Have I become what I beheld?
Identity enactments as the hidden Other in a Virtual World

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The School of Education
The University of Sheffield

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January 2015

Dedications

To my loving husband and daughter, Kok Sing and Isabelle, for supporting me in my quest to learn

To my devoted parents, Conrad and Nancy, for sacrificing much so that I can be all that I ever hope to be

Acknowledgements

I am wholly indebted to Dr. Julia Davies without whom my pursuit of a doctoral degree would not have been possible.

I gratefully acknowledge the provision of a research grant for this study, SUG30/12 NAR, by the Office of Education Research, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

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List of Abbreviations

ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
CMIO	Chinese Malay Indian Other
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
SL	Second Life
VW	Virtual World

Abstract

My study explores the enactments of adolescents who took on an avatar depicting a member of a marginalised group or a hidden Other in a three-dimensional virtual environment known as *Second Life*. I chose to examine people with disabilities as a case of the hidden Other in acknowledgement of extant social realities in the Singapore context where people with disabilities tend to be marginalised. I discover how my able-bodied participants' enactments reflect various ways in which they identified or did not identify with the hidden Other within their discourse; I analyse the processes by which people are alienated and integrated, I investigate shifts in identification using an identification framework I developed and I trace individual trajectories of group affiliations. I also examine the affordances and limitations of Virtual Worlds for facilitating vicarious living experiences and the role of critical literacy and dramatic techniques in affording agency in identifications. I draw evidence primarily from video recordings of the role-plays within *Second Life* which I supplement with evidence from semi-structured interviews and various written artefacts. I present my findings largely in the form of case studies to shed light on discursive processes, moves and trajectories in relation to representation, power and affiliations. I evaluate my curricular interventions and analytical approaches and discuss their implications for future research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> Everyone of lower or weaker status must learn as part of survival how the minds of the powerful work. Asymmetrically, the powerful are often much less able to put themselves in the shoes of those whose ways of thinking they are privileged to ignore. (Lemke, 2008, p. 20)

Lemke's comment highlights the consequence of power differentials that persist in contemporary society despite a slew of measures to rectify inequities within and across social institutions. In my study, I sought to confront this asymmetry within a Virtual World (VW). VWs are three-dimensional environments in which multiple users deploy avatars to interact visually with one another and with objects within the virtual landscape (Davies & Merchant, 2009; Peachey, Gillen, Livingstone, & Smith-Robbins, 2010; Ulicsak & Wright, 2010). The way in which users design and deploy their avatars in VWs fundamentally shapes the kinds of identities ascribed to them. The construction of such identities in VWs has been an area of growing interest amongst scholars (see Au, 2008; Bers, 2001; Boellstorff, 2008; Chee, 2007; Crowe & Bradford, 2006; Dodge et al., 2008; Francis, 2008, 2011; Kafai, 2010; Kafai, Field, & Cook, 2010; Marsh, 2011; Mortensen, 2007; Nakamura, 2002; Oliver & Carr, 2009; Pearce, 2007; Twining, 2009; Williams, Kennedy, & Moore, 2011; Yee & Bailenson, 2007). This is because of the recognition that engagement occurs in tandem with a person's investment in the construction of an identity (Bers, 2001; Dodge, et al., 2008; Gee, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

However, research on identity construction in these worlds has largely focused on the use of in-world resources to construct alternative or multiple identities for self-expression and/or self-empowerment (Merchant, Gillen, Marsh, & Davies, 2013; Peachey & Childs, 2011). This study adds a new dimension to this research by presenting adolescents with the opportunity become a hidden Other or a member of a marginalised community (Anon., 2013; Luke, 2003) within a VW so as to

(i) explore how they enacted identities not only unfamiliar to them, but is also devalued and undesired from the perspective of the dominant ideology

(ii) examine the affordances and limitations of VWs for constructing such identities and their associated practices

To facilitate my participants' enactment as a person with a disability within *SL*, I customised both the design of the virtual site and the curriculum to give my participants some sense of what it means to be an Other. I used a three-dimensional VW known as Second Life (*SL*) (http://secondlife.com/) in which I commissioned the design of structures, objects and avatars. I developed a curriculum incorporating a discovering-enacting-reflecting cycle. This cycle involved my participants engaging in critical literacy practices to unpack texts on disability, experiencing oppression while being virtually embodied as an avatar with a disability in dramatic role-plays revolving around a discriminatory incident and employing dramatic techniques to reflect on their enactments. These pioneering efforts were implemented with the aim of facilitating my participants' experience of being marginalised, disempowered and devalued and encouraging their reflection on life as presently lived within socially-prescribed boundaries. Through their experience of being differently embodied as the Other and enacting the lives and perspectives of the Other, I explored how they engaged with alterity in a VW as they constructed identities of the Other. During this process, I encountered a lot of difficulties and realised there were several shortcomings in my designs. Nevertheless, this exploration has shed light on how able-bodied individuals address power differentials revolving around dis/ability by perpetuating, countering or transforming dominant discourses.

