Everyone's a Kool-Aid Man Today: Pedagogical Implications of Teaching First-Year
Composition in Second Life

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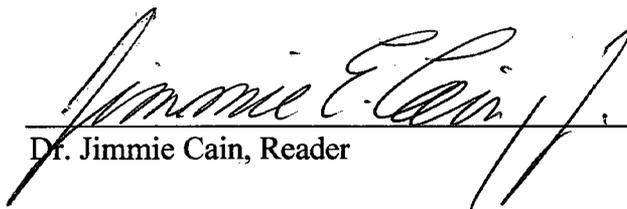
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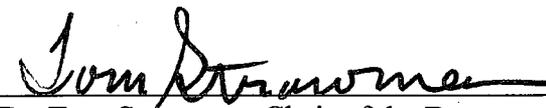
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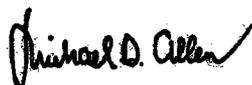
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Everyone's a Kool-Aid Man Today: Pedagogical Implications of Teaching First-Year Composition in Second Life

By Dianna Baldwin

A dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English

May 2009

Dedication

To the one that I love and the one who put up with me for six years while I struggled to find my way. This is for you, Charlene.

Acknowledgments

Finally, I owe everything first to God and then to my partner and best friend in life, Charlene. I have not traveled this journey alone, but with her and God always at my side. Thank you, Charlene, for always being there; you have helped make my dreams come true, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

Abstract

Everyone's a Kool-Aid Man Today: Pedagogical Implications of Teaching First-

Year Composition In Second Life

Second Life (SL), a massively multi-user virtual environment (MMUVE), is

called the metaverse, a parallel universe, and a world not unlike our own. This makes SL

an ideal environment for first-year composition students to pursue a second life. This is a

world that can offer students "analogies and metaphors for real-world issues [and] can

provide a way for students to discuss issues in a safe environment, where there are no

real-world consequences" (Williams, Hendricks, and Winkler 11). In SL, students can

experience issues that we often ask them to write about, such as identity or otherness, but

of which they have little knowledge.

This research investigates the world of SL and its uses in the real life (RL) first-

year composition classroom. It seeks to answer the questions:

- Will using a virtual world like SL change student writing?

- Will my students come to understand SL as a culture uniquely different from

  their own?

- Will they embrace this new medium?

- Will they form an online identity?

- How will they react to such learning?

In general, I investigated whether or not their experiences in SL would in any way change

their writing. I found that SL can be an exciting and volatile experience for educators

who choose to use it. Students became engaged with their writing and began to make

connections between their own lives and the topics we pursued. The overall theme for the

class was otherness, which also included issues of identity in both RL and SL. The connections were made because of the students' abilities to investigate life in SL in a way that was not possible in RL, such as becoming an oversized Kool-Aid man and then having to socialize with complete strangers as this other. Many commented that SL gave them interesting ideas about which to write. The students' responses, both positive and negative, to SL were evident in their writings, which consisted of blogs, journals, quick writes, and essays. SL gives instructors a tool for teaching that up until now has been missing: experience.

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Chapter 1

What is a Second Life? I Barely Have Time for My First!:

How It All Began and What It Is

It all began one Friday in January, 2007, that started like any other day . . . . I dragged myself out of bed, took a quick shower, and was out the door by 6:20 a.m., guzzling diet Mt. Dew as I drove the hour to campus in hopes that the caffeine would jolt me into some semblance of wakefulness. It was going to be a good day, though, because Bronwyn T. Williams was doing a workshop for the Virginia Peck Composition Speaker Series at Middle Tennessee State University entitled "Literacy in Popular Culture;" it was a workshop that I had looked forward to for months. The workshop was everything I possibly could have hoped for, but little did I know that something mentioned in passing toward the end of the day would change my entire outlook on teaching first-year composition (FYC).

As fate would have it, Williams had difficulty logging onto the campus network, so instead of being able to show us some virtual spaces that he found interesting when considering literacy in popular culture, he had to settle for telling the attendees a little about these places. One of these virtual spaces was a place called Second Life (SL).[1] He explained that this virtual world was becoming so popular that Linden Labs, the creator, was offering educators free virtual space to teach classes.

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[1] Some authors italicize Second Life (World of WarCraft, Everquest, and others) because they are referring to the software. I do not italicize them, like many authors, because I am referring to them as places.

All of this sounded intriguing, but SL really did not cross my mind again until I was sitting in the writing center discussing the workshop with some colleagues a couple of weeks later; we joked about not understanding how people had time for second lives when we could barely manage our first ones. I dropped the subject for another few weeks until I mentioned this absurd world to some friends over supper one night. Much to my surprise, however, I later found out that one of my friends did not find the concept absurd at all and had joined the ranks of those living a second life. This shocked me, and I decided it was time to make my own evaluations and figure out the allure of this virtual reality.

After joining the community by downloading the Second Life software, creating an avatar, and taking on the alias of ZoeB McMillan, the fascination of living a second life still eluded me, so I decided to delve deeper into this massively multi-user virtual environment (MMUVE)[2], visiting the most popular places inworld such as the home of the furries, Luskwood, and a blues club known as Phatland. Although many locations in SL are preoccupied with partying and sex, I began to see the potential of SL to cross boundaries that we, as a society, do not usually see in our day-to-day lives.

The Computer in Composition Classrooms: Introduction

Authors of any text on computers and writing will point out that those who pursue the uses of not only computers but additional computer technologies, such as virtual

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[2] A term I will use to distinguish Second Life from other online environments like World of Warcraft, which is a MMORPG or massively multi-user online role-playing game. Second Life is not a game.

worlds, blogs, or wikis, in their composition classrooms are often frowned upon by their colleagues in English and composition; the very people who should support their endeavors are often the ones whose eyes glaze over and who begin checking their watches if we begin talking about technology (Selfe, "Technology and Literacy" 94). Even though many humanist scholars have come to accept the need for computers in the English classroom, many still see the computer as a glorified typewriter or something that simply makes writing a little more convenient than a pen and paper, as described by Cynthia Selfe in "Technology and Literacy," and they will likely deny the need of any other type of technology such as MUDs (multi-user dimensions or domains), MOOs (MUD object oriented), or even the web. For many in the English department, where FYC is often housed, writing is something we simply do and the need for any technology in the classroom is without merit.

For those of us who continue to forge ahead in the computers and writing community, however, there is always something to peak our interest in how we, as teachers of composition, can use computers to not only enhance our students' writing experiences, but to also improve student writing and encourage them to write more meaningful texts. It is to this end that this research strives.

Really, What is a Second Life?: How It All Began

How is one born into a second life? First off, one starts by creating an avatar for her/himself,[3] and avatars are not limited to being either male or female; in fact, humanity is not even a requirement as there is a entire community of avies[4] who call themselves Furries and walk around in SL as animal-type avatars (see footnote 4). Even if an avatar one sees is one sex/gender or the other, the real person behind that av (see footnote 4) may not be the same sex/gender, and SL contains a wide array of gender bending avies. These issues of diversity abound in this environment, and it occurred to me that these are the very issues I am constantly attempting to get my students to understand and to explore in their writing when I utilize popular culture. Not only is diversity prevalent, but the possibilities to disrupt traditional norms and roles allow for the collapsing of normal hegemonic power structures that exist in most environments—both real life and online. I began to wonder how I could use SL to teach FYC.

Many of my questions were answered when I attended CCCCs in 2007, but many more questions were generated. I met compositionists who were already using this world to teach their FYC classes, and a PhD candidate from Ball State University, Sarah Robbins, invited me to visit the class she was conducting in SL every Thursday night. Even though only six weeks of class time remained, I made a point to witness the class in

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[3] In order to comply with NCTE's guidelines for non-sexist language usage, to avoid privileging one sex/gender over the other, and to call attention to the fluidity that is possible in SL, I will continually switch these references. If I use him/her one time, I will use her/him the next.

[4] Avie (av) is short for avatar, which is the cartoon persona one creates for oneself when entering into a virtual environment. These are often customizable once inworld, or can be changed completely.

action every chance I had. These classes, along with the encouragement of mentors, colleagues, and friends, helped me decide that the exploration and challenges of teaching composition in this environment would be worth researching.

Even though the decision was clear, the process and methods still remained a bit murky. My main research question was whether or not utilizing SL as a learning environment would improve or in any way facilitate students' writing. Specific questions include:

- Will using a virtual world like SL change student writing?

- Will my students come to understand SL as a culture uniquely different from their own?

- Will they embrace this new medium?

- Will they form an online identity?

- How will they react to such learning?

I determined that the only way to investigate questions of this magnitude was to narrow the focus and only look at certain aspects of SL life in order to tackle the questions. The primary focus of this research is diversity in the classroom/diversity in students' experiences, and whether or not confronting issues of diversity would somehow affect student writing. I hypothesized that using a virtual world such as SL would enable my students to gain experiences that they might not otherwise have, giving them meaningful material about which to write and consequently improving student writing on both low and high-risk assignments.

One of the most prominent aspects of SL is the ability of a resident to play with his/her identity. But even this needs to be broken down further to include such things as gender bending, cross-dressing, transsexuals, sex role reversals, and even race changes. Here, students are allowed to enter an environment and become someone completely different from whom or what they are in everyday life. They have the opportunity to experience life, albeit a virtual one, in someone else's shoes, allowing them to move outside of the comfort zone where they normally reside and pushing them into a contact zone as promoted by Mary Louise Pratt.

With this ability to be someone different comes the very real possibility that boundaries will be crossed or shattered. The hegemonic power structure that keeps men dominant over women, whites dominant over minorities, and the rich dominant over the poor can be reversed, changed, or become non-existent. Here students find the freedom to explore power structures and find themselves empowered to do things that they would never venture in real life, making SL an ideal place to question power structures without the fear of repercussions. Kathleen Fortney notes that "virtual worlds can enable learners to put on a new persona in a manner that goes far beyond traditional role playing. Consider, for example, the possibilities for delivering diversity awareness education where learners enter as a particular type of avatar to experience first hand the feeling of being 'Different'" (85), and Jessica Bennett and Malcolm Beith argue that SL is "a potent medium for socializing—it provides people with a way to express, explore, and experiment with identity, vent their frustrations, reveal alter egos" ("Alternate Universe"). Before any discussion concerning the pedagogical implications of using SL

for FYC can occur, though, it is imperative that the reader first understands SL as most inworld residents do.

The Big Bang Theory: The Creation of Second Life

SL began as a computer program, originally known as *Linden World*, created in 1991 by Philip Rosedale. Rosedale founded the company Linden Labs in 1999, and the beta version of *Second Life* was released in November of 2002. It did not go live to the public, however, until June 23, 2003 (Rymaszewski et al. 1). SL began by using a tax structure that charged users based on certain criteria; however, a crack-down on tax evaders that created havoc inworld began what Michael Rymaszewski et al. refer to as "a grass-roots social movement . . . . Within a few weeks, a revolution was underway. In December 2003, the revolutionaries won: an entirely new tax system based on land ownership . . . was introduced . . ." (1). This has since morphed into the current free basic membership, which restricts residents from buying property from Linden Labs, and paid premium membership, which allows residents to own land for which they then have to pay a monthly maintenance fee.

Hence the birth of the metaverse (a term originating from Neal Stephenson's 1992 sci-fi novel *Snow Crash* that describes a world with humans as avatars, interacting with one another via software) that is SL. This metaverse, according to all accounts, was not Rosedale's intention. According to Wagner James Au, "building the metaverse wasn't even the company's main goal when it began in 1999 . . ." (407-11). Perhaps it

was not Rosedale's main goal, but most texts on SL refer to it as the metaverse, a world

created in words by Stephenson and brought to life virtually by Linden Labs.

Second Life Is Just a Game, Right?: Actually, It's More Like a World

I experienced culture shock when I first entered SL at Orientation Island, which felt

strangely familiar from the computer games I had played throughout life where one

learns how to maneuver inside the game. Beyond Orientation Island, however, SL is

nothing like a game. I have lived and worked in several different countries, and I equate

the culture shock I felt in SL as similar to what I experienced in the third world country

of Angola, Africa. Anytime we travel to a new country there is much to learn about the

geography, economy, traditions, religions, people, and so much more. Peter Ludlow and

Mark Wallace claim that SL "is less a game than a parallel world unto itself" (75). SL

consists of Orientation Island, Help Island, Private Regions, Open Spaces, and the

Mainland Regions; these are the countries that make up the world of SL. Figure 1 gives a

map of just a fraction of this world. In fact, according to Brian A. White as of January

2007, "SL contained virtual land that is the equivalent of over six times the size of New

York's Manhattan Island" (5). A blog entry by Zee Linden on secondlife.com, further

states that the "continued brisk sales have left us with roughly a two-week backlog for

new Island order delivery" ("State of the Virtual World"). SL's status as a world is

legitimate as the following will bear out.

It is important to understand that SL, like any country in the real world that has its

own method of trade—whether it is some form of currency or a barter system also has an

economy. The United States has the US dollar, Britain—the pound, Angola—the

Angolan Kwanza, and Australia—the Australian dollar. Unlike the various currencies

the real world has, however, SL began its world with just one currency, the Linden dollar.

Anytime I begin a discussion concerning the economy of SL, the conversation

usually ends with the other person replying, "But it's all just play money, right? Like

Monopoly money except you have to buy it using real money!" To this, I normally reply,

"Can you take your Monopoly money and exchange it for US dollars?" As White notes,

"SL has an economy and a currency, the Linden dollar, or L$. There is an established
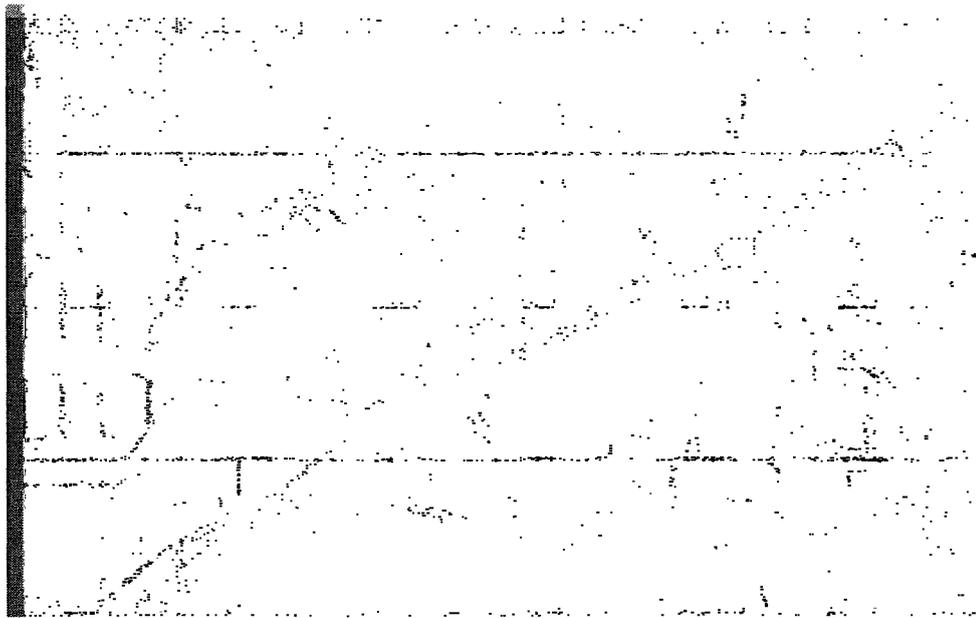
Fig. 1. Snapshot taken of a virtual map in SL.

exchange rate, which allows you to convert real-life money (US$) to SL money (L$) and

vice versa" (254). In fact, the website www.slexchange.com, is dedicated to the buying

and selling of not only SL goods, but of Linden dollars. Figure 2 shows a screen capture

of the exchange rate for September 15, 2008. Investing in Linden dollars is no different

it is made behind the backs of the companies that control these worlds. The Terms of

Service for these worlds clearly state that anything created in the game is the sole

property of the companies, not the individual creators.

SL does not operate this way. Ludlow and Wallace argue that "perhaps the most

important difference between Second Life and most other virtual worlds is that SL's

Terms of Service specifically grants residents ownership of the intellectual property right

in their creations" (76). This means that residents of SL can build and create anything

inworld, retain the rights to the object, and sell it inworld or on a website such as

SLexchange. But SL, as mentioned earlier, is not a game like all of the other popular

virtual worlds such as Everquest or World of WarCraft. Residents do not level up in SL.

They do not kill monsters, find treasures, nor attempt to impress the neighbors. There are

also no goals to attain. So the questions of what do people buy and why are valid ones to

ask.

For many, including myself at first, the answers to the questions above seem

fantastical and unrealistic. If SL is not a game and there are no levels to show progress in

the world, why would anyone want to spend real money and how could people make real

money in this environment? Julian Dibbell begins to shed some light on these inquiries

when he writes that SL,

> with its wide-openness to user-created architecture, objects, and other in-
>
> world content, and its whole-hearted embrace of the real-money trade in
>
> virtual properties . . ., is striving mightily to leave the games market
>
> behind and become, instead, the next-and perhaps final-generation

desktop—a globe-spanning virtual realm in which everything from

social lives to business plans to artistic movements unfold. (107)

Linden Labs understands the concept that "players do not just consume, or act as passive

audience members of, the game but instead are active cocreators in producing it as a

meaningful experience and artifact" (Taylor 133). This world, unlike the others, not only

encourages residents to use their creativity to build in this environment, but to actually

live a second life by participating in a culture that is not so different from our own,

regardless of where we reside in real life (RL).

One of the first commodities that was and is still sold in SL is virtual property, as

Dibbell mentions. A real estate agent in RL can make hundreds of thousands of US

dollars a year selling property on commission. Similarly, Ailin Graef—avatar Anshe

Chung—began buying and developing land in SL in 2004, and by 2006 she had made her

first million in US dollars. Bennett and Beith report that "her business, Anshe Chung

Studios, with a staff of 60, buys virtual property and builds homes or other structures that

it rents or sells to other denizens of Second Life" ("Alternate Universe"). Rymaszewski

et al., in the *Second Life: Official Guide*, describe the real estate business in SL as "a

secure investment that pays off much more quickly. [It] offers such attractive

opportunities that almost everyone dabbles in it, and many SL people make it a

permanent side occupation that delivers a steady stream of profits" (240). Rymaszewski

et al.'s book was published in 2007, but White, in his 2008 text entitled *Second Life: A

Guide to Your Virtual World*, proposes that "at some point the bug [to own land] will

catch you and you'll decide to set down roots," and he further suggests that "owning a

piece of virtual land is one of the biggest pleasures in SL" (253). Land dealing in SL is

an investment just as it is in RL, and many people dabble in this lucrative market. One

stipulation, though, is that in order to own land in SL the resident must have a premium

account. A basic account, which allows anyone to participate in SL and rent land, is free,

but the premium account is $9.95 a month and allows residents to buy and sale land.[5]

Land purchased in SL is an investment, but people do not generally stop with just

the purchase. If they expect to make a profit on the land, or if they intend for their avie to

live there, then the next step is to develop the land and either build or have someone

design and build a house for them. With a residence comes the need to furnish it, and so

the cycle of living a second life begins. With a premium account comes a weekly stipend

of 300L$. Most residents soon find, however, that 300L$ is not nearly enough to furnish

a house and live the life style they dream of in SL. Not all residents can be real estate

moguls, so this necessitates finding other ways to make money in SL if the thought of

spending real money to purchase L$ is not appealing. Rymaszewski et al. suggest the

occupations seen in figure 3 to support a second life. This list is not all-inclusive, but

these are a few of the professions anyone in SL can pursue. Another option, though, if

residents do not wish to work for someone else, is to become a business owner. Some of

the most popular businesses to own in SL include clubs and various retail establishments

such as clothing stores, wig shops, and skin stores.[6] To illustrate, figure 4 shows the

results of a search conducted for the term "skin" under "places." This list can

---

[5] See Appendix A for a complete price break down of SL charges.

[a] This is the practice of simply "hanging out" in a particular location and getting paid for
it. This helps populate the business owner's location and attracts other, possibly paying,

Journalism	Camping [a]	Greeter
Security	Shop Attendant/Sale Rep	Event Host/DJ
Dancer/Stripper	Model/Photomodel	Escort
Texturer [b]	Clothing Designer	Scripter [c]
Builder/Landscaper	Animator	

Fig. 3. Suggested jobs in SL. Rymaszewski, Michael, et al. *Second Life: The Official Guide*. Indianapolis: Wiley, 2007. 217-39.

be sorted by name or traffic, but defaults to traffic so that residents know what the most

popular places are. The list in figure 3 and the search in figure 4 both indicate what

people in SL buy. The economy of SL, just like RL, is driven by the marketing concept

of supply and demand. If no one were interested in purchasing couture fashion or escort

services, or paying to see an avie stripper, these services would soon disappear, as do bad

clothing stores and shops that do not supply new stock.

As hinted at by Dibbell, Second Life is more than just making and spending

money. It is also a creative outlet for many artists, musicians, poets, and others.

Nashville, Tennessee's famous Bluebird Cafe streams live video and audio into their SL

cafe every night. A search for live music on September 17, 2008, retrieved twenty-one

customers.

[b] This is the practice of creating textures using a program like *Photoshop* to apply to prims (see Appendix B: Glossary) to make things real looking.

[c] This is the practice of using a programming language to make objects interactive in SL.

[6] A place to buy avatar skins to completely change one's physical appearance, including animal or furry skins.

live performances. Several locations, such as Poetry Recitals at Avgi, The Isle of

Awakening, and the official group representing the Poetry Society of the United

Kingdom, offer live poetry readings frequently, and artists display their work in
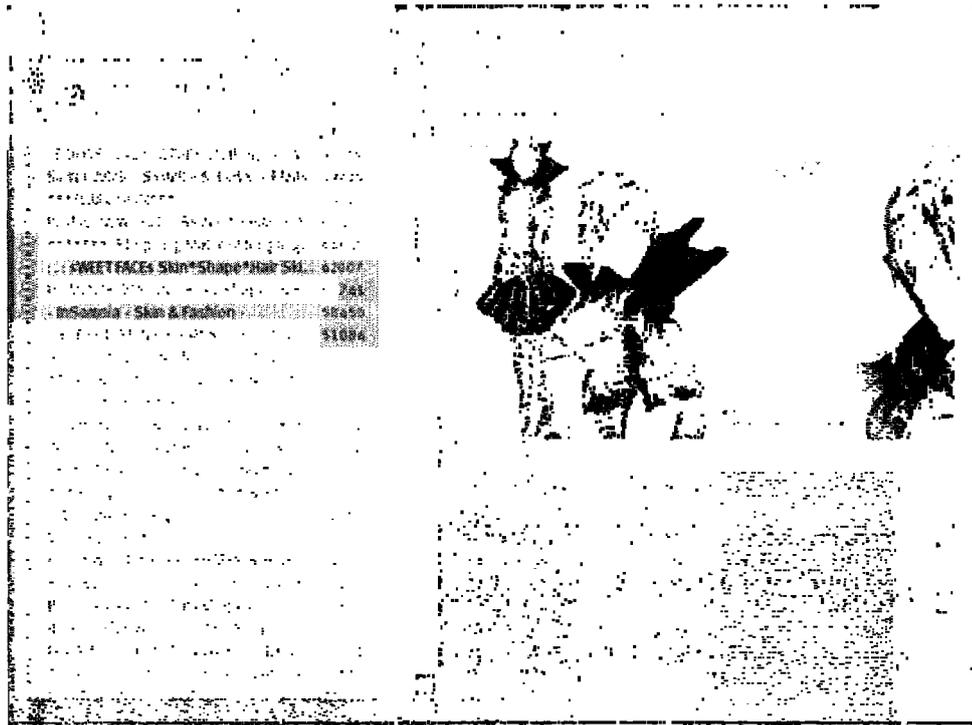
Fig. 4. Snapshot of search for the term skin.

organized events such as Art Work at the A&C. White reports that Circe Broom, a well-

known music promoter, states that she is in SL "for the music and to help musicians get a

break. I was there once and I love music. They need and deserve some help and it makes

me feel good!" (qtd. in White 336). SL is a place where unknown artists, whether it be

musicians, poets, or someone else with creative flair, can get their work into the

mainstream of SL and even into RL.

Who Lives a Second Life?: The Residents of the Metaverse

My first reaction to the residents of SL was that the RL people behind the avies

had to be die-hard role-playing gamers (RPGers). Even the friend I mentioned earlier

who traversed into this world before me is known for her marathon weekends defeating

the latest in E-, or the occasional T-, rated video games. It did not take long, though, for

me to realize that my assumptions and attempt to stereotype the residents of SL was

inaccurate. Rymaszewski et al. devote an entire chapter to twelve SL residents and allow

them to tell their stories in their own words (196-210). The one characteristic that is

strangely missing from these autobiographies is the word "gamer." In fact, the one avie

who mentions games, Frank Freelunch, discusses his love of the classic game *Space

Invaders* and the fact that he spends time in SL's game emporiums playing these types of

games, hardly your typical RPGer. Most of these twelve residents mention every day

dreams and desires that they pursue in SL. One loves cars and so creates them virtually

because she cannot afford them in RL; another created a nineteenth-century island where

SL residents flocked to live; still another discusses her desire "to set a standard for taste,

manners, and a life well-lived while building a personal community that I can be proud

of" (Rymaszewski et al. 203). None of these residents refer to SL as a game: no true

resident would.

What the residents of SL have created for themselves is a community, a culture

uniquely their own that matches Bonnie Stone Sunstein and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater's

definition of "culture as an invisible web of behaviors, patterns, rules, and rituals of a

group of people who have contact with one another and share common languages" (3).

Subcultures also exist in SL, ranging from vampires to furries, but it quickly became

apparent to me that the overall culture of SL is one that Henry Jenkins calls a

participatory culture, or one where experiences are turned into "a rich and complex"

culture (486-93). Jenkins et al. define this culture as one

1. With relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic

   engagement

2. With strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with

   others

3. With some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the

   most experienced is passed along to novices

4. Where members believe that their contributions matter

5. Where members feel some degree of social connection with one

   another (at the least they care what other people think about what they

   have created).

Not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to

contribute when ready and that what they contribute will be appropriately

valued. (7)

The final comment by Jenkins et al. is very important because not all residents in SL do

contribute, but everyone is welcome and encouraged to do so.

According to Jenkins et al., nearly non-existent barriers are needed so residents

can express themselves or become involved civically in the culture. This is certainly true

of SL as one can see from the Terms of Service found in Appendix C. Item 3.2 of the

Terms states that "you retain copyright and other intellectual property rights with

respect to Content you create in Second Life, to the extent that you have such rights

under applicable law" ("Terms of Service"). This grants all artistic license to the creator

of any materials in SL as allowed by law. Even though legal barriers do not prevent

residents from completely engaging in the world of SL, this does not mean that there are

none. Just as in RL, anyone owning property has a right to prevent others from building

on it or from even entering into it. The best way to enjoy artistic freedom and the right to

build is to either buy property, which can be expensive, or to rent land, which is much

more reasonable and can be done without paying for a premium account. However,

residents who do not want to spend any money in SL can always build in a sandbox—an

area designed after a child's sandbox, but whatever residents build there must be taken

with them before they leave. Civic engagement in SL is also encouraged, and SL offers

the Civic Forum, a location to help residents understand more about their civic rights and

responsibilities. Figure 5 shows a billboard for Global Kids HQ. This location

encourages adults to get the youth of the world involved in a global society and offers

grants to help start up such organizations. SL also offers a "Community: Events"

webpage on their site to promote community events taking place in SL.

The second point that Jenkins et al. make is that strong support is necessary for

not only creating, but for sharing these creations. The key to finding this type of

patronage is to investigate the world and locate the groups in which you might be

interested and to use social networking to your advantage. As White notes, there "are

groups for newbies on almost any topic; there are groups for activities such as live music,

skydiving, and sailing; and there are groups formed around business partnerships and

land ownership" (56). If residents cannot find a group to meet their needs and find the

Fig. 5. Snapshot of billboard in SL advertising Global Kids.

camaraderie they seek, they can always create their own group and invite others to join.

Support for one's creativity is never further than a mouse click away in SL.

Prior to this type of support, however, the third point the authors make is that

novices or newbs/noobs also need assistance.[7] Orientation Island is the area to which

new avatars are teleported when they enter the world of SL for the first time. Here, new

residents (noobs) are guided through a series of events designed to help them become

familiar with living a second life and the commands necessary to survive. Once noobs

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[7] Noob, newb, noobie, newbie are all words used to refer to a new resident in SL.

successfully negotiate this island, they have the choice of moving into the Mainland or teleporting to Help Island. Au notes that resident volunteers "devoted their own time and resources to helping out new users themselves, often without Linden Lab's involvement, at Resident-owned locales like New Citizens Incorporated . . ." (2092-96). Volunteers offer valuable assistance and enjoy introducing noobies to the finer points of living in the metaverse.

The fourth and fifth points of Jenkins et al. are that members need to believe that what they contribute matters and that they need to feel a sense of social connection. Without the contributions of the residents in SL there would literally be no SL. It is a world, according to founder and CEO Rosedale, "where you can turn the pictures in your head into a kind of pixelated reality. It's a venue for self-expression that's among the richest and most satisfying out there" (iv). By creating content in SL, residents also find social acceptance, regardless of what those creations may be. Things that may seem deviant in RL are ways of acting out fantasies in SL. Rymaszewski et al. comment on residents such as Prokofy Neva and argue that "every society needs its dissidents, and every free society attracts those who would aspire to that role. . . . He's an activist dismissed as an irrelevant extremist by the mainstream, but whose thoughts still manage to define the terms of the debate" (264). Regardless of dissident or aberrant behavior, rarely is someone ostracized in SL for behavior that could be seriously damaging in RL.

The participatory nature of the culture in SL gives everyone a sense of belonging, regardless of the subcultures to which they might belong. In *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins discusses fan culture, in particular the subculture of television fans, and he asserts that

this culture "cuts across traditional geographic and generational boundaries and is

defined through its particular styles of consumption and forms of cultural preference"

(113-17). The same can be said for the residents of SL. Its culture transcends the

hegemonic boundaries of RL and offers all who reside there a sense of belonging,

regardless of any RL attachments.

What Can I Learn Living a Second Life?: Education and Learning

  SL is a parallel universe or metaverse, and it has possibilities for impacting RL

education. For Beth Ritter-Guth, who teaches at DeSales University and Lehigh Carbon

Community College, it means that she can "build environments where students can really

explore the literature," and for Jean-Claude Bradley, chemistry professor at Drexel

University, it means he can "show [students] molecules in three dimensions. . . . [They]

can walk around the molecule and discuss it" (qtd. in Sussman). Education is a large

part of SL, so large in fact that Linden Labs has dedicated staff members whose focus is

on how SL can be used for RL education. In order to promote that side of SL, Linden

Labs also offers a fifty percent discount to RL educators who want to purchase an island

for educational purposes inworld.

  Many skeptics could view this discount as another marketing gimmick by Linden

Labs to get as many people involved and inworld as possible; however, the use of virtual

realities and digital game-based learning (DGBL) has gained respect as a valid teaching

tool over the past decade. Scholars such as James Paul Gee, Marc Prensky, and Steven

Johnson argue that digital learning has merit. Richard Van Eck cites three reasons why

he believes the public is beginning to pay attention to games as a mode of learning. First is the ongoing research mentioned above, second is the fact that today's generation of internet users "have become disengaged with traditional instruction," and third is the popularity of games in today's society (17). Today's convergence culture of combining old media with new media has students learning in more non-traditional ways than even ten years ago.

However, SL is not a game, which puts it in a category all its own. Because it is not a game, RL educators have found a way to tap into its uniqueness and use it in their classrooms. Some schools and universities have built islands in SL to support the missions of their schools. For example, figure 6 shows an SL search with the term university, which turned up 255 hits. Even though all of them are not true RL colleges, many do represent schools that have decided to use SL to accommodate their students' needs or to experiment with learning in digital environments. J. Patrick Williams, Sean Q. Hendricks, and W. Keith Winkler remark that simulations like SL, "which offer analogies and metaphors for real-world issues, can provide a way for students to discuss issues in a safe environment, where there are no real-world consequences to their actions" (11). This is true to a degree, but even in a virtual world there can be real-world consequences as seen by the lawsuit inworld resident Serpentine filed against inworld resident Catteneo in an RL court for stealing intellectual property (Davis "Virtual Sex Machine"). Even though consequences for sexual harassment or other illegal activities exist, often those are little more than Linden Lab suspending the user's account, or at worst kicking the user out of the virtual world where the crime was perpetrated.
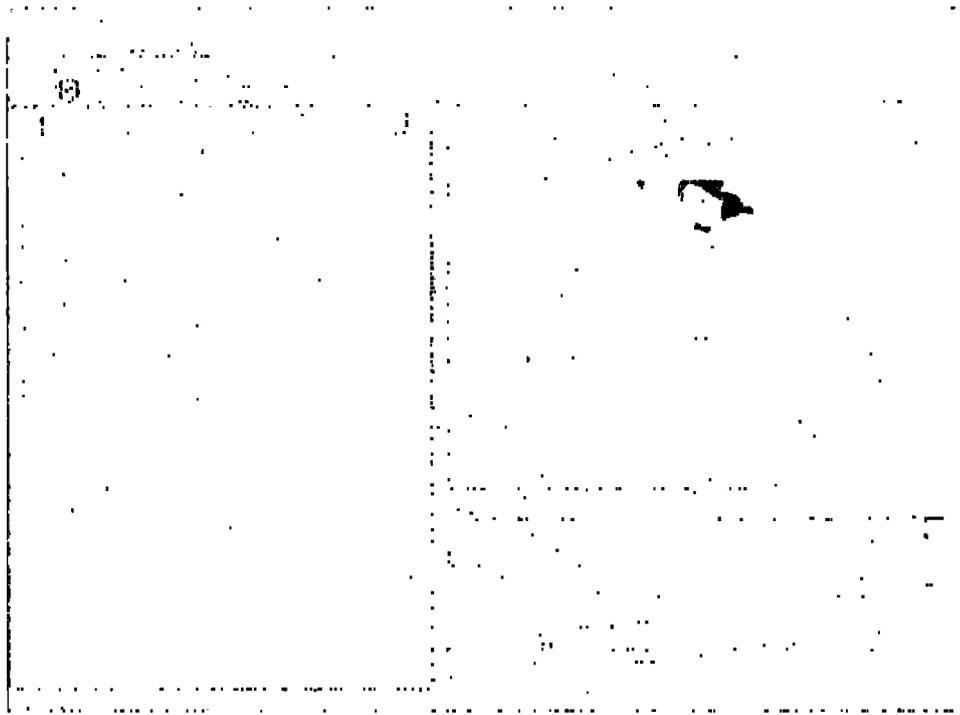
Fig. 6. Snapshot of a search on the term university.

Generally speaking, because SL is a metaverse it makes the perfect environment for virtual education.

SL Is All about the Writing: Composition Studies in SL

The implications for educational possibilities in SL are clear when one considers such examples as Ritter-Guth's use of the virtual to make literature come to life or Bradley's ability to make chemistry more accessible to his students by creating 3D models of molecules. However, what might not be as clear is how SL can be used to teach FYC in the academy. Understanding this correlation will require a brief discussion

of how students use multiple technologies in their literacy practices and how SL, as

one of these technologies, becomes a medium students can use for writing.

The literacy that I grew up with is not the same as it is today; I primarily grew up

with traditional print literacy. Even though I also had the visual literacy of television, it

was limited to two channels that came in clear and one that was more snow than show, so

my sense of literacy was mainly in the books I read for both pleasure and school. This

literacy fit well with what was expected in my education. Today, however, things are

much different. Williams notes that, according to Michael Hoechsmann, "the academic

world at large continues to behave as if it exists in a world where print is the dominant

medium of discourse" (*Tuned In* 3). The reality, however, is that it is questionable

whether or not print is still at the forefront of communication, making print, therefore, no

longer the only means of literacy.

With multiple literacies, such as print, television, social networking, and video

games/virtual worlds—to name a few—come multiple ways of learning. It is my

responsibility, as an instructor, to tap into these different modes of literacy and learn to

meet the students where they are comfortable in order to challenge them to go beyond

their comfort zone. Many of my students were familiar with the literacies mentioned

above, but I found that using the virtual world of SL in the composition classroom took

them out of their comfort zone from the first night. The writing that often evolves from

students' experiences in this mass-media culture, as Williams contends, are

> contact-zone texts that befuddle both us and them. Their attempts at
>
> mimicry can result at least in hybrid writing that resists our readings or, in

a more overt resistance, mock the discourse we are promoting. This in

turn challenges our most cherished metanarrative of literacy as

empowerment, of literacy as the fundamental requirement for critical

consciousness in a civil society. Students resist and undermine what we

see as the fundamental strength of the written discourse we teach. (*Tuned*

In 17-18)

For myself, it was time to take the binary of the academic written discourse versus the

literacies produced in our mass-media culture and remove the black and white, or right

and wrong filter that we, as academics, so often look at them through and instead realize

that the two can work together to produce a more powerful discourse. As Diana George

points out, "For students who have grown up in a technology-saturated and an image-rich

culture, questions of communication and composition absolutely will include the visual,

not as attendant to the verbal but as complex communication intricately related to the

world around them" ("From Analysis" 32). It was this intricate combination of both the

visual and the verbal/written word that SL would provide the students.

Video games and virtual worlds like SL and World of Warcraft offer this

combination of the visual and the verbal/written communication to which George refers.

In the world of static video games, or those not played with other participants, the player

is required only to read the visuals of the game and interpret what these visuals are telling

him/her about the gaming situation without having to consider other participants' actions.

These games can also include verbal—audible—or written text clues that the player must

interpret correctly in order to advance in the game. These visual, verbal, and written

aspects in gaming help to enhance critical thinking skills. Video games then promote and further enhance the gamers' critical thinking skills. As Gee points out when he discusses his first experience with gaming, games require "the player to learn and think in ways at which I was not then adept. Suddenly all my baby-boomer ways of learning and thinking, for which I had heretofore received ample rewards, did not work" (*What Video Games* 2). Video gaming and virtual worlds expand the ways in which we think and consider things, giving us an advantage when it comes to thinking and then writing about topics concerning these games, worlds, and experiences.

When it comes to writing in FYC courses, instructors continue to experiment with ways to get students more involved and actually interested in what they write. Nearly all FYC instructors have read the "My First Kiss," "My First Prom," "Winning the State Championship," and other similar essays. Some are well written and even interesting, but generally speaking, they seem to lack the level of engagement that we wish the students would have with their writing. Jennifer Howard argues that "often students . . . simply have no interest in what they are writing" and this "lack of engagement leads to flat writing" (7). One suggestion to avoid flat writing, as put forth by Howard, is to "ask the writer to connect the topic to something in pop culture or how it could affect everyday life" (7). The use of SL takes this connection of the topic to pop culture one step further by immersing students into their topic and allowing them to actually experience it in one form of everyday life: their virtual lives. Writing that comes from personal experience can be fun for students. Williams explains that what we need to do as instructors is to "offer students assignments and opportunities to recognize that what brings them pleasure

is connected to experience, competence, and challenge . . ." ("Are We Having Fun

Yet?" 341). SL is a medium that challenges students and gives them experiences, and

ultimately confidence, helping to make their writing more engaging to read and more

enjoyable for them to write.

What Is This Language You Speak?: Glossary of SL Terms

As Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater point out, every culture has its own language, and

the metaverse of SL is no different. I provided my students with a glossary of SL terms

and phrases and encouraged them to incorporate them into their texts. As Williams

suggests, providing students with the critical vocabulary of a particular subject can help

their essays attain "a sophistication" that eludes others who are not familiar with the same

vocabulary (*Tuned In* 5). I have supplied in Appendix B an extensive list of SL terms

and phrases that will help anyone who is unfamiliar with SL, which includes many of the

terms I gave my students. This glossary serves two purposes: 1) it includes terms that are

used throughout this work and will serve as a dictionary of sorts; 2) it includes terms that

are used often in the world of SL and will serve as a quick reference should you decide to

venture into the metaverse. After reviewing several sources that include their own

glossary of terms, I decided to use the one included in Rymaszewski et al.'s *Second Life:*

The Official Guide because it is the most comprehensive for beginning SL residents.

Other texts such as White's *Second Life: A Guide to Your Virtual World*, Rebecca

Tapley's *Designing Your Second Life*, and Aimee Weber, Kimberly Rufer-Back, and

Richard Platel's *Creating Your World: The Official Guide to Advanced Content Creation*

for Second Life include extensive explanations of terms within their texts and are good sources for people who become serious about their second lives.

What Can I Expect from a Second Life?: Overview of the Following Chapters

This introduction has given an overview of what SL is all about. By now, it should be obvious that SL, for many, is a parallel universe almost identical in what a resident can do in this universe. The residents that make up the SL world are the same ones that inhabit this one in RL. The major difference is that in SL they can live out fantasies only dreamed of in RL. Sometimes those fantasies are as small as having unusual sex or as large and extravagant as owning a business and making millions. In SL, anything is possible.

Although it is important to understand that SL is viewed by most as a metaverse, the intent of my work is to show how it can be used in teaching FYC. In "Chapter 2: From the Beginning to Infinity and Beyond: Computers in the Composition Classroom," I delve into this by looking at how computers have been used in the classroom since the late '70s. The chapter is broken down into four time periods (from the late '70s to now), and I look at both the technological advancements during those time periods—hardware and software—and the pedagogical changes that were occurring simultaneously. I also briefly look at the future of computers and composition.

I discuss the methods that were used in this investigation in "Chapter 3: Orientation Island—How Do We Begin?" and explain the decision to use the ethnographic teacher-researcher method, which was best suited to the research questions

being asked. Further, I explicate the logic behind the other protocols chosen and

explain in detail the procedures and steps taken to set up the research itself.

Next, in "Chapter 4: Living a Second Life: It's Not That Easy," I analyze the data

collected in the research and consider the research questions that I asked:

- Will using a virtual world like SL change student writing?

- Will my students come to understand SL as a culture uniquely different from
  their own?

- Will they embrace this new medium?

- Will they form an online identity?

- How will they react to such learning?

In order to answer these questions, I examine the writing students did 1) in class, quick

writes and text chats, 2) outside of class, journals and blogging, and 3) in one formal

essay assignment. I also include several examples of events that occurred during class

that support the answers to the questions asked and give examples of how the students

responded to learning and writing in the world of SL. I then look at the results of surveys

conducted at the end of the semester to gauge the students' overall reactions to their

experiences in SL, giving statistics on how they gauged their writing ability at the

beginning and then at the end of the semester.

Finally, I conclude the research in "Chapter 5: Benefits of a Second Life: It's All

about the Experiences" by looking at the future of using SL in FYC classrooms. Issues

of access, training, and both instructor and student resistance will have to be overcome

before such technology can be widely adopted. I reflect on the research, answering the

questions of what worked, what could be handled better or differently, and what needs

to be changed to make the next foray into SL in FYC even more successful.

Chapter 2

From the Beginning to Infinity and Beyond:

Computers in the Composition Classroom

History of Real Life (RL): Introduction

From MOOs to MUDs or CMCs to MMORPGs, someone eavesdropping on a

conversation with acronyms such as these being tossed around would swear that it was a

recipe for a top-secret military maneuver. However, anyone involved for very long in the

conversation concerning the usefulness of computers in the composition classroom, both

in the past and in the present, would immediately join the dialogue and begin tossing

around these favorite acronyms and other techno jargon. My goal in this chapter is to

review the history of computers and composition for the past twenty-five years: basically,

looking at where we have been, how we got to where we are today, and where we might

be headed in the future. Even though some elements of the technology may seem

redundant, each new mention deals with an advancement in that area or an issue that has

remained a concern and continues to be of importance. In this chapter, I will also look at

the theories that have supported the use of high-tech computer equipment where a pen

and paper once sufficed and also lay the groundwork for a discussion about where the

current theories and practices stand today.

One source that will be utilized frequently in this section is *Computers and the*

Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994: A History by Gail E.

Hawisher, Paul LeBlanc, Charles Moran, and Cynthia L. Selfe. The source is a wealth of

information on what transpired in the field of computers and writing between the years

of 1979 to 1994, and the chronological division utilized coincides with much of the

research in this field. Therefore, I will not attempt to "reorganize" this history, but will

add to it in relevant areas, and of course, I will extend it to where we are currently in the

field of computers and writing, ending with the advent of Web 2.0 in the '00s and all it

allows the user to do.

For ease of reading, each major time period will be broken down into two sub-

categories: 1) The Technology: The Hardware and Software (software not written by

compositionists or not geared toward the composition classroom) and 2) The Pedagogy:

The Theories and the Praxis. This organization will ensure that the reader understands

the advancements in technology during that time period so that the discussion of the

theories and practices can be placed next to those advancements.

