sites is complicated, the offline challenges and online challenges are not

mutually exclusive. Carlson & Kennedy (2013, p.152) suggests that, “in contemporary Australia, Aboriginal identity is not a straightforward affair. There is much debate circulating in both academic and community spaces (both online and offline) about who counts or should count as Aboriginal and, who could or should confirm such claims”. Moreover, Carlson et. al (2019) describes how their identities are questioned or challenged in the ostensibly “real world”, particularly in respect to their supposedly 'not seeming Aboriginal' and how those having Facebook profiles were also subjected to a high level of identity surveillance. While social media platforms allow Aboriginal peoples to 'perform' their Indigenous identities online, it has also resulted in pressure to 'prove' a person's indigeneity, particularly for those who do not 'appear' or 'look' Indigenous. As Lumby (2017) suggests social media acts "as a restraining force that regulates who can and cannot 'be' Indigenous, and indeed what it means to be Indigenous. (Lumby, 2017, p.69). Declaring Indigenous identity online is an intrinsically and unavoidably political act, interwoven in the much deeper history of settler colonialism. This is not what was expected from digital life initially. The internet, according to early tech pioneers, may provide a "disembodied" arena where peopl could freely shift, change, and experiment with their identities. Social media gives opportunities for extending community, building connectedness, and cultural belonging through networking features. The issues of identifying as Indigenous online have emulated the same challenges as identifying as Indigenous in the “real world”. For Abroiginal peoples, especially those of mixed descent, the issue of identity is often difficult, as their ties to the community are often more difficult to recover from the wreckage left by settler colonisation due to the lack of records of ancestry (Carlson et. al, 2021).

In many ways, digital communication and mobile media, including a variety of applications and platforms, are becoming an increasingly vital component of how most families connect (Leaver, 2015). Social media allows users to feel a sense of closeness at a distance, members of social networking sites can renew their feeling of community on these platforms as there are opportunities for individuals who have never met in the tangible world to build new communities on such platforms. Aboriginal peoples, especially adolescents use social media platforms to gain a sense of authority and control over their own identities and communities and have used the internet from its early days. “Many Indigenous Australians have utilised the Internet from its early days, despite the economic, social, cultural and geographic factors that can affect their access.” (Rice, et al. 2016, p. 2). As discussed, determining one's Indigenous identity online can be a struggle. These issues of pressure to 'prove' one's indigeneity, particularly for those who do not 'look' Indigenous, exhibit how Facebook can operate "as a constraining force that governs who can and who cannot 'be' Indigenous, and indeed what it is to be Indigenous," (Lumby, 2010, p.73). Communities are not without turmoil and complications, as stated by (Hampton and Wellman, 2018) “Struggling to make sense of community, based on a selective view of the present and an idealisation of "traditional community," obscures powerful inequalities and cleavages that have always existed in human

society, and favours deterministic frameworks above a sophisticated comprehension of how network affordances contribute to different outcomes". It is vital when discussing digital communities that not all of them are alike. Carlson & Frazer (2021, p.531) states that "Discussions of digital communities have tended to overlook culturally specific practices, values and understandings of community, instead of assuming a normalised white subject". It is imperative when discussing communities that every culture has different community structures both offline and online. (Carlson and Frazers, 2021) findings suggest that not only did social media networks do facilitate community, but they also posed a serious threat to the strength and cohesion of kinship communities for many users. Social media ties and physical relationships are inextricably linked, with the latter fitting with Indigenous ways of life and the former weakening them. As a result, critical challenges have arisen about how to guarantee that digital technologies aid in the development, strengthening, and maintenance of strong, supportive communities, rather than escalating and intensifying already-existing social issues. The online communities created on social media do not adhere to or facilitate community structures of traditional communities and can intensify issues.

For Indigenous Australians, social media is an important resource, linking people to community and culture and providing a powerful platform for political activism but social media is a platform in which Indigenous peoples are subject to extreme hate and racism. The use of information and communication technologies has benefitted certain Indigenous groups in terms of improved interaction, access to data, exposure, interest promotion, and product and service commercialisation. However, the drawbacks now exceed the benefits (Lupien, 2020). As social media has grown to govern socio-political landscapes in practically every corner of the globe, new and old racist acts have become more common. Matamoros-Fernández (2021) describes that discrimination and racial discourse thrive on social media, through the use of underhanded tactics such as meme weaponization and the use of false identities to promote racist hatred. These microaggressions reflect the same microaggressions that are commonplace in the 'real world' that Aboriginal peoples face. Systemic racism impacts Aboriginal peoples, particularly in the workplace, where prejudice is a widespread but concealed occurrence. The dominant technological narrative, in particular for internet and digital technologies, seems to be that they are the domain of white people; "The computer is imagined as the brainchild of a small group of white male geniuses, all dressed casually in hoodies and working from open-plan offices in a small coastal California town". (Carlson & Frazer, 2021, p.72). Many platforms have been called out for what (Matamoros-Fernández, 2017) has called "Platformed racism". Racist discourse and overt discrimination are embedded into social media's design and governance as well as overt prejudice. For example, platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram

have been criticized for creating filters that enable white people to use "digital blackface" and automatically lighten non-white people's complexion. By tracking user behaviour, Facebook allowed marketers to exclude individuals who had an "ethnic affinity". Internet memes have changed the way individuals represent, evaluate, narrate, and comment on societal issues in the digital era (Nieubuurt, 2021). The internet world provides online outlets for many racists in Australia to criticize, distort, and racially condemn Aboriginal people's identities and challenges. Anti-Aboriginal internet memes included a variety of catchphrases, ideas, and prejudices that together racially denigrate Aboriginal people. Al-Natour (2021, p. 781) suggests “Academics have outlined some general derogatory stereotypes that misrepresent Aboriginal people as collectively lazy, welfare-dependent, uneducated, alcoholics, violent, rapists, child molesters, petrol sniffers, drug users, and deviants who regularly engage in criminal activity”. These racist beliefs and tropes that together demonize Aboriginal peoples are being reflected in third spaces such as social media in the forms of trolling, cyberbullying, and other types of cyberviolence and are going unmediated for the most part. These racist discourses intend to further colonise Aboriginal peoples through systematically oppressing and colonising them not only in the “real world” but into third spaces. By having a lack of moderators who have can identify this culturally nuanced racism, social media as third spaces enable the continuation and enhancement of existing cultural practice and knowledge they allow for the expression and proliferation of racist, colonial discourse.

Aboriginal peoples are embracing social media and digital participation in a digitally mediated culture. The influence of technological adoption is vast and largely unknown, with certain impacts just now becoming apparent. Social media has various and varied benefits for Indigenous peoples and communities. Social media provides a forum for defining and managing one's identity and pursuing and offering mutual support (Carlson, 2021). While online identities are the result of cultural practices by real people who do not share the same physical region, they are subject to the same scrutiny and constraints as face-to-face contacts. It is demonstrated through the challenges Aboriginal peoples face in the third space of social media that they are not an equal platform. Social media does not create equal third spaces because it is mediated by cultural influences to reproduce social disparities that indigenous communities face in the "real world". The negative experiences that Aboriginal peoples have in these third spaces draw attention to the problems and concerns of online communities, Indigenous identity, discrimination, and white supremacy in both the "real world" and online third spaces.

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