In this chapter, I describe the rationale and purpose of my study; I situate myself within my research by explaining how my varied experiences professionally, academically and personally spurred me to undertake this research. I outline the research goals and questions which my study sought to address, I define the key terms I use in my thesis and I provide an overview of the chapters to come.

1.1 Rationale and Purpose of Research

My interest in this research is driven by a variety of factors. First, I have had extensive experience integrating information and communications technology (ICT) into the school curriculum during the course of my 15 years in the Singapore education service. I worked as an Educational Technology Officer at the Singapore Ministry of Education, designing and implementing professional development courses for English teachers to harness a broad range of ICT tools for teaching and learning. As Head of the English Department at a pre-university institution, I worked closely with two teachers and researchers from the National Institute of Education to develop curriculum materials for a research project. This pilot project sought to harness *Second Life*, a VW platform, and *Voices of Reason*, a structured argumentation board, to foster student engagement and learning in the General Paper curriculum (Ho, Rappa, & Chee, 2009; Rappa, Yip, & Baey, 2009). It also sparked my interest in discovering the affordances of VWs for teaching and learning.

I first conceived the idea of enacting marginalised identities in VWs while developing a research agenda during my Master of Arts programme at the University of Michigan in 2010. I drew my inspiration for this idea from the romantic comedy, “Soul Man”, in which a young white man has to find a way to finance his education at Harvard University when his wealthy father refuses to support him (Miner, 1986). He applies for the last scholarship position available meant for African Americans and thus has to disguise himself as an African American. The consequence of becoming black is that he experiences and understands life in his new marginalised status as he grapples with the prejudice and discrimination faced by African Americans. This initial research agenda drew my attention to how VWs could be used to address real-world issues (McGonigal, 2011) and I sought to discover whether embodiment and enactment as someone positioned outside a socially-valued norm within a given social situation in VWs can similarly present users with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the experience of being the Other. An encounter I had within the virtual space also

convinced me about the importance of pursuing this research agenda. In 2010, whilst exploring a science game in the VW, *Whyville* (http://www.whyville.net/smmk/nice), another user deliberately and repeatedly positioned herself over my avatar to block my avatar from my view until I was forced to leave the area. The only marked difference between our avatars was our contrasting skin tones. I was angry and wondered what could possibly drive someone to do this in a VW designed for children. It amazed me then how even in the protected world of *Whyville*, users could find unusual ways to enact their prejudices. This brings to mind Au's (2008) example of how an *SL* resident was mocked and marginalised by strangers and friends after she switched her avatar's skin from that of a blonde with a tan to that of an African American.

My research interest also stemmed from my being labelled an "Other" during my growing years in Singapore. Our society embraces rigid racial categories with its CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian, Other) model. I am of mixed racial lineage—my mother is Chinese and my father is Eurasian, a mélange of Portuguese, African, Indian, Dutch and Malay ancestry. The Chinese form about seventy-four percentage of the population while Eurasians constitute less than three percentage (Department of Statistics, 2012). Having been classified "Eurasian" and, therefore, "Other", and given that I am straddling two communities in a society with clearly delineated racial boundaries, I find it challenging to locate myself within any particular ethnic community. Although my experience of prejudice in Singapore has been rare, the sense of always living on the fringe of communities has made me realise how important it is for people to have opportunities through which they are encouraged to understand and accommodate the Otherness of those with whom they have little contact.

However, in the present study, I have chosen not to focus on the racialised Other as a case and, instead, addressed those rendered Other because of their disabilities. This is in part because ethnicity and religion are considered potentially inflammatory topics

given Singapore's racial composition and history[1]. Disability is not regarded in the same light. In my literature review, I discuss in greater detail what it means to be an Other and the process of Othering. For now, I would like to point out that my intention in examining people with disabilities as a case was not to label members of the community "Other" or further ostracise them but to acknowledge extant social realities in the Singapore context.