The Beginning: Early and Mid '80s

Hawisher et al. argue that the beginning of computer technologies in composition

studies should be set in 1979 to coincide with "the advent of the microcomputer, because

this was the technological development that put computing in the hands of individual

teachers" (14-15). Even though James A. Inman acknowledges Hawisher et al.'s

reasoning, he counters by emphasizing that the era between 1960 to 1970 saw "large-

scale social and cultural transformations . . . [that] make it especially compelling to be

included in any computers and writing history, given prominent contemporary attention

to access and diversity issues" (60). There is no doubt that the Vietnam War itself

changed the access and diversity of the university and plays an important role, as

Inman suggests, in the cultural transformations the university itself experienced.

However, when looking at how the computer and other advances in this technology made

their way into the classroom, I would argue that the 1979 date put forth by Hawisher et

al. is a valid one. Once the microcomputer made it possible for middle-class citizens to

own a computer, it was not long before teachers began to experiment with this new

technology. They soon began to develop theories and praxis to underpin the use of the

computer in their classrooms.

The Technology: Hardware and Software

The history of the computer begins as early as 1936 with Konrad Zuse's

mechanical Z1 binary computer (Bellis), but names that are more familiar are David

Packard and Bill Hewlett who invented the HP 200A Audio Oscillator in 1939

("Timeline of Computer History: Computers"). Machines like these paved the way for

the computers that were in use from '79 to the mid '80s. Computers such as the

Commodore PET (1977), Apple II (1977), Tandy Radio Shack's TRS-80 (1977), Atari's

Model 400 and 800 (1979), IBM PC—MS-DOS—(1981), and the Commodore 64 (1982)

are machines that many recall with both fondness and frustration. Of all the computers

that were available during this time, the one probably best remembered is Apple's

Macintosh. Apple began with the introduction of Lisa in 1983. It was the first home

computer that offered a graphical user interface (GUI), but the price tag was $9,995,

more than most home users could ever afford. In 1984, however, Apple released the

more affordable Macintosh ($2,495) with the same user friendly GUI, which made it more user friendly than Microsoft's text only DOS system (Bellis). Apple put a lot of faith in the success of this machine and promoted the Macintosh with a one time $1.5 million commercial during the 1984 Superbowl—a commercial that can still be seen on web sites such as Google Video and YouTube (where it has been viewed 2,304,977 times as of September, 2008) ("1984's Apple's Macintosh Commercial"). These early personal computers, both Macintosh and the personal computer, some with their black screens and green text, began the love/hate relationship for many compositionists with computers and writing.

The early uses of computers by compositionists, however, were very limited because they found themselves with the problem of finding resources with which they could experiment. Campus computer labs were often limited to use by faculty and students in the sciences and were only open to others during the hours least used by these primary users. According to Hawisher et al., the institution viewed writing "as a trivial activity—relative to number crunching and data processing" (49). Thus, the struggle to gain access to this technology that many believed could be beneficial to writing was intense, and it continued throughout the early and mid eighties. Doug Anderson relates the difficulties he encountered in securing computer access in 1982 at Texas A&I (now A&M, Kingsville) in his 1994 Computers and Writing (C&W) conference presentation: "I wasn't allowed to use the computer lab—it was for computer faculty *only*. I had to explain to deans and vice presidents what in the world a writing teacher wanted to do with a computer terminal. When I explained that I also thought my writing *students*

should have access, they knew I was a serious troublemaker!" (qtd. in Hawisher et al. 49). Lisa Gerard gives us another example when she discusses writing her first academic article. She relates that she typed it on a dedicated word processor in her English department that "faculty were permitted to use . . . after 5:00 p.m. and on weekends" (212). Unfortunately, Anderson and Gerard's experiences were the norm and not the exception, and compositionists' struggle to integrate computers with writing did not end with access issues.

The history of networking reaches back to 1960 with AT&T's Dataphone, but "the first commercial modem, specifically for converting digital computer data to analog signals for transmission across its long distance network," and the use of networks in colleges and universities came much later ("Timeline of Computer History: Networking"). In fact, Michael Spitzer, in his article "Local and Global Networking: Implications for the Future" remarks that in "1984 . . . few of the networking projects described in this article existed" (69). The projects that Spitzer refers to are local area networks and mainframes, rather simple networking technologies compared to today's standards. With new technologies, however, came new theories and pedagogies surrounding how best to use these technologies.

The Pedagogy: Theories and Praxis

During this time, James A. Berlin notes that there were "three major paradigms or problematics competing for attention in college rhetoric and composition programs" (218). These include cognitive rhetoric, expressionists, and social constructionist or

social epistemic. At the same time there was a movement from product oriented writing to process. Lad Tobin relates that "in the late 1970s and early 1980s you were either one of the process-oriented teachers arguing for student choice of topics and forms; the necessity of authentic voice . . . or you were a teacher who believed that we needed to resist process' attack on rules, conventions, standards, quality, and rigor" (4). By the mid '80s, process pedagogy was prevalent.

Teachers of writing felt that computers would facilitate the move away from the product of writing to the process of writing, but the first initial uses of microcomputers did not always support this idea of process writing. As Roxanne Kent-Drury notes, "instructors worried about how to adapt the new tools to existing pedagogies" (390). The computer could be seen as a tutor, tool, or tutee when it was first introduced into composition studies in the early '80s (Hawisher et al. 50). Michelle Sidler, Richard Morris, and Elizabeth Overman Smith remark in their introduction to *Computers in the Composition Classroom: A Critical Sourcebook* that composition classrooms that once held small writing desks "were suddenly equipped with standalone computers, which in the earliest days acted as little more than word processors and, often, electronic babysitters, performing style checks on students' written works or prompting students to complete drill-and-grill grammar exercises" (3). Of these three, the most popular in the early stages and one that is still in use today would be that of tutor or computer-assisted instruction (CAI). In this capacity, the computer tutored the student in a drill and answer format, mainly over issues concerning grammar—a very prescriptive mode of instruction—with no thought for the context of student writing or the process used to

create. Spitzer explains that when "the computer was introduced into the classroom, it was viewed as the panacea that, through drill-and-practice software, would transform education" (58). Richard Ohmann observes in 1985 that computers were "being used as little more than electronic workbooks and data banks" (29). These types of CAI can still be found online and in some universities today although they are often used only as a starting point for instruction.

In the computer's capacity as a word processing tool, the early '80s allowed students and teachers to compose their papers without first having to handwrite them. This alone accomplished a great deal for writers, and according to Moran in his 2003 article "*Computers and Composition* 1983-2002: What We Have Hoped For," many compositionists saw the computer as a means to "release us from what we deem to be the boring aspects of our work and enable us to do something better with the time that we will have saved" (345). And in many ways, the computer did just that. Gone were the days of typing and then cutting up the text to reorganize and then the daunting task of retyping it all again. Gerard notes that when she was finishing her dissertation she "typed it up it on a typewriter and each morning cut it up with scissors, threw the rejected pieces in the trash, and reorganized the remaining parts with Scotch tape" (212). When working on the final copy, making one mistake meant using the typewriter's backspace correction key—is if there was one. If not, then correction tape was the next best option, which required a bit of finesse to make the paper look presentable. If, however, the job required the use of carbon pages so that there were two or three copies, as was often necessary, then it was an entirely different matter. I remember that trying to correct "those"

documents usually ended with screams of frustration and the ripping of paper. If a document had to be perfect, a trashcan nearby was usually full of failed attempts.

The computer as a word processing tool, therefore, began to move the pedagogy of writing away from the current-traditionalist view of product, which "emphasized academic writing in standard forms and 'correct' grammar" (Burnham 22), toward the new theories on writing as a process. However, the move was not instantaneous. The software was not such that you were able to cut entire paragraphs from one section of your paper and move them into another. As Gerard notes in an interview with Hawisher et al., much of the writing work going on in the early '80s with computers "was geared to sentence-level revision and grammatical correctness" (61).

Yet, programs such as compositionist Hugh Burns's *Topoi* in 1977 allowed writers the ability to invent with computers as well. Raymond J. Rodrigues and Dawn Wilson Rodrigues point out in their article "Computer-Based Invention: Its Place and Potential" that Burns's program led "students through the tagmemic matrix of Young, Becker, and Pike; the pentad of Burke, and the enthymeme and topoi of Aristotle," resulting in a conversation between the student and the computer, leading students to realize how much they already knew about their topic and forcing them to write it all down (82). This type of invention was something that many teachers instructed their students on, but the invention programs made the process easier for students and showed them how to generate ideas.

Topoi was among the first to be written by a writing teacher for the sole purpose of writing, illustrating that the computer could be a tutee as well as a tutor or tool. Even

though Burns was one of the first to find himself writing computer code, many

instructors in the field of composition in the early '80s found themselves doing this kind

of writing rather than what their English degrees had prepared them for. Others, like

Gerard, Ruth Von Blum, and Michael Cohen, soon followed Burns with their own variety

of pre-writing software known as *WANDAH*, and William Wresch produced *Writer's*

Helper and Helen Schwartz created *Seen*. Writing teachers were teaching, or

programming, the computer to do what they needed it to do in a world that up until that

point believed that the machines were primarily for the sciences (Hawisher et al. 48-9).

The computer as a tutee, however, did not stop with instructors writing software

to help students pre-write, write, and revise. Instructors hoped that computers would help

diminish the menial work associated with writing, freeing them up to deal with the more

global issues. During the early and mid '80s, many teachers felt the computer could be

used to help correct mechanical errors, spelling errors, and grammar issues. Robert

Lucking made note of how time-consuming it was to write "sufficient length" comments

on students' papers (6). In his article "Marking Papers and Record Keeping for Apple

Users," he advocates for storing a set of standard or canned comments in one file or

glossary and then inserting these comments directly into students' papers to cut down on

the time-consuming act of responding to student writing. This trend began early in the

use of computers for writing, and it did not go away or decrease with the next decade.

The '80s were a time of change for those involved in the field of composition. If

the birth of composition studies with a capital C can be linked to the year 1963 as

suggested by Stephen M. North (15), the year 1979 was when compositionists catapulted

themselves into the next decade and refused to be left with the technology of pen and paper or typewriters as noted by Hawisher et al. Those just entering the field in the late '70s believed, like Gerard, that they would have to leave academia to find work. Things rapidly changed for many compositionists, however, and by the early '80s some found themselves writing computer programs that would assist in the writing process while others were looking for ways to make their job simpler and more stream-lined when it came to responding to writing. The early success of the computer in writing was praised by many; however, the '90s witnessed a pulling back from all of the optimistic thinking.

The Middle: Mid '80s to Late '90s

During the mid to late '80s, the use of computers to teach composition was in a state of flux. Various articles supported instructors' fears and anxieties, with titles such as "Computers and the Obsolete English Teacher," or "Computers in the Classroom: The Instruction, the Mess, the Noise, the Writing," and even though these articles and others were not necessarily negative, the writers strove to point out issues that were not always positive. Selfe, in her article "Computers in English Departments: The Rhetoric of Techno/Power," comments on the difficulties of deciding who in the department should have computers and how time should be allocated for others to use them. She observes that "if we have learned anything about computers, it is that they can have a dramatic (some, here would argue 'drastic') effect on the social systems we call English departments" (95). Likewise, Hawisher et al. assert:

Computers and composition specialists noted that departments of

English in colleges and high schools frequently introduced computers into

their programs without the careful research and planning demanded for the

use of new technology, and without thinking carefully about the design

and implementation of instruction in computer-supported writing facilities.

(202)

With the end of the twentieth-century drawing to a close, the '90s witnessed scholars

continuing to struggle with every aspect of using computers, from hardware and software

constraints to the pedagogical theories that supported them.

The Technology: Hardware and Software

The rate at which computer technology itself has advanced over the last 30 years

is astounding. Many of us believed that computers had hit their apex in the late '80s and

early '90s, and that we, as home/work users, would never have need of anything more

powerful than that 16 bit processor that was clocked at 7.83 MHz per second and allowed

us to store our files on a 3.5 inch 400kB floppy.

During the early years, every new advancement in speed, storage, and processing

power was heralded as the end all/be all of home personal computers, and many of us

wanted that computer because, once again, we would never need anything better than

that, surely. I clearly remember when I purchased a personal computer in 1992 that had

the "new" Windows 3.1 operating system, 4M of ram, and a bigger-than-I-would-ever-

need 40M hard drive. I also remember that I sold it to my brother a year later as all he

and his family would ever need in a computer; while I, on the other hand, went out and bought the latest and greatest in a Hewlett-Packard. At this point and time in my life, I have lost track of the number of computers I have bought or built and how many I have helped others buy.

Today, we barely notice when an announcement is made concerning a new advancement in the speed, storage, or processing barrier. There seems to be no end to how many gigabytes (terabytes are now out) worth of information can really be saved on a hard drive, and processor nomenclatures seem to have no meaning anymore. The only thing likely to slow systems down is the software that is installed on them. As James Kalmbach observes, "as soon as we become comfortable with a new architecture or a new word-processing program, something newer, more exciting, and potentially even more useful appears" (57). Software developments are clearly what drive advancements in technology.

Another misconception that many of us had in the beginning concerned the word processing software that often came pre-installed on our home computers. As long as we could type our papers and correspond with it, revise and edit repeatedly (even if it was more at the sentence level than the paragraph), and then print our work, we believed we had all we would ever need, but we were mistaken. By 1983, Microsoft released its first version of Word, originally known as Multi-Tool Word, and according to one article, "Word strove for acceptance in a word-processing market that boasted more than 300 different titles on multiple platforms" ("Microsoft Word"). Microsoft struggled in the beginning to find their niche in the market, but in 1989 they released the first version of

Word for the Windows operating system, and with each new version came requirements for more memory and faster processors to handle the features offered in the package. According to a 2007 *Microsoft* interview with Peter Pathe, vice president of Microsoft, "Word has become *the* standard word processor, with more than 450 million users of Microsoft Office worldwide" ("Microsoft Word"). With each new feature, Word secured its place as the powerhouse of word processing programs and can be found in nearly any business across the nation.

However, growth in computer hardware and software paled when compared with advances in networking technology. Even though these advancements were not immediately implemented in universities, it is important to have a basic understanding of this information to know how one technology builds on another (see Fig. 7). Businesses had used networking technologies from their inception, as evidenced by AT&T's Dataphone. However, it was not until the year 1993, the birth of the internet as we know it today with Bina and Andreessen's creation of Mosaic, that these networking technologies began to infiltrate the lives of the home personal computer user. Unlike the earlier period, when university administrators in general and composition instructors specifically rushed headlong to bring computers into the classrooms before considering the pedagogical implications of their actions, this time-frame saw a more hesitant approach in implementing these improved and new technologies. Deborah H. Holdstein and Selfe, in their collection of essays *Computers and Writing: Theory, Research, Practice*, believe the collection will "serve as an intellectual counterbalance to the bandwagon approach that characterized our early adoption of computers in college

English classrooms during the first six years of the 1980s" (1). Compositionists now

strove to have solid pedagogical reasons for their use of computers.

1970	1971	1973	1975	1979
ARPANET (military network) Computer to computer communication	First email sent by Ray Tomlinson	Robert Metcalfe invented the ethernet method of networking	Telnet (civilian version of ARPANT) created by Larry Roberts	Graduate students at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill developed USENET, allowing users to transfer files from one computer to another and post messages

1983	1985	1985	1990	1993
ARPANET divided into MILNET (military) and ARPANET (civilian) which the networking standard of TCP/IP made possible	NSFNET linked five super-computers, paving the way for commercial use of internet by 1991	Stewart Brand and Larry Brilliant began Bulletin Board System (BBS), creating the first virtual space for a community of computer users	Tim Berners-Lee credited with the birth of the World Wide Web when he created Hyper Text Markup Language, or HTML	Mosaic, a web browser, was the first commercial graphical user interface designed by Eric Bina and Marc Andreessen

Fig. 7. History of Networking. Information obtained from "Timeline of Computer

History: Networking." Computer History Museum website

The Pedagogy: Theories and Praxis

Process pedagogy was established by this time and instructors were using other

pedagogies/theories in conjunction with it. For a good overview of what was prominent

at the time, Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper and Kurt Schick's book *A Guide to Composition*

Pedagogies is an excellent source. This work includes such titles as "Cultural Studies

and Composition," "Critical Pedagogy: Dreaming of Democracy," and "Feminist

Pedagogy" to just name a few. Key to this time period when considering the use of

computers in the classroom, however, is the social constructionist or social epistemic

theory of composition.

Some, however, continued to view the technology as simply a word processor or a

way to streamline their work. Gordon Thomas and Dene Kay Thomas, writing in 1991,

suggest a program that would automate many teacher comments, allowing teachers to

spend more time "on more important aspects of the writing" (29). Emil Roy argues that

the teacher as reader and grader only introduces a margin of error into assessment;

therefore, it would be best to leave assessment to computers (72). Roy used a style

checker known as *Rightwriter* (*RW*) to design a Structured Decision System (SDS) that

could be used to "replace impressionistic human evaluations of placement tests with

automatic, reliable, and inexpensive ratings" (72). He asserts that his "SDS could place

students in appropriate writing courses more accurately and efficiently than trained

readers could" (72). This desire for computers to evaluate student writing is still

prevalent and will be touched on in the final section as well. Consistently, proponents for

computer evaluation of writing all suggest that it will allow the teacher more time to

focus on the global issues beyond simple grammar and style errors.

Not everyone, however, continued to show enthusiasm for the computer's ability

to assess student writing or facilitate the writing process. The more instructors attempted

to use computers for these purposes, the more obvious the limitations became.

Focusing on Roy, Brian Huot reviews much of the research on using computers for

assessment and responds to remarks about the computer relieving the "drudgery" of

reading by stating that this attitude "locates the teacher as a rule giver and corrector of

student writing and the teaching of writing as the production of grammatically correct

texts" (236). He further points out that "these uses of computer-mediated assessment are

a step backward" (238); he advocates that we use computers as a means to comment on

students work, "a way to deliver, organize, or facilitate feedback . . . " (239). Programs

that were specifically designed to comment on students' work were not successful, and

instructors questioned their capacity to be used in this fashion. David N. Dobrin graded

such programs that claimed to analyze style, process ideas, and aid invention. He gave

the style analyzers and aid invention programs a "poor" for accuracy (he did not score the

idea processors), and when considering them as a utility, he ranked their usefulness as

"little" (41). Programs meant to assess writing could be tricked into scoring the papers

high based on things like the difficulty of the vocabulary used, the number of syllables in

words, or even the length of the paper. The content of such papers could be gobbledy-

goop, but the computer would still score them high based on the programmed criteria.

Allowing computers to assess student writing completely took the meaning out of what it

is to write in the first place. If no one (no human) is going to read the writing, even if it is

just the teacher, then why bother writing at all?

The computer was utilized as more than just an assessment tool though, and the

mid to late '80s saw a shift in the use of computers in composition classrooms. As

mentioned in the previous section, many teachers shifted their focus from the product

model of writing to the process model, focusing on how writing was generated.

Computers helped with this process model by allowing writers to invent or pre-write,

write, and then revise more easily. The stand alone computer supported the

individualized mode of writing, however, that had prevailed throughout history. This

concept of writing alone was challenged by compositionists such as Lester Faigley,

James Berlin, Kenneth Bruffee, and Patricia Bizzell, to name a few. This shift is known

as the social constructionist or social epistemic theory of writing, and it moves "away

from the view of the writer as a solitary, autonomous individual and toward an

understanding of the situatedness of writers and writing" (Dias 288). This new theory not

only challenged the way many thought writing should occur, alone and solitary, but it

also challenged the way many teachers viewed their roles in the classroom. During this

time period, authors such as Thomas T. Barker ("Computers and the Instructional

Context"), Carolyn Handa ("Politics, Ideology, and the Strange, Slow Death of the

Isolated Composer or Why We Need Community in the Writing Classroom"), and Kent-

Drury ("Finding a Place to Stand: Negotiating the Spatial Configuration of the

Networked Computer Classroom") discuss the concerns writing teachers had about their

new roles in the composition classroom. For example, instructors no longer stood at a

podium in front of the room and delivered lectures. Now, they had to find a way to

interact with their students.

Those teachers who adhered to the process paradigm attempted to move away

from the more traditional mode of teaching, as did the new social constructionist theories

of writing in conjunction with the new computerized, networked classrooms. The new

spatial arrangements of computers in classrooms replaced the idea of the teacher as the

center of attention, standing at the front of the class with a chalkboard or white board and

the students arranged in rows facing him/her. Kent-Drury discusses the idea that in

computer classrooms with computers in pods or arranged around the room "the instructor

can experience the sensation of having no place to stand, no central position from which

to direct and focus the class," causing the teacher a sense of disorientation in this type of

classroom (387).

Thomas T. Barker and Fred O. Kemp expound on the changes that network theory

or postmodern pedagogy has had on the writing classroom by explaining that "networked

microcomputers dissolve the proscenium classroom" (16). However, even though LAN

technology became available for use in the writing classroom in the early '80s, it was not

feasible for many due to the cost (Hawisher et al. 76). By the late '80s and into the '90s,

though, many had begun to experiment with what networks could provide them in their

writing classrooms, and the technology meshed well with new pedagogical theories that

suggested knowledge and writing were social, not solitary, activities. No longer were

classrooms arranged in the classic manner described by Kent-Drury, so instructors had a

difficult time maintaining the top-down traditional style of teaching that "has been shown

to be highly ineffectual with many (if not most) student groups" (Barker and Kemp 7).

Barker and Kemp suggest the ways that network theory helps make the traditionalist

mode of teaching and the top-down model obsolete. Networks often configure the space

differently in the room with the computers surrounding the outside walls, forcing the

students to face these walls. This takes the students' attention off the teacher at the head of the class and focuses it on the screen where they can read others' works and respond or comment on these writings. This networked environment also supports more group work because students can give and receive instant feedback on their work. Barker and Kemp believe that "a postmodern pedagogy constitutes a reaction to the traditional practices of the writing classroom" (25), and they comment that "nothing has proven more dismal than the lack of instructional success microcomputers have demonstrated in their brief careers as drill-and-practice machines, pseudo-human tutors, and automated graders" (26). It was time to move computers into their rightful position in the composition classroom: one of helping students become better writers through collaboration and interaction with other writers.

The advances in computers and computer technologies, such as networking with local-area networks (LANs), supported this theory of writing. Now, rather than a student sitting alone in front of a computer screen composing, as in the more traditionalist mode, students could be networked with other writers and discuss their texts in a synchronous chat environment such as a MOO (MUD object oriented). This allows multiple users to be connected at the same time, encouraging collaboration and a social way of writing. As Jim Porter argues, it was not the computer that was revolutionary: "Rather the revolution is the networked computer and the social/rhetorical contexts it creates and the way its use impacts publishing practices" (384-85). One of the first of these networked environments was the Electronic Networks for Interaction (ENFI) project. M. Diane Langston and Trent W. Batson emphasize that ENFI "offers a new channel for communication and

collaboration in the writing classroom that consists of a local-area network bolstered

by communication software that allows a group to 'converse' in writing" (140).

Networking, software, and more powerful computers are all key factors in the success of

the new technology in writing classrooms and to these new pedagogies.

As writing moved forward as a social practice, another advancement, the internet,

had one of the greatest impacts on the pedagogies associated with this new paradigm.

Two proponents of using the internet in the writing classroom are Leslie D. Harris and

Cynthia A. Wambeam. They support the idea of thinking as a dialogic process as

advocated by L. S. Vygotsky and note that this concept requires "acceptance of and

reaching toward another communicator. Being able to understand others' perspectives is

central to developing thinking and writing strategies" (354). If we accept these premises,

then it would make sense that writing as a social construct, or a dialogic, and the internet

would fit perfectly together. Harris and Wambeam assert that the "concepts of social

constructionism are central to the 'technorhetoric' field as it becomes more committed to

writing and communication via computer networks. These communication networks

seem well suited as environments for encouraging dialogic learning strategies" (354).

Hence, the insertion of the internet into the writing classroom allowed students to

converse via writing with individuals not only in their own classroom, but from different

parts of the country and even from different countries. This broadening of their audience

allowed them to enhance their thinking skills, helping them to understand that writing

was not a solitary event.

From the advent of pen and paper, and later word processing, many students sat alone or in front of terminals or personal computers and composed their papers, supporting the "humanist conceptions of the author as a unitary genius writing alone in his garret" (Webb 74). As mentioned earlier, these word processors supported the process paradigm of writing; they did not, however, encourage a social constructionist pedagogy that many compositionists supported in the '90s. Handa recognizes the need for pedagogies "to draw students away from the ideologically specific, isolated approach to writing that word processors too often reinforce" (160). Kathleen Skubikowski and John Elder discuss their decision "to combine word processing and networking within a system that encouraged . . . students to work together in developing their ideas and shaping their language" (90-91). Skubikowski and Elder hoped to "emphasize the fluidity and the ephemeral qualities of writing done on a computer, to draw on the technology for both its speed and its potential for playfulness" (91). The move to networking, and later the internet, in the writing classroom encouraged a new type of writing environment that many found refreshing and stimulating. It relieved writers from the "process approach [which could] isolate novice writers, each intent upon his or her own sequence of drafts" (Skubikowski 89), and it gave them the ability to communicate with peers during the writing process and get instant feedback on their texts. For many teachers, it, in effect, ended the current traditionalist pedagogy of teaching writing.

The Now: '00s

To recap, the use of pen and paper technologies in composition classrooms was very much alive reaching into the early '90s even though the new technologies of computers and networking had burst onto the scene by the early '80s. Access to such technologies became a major issue and concern for many who felt that limited funding would once again find those who had means benefiting while those without suffered and found themselves left behind. As early as 1983, Jane Ann Zaharias, in her article "Microcomputers in the Language Arts Classroom: Promises and Pitfalls," charges that the cost of using computer resources for word processing results in few schools having "the resources to make word processing an option to all who might want to use it" (993). Ohmann saw even greater discrepancies in the use of computers in a capitalistic society. He argues that "the computer revolution, like other revolutions from the top down, will indeed expand the minds and the freedom of the elite, meanwhile facilitating the degradation of labor and the stratification of the workforce that have been hallmarks of monopoly capitalism from its onset" (683). Finally, Faigley contends that "as personal computers became enormously more powerful in memory and speed, they began to *challenge* the unproblematic relationship between *familiar pedagogy* and new technology" (35).

Despite the negative possibilities surrounding computer use, many were eager and excited to integrate them into their classrooms; however, they often failed to consider the pedagogies needed to support their use. Hawisher and Selfe advise that "all too often, those who use computers for composition instruction speak and write of 'the effects of

technology' *in over positive terms* as if computers were good in and of themselves"

(emphasis added 56). It was not long before compositionists learned from these errors

and began building pedagogies that were sound in theory and to which computers would

be an added benefit.

Today we are no longer satisfied with simple, or even complex, word processors

and the essays they produce. Gerard notes that "we've also embraced other creations as

writing: PowerPoint presentations, blogs, iMovies, zines, and MOO rooms, among other

documents" (213). Some of those other documents include web pages, wikis, FaceBook,

MySpace, LiveJournal, and fan fiction. The use of computers for writing teachers has

finally found its niche in academia and continues to grow.

The Technology: Hardware and Software

As mentioned in the previous section, computers, software, and networking

technologies were advancing at astronomical rates by the mid to late '90s, but most

people became oblivious to the latest advancements. Kalmbach notes that "computers

keep doubling (and even tripling) in power every year, and publishers keep producing

new and purportedly better versions of software" (57). We have all grown accustomed to

these advancements, but there are still a couple of developments that have changed the

way we utilize our own personal computers and the way we employ them in our

classrooms.

The introduction of the world wide web (www) in 1993 was a time of excitement

for those interested in technology of any form. The web was a place to go to for

information and eventually to make purchases. Finding this information, however, was much more difficult than it is today because of the static nature of the web. Search bots were not constantly combing the web for information, and dynamic search engines like Google and Yahoo were non-existent. One had to know where to find the information; however, once it was found, the information pretty much stayed the same from the first time the site was visited to six months later when visited again. Businesses on the web thrived during the late '90s, but it was an atmosphere of spend, spend, spend, with little to no profit in return. In an article in the *BBC News*, the author reports that many dot-com businesses employed the business model of "enrich[ing] investors through rising share prices rather than profits" ("Warren Buffet: 'I Told You So'"). Investor Warren Buffet knew that this model was doomed to failure and refused to buy into the dot-com hype that eventually drove many investors into bankruptcy. After the fact, this static, dot-com version of the web became known as Web 1.0, and differs greatly from the web we have today.

Thus enters the primary advancement in technology during the '00s: the introduction of Web 2.0 in 2004, which has unlocked the internet with its "open source" platform. Even Tim O'Reilly, one of the experts at O'Reilly Media, states that "there's still a huge amount of disagreement about just what Web 2.0 means" ("What is Web 2.0"). Taking this into consideration, I replicated the meme map of Web 2.0 developed at an O'Reilly/ MediaLive conference for the reader to study (see Fig. 8). The map, according to O'Reilly, "shows the many ideas that radiate out from the Web 2.0 core" ("What is Web 2.0").

One key to Web 2.0 is that it put users more in control of their web experience.

No longer are we forced to have a certain browser to surf to all of our favorite places on

the web. Gone, or fading, are the days of Netscape's software paradigm. We no longer

just go to the web to find information that is fed to us by some Oz behind a curtain, but

instead we create our own information in the form of blogs, wikis, social networks, and

other forms. Web 2.0 is all about the platform, not the application. Instead of using
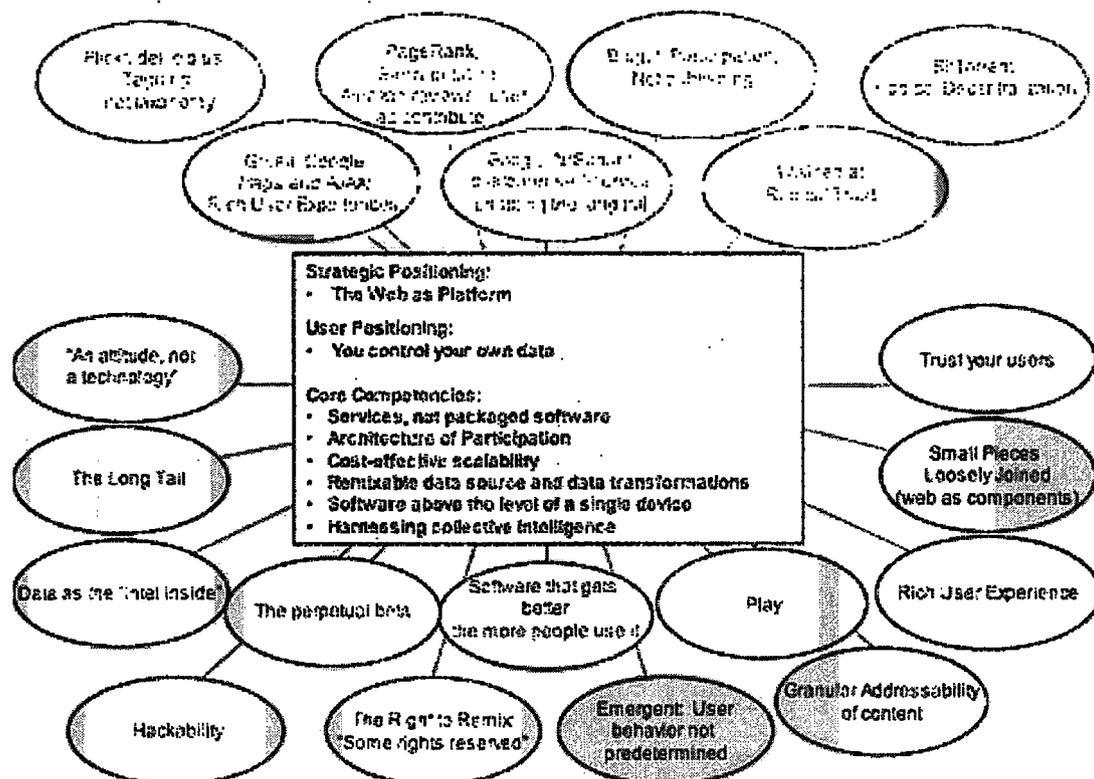
Fig. 8. The Web 2.0 Meme Map from http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/

news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html

packaged software that is loaded onto our computers, we use applications that are

native to the web, such as Google Maps, Acrobat Buzzword, and many others. Web 2.0,

and all it offers users, is the primary technological advancement of the '00s.

What do more powerful machines, more sophisticated software, and a more

intuitive web mean to those who choose to use computer technology in their classrooms?

The more innovative and complex these things have become, the more innovative and

complex our use of them has become. Some of us no longer expect our students to sit

alone in front of a computer and compose the standard five-paragraph essay. We allow

students to use their creativity, their computer and web knowledge, and the media

available to them to produce texts that some compositionists consider inappropriate for

the composition classroom, as we will see.

The Pedagogy: Theories and Praxis

One way that instructors have attempted to use these improvements, in software

in particular, is to assess writing. Even in the twenty-first century arguments still exist

for using machines, not humans, to grade student writing. An anonymous reporter for

Wired magazine conveys that sociology professor Ed Brent made the decision to use

SAGrader—a software that he wrote specifically for his classes—to critique his students'

drafts before they turn them in for a final grade ("Computers Grade"). Frank Catalano,

senior vice president for Pearson Assessments and Testing, claims that the major obstacle

for these types of programs is that it is difficult "to tout a product that tinkers with

something many educators believe only a human can do" (qtd. in "Computers Grade").

Advocates for this type of software are still using the same arguments that they have

since the first program was introduced to assess writing. Namely, the software removes a

degree of subjectivity that is introduced by human graders, and as Brent argues, we can

let "the computer do the tedious but necessary stuff" ("Computers Grade").

The last ten years have seen many advancements in the research surrounding

essay assessment programs. Ellis Page set the stage for automated essay graders in 1966

with his Project Essay Grader (PEG); according to the timeline of research shown in

figure 9, PEG was still operational as late as 2000.

Pioneering writing-evaluation research	Recent essay-grading research	Operational systems	Current ETS research	Future research & applications	
		PEG Page			
	Computer Analysis of Essay Content Burstein, et al.	e-rater ETS	Writing diagnostics	Short-answer scoring	Question-answering systems Light, et al.
	Intelligent Essay Assessor Landauer et al.	Latent Semantic Analysis Knowledge Analysis Technologies	Chodorow and Leacock	Leacock and Chodorow	Verbal test creation tools
PEG Page Writer's Workbench MacDonald et al.			Miltsakaki and Kukich	Hirschman et al.	Student-centered instructional
	PEG Page	PEG Page and Petersen	Criterion ETS Technologies	Burstein and Marcu	Breck et al.	systems
1966–1968 1982	1994–1995 1997	1998–2000	2000	2000–	

Fig. 9 Research of Assessment Software from "The Debate on Automated Essay

Grading" *IEEE Intelligent Systems* Sept/Oct 2000 pg. 23

Another program that has been around since 1997 is The Intelligent Essay Assessor

(IEA). Developed by Tom Landauer et al., this assessor "aims at going beneath the

essay's surface vocabulary to quantify its deeper semantic content" (Kukich 24). A.

James Wohlpart, Chuck Lindsey, and Craig Rademacher discuss Florida Gulf Coast

University's adoption of IEA in a restructuring of a general education course offered

online, Understanding the Visual and Performing Arts. This course required four essays, two long and two short. The faculty involved in the restructuring process "insisted that only the two short essays . . . be scored by the IEA" (Wohlpart et al. 206), partly because it "is most effective with a very narrowly prescribed prompt and with essays that are between 100 and 500 words in length" as the software "is learning to read essays through analyzing pre-scored essays" (Wohlpart et al. 207).

Drawbacks to IEA and other similar programs are that they are only valid for shorter works and do not provide any sort of feedback to students concerning why they received the score they did. Lack of feedback is often not a major concern for students who score high; however, it is a problem for those who score low and want to know not just that their organization was poor, but what was lacking in their organization. In their article "What Happens When Machines Read Our Students' Writing," Anne Herrington and Moran note the concern of some that automated grading might threaten the jobs of teachers; however, a larger concern for many is that it "seems likely to change our students' sense of what it means to write in school and college" because they will be writing to a computer and not a human reader (481). Will computerized essay assessment ever become wide spread? According to Wohlpart et al., it "is not yet as widespread as [they] sense it may be in the near future" (204). This will be looked at more closely when considering what the future holds for computers and writing.

The debate over computers as automated graders continues, but theory and praxis have made significant changes in other areas of composition studies. It might be wise to first look at what is happening in theories of composition before diving into the practices

associated with digital media and writing. Since the '70s, composition theory has

flourished. The first big change in the way compositionists think came when they moved

to the process mode of writing in the '80s. However, Melanie Sperling remarks that the

cognitive process theory, which she argues "many feel revolutionized writing research

and practice and associate with 'process instruction'" (244), was criticized by many, such

as Nystrand, Greene, and Wiemelt who argue that "the thinking strategy of 'translation,'

which is prominent in the three-part Hayes/Flower model, presupposes that ideas always

exist 'somewhere' before they are turned into language" (245). Sperling also notes that

Patricia Bizzell criticizes the model because it "emphasizes the activities inside the

writer's head at the expense of contextual considerations" (245). Criticisms such as these

broadened the process model to include the social and cultural aspect of composing—

social constructionist or social epistemic—as well as the concept of critical pedagogy.

The mid '90s saw another shift in theory from the process model to the post-

process design. The process model has and continues to serve the community well as

pointed out by Gary A. Olson. The process movement "emphasized that writing is an

'activity,' an act that is itself composed of a variety of activities; that the activities . . . are

typically recursive rather than linear; that writing is first and foremost a social activity . . .

," and the list goes on (233). However, Olson also states that the process model has

limitations and one "is the fact that [it] . . . imagines that the writing process can be

described in some way; that is, process theorists assume that we can somehow make

statements about the process that would apply to all or most writing situations" (233-34).

Lee-Ann M. Kastman Breuch echoes these concerns when she remarks that "many post-

process scholars . . . suggest that the process paradigm has reduced the writing act to a series of codified phases that can be taught" (97). The process theory, still practiced by many, has become too limiting for others in that it suggests there is a correct way or process to write. Olson argues that the problem with process theory is that it constructs "a series of generalizations about writing that supposedly hold true all or most of the time" (235). This process model tends to uphold the power and authority of the dominant hegemony by asserting that there is one correct way to write, but post-process or postmodern theory believes that writers "must reveal how authority is implicated in discourse" (Olson 238), and they must be willing to question authority.

Since the post-process model questions authority, it also questions the assertion that there is a right or correct way to compose an essay. Many of my colleagues still use the product model and require students to write using modes such as argumentative, narrative/descriptive, or comparison for each essay assigned, and some still require the five-paragraph essay format, all arguing that students must learn to write for academia. I am beginning, though, to see some major changes taking place due to advancements in internet technologies. Byron Hawk notes that the "internet opened the way for completely new social and pedagogical contexts" (207). Within this post-process paradigm cultural theories abound: feminist, ecological, post 9/11, gender, class, and the list goes on, so should we be teaching our students a pedagogical practice that has taken on its own set of rules when they already "produce their own media texts and create their own online contexts and communities" (208), or should we, rather, be allowing them to

explore their own writing experiences and encouraging them to question the paradigms with which they are faced?

One way to encourage this post-process way of writing in FYC classes is to use digital media. Digital media often combines the social/political aspect of writing with new media, including PowerPoint, Publisher, PhotoShop, Illustrator, Front Page, Dreamweaver, (all still stand alone prepackaged software), and Web 2.0 (an open, shared platform) applications such as Google Maps. Perhaps at one time instructors assumed, and were probably correct in their assumptions, that students came to class with only the writing experience they had in school. This is no longer the case though. As Hawk asserts, "a whole new technological apparatus means that teachers cannot assume students are simply walking into classes as passive consumers of dominant texts" (208). They write emails; they text incessantly; they participate in social communities like Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and Second Life; they participate in or create their own wikis and blogs. Students now come to composition classes as well-versed writers, having used these social web spaces and others.

The social networks that existed in the static Web 1.0 were limited in what they offered the user; the new Web 2.0 spaces are full of functionality. Web 1.0 applications such as Classmates.com basically gave users the ability to search for people and to create a connection using chat or email. Web 2.0 applications such as Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube, give users the ability to upload various types of media or stream live audio and video to their spaces. They can create blogs for just their friends to post on or for the whole world to view and comment on. The web has created a greater social environment

for writing than just the classroom, and it is up to instructors to take advantage of these changes. As Faigley notes, "If we come back to our annual convention [Conference on College Composition and Communication] a decade from now and find that the essay is no longer on center stage, it will not mean the end of our discipline" (40). Stephanie Vie, however, acknowledges that certain matters need to be dealt with when using new media, including plagiarism, access, copyright, and proper teacher training (12, 14, 18). The returns are worth the effort though. Vie argues that social online networking sites have the ability "to topple traditional classroom hierarchies of power in unpredictable ways," creating a democracy in the classroom rather than a top-down banking method of learning (19). Teachers need not fear the progress toward digital writing, but they do need to learn what it is about and let their students share the knowledge they bring to the classroom.

To Infinity and Beyond: The Future

Predicting what the future holds for technology in general and for computers and composition in particular is a difficult task. When computers first entered the classroom, no one could foresee where we are today, just 30 short years later. Given unlimited resources and unlimited time, how we choose to incorporate new technologies into the curriculum is only limited by the imaginations of ourselves and our students.

But what "new" technologies can we expect in the next 10, 20, or 30 years? Ed Lazowska, chair of the Computer Science and Engineering department at the University of Washington, argues that he is "aware of only one accurate prediction in the field of

computing," which deals with the density of transistors doubling every eighteen months, allowing computers and other technologies to thus double in power ("Wired for Life"). Lazowska further notes that "the fact that everything about computing continues to double at fixed intervals, from the amount of performance you can buy for a dollar to the value of Microsoft stock . . . is why we can't predict the future of computing" ("Wired for Life"). Predictions about technological advancements are often wrong and shortsighted, but living life in what could be called a science fiction world makes predicting the future difficult.

If computer power continues to double every eighteen to twenty-four months, what does that mean for those of us who attempt to stay abreast of the cutting-edge and utilize it in our classrooms? What new pedagogical approaches will we devise that will allow us to use these things in a meaningful way and not just because they are exciting and fun?

The Technology: Hardware and Software

Hardware will likely continue to grow at what some consider an alarming rate, and with it, so will the software. From my experience as a former Navy Electronics Technician and later as a tech expert, it seems the marketing experts know exactly how often the consumer is willing to pay for new hardware and software, including operating system upgrades. I suspect that software packages will continue to develop using more and more of the web and its open platform, allowing independent developers to add to the

functionality of the package and create mash-ups.[8] Most software companies already

have their manuals online and their help features as well. It is only a matter of time

before they tap further into the web to offer greater functionality to their customers.

The major advances will come in the platform that we use, and that platform is

moving closer and closer to being completely open. Josh Quittner explains that

> a truly successful one [platform] can extend far beyond its immediate
>
> group of users and effectively create and control an enormous market. In
>
> the computer industry, IBM dominated the first commercial platform with
>
> its expensive mainframes and operating systems, aimed at corporate users.
>
> Seemingly overnight, IBM was supplanted by Microsoft and its Windows
>
> operating system as the PC revolution took hold. Windows, in turn, is
>
> now losing its power as the Web—owned by no one, accessible to all—
>
> becomes the dominant platform. ("Who Will Rule")

Quittner continues to explain the ongoing battle between open platforms such as those

Google advocates for and runs and more closed ones such as Facebook and other social

networks. Into this mix, Quittner then throws Apple's iPhone, claiming that it has

everything it needs to be the next generation platform. Prior to the phone's release,

developers had downloaded the kit to build applications over 200,000 times ("Who Will

Rule"). However, Google is never far behind, and they, along with the Open Handset

Alliance, have developed a platform known as Android that is on multiple handsets, not

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[8] Where one web application will take information from another, for example Google
Maps, to create a new source of information. One example would be whereamIat.com
which uses Google Maps, Google Search, Flickr, and Hostip.info to show you your exact
location.

just phones similar to AT&T iPhones, and it is an open platform (McCracken). The competition for the next leading platform is an ongoing battle, and perhaps one that will have multiple winners.

As mentioned in the last section, Web 2.0 is currently the driving force behind the internet, but as early as 2001 there was news of Web 3.0, and Web 4.0 is already in the news. An article by Tim Berners-Lee, James Hendler, and Ora Lassila, "The Semantic Web: A New Form of Web Content that Is Meaningful to Computers Will Unleash a Revolution of New Possibilities," began the buzz surrounding Web 3.0 in May of 2001. So what will a new version of the web offer users that the current one does not? According to the three, it "will bring structure to the meaningful content of Web pages, creating an environment where software agents roaming from page to page can readily carry out sophisticated tasks for users" (36), and it will accomplish this by "understanding" how search terms and phrases relate to one another through meaning, hence the term the "Semantic Web." Figure 10 is a visual representation, found in "The Semantic Web in Action" by Lee Feigenbaum et al., of what users might expect from a search, and figure 11 shows the results, which first illustrates the steps that the Semantic Web would go through to find results for a particular search, and second, shows the resulting web page of the search in figure 11. This representation signals the end of web searches that return superfluous results which we must wade through to determine which ones truly represent or match our meaning. However, Web 3.0 or the Semantic Web offers much more than this. Berners-Lee et al. argue that when properly designed it "can assist the evolution of human knowledge as a whole" (43).