In the next few paragraphs, I provide an overview of the progress that has been made to advance the cause of people with disabilities in Singapore as well as some facets which still need to be attended to. Within the last 10 years, there has been a push to transform society to meet the needs of people with disabilities at the systemic level. For example, the Singapore Ministry of Education trained ten percentage of teachers in primary schools to identify and work with children with mild learning disabilities under the Training in Special Needs policy initiative in 2005 (Tam, Seevers, Gardner III, & Heng, 2006). A one-stop centre and new schools for autistic children have also been established (My Paper, 2011; Ng, 2009). Privately run special schools are gaining traction as a means to provide more choices and to address the shortage of vacancies in government-run institutions (Tan, 2011). The recommendations of the Enabling Masterplan 2012 – 2016 are in the process of being implemented to empower and recognise people with disabilities as Singapore strives towards establishing an inclusive society (SG Enable, 2012). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into effect in Singapore in 2013 (Ng, 2013). The Singapore government has pumped 30 million dollars into the Open Door Programme to help employers defray the cost of running apprenticeships or modifying work environments when hiring a person with a disability (Heng, 2014). An additional 33 million dollars is being used to fund subsidies for education and therapy services under the Early

[1] The Chinese are the majority population in Singapore with indigenous Malay-Muslims forming a significant minority and Eurasian-Catholics a very small minority. Given Singapore's history of racial and religious conflicts between these various groups in the 1950s-1960s, the Ministry of Education has set strict limits on research pertaining to race and religion.

intervention Programme for Infants and Children and another 24 million to defray transport costs for people with disabilities (Tai, 2014).

Despite these measures to support people with disabilities at the systemic level, they are still very much hidden from public view. It has been acknowledged of late that such “hidden communities” in Singapore are “marginalised, less noticed and somewhat forgotten” (Anon., 2013). Some measures have been introduced to bridge the gap between the mainstream and hidden communities. For example, there are about 10,000 students with dyslexia, mild autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder studying in mainstream schools (Chia, 2013). A pilot programme called "Buddy'In" was launched in March 2014 to pair up 10 abled-bodied students and 10 students with a disability for 80 hours over a 6- to 9-month period so as to increase opportunities for academic and social interaction (Khew, 2014). A 30,000 square metre parcel of public land has been set aside to serve the twofold purpose of catering for the needs of the disabled community and fostering greater interaction between people with/out disabilities (Lim, 2014). A survey to discover the attitudes of able-bodied Singaporeans towards people with disabilities was administered in 2009 and again in 2011 in conjunction with the “I Accept” fundraising and education campaign to encourage the inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities. The 2011 survey results revealed a marked improvement in Singaporeans’ (i) openness towards communicating with people with disabilities (74.7%), (ii) perception of the independence of people with disabilities (61.75) (iii) recognition of people with disabilities as economically productive members of society (91.2%) (iv) willingness to employ people with disabilities (80.3%) (see Appendix A1 for the 2009 and 2011 survey questions and results).

While these results suggest improved perceptions in Singapore of people with disabilities, the question of their hiddenness remains. As a case in point, of the 15 participants in my study, 14 said they had not regularly encountered people with disabilities in public spaces over the last one year and these same participants

acknowledged that they did not know about impairments such as autism and cerebral palsy and they were unfamiliar with the term “paraplegia”. As such, I would characterise the Other in this study as the hidden Other. The consequences confronting a hidden Other stepping into the public arena and making her presence felt and voice heard are illustrated in the case of a visually-impaired Singaporean named Cassandra Chiu who was turned away from a McDonald’s outlet on 17 March 2014 because she was with her guide dog. The incident was reported in the local media and a stream of vituperative comments on news websites, personal blogs and Facebook pages was directed at her (Chua & Tan, 2014; Tan, 2014). Even though there were many who spoke up for her online and McDonald’s subsequently issued an apology, she faced a torrent of public criticism and abuse online for “complaining” about the incident on her Facebook page. It seems that the hidden Other is expected to remain hidden and voiceless in the public sphere even when confronted with prejudice and discrimination. This bespeaks the discriminatory actions ranging from ostracism to bullying which people with disabilities silently endure on a daily basis. It also underscores the importance of understanding how this hidden Other is perceived and enacted by those who are able-bodied.

To address the aforementioned developments in Singapore, my study confronted power differentials between people with/out disabilities by presenting a small group of abled-bodied adolescents with the opportunity to look beyond their chosen selves and become “the Other” in a VW. By means of critical literacy practices and dramatic techniques, my research participants explored and enacted this otherwise hidden and unknown Other. As such, my research provides a means, through the discourse of those without disabilities, to understand how people with disabilities are being construed (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012). I would then be able to ask whose interests were being served in the discourse (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012). This is pertinent given that Singapore is at the cusp of developing more inclusive approaches,

the success of which partly depends on bringing about changes in the discourse to reduce, if not eliminate, the process of Othering.