Since that first article by Berners-Lee et al. touting a better Semantic Web, many have both praised and criticized the theory of such a web. Feignbaum et al. report that "skeptics have said the Semantic Web would be too difficult for people to understand or exploit" (91). This, however, does not seem to be the case as websites such as Pandora.com—a popular music site that creates playlists of different artists based on a favorite artist that you input—and Radar Networks' Twine—a site that *Technology & Learning* claims "harnesses artificial intelligence to move beyond the capabilities of MySpace and Facebook" (Fertazzo 7)—have been received on the internet with much enthusiasm. Speculations concerning what the new Web 3.0 will be and how it will perform are too numerous to consider here, but figure 12 will provide the reader with an idea of the things that are being said. Some see Web 3.0 more in terms of business or application services offered to the user, but most agree that it will organize the web, making searches more in tune with what the user really wants.

What could Web 4.0 possibly have in-store for us? Seth Godin believes that "Web4 is about making connections, about serendipity and about the network taking initiative" ("Web4"). Others, such as Metz, have noted that the more connected we become, the more likely our privacy will be at risk. Metz sees the new Web 3.0 as a pervasive web or a web that is everywhere: PC, cell phone, clothes, jewelry, throughout home and office, and even in the bedroom (77). If this is the case, Web 4.0 will likely be in our heads in the form of a chip implant. The future of hardware and software truly is to infinity and beyond.

Fig. 10 A Web 3.0 Web Search from Lee Feigenbaum et al.'s "The Semantic Web in Action: Corporate Applications Are Well Under Way, and Consumer Uses are Emerging." *Scientific American* 297.6 (2007): 92.
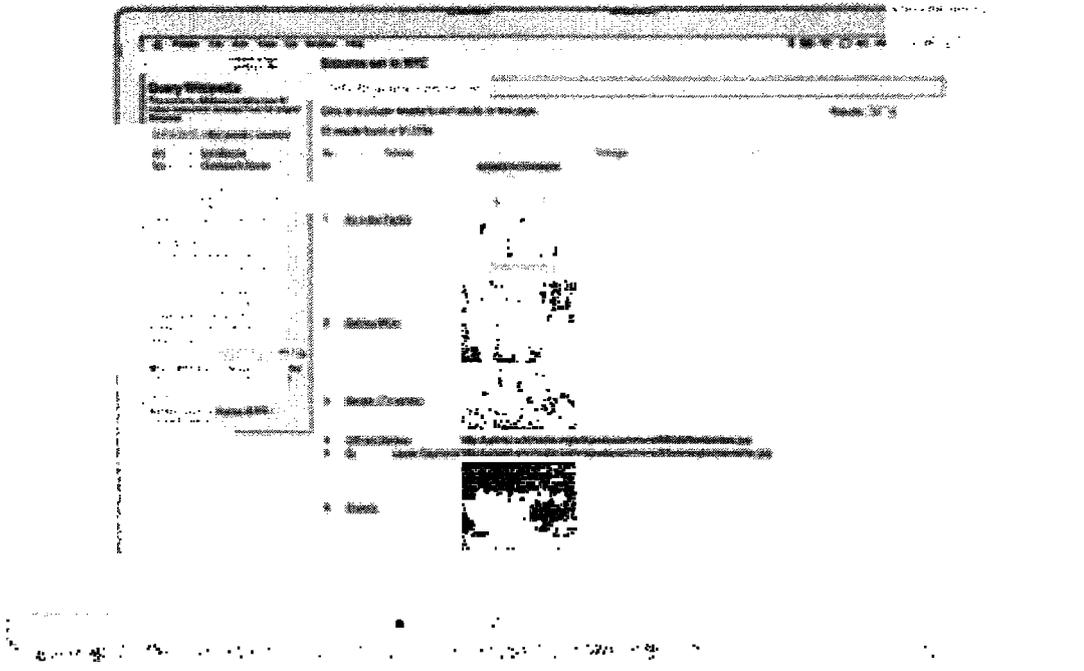
Fig. 11 Resulting Web Page from Search in Fig. 10 from Lee Feigenbaum et al.'s "The

Semantic Web in Action: Corporate Applications Are Well Under Way, and Consumer

Uses are Emerging." *Scientific American* 297.6 (2007): 92.

John Borland	The Semantic Web community's grandest visions, of data-surfing computer servants that automatically reason their way through problems, have yet to be fulfilled. But the basic technologies . . . are joining the everyday Web. (64)
Woody Evans	We need an intelligent search that can recognize colors and shapes in images. . . . This kind of search begins to border on 'weak artificial intelligence,' in which machines mimic highly complex, human

	problem-solving. (14)
John Markoff	The Holy Grail for developers of the semantic Web is to build a system that can give a reasonable and complete response to a simple question like: 'I'm looking for a warm place to vacation and I have a budget of $3000. Oh, and I have an 11-year-old child.' . . . Under Web 3.0, the . . . search would ideally call up a complete vacation package that was planned as meticulously as if it had been assembled by a human travel agent. ("Entrepreneurs")
Cade Metz	Semantic Web is a place where machines can read Web pages much as we humans read them, a place where search engines and software agents can better troll the Net and find what we're looking for" (74). "A Web you can walk through. Without leaving your desk, you can go house hunting across town or take a tour of Europe. Or you can walk through a Second Life-style virtual world, surfing for data and interacting with others in 3D. (76)
Brand Niemann	In the next 25 years, today's popular social-networking sites will seem primitive, and we will be well into Web 3.0 connecting knowledge, and Web 4.0, connecting intelligence . . . . (33)

Fig. 12 Quotations on what Web 3.0 might be in the future

The Pedagogy: Theories and Praxis

How instructors of writing will use the technologies of the future is as difficult to predict as where the hardware and software might take us. Donald A. Daiker notes that although those involved in composition studies find the past difficult to read, they believe "the future is even more problematic" (1). However, one thing is certain; the internet of the future seems to be playing more and more into what writing instructors do and the pedagogies that are already in place. If we accept writing as a social practice, then sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, Second Life, Twine and other social networking environments will begin to play a more vital role in writing classrooms. The mere fact that universities across the country can be connected to one another adds to this social aspect. Alex Reid suggests, "the ability to compose media and contribute it to a mobile network that includes a constellation of participatory sites indicates a permanent shift in the compositional practices and rhetorical relationships that have structured higher education to this point" (64). The shift in these practices will include the convergence of media that students use on a daily basis.

Before discussing how the convergence of media may affect the composition classroom of the future, it is important to return to the obsession of some to have computers assess student writing. This issue was not laid to rest back in the '90s; it is still thriving in many areas, although maybe less so in composition studies. The year 2006 saw the publication of *Machine Scoring of Student Essays: Truth and Consequences* edited by Patricia Freitag Ericsson and Richard H. Haswell. All one needs to do is read some of the titles in this collection—"Why Less is Not More: What We Lose by Letting a

Computer Score Writing Samples," "The Meaning of Meaning: Is a Paragraph More

than an Equation?", and "Automated Essay Grading in the Sociology Classroom: Finding

Common Ground"— to understand that the use of computers to assess writing is still a

contested topic. When it comes to the use of *e-Writer* and *WritePlacer* Plus assessment

packages in Texas higher education, Ericsson and Haswell claim that "college educators

can only throw up their hands. The decisions were made by government officials and

industry lobbyists with no input from writing experts or administrators in higher

education" (1). So what is the future of such automated grading? I would venture to say

that as platforms become more intuitive and semantic in nature, the push for automated

scoring will find vigor. It is not difficult to predict that many compositionists will shun

such advancements; however, these types of software packages will gain ground in

assessing college placement exams and students will learn how to beat the test, as they

often have.

Beyond whether or not computers will be utilized to assess writing, the bigger

question remains of how compositionists will continue to expand their use of technology

in the classroom. As mentioned earlier, social networking will play a more vital role, as

we continue to integrate the process paradigm of writing with a postprocess/

postmodernism pedagogy. As Lisa Ede points out in *Situating Composition:*

Composition Studies and the Politics of Location, moving to a postprocess, postmodern,

or other newer pedagogy does not negate the paradigm of process but rather adds to it.

Ede analyzes her own course descriptions over several years and notes that as late as

1995 "engagement with the writing process is hardly absent from my most recent course

description . . . . Rather, these tests build on and extend, rather than reject, a process view of writing" (95-96). This will likely continue in the future as many of us who teach composition will focus our students' writing on issues of power, identity, gender, or a number of other issues that we believe to be relevant and vital in composition courses, while we continue to have students invent, write, and rewrite their essays. Yet how can we expect our students to write about such concerns as diversity or power issues when many of them are only 18- or 19-years-old and have never been outside of their home towns, much less their state or the country?

With the new web and social networking sites, we can introduce our students to situations and circumstances that were beyond our ability before and which, frankly, we failed to see as part of our responsibility when it comes to teaching composition. As Olson remarks, "writing instructors and writing program directors are not well equipped to cope, both pedagogically and administratively, with the influx of students of difference" (209). However, the web can help. Take, for instance, a site such as Second Life. By simply having students download the software necessary to enter this world, they can experience life in a different way (see Video Clip "SL Startup Procedures"). Our students, via their avatars, can experience not only different races, genders, and power structures, but they can *become* a male instead of a female, an animal instead of a human, or a slave instead of a free man or woman. Students hear instructors constantly talk about issues of identity in English, sociology, or psychology classes without really understanding what they mean, but in a virtual world such as Second Life or World of Warcraft, students can begin to explore these identity issues for themselves.

How many times do we ask our students to write about things they are passionate about and things that they know? If Web 3.0 and beyond includes a 3D component as some suggest, then students will be able to have new life experiences by being virtually transported into these environments as if they were actually there. Au reports that currently the University of California, Davis has what they call the "Virtual Hallucinations" building in SL where avatars can experience what it is like to have schizophrenia by walking through a hospital environment and observing the hallucinations that ones avatar triggers and the voices via headphones (3059-70). With Web 3.0 though, what they can only experience now via an avatar they will be able to face firsthand. Students will be able to undergo and react to dangerous situations without ever being at risk physically, enabling them to write about experiences they would otherwise never have.

Our postprocess pedagogies should also allow more and more uses of a variety of media. Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, Joseph Johansen, Cynthia L. Selfe, and John C. Williams, Jr. discuss the relevancy of media literacy in the composition classroom and identify three lessons composition instructors and programs need to understand. Lesson one is that "literacies have life spans linked to the cultural ecology of a specific time and place" (168), and one of the literacies that exists in today's culture is that of online: emailing, chatting, gaming, social networking, blogging, wikis, and others. Even text messaging can be viewed as a literacy of this day and age. Lesson two that DeVoss et al. put forth is that we "must be willing to address an increasingly broad range of literacies—emerging, competing, and fading—if [we] want [our] instruction to remain

relevant to students' changing communication needs and experiences within the contemporary cultural ecology" (169). One fading literacy is based strictly on the use of the alphabet. Emerging literacies include those that might use the alphabet in conjunction with images and/or audio clips or they might be strictly visual and/or auditory in the form of comics without words or movies. Porter argues that "we are already in the age of new media, where visual and video forms of expression supersede alphabetic text" (389). Lesson three is that we "need to start with the literacies that students bring to the table and in which students are invested, but [we] can't stop there" (170). Students today come into the classroom with literacies we could not even imagine just ten years ago, and with a variety of literacies based on their cultures. If we continue to focus on just one type of literacy, we will certainly repress others that are just as valid and important in a democratic classroom. DeVoss et al. argue that the path we should take will enable us "to recognize, value, and make instructional use of the multiple literacies students bring to our classrooms, thus, expanding the bandwidth of literacy and taking advantage of its dynamic nature within changing cultural ecologies" (171). Virtual worlds such as Second Life allow, encourage, and challenge students to expand their own literacies and involve themselves in the literacies of others by offering multiple tools for residents to learn and use to create new texts unique to their needs. The future practices and pedagogies of composition studies are as boundless as that of technology, only hindered by the imaginations of those in the field.

History Moves Forward at BreakNeck Speed: Conclusion

Even though the history of computers, networking, and the internet in the composition classroom is a rich and varied one, I have to remind myself from time to time that many of my colleagues still are not comfortable using computers in the classroom. Yes, they expect their students' papers to be typed and often emailed to them, but the thought of using computers, much less blogs, wikis, or virtual worlds, in the classroom terrifies or does not interest them. Some only own computers to do their own writing and still connect to the internet via dial-up primarily to download their email. They find my research in using Second Life to teach composition fascinating but also somewhat frivolous, disturbing, and even non-academic due to them either not understanding it or finding it improbable.

Some arguments against the use of computers in the classroom have been touched on slightly and deserve further mention, and one that has persisted throughout the computer revolution is that of access and how it affects the power structure. The issue of access is greater than the simple and valid argument of poor school district versus rich school district or small college versus large research one university. With many of our students now international, global access is also a concern. The reality of just how limited access is can be seen in Iswari P. Pandey's " Literate Lives Across the Digital Divide." Pandey acknowledges that wealth and social status also play a vital role in access to computer literacies, but he argues that issues of politics are just as relevant (247). Pandey, a native of Nepal, relates that "access to computer literacy was extremely limited as was the opportunity to political power" (250) for fear that "increased levels of

literacy and easy access to communication media might breed more discontent and

opposition than conformity" (248). I recall reading an email recently (one I am afraid I

no longer have the information for) that stated my current university would see a higher

number of international students enroll for the fall semester of '08. We cannot assume

that all of these students will enter the country with the same level of computer literacy as

we have come to expect our students to have.

Likewise, as I mentioned earlier, many of my colleagues still do not use

computers in their classrooms, much less allow students to create multimedia essays. I

do not believe this is solely based, however, on their pedagogical beliefs that all writing

must be alphabetic or that they are closeted Luddites, but rather on their lack of

knowledge as well as their lack of time to pursue such knowledge. Sibylle Gruber argues

that most have moved from a technophobia and techno-enthusiasm to "a more pluralistic,

postmodern, heteroglot, and cyborgian approach to new information technologies in

Computer and Composition (15). Although this is true for those involved in *Computer*

and Composition, this does not necessarily include the majority of composition

instructors, and I would venture to speculate that many still have phobias concerning

technology, especially when many of their students come to class having such

knowledge. In her 2008 article "Digital Divide 2.0: 'Generation M' and Online Social

Networking Sites in the Composition Classroom," Vie acknowledges that students

believe that their instructors are "hopelessly behind in terms of technological knowledge

and prowess . . .," which has merit because many instructors of composition "resist what

they see as the pervasive encroachment of technology, particularly computers, into

pedagogy" (18). Part of that resistance is a lack of knowledge and a fear of their students possessing knowledge they do not. If we are to keep abreast of the cutting edge in technology, we have to not only be willing to learn on our own, but departments and universities need to provide professional development seminars and workshops to help instructors.

The issues of access and staying current in our technological knowledge are two areas that computers in composition will continue to struggle with well into the future. However, we are at a place that no one envisioned just twenty years ago. This is never more evident than when Spitzer remarks in 1990 that at a time

> when the majority of writing teachers still do not use computers in their classrooms, an essay that anticipates a time when students will work in writing classrooms equipped with networked computers linked to large databases and classes in other schools, and writing teachers will collaborate electronically with colleagues throughout the country, may seem esoteric, far-fetched, and foolhardy. (69)

However, after only eighteen short years we are already there and far beyond. Today we might say that his essay was somewhat shortsighted instead of foolhardy, and my discussion of the future of technology in the classroom might likewise seem shortsighted in the very near future.

My research into the use of virtual worlds such as Second Life in the composition classroom, however, is relevant for the here and now. Even though some research is being done on how we can best utilize social networking sites such an MySpace and

Facebook, little is being said about the possibilities of these virtual worlds where our students not only use their prior knowledge of the internet and gaming to help create identities and explore another culture, but they can also add to that knowledge and write about the learning experiences they have there.

Chapter 3

Orientation Island—How Do We Begin?

How Do I Fly?: Introduction

Based on input from peers and mentors as well as my interest in how virtual

worlds could work in the classroom, I decided in April of 2007 to complete a study about

how the virtual world of Second Life (SL) affected students' writing. With that choice

came the need for additional decisions concerning the methodology for the study.

Admittedly, this type of research excited my academic/creative mind but scared the

academic/logical side that knew little about conducting this type of research. Even

though a small degree of quantitative research seemed appropriate for things like class

demographics and end-of-semester questionnaires, a qualitative approach best suited

many of my research questions:

- Will using a virtual world like SL change student writing?

- Will my students come to understand SL as a culture uniquely different from

  their own?

- Will they embrace this new medium?

- Will they form an online identity?

- How will they react to such learning?

How can one quantify whether or not a person pursues an online identity and what that

identity might be? A qualitative rather than a quantitative method of research was more

appropriate to answer these types of questions. Ethnography, a study of human cultures,

logically suited the type of research I wanted to accomplish: a teacher-research field study. As Hawisher et al. note in their text *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979—1994: A History*, the advent of the social/epistemic theory of writing made studying writing using quantitative methods difficult, and "as a result . . . research in computers and composition studies began to move toward qualitative research, using ethnographic methodology" (136). Even though scholars like Charles Bazerman and North call for quantitative methods in writing research, basing results off of essay grades would not produce the type of data needed to understand students' interactions in SL and how these affected their writing.

How Do I Find My Stuff?: The Research Methodology

This research would be conducted in my classrooms, using my students, and I would be an active participant in the process; therefore, using an ethnographic method allowed me to immerse myself into the study "in more than some abstract 'researcher' way" (Moss 154). In order to answer my research questions, I planned to investigate four main areas or types of data: 1) the essays and other writing my students would produce based on their experiences and their own field studies in SL , 2) how they would communicate in the online world, 3) whether or not they would immerse themselves into the culture of this virtual environment, and 4) what issues of identity would the students face. Beverly Moss comments that "ethnography in composition studies is generally topic oriented and concerned more narrowly with communicative behavior or the interrelationship of language and culture" (156), a focus known as the "ethnography of

communication" according to Dell Hymes (qtd. in Moss 156). These ideas supporting

an ethnographic study and researcher-immersion into the research led me to the method

most appropriate in conducting my research.

As both a teacher and a researcher, I would have the chance to invoke change in

my classroom, change that might some day filter upward and outward to other teachers.

This concept of the teacher as someone who conducts research in her own classroom in

order to help other teachers is one I learned from attending the 2006 summer writing

institute hosted by the Middle Tennessee Writing Project, part of the National Writing

Project, which advocates for teachers teaching teachers: a practice employed by teacher-

researchers as well. Because I would be focused on my students as research subjects and

immerse myself into the same culture they were in, I concluded that a teacher-researcher

methodology, influenced and informed by critical pedagogy and social epistemic,

feminist, and cultural theories (the same theories and practices that inform my own

pedagogy), combined with an ethnographic study would fit my needs well.

The teacher-researcher methodology has come under much scrutiny from the

watchful eyes of academia, but it is a method that can have far-reaching results. Ruth

Ray, in her article "Composition from the Teacher-Research Point of View," takes a

close look at the assumptions made by both the positivist paradigm in education and that

of teacher research. Focusing first on the assumptions of the practitioners of the positivist

paradigm, Ray notes that these assumptions expect the research to be "objective,

controlled, and decontextualized" (175), with the researcher remaining aloof and

uninvolved. Those who practice the positivist paradigm also assume research "is always

theory-driven and must be generalizable in order to perpetuate theory building; and that knowledge and truth exist in the world and are found through research" (175). The total objectivity and detachment that the positivist paradigm demands would be impossible to attain using the classroom for my research because I intended on submersing myself into the research and would thus inevitably become subjective rather than objective by bringing my own thoughts and feelings to bear in the results. The positivist mode of research closely resembles the current-traditionalist pedagogical theory, a pedagogy that tends to decontextualize and control the learning environment by ignoring the cultural backgrounds and prior learning experiences of students or the history of the subject matter.[9] Since I never practice current-traditionalist pedagogy in the classroom, a research methodology based on parallel assumptions could not serve my purposes.

In the past, teacher research may not have been seen as a vital or effective means of research because of what some considered major limitations. Belinda Y. Louie, Denise J. Drevdhl, Jill M. Purdy, and Richard W. Stackman note that one criticism is a concern "about the validity of introspective research as it is subject to incomplete information recall" (156). However they counter this by commenting that from their "perspective, validation, rather than validity, is a more important standard in self-study research" (156). Another of these perceived limitations is that it does not publicize outside of the local area in which it is conducted. The positivist method of research is often written up in

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[9] For more information on the current-traditionalist pedagogy, see Gregory R. Glau, "Current-Traditional Rhetoric." *Theorizing Composition: A Critical Sourcebook of Theory and Scholarship in Contemporary Composition Studies*. Ed. Mary Lynch Kennedy (1998) 73-75.

scholarly peer-reviewed journals, but in the early 70s and 80s, the teacher-researcher

method was often only disseminated at the local or regional level. Today, however, one

can find an abundance of CFPs for national conferences mentioning teacher-researcher

methods and articles written using this method that appear in scholarly peer-reviewed

journals, dispelling the concern over such research only finding local dissemination.

Examples of scholars using the teacher-researcher method can be found in journals such

as *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*,

Journal of Second Language Learning, and *Language Arts*, each containing such an

article in a 2008 volume of their journals. Ray asserts that the teacher-researcher

movement not only "redress[es] the imbalances between researchers and teachers, but

also the imbalances between quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, and

between theory and practice in education", making teacher research an accepted and

appreciated method (174).

Thus, the teacher-researcher methodology, which began to take hold in the early

1990s through works such as "Research on Teaching and Teacher Research: The Issues

that Divide," and "Learning from Teacher Research: A Working Typology" both by

Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle, appealed to the lessons I had learned in the

Middle Tennessee Writing Project. It allowed me, as a researcher, to be a part of the

context in which the research was taking place and to count myself as one of the group,

permitting both students and researcher to make meaning and knowledge. Marian M.

Mohr et al. suggest teacher research is an "inquiry that is *intentional, systematic, public,*

voluntary, ethical, and *contextual*" (23). My research matches this definition in all

aspects: it is intentional because the study has a research question; it is systematic because there is a plan for conducting the research; it is public because the students are both in the public place of SL and blogging online; it is voluntary and ethical because the study has received IRB approval, the students are not required to participate, and no harm will come to students by participating; it is contextualized because the students and the researcher are involved in the process and are responsible for the creation of meaning in the context of the research.

Even though teacher research is systematic because there is a plan for conducting the research, theories that provide support and techniques for collecting and analyzing the data are more flexible than a positivist research approach because this method is contextualized. Teacher research both shapes and is shaped by its context, and Mohr et al. conclude that whereas researchers may begin in one direction, "their growing understanding of their teaching and their students' learning may lead them to change directions" (23). This flexibility allows researchers to change tactics or approaches when they find that the one they are using is no longer effective or useful. Teacher research also provides practitioners the opportunity to bring other theories into practice.

Another key to teacher research is that it informs the practices of teachers in their everyday teaching. Teacher research is intended to have immediate effects, if only on the classroom where the research is being conducted. Patricia Lambert Stock comments that teacher-researcher methodology is a genre that enabled her "to develop effective instructional materials and practices not for the 'artificial' students whom I was asked to imagine in my teacher education classes but for students I was meeting in my classroom,

then and there, here and now" (104). Rather than instructors attempting to implement theories that never quite fit with the class we are teaching at the time, teacher research enables us to develop material that is geared specifically for our classrooms.

The fact that teachers perform research on a daily basis is noted by Karen Kortecamp and Kathleen Anderson Steeves when they argue "that the process of asking questions followed by gathering and examining data in order to make informed decisions is a natural function of teaching" (124). Everything about teaching is a natural process of researching; therefore, research is a natural extension of the work teachers do on a daily basis. With the decision made to use teacher-researcher methodology, I developed a concrete plan of data collection to help answer my research questions and proceeded with my plan by filling out the Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) during the summer of 2007.[10] IRB approval would allow me to study my students as they traversed the metaworld of SL and wrote about their experiences.

How Do I Find a Job?: Institutional Review Board Process

All research projects, regardless of the method used, have a degree of administrative tasks that must be completed, and for this research, it was the IRB process. This process was something foreign and something that, frankly, seemed intimidating. The initial step was to locate and complete the training involved in all IRB research; however, the first attempt at locating this training material from MTSU's web page led

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[10] IRB Protocol Number: 08-015

me to a website sponsored by the National Cancer Institute with a heading of "Human

Participant Protections Education for Research Teams." Even though it is true that

humans, first-year students, would be participating in the research, I certainly did not

constitute a research team, and the links on the home page—"Cancer Topics," "Clinical

Trials," and "Cancer Statistics" (*National Cancer Institute*)—did not seem applicable to

the research I wished to conduct.

The use of IRBs is a concern for many who choose to do ethnographic research.

The need for this type of protection for the subjects of research projects is well

documented, but these mandates stem primarily from biomedical research conducted in

the 1960s where subjects suffered physical harm, not from subjects being observed,

which was more in-line with my proposal to observe students in SL and analyze their

writing. As Michael V. Angrosino points out in his article "Recontextualizing

Observation: Ethnography, Pedagogy, and the Prospects for a Progressive Political

Agenda," out of the hundreds of pages in the federal handbook dealing with IRBs, "only

11 paragraphs are devoted to behavioral research" (735). Angrosino also notes that some

universities are consequently developing forms that are more suitable to the

ethnographer's needs, and after contacting the compliance officer, Tara Prairie, at my

institution in July of 2007, I found that there was an alternative training for those working

in the humanities. The title of this training, "The Why, Who, & What of Human

Participants Behavioral and Social Research Training" (Prairie), was more appropriate to

the research project.

After the training was completed on July 21, 2007 and the required certificate procured on July 25, 2007, it was time to design the project and submit the forms for approval by the IRB. Again, I found myself at a bit of disadvantage; even though I knew what I intended to research, I had not determined the exact means that would be the most versatile and garner the results needed for analysis. This dilemma is one that other researchers using human subjects also experience. Angrosino notes that

> ethnographers were also concerned that the proposals sent to IRBs had to
> be fairly complete when it came to explicating the methodology . . . .
> Their research, they argued, often grew and changed as it went along and
> could not always be set out with the kind of predetermined specificity that
> the legal experts seemed to expect. (735)

With this in mind, I decided to include as much information as possible to cover any possible avenues of research I thought might be advantageous. In the IRB forms, I included a general consent form for students' participation in the study (includes videotaping inworld, focus groups, interviews, and all writing done by students), questionnaires, and consent forms for inworld residents' participation (see Appendices D, E, & F).

How Do I Build a Life?: Class Setup

It was now time to make some decisions about how to set up the classes while I waited for IRB approval. Even the best-made plans, however, rarely work out exactly as we would like, and this was certainly the rule in this study. I talked with Sarah Robbins

from Ball State University at CCCC in 2007 about how she had set up SL for her first

year composition classes, and I learned that she had hand-picked students based on their

knowledge of computers and online gaming. This sounded reasonable since SL is viewed

as an online society that takes a degree of gaming knowledge to negotiate, so I printed

flyers advertising the class and asked the assistant director of MTSU's Writing Center if

the center could distribute them at Customs, an orientation designed to get freshmen

familiar with the campus and registered for classes during the summer of 2007. My

initial thoughts were that I would have two classes of hand-picked students; one class

would meet in the classroom once a week, and they would sign into SL from home the

other night, whereas the three-hour class would remain in the classroom for their SL

sessions. This design would provide me with further data on whether or not students in

the classroom acted differently from those logging on from a distant location. However,

English 1010 Expository Writing is one of those classes that freshmen are advised to sign

up for before they leave Customs, and this did not allow them time to contact the English

department for permission to register for one of my classes.

     With the beginning of the semester only two weeks away and no students enrolled

in either of the SL classes, it was time to approach the Lower Division English

administration in charge of first year writing about changing the classes to open

enrollment, so the classes would meet the enrollment requirements, giving me the

opportunity to conduct the field study. The director of Lower Division English doubted

the wisdom of this decision but finally agreed as long I would email students to inform

them of the uniqueness of the class. This new process gave me reason to re-think what I

had originally planned for the classes. No longer was I to have roughly 35 students who owned computers capable of running SL's software, used a broadband internet connection, and had knowledge of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs). Now the students would be those who might or might not have knowledge of computers in general and online gaming in particular. After further consideration, however, this seemed more appropriate than my initial plan. Hand picking students for this type of research would have had several negative effects. First, it would privilege certain students based on their socioeconomic status. Students would have to be affluent enough to have high-end computers capable of running SL as well as be able to afford a broadband connection. It would also limit the students to those who had a desire to participate in an online virtual world learning environment, and even though we all wish we could have students who are interested in the way they learn, the truth is that we often do not. If SL proved to be as useful as seemed possible, then all students, not just those with prior computer knowledge and financial means, deserved to benefit.

Another decision that had to be made prior to the beginning of the semester was what textbook to use to help my students negotiate SL and learn about writing. For several semesters I had been using Michael Petracca and Madeleine Sorapure's *Common Culture: Reading and Writing About American Popular Culture*, which the students responded to well. The students seemed to enjoy the readings, and it modeled the types of essays they were expected to write for class. However, this did not seem like a viable option for SL since this world presented a metaverse unknown to the culture that we inhabit daily, so I was faced with choosing a new text. My first consideration was Lester

Faigley, Diana George, Anna Palchik, and Cynthia Selfe's *Picturing Texts* because the

visual aspect of SL would help the students learn to analyze the different visual aspects

that residents created in the metaverse. However, SL's visuality, one unique aspect of

life online, was not the intended focus for the study. Any time I have discussed SL with

friends, family, or colleagues, the response is often the same: heads shake, sighs escape,

and their initial comment is generally "I just don't get it." They do not understand how

people can live a virtual existence, making money, working jobs, dating other virtual

residents, and even virtually marrying their virtual partners. People I have talked with do

not understand this the same way many of us do not comprehend why people of any

culture, other than our own, participate in practices to which we simply cannot relate.

The same holds true for SL. It is a culture to which many cannot relate; therefore, they

cannot understand it. Approaching SL as another culture was the perfect solution for my

students. Viewing SL as a culture completely different from their own might help

students to better understand their own culture and write in an expository manner about

their experiences in this new world. When discussing this cultural approach with the TA

Coordinator, we began to talk about textbook choices. *Picturing Texts* would be the

perfect text to study the visual aspects of this culture, but to really get the students

involved, my colleague recommended the third edition of Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's

FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research. I had not considered the unique approach

of having the students become fieldworkers in order to study a culture quite different

from their own; although, I had anticipated that some of the students would experience

Jenkins participatory culture as discussed in the introduction. I secured permission

from the department to use this textbook and waited to hear from the IRB.

Where Do I Live?: Island Design and Consent

The IRB approved the research method and practices, and it was time to decide

how to set up the class in SL. As mentioned in chapter 1, Williams discussed the fact that

SL offers first time educators in SL space to conduct classes called "Campus Second

Life," but I wanted my students to experience SL as a diverse culture: not just another

academic space. Another possibility was to conduct classes in sandboxes, an area where

anyone in SL can practice building; however, with sandboxes, I would have no control

over who could join the class and most sandboxes are small and over populated. Even

though the perfect solution would be to purchase an island, this option was beyond

financial consideration, as it is quite expensive for both the land and the monthly

maintenance fee for the upkeep of the server on which your island resides. Up front cost

for an island of 65,536 square meters—or about 16 acres—at the time of this writing was

$1,675 (50% discount for verified real-world educators) with a monthly maintenance fee

of $295 (Second Life). The other option was to rent land at a cost of $162 for six

months. This would give me the ability to ban griefers—people in SL who spend their

time wreaking havoc on other SL residents—and control the placement of objects on the

land. It would also give my students the option to build items on the land and leave

them: something that cannot be done in sandboxes where the items have to be picked up

when you leave. I expected that some of my students would become more immersed in

this culture than others because of the immense popularity of SL as evidenced by news reports on television, newspapers, and even *CSI: New York*'s use of the world for a plot line in the fall of '07. Being able to permanently build items would facilitate this for the students. After considerable searching in August of '07, I settled on a commercial piece of land off the mainland to rent, named Hale Ukana, a place my students could call their own.

The only preparation that was necessary to get the island ready for the research project was to strategically place a greeter out of sight on the island. The purpose of this electronic greeter was to inform any inworld residents who happened on Hale Ukana of the research project and to let them know that they might be recorded while there. This was accomplished by placing the approved IRB Informed Consent document into a note card that the greeter automatically gave to anyone who did not have the group tag (see Appendix F). Remaining on the island after having received this note card constituted informed consent. With outside participant consent taken care of, the next step in this process was to secure the students' consent for all aspects of the research (see Appendices D & E).

Whether or not all of the students would be willing and voluntary participants needed to be ascertained the first night of class, and the first steps in this process consisted of making sure they were all 18 or older and then thoroughly explaining the project to the students and informing them of what I hoped to accomplish. Students responded in various ways to the idea of conducting half of their class time in a virtual world. Some were excited by the prospects of doing something completely different

from what they were used to in a writing class, but others did not understand how spending time in a virtual environment would help them learn to write. I assured them that that was exactly what the research was intended to determine: would teaching first year composition in a virtual world like SL have any effects on their writing? After I answered several questions that first night of class (Aug. 30 and Sep. 01, 2007), everyone signed the consent forms so that we could move forward.

As mentioned earlier, ethnographic studies often change, rearrange, and mutate, so making decisions about how to approach the study itself, what type of data to collect, and even what questions I wanted answered, changed. The most important piece of information gathered for the study was the students' writings since my primary concern was whether or not using a virtual environment like SL would in any way change their writing. When it came to the research question of whether or not using a virtual world like SL would affect student writing, I questioned if it would give them more to discuss than they would typically be able to come up with on their own? Would they continue to struggle with writing 1000 words in one essay? Would their essays take on a different tone and voice than a typical first-year essay? I investigated if their writing, when compared to my previous experiences with first-year writing, would be different. Over the course of the semester, the students composed four major essays, however, only the one focusing on otherness was analyzed because it dealt most directly with identity and issues in SL that the students could relate to their real lives. They also wrote blog entries every week concerning their experiences in SL. I refrained from posting on the blog in hopes that students would feel comfortable expressing themselves there. Not only did I

want to know how or if their writing would change, but I also wanted to know how they felt about what they were doing in SL for several reasons. First, I felt it was imperative to keep the results of their writing in the context of the environment about which they were writing. Thomas N. Huckin discusses the fact that people belong to discourse communities, and "they live and perform in some multivariegated, sociocultural *context*" (85). Without this context, the students' essays could become meaningless and superficial. Second, I wanted to make note of whether students' resistance or acceptance of this new environment was reflected in their writing,

I also determined from the beginning that I would video the SL sessions using *Camtasia* software (see Appendix D). Taping would provide me with a way of reviewing these online sessions, much like a video allows the ethnographer to return again and again to a taped interview. As Anssi Peräkylä points out in her article "Analyzing Talk and Text," "video and audio recordings are what provide the richest possible data for the study of talk and interaction today" (875). Douglas Harper concurs with Peräkylä's attitudes on video, and in his article, "What's New Visually," he asserts that "film has become an important teaching tool as well as an important research tool" and that "it is a commonly cited example of how minimally edited ethnographic film can tell several layers of ethnographic stories" (751). The class was not going to use the voice over internet protocol (VoIP) function of SL for communicating; however, a transcript and video recording of our sessions in the virtual world would allow me to further analyze the sessions for the interactions that occurred between the students themselves and between

students and SL residents, giving me the opportunity to look for those extra layers to

which Harper refers.[11]

These transcripts and taped sessions would also become an integral part of the

overall study, allowing readers to access a DVD to view an online session so they would

be able to see how they were conducted. Even though there is a DVD included with this

study that will be very informative for the reader to view when referenced in the text,

recordings of the online classes became problematic soon after the first one. As long as

the classes were being held on Hale Ukana, the taping worked seamlessly. However,

when sessions roamed to other parts of the virtual environment, problems arose that even

a top-of-the-line computer with gigs of ram and a dual processor could not handle. The

computer would lock up and the only thing that would bring it back was a hard shutdown,

losing all of the video that had been recorded. I suspect that these problems occurred

because many of the places my students frequented experienced lag—a phenomenon that,

according to Tapley, occurs "when the grid is overworked and cannot render objects fast

enough to allow for 'natural' movement" (87). This was certainly problematic in many

of the SL sites that my students visited, but I suspect that the failures occurred due more

to what Weber, Rufer-Bach, and Platel describe as lag: "a reduction in game performance

caused by network problems, client machine problems, or server problems" (378). In this

instance, a combination of network and client machine problems are the likely culprits.

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[11] Voice communication via VoIP was not allowed for several reasons: first, the
bandwidth required for voice would put more demands on the network than necessary;
and second, this was a writing class, and I felt the students would benefit by
communicating in writing because they would learn that not everyone speaks (writes) the
same language.

However, approximately eight video sessions were recorded and proved invaluable to the study.

As mentioned above, the VoIP function of SL was not used by my students during class sessions, but like most massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs), there are intricate chat features and instant messaging (IM) that the class used to communicate with one another and SL residents. I ensured that I set my "Logging Options" under Communication in the preferences of the SL software to "Log Instant Messages," "Show timestamps in IM Log,"[12] "Log Chat," "Show timestamps in Chat Log," "Show incoming IM in Chat Log," and "Include Date with Timestamp" (see Fig. 13). This would guarantee that I had the equivalent of the transcripts that are vital to any ethnographic study. These chat and IM logs would be supplementary to the actual essays produced by the students, but they would prove instrumental in determining the students' reactions to the world of SL. As such, these logs would be analyzed informally, which Peräkylä suggests is the "best choice as a method in research focusing on written texts" where those texts take on a "subsidiary or complementary role" (870). These texts would provide information concerning how the students interacted with classmates and SL residents, responding to the question: were the students becoming a part of the community?

These three pieces of data, students' writings, chat and IM logs, and the videos, were my main sources of information. But like the blog entries mentioned earlier that allowed students to discuss their experiences in SL after each class session, I decided that

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[12] IM—Instant Message

another good source of information would be to have the students complete a

questionnaire at the end of the semester that used a Likert Scale for them to judge their

overall confidence with writing both before and after the class, and I also asked basic,

open-ended questions concerning their experiences with writing and SL (see Appendix

G).[13] The students were assured that nothing they wrote on their questionnaires would

affect their grades. Knowing from experience that students often mistrust authority

figures whom they feel control their grades, the final grades were calculated by the time

they answered these forms so there could be no questions in their minds concerning
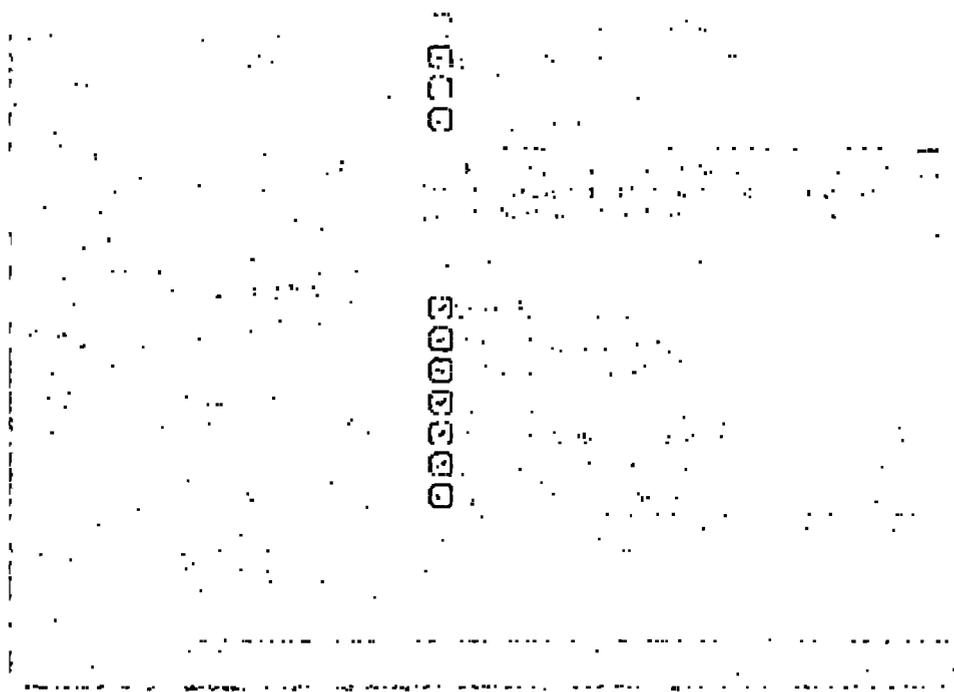
Fig. 13. Snapshot of the communications menu in SL

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[13] Use of a Likert Scale quantitatively supports the findings of the qualitative research
that I performed here.

final grades. However, I also wanted to ensure that their final grade would not influence how they answered the questionnaire, so they were not shown their grade until they turned in the forms. Their answers would again provide information about how they responded to the experience of combining their first semester of college writing with the culture of a virtual world (see Appendix G).

The last piece of information to be gathered for the research included interviews with students who volunteered to answer questions after the semester had ended. These interviews took three forms: the students could meet with me and answer questions in a face-to-face interview; we could meet in SL and the interview would occur via a chat dialogue; or they could request the interview questions be sent to them via email and they could submit written responses to the questions in whichever form they chose (see Appendix H). Nine out of twenty-seven students agreed to the interview; however, only three followed through, and the interviews were conducted via email.

How Do I Make a Life?: Analysis

With data in hand, the analysis process began. One important piece of data collected was, of course, the four essays that the students wrote over the duration of the semester although I only looked at one essay in-depth. I looked at this essay in hopes of answering the following original questions:

- Did using a virtual world like SL affect student writing?
- Did my students come to understand SL as a culture uniquely different from their own?

- Did they embrace this new medium

- Did they form an online identity?

- How did they react to such learning?

Additional questions that arose during analysis include the following: Did the students'

writing improve from the first essay to the last? Did issues of cultural diversity appear in

any of the writing? How did the students deal with issues surrounding identity? Were

the students' essays of interest to the reader (in this case, the somewhat artificial audience

of the teacher)? These were all questions that I hoped to find answers to in at least some

of the essays.

I also analyzed low-risk writing assignments, such as quick writes and blogging.

I knew that the low-risk assignments might produce better writing for the purpose of

analysis when considering issues of cultural diversity, identity, and how students

generally felt about the class being conducted in the virtual world of SL. Toby Fulwiler

argues that low-risk writing assignments such as journaling (now blogging) allow the

student the freedom to make connections without fear of penalty. The blogging would

allow them to vent, and the journaling could create space for them to express their

responses to the things we were reading and discussing in class. Students were faced

with what John C. Bean labels critical thinking activities. Bean argues that "good writing

. . . grows out of good talking," and journals and blogging were often direct results of

events that occurred during the online classes (7). These low-risk assignments offered up

information that could not be found in the essays

Besides writing assignments, the other information that I analyzed was the end-of-term questionnaire and the interviews. Students answered the questionnaires at the end of term while the experience was still fresh for them, but the interviews occurred three months later, around the mid-term of the following semester. I analyzed whether or not the students' attitudes had changed between the end-of-term and three months later. The questions were not identical; however, they were close enough in theme to get an impression of whether or not opinions had changed.

These two classes were the basis of my teacher research, and I hypothesized that all of the information gathered for this project would indicate that the students were more engaged in their writing than they would be in a class taught in the traditional manner and that their writing would benefit from this increased engagement. The data collected were analyzed not only for changes in writing, but also for issues surrounding communication, cultural diversity, and identity.

Chapter 4

Living a Second Life: It's Not That Easy

The Clash of RL and VL: Introduction

Introducing my students to the culture of SL was both challenging and exciting. Since I changed the class, as mentioned in chapter 3, from one requiring permission to one with open enrollment, I expected a variety of students with different levels of experience when it came to computers in general and massively multi-user online role-playing games (MMORPGs) in particular; I was not disappointed. I knew that some students would resist having class in a virtual world because of their inexperience, beliefs, and fears of the unknown, but I also knew that others would welcome a change in the approach to learning writing. I also hypothesized that many aspects of holding class in the virtual world, from the challenges that we encountered to the mode of communication, would all play a role in how the students not only dealt with this new environment and to what extent they would participate in SL, but also how they would interact with one another inworld, what they would choose to blog about, and ultimately what they would include in their essays.

In this chapter, I take a brief look at the class setup (the textbook used, the essays read, and the general expectations), and then I analyze several aspects of this ethnographic research to determine if using SL in my two first-year writing classes had any effects on students' writing by looking at their inworld chats, blogs, quick writes, and essays. Research shows that gaming does have a positive effect on literacy, so this was a

primary focus of my research. Heather L. Mello, in her 2006 essay "Invoking the

Avatar: Gaming Skills as Cultural and Out-of-Game Capital," discusses a study she

conducted of gamers at a science fiction, fantasy, and fantasy role-playing game (FRPG)

conference, and some of her respondents noted that gaming provided "fodder and

experience in the actual writing process" (188). Another example is DeVoss who notes

that "her literacy in these electronic environments . . . Had a great deal to do with her

increasing confidence as a reader and writer off-line, as well . . . (qtd. in DeVoss et al.

185). Finally, Williams suggests that "today's online technologies have young people

reading and writing far more than they were 20 years or even a decade ago" ("'Tomorrow

Will Not Be Like Today'" 682). It was, therefore, my expectation that using SL would

be a springboard for my students' own writing experiences.

Before the analysis of the challenges, class demographics, or any student writing,

a brief look at the syllabus and calendar found in Appendix I, including readings and

assignments, should provide the reader with an overview of the course objectives. This

writing class, like any other, focused on providing students with instruction on how to

improve their writing through low and high-risk writing assignments, use of essays in the

textbook *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research* as models, readings and

assignments in the *Harbrace* textbook, in-class discussions, peer review, and other modes

of instruction.

After reviewing the course structure, I investigate and examine the challenges that

arose as a result of holding class in a virtual world and the real world demographics of

the two classes. Trials in cyberspace are inevitable; as Cynthia Haynes and Jan Rune

Holmevik relate, "incidents such as plagiarism . . ., flaming (extremely rude or mean responses), Internet stalking, and other forms of harassment" can occur (5). These types of issues can be amplified by the demographics of the classes as well as how the classes are conducted in a virtual environment. Because of the inexperience of many of the students and also hardware and broadband issues, most students chose to come to the brick and mortar classroom on the nights the sessions were in SL. This situation amplified classroom dynamics in the virtual world, as will be observed later, because the students were in physical as well as virtual proximity to one another.

I also explore the communication aspect of Second Life. Even though voice over internet provider (VoIP) was implemented inworld immediately before my research began, as mentioned in chapter 3, I chose not to utilize this feature/function. First, technical issues of ensuring everyone had headphones with mics was a concern, and then the struggle of getting them to install properly on the computers was a technical challenge. For me, the larger concern, however, is the fact that my enthnographic study took place in two writing classes, and any form of writing was a step in the right direction. As Sherry Turkle states, "On a MUD,[14] one discovers that one can speak writing, something like Mliere's M. Jourdain, who discovered that he had been speaking prose all his life. The writing on MUDs, because it is spontaneous and alive, is often rich in texture and emotion" (xi). It was this texture and emotion that I was anxious to see come alive in my students' writing inworld, on the blog, and ultimately in their essays.

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[14] Multi-user domains or dungeons and the predecessor to today's virtual worlds

The next issue I examine is that of identity, both social and personal. Identity is a broad topic, but here I limit it to the role it plays in the virtual world. Experts in virtual spaces such as Turkle believe that the role/s that identity plays in worlds like MOOs,[15] MUDs, and other virtual spaces such as SL is complicated. Turkle states that the "anonymity of MUDs . . . provides ample room for individuals to express unexplored parts of themselves" (xii). These spaces are not necessarily places where people can become someone whom they are not, although some view them that way, but, more importantly perhaps, they are a place for true self-expression. Rymaszewski et al. argue that "*Second Life* is often held up as the perfect place to get your fantasy on—and yes, there's no other place like it for becoming something you aren't, or even for working out just what it is you want to be" (301). This ability to explore and play with one's identity and then to write about such experiences is probably one of the best arguments for using virtual realities such as SL in the composition classroom.

Finally, I will look at how using a place like SL creates a contact zone in a classroom where it might otherwise be difficult to create one. The demographics in the following section show that the major differences both within the individual classes and between the two classes are age and gender; however, the majority of the students in both classes have a very similar background geographically, which often contributes more to agreement than disagreement or conflict in many areas. When students come from the same region, they often have similar moral values, religious affiliations, or political

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[15] MUD object oriented site

beliefs.[16] Using SL might create a space where the students could experience a true

contact zone as described by Pratt (4). Taking my students into SL would introduce

many of them to a drastically different culture than they had ever been a part of before.

My expectations were optimistic, but I reminded myself frequently that these

were freshmen and that conducting classes in this type of an environment would be an

undertaking. Some students would resist the notion of participating in a virtual world,

but each student had the opportunity to drop the class both before class began and after

the first night. The challenge would be helping them to see the value in engaging in a

culture that was both foreign and scary to many of them.

When reading this chapter, keep in mind the following issues. First, some might

criticize the fact that I am beginning with the challenges that occurred while using SL

rather than the positive aspects that came out of the experience. However, it is important

to know what issues both myself and the students dealt with and worked through in order

to achieve the success that we did in the end. Second, some overlap will occur between

sections. Many of the difficulties that occurred can be attributed to age, peer pressure,

and the general demographics of the classroom, but the mode of communication and

issues of identity also play a part, so even though I outline from the beginning certain

difficulties, these problems might come up again when discussing other areas. Third,

because of this overlapping, it may be difficult for the reader to readily connect the

information provided with the research questions, so I have footnoted some of the major

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[16] This is an over simplification of a multi-layered issue; however, my experience with
these two classes suggested that these students shared similar moral values, religious
affiliations, and political beliefs.

issues that help to answer these questions. Even though this chapter is an analysis of the data and my response to the research questions, ultimately, it is the reader who determines whether or not the research questions have been sufficiently answered with the data and analysis provided here, and any questions left will serve to further the research as suggested in chapter 5.

SL is just the Medium: The RL Writing Classroom

The use of SL in the writing classroom may be confusing for many. Why would anyone want to subject his/her students to a virtual environment in a writing class? Just as nonprofit writing, which occurs in composition classrooms that have a service-learning focus, provides an additional layer for the writing environment, so too does SL provide this extra layer when instructors choose to use a theme-based course with cultural or social underpinnings. As George and John Trimbur point out,

> The popularity of the popular in writing classrooms may be attributed in part to the fact that such topics enable writing teachers to retain two commonplace practices: (1) to begin student writing with a topic "close to the self," close to students' experiences, and (2) to teach close reading and interpretation of texts, in this case, substituting popular culture or media for literary texts. (82)

Not only does this approach give the class a focus for the writing, but it also allows them to critically analyze the course subject. Living in SL (even only an hour a week), in part, takes the place of written texts dealing with the course theme or topic that students would

normally read. Instead of reading and then writing about diversity, for instance, they

have the opportunity to experience it, write about it while inworld, and then construct

more formal essays or texts based on their experiences and their more informal

writings.[17]

Another benefit of writing in SL was the real world audience it gave students. As

composition instructors, we teach our students to always be mindful of the audience to

which they are writing. But what does this mean? Douglas B. Park argues that "only

sometimes does considering audience mean directly considering particular people; more

often it means something much hazier" (311). Walter J. Ong takes this one step further

by asserting that the audience for a writer is purely a fiction. Ong remarks that "the

problem is not simply what to say but also whom to say it to. Say? The student is not

talking. He is writing. No one is listening. There is no feedback. Where does he find his

"audience"? He has to make his readers up, fictionalize them" (11). This fictionalizing of

one's audience, however, is not necessary in SL. When writing in SL, the student's

audience is listening, they are responding, they are giving instant feedback to the

student's thoughts and remarks. This type of interaction creates a discourse community

that is not normally present in the writing classroom and one that facilitates the student's

understanding of audience and permits them to communicate on a global level.

This variety of both low-risk and high-risk writing assignments facilitated the

meeting of many course objectives as outlined in the syllabus found in Appendix I. The

low-risk task of writing in SL and then following that up with a blog entry after each

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[17] The ability to experience diversity before beginning the writing process made the
students' writing more engaged, thereby changing their writing.

session, reflecting on that night's assignment or SL activities, allowed the students to meet the objective of investigating "writing as a social activity in the virtual world of Second Life" (see Appendix I). The use of SL and the writing both in and out of world met the objective of generating "ideas for our class discussions and writing assignments" (see Appendix I). Students could keep a record of all of their SL chat sessions as well as access their blog entries at all times, allowing them to refer to these resources when writing their formal essays.

Even though writing is the key objective in this course, it is also important that students read essays that model the type of writing that many in the academy expect. As Williams notes, the goal of many FYC courses "is to teach students acceptable academic writing conventions that they can take to other classes in order to succeed in their university careers" ("Are We Having Fun Yet?" 340). Therefore, I used Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's text, *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*, which both instructed students in conducting fieldwork and provided essays that modeled this type of writing. The syllabus in Appendix L shows that the students began with chapter 2: "Writing Self, Writing Cultures: Understanding Fieldworking" in the textbook and then moved to chapter 1: "Stepping In and Stepping Out: Understanding Cultures," chapter 3: "Reading Self, Reading Cultures: Understanding Texts," and chapter 4: "Researching Place: The Spatial Gaze." Each of these chapters contains information on how to conduct an ethnographic field research into a culture either slightly or drastically different than our own. They also contain essays written by both professional writers and students conducting this type of ethnographic research. As a class we discussed essays such as

Gloria Naylor's "Mama Day," alongside student projects such as Sky Angus's

"Confessions of a Blog Addict." Discussions of essays like these helped the students

recognize the components of a successful essay, enabling them to synthesize their own

compositions.

The chapters in the textbook, including the essays, were vital in helping the

students succeed at the course objectives. In particular, these readings helped meet the

objective that states, "We will focus on improving your knowledge of what makes an

effective college-level paper and will spend time looking at strategies that will improve

your papers on the following levels: content, organization, word choice, vocabulary,

grammar, and mechanics" (see Appendix I). The essays provided examples of college-

level writing, whereas the chapters, discussed during class, helped the students

understand how to organize their essays and the content that needed to be included.

VL and RL Neighbors Can Be a Pain: Difficulties in the Virtual World of the Second Life Classroom

The classroom, be it virtual or real, is not without its challenges. Students can

become rowdy regardless of the environment, and at times their language to one another

borders on rude or harassing. It has been my experience that in a brick-and-mortar class

students begin to understand one another and to build community, allowing them to know

where the lines are, and they avoid crossing them for fear of being ostracized by their

classmates. The same logic holds true in a virtual world where, even though they may

not know exactly which RL name fits with which avatar's VL name, they still know that

these people are their classmates, and the same types of rowdiness and raucous talk

can usually occur with no one becoming offended. This is not necessarily the case,

however, when the students venture away from their island inworld and begin meeting

people who are only represented by avatars. Anonymity, for some, becomes an excuse to

interact in a way they probably never would in RL.[18] Before going into further details

about specific events, basic demographics of both classes are worth looking at.

The demographics in the classroom play a vital role in the success or failure of

any class, but when trying something experimental, those same demographics stand out

even more. Factors such as academic background, cultural background, social

influences, gender, race, and age have all been used to study academic retention in junior

colleges and universities (Wohlgemuth 459-63) and are likewise valid for studying

behavior in a classroom environment. Glenda L. Bissex notes that "questions we had not

envisioned can arise as we listen to replays of classroom events . . ." (91). By attempting

to understand the dynamics in my classes, I noticed quickly that demographics play a role

inworld. I will keep the two classes divided for comparison in this section and refer to

them as Class A and Class B.

Certain demographics such as age, geographic origin, male to female ratio, and

peer influence were key factors in the way the two classes interacted in both the RL

classroom and in the virtual sessions, affecting their writing in both. Figure 14 shows the

breakdown of ages in each class.[19] The average age in Class A was 18.6 and Class B was

---

[18] This interaction is evidence that some students do form an online identity that is different from their RL one.

[19] In all graphs, the numbers on the y axis indicate the number of students.

21.4. The students in both classes were all freshmen with only one transfer student in

Class A and two in Class B. As can be seen in figure 14, Class B had a much more

diverse age range and two students were in their 30s. Figure 15 shows that most students

came from the same geographic area. Class B had a slightly more diverse makeup than

Class A and even had one international student. However, both classes primarily

consisted of students who listed their permanent addresses as being in Middle Tennessee.

Shown in figure 16 is one final demographic, the male to female ratio, which also played

a role in the classroom. Class A was fairly equal in its male to female ratio, but Class B

had more than double the number of females to males.

What do all of these statistics indicate about how the students interacted in SL and

what others might expect if faced with similar demographics? Class A reacted quite

differently than Class B when it came to interaction in SL and RL.
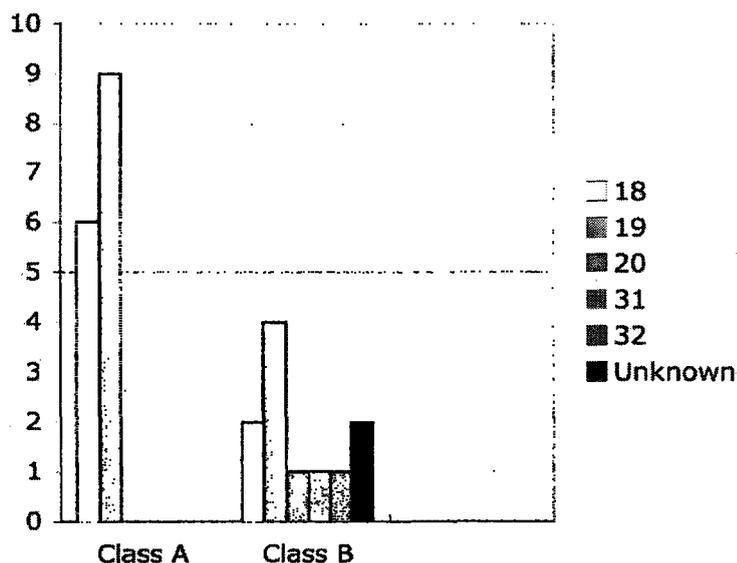
Fig. 14. Demographics of ages in the two classes.
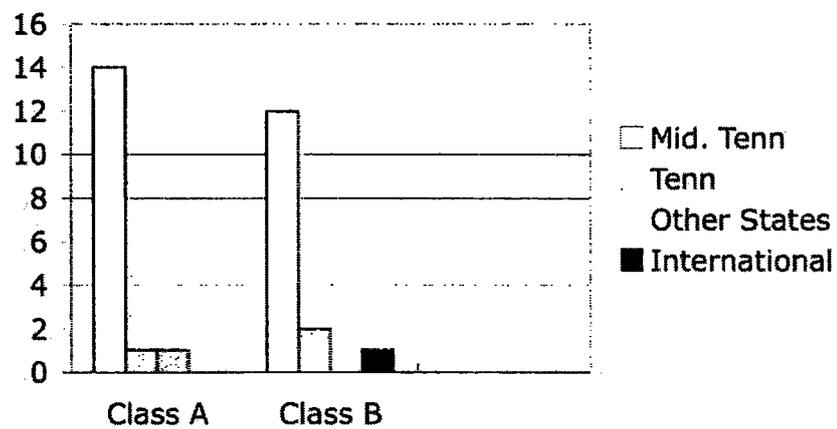
Fig. 15. Geographical demographics of students in both classes.
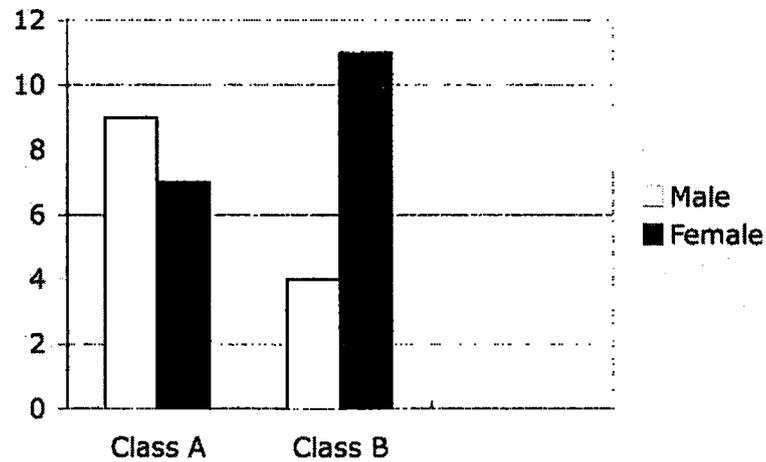
Fig. 16. Demographics of male to female ratio for the two classes

Following is a transcript from the second class session that Class A had in SL.[20] Note

that the conversation begins with me questioning group one because I noticed on the map

that most of the students had returned to our island when the assignment called for them

to be observing various locations chosen by the group members. I have deleted much of

the original thread for brevity, but the entire conversation can be found in Appendix J.

For those interested in seeing the actual video of the interaction, go to the DVD included

and view the clip entitled "SL Conversation."

[2007/09/13 15:15] You: I thought all of group 1 would look at each

other's locations.

[2007/09/13 15:17] Mildrad Pinklady: haha its so much fun watching the

macho guys take each other out

[2007/09/13 15:17] Tyson Sawson: no shit

. . . .

[2007/09/13 15:18] Hailey Shelford: we should all take our clothes off

haha just kiddin

. . . .

[2007/09/13 15:18] Zao Roux: tyson's getting his ass kicked

. . . .

[2007/09/13 15:18] THERealRomeo Flow: we can hailey my place 6:30

bring a friend

[2007/09/13 15:18] Tyson Sawson: shell bring me

---

[20] This interaction in SL on their second visit shows that many of the students did
embrace this new medium and took advantage of the freedom they felt it afforded them.

[2007/09/13 15:18] Tyson Sawson: ill take you out

[2007/09/13 15:18] THERealRomeo Flow: and i'll beat your ass

[2007/09/13 15:18] Aska Kungfu: you all are CRAZY

. . . .

[2007/09/13 15:19] Hailey Shelford: haha do u even have a house here

romeo

. . . .

[2007/09/13 15:19] THERealRomeo Flow: not on this island

[2007/09/13 15:19] Aska Kungfu: oh, snap now we are claiming

people

[2007/09/13 15:19] Mildrad Pinklady: r they fighting over u hailey?

[2007/09/13 15:19] Hailey Shelford: thanks tyson ur too sweet

[2007/09/13 15:19] Zao Roux: so, a father says to his son, "if you dont

stop masturbating, you will go blind!" The son replies, "dad, im in the

other room"

. . . .

[2007/09/13 15:19] Tyson Sawson: your gay zao

. . . .

[2007/09/13 15:20] Zao Roux: you just cant handle a real body like mine

. . . .

[2007/09/13 15:20] THERealRomeo Flow: imma have to spit this pimpin

[2007/09/13 15:20] Velleos Nakamori: and so the internet in effect destroys the english language. ("Second Life Chat" 13 Sep. 2007)

I find the final comment here an interesting one.[21] Referring to scholars such as Sven Birkerts, Inman notes "that computers and other technologies are bringing problematic changes to literacy" and that "literacy is being somehow corrupted or defaced by the technologies" (161). Even though it is true that the students have, in effect, changed the way in which we communicate with written language, I do not find myself struggling to make sense of it. Williams comments that most teachers "know that electronic communication in the form of television, video, and computers is creating a rapidly shifting discursive landscape" which most of us respond to by digging "in our heels" (*Tuned In* 20). I, however, would find myself slipping into abbreviations and acronyms from time to time in order to get my thoughts on the screen as quickly as possible before the conversation took a quick turn. Rather than fighting this new "discursive landscape," I saw the need for it and began to embrace it.

Some associate this new discourse with text messaging, but actually it began in MUD and MOO sites. Turkle attributes Richard A. Lanham as arguing that "open-ended screen text subverts traditional fantasies of a master narrative, or definitive reading, by presenting the reader with possibilities for changing fonts, zooming in and out, and rearranging and replacing text" (18). To that list, we can now add the uniqueness of computer-mediated communications (CMCs) as we have come to know them today. Even though people who are involved extensively with role playing games (RPGs) have

---

[21] This use of text language was not one I had considered before beginning this research, but it does, in effect, change the way students write even if limited to SL.

altered spelling to accommodate the speed of such communication, Mello reports that 20.7% of the RPGers she interviewed noted that writing and reading are skills honed in gaming which translate into their everyday lives (187). Whereas some bemoan the loss of language as we know it, it appears that others see games as a way to improve their writing skills.

What is even more informative though is the content of the conversation between the students. This type of exchange is anything but academic, but it is not completely unusual. Julia K. Ferganchick-Neufang, in "Harassment On-Line: Considerations for Women & Webbed Pedagogies," hyperlinks to a MOO transcript that is very similar in disruptive content to what occurred here. This is not the type of language nor the type of conversation one would expect in a typical first-year writing course, and many might be disturbed by the content and tone of this exchange. I have to admit that when it occurred, I was certainly taken aback, as evidenced by my journal entry that night when I stated that I was not "sure why they ever thought they could get away with that kind of behavior" ("Teaching Journal"). I have since asked myself why I had such a strong reaction to the episode. Was it because I felt they were not respecting my authority in the classroom? Was it because they were not completing the assignment I had given them? I had no proof that they had not completed it. Why did the episode upset me so much? I am still struggling with this question, but it was likely a combination of all of the above and because I wanted the research project to be a success.

I had taken my students into what they viewed as a game, and then expected them to not play, or at least to get my approval for their play. I had failed to factor in that this

was completely new to many of them and that they would need time to adjust and frankly to play. Turkle argues that college used to be a moratorium for youth, but is no more. She goes on to suggest that "if our culture no longer offers an adolescent moratorium, virtual communities do. They offer permission to play, to try things out. This is part of what makes them attractive" (xiii). I had, in essence, forced my students into an unfamiliar environment and then expected them to do only what I asked, taking away any spontaneous enjoyment they might glean from it. Had the class been made up of students familiar with SL or with MMORPGs in general, it is possible this would not have occurred, or if it had happened, not lasted the thirteen minutes that it did.

Class A's level of experience is only one factor though. The fact remains that Class B had little to no experience in virtual worlds as well, yet they did not behave this way at any time during the semester. So I had to ask myself what other factors could be involved in Class A's behavior? This is where I suspected demographics such as gender, age, and male-to-female ratio came into play. Kimberlee D. Weaver, co-author of the book *Gender and Computers: Understanding the Digital Divide*, Gita Wilder, and Diane Mackie conducted a survey in 1985 of "newly enrolled men and women enrolled at Princeton University" (Cooper and Weaver 27). Even though the number of men and women who both owned and believed computers to be an important part of life was about equal, Weaver et al. reported that "when asked how comfortable [the men and women] were using the computers, there was an overwhelming gender effect. . . . [and] women indicated far less feelings of competence . . . than their male counterparts . . ." (27-28).

A follow-up study conducted by Joel Cooper and Weaver in 2003, seventeen years later, again found that "males were considerably more comfortable with computers than were freshman women" (29). This was another piece of the puzzle for me when considering the behavior of Class A, which had a greater number of males than females in the class. In order to play in a new environment such as SL, a certain degree of confidence is necessary. It is no different in the virtual world than it is in the real world when it comes to playing. If I have never played a certain game before, I tend to hold back and watch everyone else until my own confidence begins to grow. It is possible that because there were more males in Class A, the atmosphere was more playful, and the males in class encouraged and assisted the females in their play, which would explain the chatter and pointing at one another's screens that I noticed while in class. The number of females in Class B, however, was double that of males, and I did not notice the same type of playful behavior. In fact, I noticed the students in Class B using iPods and isolating themselves from one another to pursue their adventures in SL. Thus, the male to female ratio could have played a major role in the conversation that occurred that night.

I do not, however, believe that this ratio was the only factor contributing to the conversation that occurred above. The age/maturity level of Class A is suggested by the overall average age of 18.6—Class B's was 21.4, and the immaturity of the students in Class A was apparent simply from the conversation. I have noticed (and it seems to be a consensus among my colleagues) that students who sign up for evening classes are often more mature than other students. It is likely that if they sign up for a late class, it is because they work a full time job and/or they often have families. In fact, one student

from the night class finally got tired of listening to students (primarily in the young

class) complain on the blog about their SL experiences. She writes,

> Being prepared for class is the STUDENTS responsibility. You were
>
> aware that SL was part of this class....if you weren't PREPARED then you
>
> should have checked it out and educated yourself. I am so sick of Prof. B
>
> having to state over and over and over what is what and when this is due
>
> and what book you need.....GROWUP! ("Pissed Off").

This particular post is not exclusive to SL, but it highlights the fact that one of the older

students in Class B was asking younger students in both classes to reach a level of

maturity that just was not there yet.

The conversation listed above and in Appendix J was not the only challenge that

class faced that night. Haynes and Holmevik warn,

> Teachers should also anticipate disruptions and take preventive action.
>
> For example, there may be times when other MOO players interrupt a
>
> class with what we call "drive-by-shoutings," where they teleport into the
>
> virtual classroom and say silly or offensive things, or just stumble into the
>
> class innocently in the hopes of chatting. (6)

Today, what Haynes and Holmevik call "drive-by-shoutings" are most often referred to

as griefing, which refers to a person or people who "bother or harass another *SL* resident

through offensive actions; an *SL* resident who bothers other residents. Griefing violates

Second Life community standards" (Rymaszewski et al. 327). I will address the

"standards" part of this later; however, it is vital first that one understands the severity of

the griefing to which my students and I were subjected. To say that the griefing

episode was inappropriate would be an understatement; it definitely was R-rated. At the

beginning of that second class session in SL, I had an extremely difficult time getting

students settled in their seats and quiet in the virtual world, and I did not notice that an

outsider had joined our group. Again, this was only the second night and I had asked all

of my students to use an alias even for their first name so that there would be no chance

of them being identified in my study. When a pile of feces suddenly appeared in the

middle of our circle (I had arranged chairs in a circle for class sessions) and then quickly

disappeared, I assumed it was one of my rowdy students experimenting. As I finally got

the class settled, however, the R-rated griefing episode occurred. On every computer

screen in the room a nude African-American woman of a rather large size suddenly

appeared. One student described it on the blog thus, "we started talking about

fieldworking, then a naked fat woman floated across everyone's screen. That was pretty

funny, yet a little disturbing" ("Pretty Interesting"). I had warned my students about the

possibilities of griefers and had told them to simply log off if they were ever subjected to

such an event. When this occurred, some students began logging off before I even had

the chance to tell them to do so. Once we logged back in, I gave the students their

assignments and sent them inworld. The event was indeed disturbing and probably

contributed to the rowdiness of the group mentioned above.[22]

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[22] Relating this event here is simply not the same as experiencing it first-hand, so for
those interested, I have included it on the DVD, titled "SL Griefing: This Clip Contains
Mature Content."

Even though griefing violates the standards mentioned previously, no action is usually taken by the site authorities if it is reported. As Peter Ludlow and Mark Wallace point out, the authorities in many virtual worlds are "so immersed themselves in the shared culture created by the population that they could be talked out of taking part in the resolution of many disputes" (96-97). Ludlow and Wallace note that "game companies are staffed by engineers, not dispute mediators, constitutional scholars, social workers or psychologists" (98). This is not to say, however, that I did nothing concerning the events that occurred that night.

One advantage of having recorded the session on that night was that I could review it closely after class to try to determine who had griefed us. I did not believe it was one of my students, but there was no way to be sure unless further evidence showed a clear culprit. Upon closer examination, I noted that a stranger had indeed joined our class that night when I was attempting to get the class settled down for class discussion. It began with me shouting (virtually of course), "Can I have your attention please" and then a couple of minutes later, "Everyone SIT" ("Second Life Chat" 13 Sep. 2007). Within seconds, the unknown visitor says, "Everyone SHIT" ("Second Life Chat" 13 Sep. 2007). Minutes after this stranger's remark, a pile of feces appeared in the middle of the circle.[23] This stranger then left the group, only to return around fifteen minutes later when the major griefing incident occurs. Because there was video evidence as well as the chat logs, I was able to look this person up online and contact her inworld that same

---

[23] See DVD clip "SL Griefing: This Clip Contains Mature Content"

night.[24] The resident was not online at the time, but I sent an instant message (IM)

and asked, "Are you the one responsible for disturbing my class on hale ukana tonight?"

("Second Life Chat" 13 Sep. 2007). I knew the individual would receive the message

because SL stores messages until the user logs back in.

The resident's response, less than a half an hour later, frankly shocked me. She

claims, "I was in the area shopping, and was attacked by three of your students, so if

anyone is responsible for anything, it's yourself..for not keeping track of them and

explaing [sic] to them that foul language, and harrasment [sic] are unacceptable

behavior" ("Second Life Chat" 13 Sep. 2007).[25] I had forewarned my students about the

possibility of being subjected to harassment and what to do if they were (teleport away

immediately), but I expected my students to behave in an academic manner. I had never

experienced one student harassing another in a regular brick-and-mortar class, and I did

not expect them to act this way inworld either. This accusation by an inworld resident

presents by far the most serious challenge that my class and I faced that night.

Sexual harassment in virtual worlds is a well-known and highly discussed topic.

Ferganchick-Neufang notes that "feminist scholars of virtual spaces argue that the

Internet is, like real life, a very sexist and hostile environment" ("Harassment On-

Line""). Exactly how to avoid it, stop it, or deal with it is not as easy to determine. As

Ludlow and Wallace point out, "the metaverse is a place without an established set of

---

[24] I refer to this individual as a female only because that is the gender of the avatar the
individual chose.
[25] This episode of harassment indicates that perhaps the students did not understand that
SL has its own culture and that they had violated the social norms of this culture by
repeatedly bumping into the woman's avatar.

mores. And while virtual worlds do enjoin their residents to abide by rules of

courtesy, laid out with varying degrees of specificity from world to world and game to

game, these agreements are rarely enforced with any consistency" (94). As far as I know,

the inworld resident did not report my students—she could only remember one avatar's

name—to any authorities associated with Second Life, but as a woman and a

professional, I could not let the issue go without reporting it to authorities at my

university. James E. Porter reminds us that "writing teachers who use computers for

instructional purposes are responsible for guiding their students toward (and themselves

adhering to) ethical and legal use of computing facilities and resources . . ." (qtd. in

Inman 17). I certainly felt this responsibility. I discussed the issue with Allison Smith,

the teaching assistant coordinator, in September, and she followed up with the office of

Judicial Affairs on campus. It was determined that no formal action would be taken

against the students because MTSU did not have formal rules regarding classes in virtual

spaces and especially since I only had an idea of who the students were; however, it

meant some changes in the way I would conduct class.

Although I had hoped to keep the class island open to visitors at all times,

including class time, the above issues prompted several actions that Smith and I decided

were needed for the remainder of the semester. All of these changes were implemented

using the options allowed through the Second Life software:

- No longer would inworld residents be permitted to access our island during

  regular class time

- Anyone not a member of the class's group, "Zoe's Rebel Rousers," would not be allowed to place objects on the island

- All students were required to select an option in their menus that allowed me to see where they were inworld at all times, allowing me to teleport to their location at any time

- I also reiterated that part of their participation grade came from completing their inworld assignments

With these precautions in place, the remainder of the semester was without major incident or disruption.

All of these challenges occurring in one night might have been enough to make me give up on this project had I not believed from the first that holding FYC classes in SL would benefit my students and myself. My next foray into teaching FYC in SL will include some of these changes, such as making sure I can always see where students are, but not others, such as closing off the island to outsiders as will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Can You Hear Me Now: Communication in the Virtual World of Second Life

The VoIP feature of SL went live for all residents on August 2, 2007, with release 1.18.1.2 of Linden Lab's software; I know because I was inworld on that day. This, however, was a mere three weeks before my classes were to begin. Even though chosen inworld residents had been testing the VoIP function since earlier in the year, I suspected it would be fraught with bugs for the first few weeks, and the challenges that my class

were going to face in the beginning did not need to be complicated by other hardware and software issues. I told myself all of these things, and they were certainly valid reasons for not using the new function, but my real motive lay in areas outside the espoused hardware and software issues.

First, there was the practical side of using the chat and IM functions over the VoIP. As mentioned earlier, I attempted to videotape all of the sessions using software on a high-powered MacBook Pro. This software would also capture any sounds, including voices, and the computer was more than sufficient to run both the video taping software and *SL* software, but circumstances beyond my control often crashed the system. These occurrences forced me to hard boot (turn my system off and back on without officially shutting down) my machine, and I always lost whatever video and audio I had captured up until that point (I still had the typed chat logs as mentioned earlier).

The video malfunctions were irritating to say the least. However, had I allowed the students to use VoIP, I would have lost all of the communications between the class and myself and between the students themselves. I would not have had transcripts to refer back to when considering certain conversations, and I would not have had them as evidence to support claims I make during this analysis section. These may seem trivial to someone unfamiliar with SL or virtual worlds, but the transcript provided in the previous section should help the reader to understand the severity of the issue.

The loss of the data would have been astronomical as far as my research is concerned, but other reasons existed that I deemed even more important when considering whether or not to use VoIP. One of these is the anonymity that using chat

gives the individual students. This same desire for anonymity is also noted by SL

residents. Au relates residents' reactions to SL's decision to include VoIP, pointing to a

pre-launch survey where "residents overwhelming declared that voice chat would not be

broadly adopted; in a follow-up poll, nearly 70 percent of respondents said they used

voice rarely or never" (2900-05). Besides technical reasons for not using VoIP, such as

hardware and lag,[26] deeper motivations to avoid VoIP exist, such as the fear that voice

will "expose real-life gender and offer hints at other identifying details (accent, diction,

and so on) . . ." (Au 2905-10). Au then relates that perhaps one of the most important

reasons to say no to voice is that "the lack of voice had also created a cultural hierarchy

defined in large part by the written word—and in the process, had advantaged diverse

groups of people who had never before flourished in a group setting" (2910-14). What

did this mean for my students? In part, it meant that no one would be able to judge them

based on having a female sounding voice or a male sounding voice. They would also not

be subjected to being judged based on their southern accents or vernacular that tend to

come through more clearly in audio than text chat. I am also not sure that my students

would have felt comfortable playing with gender if they had been using the VoIP

function because someone with a female avatar and a male voice and vice versa would

have been judged based on preconceived ideas. It also meant that my students would not

be able to judge others based on these same stereotypes.

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[26] Lag refers to the "slow or jerky performance in a 3D application caused by an
overworked processor; memory bandwidth, video card, or hard drive" (Rymaszewski et
al. 327).

Another reason I wished to use the chat over the VoIP is the anonymity that chat offers the introverted student. A well documented advantage of using any type of networked technology, and in particular chat, is that students who are normally shy or introverted in class suddenly have a voice. Walt Turner claims that "online spaces can provide a way of compensating and addressing fears that exist in the real-world as the body becomes more of an imagined construction of words and ideas. Online personas become freed as some rules of social interaction become suspended" ("Out of the Ghetto"). This freeing of one's persona allows the student to undergo a metamorphosis of sort. Michael Day notes that students in Electronic Networks for Interaction (ENFI) classes (text based only) adopt a network role, and he reports an introverted student in one professor's class began "behaving like an extrovert" ("The Network-Based Writing Classroom"). Fortney sums it up best in her Second Life Community Conference presentation when she states that "the introvert who remains quiet in the classroom can safely speak out in the virtual world" (84). This was the type of environment I desired for my SL classes. I saw the results of this after the very first night of class when I logged back into SL to do some work and found one of my students from the late class on our island. I thanked this student for helping one of the others who had some difficulty that first night in SL, and we began chatting. After a nice conversation, I asked this student if she/he would normally talk so openly to a professor on the first night of class? There was no response for a second, and then he/she responded that she/he would not

have because he/she was typically quiet.[27] These were the kinds of conversations for which I had hoped. I wanted students to feel comfortable speaking out when they had something to say, and I hoped that their extroversion in SL might translate to the RL classroom. Mello reports that one of her interviewees "claimed gaming helped her 'get over a fear of interacting with strangers'" (189). I suspected that these types of social skills would translate into the brick-and-mortar classroom, and even though I have no data to suggest this was the case, I never found myself calling on people to get them to speak up. All students had a voice in the RL classroom as well as the virtual one.

The final reason for using chat rather than VoIP is probably the most obvious to anyone who teaches writing: chat would force my students to communicate in writing. In the academic class, they are expected to write in a way that the academy deems acceptable. This often means students must learn quickly how to code-switch in order to be successful. Although this is what we expect in the classroom, I am of the opinion that it steals the students' true voices in many ways and makes their writing seem stiff and artificial to their readers. A symposium conducted by Janet Bean et al. addresses the issue of whether or not it is desirable to have students write in their mother tongues or native dialects: and they decided that the question was not "*whether or not* to invite students to write in a mother tongue different from standardized English, but rather, *when and under what conditions* might it make sense to do so?" (226). Not only did I want students to have their own unique voices in these written online communications, but I

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[27] This type of communication between students and myself proved to me that students could have a positive reaction to the use of SL in a learning environment and that it could allow them to feel more comfortable talking to me one-on-one.

hoped that they might be able to experiment as well, making this the perfect "when" to which Bean et al. refer. Alice L. Trupe argues that "another rich possibility afforded in electronic texts . . . is the opportunity to create a number of personae, rather than a stable voice, and thus to speak with a variety of voices" ("Academic Literacy in a Wired World"). I can assure the reader that the way my students communicated in SL was much different than the way I witnessed communication in the RL classroom; however, since I could not be in every location with every student as he/she traversed the metaworld, I have no data to show whether or not they took on different personas in their communications with inworld residents. I suspect that it did occur, though, as I overheard students in class one night discussing having taken on "gangsta" personas in an attempt to muscle their way into a club.[28]

One important aspect of any research is a reflection on whether or not decisions made in the beginning were viable. In the previous section, I outlined in the conclusion the changes that I made during the research in order to avoid griefing and to have a measure of control in the virtual world classes. When looking back on my choice to use chat only instead of VoIP, I would not make any changes. My next experience in teaching using SL will still require the students to type, not talk. I will be able to monitor this because when residents have VoIP enabled a glowing white dot appears over their head. With the ability to teleport to any location my students may visit, I'll be able to ensure they adhere to text chatting.

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[28] This roleplaying [as it were] is evidence that some students did attempt to take on an identity inworld that they did not own in RL.

A Second Life Must Have a Beginning: Let the Writing Begin

The thought of using SL for the purpose of a writing class confused many students, as mentioned earlier. Some students resisted the idea that a virtual world could have any bearing on composition. Williams emphasizes that literacy courses such as FYC have as their goal "to teach students acceptable academic writing conventions that they can take to other classes in order to succeed in their university careers" and that "pleasure [in these courses] is rarely discussed and seems frivolous . . ." ("Are We Having Fun Yet?" 340). Students have been "trained" to believe that popular culture can have no value in their academic studies, so first I needed to help the students understand how this virtual world of SL could be viewed as a culture different than their own and then get them writing about it as a culture while enjoying their experiences there.

The first step in accomplishing this was to have the students read chapter 2: "Writing Self, Writing Cultures: Understanding Fieldworking" in Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's text, *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*. This chapter, as mentioned earlier, instructed the students in how to conduct fieldwork in an environment/culture different from their own. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater "discuss how writing about the self links with writing about the culture you are investigating" (66). These were the connections I wanted the students to be able to make between their own lives and the world of SL they were observing.

The next step toward achieving the goal of student immersion into the world of SL and bringing pleasure back into the writing process was to have the students conduct fieldwork on a place of their choice in SL. The first assignment required that the essay

"be based on your field observations of a Second Life place that interest you. You have total artistic freedom in this essay assignment. The requirements are that there be a minimum of 1100 words and good writing" (see Appendix K).[29] This assignment combined the academic need for critical observation by having the students study a new culture with the need for enjoyment by allowing them to express themselves in any way they chose as long as they met the department's length requirement. Students understood the term "field observations" from their reading and the discussions we had in class. They did not, however, understand what I meant by "total artistic freedom." Many asked if they were allowed to write the standard five-paragraph essay that they had learned in high school. Even though the five-paragraph essay was not what I had initially hoped the students would write, I did not want to dissuade them from the standard academic essay of an introduction with a thesis, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. We did, however, discuss the limitation of five paragraphs in an essay of this length.

Another concern that the students voiced was whether or not they would be graded on their "creativity," which they translated to mean something other than a typical essay format. I shared the rubric with the class (see Appendix L), showing them that only 5 points of their overall grade was based on "creativity and voice" and discussed with them the fact that creativity can be incorporated into a standard essay by many different means. One of the simplest ways of doing so, according to Howard, is for students to "include personal narrative" in their essays, which she argues "has the potential [to] be an effective method of writing more creatively" and a concept that I shared with the students

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[29] This first assignment is an attempt to get the students thinking about SL in terms of being a unique culture.

(6). We further discussed the meaning of "expository" writing and how creativity might fit into the idea of writing for the purpose of conveying or explaining information. Next, the students entered SL to conduct their field research.

The results of this first assignment were both predictable and exciting. Once students began to immerse themselves into the virtual world of SL, some chose to experiment with their essays. Many students chose to write using the first person narrative in a descriptive mode (see Appendices M and N), another chose a multimodal technique by combining text into a PowerPoint presentation with simple graphics (see Appendix O), and yet another student chose to write her/his essay as a travel review to the location he/she had observed in SL (see Appendix P). Did all of these essays receive an 'A' grade? No. What the assignment did seem to do, however, was actually bring some pleasure back into the writing process for some of the students, as advocated for by Williams. The student who used PowerPoint remarked that it was actually fun to write the essay, while other students who had never written in the first person narrative form before found the experience to be liberating. As Williams points out, "part of what we should be doing as literacy instructors is helping our students understand that an academic identity in writing is not a disappearing act but a way of connecting passion, point of view, experience, and identity with research, evidence, and analysis" (713-14). Not only were the students experimenting with new ways of writing that actually brought enjoyment back into the process for them, but they also had a stimulating environment that sparked an interest in them and a level of engagement that I had not typically seen in FYC writing.

Who Am I; Who Do I Want to Be: Identity in the Virtual World of Second Life

Identity is a volatile and fluid thing. The fluidity of identity makes it difficult at times to be able to say exactly what it is because . . . it is ever changing. But it is amazing how many FYC students, who are primarily 18 and 19 year olds, do not see identity in this way. One of my students, when responding to a request to describe himself/herself says, "But I have no clue what or hoe [sic] to define me. I am only 18!" to which another student responds "you still dont [sic] kno [sic] damn?" ("Second Life Chat" 08 Nov. 2007). Another student later states, "i think who i am is somewhat constant though. it may change a little bit but...constant for the most part" ("Second Life Chat" 08 Nov. 2007). The same student who could not believe that someone still did not know how to define herself/himself, after much discussion about identity and how it is shaped and constantly changes, remarks "your identity should already be shaped" ("Second Life Chat" 08 Nov. 2007). These remarks, again, came from Class A, the younger class. Even though there were younger students in Class B, they did not see identity as something that is almost always the same or already shaped. So even though many scholars see identity as something fluid, it is not safe to assume that everyone does.

Before further considering the students' identity issues, it is important to understand the conversations surrounding identity that began years ago and are still ongoing in the field of computers and composition. In figure 17 are quotations highlighting what some have had to say about the issue of identity in CMC. Many of these statements are from leaders in the field of computers and composition, and others

are from experts who study the effects of computer gaming. This is a small sampling

of what has been said from a wide variety of scholars, and all of these experts have

something different to say about identity. It is no wonder then that my students were so

confused about their own identities and how these might change when they encountered

Wagner James Au (2008)	Freed from the accidents of birth that define who are, to ourselves and the people around us, the anonymity of Internet-based communication would give us new ways of playing with the things that seemed most fundamental to us and finding out just how essential they really are. Class, race, even sexual orientation would be fluid. (1185-90)
James Paul Gee (2007)	Good games offer players identities that trigger a deep investment on the part of the player. [They do this by either offering] a character so intriguing that players want to inhabit the character and can readily project their own fantasies, desires, and pleasures onto the character, [or by offering] a relatively empty character whose traits the player must determine, but in such a way that the player can create a deep and consequential life history in the game world for the characters. (32)
James A. Inman (2004)	Thinking about virtual identity requires a convergence of real and virtual identities, in virtual systems emerging from real systems [virtual community created from real community of class]. (171)
Beth Kolko	But the fact remains that sooner or later participants in a text-

(1998)	based virtual world come to recognize that their sense of self, of identity, is slippery. (254)
Peter Ludlow & Mark Wallace (2007)	Your character there [virtual world] is not merely a collection of screen art and software subroutines; it is, in large part, you. What happens to 'you' who exists in an online game can in many cases be every bit as meaningful as anything that happens to the 'you' of your offline life. (xv-xvi)
Michelle Nephew (2006)	The conflict between the unrestrained desires of the player characters (PCs) and their own moral judgment is an aspect of role-playing that defines it as a forum for the exploration of issues of identity. (120)
T. L. Taylor (2006)	Online world [is] not a tidy, self-contained environment but one with deep ties to value systems, forms of identity, and social networks. . . . This is not to say that experimentations do not exist online (such as gender-swapping) but that how peope make sense of and experience who they are online is not inherently separate from who they are and what they do offline. (18)
Sherry Turkle (1998)	But people don't just become whom they play, they play who they are or who they want to be or who they don't want to be. Players can use their MUD personae to refine their sense of why they are. (xi) When identity was defined as unitary and solid, it was relatively

	easy to recognize and censure deviation from a norm. A more fluid sense of self allows a greater capacity for acknowledging diversity. . . . life in the MUD is educational in ways that go far beyond any specific MUD content—the very experience of building and playing a MUD persona is a powerful education. (xvi)
Randal Woodland (1999)	Online spaces are so easily accessible that they are invaluable to people just beginning to explore their sexual identity. (79)

Fig. 17. Quotations concerning identity in virtual spaces.

the SL environment.