My study also attended to the important goal of nurturing what the Singapore Education Ministry refers to as 21st century competencies amongst Singapore students (http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/21cc; see Figure 1 below). In particular, the curricular emphasis in this study is on nurturing concerned citizens with "a strong sense of civic responsibility" who demonstrate the social-emotional competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management and responsible decision-making and who have cultivated civic literacy in that they have "the ability to work with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, with different ideas and perspectives" (http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/files/2010/03/21st-century-competencies-annex-a-to-c.pdf).

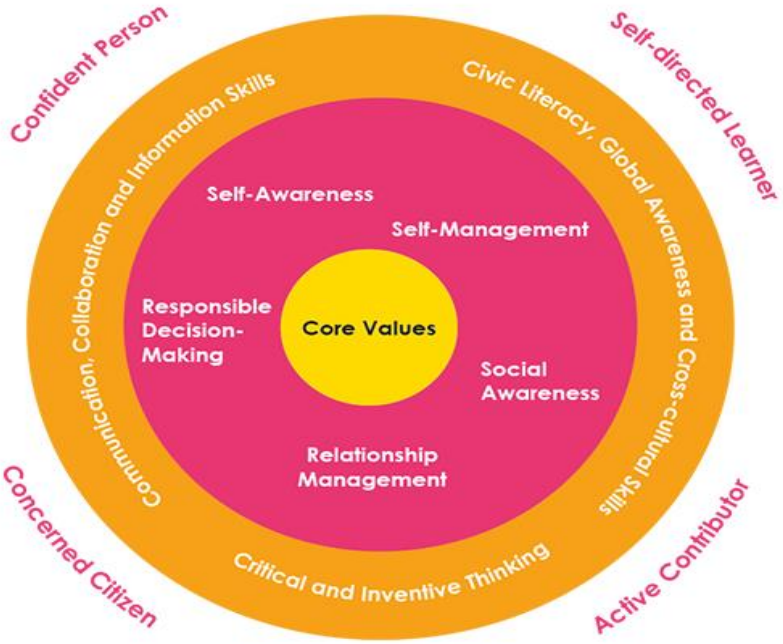


Figure 1: 21st century competencies and desired student outcomes

Taken from: http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/21cc

In sum, my professional, academic and personal experience and the broader goals of Singapore's education service have shaped the goals of this research. These research

goals are in essence founded on the belief that one path to ensuring equitable treatment lies with bridging diverse cultures, values and worldviews as people regardless of their sociocultural affiliations are encouraged to understand the Otherness of those with whom they have minimal contact and learn how to engage with and accommodate alterity.

1.2 Curricular and Research Goals

In the previous section, I explained why I chose to focus on embodiment and enactment as the hidden Other in VWs and why I chose disability as a case. In view of this focus, I now briefly outline the curricular and research objectives of my study.

While the focus of my thesis is not primarily on the curricular objectives, I highlight them here because these objectives, being both process-oriented and goal-oriented, shaped both my research methods and research objectives. (I discuss the resulting methodological constraints I faced in Chapter 3.) My study was conducted during the curriculum time of a General Paper class in a pre-university institution. As such, the curricular objectives of my study and the curriculum itself were circumscribed by the syllabus and assessment objectives of the subject. The General Paper examination encompasses argumentative essay writing and comprehension of an extended piece of persuasive prose. Students are expected to read extensively on a variety of global and local issues relating to topics such as discrimination and prejudice, science and technology, the environment, etc., and to apply what they have read to their essay-writing and to facilitate their understanding of the comprehension passage. The General Paper curriculum on the whole presents the best opportunity for facilitating enactments as the Other and transformations in the discourse about disability through role-playing in *SL* because of the alignment between the research objectives and questions and the goal of fostering multiple perspectives in its syllabus to help students to "understand better the world in which they live by fostering a critical awareness of continuity and change in the human experience" (https://www.seab.gov.sg/content/syllabus/alevel/2014Syllabus/8807_2014.pdf).

The curricular objectives of this study were:

CO1. *To develop virtual landscapes, curricular materials and pedagogies to nurture critical literacy and support role-playing in Virtual Worlds*

CO2. *To nurture enactments as the hidden Other in participants' discourse*

I briefly described earlier the results of a survey gauging the attitudes of able-bodied Singaporeans towards people with disabilities. However, I have not been able to find any qualitative data on Singaporeans' perception of people with disabilities. Nevertheless, the intent of my study was not to prove, disprove or elaborate these survey findings. Instead, given my novel approach to identity construction of marginalised identities within VWs, it seemed more appropriate for me to focus on more fundamental questions concerning able-bodied people's understandings about the lived experiences of people with disabilities as reflected in their own discourse and how they used the VW in tandem with their enactments. The intent was to drill down into how people with disabilities are portrayed and talked about; whether my participants' discourse was simplistic/complex and/or stifling/enabling in relation to the possible readings of disability based on the medical, social, relational and socio-cultural models and whether or how these readings of disability were manifested (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012). It was also to get at how people configure social relations and the technological affordances of Virtual Worlds to constitute their identifications and whether or how these identifications were facilitated or constrained by these socio-technical structures (Dodge, et al., 2008).