I knew when I began this project and made the decision to go with open enrollment instead of department permission that I would meet with some resistance. Even though the students had every opportunity to drop the class, some still felt they had to stay in the class, and these students resisted the course of instruction the most.[30] In part, this resistance could have come from what Inman refers to as "a sort of resistance to MOO textuality" (114). This occurs when players or in this case students "encounter multiple and rapidly scrolling threads of text," giving the student a feeling of being overwhelmed (114). One student comments on this very issue during a class discussion about identity. The student writes during the chat discussion "i am so lost," and another

[30] Students who entered class a week late felt they could not drop because they wanted to complete their FYC course in their first semester, and these students tended to not react well to SL as a learning environment; however, other students also resisted the environment at first.

student writes "i cant type this fast" ("Second Life Chat" 08 Nov. 2007). One

surprise, though, were some of the misconceptions my students had about anyone who

spent time in a virtual reality. Many of my students would take Turkle's comment,

"when we step through the screen into virtual communities, we reconstruct our identities

on the other side of the looking glass" (177), to mean that once those identities are

reconstructed, we return to this side of the looking glass changed into a being that is no

longer social or capable of living in the "real" world. For example, one night in the

brick-and-mortar classroom I asked some students, who had made verbal comments

about social spaces on the internet, what they thought I did with all of my free time.

They shifted uncomfortably in their seats and looked around as if an answer might be

floating out there somewhere, so I helped them out and asked if they thought I went home

every night and logged onto the internet and stayed there until all hours of the morning.

They shyly responded, "yes," that was indeed their concept of anyone who played

computer games or participated in social networking environments such as Facebook,

MySpace, or SL. In other words, people who are involved in these types of activities do

not have a life or an identity other than that of a computer geek.

Perhaps because of these types of attitudes, some students never felt as if they

obtained an SL identity. On November 8, I asked a guest speaker, OliviaP Writer in SL,

a writing, gender, and identity scholar at Michigan State University, to join us in SL and

lead a conversation about identity.[31] The first thing the guest lecturer asked my students

was whether or not they had completed their SL profiles. I was thrilled with this question

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[31] This ability to have a guest speaker from all over the US or even the world allows
students the opportunity to chat with people outside of their geographical area.

because I had purposely not mentioned the profiles to my students. I wanted to leave things for them to discover and decide whether or not to pursue. Had I told my students about the profiles, which were fairly easy to find, it is possible they would have felt obligated to fill them out. Why else would the instructor point them out, right? I was anxious to hear/read the answers from my students. It was almost a unanimous "no." Most students said they knew nothing about them. This backed up many of the students' position as outsiders in a culture not their own, and this position was evident in their writing. In response to a quick write on October 22, one student wrote "people are just different then [sic] me in SL. I really don't understand why these people log onto it anyways. I think we should all be worried about our real life. I guess that is what makes me an outsider on SL. I just don't get it [and] don't fit in at all" (Student Quick Write #1). Many commented that what made them an outsider was the inability to function like a resident in this culture, often being labeled as a newb or newbbie.[32]

Other issues, however, kept some feeling apart from the true SL residents. These things kept them thinking about their own identities and subsequently writing about them. One African American student wrote, "in the virtual world I'm white. I see every different color but mine" (Student Quick Write #2). As you can see in figure 18, at the time my students signed up in SL, there were no African American choices in the avatars. Now, however, the choices are more varied and you can start with an African American skin, but the furries are no longer available. The site, though, has a link in small letters that says "more" and there it relates that "you can change your clothes, your skin, your

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[32] Remarks such as these make it obvious that many students felt uncomfortable with forming an online identity.

hair, your shape and even your gender. You might even choose to make your avatar

something nonhuman such as a fish, a robot, or maybe even a potted flower. The only

limit is your imagination" (*SecondLife*). My students also had such choices, but it was

not as clearly stated, so if the students did not spend additional time inworld, it is

something they never realized.

The topic of racial identity is common in SL. You might notice that the

SecondLife website states that you can play with your gender and humanness, but the

closest it comes to saying anything about race is that you can change your skin. For

many, that means you can have a tan or be Goth white, but race does not necessarily

come to mind. Au discusses one Caucasian woman's experience when she donned the

Choose this avatar

Fig. 18. Screen capture from the video "SL Startup Procedures" showing the available

avatars from which my students had to choose.

skin of a beautiful African American woman given to her by a skin creator. Keep in

mind that she was still identifiable by her unique SL name (no one has the exact same

name), which did not change. When Thereian (avatar name) randomly teleported to a

location, Au relates that "one man took a look at her and announced, 'Look at the nigger

bitch' while another replied, 'Great, they are gonna invade SL now'" (1206-11). Au also

reports that some of Thereian's SL friends also treated her with cold disdain, asking when

she was going to return to her old self. Thereian tells Au that some of her RL friends

who are African American are also in SL, and they play white characters to avoid the

racism to which Thereian was subjected (1211-16). Perhaps this explains both why one

of my African American students chose to play as a Caucasian character and why he/she

fails to see any African Americans in SL, creating for her/him a sense of otherness that

keeps him/her from becoming an insider. Without this experience, however, these

personal reflections never would have appeared in this student's writing.[33]

Not all students, however, considered themselves outsiders, which was reflected

in the same quick write assignment, which comes from Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's

text *FieldWorking* asking students to describe their insider/outsider status (219-20).

Some students indicated that they had found a sense of belonging by investigating SL and

finding places that interested them. The ones who did this were primarily the ones that I

would see inworld outside of regular class time. They were the ones who were willing to

complete in-class assignments as homework if they found they were not satisfied with the

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[33] Experiences such as these enriched the students' writings because they were more
engaged with their topics and had more details to draw from.

results of their fieldworking during class.[34] One student wrote, "I have been to a couple of parties at the tattoo shop. Rea is learning to DJ and it's fun to dance and dress up in what ever the theme may be. My noobishness shines through every now and then. . . . I now have a whole new view in SL that is so much more awesome than I thought it could be" (Student Quick Write #3). Another student wrote, "I began to walk around, talk with others so that I could gain some more cultural insight on the inner workings of this magical place [Burning Life Festival] in the middle of this barren desert. Such a nontypical setting made me feel usually odd but not in this case. I knew off the bat that coming here made me become an insider" (Student Quick Write #4). Other students felt a mixture of insider/outsiderness when it came to their experiences in SL, depending on how involved they chose to become. One student writes "every time I log on to SL I am more comfortable and relaxed about what I am doing . . ." and then writes in the very next sentence "though I am an SL resident I am still a newbie" (Student Quick Write #5). These issues of identity came through in much of their low-risk writing.

Watching my students struggle with issues of identity while using SL and then seeing those concerns appear in their writing was what I had expected. I had hoped that my students would experience things in this virtual other life that would inspire their writing. Keep in mind that inspired writing is not necessarily good writing, but it is often more interesting and more readable, which is a step in the right direction. As long as students are writing about things that are of interest to them, they are engaging with their

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[34] The fact that I would find students logged into SL outside of the classroom, further researching in-class assignments, shows that some students were willing to spend more time than required doing their course work.

written work as noted by Ralph Fletcher and Aimee Buckner. However, all of the

issues my students faced in this new and challenging environment also created a context

for the contact zone.

Anything Goes in a Second or Online Life?: Contact Zone or Fight Zone

Pratt's seminal article, "Professing in the Contact Zone," is known by many in the

field of composition, and many of us attempt to put the contact zone into practice in our

own classrooms, working to create "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple

with each other, often in contests of highly asymmetrical relations of power . . ." (4).

Pratt suggests that "the fact that no one was safe made all of us involved in the course

appreciate the importance of what we came to call 'safe houses'" (17). Many have taken

this comment to mean that these contact zones must also provide a safe place to which

students can return. Daphne Key writes that Pratt "recognized that in order for all

participants to grow, contact zones must become—or provide for—the creation of 'safe

houses'" (102-03). I would argue that Pratt was simply pointing out the importance of

there being a place where students would feel safe, not that we should create this safe

place in the midst of the contact zone or even to provide it if we intend on having our

students enter a contact zone. I also do not agree, as Key states, that "the power

redistribution can allow all participants to emerge victorious" (102). Pratt actually says

that "the sufferings and revelations [not to be confused with victory] were, at different

moments to be sure, experienced by every student. No one was excluded, and no one

was safe" (17).

It is important for the reader to understand that I do not agree that contact zones do or should provide a safe house, nor do I accept that everyone walks away victorious. I do argue that most should walk away from the contact zone with a deeper understanding of who they are or perhaps where they have come from. With these deeper understandings, students and instructors alike who enter honestly into a contact zone should emerge with more insight into themselves and the culture in which they live. Furthermore, I do not agree with Lori E. Amy when she argues that in order for "our online classes to be effective and liberatory experiences for students, we must acknowledge that 'out of hand' *can* be destructive—that the verbal fighting electronic discussions sometimes entail cannot simply be glossed as the necessary friction of the contact zone" (124). I would argue that verbal fighting may very well be necessary in electronic discussions in order to grow and move beyond such things. This is a part of maturing as individuals.

Take for instance the blog discussion that occurred between one of my older students in Class B, whom I will call Kelly, and other younger students—some in Class B, others in Class A—who were mentioned earlier in this chapter. Kelly was not necessarily politically correct in her/his accusation that many of the students were immature; however, one student in particular, whom I will call Pat, responded in an extremely harsh manner. Pat posted this in response: "if you have a probllem [sic] then maybe you should say something in class [rather] than just hide behind your little computer and dogg [sic] on us. ill [sic] be more than happy to state my opinion to you face to face. who do you think you are? your nothing. grow up and get a life" ("Pissed

Off"). This was not the first response to Kelly's initial post, but with each reply,

Kelly argued his/her position more succinctly and without a lot of the initial anger that

permeated her/his original post. In response to Pat's over zealous remark, Kelly wrote:

> I won't stoop to your level with name calling. If my post pissed you off it
>
> is up to YOU to figure out why. You DID have a choice to be in this
>
> English class, as did I. I, along with a good number of others, do our
>
> assigned reading, fieldwork in SL and keep up with due dates. The ones
>
> that don't end up hindering the class and I have the right to say so.
>
> ("Pissed Off")

After the initial attack, Kelly could have retorted by name calling and made the situation

even worse, but he/she did not, and by the final post, Pat, who told Kelly to "get a life"

ended up apologizing and suggesting that Kelly keep such opinions and comments to

her/himself. So even though Pat did not agree with the original post or Kelly's right to

voice his/her opinions, Pat did realize that many of her/his comments were inappropriate.

The question that we must ask ourselves is why such verbal exchanges take place

in an online contact zone when we rarely see such violent exchanges in the contact zone

of a traditional brick-and-mortar classroom? The answer, obvious to some, may not be

clear to those who have not dealt with or allowed a contact-zone-type environment in

their online spaces, whether it be a blog, a discussion board, or a virtual location.

Consider the brick-and-mortar classroom: here when students confront one another in the

contact zone there is much more going on than the simple verbal exchanges that are

occurring. When students are in close proximity to one another, things such as facial

expressions, body posture/gestures, and voice tone and infliction say just as much as the words that a person is speaking. All of these factors are either completely lost, or much more difficult to replicate online. SL will allow users to somewhat control their avatar's animations, but once a serious discussion gets going, there is no time to worry about having your avatar do such things as make rude gestures or perform in a certain way.[35] As Amy notes, "we can understand students' struggles for dominance in online classrooms in terms of the struggle to establish the symbolic value of one social field over another. Given the conflation of competing social fields, it is hardly surprising that much of this struggle for dominance manifests in rhetorically violent ways" (116). I would have to agree with bell hooks, however, when she writes that early in her career as a professor she had a difficult time "evaluating whether or not [her class's] experience in the classroom had been rewarding" (153). She further notes that "it may be six months or a year, even two years later, that they [the students] realize the importance of what they have learned" (153). It is only through honest and open exchanges such as the one given above that students can learn to deal with such violent verbal sparring. Even if it takes my students a few years to realize the value of what they have learned, these lessons will be valuable as they enter a job market that includes more and more online interaction in a global market.

The early part of the semester saw several spontaneous contact-zone-type exchanges as I have shown in this chapter; these types of exchanges decreased drastically as the semester continued and some sort of online social hierarchy was established among

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[35] The anonymity in online environments such as SL allows some students to voice opinions that they would never venture in the traditional classroom.

the students. I did not, however, want my students to become complacent in this second life, thereby ending the contact-zone environment that was established in the beginning. In order to complicate both the issues of power and of identity, I created the "Everyone's a Kool-Aid Man Today" assignment mentioned earlier. As Inman argues, "discomfort in academic spaces, if structured carefully and responsibly, often leads to great personal and intellectual growth for students" (218). What safer environment for students to take risks in than a virtual space where teleporting or simply logging off immediately removes them from a potentially dangerous or overly uncomfortable situation.

This assignment was designed to help my students experience what it might be like to be viewed as an "other:" an uncomfortable situation for anyone. The full assignment can be found in Appendix Q, but what the assignment calls for is students becoming someone they are not.[36] I started the students thinking about being someone whom they are not by asking them to do a quick write prior to any knowledge of the assignment. I told them to imagine that they woke up one morning, stumbled to the bathroom to take their morning shower, and found that they could not fit in the shower door. Upon looking in the mirror, they discovered they had turned into the Kool-Aid man. They were then instructed to write about their experiences as they attempt to go to classes and function like any other day. The student quick writes were both entertaining and serious, but more importantly, the students began thinking about the idea of being different.

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[36] This assignment required that the students experiment with their online identity.

On the next venture into SL, students were instructed at the beginning of the class session—the second half of class for the night class—to log into SL and go to the circle of chairs where they would find a box. I informed them that they were to pick up the box, unpack it, and then don the skin that they had unpacked from the box. Technical difficulties that night prevented me from recording any video; however, I have a shot of the result of this changing of skin as seen in figure 19. This student apparently felt comfortable as a Kool-Aid man because he/she never changed from this appearance for the rest of the semester. The writing in the essays that resulted from this experiment shows that many of the students were surprised by the way this costume made them feel and the way others treated them while they wore it. One student writes,

> During my time spent as the Kool-aid Man in Second Life, several avatars
> denied me the right to enter buildings and people's conversations based on
> foolish motives. Numerous avatar characters rejected my identity and
> refused to accept or tolerate me. Having people refuse my presence
> because of my appearance ultimately forced me to question my stability as
> an individual. ("Insight of an Outsider")

This student found that trying to be someone whom you are not can create an identity crisis.

For another student, the experience brought back memories of two friends he/she had in high school. One of these friends paid money to "look" different than everyone else, but the other friend was born with a physical facial deformity which she would have paid to have had corrected. The student writes that her/his "deformed friend had no

control over her looks, and was miserable because of people's reaction to her

otherness. People stared at her in restaurants, and she cried afterwards. Her

uncontrollably different appearance eventually got to her when she hung herself at age

sixteen" ("Otherness" 1). This student's experience as an "other" gave him/her the outlet

that she/he needed to
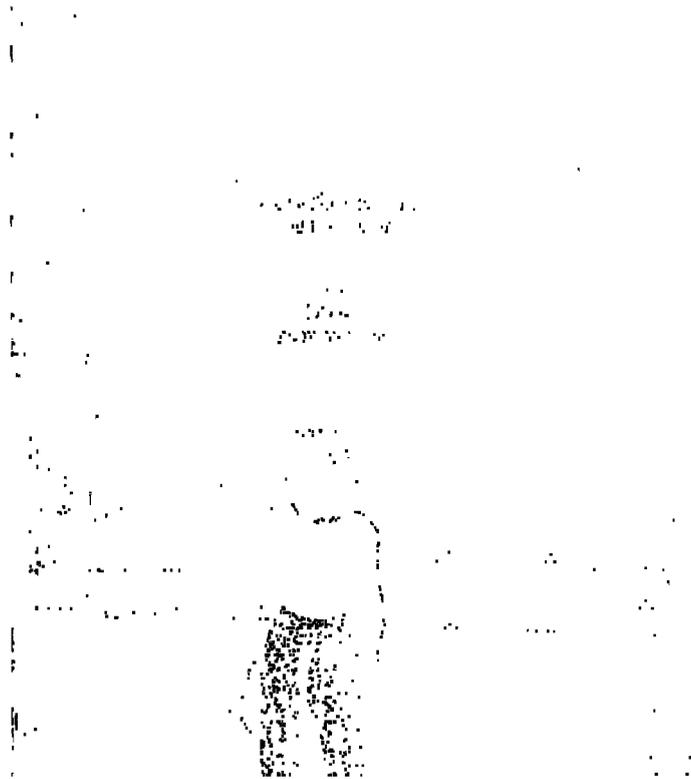
Fig.   19. Snapshot of student in Koolaid Man skin.

write about a painful experience. Barry Joseph argues that "educational programs can not

[sic] only leverage the impermanence of identity within virtual worlds but help to make

these issues explicit for learners or use these features to explore various real world issues

like race or class" (13). My student then connects this RL experience to his/her Kool-Aid

man experience in SL. She/he writes that during "my time spent in Second Life, I have never seen anyone as different as I was when dressed as the Kool-Aid man. This goes to show that people are just as self conscious in SL as they are in real life. They are afraid of being laughed at, or feeling uncomfortable" ("Otherness" 1).[37] The difference between the student's RL experience and the SL one is that the student was the one who was being viewed as an other. The student concludes with "I, for the sake of our experiment, cannot control my Kool-Aid-Ness, and now understand how frustrating it is to be denied rights simply because of physical appearance" ("Otherness" 1). The dichotomy that this assignment created for the students came through clearly in many of their writings.

What I was not prepared for, however, was the student who would write about being the "other" in RL with "the neatly manicured boy upfront [who] points out your medusa like hair, the 'Battle of Your Face' that has been all but won by opposing forces and your shoes, which he now dubs 'neon nightmares'" ("Taming the Beast"). Rather than feeling like an "other," masquerading in SL as the Kool-Aid man, this student found acceptance. The student admits that one location she/he visited asked him/her to leave, but it was not because the student was creating too much lag because of her/his girth, but rather because the establishment thought the student was advertising. The student found that acceptance of things new and somewhat strange comes quickly in a virtual world. He/she relates, "I began to ask them [SL residents] why my appearance hadn't been an

[37] This student's SL experience is an example of making connections between SL and RL.

issue. In every instance it was the same response—I was not the first Kool Aid man to visit. . . . I was no longer an oddity. . . . They had been desensitized and had accepted the fact that Kool Aid men were just a part of SL now" ("Taming the Beast"). This student was prepared for the same type of humiliation she/he had been subjected to in RL, but instead, found acceptance based on the simple fact that residents were now used to seeing Kool-Aid men.

Most students entered into the assignment with the mentality of simply finding out how others would react to them. There were a few, however, that took a more contact-zone approach to the endeavor of becoming an other in SL. They were not willing to accept the distribution of power that was being presented to them and were willing to risk confrontation to make a point. When one establishment attempted to keep one of the Kool-Aid men out because of his/her size, the student retaliated. She/he writes, "I really didn't want to be in there. It was just the point that she was discriminating against us because of our size. I ran through her entering the nightclub. I wasn't going to let some little avatar tell me that I'm not allowed in somewhere" ("Otherness" 2). The result of this action was that the student's screen went black as he/she was not only banned from the club, but was put into SL limbo with her/his friends who had entered the club with him/her. The student and her/his friends took back the power that was denied them, if only temporarily, and they all felt a sense of empowerment from their actions, if, again, only briefly. The students were satisfied with the fact that they had entered the club and not walked away defeated.

Once they had freed themselves from limbo, they proceeded to another location to see how residents would react to them, and next, they found themselves being threatened with bodily harm. The student writes, "I looked at the avatar and he had this humungous machine gun pointed right at me! I could not believe what I was experiencing. It made me really mad so I gathered up all my other fellow Kool-Aid men and told them to go to Money Island" ("Otherness" 3). Again, these students were not willing to be treated any differently than any other avie in SL. This time, however, they sent out a call to the rest of their class members asking them to teleport to their location. The result, according to one student, was that the avatar threatening them "eventually ran off," and the students who had been threatened felt a sense of accomplishment. By banning together with their classmates to increase their own power, they stood up to and won the battle for equality in this virtual space. The students are, in effect, practicing what Inman terms "cyborg pedagogy," which he defines by "tying it carefully to activism for equity and diversity" (210). These students protected their right to be diverse, and in the case of trying to enter the club, they were attempting to secure equality for themselves regardless of their diversity.

The "Everyone's a Kool-Aid Man Today" assignment was designed to place the students in an uncomfortable situation in hopes that it would help them understand more about themselves or their own identities and the culture in which they live. Taylor makes reference to the fact that "how you choose to represent yourself has meaningful implications psychologically and socially" (12), and I trusted that this assignment would place the students in a place, both psychologically and socially, that many had never been

before. Kolko emphasizes that a virtual environment such as a MOO is "a place of contact and conflict, both with the self and with others" (261); all my students experienced these conflicts to one degree or another.

The Ending of a Second Life: The Students Final Thoughts

As mentioned in chapter 3, I asked the students to fill out a questionnaire (see Appendix G) at the end of the semester. It is important to note that their grades were calculated, but they did not see them until they turned in their questionnaires, insuring that their responses in no way influenced or were influenced by their final grade. The survey was a combination of a Likert scale, which according to Mary Sue MacNealy "is very useful when probing attitudes and opinions," and a series of open-ended questions to which the students needed to write a response, which MacNealy notes "do not limit the possible answers that may be given" (162). The Likert survey allowed the students to rank their response on a scale from one, being "Strongly Agree" to five, being "Strongly Disagree." This survey provided a "way to describe a population [my students] in quantitative terms" (MacNealy 148). The first set of questions is in relation to their confidence level before taking the class. The results, listed in the figure 20, show that the students were generally confident in their ability to brainstorm a topic to write about and their ability to write about it in a way that interested them. However, their confidence level wanes when it comes to their ability to write about that topic in a way that was of interest to their reader, their ability to organize their essay, and their ability to write with few grammatical errors. The next Likert scale asked them to rank these same questions

based on their experiences after a semester in the class. The results can be seen in

figure 21. The most noteworthy change here is that no student disagrees or strongly

disagrees in any category. Figure 21 also illustrates the students' confidence level in

their ability to write an organized essay, with no one feeling "unsure" of their skill.

Even though a Likert scale provides useful data, I wanted to gauge the students'

success in the classroom based on their own answers to open-ended questions. I began

these questions by asking them a simple yes or no question that they then needed to

explicate. Figure 22 shows the results of the yes/no portion of these answers. I found

the answer to the second question to be the most intriguing because the classes were split

when considering whether or not SL experiences improved their writing abilities, yet

their confidence levels increased in all of the areas in figure 22, indicating that their own

perceptions of their writing did improve. The resistance that was apparent at the

Question	(Please mark only one box for each question)				
	Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Not Sure 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5
In relation to your confidence level prior to taking this class					
I was confident in my ability to come up with a topic/content to write about prior to taking this course.	8 or 29.6%	13 or 48.1 %	4 or 14.8%	2 or 7.4%	
I was confident in my ability to write about a topic in such a way that it was of interest to myself.	6 or 22.2%	17 or 63%	4 or 14.8%		
I was confident in my ability to write about a topic in such a way that it was of interest to others.	3 or 11.1%	11 or 40.7%	8 or 29.6%	5 or 18.5%	
I was confident in my ability to write an essay that was organized prior to taking this course.	3 or 11.1%	14 or 51.9%	5 or 18.5%	4 or 14.8%	1 or 3.7%
I was confident in my ability to write an essay with few grammatical flaws prior to taking this course.	5 or 18.5%	8 or 29.6%	7 or 25.9%	5 or 18.5%	2 or 7.4%

Fig. 20. Survey of writing confidence before taking the class.

	(Please mark only one box for each question)				
Question	Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Not Sure 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5
In relation to your confidence level after taking this class					
I was confident in my ability to come up with a topic/content to write about after taking this course.	14 or 51.9%	12 or 44.4%	1 or 3.7%		
I was confident in my ability to write about a topic in such a way that it was of interest to myself.	11 or 40.7%	14 or 51.9%	2 or 7.4%		
I was confident in my ability to write about a topic in such a way that it was of interest to others.	9 or 33.3%	15 or 55.6%	3 or 11.1%		
I was confident in my ability to write an essay that was organized after taking this course.	7 or 25.9%	20 or 74.1%			
I was confident in my ability to write an essay with few grammatical flaws after taking this course.	8 or 29.6%	13 or 48.1%	6 or 22.3%		

Fig. 21. Survey of writing confidence after taking the class.

beginning of the semester still continued for some. Below is a list of some of the

comments made by students who did not feel SL was beneficial to their writing skills.

- "it [SL] had nothing to do w/ writing."

- "It did not really help my writing, but opened my eyes to new topics to write

  about."

- "I feel critique from the instructor assisted my writing skills. Second Life was

  just an experience to incite ideas and topics."

It seems students whose responses were similar to the last two quotes possibly misread

question 2, as if it asks if the "experiences" in SL improved their ability to come up with

topics or ideas. Most of the students who responded "No" to question 2 made similar

comments about SL helping with topics and ideas, but they did not see this as

improving their writing. Fulwiler, however, argues that "when ideas don't come easily or

naturally, writers need techniques for finding or creating them" (79). If SL helped with

topics or gave students "more to write about" ("End-of-Semester Questionnaire"), then it

would

Question	YES	NO	N/A
1) If you had the opportunity to take another class in *Second Life* would you do so?	17 or 62.9%	10 or 37.1%	0
2) Do you feel your experiences in *Second Life* improved your writing abilities?	14 or 51.9%	13 or 48.1%	0
3) When compared to the writing you did for other classes this semester, did you work harder on your writing in this class?	22 or 81.5%	2 or 7.4%	3 or 11.1%
4) Do you feel the writing you did for this class will help you with your writing in other classes?	26 or 96.3%	0	1 or 3.7%

Fig. 22. Yes/No portion of the end of semester questionnarie.

stand to reason that SL experiences did indeed help them to improve their writing skills.

It is true that 48.1% of the students did not feel that SL helped improve their

writing, and whether or not their answers were based on misreading the question or not

cannot be proven definitively. However, 51.9% believed that their writing improved as a

result of their exposure to this environment, and below are some of the students'

comments related to their answers.[38]

- "I actually got to view things in a different way which gave me more to talk

  about."

- "It gave me more to write about & a more interesting topic, but not help with my

  grammar."

---

[38] These statistics show that using SL did indeed change student writing.

- "In a way yes it did because it keeps my mind flowing with ideas to write about."

- "Yes because it has allowed me to experience things that I wouldn't have before."

Amazingly, these students who believe SL helped with their writing abilities give similar reasons as the ones who said SL did not help. They list experiences and topic ideas as reasons that SL was beneficial in improving their writing. Again, it is instructive what students consider helpful in their writing improvement.

Finally, 96.3% of the students answered yes when asked if the writing they did for this class would help with writing in future classes. The success of any class should not only be the outcome for students in that class, but also how well it prepares them for future endeavors both in school and in life, which is why FYC is often part of the general education curriculum. I argue that the use of SL not only helped students to engage more with their writing, but that it also encouraged them to look and think outside of their comfort zone, making the use of SL in these two writing classes very successful.

Rethinking a Second Life: Students Reflect

The two classes ended, and everyone scurried away for their Christmas break before beginning the second semester of the school year. I am confident that my students did little to no thinking about learning in a virtual environment such as SL, but it was pretty much all I did. One result of my reflections was that I wrote the final interview questions, which I hoped several students would answer once the second semester began. On January 28, 2008—the first day of the spring semester—I emailed all of my former

students and asked if they would volunteer to participate in the interview process via email. Of those that finished the class, 11 percent agreed to the interview process and answered the questions found in Appendix H. Even though the response rate appears low, it is important to remember that I was asking freshman to do "work" for a class they had already either passed or failed, and they had no incentive to do so. The answers of those that did respond, however, provide some interesting insight into what some of the students thought about their learning experiences in SL.

The interview questions were varied in an attempt to understand what the students felt was most and least beneficial when it comes to learning in SL and what their overall experience was. The students agreed that if they learned another of their classes (not necessarily an English or writing class) was going to be held using SL, they would view it as "another extraordinary situation" and "pretty cool" (Student Interviews). Given the time removed from the actual experience (anywhere from three to five months), this is a positive outcome. However, one of my overall goals of this interview was to learn what did not work for the students.

I expected some of the disadvantages of learning in SL to be things such as the fact that not every student enjoys computer games or SL is too hard to learn. In other words, I expected that the disadvantages would address students' personal preferences when it came to learning; what the students' responded, however, was quite different. Two of the respondents addressed access and computer hardware issues. They voiced concerns over computer and system crashes and the need for high-speed internet, and one student commented that if she ever took another class in SL, she hoped she could "sit at

home . . . and log on to SL" (Student Interview, 10 Apr. 2008). Another disadvantage

noted was that some students did not take this learning environment seriously and instead

choose to harass others. Even though this is certainly true, I would suggest that the few

students who are going to push the boundaries and behave this way in a virtual world are

likely the same few students who sit in traditional classrooms and violate these

boundaries by harassing their fellow classmates and/or the instructor. If anything, the

virtual world frees up the rest of the class from such harassment and gives them the

opportunity to explore new and exciting learning environments while those who are not

interested pursue their disinterest virtually.

This same question asked the respondents what advantages they saw in learning in

a virtual reality like SL, and here the students listed different aspects that they felt were

advantageous. One student stated that "for those who have trouble learning in a

[traditional] classroom setting, Second Life serves as a perfect virtual learning

environment" (Student Interview, 17 Mar. 2008). Along those same lines, another

student wrote that "you are more open to speak your mind, especially if your classmates

do not know which avatar belongs with which student" (Student Interview. 10 Apr.

2008). Both of these advantages speak to the anonymity discussed earlier in this chapter,

indicating that some students also see the value in a learning environment that provides a

degree of freedom from the traditional brick-and-mortar classroom and that encourages

them to speak freely.

On that first night of class, I doubt any of my students were thinking of SL in

terms of learning advantages, but I will share two of my students' responses to the

question of what they were experiencing during that first night in SL. As one student

stated, "at first I was unsure of how this would help my writing since it was just a video

game. Needless to say, by the end of the semester my writing had grown so much due to

this program once recognized as a silly little video game" (Student Interview, 17 Mar.

2008). Another student discusses the excitement he/she felt going into SL because she/he

always wanted to participate in a role playing game, but then he/she comments that "it

isn't really a game because you don't really have any goals or levels to beat, but it still

involves role playing" (Student Interview, 10 Apr. 2008). All of the students agreed that

they were confused as to how using SL was going to benefit their writing, but even this

was soon overcome as evidenced from previous comments.

What Does a Second Life Really Get Me?: Conclusion

I will look more closely at the outcome of the research and where it might extend

in the next and final chapter, but based on what has been discussed here, what purpose

did conducting half of my classes in SL serve for both me and the students? It is evident

that most of my students were involved in class instead of sitting on the side-lines, and

this involvement shows in their learning. In response to conducting class in SL, one

student posted the following blog entry:

> Tonight, I went to my favorite spot in Second Life; Japan Islands! . . . I
>
> met two guys there in SL. One of them is an International student and he
>
> lives in U.S, and the other lives in Japan and he is businessman. We talked
>
> about each other bios or something like that. It was for a while, but I felt

like we could know each other in the old days. This chat made me

excited and a little bit wonderful because we are passing the border by

using PC, and we are chatting in this virtual world. Beyond border,

beyond time lag, we could talk. It is awesome, right? I know that in SL we

can talk anytime you want, anywhere you want. Tonight, I realized that

through PC, through SL, I can connect with people around the world. I

look forward to next Thursday class. ("No Border in SL" 05 Oct. 2007)[39]

Clearly this student found a place in SL that helped her/him to understand that virtual

communities span borders and enable users to communicate globally and learn from

people around the world, not just in the brick-and-mortar classroom from which he/she

was connecting.

The same involvement and excitement that the students experienced in their

learning environment was also evident in their writing. It is the engagement the students

had with their writing that was most exciting to me. It was obvious that a majority of

them were writing about things that interested them, and never once did I receive an

essay that missed the required length: often a common problem with first-year writers in

my experience. It took the students time, but some finally began to understand the

benefits of using SL. This is apparent in one student's blog post when she/he writes:

"Es Mas Bello." First, title translation: it's much better. I have to say that

my experiences with SL are becoming more relaxed and enjoyable, if not

---

[39] This student's ability to connect with people globally made her more comfortable in the RL environment and allowed her to explore cultural differences with others who felt the same way she did.

more justifiable. When we were bumbling around as Kool-Aid men

Thursday, I realized for the first time that we were actually doing research

WHILE having fun in SL - we were learning how other people respond, so

we were productive. There's a light at the end of the tunnel now :). ("Es

Mas Bello" 27 Sep. 2007)

The Kool-Aid man assignment was what many of the students needed to convince

them of the worth of using SL in a writing class. They began to understand the

opportunities it afforded them to do research in a way that could never be accomplished

in the regular classroom. They became someone other than their normal selves, and after

a night of the students masquerading as the Kool-Aid man, I required them to go into SL

and talk to people who chose to be something other than a typical human for their next

SL assignment. Their experiences in this virtual environment gave them the experiences

that many lacked to write the interesting and expository essays that the first-year writing

program requires.

Chapter 5

Benefits of a Second Life: It's All about the Experiences

Can a Second Life Really Help?: Introduction

One question that I heard numerous times from students throughout the semester

was "what can using Second Life (SL) teach us about writing?" Some students wanted to

come to the brick-and-mortar classroom, sit at desks, and listen to an instructor deliver a

lecture: a lecture on how to write. I assured the students that we, as a class, would have

discussions on writing, specifically, what it is, what makes good writing, and how they

could become better writers. I even assured them that there would be times when we

would discuss grammar issues, and I asked the students to email me their greatest

grammar concern—the majority said commas. But the question still persisted: what can

"SL teach us about writing?"

This, quite frankly, is a difficult question to answer when dealing with FYC

students whose last experiences in writing were in high school or possibly a work

environment. Their expectations varied greatly, but with these two classes, as with most

FYC classes, many wanted only grammar lessons, and they did not understand how SL

would facilitate these expectations. One student wrote in her/his blog entry that when I

told the class about SL that he/she "was thinking in [her/his] head what [does] this stuff

have to do with english [sic]" ("I Think I Like It"). Another student blogged, "I am still

kinda confused about how this has anything to do with English, but this class is more

than likely not going to be near as boring as most English classes are" ("Experience of

Second Life"). Comments like these are what many writing teachers face those first few days of class. As discussed by Constance Weaver in *Teaching Grammar in Context,* students simply do not understand that a writing class is anything other than a stereotypical English class where they will be taught grammar, and this is evident in the resistance that I discussed earlier. Even though the students were still unsure of how SL was going to fit into their writing class, which they viewed as an English/grammar class, most were still excited about the possibilities of trying out this new adventure.

Can a Second Life Continue?: Where Do We Go from Here

I have enthusiastically told anyone who asked that the two classes were a success based not only on student comments in the End of Semester Questionnaire, but on every aspect of the classes: students were engaged with their writing, they were interactive in the class sessions, and they approached the class with open minds. . . most of the time. The general question this research has attempted to answer, however, is focused on whether SL can be an effective tool. Specific questions include:

- Did using a virtual world like SL change student writing?

- Did my students come to understand SL as a culture uniquely different from their own?

- Did they embrace this new medium?

- Did they form an online identity?

- How did they react to such learning?

My analysis of the data collected through this ethnographic teacher-researcher study shows that SL can be an effective tool for instructors to use in FYC as outlined below.

Some of the students in this research project found that they could:

1. Communicate with people globally (social networking)

2. Talk to instructors more easily through SL

3. Have a voice due to anonymity

4. Better understand and write about diversity

5. Better understand and write about their own identity

6. Spend more time on coursework because they enjoyed the virtual environment

7. Make connections between RL and VL events and write about them

8. Become more engaged in their writing

9. More easily meet length requirements

10. Engage with scholars (invited by instructor) from different universities

---

Even though SL is a highly effective tool for teaching FYC, some reservations still exist. The first is the issue of access, which I discussed in chapter 2. As Nedra Reynolds points out when discussing the concept of the world wide web connecting us all, "at odds with these 'warm and fuzzy' notions of the WWW are some material realities: the whole world is *not* in the Web" (83). Students are not naive when it comes to this problem, as evidenced by the student who wrote about wanting to be able to log in from home

(Student Interview, 10 Apr. 2008). This student's comment is a direct result of she/he

not having a computer powerful enough to run the software or not having a broadband

internet connection that would allow her/him to log onto SL successfully. Linda L.

Briggs, in a talk with Peggy Sheehy whose middle school created Ramapo Islands in

Second life, found that Sheehy laments that SL bandwidth "can be an issue with schools

that don't have access to broadband connectivity," but Sheehy also argues that "it helps

that Second Life is increasingly being recognized for its potential as a serious learning

environment . . . rather than a game" ("The Teen Grid"). Even in my classroom, where

we had broadband connectivity and adequate hardware, we endured crashes and severe

lag at times. These connectivity issues make it difficult to conduct a productive class, but

these difficulties did teach the students how to deal with technology issues that can be

trying, such as the frustration felt by them when they lose assignments due to

technological difficulties. Schools that wish to use SL as a learning environment will

need to address such technology problems.

Not all access issues are related to hardware, though. As discussed earlier in

chapter 4, female first-year students still do not feel as comfortable with computers as

their male counterparts, due, in part, to protective parents not allowing their daughters as

much access as their sons as well as many young women succumbing to social norms.

Barbara Z. Johnson and Elizabeth M. King note that in their "experience, many families

tightly restrict access of their daughters to computers and the Internet . . ." (114).

Generally speaking, parents seem more concerned about their daughters falling prey to

predators on the internet than they are their sons. The resulting limited access, however,

puts girls/women at a disadvantage when it comes to a virtual social environment such as SL. If parents, teachers, or school administrators are concerned about the safety of young women on the internet, then they need to teach girls from a young age to watch for the warning signs of and how to protect themselves from such predators, not restrict their computer/internet use. Sally probably thinks that if she cannot get on the computer and play World of Warcraft like her brother or set up a MySpace profile, then why should she bother getting on the computer at all. We cannot control all of the access issues that students face, but those we can control, we should, such as providing computers and encouraging girls from an early age to investigate computers and all they have to offer, including internet social spaces—perhaps under a controlled environment.

The other access issue for many girls/women is the social pressure that many of them feel to give up the sciences and math as they enter middle school. For a girl or young woman to be interested in these subjects has been, in the past, perceived as unfeminine, and some of these preconceived ideas still exist. Gee argues that one "important issue is that our society takes games, technology, math, and science away from girls . . . during middle school": a time "when girls are expected to serve the interests of the heterosexual crowd and not develop their technical chops. We need to give them back full access" ("Foreword" xii). Gee makes this argument in a foreword written in 2007. The issue of access for girls and women due to social norms is still a factor in the twenty-first century.

Overall, however, access issues that were once a very big concern when it came to conducting any kind of class using computer/network technologies are now small

considering other concerns. Selfe discusses the reactions she gets when she begins talking gigabytes and processors, and she points out that she "can spot . . . the slightly averted gaze, the quick glance at the watch, the panicky look in the eyes" when a discussion turns to technology ("Technology and Literacy" 94). Technology scares many teachers because they know they are not knowledgeable enough to contribute to the conversation. Furthermore, Selfe comments that "technology is either boring or frightening to most humanists," but she does not stop there; she further argues that "many teachers of English composition feel it antithetical to their primary concerns and many believe it should not be allowed to take up valuable scholarly time or the attention that could be best put to use in teaching or the study of literacy" ("Technology and Literacy" 94). Selfe is not the only compositionist/technologist who sees this in the area of humanities. Eric H. Hobson argues that "most teachers of writing respond to the presence of technology and teaching in one of four ways: rail against its dehumanizing potential; ignore it and hope that it won't affect them too much; explore its uses and implications tentatively; a small percentage embrace it enthusiastically" (ix). The simple truth is that many humanities' scholars proudly call themselves Luddites; however, instructors who criticize technology because it scares them should consider the possibilities before dismissing it.

Virtual realities such as SL with their Web 2.0 (soon to be 3.0) technologies are the future of computers and composition. In order to keep up with the ever changing and expanding world in which we live, it is crucial that composition scholars and teachers who are interested in technology stay informed and self-trained in the newest software

and hardware changes because what was once viewed by many as a trend has proven

its staying power and its usefulness. George's comments in 1995 are still correct today:

> Technology is here. We cannot ignore it. . . . What we don't quite know .
>
> . . is how this 'New World' really will reconfigure our teaching . . . .
>
> Because we come to the technology with structures already in place . . .
>
> we are in danger of either recreating the old or staring at the new in
>
> wonder—hoping for the utopian classroom that too many of our
>
> colleagues envision. ("Wonder of it All" 332-33)

Even after thirteen years, many still expect that utopian classroom when it comes to the

use of technology. It is never going to happen. As instructors we have to work hard to

1) train ourselves in the technologies we believe will be beneficial to our pedagogy (even

if our institutions do not offer the hardware or training to facilitate this) , and

2) constantly revisit our pedagogies to ensure we do not let the technologies drive them.

Selfe recognizes that "composition studies faculty have a much larger and more

complicated obligation to fulfill—that of trying to understand and make sense of, to *pay*

attention to, how technology is now inextricably linked to literacy and literacy education

in this country" ("Technology and Literacy" 96). In order for composition specialists to

be able to use technologies such as SL, they will also have to spend time understanding

how the technology, which is inextricably linked to literacy, can work with their

pedagogies.

The final reservation I have concerning the use of SL by any instructor is due to

the relationship between the instructor and students. Once instructors are comfortable

with the technology and the pedagogies they are using, the next step required is that

they learn from and help educate their students in the technology they are using.

However, when it comes to social environments, students are often more educated than

we are. Recent research has shown that students sometimes resent the use of

technologies that they consider "theirs." Vie conducted a survey with instructors and

students concerning social networking spaces. She determined from the results that "for

the most part, students did not expect that instructors would *encroach* on online 'student

spaces'" (emphasis added 18). Therefore, instructors often have to deal with a degree of

disgruntlement if they choose to use technology that students view as theirs. It may take

time to acclimate the students into using these types of spaces in an academic setting, and

instructors need extra patience and great empathy to help students make this transition.

The best way for instructors to succeed at this is to be well-trained themselves and to

remember that students are likely either 1) new to the technology they are being asked to

use, or 2) familiar with it and resistant to the fact the instructor is invading what they

consider their territory.

Memories of My Second Life and Dreams for the Future: Reflections and Plans

I mentioned in chapter 4 the changes that I had to make due to the griefing incident

from an inworld resident.[40] These changes were necessary in order to move the research

forward; however, as with any teacher research, I learned as much as I taught during

these two classes, and, as a result, when I teach a composition course again in SL, I will

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[40] See the DVD clip "SL Griefing: This Clip Contains Mature Content."

keep some of these changes, discard others, and implement new ones. Bob Fecho,

Peg Graham, and Sally Hudson-Ross note that "we who learn acknowledge a historical

figured world, determine our positioning within that world, author or improvise a

response to that world, and reconceive that world" (177). Within the historical context of

my classes, it is time to position myself and reconceive what this world of FYC might be

the next time I teach it.

Of the changes made, the first one I would cut is that of not allowing inworld

residents access to our island or space during class time. Most inworld residents are very

respectful of academic spaces and drop by just to investigate what is going on. However,

the land I rented on the Hale Ukana island for this research was not an academic space,

but it was basically deserted when I decided on the location. Only two homes were on

the island and no commercial locations, even though the land was zoned commercial. It

seemed like the perfect environment because every time I had visited the location, there

was no one else around. However, by the time classes began, a shopping center was

going in and a car/motorcycle dealership was right next-door.

I now know that a commercial area is not necessarily a good place to hold classes,

so one change I would make would be to purchase an academic island so that inworld

residents would know where they were teleporting. Even though the cost is somewhat

high, I think it is important to give students a place where they can build and experience

SL as a true culture if they so choose. I had two or three students whom I would often

find on our rented land during non-class time, building and experimenting with freebies

they had received inworld. More importantly, however, the purchase of an island would

likely eliminate griefing altogether because it would prevent shoppers from dropping by out of curiosity. Any inworld resident who wanted to investigate our island would have to purposely teleport to a known academic space. Just dropping in is much less likely to happen than if someone in a nearby shopping area drops by to see why there is a crowd in one section, which can be seen on one's local map.

One useful change worth keeping is preventing anyone other than a group member, which would be students, inworld residents who wish to become group members, and myself, from placing objects on the island. If an inworld resident has something that he/she wishes to give the group but does not want to become a member, she/he can simply give it to me and then I could place it on the island. This would prevent anyone from dropping a griefing object without my knowledge, as happened during this research.

Two more variables to keep are the text chat and video logs. I was only able to determine who had griefed the early afternoon class because I could refer to these two items. When I reviewed the video recordings, I rewound frame-by-frame from the griefing incident and noticed an item being tossed by someone out of frame onto the island. I went back inworld and looked around where I thought the object had rolled until I finally found the object under a bush. When I right-clicked on it, the object's menu told me who had placed the object on the island, and thus I was able to track it back to the person who had disrupted the class earlier via the chat logs. Without these recordings, many things would never have been revealed to me, including the sexual harassment

perpetrated by my students against this resident. It is imperative to use such devices

to ensure the safety of all and have some type of accountability.

Additionally I would alter some other ways the classes were conducted, including

having student's read Stephenson's novel *Snow Crash* along with other model essays

related to the class theme, changing how the classes were carried out, and altering the

assignments the students had to complete. First, students would benefit from reading

Stephenson's *Snow Crash* as they attempt to negotiate the world of SL. As mentioned in

chapter 1, this is the science fiction work that inspired Rosedale to create Linden Labs

and the metaverse of SL. Mark Stephen Meadows notes that even though the "3-D dream

of *Snowcrash* [sic] may not have been quite achieved, . . . Second Life or something

about it, worked well enough to capture the imaginations of enough people to register

more than ten million avatars as of this writing [2007]" (24). *Snow Crash* will help

students understand the vision behind SL, which might facilitate their immersion into this

world and allow them to have a more realistic virtual experience.

Another important addition to the class would be to bring in more model essays

that relate to the theme of the class and demonstrate the rhetorical modes in which we

often expect students to be well versed. My next class will focus on the issue of diversity

or otherness within cultures. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's *Fieldworking* has many

model essays that students can refer to in learning how to write about cultures and putting

their fieldwork into action, but essays dealing with the more specific topic of otherness,

such as Alexandra Robbins' "Pledged: The Secret Life of Sororities," Melissa Algranati's

"Being an Other," or Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible

Knapsack," would likewise be beneficial. These essays would model for the students ways that authors have tackled what some students consider a very difficult topic, and even though each is written in an expository essay style, each uses rhetorical modes such as persuasion and argument, as well as the personal narrative/description.

I would also factor in at least one class period for the students to play in SL. SL is new to many students, and they need time to investigate without having any type of assignment to complete. People are different when it comes to how they handle new cultures and new environments, and placing too much pressure on them from the beginning can make them feel uncomfortable in this new world. Several of my students commented in their first blog post about how it was all very confusing and frustrating those first two nights. One night to set up their avatars and go through Orientation Island and then one night for them to play, both without guidance or instruction, would be a more effective plan because it will give the students a level of confidence that they can survive in this new environment. As an instructor, those nights will be dedicated to facilitating students who are having difficulties due to English as a second language or computer illiteracies. Following a social constructionist pedagogy, students will also be encouraged to help one another.

Fourth, I would incorporate an even tighter focus for the class assignments. The two classes in this research had an overall class theme of identity, but the theme was defined too broadly and included writing assignments to help indoctrinate them into the culture of SL. Consequently, the classes had a blended theme of both culture and identity. Both of these topics have a broad spectrum of possibilities, and it was a drastic

course design flaw on my part to combine the two because the essay assignments failed to focus on one area. In order for any class to be successful in SL, I would recommend a narrowed topic, and my next writing class will focus on otherness as it connects to identity.

My research into the use of SL to teach FYC is, however, limited to what I accomplished in one semester with two classes. This research is only the beginning to what can be accomplished using any type of virtual world in composition studies. An MMORPG such as World of WarCraft or Everquest is the perfect world for students to experience community building and teamwork. Williams et al. believe that "as players cooperate with one another on multiple occasions and for multiple purposes, they develop the same sense of shared community, and become known to one another through their specific style of play and their characters' names" (6). Experiences such as these allow students to learn the importance of teamwork/community, which can lead to a more collaborative environment and transfer to their writing as discussed in chapter 4.

SL, however, offers more than a regular MMORPG, including a deeper understanding of the issue of identity that we have discussed. In addition, in SL there exists the possibility of incorporating other pedagogical modes, such as service learning, for students to immerse themselves into. Since SL is a metaverse not unlike our own universe, many opportunities arise for getting students involved in civic engagement. Many not-for-profit organizations are represented in SL such as Global Kids Inc. and Live2Give. Live2Give is an island sponsored by Braintalk.org where "people can come and learn about physical challenges and see that people who may look and sound

different are really no different at all!" (Cooper, Dibbell, and Spaight "Wilde

Cunningham"). Students can learn to become involved in fundraisers, charity auctions,

and other types of civic activities.

It is not an exaggeration to state that any pedagogy that an instructor chooses to

practice in an RL FYC classroom can be successfully transferred to SL. Many instructors

base their classes on themes such as politics, race, or gender, and the anthropologist Tom

Boellstorff, in his recently published book *Coming of Age in Second Life: An*

Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human, discusses such topics as "The Self,"

"Gender and Race," "Language," "Friendship," "Community," and the "Political

Economy." Rymaszewski et al. note that "educators are currently using *Second Life* with

students to explore distance learning, simulation, new media studies, and cooperative

work" (318). The investigation into SL as a learning environment has only just begun.

Expanding My Second Life: Expansion of the Research

This research can be built on in several ways to provide further evidence of

whether or not teaching FYC in a virtual environment can improve student writing. One

way of doing this is to teach two comparable FYC classes: one in SL and one in the

traditional brick-and-mortar classroom. Both classes would have the same topic/theme,

the same essay assignments, and the same class readings. I would continue to use

Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's *Fieldworking* because it is important that the students learn

how to observe a foreign culture and be able to take meaningful notes to which they can

later refer when writing. Using this text in the traditional classroom could prove

challenging, but the students would likewise be doing cultural exploration, except in RL and in cultures that may not seem as strange, such as a homeless shelter or a truck stop. Both classes would do similar writing assignments from low-risk blogs and free writes to the higher risk essay assignments.

In an effort to grade the essays from these two different classes impartially, I would combine the number in both classes, say 20 and 20 for a total of 40, and have both classes pull numbers randomly from that total. They would be required to write their name on the back of the number and place them in an envelope and seal it. They would then put the numbers on their essays instead of their names and submit them to a dropbox. When grading, I would not be aware of which essays came from which class other than the writing itself. Also, an outside impartial reader would review the essays, comment on them, and assign a grade based on that essay's grading rubric. These precautions will help ensure a fair comparison between the classes. Their low-risk assignments would also be compared but without the same rigorous attempt at anonymity as taken for the essays. I would have the two classes respond to each other's blog postings to compare their experiences.

One final way of expanding this research would be to connect the SL class with a class from another university either in the US or abroad also using SL for FYC or another writing intensive course. Writing assignments dealing with cultural diversity or otherness would likely take on another level of intensity with students from different locations reading and responding to one another's writing. Not only would I collaborate with the other instructor to have students responding to each other's blogs posts, but the students

from the two classes could also do peer reviews in SL, interview one another, travel

to SL locations in teams or groups, and compose a collaborative essay with two students

from each class working together. This type of learning environment would teach the

students about different cultures, but more importantly, it might enlighten them to other

cultures' writing styles and writing processes.

Expanding the research in one or more of the ways mentioned here would be

beneficial in determining just how successful a FYC course using a virtual metaverse like

SL might be. However, whether or not improved writing in FYC will lead the students to

a more successful academic career is a question that cannot be answered with any of the

proposed additions to the research. The only way to determine this type of overall

success would be to follow one group of students through a program that continued this

type of virtual experience throughout their program and another group of students whose

only experiences with a virtual learning environment came in FYC. Even though this

type of study would be difficult to organize, the results could examine the effectiveness

of the virtual learning environment when it comes to writing.

Creating a Better Second Life: Conclusion

What does this type of research mean for the future of teaching FYC with

computers? After the inception of networks and then later the internet, the use of

computers in the writing class grew exponentially. These changes alone meant that the

computer was no longer being used as either a skill-and-drill machine or as only an

invention-drafting-revising machine. Skill-and-drill or invention-drafting-revising,

however, could be done using a pen and paper or a typewriter. The networking of computers in the classroom, though, meant that students could collaborate more easily and could witness someone's writing process via their own computer terminal. This ability to collaborate easily and to use email to communicate was a major advancement in the field, but the introduction of the internet into the composition classroom was even more revolutionary. Students could enter MOOs, MUDs, or other early social spaces and speak their minds on assigned topics without fear of being shutdown by a student who might normally have that effect on them in the brick-and-mortar classroom.

All of these advancements have changed the way that many of us in composition studies teach our classes. Virtual worlds such as SL are creating yet another paradigm shift. Most self-help or textbooks on writing tell you either directly or indirectly to write about what you know. Pat Schneider states, "writing is talking. It is hunkering down around the cave fire at night and telling about the day" (3), and Natalie Goldberg asserts that "writers end up writing about their obsessions. Things that haunt them; things they can't forget; stories they carry in their bodies waiting to be released" (38). We have all read students' essays about their prom, about their first date/first kiss, about their big game, and about their first day of college. It has been my experience that attempts to get students to write about gender, identity, borders, or any number of other critical topics often leave them shrugging their shoulders and complaining they have nothing about which to write.

This is where the next wave of technology enters the picture. SL and other virtual environments allow students to experience things that they either cannot in their real lives

or that they have not attempted. If students become an other in a virtual world, they soon begin to realize what some of their peers have been going through perhaps all of their lives. More importantly, students feel confident writing about these experiences and feel that they have something valid to say. As discussed previously, we have always instructed our students in invention, revision, and editing techniques, and we have had numerous classroom discussions on content, organization, and vocabulary as being key items in any good essay. Further, we have done the most important thing, which is having our students write, write, and write some more as advocated by Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, Bizzell, and others because we all know the only way to get better is to practice. One thing that has been lacking from our writing pedagogy, however, is now made complete with the use of virtual spaces. Virtual realities such as SL are one way to give our students the experiences they need to make the connections between the topics mentioned above and their own lives, and they can then integrate these experiences into their writing.

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Appendices

Appendix A: SL Pricing List

PRICING LIST
AS OF MAY 14, 2008

LINDEX *

Buying L$	$0.30 USD/transaction
Selling L$	3.5%
Processing USD Credits	$1 USD (Paypal) $10 USD (Domestic Check) $15 USD (International Check)
Adding Credit	$0 USD

PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP *

Monthly	$9.95 USD/month
Quarterly	$7.50 USD/month
Annual	$6.00 USD/month

LAND MAINTENANCE *

Size (Regions)	Size (sqm)	Current Price
1/128th	512	$5 USD/month
1/64th	1,024	$8 USD/month
1/32nd	2,048	$15 USD/month
1/16th	4,096	$25 USD/month
1/8th	8,192	$40 USD/month
1/4th	16,384	$75 USD/month
1/2	32,768	$125 USD/month
Mainland Region	65,536	$195 USD/month
Private Region	65,536	$295 USD/month
Openspace Region	65,536	$75 USD/month

LAND PURCHASE *

Feature	Current Price
Mainland Auctions	Variable
Private Region Sales	$1,000 per region
Private Region Moves	$150
Private Region Transfer	$100
Openspace Region Sales	$250

NOTE: All fees are charged in US Dollars (USD). Customers may be charged additional credit card fees for currency conversion from non-USD currencies to USD.

* VAT will be added where applicable; see table at right.

VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT) RATES

Country	VAT Rate
Austria	20.0%
Belgium	21.0%
Bulgaria	20.0%
Cyprus	15.0%
Czech Republic	19.0%
Denmark	25.0%
Estonia	18.0%
Finland	22.0%
France	19.6%
Germany	19.0%
Greece	19.0%
Hungary	20.0%
Ireland	21.0%
Italy	20.0%
Latvia	18.0%
Lithuania	18.0%
Luxembourg	15.0%
Malta	18.0%
Netherlands	19.0%
Poland	22.0%
Portugal	21.0%
Romania	19.0%
Slovakia	19.0%
Slovenia	20.0%
Spain	16.0%
Sweden	25.0%
United Kingdom	17.5%

In accordance with the sales tax regulations of European Union countries in which some of our Residents live, we must collect and remit Value Added Tax (VAT). Currently, only Residents who live in the European Union are charged VAT. The EU allows people and companies to register for VAT exemption, which we abide by. For more details, please refer to the VAT policy page on the Second Life website. Rates above are current as of May 14, 2008.

Appendix B: Glossary

from Rymaszewski et al.'s *Second Life: The Official Guide*

ad space: A tiny parcel (most frequently, 16 square meters) used for advertising purposes: signs billboards, etc. Can also be used as storage space (see "storage").

AFK: Away from keyboard. AFK means a resident may appear to be online, but there's no one at the keyboard typing. This tells people you are online, but not responding. Typing "AFK" in chat causes your avatar to display "(AWAY)" after its name. After 30 minutes of inactivity, you will be logged off automatically.

allocation: 1) The total amount of land a resident/account can own or otherwise hold. Premium subscribers receive an allocation for 512m2 at no additional Land Use Cost; 2) The total amount of land a group can own. A group cannot own land unless it has an allocation equal or greater than the land size. Group allocation is donated by group members, who pay for the amount they donate (in addition to any land they themselves own), regardless of whether the group is currently using the allocation.

alpha channel: The transparency channel in image files such as textures.

animation: Avatar animation, or a sequence of avatar moves scripted in an external application (most commonly, Poser) and imported into *Second Life*.

AO: Animation override; generally a scripted object that plays specific animations in response to your character's actions. These animations take over (or override) default animations (walking, etc.).

AR: Short for Abuse, accessed from the Help pull-down menu and sent in when being griefed by someone (see "to grief; griefer").

attachment: A virtual object that can be attached to an avatar (for example, a hat, a gun, or a ring).

ban: 1) The act of explicitly forbidding entry. Landowners have ban tools to prevent specified residents from entering their land; 2) To add someone to your ban list and thus eject them from your land; 3) The permanent removal of someone from *Second Life*. This can be done only by Linden Lab. Thankfully, most people who break the rules learn to behave well before this happens. Not to be confused with a suspension, which is a time-out of sorts.

build: 1) To make something out of primitives; 2) An object composed of one or more primitives; 3) An engineering term for a specific version of the *Second Life* (or other) software.

bump: 1) The act of pushing another resident, either by running into them, hitting them with a physical object, or using a scripted object to apply a force to them; 2) A projectile designed to push residents. These

projectiles are usually named "bump." Improperly scripted bump objects occasionally litter no-script areas, as their scripts are disables (thus preventing them from deleting themselves); 3) Adding a comment to a forum post to place it at the top of the topic's list. Forum topics are sorted with most-recent postings at the top. Bumping an old post can get it back to where people will notice it—often done when the post has fallen off the first page.

camping job: A virtual job that involves staying in one place—sitting in a chair, dancing on a dance pad—in exchange for a few Linden dollars paid out every 10 or 15 minutes.

charter member: An *SL* resident who has lived in-world almost since it began.

Classifieds: Advertisement listings in the *SL* Search window.

covenant: A set of rules and regulations governing a particular estate (see "estate").

damage: Describes any region marked "Not Safe," where *Second Life*'s rules of damage and death are in effect. Any scripted object can be set to damage avatars (usually by firing damage-enabled projectiles). An avatar that takes lethal damage is instantly teleported to its home location. The overwhelming majority of *Second Life* is not damage-enabled.

dance ball, dance pad: Objects scripted to animate avatars, making them dance

debug menu: A menu that is hidden by default but includes some useful advanced commands. It can be toggled on and off by hitting Ctrl-Alt-Shift-D.

deep-think: Related to sim performance. A deep-think happens when a physical interaction within a sim is taking a very long time to compute. A deep-think can be caused by a large number of colliding physical objects, when a physical object is stuck in an awkward position, or when advanced shapes are interacting in some weird way. Symptoms of a deep-think are slow avatar-movement, your avatar continuing to move after it should have stopped, or logging-off issues. You may still be able to chat normally while moving and other physical movement are impaired.

estate: An administrative unit of private or group-owned virtual land (usually a region or a collection of regions) with special tools for large-scale real-estate management.

First Land: The specially priced, 512-square-meter parcel offered to *SL* account holders who can purchase land. You may purchase First Land only once.

first life: Real life or "RL"

flexiprim: A flexible prim used as a building block in *SL* (see "prim").

furry: An anthropomorphic animal avatar; usually bipedal. Furries comprise one of *SL*'s prominent resident groups.

gesture: A mix of avatar animation, sound, and sometimes special effects activated by a typed command or keyboard shortcut.

Gorean: A member of the Gor community based on the real-world novels of John Norman, in which master/slave relationships are the norm.

grid: Slang for the *SL* virtual world and its server network, as in "the grid is down" or "the grid is up again."

to grief; griefer: To bother or harass another *SL* resident through offensive actions; an *SL* resident who bothers other residents. Griefing violates *Second Life* community standards.

Help Island, HI: The place most new residents reach having passed through OI (Orientation Island). Mentors often help out new residents here.

home: The in-world location your avatar considers the center of its *Second Life* existence. You can teleport directly home at any time by opening the World menu and choosing Teleport Home. You can change your login location so you always start *Second Life* at home. If you wander (or march) into a damage-enabled area and are killed, your avatar will teleport home immediately (none the worse for the experience).

IM: Instant message

Inventory: The collection of clothing, objects, textures, etc. that your avatar possesses in-world. Your inventory travels with you and you can use any of it at any time.

in-world: Anything that takes place within the virtual environment of *Second Life*. Also, the state of being logged into *Second Life*.

island: A simulator/region that is detached from the main continent and accessible only by directly teleporting to it (i.e., "Cayman is an island sim."). Sometimes also used in the more general definition of the word, to refer to a small land mass surrounded by water.

**L$**: A linden dollar (L$ or "Lindens") is the in-world currency. Most transactions in-world take place in L$.

lag: 1) The delay inherent to a connection between two computers on the Internet, especially an unusually long delay between a client and a server; 2) A delay or interruption in a network or Internet connection caused by slow response times and/or lost or missing data. 3) Slow or jerky performance in a 3D application caused by an overworked processor; memory bandwidth, video card, or hard drive. 4) Any situation in which part of the *Second Life* experience is not performing as desired.

land baron: A resident who owns a significant quantity of land, especially with the intent to sell it at a profit.

land owner: A resident who owns land—anything from a parcel to multiple estates.

landmark: A beacon marking a specific location in-world, *and* the teleport shortcut to that location stored in the Landmarks folder in your avatar's inventory.

liaison: A Linden Lab employee who serves as an in-world representative and contact for all residents, especially newcomers. They're the people you see with names like Liaison Ralph Linden.

LindeX Currency Exchange: The online currency exchange where you can change real-world money into Linden dollars, and vice versa.

LSL: Linden Scripting Language, used to animate objects in the *SL* world.

machinima: A computer movie made using real-time, 3D game/virtual-world engine instead of a special application dedicated to making computer movies. The term has its origins in "machine animation" and "machine cinema."

Mature: A region rating permitting adult-only activities such as explicit sexuality.

mouselook: The first-person camera view. The mouse is used to move the camera around. Often used for weapons, vehicles, and grabbing objects.

newbie, noobie: A newcomer to *Second Life*; a resident who has been in-world for a relatively short period of time and/or is not familiar or comfortable with *Second Life*'s nuances. Also spelled "noob" or "nOOb."

no-copy: An object permissions that forbids the object's current owner to make additional copies of it. These objects have "(no-copy)" in their name in the Inventory.

no-fly: Any land parcel that does not permit flying. You can fly through no-fly parcels, but as soon as you touch down and stop flying, you'll be unable to fly again until you exit the no-fly parcel. If you get really stuck, teleport somewhere else.

no-modify: An object permission that forbids the object's current owner to modify it. These objects have "(no-modify)" in their name in the Inventory.

no-transfer: An object permission that forbids the object's current owner to transfer it to another *SL* resident. These objects have "(no-transfer)" in their name in the inventory.

notecard: An in-world text document, such as the instructions attached to an object.

object: Anything that exists in the virtual world and is built of one or more prims.

OI, Orientation Island: The first place most new residents see when they enter *Second Life*. Teaches the basics of getting around, customizing your avatar, and communicating.

parcel: A piece of virtual land that can be bought or sold.

permissions: Rules and regulations that define what an object's owner can do with it (for example, copy or modify).

PG: Region rating banning "mature" activities.

pie menu: The round, context-sensitive menu opened by right-clicking inside the virtual world.

prim: Short for "primitive"—a virtual solid of any shape, used as a building block in the *SL* world. Also used as an adjective, as in "prim hair" to denote hair made out of prims instead of texture. "High-prim" and "low-prim" describe virtual objects containing a high/low number of prims. Note that high prim numbers may cause lag.

push script: A script, usually for a virtual weapon, that results in the targeted avatar being moved to another location—for example, many thousands of feet up in the sky.

to rate: To award points to a resident for behavior, appearance, etc., as listed on the resident's Profile panel.

region: A named area within *Second Life*, also commonly called a *simulator* or a sim (see "simulator"). *Second Life* is divided into square regions, each 256m on a side and assigned a name. The regions are aligned and assembled so that the borders between them are, for all intents and purposes, seamless. You can stand [on] one side of a region border with your friend on the other. Despite the fact that the two of you are in different regions, you can chat freely, throw a baseball across, even drive a car back and forth without interruption.

relog: To log out of *Second Life* then log back in again. Usage: "I've got to relog, be right back."

reputation: Your in-world prestige, as rated by other players. (See "rate.")

resident: A person who uses *Second Life*. Can refer to the user of the account as well as their in-world avatar.

rez: This term is commonly attributed to the movie *Tron*. [1)]To bring an object into 3D space within *Second Life*, usually by dragging it from Inventory into the wold; 2) To create a new primitive in *Second Life* through the building tools.

sandbox: A public area where *SL* residents are allowed to create new objects. There are many sandboxes scattered around the world; most are "safe" areas that don't allow selling, gambling, or combat.

security system: An elaborate script, usually contained within an object, used to protect privately owned land from griefers and virtual weapons.

shield: An attachment that protects an avatar from virtual weapons. There is no perfect shield; as soon as it's invented, new weapons appear.

simulator, sim: A square, named region that makes up part of the *Second Life* world (not an avatar or character).

snapshot: An in-world photo. You can take snapshots using *SL*'s Snapshot button.

skin: What you see when you strip your avatar naked. May include body shape and features such as eyes and tattoos in addition to the avatar's

actual skin. Often used to denote a custom-made avatar skin of superior appearance.

snap, snapshot: A screenshot or photograph taken in-world using *SL* software.

stipend: A weekly allowance paid in L$ to qualifying residents. Stipend rules change frequently; at the time of writing, they're limited to Premium-account holders.

storage: Space where virtual objects built out of prims may be stored. Each region can support a limited number of prims.

suspension: The temporary removal of someone from *Second Life*. A suspended resident will be unable to log into *Second Life*. The resident will receive an email stating the reason for suspension. A suspension is not to be confused with an administrative kick, which includes a short time-out from *Second Life* that's usually not accompanied by an email.

Teen *Second Life*; Teen Grid: A special *SL* area for 13- to 17-year-old members only; more info at http://teen.secondlife.com.

Telehub: Originally a teleporting "port" or location in the *SL* world. At the time of writing, Telehubs are used to direct teleporting traffic on private estates.

texture: An image or graphic applied to an object or avatar. You can create you own textures in any third-party graphics program and upload them to *Second Life* for L$10 per image.

themed community: An area, frequently an entire region or more, built to represent a specific entity—for instance, a medieval Japanese village or a Polynesian island. Many themed communities are also historical communities—the Victorian-inspired community of Caledon is a famous example.

tier; tier up: 1) One of *Second Life*'s levels of land ownership and land-use fees. Each tier has a monthly price and a maximum amount of land that can be held. 2) To make a land purchase that increases your monthly Land Use Cost.

Town Hall: Events at which the *SL* governing staff (the Lindens) meets the *SL* residents to introduce and discuss virtual-world issues.

tp: Short for "teleport," often used in teleport requests by residents (as in "Can you tp me to your location?").

vendor: A *Second Life* resident or a scripted object that sells objects, clothing, or other items.

sim, simulator: Originally the term for an *SL* region, created back in the ancient times when one LL server or simulator supported one region. Still used to denote a region, although servers now support two or more regions each.

welcome area, InfoHub: A location serving new residents, featuring numerous notecard dispensers, freebies, and *SL* mentors providing guidance and answering newbies' questions. (325-31)

Appendix C: SL Terms of Service

http://secondlife.com/corporate/tos.php

Terms of Service

Welcome to Second Life! The following agreement (this "Agreement" or the "Terms of Service") describes the terms on which Linden Research, Inc. ("Linden Lab") offers you access to its services. This offer is conditioned on your agreement to all of the terms and conditions contained in the Terms of Service, including your compliance with the policies and terms linked to (by way of the provided URLs) from this Agreement. By using Second Life, you agree to these Terms of Service. If you do not so agree, you should decline this agreement, in which case you are prohibited from accessing or using Second Life. Linden Lab may amend this Agreement at any time in its sole discretion, effective upon posting the amended Agreement at the domain or subdomains of http://secondlife.com where the prior version of this Agreement was posted, or by communicating these changes through any written contact method we have established with you.

THE SERVICES AND CONTENT OF SECOND LIFE

1.1 Basic description of the service: Second Life, a multi-user environment, including software and websites.

"Second Life" is the multi-user online service offered by Linden Lab, including the software provided to you by Linden Lab (collectively, the "Linden Software") and the online environments that support the service, including without limitation: the server computation, software access, messaging and protocols that simulate the Second Life environment (the "Servers"), the software that is provided by Linden Lab and installed on the local computer or other device you use to access the Servers and thereby view or otherwise access the Second Life environment (the "Viewer"), application program interfaces provided by Linden Lab to you for use with Second Life (the "APIs"), and access to the websites and services available from the domain and subdomains of http://secondlife.com (the "Websites"). The Servers, Viewer, APIs, Websites and any other Linden Software collectively constitute the "Service" as used in this Agreement.

1.2 Linden Lab is a service provider, which means, among other things, that Linden Lab does not control various aspects of the Service.

You acknowledge that Linden Lab is a service provider that may allow people to interact online regarding topics and content chosen by users of the service, and that users can alter the service environment on a real-time basis. Linden Lab generally does not regulate the content of communications between users or users' interactions with the Service. As a result, Linden Lab has very limited control, if any, over the quality, safety, morality, legality, truthfulness or accuracy of various aspects of the Service.

1.3 Content available in the Service may be provided by users of the Service, rather than by Linden Lab. Linden Lab and other parties have rights in their respective content, which you agree to respect.

You acknowledge that: (i) by using the Service you may have access to graphics, sound effects, music, video, audio, computer programs, animation, text and other creative output (collectively, "Content"), and (ii) Content may be provided under license by independent content providers, including contributions from other users of the Service (all such independent content providers, "Content Providers"). Linden Lab does not pre-screen Content.

You acknowledge that Linden Lab and other Content Providers have rights in their respective Content under copyright and other applicable laws and treaty provisions, and that except as described in this Agreement, such rights are not licensed or otherwise transferred by mere use of the Service. You accept full responsibility and liability for your use of any Content in violation of any such rights. You agree that your creation of Content is not in any way based upon any expectation of compensation from Linden Lab.

Certain of the fonts in the Meta family of copyrighted typefaces are used in Second Life under license from FSI FontShop International. You acknowledge that you may not copy any Meta font that is included in the Viewer and that you may use any such Meta font solely to the extent necessary to use the Linden Software in Second Life and that you will not use such Meta fonts for any other purpose whatsoever.

1.4 Second Life "currency" is a limited license right available for purchase or free distribution at Linden Lab's discretion, and is not redeemable for monetary value from Linden Lab.

You acknowledge that the Service presently includes a component of in-world fictional currency ("Currency" or "Linden Dollars" or "L$"), which constitutes a limited license right to use a feature of our product when, as, and if allowed by Linden Lab. Linden Lab may charge fees for the right to use Linden Dollars, or may distribute Linden Dollars without charge, in its sole discretion. Regardless of terminology used, Linden Dollars represent a limited license right governed solely under the terms of this Agreement, and are not redeemable for any sum of money or monetary value from Linden Lab at any time. You agree that Linden Lab has the absolute right to manage, regulate, control, modify and/or eliminate such Currency as it sees fit in its sole discretion, in any general or specific case, and that Linden Lab will have no liability to you based on its exercise of such right.

1.5 Second Life offers an exchange, called LindeX, for the trading of Linden Dollars, which uses the terms "buy" and "sell" to indicate the transfer of license rights to use Linden Dollars. Use and regulation of LindeX is at Linden Lab's sole discretion.

The Service currently includes a component called "Currency Exchange" or "LindeX," which refers to an aspect of the Service through which Linden Lab administers transactions among users for the purchase and sale of the licensed right to use Currency. Notwithstanding any other language or context to the contrary, as used in this Agreement and throughout the Service in the context of Currency transfer: (a) the term "sell" means "to transfer for consideration to another user the licensed right to use Currency in accordance with the Terms of Service," (b) the term "buy" means "to receive for consideration from another user the licensed right to use Currency in accordance with the Terms of Service," (c) the terms "buyer," "seller", "sale" and "purchase" and similar terms have corresponding meanings to the root terms "buy" and "sell," (d) "sell order" and similar terms mean a request from a user to Linden Lab to list Currency for sale on the Currency Exchange at a requested sale price, and (e) "buy order" and similar terms mean a request from a user for Linden Lab to match open sale listings with a requested purchase price and facilitate completion of the sale of Currency.

You agree and acknowledge that Linden Lab may deny any sell order or buy order individually or with respect to general volume or price limitations set by Linden Lab for any reason. Linden Lab may limit sellers or buyers to any group of users at any time. Linden Lab may halt, suspend, discontinue, or reverse any Currency Exchange transaction (whether proposed, pending or past) in cases of actual or suspected fraud, violations of other laws or regulations, or deliberate disruptions to or interference with the Service.

1.6 Second Life is subject to scheduled and unscheduled service interruptions. All aspects of the Service are subject to change or elimination at Linden Lab's sole discretion.

Linden Lab reserves the right to interrupt the Service with or without prior notice for any reason or no reason. You agree that Linden Lab will not be liable for any interruption of the Service, delay or failure to perform, and you understand that except as otherwise specifically provided in Linden Lab's billing policies posted at http://secondlife.com/corporate/billing.php, you shall not be entitled to any refunds of fees for interruption of service or failure to perform. Linden Lab has the right at any time for any reason or no reason to change and/or eliminate any aspect(s) of the Service as it sees fit in its sole discretion.

1.7 In the event you choose to use paid aspects of the Service, you agree to the posted pricing and billing policies on the Websites.

Certain aspects of the Service are provided for a fee or other charge. These fees and charges are described on the Websites, and in the event you elect to use paid aspects of the Service, you agree to the pricing, payment and billing policies applicable to such fees and charges, posted or linked at http://secondlife.com/corporate/billing.php. Linden Lab may add new services for additional fees and charges, or proactively amend fees and charges for existing services, at any time in its sole discretion.

ACCOUNT REGISTRATION AND REQUIREMENTS

2.1 You must establish an account to use Second Life, using true and accurate registration information.

You must establish an account with Linden Lab (your "Account") to use the Service, except for those portions of the Websites to which Linden Lab allows access without registration. You agree to provide true, accurate, current and complete information about yourself as prompted by the registration form ("Registration Data") and maintain and promptly update the Registration Data to keep it true, accurate, current and complete. You may establish an Account with Registration Data provided to Linden Lab by a third party through the use of an API, in which case you may have a separate, additional account relationship with such third party. You authorize Linden Lab, directly or through third parties, to make any inquiries we consider necessary to validate your Registration Data. Linden Lab reserves all rights to vigorously pursue legal action against all persons who misrepresent personal information or are otherwise untruthful about their identity, and to suspend or cancel Accounts registered with inaccurate or incomplete information. Notwithstanding the foregoing, you acknowledge that Linden Lab cannot guarantee the accuracy of any information submitted by any user of the Service, nor any identity information about any user.

2.2 You must be 13 years of age or older to access Second Life; minors over the age of 13 are only permitted in a separate area, which adults are generally prohibited from using. Linden Lab cannot absolutely control whether minors or adults gain unauthorized access to the Service.

You must be at least 13 years of age to participate in the Service. Users under the age of 18 are prohibited from accessing the Service other than in the area designated by Linden Lab for use by users from 13 through 17 years of age (the "Teen Area"). Users age 18 and older are prohibited from accessing the Teen Area. Any user age 18 and older who gains unauthorized access to the Teen Area is in breach of this Agreement and

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may face immediate termination of any or all Accounts held by such user for any area of the Service. If you reside in a jurisdiction where the age of majority is greater than 18 years old, you are prohibited from accessing the Service until you have reached such age of majority.

By accepting this agreement in connection with an Account outside the Teen Area, you represent that you are an adult 18 years of age or older. By accepting this agreement in connection with an Account for use in the Teen Area, you represent that (i) you are at least 13 years of age and less than 18 years of age; (ii) you have read and accept this Agreement; (iii) your parent or legal guardian has consented to you having an Account for use of the Teen Area and participating in the Service, and to providing your personal information for your Account; and (iv) your parent or legal guardian has read and accepted this Agreement.

Linden Lab cannot absolutely control whether minors gain access to the Service other than the Teen Area, and makes no representation that users outside the Teen Area are not minors. Linden Lab cannot absolutely control whether adults gain access to the Teen Area of the Service, and makes no representation that users inside the Teen Area are not adults. Adult employees, contractors and partners of Linden Lab regularly conduct their work in the Teen Area. Linden Lab cannot ensure that other users or any non-employee of Linden Lab will not provide Content or access to Content that parents or guardians may find inappropriate or that any user may find objectionable.

2.3 You need to use an account name in Second Life which is not misleading, offensive or infringing. You must select and keep secure your account password.

You must choose an account name to identify yourself to Linden Lab staff (your "Account Name"), which will also serve as the name for the graphical representation of your body in the Service (such representation, an "Avatar"). You may not select as your Account Name the name of another person to the extent that could cause deception or confusion; a name which violates any trademark right, copyright, or other proprietary right; a name which may mislead other users to believe you to be an employee of Linden Lab; or a name which Linden Lab deems in its discretion to be vulgar or otherwise offensive. Linden Lab reserves the right to delete or change any Account Name for any reason or no reason. You are fully responsible for all activities conducted through your Account or under your Account Name.

At the time your Account is opened, you must select a password. You are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of your password and are responsible for any harm resulting from your disclosure, or authorizing the disclosure of, your password or from use by any person of your password to gain access to your Account or Account Name. At no time should you respond to an online request for a password other than in connection with the log-on process to the Service. Your disclosure of your password to any other person is entirely at your own risk.

2.4 Account registrations are limited per unique person. Transfers of accounts are generally not permitted.

Linden Lab may require you to submit an indication of unique identity in the account registration process; e.g. credit card or other payment information, or SMS message code or other information requested by Linden Lab. When an account is created, the information given for the account must match the address, phone number, and/or other unique identifier information associated with the identification method. You may register multiple accounts per identification method only at Linden Lab's

sole discretion. A single account may be used by a single legal entity at Linden Lab's sole discretion and subject to Linden Lab's requirements. Additional accounts beyond the first account per unique user may be subject to fees upon account creation. You may not transfer your Account to any third party without the prior written consent of Linden Lab; notwithstanding the foregoing, Linden Lab will not unreasonably withhold consent to the transfer of an Account in good standing by operation of valid written will to a single natural person, provided that proper notice and documentation are delivered as requested by Linden Lab.

2.5 You may cancel your account at any time; however, there are no refunds for cancellation.

Accounts may be cancelled by you at any time. Upon your election to cancel, your account will be cancelled within 24 hours, but if you have paid for a period in advance you will be allowed to use the remaining time according to these Terms of Service unless your account or this Agreement is suspended or terminated based on our belief that you have violated this Agreement. There will be no refunds for any unused time on a subscription or any prepaid fees for any portion of the Service.

2.6 Linden Lab may suspend or terminate your account at any time, without refund or obligation to you.

Linden Lab has the right at any time for any reason or no reason to suspend or terminate your Account, terminate this Agreement, and/or refuse any and all current or future use of the Service without notice or liability to you. In the event that Linden Lab suspends or terminates your Account or this Agreement, you understand and agree that you shall receive no refund or exchange for any unused time on a subscription, any license or subscription fees, any content or data associated with your Account, or for anything else.

2.7 Accounts affiliated with delinquent accounts are subject to remedial actions related to the delinquent account.

In the event an Account is suspended or terminated for your breach of this Agreement or your payment delinquency (in each case as determined in Linden Lab's sole discretion), Linden Lab may suspend or terminate the Account associated with such breach and any or all other Accounts held by you or your affiliates, and your breach shall be deemed to apply to all such Accounts.

2.8 You are responsible for your own Internet access.

Linden Lab does not provide Internet access, and you are responsible for all fees associated with your Internet connection.

LICENSE TERMS AND OTHER INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY TERMS

3.1 You have a nonexclusive, limited, revocable license to use Second Life while you are in compliance with the terms of service.

Subject to the terms of this Agreement, Linden Lab grants to you a non-exclusive, limited, fully revocable license to use the Linden Software and the rest of the Service during the time you are in full compliance with the Terms of Service. Additional terms may apply to use of the APIs or other separate elements of the Service (i.e. elements that are not required to use the Viewer or the Servers); these terms are available where such separate elements are available for download from the Websites. Nothing in this Agreement, or on Linden Lab's websites, shall be construed as granting you any other rights or privileges of any kind with respect to the Service or to any Content. You acknowledge that your participation in the

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Service, including your creation or uploading of Content in the Service, does not make you a Linden Lab employee and that you do not expect to be, and will not be, compensated by Linden Lab for such activities.

3.2 You retain copyright and other intellectual property rights with respect to Content you create in Second Life, to the extent that you have such rights under applicable law. However, you must make certain representations and warranties, and provide certain license rights, forbearances and indemnification, to Linden Lab and to other users of Second Life.

Users of the Service can create Content on Linden Lab's servers in various forms. Linden Lab acknowledges and agrees that, subject to the terms and conditions of this Agreement, you will retain any and all applicable copyright and other intellectual property rights with respect to any Content you create using the Service, to the extent you have such rights under applicable law.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, you understand and agree that by submitting your Content to any area of the service, you automatically grant (and you represent and warrant that you have the right to grant) to Linden Lab: (a) a royalty-free, worldwide, fully paid-up, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and license to (i) use, reproduce and distribute your Content within the Service as permitted by you through your interactions on the Service, and (ii) use and reproduce (and to authorize third parties to use and reproduce) any of your Content in any or all media for marketing and/or promotional purposes in connection with the Service, provided that in the event that your Content appears publicly in material under the control of Linden Lab, and you provide written notice to Linden Lab of your desire to discontinue the distribution of such Content in such material (with sufficient specificity to allow Linden Lab, in its sole discretion, to identify the relevant Content and materials), Linden Lab will make commercially reasonable efforts to cease its distribution of such Content following the receipt of such notice, although Linden Lab cannot provide any assurances regarding materials produced or distributed prior to the receipt of such notice; (b) the perpetual and irrevocable right to delete any or all of your Content from Linden Lab's servers and from the Service, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and for any reason or no reason, without any liability of any kind to you or any other party; and (c) a royalty- free, fully paid-up, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and license to copy, analyze and use any of your Content as Linden Lab may deem necessary or desirable for purposes of debugging, testing and/or providing support services in connection with the Service. Further, you agree to grant to Linden Lab a royalty-free, worldwide, fully paid-up, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive, sublicensable right and license to exercise the copyright, publicity, and database rights you have in your account information, including any data or other information generated by your account activity, in any media now known or not currently known, in accordance with our privacy policy as set forth below, including the incorporation by reference of terms posted at http://secondlife.com /corporate/privacy.php.

You also understand and agree that by submitting your Content to any area of the Service, you automatically grant (or you warrant that the owner of such Content has expressly granted) to Linden Lab and to all other users of the Service a non-exclusive, worldwide, fully paid-up, transferable, irrevocable, royalty-free and perpetual License, under any and all patent rights you may have or obtain with respect to your Content, to use your Content for all purposes within the Service. You further agree that you will not make any claims against Linden Lab or against other users of the Service based on any allegations that any activities by either

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of the foregoing within the Service infringe your (or anyone else's) patent rights.

You further understand and agree that: (i) you are solely responsible for understanding all copyright, patent, trademark, trade secret and other intellectual property or other laws that may apply to your Content hereunder; (ii) you are solely responsible for, and Linden Lab will have no liability in connection with, the legal consequences of any actions or failures to act on your part while using the Service, including without limitation any legal consequences relating to your intellectual property rights; and (iii) Linden Lab's acknowledgement hereunder of your intellectual property rights in your Content does not constitute a legal opinion or legal advice, but is intended solely as an expression of Linden Lab's intention not to require users of the Service to forego certain intellectual property rights with respect to Content they create using the Service, subject to the terms of this Agreement.

3.3 Linden Lab retains ownership of the account and related data, regardless of intellectual property rights you may have in content you create or otherwise own.

You agree that even though you may retain certain copyright or other intellectual property rights with respect to Content you create while using the Service, you do not own the account you use to access the Service, nor do you own any data Linden Lab stores on Linden Lab servers (including without limitation any data representing or embodying any or all of your Content). Your intellectual property rights do not confer any rights of access to the Service or any rights to data stored by or on behalf of Linden Lab.

3.4 Linden Lab licenses its textures and environmental content to you for your use in creating content in-world.

During any period in which your Account is active and in good standing, Linden Lab gives you permission to create still and/or moving media, for use only within the virtual world environment of the Service ("in-world"), which use or include the "textures" and/or "environmental content" that are both (a) created or owned by Linden Lab and (b) displayed by Linden Lab in-world.

CONDUCT BY USERS OF SECOND LIFE

4.1 You agree to abide by certain rules of conduct, including the Community Standards and other rules prohibiting illegal and other practices that Linden Lab deems harmful.

You agree to read and comply with the Community Standards posted on the Websites, (for users 18 years of age and older, at http://secondlife.com/corporate/cs.php; and for users of the Teen Area, at http://teen.secondlife.com/footer/cs

In addition to abiding at all times by the Community Standards, you agree that you shall not: (i) take any action or upload, post, e-mail or otherwise transmit Content that infringes or violates any third party rights; (ii) impersonate any person or entity without their consent, including, but not limited to, a Linden Lab employee, or falsely state or otherwise misrepresent your affiliation with a person or entity; (iii) take any action or upload, post, e-mail or otherwise transmit Content that violates any law or regulation; (iv) take any action or upload, post, e-mail or otherwise transmit Content as determined by Linden Lab at its sole discretion that is harmful, threatening, abusive, harassing, causes tort, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, libelous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful, or racially, ethnically or otherwise objectionable; (v) take any actions or upload, post

e-mail or otherwise transmit Content that contains any viruses, Trojan horses, worms, spyware, time bombs, cancelbots or other computer programming routines that are intended to damage, detrimentally interfere with, surreptitiously intercept or expropriate any system, data or personal information; (vi) take any action or upload, post, email or otherwise transmit any Content that would violate any right or duty under any law or under contractual or fiduciary relationships (such as inside information, proprietary and confidential information learned or disclosed as part of employment relationships or under nondisclosure agreements); (vii) upload, post, email or otherwise transmit any unsolicited or unauthorized advertising, or promotional materials, that are in the nature of "junk mail," "spam," "chain letters," "pyramid schemes," or any other form of solicitation that Linden Lab considers in its sole discretion to be of such nature; (viii) interfere with or disrupt the Service or servers or networks connected to the Service, or disobey any requirements, procedures, policies or regulations of networks connected to the Service; (ix) attempt to gain access to any other user's Account or password; or (x) "stalk", abuse or attempt to abuse, or otherwise harass another user. Any violation by you of the terms of the foregoing sentence may result in immediate and permanent suspension or cancellation of your Account. You agree that Linden Lab may take whatever steps it deems necessary to abridge, or prevent behavior of any sort on the Service in its sole discretion, without notice to you.

4.2 You agree to use Second Life as provided, without unauthorized software or other means of access or use. You will not make unauthorized works from or conduct unauthorized distribution of the Linden Software.

Linden Lab has designed the Service to be experienced only as offered by Linden Lab at the Websites or partner websites. Linden Lab is not responsible for any aspect of the Service that is accessed or experienced using software or other means that are not provided by Linden Lab. You agree not to create or provide any server emulators or other software or other means that provide access to or use of the Servers without the express written authorization of Linden Lab. Notwithstanding the foregoing, you may use and create software that provides access to the Servers for substantially similar function (or subset thereof) as the Viewer; provided that such software is not used for and does not enable any violation of these Terms of Service. Linden Lab is not obligated to allow access to the Servers by any software that is not provided by Linden Lab, and you agree to cease using, creating, distributing or providing any such software at the request of Linden Lab. You are prohibited from taking any action that imposes an unreasonable or disproportionately large load on Linden Lab's infrastructure.

You may not charge any third party for using the Linden Software to access and/or use the Service, and you may not modify, adapt, reverse engineer (except as otherwise permitted by applicable law), decompile or attempt to discover the source code of the Linden Software, or create any derivative works of the Linden Software or the Service, or otherwise use the Linden Software except as expressly provided in this Agreement. You may not copy or distribute any of the written materials associated with the Service. Notwithstanding the foregoing, you may copy the Viewer that Linden Lab provides to you, for backup purposes and may give copies of the Viewer to others free of charge. Further, you may use and modify the source code for the Viewer as permitted by any open source license agreement under which Linden Lab distributes such Viewer source code.

4.3 You will comply with the processes of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act regarding copyright infringement claims covered

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under such Act.

Our policy is to respond to notices of alleged infringement that comply with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act ("DMCA"). Copyright-infringing materials found within the world of Second Life can be identified and removed via Linden Lab's DMCA compliance process listed at http://secondlife.com/corporate/dmca.php, and you agree to comply with such process in the event you are involved in any claim of copyright infringement to which the DMCA may be applicable.

4.4 Without a written license agreement, Linden Lab does not authorize you to make any use of its trademarks.

You agree to review and adhere to the guidelines on using "Second Life," "SL," "Linden," the Eye-in-Hand logo, and Linden Lab's other trademarks, service marks, trade names, logos, domain names, taglines, and trade dress (collectively, the "Linden Lab Marks") at http://secondlife.com /corporate/brand and its subpages, which may be updated from time to time. Except for the licenses expressly granted there or in a separate written agreement signed by you and Linden Lab, Linden Lab reserves all right, title, and interest in the Linden Lab Marks and does not authorize you to display or use any Linden Lab Mark in any manner whatsoever. If you have a written license agreement with Linden Lab to use a Linden Lab Mark, your use shall comply strictly with that agreement's terms and conditions and use guidelines.

RELEASES, DISCLAIMERS OF WARRANTY, LIMITATION OF LIABILITY, AND INDEMNIFICATION

5.1 You release Linden Lab from your claims relating to other users of Second Life. Linden Lab has the right but not the obligation to resolve disputes between users of Second Life.

As a condition of access to the Service, you release Linden Lab (and Linden Lab's shareholders, partners, affiliates, directors, officers, subsidiaries, employees, agents, suppliers, licensees, distributors) from claims, demands and damages (actual and consequential) of every kind and nature, known and unknown, suspected and unsuspected, disclosed and undisclosed, arising out of or in any way connected with any dispute you have or claim to have with one or more users of the Service. You further understand and agree that: (a) Linden Lab will have the right but not the obligation to resolve disputes between users relating to the Service, and Linden Lab's resolution of any particular dispute does not create an obligation to resolve any other dispute; (b) to the extent Linden Lab elects to resolve such disputes, it will do so in good faith based solely on the general rules and standards of the Service and will not make judgments regarding legal issues or claims; (c) Linden Lab's resolution of such disputes will be final with respect to the virtual world of the Service but will have no bearing on any real-world legal disputes in which users of the Service may become involved; and (d) you hereby release Linden Lab (and Linden Lab's shareholders, partners, affiliates, directors, officers, subsidiaries, employees, agents, suppliers, licensees, distributors) from claims, demands and damages (actual and consequential) of every kind and nature, known and unknown, suspected and unsuspected, disclosed and undisclosed, arising out of or in any way connected with Linden Lab's resolution of disputes relating to the Service.

5.2 Other service or product providers may form contractual relationships with you. Linden Lab is not a party to your relationship with such other providers.

Subject to the terms of this Agreement, you may view or use the

environment simulated by the Servers through viewer software that is not the Viewer provided by Linden Lab, and you may register for use of Second Life through websites that are not Websites owned and operated by Second Life. Linden Lab is not responsible for any software used with or in connection with Second Life other than Linden Software developed by Linden Lab. Linden Lab does not control and is not responsible for any information you provide to parties other than Linden Lab. Linden Lab is not a party to your agreement with any party that provides software, products or services to you in connection with Second Life.

5.3 All data on Linden Lab's servers are subject to deletion, alteration or transfer.

When using the Service, you may accumulate Content, Currency, objects, items, scripts, equipment, or other value or status indicators that reside as data on Linden Lab's servers. THESE DATA, AND ANY OTHER DATA, ACCOUNT HISTORY AND ACCOUNT NAMES RESIDING ON LINDEN LAB'S SERVERS, MAY BE DELETED, ALTERED, MOVED OR TRANSFERRED AT ANY TIME FOR ANY REASON IN LINDEN LAB'S SOLE DISCRETION.

YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT, NOTWITHSTANDING ANY COPYRIGHT OR OTHER RIGHTS YOU MAY HAVE WITH RESPECT TO ITEMS YOU CREATE USING THE SERVICE, AND NOTWITHSTANDING ANY VALUE ATTRIBUTED TO SUCH CONTENT OR OTHER DATA BY YOU OR ANY THIRD PARTY, LINDEN LAB DOES NOT PROVIDE OR GUARANTEE, AND EXPRESSLY DISCLAIMS (SUBJECT TO ANY UNDERLYING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS IN THE CONTENT), ANY VALUE, CASH OR OTHERWISE, ATTRIBUTED TO ANY DATA RESIDING ON LINDEN LAB'S SERVERS.

YOU UNDERSTAND AND AGREE THAT LINDEN LAB HAS THE RIGHT, BUT NOT THE OBLIGATION, TO REMOVE ANY CONTENT (INCLUDING YOUR CONTENT) IN WHOLE OR IN PART AT ANY TIME FOR ANY REASON OR NO REASON, WITH OR WITHOUT NOTICE AND WITH NO LIABILITY OF ANY KIND.

5.4 Linden Lab provides the Service on an "as is" basis, without express or implied warranties.

LINDEN LAB PROVIDES THE SERVICE, THE LINDEN SOFTWARE, YOUR ACCOUNT AND ALL OTHER SERVICES STRICTLY ON AN "AS IS" BASIS, PROVIDED AT YOUR OWN RISK, AND HEREBY EXPRESSLY DISCLAIMS ALL WARRANTIES OR CONDITIONS OF ANY KIND, WRITTEN OR ORAL, EXPRESS, IMPLIED OR STATUTORY, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY IMPLIED WARRANTY OF TITLE, NONINFRINGEMENT, MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

Without limiting the foregoing, Linden Lab does not ensure continuous, error-free, secure or virus-free operation of the Service, the Linden Software or your Account, and you understand that you shall not be entitled to refunds for fees based on Linden Lab's failure to provide any of the foregoing other than as explicitly provided in this Agreement. Some jurisdictions do not allow the disclaimer of implied warranties, and to that extent, the foregoing disclaimer may not apply to you.

5.5 Linden Lab's liability to you is expressly limited, to the extent allowable under applicable law.

IN NO EVENT SHALL LINDEN LAB OR ANY OF ITS SHAREHOLDERS, PARTNERS, AFFILIATES, DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, SUBSIDIARIES, EMPLOYEES, AGENTS, SUPPLIERS, LICENSEES OR DISTRIBUTORS BE LIABLE TO YOU OR TO ANY THIRD PARTY FOR ANY SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR EXEMPLARY DAMAGES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY DAMAGES FOR LOST PROFITS, ARISING

WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY DAMAGES FOR LOST PROFITS, ARISING
(WHETHER IN CONTRACT, TORT, STRICT LIABILITY OR OTHERWISE) OUT
OF OR IN CONNECTION WITH THE SERVICE (INCLUDING ITS
MODIFICATION OR TERMINATION), THE LINDEN SOFTWARE, YOUR
ACCOUNT (INCLUDING ITS TERMINATION OR SUSPENSION) OR THIS
AGREEMENT, WHETHER OR NOT LINDEN LAB MAY HAVE BEEN ADVISED
THAT ANY SUCH DAMAGES MIGHT OR COULD OCCUR AND
NOTWITHSTANDING THE FAILURE OF ESSENTIAL PURPOSE OF ANY
REMEDY. IN ADDITION, IN NO EVENT WILL LINDEN LAB'S CUMULATIVE
LIABILITY TO YOU FOR DIRECT DAMAGES OF ANY KIND OR NATURE
EXCEED FIFTY DOLLARS (U.S. $50.00). Some jurisdictions do not allow the
foregoing limitations of liability, so to the extent that any such limitation is
impermissible, such limitation may not apply to you. You agree that Linden
Lab cannot be held responsible or liable for anything that occurs or results
from accessing or subscribing to the Service.

**5.6 You will indemnify Linden lab from claims arising from breach
of this Agreement by you, from your use of Second Life, from loss
of Content due to your actions, or from alleged infringement by
you.**

At Linden Lab's request, you agree to defend, indemnify and hold harmless
Linden Lab, its shareholders, partners, affiliates, directors, officers,
subsidiaries, employees, agents, suppliers, licensees, distributors, Content
Providers, and other users of the Service, from all damages, liabilities,
claims and expenses, including without limitation attorneys' fees and costs,
arising from any breach of this Agreement by you, or from your use of the
Service. You agree to defend, indemnify and hold harmless Linden Lab, its
shareholders, partners, affiliates, directors, officers, subsidiaries,
employees, agents, suppliers, licensees, and distributors, from all
damages, liabilities, claims and expenses, including without limitation
attorneys' fees and costs, arising from: (a) any action or inaction by you in
connection with the deletion, alteration, transfer or other loss of Content,
status or other data held in connection with your Account, and (b) any
claims by third parties that your activity or Content in the Service infringes
upon, violates or misappropriates any of their intellectual property or
proprietary rights.

PRIVACY POLICY

**6.1 Linden Lab uses your personal information to operate and
improve Second Life, and will not give your personal information to
third parties except to operate, improve and protect the Service.**

The personal information you provide to us during registration is used for
Linden Lab's internal purposes only. Linden Lab uses the information it
collects to learn what you like and to improve the Service. Linden Lab will
not give any of your personal information to any third party without your
express approval except: as reasonably necessary to fulfill your service
request, to third- party fulfillment houses, customer support, billing and
credit verification services, and the like; to comply with tax and other
applicable law; as otherwise expressly permitted by this Agreement or as
otherwise authorized by you; to law enforcement or other appropriate third
parties in connection with criminal investigations and other investigations
of fraud; or as otherwise necessary to protect Linden Lab, its agents and
other users of the Service. Linden Lab does not guarantee the security of
any of your private transmissions against unauthorized or unlawful
interception or access by third parties. Linden Lab can (and you authorize
Linden Lab to) disclose any information about you to private entities, law
enforcement agencies or government officials, as Linden Lab, in its sole
discretion, believes necessary or appropriate to investigate or resolve
possible problems or inquiries, or as otherwise required by law. If you

request any technical support, you consent to Linden Lab's remote accessing and review of the computer onto which you load Linden Software for purposes of support and debugging. You agree that Linden Lab may communicate with you via email and any similar technology for any purpose relating to the Service, the Linden Software and any services or software which may in the future be provided by Linden Lab or on Linden Lab's behalf. You agree to read the disclosures and be bound by the terms of the additional Privacy Policy information posted on our website at http://secondlife.com/corporate/privacy.php.

6.2 Linden Lab may observe and record your interaction within the Service, and may share aggregated and other general information (not including your personal information) with third parties.

You acknowledge and agree that Linden Lab, in its sole discretion, may track, record, observe or follow any and all of your interactions within the Service. Linden Lab may share general, demographic, or aggregated information with third parties about our user base and Service usage, but that information will not include or be linked to any personal information without your consent.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

If a dispute arises between you and Linden Lab, our goal is to provide you with a neutral and cost-effective means of resolving the dispute quickly. Accordingly, you and Linden Lab agree to resolve any claim or controversy at law or in equity that arises from or relates to this Agreement or our Service (a "Claim") in accordance with one of the subsections below.

7.1 Governing Law. This Agreement and the relationship between you and Linden Lab shall be governed in all respects by the laws of the State of California without regard to conflict of law principles or the United Nations Convention on the International Sale of Goods.

7.2 Forum for Disputes. You and Linden Lab agree to submit to the exclusive jurisdiction and venue of the courts located in the City and County of San Francisco, California, except as provided in Subsection 7.3 below regarding optional arbitration. Notwithstanding this, you agree that Linden Lab shall still be allowed to apply for injunctive or other equitable relief in any court of competent jurisdiction.

7.3 Optional Arbitration. For any Claim, excluding Claims for injunctive or other equitable relief, where the total amount of the award sought is less than ten thousand U.S. Dollars ($10,000.00 USD), the party requesting relief may elect to resolve the Claim in a cost-effective manner through binding non-appearance-based arbitration. A party electing arbitration shall initiate it through an established alternative dispute resolution ("ADR") provider mutually agreed upon by the parties. The ADR provider and the parties must comply with the following rules: (a) the arbitration shall be conducted, at the option of the party seeking relief, by telephone, online, or based solely on written submissions; (b) the arbitration shall not involve any personal appearance by the parties or witnesses unless otherwise mutually agreed by the parties; and (c) any judgment on the award rendered by the arbitrator may be entered in any court of competent jurisdiction.

7.4 Improperly Filed Claims. All Claims you bring against Linden Lab must be resolved in accordance with this Dispute Resolution Section. All Claims filed or brought contrary to this Dispute Resolution Section shall be considered improperly filed. Should you file a Claim contrary to this Dispute Resolution Section, Linden Lab may recover attorneys' fees and costs up to one thousand U.S. Dollars ($1,000.00 USD), provided that

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http://secondlife.com/corporate/tos.php

Linden Lab has notified you in writing of the improperly filed Claim, and
you have failed to promptly withdraw the Claim.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

The Service is controlled and operated by Linden Lab from its offices within
the State of California, United States of America. Linden Lab makes no
representation that any aspect of the Service is appropriate or available for
use in jurisdictions outside of the United States. Those who choose to
access the Service from other locations are responsible for compliance with
applicable local laws. The Linden Software is subject to all applicable export
restrictions. You must comply with all export and import laws and
restrictions and regulations of any United States or foreign agency or
authority relating to the Linden Software and its use.

Linden Lab's failure to act with respect to a breach by you or others does
not waive Linden Lab's right to act with respect to that breach or
subsequent or similar breaches. No consent or waiver by Linden Lab under
this Agreement shall be deemed effective unless delivered in a writing
signed by a duly appointed officer of Linden Lab. All or any of Linden Lab's
rights and obligations under this Agreement may be assigned to a
subsequent owner or operator of the Service in a merger, acquisition or
sale of all or substantially all of Linden Lab's assets. You may not assign or
transfer this Agreement or any or all of your rights hereunder without the
prior written consent of Linden Lab, and any attempt to do so is void.
Notwithstanding anything else in this Agreement, no default, delay or
failure to perform on the part of Linden Lab shall be considered a breach of
this Agreement if such default, delay or failure to perform is shown to be
due to causes beyond the reasonable control of Linden Lab.

This Agreement sets forth the entire understanding and agreement
between you and Linden Lab with respect to the subject matter hereof. The
section headings used herein, including descriptive summary sentences at
the start of each section, are for convenience only and shall not affect the
interpretation of this Agreement. If any provision of this Agreement shall
be held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be unlawful, void, or for any
reason unenforceable, then in such jurisdiction that provision shall be
deemed severable from these terms and shall not affect the validity and
enforceability of the remaining provisions.

Linden Lab may give notice to you by means of a general notice on our
website at http://secondlife.com, through the Second Life Viewer at or
after log-in to your Account, by electronic mail to your e-mail address in
our records for your Account, or by written communication sent by first
class mail, postage prepaid, or overnight courier to your address on record
for your Account. All notices given by you or required under this
Agreement shall be faxed to Linden Lab Legal Department, Attn: Dispute
Resolution, at: (415) 243-9045; or mailed to us at: Linden Lab Legal
Department, Attn: Dispute Resolution, 945 Battery Street, San Francisco,
CA 94111.

Appendix D: Student Consent
Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
(General Consent Form)

The following information describes the research study in which you are being asked to participate. Please read the information carefully. At the end, you will be asked to sign if you agree to participate.

1. INVESTIGATOR(S): Dianna Baldwin, a Ph.D. candidate in the English Department at MTSU, will conduct this research project. (Faculty Advisor: Dr. Trixie Smith, Department of English).

2. PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of this research study is to determine how or if freshman student writing at Middle Tennessee State University changes when classes are conducted in the virtual world of *Second Life*.

3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE STUDY: The study will be conducted throughout the fall 07 semester. Each in-world class period will be recorded using *Camtasia* software; however, students are free to meet in-world at any other time than class and it will not be recorded. However, any writing or conversations, as described below, that occur during class concerning such out-of-class activity can be used. The last fifteen minutes of each in-world class period will be dedicated to focus groups. During this time, the moderator will ask a few questions, the participants will discuss the questions and offer their perspective on the virtual classroom experience. Students will also be asked to post to a blog site. Any and all writing done by the students' in-world, such as blog posts, chats, and essays, and out may be used as part of this study; however, identities will remain anonymous or by avatar names only.

4. POSSIBLE RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS: We do not know of any personal risk or discomfort you will experience from taking part in this study.

5. POSSIBLE BENEFITS: Although we do not expect that you will benefit directly by taking part in this study, the study is expected to benefit future students by helping in the assessment of teaching in the virtual world of *Second Life* and similar virtual environments.

6. PRIVACY: The identity of participants will be known to the researcher/moderator and

fellow participants. During discussion and note taking, participants will be referred to by their avatar names only. Information from the video and audio recording, including transcripts, and any notes will be kept confidential by the researcher and will be locked up by the researcher when not in use. The information gained in this study will be used in written reports and in various scholarly presentations. In these reports participants will be referred to by their avatar names or a pseudonym, one chosen by the participant.

9. YOUR RIGHTS: The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. However, since at least half of the class will be conducted in the virtual world of *Second Life*, if you choose not to participate, you will need to drop the class and sign up for a different section of English 1010.

10. CONTACT INFORMATION: Dianna Baldwin, (615) 419-5620, email: dlb2t@mtsu.edu, will gladly answer any questions you may have concerning the purpose, procedures, and outcome of this project.

STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY
I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this study.

_____   _____   _____

Printed name of Participant   **Signature of Participant**   **Date**

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

Appendix E: Questionnaire Consent

Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

The following information describes the research study in which you are being asked to participate. Please read the information carefully. At the end, you will be asked to sign if you agree to participate.

1. INVESTIGATOR(S): Dianna Baldwin, a Ph.D. candidate in the English Department at MTSU, will conduct this research project. (Faculty Advisor: Dr. Trixie Smith, Department of English).

2. PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of this research study is to determine how or if freshmen student writing at Middle Tennessee State University changes when classes are conducted in the virtual world of *Second Life*.

3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE STUDY: After reading this form, you will be given a questionnaire. Upon completion, the questionnaires will be collected, and only the investigator will have access to them.

4. POSSIBLE RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS: We do not know of any personal risk or discomfort you will experience from taking part in this study.

5. POSSIBLE BENEFITS: Although we do not expect that you will benefit directly by taking part in this study, the study is expected to benefit future students by helping in the assessment of teaching in the virtual world of *Second Life*.

6. PRIVACY: The identity of participants will remain anonymous. The information gained in this study will be used in written reports and in various scholarly presentations. In these reports, participants will not be referred to individually but rather in groups based on course, class rank, and major.

9. YOUR RIGHTS: The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. You will not be punished or treated any differently if you decide not to be in the study; however, completion of the questionnaire is required as your final exam. If you choose

not to participate, the results will not be used in the study. If you decide to be in the study, you have the right to stop being in the study at any time prior to the submission of your questionnaire, but you must inform the moderator/researcher when you turn in your questionnaire.

10. CONTACT INFORMATION: Dianna Baldwin, (615) 419-5620, will gladly answer any questions you may have concerning the purpose, procedures, and outcome of this project.

STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this study.

_____   _____
Date   Signature of patient/volunteer

Consent obtained by:

_____   _____
Date   Signature

                                      _____
                                      Printed Name and Title

Appendix F: In-World Consent
Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
(In-World Consent Form)

The following information describes the research study in which you are being asked to participate. Please read the information carefully. At the end, you will be asked to sign if you agree to participate.

1. INVESTIGATOR(S): Dianna Baldwin, a Ph.D. candidate in the English Department at MTSU, will conduct this research project. (Faculty Advisor: Dr. Trixie Smith, Department of English).

2. PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of this research study is to determine how or if freshman student writing at Middle Tennessee State University changes when classes are conducted in the virtual world of *Second Life*.

3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE STUDY: The study will be conducted throughout the MTSU fall 07 semester, 27 August 2007 through 13 December 2007, with possible interviews being conducted until 31 July 2008 to clarify any ambiguities which might arise from the results. Each in-world class period will be recorded using *Camtasia* software. Any and all writing done in-world, including chats, may be used as part of this study; however, identities will remain anonymous or by avatar names only.

4. POSSIBLE RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS: We do not know of any personal risk or discomfort you will experience from taking part in this study.

5. POSSIBLE BENEFITS: Although we do not expect that you will benefit directly by taking part in this study, the study is expected to benefit future students by helping in the assessment of teaching in the virtual world of *Second Life* and similar virtual environments.

6. PRIVACY: The identity of participants will be known to the researcher/moderator and fellow participants. While in-world, participants will be referred to by their avatar names only. Information from the video and audio recording, including transcripts, and any notes will be kept confidential by the researcher and will be locked up by the researcher when not in use. The information gained in this study will be used in written reports and

in various scholarly presentations. In these reports participants will be referred to by their avatar names or a pseudonym, one chosen by the participant.

9. YOUR RIGHTS: The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. However, entering into the space known as Hale ukana in *Second Life* IS deemed as consent to participate in this study.

10. CONTACT INFORMATION: Avatar ZoeB McMillan will gladly answer any questions you may have concerning the purpose, procedures, and outcome of this project. Simply send her an IM in-world with any questions you may have.

I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this study. I have had the chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me.

Continue in-world and enjoy.

Appendix G: Questionnaire
End of Semester Questionnaire

Year in School (Please Check One):

☐   Freshmen

☐   Sophomore

☐   Junior

☐   Senior

Major: _____

(Please mark only one box for each question)

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In relation to the your confidence level prior to taking this class					
Confidence in your ability to come up with a topic/content to write about prior to taking this course?	1	2	3	4	5
Confident in your ability to write about a topic in such a way that it was of interest to yourself?	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence in your ability to write about a topic in such a way that it was of interest to others?	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence in your ability to write an essay that was organized prior to taking this course?	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence in your ability to write an essay with few grammatical flaws prior to taking this course?	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In relation to the your confidence level after taking this class					
Confidence in your ability to come up with a topic/content to write about prior to taking this course?	1	2	3	4	5
Confident in your ability to write about a topic in such a way that it was of interest to yourself?	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence in your ability to write about a topic in such a way that it was of interest to others?	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence in your ability to write an essay that was organized prior to taking this course?	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence in your ability to write an essay with few grammatical flaws prior to taking this course?	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Please take the time to answer these questions, use extra paper if necessary

1) If you had the opportunity to take another class in *Second Life* would you do so?
   ___Yes ___No Why or why not?

2) What do you feel the advantages/disadvantages are of attending class in *Second Life* when compared to a traditional classroom?

3) Do you feel your experiences in *Second Life* improved your writing abilities, as defined in questions 3-6? Why or why not?

4) When compared to the writing you did for other classes this semester, did you work harder on your writing in this class? Why or why not?

5) Do you feel the writing you did for this class will help you with your writing in other classes? Why or why not?

Appendix H: Interview Questions

1. What would be your reaction if you learned that another of your classes was going to be taught in Second Life?

2. What was your initial reaction to learning that this class was being taught in a virtual world?

3. Explain either how you became a part of the culture of Second Life, or why you feel you did not?

4. How do you think Second Life influenced your writing?

5. Explain what you think the advantages or disadvantages are of learning in Second Life?

6. Some students expressed feelings of fear, excitement, or real world phobias while in Second Life. Why do you think these feelings transfer to a virtual world and explain whether or not this helps one to explore their own identity?

7. Think back to the first couple of night you experienced in Second Life? Explain what your feelings were during those sessions?

8. Tell me how you would explain your experiences to a freshman class getting ready to take writing in Second Life.

Appendix I: Syllabus and Schedule

English 1010 – Expository Writing – Fall 2007
Course Theme: Living a Second Life

Instructor: Prof. Dianna Baldwin **Section** : 107 PH 327
Office: PH 105   T-TR 4:20 – 5:45
Alternate PH 303A
Office Hrs: T/TR – 1:15-4:15 **Phone** : 904-8262
and by appointment **Email** : dlb2t@mtsu.edu

REQUIRED TEXTS

✱ FW: *FieldWorking*, 3rd edition, by Bonnie Stone Sunstein & Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater
✱ HHH: *Hodges' Harbrace Handbook*, 16th edition, by Glenn & Gray
✱ SFC: *Surviving Freshman Composition*, 4th edition by Smith and Smith
✱ SL: *Second Life: The Official Guide*, by Michael Rymaszewski et al.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

• Access to Microsoft Word (only, no Works   • Email Account
or Word Perfect)

• College Dictionary   • High Speed Internet Access **(A MUST)**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

English 1010 is the first course in the English writing sequence that you are required to take. Everything that you learn in this class will benefit you in whatever field of study you choose to pursue, as well as in the "real world" you will one day endeavor to conquer. We will focus on the process of writing as well as the actual texts that you will produce. **The process is just as important as the finished product**. We will also investigate writing as a social activity in the virtual world of Second Life. Therefore, you will be graded on the final papers you produce, on the process you use in order to complete your assignments, and on the activities necessary to complete the assignments. We will focus on improving your knowledge of what makes an effective college-level paper and will spend time looking at strategies that will improve your papers on the following levels: content, organization, word choice, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. We will be treating revision and editing as two separate processes and using peer review workshops (social activities) for both revision and editing. In order to generate ideas for our class discussions and writing assignments, we will use the virtual world of Second Life.

This is a mature classroom; if you are easily offended, you may want to drop. This is also a digital classroom. If you are not familiar and comfortable with Microsoft word, the internet, websites, WebCT, and email, you need to become that way quickly or drop. You will also be responsible for meeting certain deadlines; if your schedule is not flexible enough to meet these requirements, you may wish to drop. You will need to familiarize yourself with MTSU's policies

on Sexual Harassment, found at http://www.mtsu.edu/~handbook/rights.pdf. Please keep in mind that sexual harassment can also occur in the virtual world of Second Life, so please be aware of your responsibilities as well as your rights.

CLASS ACTIVITES & GUIDELINES

Reading – You will read chapters from *FieldWorking, Second Life: The Official Guide*, other outside readings as assigned, chapters from the *Harbrace,* and selections from *Surviving Freshman Composition.*

Writing and Revising – In addition to writing in the virtual world of Second Life and on a blog, you will write at least two drafts, as well as a final paper, for the four essays (1000-1250 words each). Failure to do so will reduce your essay score significantly. **All essays must be a minimum of 4 pages and a maximum of 7 pages**. You will learn that effective writing is a matter of revision, and you will have an opportunity to receive feedback on your writing from your peers and then to rewrite each of your essays.

Blog – You will be responsible for submitting one original blog entry each week, and one response to one of your peers for a total of two submissions per week. These entries will be based on your reactions to your experiences in Second Life. More are gladly welcome.

Quizzes – You will likely have quizzes over reading assignments in the textbooks and over any other reading assignments such as *Harbrace's Handbook* or *Surviving Freshman Composition.*

Journals –You will be responsible for writing journal entries with your reactions to readings, music, advertising, or other things. The purpose of these journal entries is to allow you to investigate the readings, etc. more thoroughly and have a better understanding of them and your relationship to them as a reader, listener, consumer, etc.

Website – You and your classmates will be responsible for creating a business in the virtual world of Second Life. Creativity is the key here. It is a place where you can get to know one another and a soapbox if need be. Have fun with it.

Paper Format - All papers will be typed in Microsoft Word, double-spaced, and turned in via email. In addition, all papers will use 12-point Times New Roman font and will have a 1" margin at the top, bottom, and both sides. <u>NOTE:</u> The default settings for MS Word are **1.25"** for the left and right margins—you will need to reset the margins to 1". All papers will have a title and the appropriate assignment block in the top left-hand corner of the first page. (See *HHH* 634-35 for further explanation and example.) You need to follow these presentation guidelines whenever you turn in a paper to me; not following them will **reduce your essay grade.**

Attendance – I will take roll daily. For this course, you are allowed three free absences. A fourth one will **FAIL** you. Perfect attendance will improve your grade. If you are to miss class, check with a classmate or me before you return to see if any assignments have changed so that you do not fall behind. It is not wise to use all of your absences early in the term in case you have legitimate reasons for missing class later. The point scale for attendance is

        0 absences--------------------2 points added to your final grade
        1-2 absences-----------------1 point added to your final grade
        3 absences--------------------grade unchanged
        4 absences--------------------**FAILURE**

GRADES

In order to pass this course and earn three credit hours, your course average must be a **C** (at least a 70) or better. In order to be eligible you must 1) complete all four essays, and 2) meet all attendance requirements while maintaining a 70 or better average on all course work. Failure to complete an essay or missing four classes will automatically exempt you from being able to pass this class. Your course grade will be determined as a ratio of total points earned divided by total points available (see below).

15%	Diagnostics (5%)+ Essay 1 (10%)	15% Journals, Blog, and Second Life assignments
20%	Essay 2	10% Quizzes, reading test, participation, etc
20%	Essay 3	**100% TOTAL**
20%	Essay 4	

Grading Scale:

100-90=A / 89-87=B+ / 86-80=B / 79-77=C+ / 76-70=C / 69-60 = Possible N or F / 59 and Below = F or Possible N

Students who fulfill all course requirements as stated above but fail to achieve the grade of C or better *and who are attempting the course for the first time* will be eligible to receive a course grade of **N** (not passing), which gives them another opportunity to pass the course without lowering their GPAs. *Final grades will be reported as A, B+, B, C+, C, F, or N.*

COURSE POLICIES

Late Work – All assigned work is due on or before the due date listed in the schedule. However, you can turn one assignment in late, within a week, with no questions. **NOTE:** This **does not** apply to the final essay, which must be turned in on the date it is due. This is a one-time deal; a second occurrence means an automatic "0" on the assignment and likely failure.

Plagiarism – The most flagrant instances of plagiarism are 1) submitting work that is copied from another student's writing, 2) having someone dictate what should be written, and 3) using printed or Internet sources without documentation. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating in my class using one of these methods or any other method, you will receive an F for the assignment and your activities will be reported to the Dean of Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. I have access to www.mydropbox.com that allows me to check for plagiarism, and I will. You will be required to read over, sign, and turn in the plagiarism statement found in *Surviving Freshman Composition* (pg. 13).

Second Life Policies – Every policy that applies to the regular classroom also applies to your behavior in the world of Second Life while we are in class. You would not come to a regular classroom naked, so I do not expect you to show up in Second Life naked. Please keep in mind that the same sexual harassment policies that apply in the regular classroom also apply in Second Life. The same attendance policies also apply. If you fail to show up to class in Second Life, you will be counted absent. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask.

Please note: If you need special accommodations due to a disability, please provide a letter from Disabled Student Services to me at the beginning of the semester. I am happy to provide special accommodations but need to know in advance; please do not wait to give me your letter.

WRITING ASSISTANCE SERVICES

The Writing Center is located in Peck Hall 325 (phone 904-8237, email *uwcenter@mtsu.edu*). They also perform writing assistance online. If we find you are having writing problems in a specific area that can best be addressed in writing assistance sessions, I will ask that you take advantage of this service. Speaking and Writing assistance is offered in Ezell Hall (494-8616). You are paying for these services through your fees, so it would behoove you to use them.

Scholarships and Student Loans

You are responsible to be familiar with and adhere to the terms and conditions of whatever means of financial support you benefit from. In no instance can I be held responsible for any neglect of your duties. This applies in particular to the Hope scholarships that are lottery funded. To retain Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. Dropping a class after 14 days may also impact eligibility. If you withdraw from this class and it results in an enrollment status of less than full time, you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship. For more lottery information please see http://scholarships.web.mtsu.edu/telsconteligibility.htm. You can also find up to date information at http://mtsu32.mtsu.edu:11447/telsprogram.htm, or contact the MTSU financial aid office at 898-2830.

***The schedule is subject to modification at the instructor's discretion.

THIS IS A CONTRACT

This syllabus is a contract between you (as the student) and me (as the instructor). By staying in this class, you are agreeing to follow all the guidelines given above and to be responsible for your own actions.

Tentative Calendar

Week 1 (8/27—9/2) (Last day to add: 8/30)	TUES 1. Introduction to D2L, also read pages 191-206 in <u>Surviving Freshman Composition</u> (SFC) 2. MLA Page Formatting, also reference pages 139-148 in SFC 3. Review p. 605 in <u>Hodge's Harbrace Handbook</u> (HHH) 4. Write a minimum of 3 pages, max of 4, on your identity. Who are you, who would you like to be, and who do you fantasize about being. THUR 1. Intro into Second Life 2. Have read Chapter 4 in *Second Life: The Official Guide (SL)* 3. Have read pgs. 65-90 in Chapter 2 in *FieldWorking (FW)* 4. Blog about your experiences in SL.
Week 2 (9/3—9/09) 9/3 – No Class, Labor Day Holiday (9/09 – Last day to drop no grade.)	TUES 1. Have read Planning and Drafting Essays (pp. 392-417 in HHH) 2. Have read pgs 91-115 in chapter 2 "Writing Self" in FW. 3. Have read Rhetorically (380-391 HHH) and Revising and Editing pgs 418-458. 4. Essay 1 assigned. THUR 1. Journal entry of one typed page due.

	2. Sign and return Plagiarism Statement pg 13 <u>only</u> (no photo copies and no other page) in SFC. 3. Blog about your experiences in SL.
Week 3 **(9/10—9/16)**	TUES 1. Have read Chapter 3 & pp. 112-114 in SFC 2. Have read pages 99 & 102 and 10-12, 28-32, 39-41, & 44 SFC 3. Have read "Agreement" (pp 99-112 HHH) and TURN in Exercises 1-3 4. Have read Chapter 1 in FW pgs 1-32 5. Revision Workshop THUR 1. Editing Workshop 2. Blog about your experiences in SL. 3. Journal entry of one typed page due.
Week 4 **(9/17—9/23)**	TUES 1. Essay 1 DUE 2. Have read Comma/Semicolon (pp. 203-223 HHH). Be prepared to go over all exercises in these sections. 3. Have read Chapter 1 in FW pgs. 33-63 THUR 1. Blog about your experiences in SL. 2. Journal entry of one typed page due.
Week 5 **(9/24—9/30)**	TUES 1. Essay 1 REV due 2. Essay 2 Assigned 3. Have read Apostrophe (pp. 224-232 HHH). Be prepared to go over the exercises 4. Have read pages 115 and in SFC 5. Have read Chapter 3 in FW pgs. 117-146 THUR

	1. Blog about your experiences in SL. 2. Journal entry of one typed page due.
Week 6 **(10/1—10/7)**	**TUES** 1. **Transitions (HHH 436-440)** 2. **Have read chapter 3 of FW 147-174** 3. **Revision Workshop** 4. **Have read pages 47-52 in SFC**
	THUR 1. **Editing Workshop** 2. **Blog about your experiences in SL.** 3. **Journal entry of one typed page due.**
Week 7 (10/8—10/14) (Last day to drop with a "W": 10/14)	TUE 1. Essay 2 DUE 2. Language Awareness (pp. 285-304 HHH). Be prepared to go over the exercises 3. Have read chapter 4 in FW pgs 175-235 THUR 1. Blog about your experiences in SL. 2. Journal entry of one typed page due.
Week 8 **(10/15—10/21)** (Fall Break 10/13 – 10/16)	**TUES** 1. **Fall Break**
	THUR 1. **Blog about your experiences in SL.** 2. **Journal entry of one typed page due.**
Week 9 (10/22—10/28)	TUES 1. Essay 2 REV DUE 2. Have read chapter 4 in FW pgs. 207-236 3. Sentence Combining (pp. 318-324 HHH) Be prepared to go over the exercises 4. Essay 3 Assigned THUR

1. Blog about your experiences in SL.
2. Journal entry of one typed page due.

Week 10 (10/29 – 11/4)	**TUES** 1. Advance your writing skills. 2. Read pages 91-98 in SFC 3. Have read chapter 5 in FW pgs. 237-272 4. Revision Workshop
	THUR 1. Editing Workshop 2. Blog about your experiences in SL. 3. Journal entry of one typed page due.
Week 11 (11/5—11/11)	**TUES** 1. Have read chapter 5 in FW pgs 273-306. 2. Essay 3 DUE **THUR** 1. Blog about your experiences in SL. 2. Journal entry of one typed page due.
Week 12 (11/12—11/18) (11/12 – Registration begins)	**TUES** 1. Essay 3 REV DUE 2. Essay 4 Assigned 3. Read pages 495-518 in HHH
	THUR 1. Blog about your experiences in SL. 2. Journal entry of one typed page due.
Week 13 (11/19—11/25) (Thanksgiving break: 11/22-11/23)	**TUES** 1. Advance your writing skills. Read pages 100 & 100-111 in SFC 2. Revision Workshop

THUR

1. THANKSGIVING

Week 14 (11/26—12/2)	TUES 1. Editing Workshop
	THUR 1. Blog about your experiences in SL.
Week 15 (12/3—12/9) (Study Day on 12/6) (3 days only!)	TUES 1. Essay 4 DUE THUR STUDY DAY
Week 16 (12/10—12/13) (Final Exams – 12/7 – 12/13) Our Final Exam Dec 13 @ 3:30	FINAL EXAM DEC 13th 3:30-5:30

Appendix J: Chat Log

[2007/09/13 15:15] You: I thought all of group 1 would look at each other's locations

[2007/09/13 15:17] Mildrad Pinklady: haha its so much fun watching the macho guys take each other out

[2007/09/13 15:17] Tyson Sawson: no shit

[2007/09/13 15:17] Tyson Sawson: hailey is the only one

[2007/09/13 15:17] Zao Roux: they dont even do anything, they just talk

[2007/09/13 15:18] Hailey Shelford: we should all take our clothes off haha just kiddin

[2007/09/13 15:18] Leonidis Ultsch: o ill take them out. watch this!

[2007/09/13 15:18] Tyson Sawson: no your not

[2007/09/13 15:18] Zao Roux: do it!!

[2007/09/13 15:18] Aska Kungfu: Looking good!

[2007/09/13 15:18] Zao Roux: knock him out

[2007/09/13 15:18] Aska Kungfu: Looking good!

[2007/09/13 15:18] Mildrad Pinklady: lol

[2007/09/13 15:18] Zao Roux: tyson's getting his ass kicked

[2007/09/13 15:18] Hailey Shelford: yes i am! hush ur mouth before i do it for u

[2007/09/13 15:18] THERealRomeo Flow: we can hailey my place 6:30 bring a friend

[2007/09/13 15:18] Tyson Sawson: shell bring me

[2007/09/13 15:18] Tyson Sawson: ill take you out

[2007/09/13 15:18] THERealRomeo Flow: and i'll beat your ass

[2007/09/13 15:18] Aska Kungfu: you all are CRAZY

[2007/09/13 15:18] Tyson Sawson: yea yea

[2007/09/13 15:18] Zao Roux: by walking into me? oh boy, ur tough

[2007/09/13 15:18] Aska Kungfu: hehehehe

[2007/09/13 15:18] THERealRomeo Flow: what's up girl

[2007/09/13 15:19] Leonidis Ultsch: let me guess, with ur pistol right?

[2007/09/13 15:19] Mildrad Pinklady: heat your ass?

[2007/09/13 15:19] Tyson Sawson: thats my girl

[2007/09/13 15:19] Aska Kungfu: heat what

[2007/09/13 15:19] THERealRomeo Flow: then why she eyeballin' me for

[2007/09/13 15:19] Leonidis Ultsch: lol

[2007/09/13 15:19] Hailey Shelford: haha do u even have a house here romeo

[2007/09/13 15:19] Tyson Sawson: shes wonderin y you dress like me

[2007/09/13 15:19] THERealRomeo Flow: not on this island

[2007/09/13 15:19] Aska Kungfu: oh, snap now we are claiming people

[2007/09/13 15:19] Mildrad Pinklady: r they fighting over u hailey?

[2007/09/13 15:19] Hailey Shelford: thanks tyson ur too sweet

[2007/09/13 15:19] Zao Roux: so, a father says to his son, "if you dont stop masturbating, you will go blind!" The son replies, "dad, im in the other room"

[2007/09/13 15:19] Tyson Sawson: i kno only for my girl

[2007/09/13 15:19] Tyson Sawson: your gay zao
[2007/09/13 15:20] Hailey Shelford: yeah u too r dressed alike
[2007/09/13 15:20] Mildrad Pinklady: hahah wow...
[2007/09/13 15:20] Zao Roux: LIES
[2007/09/13 15:20] Leonidis Ultsch: second that
[2007/09/13 15:20] THERealRomeo Flow: she ain't gonna be your girl 2 long
[2007/09/13 15:20] Aska Kungfu: heheheheh gross but hehehe
[2007/09/13 15:20] Zao Roux: you just cant handle a real body like mine
[2007/09/13 15:20] THERealRomeo Flow: he keep walking away from you
[2007/09/13 15:20] Leonidis Ultsch: haha
[2007/09/13 15:20] Chocolate Kappler: Who is this walking into me?
[2007/09/13 15:20] THERealRomeo Flow: imma have to spit this pimpin
[2007/09/13 15:20] Velleos Nakamori: and so the internet in effect destroys the english language
[2007/09/13 15:20] Leonidis Ultsch: why u holdin a torch man
[2007/09/13 15:20] Zao Roux: why not?
[2007/09/13 15:20] Valcron Bracken: yea
[2007/09/13 15:20] Zao Roux: it helps me see
[2007/09/13 15:20] Zao Roux: it lights my way
[2007/09/13 15:20] Valcron Bracken: its about to be dark
[2007/09/13 15:21] Tyson Sawson: i love the dark
[2007/09/13 15:21] Aska Kungfu: who the shit is holding the torch
[2007/09/13 15:21] Zao Roux: well, too bad you losers dont have torches
[2007/09/13 15:21] Hailey Shelford: hahaha i am sure u do love the dark
[2007/09/13 15:21] Tyson Sawson: time for me and hailey
[2007/09/13 15:21] THERealRomeo Flow: yea time for you to say goodbye
[2007/09/13 15:21] Hailey Shelford: tyson ur crazy
[2007/09/13 15:21] Aska Kungfu: I did not need one thank you
[2007/09/13 15:21] Chocolate Kappler: Damn...
[2007/09/13 15:21] Aska Kungfu: I have other attractiopns
[2007/09/13 15:21] Leonidis Ultsch: tysons gay
[2007/09/13 15:21] Valcron Bracken: i trun into a vampire at night....watch out
[2007/09/13 15:21] Aska Kungfu: attractions
[2007/09/13 15:21] THERealRomeo Flow: yea that's right you weak tyson
[2007/09/13 15:21] Leonidis Ultsch: yea thats right tyson
[2007/09/13 15:21] Chocolate Kappler: Whoa...I am going to leave YOU the hell alone.
[2007/09/13 15:21] Mildrad Pinklady: u know when u guys try to push each other it kind of looks like your grinding on each other
[2007/09/13 15:22] Leonidis Ultsch: u aint nothin but a ho
[2007/09/13 15:22] Velleos Nakamori: ugh
[2007/09/13 15:22] Leonidis Ultsch: hey im talkin to u tyson
[2007/09/13 15:22] THERealRomeo Flow: hey girl

[2007/09/13 15:22] Aska Kungfu: nice, so we do not want to ketch you in adark alley or do we?

[2007/09/13 15:22] Chocolate Kappler: Kind of like...never mind.....

[2007/09/13 15:22] Tyson Sawson: shut up bitch

[2007/09/13 15:22] Tyson Sawson: get away from my girl

[2007/09/13 15:22] Zao Roux: they think it makes them look hardcore, when it really looks like they're making out

[2007/09/13 15:22] Hailey Shelford: dammnnnn

[2007/09/13 15:22] Valcron Bracken: nay

[2007/09/13 15:22] THERealRomeo Flow: see even leo know you a ho tyson

[2007/09/13 15:22] Hailey Shelford: zao who r u

[2007/09/13 15:22] Hailey Shelford: turn around

[2007/09/13 15:22] Hailey Shelford: lol

[2007/09/13 15:22] Zao Roux: YOU WILL NEVER KNOW

[2007/09/13 15:22] Hailey Shelford: please!!!!!

[2007/09/13 15:22] Aska Kungfu: pink what are you doing

[2007/09/13 15:22] Valcron Bracken: muhuhhahahaha

[2007/09/13 15:22] Zao Roux: no

[2007/09/13 15:22] Zao Roux: !!

[2007/09/13 15:23] Tyson Sawson: he kno not to mess with me

[2007/09/13 15:23] Zao Roux: wo are you?

[2007/09/13 15:23] Chocolate Kappler: What is this...A gang?

[2007/09/13 15:23] Valcron Bracken: hailey.....original name.

[2007/09/13 15:23] Aska Kungfu: boy this conversaation is so LAME!

[2007/09/13 15:23] Mildrad Pinklady: i guess

[2007/09/13 15:23] Mildrad Pinklady: we some hardcore beyotchs

[2007/09/13 15:23] Tyson Sawson: damn you want it in front of all these ppl

[2007/09/13 15:23] Zao Roux: no, its two guys fighting over eachother's mangina

[2007/09/13 15:23] Hailey Shelford: thanks i liked it myself

[2007/09/13 15:23] Chocolate Kappler: (sighs) Some people I honestly wonder about...

[2007/09/13 15:23] Hailey Shelford: glad to know that u like it too

[2007/09/13 15:23] THERealRomeo Flow: hailey stop frontin girl

[2007/09/13 15:23] Mildrad Pinklady: r u talkin about me kappler?

[2007/09/13 15:23] THERealRomeo Flow: you know you want romeo

[2007/09/13 15:24] You: Excuse me

[2007/09/13 15:24] Hailey Shelford: lol

[2007/09/13 15:24] Tyson Sawson: watch who u talkin to boy

[2007/09/13 15:24] Mildrad Pinklady: valcron i love your look btw

[2007/09/13 15:24] Chocolate Kappler: No, sweetie. Why would I be talking about you?

[2007/09/13 15:24] Valcron Bracken: this is all nonsense

[2007/09/13 15:24] Aska Kungfu: Yes yes it is

[2007/09/13 15:24] THERealRomeo Flow: tyson i will fold you like a napkin boy

[2007/09/13 15:24] Leonidis Ultsch: tyson u talk a lot

[2007/09/13 15:24] Valcron Bracken: grazi

[2007/09/13 15:24] Zao Roux: 8=====> ~ ~

[2007/09/13 15:24] Tyson Sawson: hater

[2007/09/13 15:24] Leonidis Ultsch: and damn u ugle

[2007/09/13 15:24] Mildrad Pinklady: its hard to tell on here

[2007/09/13 15:24] You: HELLO

[2007/09/13 15:24] Leonidis Ultsch: ugly*

[2007/09/13 15:24] Hailey Shelford: everyone needs to get along

[2007/09/13 15:24] Aska Kungfu: oh, snap we are in trouble now!@

[2007/09/13 15:24] Mildrad Pinklady: tried tht

[2007/09/13 15:24] Leonidis Ultsch: shut up hailey

[2007/09/13 15:24] Mildrad Pinklady: it doesnt work

[2007/09/13 15:24] THERealRomeo Flow: yea imma get along with you hailey cuz it's romeo

[2007/09/13 15:24] Tyson Sawson: im cool if they leave you alone

[2007/09/13 15:25] Valcron Bracken: why are we all jumbled up right here. its silly.

[2007/09/13 15:25] Chocolate Kappler: Special humans...

[2007/09/13 15:25] Aska Kungfu: You with the crappy blue hair who are you!

[2007/09/13 15:25] Leonidis Ultsch: and thats the only girl u can prolly get romeo

[2007/09/13 15:25] Zao Roux: ME?

[2007/09/13 15:25] Zao Roux: my hair is drop dead gorgeous

[2007/09/13 15:25] You: Did you all forget that you are being recorded for academic purposesw

[2007/09/13 15:25] Hailey Shelford: leo stop that right now!!

[2007/09/13 15:25] Valcron Bracken: good one leonidis.

[2007/09/13 15:25] Chocolate Kappler: Drop dead ugly...

[2007/09/13 15:25] THERealRomeo Flow: leo don't make me remind you that me and ya mom's got our lil thang on the side

[2007/09/13 15:25] Valcron Bracken: idiot.

[2007/09/13 15:25] Tyson Sawson: i guess

[2007/09/13 15:25] Mildrad Pinklady: lol um oops

[2007/09/13 15:25] Leonidis Ultsch: dang

[2007/09/13 15:25] Tyson Sawson: damn

[2007/09/13 15:25] THERealRomeo Flow: yea that's right im ya pappy

[2007/09/13 15:25] Valcron Bracken: dern

[2007/09/13 15:26] Tyson Sawson: hailey still my girl

[2007/09/13 15:26] THERealRomeo Flow: she wasn't your girl last nite

[2007/09/13 15:26] Zao Roux: ....

[2007/09/13 15:26] Hailey Shelford: haha oh my gosh tyson

[2007/09/13 15:26] Aska Kungfu: you guys are fighting over a girl in a game get a life!

[2007/09/13 15:26] Chocolate Kappler: (whistles)

[2007/09/13 15:26] Hailey Shelford: i cant believe u

[2007/09/13 15:26] THERealRomeo Flow: she was with the real romeo son

[2007/09/13 15:26] Leonidis Ultsch: zoeb are we done with discussions for the day?

[2007/09/13 15:26] You: It should be interesting when I show this to a room full of PhDs

[2007/09/13 15:26] Tyson Sawson: i kno it was your mom. she was the night b4. tonights her night tho

[2007/09/13 15:26] Aska Kungfu: hehehehehe

[2007/09/13 15:27] Chocolate Kappler: (shakes his head and laughs) This gets better by the second.

[2007/09/13 15:27] Aska Kungfu: oh GOD

[2007/09/13 15:27] Hailey Shelford: lol that was so rude we r not friends anymore tyson i thought u were my shawty hehe

[2007/09/13 15:27] Mildrad Pinklady: lol like i said oops

[2007/09/13 15:27] THERealRomeo Flow: tyson i know i might be your dad and all but your still grounded son

[2007/09/13 15:27] Zao Roux: in that case, lets talk about the effects of literature on american culture

[2007/09/13 15:27] Tyson Sawson: you my shawty

[2007/09/13 15:27] Aska Kungfu: you look GAY!

[2007/09/13 15:27] Tyson Sawson: im just takin up for you

[2007/09/13 15:27] Hailey Shelford: no romeos mom apparently is

[2007/09/13 15:27] You: Nice try Zao, but this is a writing class

[2007/09/13 15:27] Zao Roux: :(

[2007/09/13 15:27] Velleos Nakamori: please...a little more civility?

[2007/09/13 15:27] Mildrad Pinklady: haha aww bummer

[2007/09/13 15:27] THERealRomeo Flow: she might be yo shawty but she creepin' on the DL

[2007/09/13 15:28] Hailey Shelford: lol no i am not

[2007/09/13 15:28] Tyson Sawson: no you kno it was you las night. he just stupid

[2007/09/13 15:28] You: What happened to checking out the places you were writing about

Appendix K: Fieldworking Assignment

English 1010-107 Professor Baldwin
Essay 1: Essay—Field Notes (10% of final grade)

Revision Workshop (in-world): Thusday, Sept 13th, 2007
Editing Workshop (in-class): Tuesday, Sept 18th, 2007
FINAL DRAFT DUE (by email): Thursday, Sept 20th, 2007

ASSIGNMENT: This essay will be based on your field observations of a Second Life place that interest you. You have total artistic freedom in this essay assignment. The requirements are that there be a minimum of 1100 words and good writing.

TOPIC: Find a place in SL that interests you: maybe some place that includes your degree interests. Write up field observation notes as described in *FieldWorking* (and to be included with your first draft) and then incorporate those observations in your writing. Were you impressed by the location you visited? Why or why not. What were our initial reactions to the location? Do you know any place in real life that is similar? Compare this virtual world to the same location in real life. Now do they compare? These are just some questions that might spur your writing. You can create a PowerPoint (don't forget that there must be 1100 polished words), a graphic story (same 1100 words), a journal entry or letter, or a traditional essay. Don't feel like you have to be creative if you want to just write a traditional essay.

AUDIENCE: You will need to choose your audience according to your medium. If it is a graphic novel, it will likely focus on a younger (not children) audience. If you do a journalistic feature, your audience is anyone who might read a newspaper. ASK if you have questions.

TASKS TO COMPLETE BEFORE THE REVISION WORKSHOP:
    a) Type the essay according to the medium you have chosen
    b) **PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE WRITE 1100 WORDS**

PAPER GUIDELINES: Paper guidelines pretty much go out the window in this type of an assignment. **If you are doing a traditional essay, use the Harbrace MLA format on page 605.**

SPECIFIC SKILLS/ABILITIES REQUIRED: You will
- Be aware of your audience and write to that audience
- Use the language appropriate to that audience
- Reflect and respond to your field note observations

TRAPS TO AVOID: You will want to avoid the following problems, especially
- Not writing to your audience
- Not writing at least 1100 words

Appendix L: Essay 1—Primary Trait Rubric

Prof. Dianna Baldwin
Essay 1—Place Observation
(Primary Trait/Rubric)

I will evaluate your diagnostic essay on the following criteria. Please pay close attention to each category including the total amount of points possible

INTRODUCTION:

Well developed introduction with clear audience and apparent thesis

Strong...............Average...............Weak
20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 10 9 8 7 6 5

PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT:
Well-developed topic sentences that anchor the intent of each paragraph

Strong...............Average...............Weak
10   9   8   7   6   5

Well-supported—vivid details, meaningful examples, use of five senses

Strong...............Average...............Weak
10   9   8   7   6   5

Paragraphs strongly support the thesis and topic sentences

Strong...............Average...............Weak
10   9   8   7   6   5

ORGANIZATION:
Logical flow with transitions between paragraphs

Strong...............Average...............Weak
10   9   8   7   6   5

CONCLUSION:
Strong final paragraph, summarizing content

Strong...............Average...............Weak
10   9   8   7   6   5

OVERALL ESSAY:
Creativity and voice apparent

Strong...............Average...............Weak
10   9   8   7   6   5

Edited paper for spelling errors, clear word choice, commas, agreement, and pronouns

Strong...............Average...............Weak
10   9   8   7   6   5

Revision apparent

Strong...............Average...............Weak
10   9   8   7   6   5

COMMENTS:

Appendix M: Student Essay 1

ENGL 1010-102

Diana Baldwin

11, SEPT 2007

Essay 1- Taken Under a Gothic Angel's Wing

Who knew that a click of a mouse and a stroke of a few keys could unlock our fantasies

and set them into motion? Well, animated motion, that is. I am speaking of the virtual

world of Second Life (SL) where you can fly, chat in mermish to the merpeople or go to

a block party in Hollywood all while sitting in your pajamas at home. Sounding more like

a hyped-up version of The Sims, SL is actually far beyond anything one could ever

experience in that overshadowed children's game. One week in this virtual fantasy land

has opened my eyes to some amazing things, some beautiful and some not so charming.

As I created myself in SL, I designed my own avatar. The avatars on SL have many more

changeable features than the basic "hair-and-clothes" av's that you may be familiar with.

The head alone can be shaped and molded using over 25 control options. From the length

of your forehead to the nose/nostril width- every feature is set to your liking. The rest of

the body is controlled the same way. Want to be tall and muscular with a thick neck and a

thin waist? You got it! I was happy with the "Cyber-goth female". Her milk white robotic

skin and hollow eyes suited me.

Gender is usually appropriate to the user but "gender bending" does happen. Your avatar

is a representation of you and, in my opinion, "honesty is the best policy". Friendships

will be formed online and deception is not a good foot to start off on. One wouldn't like to spend hours chatting to someone only to realize that the person they took at face value was counterfeit.

Naming the avatar is a delicate process. The last name of the avatar comes from a pre-chosen list. My first name was up to my imagination, but I had to think about it! SL doesn't allow you to change your name once you submit it. Fiona Howley was my choice. The two sound melodic together and I have always been partial to the name Fiona!

Once I was officially created as a resident of SL, I was transported to "Orientation Island" where I learned the basics. Walking, sitting, touching objects, flying and gestures can all be practiced while on OI. I chatted with a few "noobies" who had just landed there as well. A tall surfer looking male ran up and spouted off a few things in German, I think, to which I just said "English." I hadn't thought about the fact that people all over the world were using Second Life.

Once I felt comfortable maneuvering on OI, I was ready to explore. I was ready to hit "the grid" to see what this world was really all about. I had no idea how little I knew until I happened upon a place that I knew was the spot for me. An oddly grouped patch of buildings lie past mystical pagodas on a little island called San Sebastian Isles. Outside of one of the shops, an empty red and black checkered dance floor played the audience for pumping industrial goth music. This attracted my attention right away and I wanted to know more about what was called Gothic Angel Tattoo Studio.

As I entered the main building I noticed many pictures of beautiful tattooed girls hanging about. I liked this place more and more! As I strolled along looking at each picture I noticed a group of people in the lounge area. Sitting on the couch was a very muscular man with dread locks and a hat. He was being given a lap dance by two females dressed in leather. I was warmly greeted by everyone and the gentleman in the hat stood to introduce himself.

His name is Rea and he is the owner of the place. He has designed every piece of art on display. His bulging arm is the canvas for a custom piece of his own design. One of the dancers quickly runs up to show her back- another masterpiece by Rea. He and I chat for a while and for this evening I tell him I have to go with a promise of returning. He sends me a SLURL, a bookmark of sorts, so that I can always find my way back.

As promised, I returned back to Gothic Angel and found myself being anxious to explore deeper into the people I had met. Rea is not here but a girl with long pink hair and chain-laden goth gear is and she is quick to introduce herself as Chickie Etche. She does the photography for the shop. I complement her work, as it surrounds us and is quite exquisite. Shortly, another female lands. She is a pretty punk girl with a green mohawk named Zooey Kohime. Based on the steamy kiss shared by the pair, I assume they know each other. Chickie introduces her to me and the three of us chat about different things.

The conversation continues to revert back to my look and I feel like the girls almost feel sorry for me. They each give me clothes and a few Lindens, which is cash here. I don my new "I Eat Noobs" shirt and win the girls' approval. Zooey gives me a black flexi skirt that really isn't my style but I keep it. A girl needs all the clothes she can get! The two

discuss taking me shopping and I notice that this is not the first time this offer has

been brought up. I feel that I must reek of "nubishness" and a good shopping trip must be

the cure.

Zooey has some things to do and says her goodbyes. Chickie and I chat about the art and

the possibility of Rea designing something for me. I ask when he will be back and, to my

astonishment, discover that HE is a SHE. A very muscular SHE who is sensitive about

the issue of being mistaken for a man. I was so thankful that Chickie had told me before I

made a fool of myself. She found humor in it but I was glad I hadn't offended my new

friend.

I told her of a tattoo design idea that I had of stars that stretched from shoulder to

shoulder across my back. She said I could leave Rea an offline message and she would

get it as soon as she logged in. Being familiar with Rea's talent for tattoo design, Chickie

was sure that it was something she could do. From the examples of what I had seen so

far, I had no doubts. I thanked her and logged out for the night.

Thoughts of what I had experienced during that brief encounter were mind boggling. I

had basically intruded on a group of friends chatting and having a good time but it was

okay. They didn't think it was strange to have a complete stranger stroll pass and strike

up conversation. They didn't think twice about giving me their clothes or their Lindens. I

wondered if the real people behind these avatars were also as giving in their own lives.

On my next log I wanted to venture out a bit. I wandered north of the studio and found

beautiful pagodas with serene rock gardens, ponds and meditation areas surrounding

them. The island is a "No Fly Zone" so it is a long walk but the views are worth it.

Rolling hills support massive Japanese style houses and their slopes give way to crisp clear streams where koi fish swim. Cherry blossoms float from the trees and dust the path before me as the giant cliffs breathtakingly introduce the ocean. It is clear to me why Rea chose this place to build her shop.

As I walked back towards the studio my mind raced with anticipation. As I neared I could see Betz out on the dance floor dancing alone. Rea was sitting on the sofa chatting with Raven. Rea happily greeted me and Raven introduced herself as the owner of the shop across the way from Gothic Angel. She sells carpet, floors, custom photo walls and other things to the residents in SL. The two are discussing a fashion show that they are putting together. It will feature custom tattoo art by Rea and clothes designed by Raven. All of the models will be wearing custom bodies made by Betz. I listen and am amazed at all of the hard work and thought that has been put into this event.

As my mind wanders into figuring out just how one would host a fashion show in a virtual world, Rea tells me that she is sending me with Betz to get new hair, skin and clothes. She gives me L$450 and tells me to come back with great things. Now THAT'S an order I can fill! Betz disappears and soon I get a teleport (TP) request from her. She is asking me to join her in Deviant Kitties and away I go.

When I arrive I notice that it is much darker here. There are a few people scattered about and Betz stays close. We chose hair styles as our initial purchase and Betz tells me to look at the hair featured on the outside wall first, as it is on sale. By choosing this option I could get 4 hair styles for what I would pay for 1 on the inside. I see her point and as we

make our way down the street I notice what looks to me like a dead girl lying on the sidewalk. She is flat and lifeless and flies are swarming. Betz keeps moving and so do I. She and I shop for over an hour for just the right hair, skin/face, clothes and animation overrides (AO's); which are like add-ons to enhance your avatar. She gives me a "Sexy Walk" AO that gives me more of a fluid and human-type movement. She also gives me few dance AO's so that I can get my groove on out on the dance floor. Now I start to feel like I'm shedding my newbie skin!

Betz also showed me HOW to shop by guiding me through purchasing a Demo of a product for free. This allows you to try it on before buying the final product. I learn how to edit my hair to stretch and position it on my head properly. We buy a few clothes and decide it is time to head back to the studio. Two and a half hours of virtual shopping is tiring!

When we return Rea and Raven can't believe how great I look! I thank them, Rea especially, and show them some of my dance moves. Rea is really impressed and she and Raven dance too. As the track ended, Rea and Raven ask me to be in their fashion show on September 22nd. Both agree that I'm ready and that I have the look that they want. I save my answer and tell Rea that I will think it over. I tell everyone goodnight. My day of learning and shopping and dancing has been fun but tiring. The most draining decision still laid ahead of me...fashion show or no?

It is a debate still struggling inside of me. Do I want to get so wrapped up in a virtual world that I participate in things that I would otherwise have no part in? The real me is nowhere near model material and would never promote a conforming fashion industry of

skinny models regardless. What do I know about representing people and modeling?

Nothing! But that's what excites me! So I believe I will take a chance and jump into the

unknown. The first plunge was taken when I logged into SL, why not keep swimming

and see what's on the next shore? If it's deserted I can always find my way back home

and still be safe.

Appendix N: Student Essay 2

Professor Baldwin

English 1010

20th September 2007

SECOND LIFE: A CYBER SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

FIELD OBSERVATION NOTES:

Observations	Responses
1. Walls are not standardized as far as texture, color, height, etc.	More laid back environment
2. Very unique paintings	Picasso
3. Unusual flooring	Moon-like texture
4. Lots of blue	Floating ocean
5. Contemporary furniture	Furniture at my house
6. Variety of items	New York City shops in general
7. Many freebies	Infomercials
8. Random snoopy head	Pajama Shorts
9. Nudity	Hugh Hefner
10. No natural lighting	Jail

SECOND LIFE: A CYBER SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

There are so many hip places in the Second Life cyber world that it's difficult to choose just one specific location to visit. To refine my site selection I perused the web and obtained input and recommendations from my Second Life virtual friends. This helped me decide how to narrow my search to a place that would best match my own personal interests. Due to my obvious shopping addiction, my friends and I agreed that Slusteria Commercial Island would be the best starting point for me, and it turned out to be even better than I imagined.

The Island was full of a vast array of upscale retail stores. Flying around Slusteria brought back fond memories of strolling through Hillsboro Village (Nashville), Rodeo Drive (Beverly Hills), Park Avenue (Manhattan), and the infamous Hait-Asbury district (San Francisco) with my family. Many shops drew my attention, but I believe because of my love for unique contemporary décor, I was particularly intrigued with a shop named "On Art and Sluster." I teleported myself into this shop as quickly as possible.

When I entered "On Art and Sluster," the first feature that struck me was the unusual walls. They were painted in a beautiful dark blue and accented with lighter tones of blue. As I got closer to the walls I noticed the rich texture- - I could almost feel the texture. Dividing walls were different heights. Something about the characteristics of these walls seemed to create a laid back environment. I haven't visited any stores in my world where the walls evoked this type of mood for me.

After a just a few minutes I was greeted by a salesperson, Rita. Her outgoing personality and retro, yet futuristic, attire reminded me of my parents' decorator. I told Rita I wanted to browse on my own for a while. She was very accommodating and explained that anytime I needed assistance all I needed to do was send an instant message (IM) to the customer assistance number she provided.

After wandering on my own for a while, I decided that I was especially interested in the unique works of art. The first thing that stuck out in my mind was Picasso. When I look at a piece of art it makes me wonder what the artist was thinking as he was creating. Art can have so many different meanings, but it all depends on each individual's perspective. The enormous variety of artwork included Pop Art posters, nudes, abstract acrylics, traditional oils, black and white sketches, etc. I decided to send an IM to Rita who sent the art specialist (AS) over to provide me with further information.

As the AS showed me around I found myself drawn to a large abstract done on canvas with acrylics. My family home is filled with acrylic abstracts painted by Uncle Vern, my Dad's college roommate, who studied under Professor David LeDoux during the 1970s at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU)[1]. Uncle Vern was most influenced by the work of M.C. Escher, a print maker, but he also highly admired Picasso. Uncle Vern's favorite Picasso's were from what was known as his "blue period." Some speculate that these paintings, done in almost all shades of blue, were

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[1] On a side note, Uncle Vern always thought of LeDoux as a talented artist although a bastard as a professor. LaDoux once told Vern that he wanted to get inside his head. Vern used his dry sense of humor and responded to the professor "there's barely enough room in there for me."

indicative of a state of depression for Picasso. Contrary to depression the assorted streams of blue in "On Art and Sluster" gave me a feeling of calm.

All of the walls in the store were painted with nothing but shades of the color blue. While I walked through the store, it was almost like the ocean tide slowly crept in and brushed over my feet. The ocean is just as calm as the color blue. When I think of the ocean it lets me reminisce over all of the good times I had relaxing out on the beach with friends and family. In my opinion, the beach and shopping are two great things combined.

Wandering through the store at some point I noticed the unusual flooring. I realized that the floors resembled the moon. It almost felt like I was actually on the moon. I could fly around the store to browse as if I was browsing in a weightless like state on the moon. Different looking crater like indentions were engraved on the tile floors. The big square tiles were like cosmic planets. It was interesting how the floors were laid out. It made me wonder who in the world designed this store.

Another thing that stood out to me was all of the modern furniture. My favorite style of furniture is contemporary so I felt like I fit right in when shopping at "On Art and Sluster." It reminded me of my family home. The house I lived in during high school, and where my parents still reside, has a contemporary feel to it. Lots of our furnishings came from came from Nouveau Classics, a store in the Green Hills' area of Nashville. In fact many pieces of our furniture are very similar to those on display at "On Art and Sluster." My house, as is On Art and Sluster, incorporates an eclectic mix of furniture and artwork.

Something else that popped out, numerous times, were freebies which were located everywhere throughout the store. There is nothing better than a free gift. Anything that is free appeals to me because of my college student/low income status. On Art and Sluster had almost every type of free gift a furniture store could offer. You could basically live off of all the freebies they bestowed. It reminded me of those infomercials that come on late at night offering you free gifts if you purchase an item within the hour. Infomercials sometimes try to rip you off with freebies, but On Art and Sluster isn't like that.

As I was collecting my free gifts, suddenly I thought I had been teleported into an episode of Charley Brown because I almost ran into an extremely large Snoopy head. Awe was the expression that I held after seeing the Snoopy head sitting in the middle of the floor. I had figured out that On Art and Sluster had some pretty interesting stock items, but I never would have imagined a big Snoopy head sitting right in the midst of the store. He looked so real, and at the time I was so amused that I purchased a dog bone with my Linden dollars and sat it beside him. After feeding the dog, I gave him a pat on the head, thought of my Snoopy pajamas, and began wandering through the store to see what other creative items were for sale. That's when I noticed the wide array of pornographic art.

Although I have two prints of Betty Paige displayed in my apartment, I wouldn't say pornographic art is a real passion of mine. However, the nudes displayed at On Art and Sluster definitely attracted my attention. Different assortments of nude paintings were set up for you to leaf through. Some of them were very obscene, and some of them

were done in good taste. One thing that I do enjoy about nudity is the freedom one feels when one does not wear clothes. Hugh Hefner came to mind. I have always wanted to visit him and his bunnies at the Playboy Mansion. Are there Second Life bunnies? I wonder? I bet Hugh knows.

After looking through the nude/porn art, I suddenly had a feeling of darkness. The fact that there appeared to be no windows to produce natural light bummed me out. Light is a very important factor to me. Whether it be shopping, doing my makeup, or just cleaning my house, I have to have some source of natural sunlight. Without sunlight I feel like I'm trapped. Being in a place with no windows reminds me of the time I went to jail for underage consumption. Jail sucks! There are no manicures, pedicures, or sugar scrubs. It makes me very S.A.D. Who knows, maybe I am afflicted with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Once this S.A.D. feeling came over me I decided to teleport it back to the house.

Overall, the Second Life shopping adventure was pretty awesome. I could definitely relate to the surroundings of On Art and Sluster. Who knows maybe I could become a personal shopper in the Second Life cyber world. Next visit I'm hitting the Second Life clothing stores.

Appendix O: Student Essay 3

MY EXPERIENCES
OF SECOND LIFE

My Experiences of Second Life
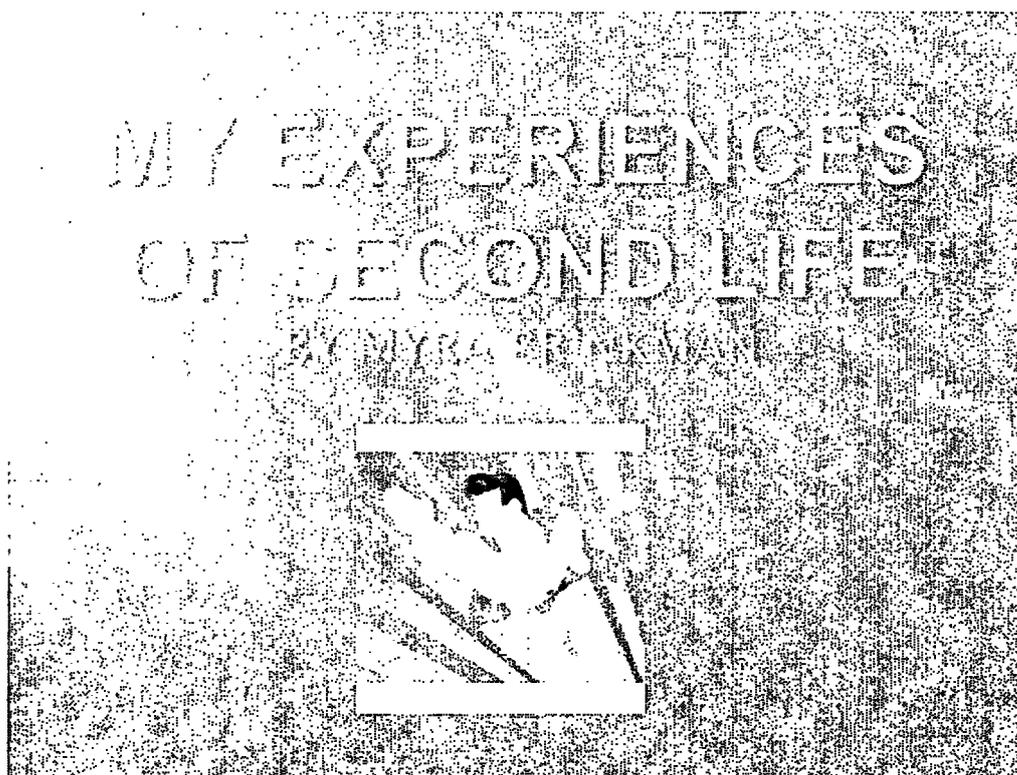
Well, I know that I am supposed to tell my audience of a particular place in Second Life that interests me. However, to tell you the truth, all the places I've been to in Second Life had caught my interest. So, to simply state my point, I am going to tell of my experiences in several different places I ventured to in Second Life. Then in turn, create a story sharing my observations and responses to my journey through Second Life to my audience.

First call Where is Second Life for me?

When I first became, what they call, "an Avatar" in Second life, I was brought into a world where almost anything is possible, and where one can be who or what they dream and fantasize about being.

For it is a "second life". The life outside of reality, in which you fantasize about living. My gosh!! I thought, "that's perfect for me, because I spend most of my mental consciousness in a fantasy world anyway.

So I created my avatar, and ventured in of Second Life, I   ce with no boun

Wow! When I first arrived in Second Life at the Island of "Hale Ukana", I was surprised to find the area with many different and somewhat strange features.

Of course I saw many other avatars of all different appearances', but there was an urban looking area with buildings, etc., and a bunch of random boxes, which apparently I was supposed to purchase and place into my inventory slot. What!! I have an inventory!?

After purchasing the box, I decided to investigate what sort of items I had in my inventory. I opened it up, and to my surprise I found so many things, such as items to wear, things to use, and even different options of ways to change my appearance or my body language and actions.

I then realized that all the avatars around me had the same access and ability to modify themselves of their surroundings in order to create their own fantasy world and self. I concluded that Second Life would not just be a world in which I personally fantasize about, but instead a world influenced by several avatars and composed of every avatars fantasy world all

After arriving at "Hale Ukana" Island, my journey and experiences had begun.

One of my first observations in Second Life was, the moment after becoming an Avatar, I was teleported to "Hale Ukana". That's right, "teleported" there. It was amazing, my body would gradually disappear and leave behind a glittering dust. Then I would reappear by suddenly popping out of thin air to the place I asked to be teleported to.

It was like something from a movie. Like "Star Trek", and how they traveled from the ship to other places by teleporting. Basically in the same way as in Second Life: gradually disappearing and leaving behind a trace of floating glitter/sparkles.

It sounds all too strange, but it was in awesome experience.

Also, while at "Hale Ukana" Island, I began to see other avatar's flying!! I thought, " that's impossible!" But not in Second Life where anything is possible. So I decided to try it. Then bam!! I was in the air flying, just like superman. By flying I achieved a better view of my surroundings and could see the Island of Hale Ukana from a totally different view point. It was really cool, I was beginning to feel the sense of unreality and fantasy take its toll.

After exploring" Hale Ukana" Island, I decided to see what else Second Life had to offer: so, thanks to my new power of teleporting, I journeyed to another place in called "Greenies".

I arrive at Greenies and next thing I know, I realize I am underground, or under what looks to be, a building or house. I begin to walk around, underground, trying to find a way to get to the surface.

Then I make a funny observation. While walking around, past walls and other obstacles, I find the perspective in which I watch myself (my avatar) quite funny. For its not a eyes forward view, as if I was looking through the eyes of my avatar, instead I am seeing my avatar as if I was floating beside it. So when my avatar walks past a wooden pillar under the house/building, suddenly my view is blocked from my avatar and all I can see is the obstacle my avatar is walking through, or beside. Its not until my avatar passes all the way through or pass the obstacle, that I can see myself(avatar) again. I know that's a strange observation, but in response to it, I found it somewhat difficult to travel around under the house, and easy to get lost or stuck.

I finally find my way out from under the house/ building or whatever it was, and find my self on a giant wooden floor with giant furniture and walls.

I first realize that what I was under was a house, but also that after arriving on the surface, I saw that I was extremely small in size compared to m surroundings. Like I was a shrunken person, like an elf or a Nome.

Because of my small size, I begin to fly around instead of walk. From the air I see other avatars and a big doll house. However I soon realize that flying was a mistake, for suddenly I find that I have flown into what looks like a big cloud of thick light-green smoke. In the smoky green stuff, I randomly start floating around upside-down and all around, and think" Aaaah!! Get me out of here!!". I finally escape the greenish abyss and decide to teleport somewhere else less strange.

After teleporting, I arrive at a very green place. There were giant cliffs covered in lush green vegetation. In between the cliffs were tropical gardens and flowers. Also towering down from the cliff faces were big water falls.

My first reaction was, "wow, this place is just for me and my love for nature". I wanted to travel around the cliffs, and since I couldn't get my avatar to climb up the walls, I decided to try flying again.

I flew around and between the cliffs and got to see the entire network of cliffs and gardens, it was so beautiful. I also was able to fly through the waterfall, with out the falling water pull me down.

I stayed for a little, but af   re wasn't much else I could do besides fly and   erfall. So I decided to once again teleport to an

When I left the pretty gardens and cliffs, I arrived in a very enchanted looking place. I later learned the place was a kingdom, the "Kingdom of Elfhart". I was instantly eager to explore when I saw that it was a kingdom of elves. I love elves. They are creatures whom I pretend to be at times, and that I can perform magical powers and have pointy ears.

As I journey through the magical kingdom. I come across a huge yellow colored tower, with a spiral staircase snaking up and around the outside of the tower walls. I decided to climb up the stairs and see what was at the top of the tower.

It took me forever to get to the top of the tower. Then to my disappointment, there was nothing up there but a circular balcony with nothing in it. So I decided to fly down back to the ground instead of taking the long way down the stairs, after wasting my time looking for nothing. However, I later found a strange looking water whole that looked like a hot tub that had a words inscribed on the side offering dreams and fantasy. So I get in the hot tub, but sadly nothing seems to happen. So I teleport out.

After leaving the Kingdom of Elkhart I arrived at a place called Avalon Grove and Castle. The place was medieval looking, like King Arthur of Camelot.

Since it was set up a lot like a castle, there were several barriers that were hard to cross, such as the surrounding wall, etc. So I wasn't able to venture around that easily. However I did come across a fire that I was able to sit in without burning. Again the impossible happened.

I journeyed through Avalon a while longer. Walking along side the big castle wall and unfortunately didn't see much of anything else that grabbed my attention.

After not finding enough interesting things in Avalon, I planned to teleport out. However has I was searching for a new place to go to, my teacher announced that it was sadly time to leave "Second Life".

I then end my search and decide not to teleport anywhere else. So I leave Second Life by simply the click of the mouse. I think to myself, that its funny how I can journey in and out of my "Second Life" by simply clicking the log in/out button on the screen. Why cant real life that simple when one might want to escape reality for a while by the simple click of a button.

Overall my experiences in Second Life were basically what a fantasy world, or "second life" would be like. Being how strange the place is and the strange abilities the avatars can do.

Though my experiences in Second life have, so far been interesting, the place is still not as close to what my personal fantasy world would be like. I conclude that Second Life will never be really my fantasy world, or "Second Life." I pretend to be living along side my other. I say this because, though I think the use of this virtual computer game for English class is a good idea as a way to teach us about other people/avatars in the world by playing the game; I still have little interest in the essence of the game.

However, though I respectfully follow directions and play the game for class, my overall experiences in Second Life are that of little enjoyment and little interest. I say this because I believe our society is already getting sucked into the dependency of technology as ways of entertainment and life experience. But I believe that real life experiences and learning can only be achieved by living our real life to its fullest and as self-empowering as you can make it to be. I believe that computer games and other virtual worlds like Second Life, are another influence to pull humanity from the beauty and magnificence of the natural world. But then again, this is only my opinion. I'm sure my future experiences in Second Life will later, be more interesting.

Appendix P: Student Essay 4

Professor Baldwin

ENGL 1010-102

22 September 2007

Apfelland is All the Rage

Ladies and gentlemen, you may think you have seen it all in-world on Second Life. Heck, you may think you have seen it all in real life; but you haven't seen anything until you make your way to Apfelland. You will be awed by the rigorous attention to detail and the land's amazing ability to blend in with the real world. You will be wowed by technological opportunities. And you will be swept away by the array of shops, stands, and vendors. If all of this is not enough, do not forget to check out

many of the other amazing attributes Apfelland has to offer. After all "Das ist Deutschland en Second Life."

Upon teleporting in, you will be immediately impressed by the sharp architecture and life-like details. You may not realize you are in a virtual world! Unlike many other sims in Second Life, such as Hippie Pay Land, the same motif is not repeated over and over. You will find a variety of landscapes, hardscapes, and architectures ranging from expansive parks filled with trees, benches, and picnic tables to commercial buildings where you can spend every last Linden

you have and even skyscrapers. If you look around a bit, you will even find traditional style buildings and shops much like those found in true life Miltenberg, Germany. There is even a castle, and since there is nothing inside it will take you right back to the time you toured Castle Heidelberg. If all that does not do it for you, you can at least be amused that the island is actually shaped like an apple (as you will see on your Mini-Map in the top right corner). This must be where the island gets its name – apfel is the German word for apple.

Apfelland is an extremely technologically up-to-date place. With real world items up for grabs, such as Apple's iPod and Microsoft's X-Box, no tech-geek could ask for a better place to gather. There are even advertisements for brand spanking-new technologies such as the Apple iPhone. There is an

Apple store near the place where you will land after teleporting. There are also many other electronic stores including a Bose shop, a record shop, and others.

Additionally, Apfelland is current on all Second Life technology including voice chat areas and Second Radio. You will hear commercials for Second Radio as it plays in all the common areas of the land. However, when you enter shops, you will often hear music

SECOND LIFE RADIO 2
Aus SL in SL für SL.

particular to the shop such as John Lennon tracks playing in a vintage style records store. Do not forget to look for boards displaying information about Second Radio with instructions on how to use it and customize it as well as other

important notices. While you are walking around, seek out places labeled "Voice Chat Area" and make sure you have your volume turned on so that you can hear people. Just do not neglect to enable the voice chat in order to participate.

Just like in any other sim, you can easily fly or walk anywhere you want to go. But why use manual controls to travel when you can take the monorail?! Upon your initial arrival to the sim, you will be right under the monorail track. I was unable to find the station and board the train, but perhaps someone more skilled would be able to find it. I did not personally see anyone driving cars. This puts me in mind a lot of real world Germany because many people there travel by foot or by bike. Germans also tend to use a lot of public transportation – maybe not a monorail—such as trains, buses, and trolleys.

There are plenty of shops to satisfy even the pickiest of shoppers' taste. As previously mentioned, you will find an Apple store where you can buy iPods, software, and more! You can find necessities, such as Nike shoes, lingerie, dresses, and women's dress shoes in vending machines in the market space. Most popular of all stores are most likely women's clothing and lingerie stores. Just like real life! There are, of course, beauty shops to get the latest hairstyles and boutiques galore for all your fashion needs. You will definitely want to stop by as many of these places as you can. Wouldn't you hate to be the only avatar who missed out on all the latest fashions in Second Life.
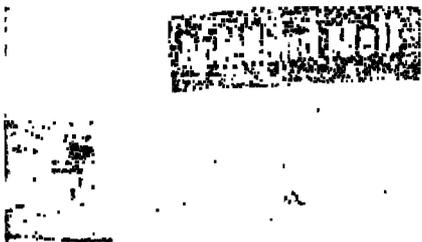
This shopping phenomenon is much like real life Germany. Like Apfelland, Germany seems to have a passion for shopping. Like the streets of Miltenberg, Germany, there are parts of Apfelland that are streets lined with traditional style buildings filled with shops offering all sorts of treasures. On the flip side, there are also many modern buildings much like those in large cities in Germany. Wide, paved streets are lined with fashion and technology stores with hundreds of eager customers. This can be observed in both Apfelland and Germany.

There are also plenty of modern gathering hot spots such as night clubs and coffee bars -- look for a great coffee stand across from the big ship. You will also find parks and other outdoor activities where many other avatars congregate. If by some odd chance, you do not find a place you like, you can easily buy or rent space in a building or stand. Then you can use the plentiful billboard space to advertise your own store. Commercialism is in -- and there is a place to meet everyone's needs.

If you are looking to meet other avatars, Apfelland is the place. Do not worry if you do not speak the local language. There is a healthy concentration of Americans and Brits speaking English. It is also common to find bilingual people. You will most likely be able to find large crowds of

avatars in parks and at coffee bars. At times, there are so many people it is difficult to walk around, especially in the parks. For the night life scene, you can find an array of interesting people to meet in night clubs if you go in world at the times that they are open. Do not forget to check from time to time about live music events as well. You can find these and other activities in the search menu under the "Events" tab.

Despite the time difference, you will find native Germans in world any time day or night. Therefore, if you are interested in learning more about the culture or just brushing up on your German skills, you can visit anytime of day and find someone with whom you can speak. Do not think you will be the only foreigner. There are many people from a variety of countries and backgrounds in Apfelland. Much like

real life Germany, you will find a rich diversity of people from countries all over the world. In both Germany and Apfelland the main concentration of people are from Germany, but there are also relatively high concentrations of people from other European nations. A bit less common are Americans and other non-European citizens, however, their presence remains recognizable.

If you are not attracted to Apfelland for any of the aforementioned reasons, here are a few last thoughts to give you a reason to stop by. Developers are building a replica of the Tower of Dubai currently. There is a building, which resembles a museum, where documents can be found detailing all the plans. If you can read German or have a good translator, you may find that interesting. This may seem a bit bizarre and definitely different from real life

Germany since the original Tower of Dubai is located in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Furthermore, you can keep up on many real world issues, such as tragedies like the disappearance of Madeline McCann and even happy things like the story of Knut the polar bear! If you like Knut, you can find tons of related paraphernalia in the shopping areas as well.
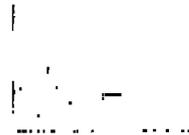
Just when you are starting to get bored with other sims in Second Life, do not forget to make your way over to Apfelland. I have yet to find another land so rich in culture, diversity, and modernism. Make a point to check out all the shops, technology, and exquisite attention to detail in design, landscape, and architecture. You won't be disappointed.

The included pictures can be found at

www.die-wohung.com/blog/albert/wp-content/snapshot_001.bmp

and

www.second-life-info.de/sl/category/sl-interview/page3

Appendix Q: Kool-Aid Man Assignment

English 1010-107 Professor Baldwin
Essay 2: Essay—Everyone's a Kool-Aid Person Today, or What It Means to Be an Other

Revision Workshop: Tuesday, Sept 25th, 2007
Editing Workshop (in-class): Tuesday, Oct 02nd, 2007
FINAL DRAFT DUE (by email): Tuesday, Oct 09th, 2007

ASSIGNMENT: Some of us have never experienced what it is like to be considered an "other": someone who isn't like everyone else around them for one reason or another. Sometimes these reasons are all too obvious, but at other times they are much more subtle. In this assignment, we are going to use the relatively safe environment of SL to experience this otherness by draping ourselves in the shape and skin of the Kool-Aid man and going to a public place to interact.

TOPIC: Otherness. Continue to write up field observation notes as described in *FieldWorking* (to be included with your final draft) and then incorporate those observations in your writing. How did you feel while masquerading in the shape and color of the Kool-Aid man? What were others' reactions to you? Have you ever experienced anything like this in real life? Have you ever unknowingly or knowingly treated someone else like an "other" or outsider? These are just some questions that might spur your writing. Try to think of some others. You can create a PowerPoint (don't forget that there must be 1100 polished words), a graphic story (same 1100 words), a journal entry or letter, or a traditional essay.

AUDIENCE: Regardless of the media you choose to write your essay in, your audience is an auditorium full of educators of high school students. You want them to understand how some of their students might feel if they are being treated as an other. With this type of audience, you will have to gain their respect, so choose your words carefully.

TASKS TO COMPLETE BEFORE THE REVISION WORKSHOP:
Type the essay according to the medium you have chosen
Be sure to use SL terminology
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE WRITE 1100 WORDS

PAPER GUIDELINES: Paper guidelines pretty much go out the window in this type of an assignment. **If you are doing a traditional essay, use the Harbrace MLA format on page 605.**

SPECIFIC SKILLS/ABILITIES REQUIRED: You will

Be aware of your audience, high school educators, and write to that audience

Use the language appropriate to that audience and SL terminology

Reflect and respond to your field note observations

TRAPS TO AVOID: You will want to avoid the following problems, especially

Not writing to your audience

Not writing at least 1100 words

Appendix R: IRB Approval

August 15, 2007

Names: Dr. Trixie Smith (smit1254@msu.edu), Dianna Baldwin (dlb2t@mtsu.edu).

Protocol Title: Everyone's a Kool-Aid Man Today: Pedagocial Implications of Teaching in *Second Life*

Protocol Number: 08-015

Dear Investigator(s),

The MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), or a representative of the IRB, has reviewed the research proposal identified above. The MTSU IRB or its representative has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants and qualifies for an expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110.

Approval is granted for one (1) year from the date of this letter for 100 participants.

According to MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who works with data or has contact with participants. Anyone meeting this definition needs to be listed on the protocol and needs to provide a certificate of training to the Office of Compliance. **If you add researchers to an approved project, please forward an updated list of researchers and their certificates of training to the Office of Compliance (c/o Tara Prairie, MTSU Box 124) before they begin to work on the project.** Any change to the protocol must be submitted to the IRB before implementing this change.

Please note that any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

You will need to submit an end-of-project report to the Office of Compliance upon completion of your research. Complete research means that you have finished collecting and analyzing data. **Should you not finish your research within the one (1) year period, you must submit a Progress Report and request a continuation prior to the expiration date.** Please allow time for review and requested revisions.

Also, all research materials must be retained by the PI or faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) for at least three (3) years after study completion. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Joe Hawkins,
MTSU Institutional Review Board