The research objectives of this study were:

RO1. *To explore in the discourse how able-bodied adolescents in a physical classroom enacted the hidden Other as an avatar with a disability in the Virtual World.*

RO2. *To trace in the discourse on dis/ability, the trajectories of able-bodied adolescents' identifications in relation to the hidden Other across time and space.*

RO3. *To investigate the affordances and limitations of the Virtual World, Second Life, in facilitating identity enactments as the hidden Other with a disability and to examine the implications of deploying Second Life in a physical classroom.*

1.3 Research Questions

In the Table 1.1 below, I link each research question to a research objective and I describe the purpose of the question and their relationship to other questions where applicable.

Table 1: List of research objectives, research questions and purposes

Research Objectives	**Research Questions and Purposes**
RO1. To explore in the discourse how able-bodied adolescents in a physical classroom enacted the hidden Other as an avatar with a disability in the Virtual World.	***RQ1.*** *What discourse features did the able-bodied adolescent role-playing an avatar with a disability confronting discrimination employ to address dominant discourses?* This is a foundational question which helped me construct my understanding of *what* features my participants used to support their discourse of Othering and revolutionising and *how* they used these features to conform to or subvert dominant discourses on dis/ability. I take "discourse features" to refer to the participants' language, gesture, movement, and position.
	RQ2. *How did the able-bodied adolescent participants role-playing the avatar with a disability position (i) their avatar and (ii) others in relation to their avatar in the discourse during the role-play? What identities did these participants enact by means of such positioning?*

	This question builds on RQ1 by examining the positions my participants took on while employing the discourse features of Othering or revolutionising. I used the responses to this question to identify a typology of the shifting positions assumed by my participants throughout the course of their role-play. These reflect what they considered legitimate stances in their interactions with able-bodied avatars in *Second Life* as they addressed dominant discourses on dis/ability.
	RQ3. *What discourse moves did the able-bodied adolescent participants role-playing the avatar with a disability enact during the role-play? What does this communicate about their identifications?* This question builds on RQ2 by examining the process of shifting identifications rather than the positions or identities themselves. This is because a typology of positions or identities alone is restrictive and not necessarily applicable across contexts. Participant responses were used to develop a framework to facilitate comparative analysis of the identification process cross-contextually relative to an original case. This framework also provided insights into conformity to and subversion of dominant discourses on dis/ability.
RO2. To trace in the discourse on dis/ability, the trajectories of able-	***RQ4.*** *How did the adolescent participants' focus group discussions, in-world reflections and writings about dis/ability compare with their role-playing enactments as the hidden*

bodied adolescents' identifications in relation to the hidden Other across time and space.	*Other with a disability?* This question complements RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3. Its purpose is to compare the responses of the participants' across discourses and contexts to trace how they navigated the liminal spaces of dis/ability.
RO3. To investigate the affordances and limitations of the Virtual World, Second Life, in facilitating identity enactments as the hidden Other with a disability.	***RQ5.*** *What features of the Virtual World did the able-bodied adolescent participants employ during their role-play? How did they use them? To what extent did they consider these features effective in enacting the hidden Other?* This foundational question complements RQ1. It enabled me to examine how the participants used the technological features of the Virtual World in tandem with discourse features to support their discourse positions and moves. RQ1 and RQ5 constituted the first layer of analysis.
	RQ6. *What are the implications of deploying Second Life in a physical classroom which permits out-of-character face-to face communication between the group members?* This question took into account how *SL* was deployed in the context of this study and how this might have impinged on the participants' enactments in *SL*.

1.4 Definition of Terms

Avatar Users' self-fashioned visual representations of themselves in a Virtual World which they employ to interact visually with one

	another and with objects within the environment (Davies & Merchant, 2009; Peachey, et al., 2010; Ulicsak & Wright, 2010).
Chat	A dialogue box for users in a Virtual World to type in text in order to communicate with one another. The chat may be made visible to everyone in a shared virtual space or it may be directed at a specific avatar.
Gesture	The scripted movement of an avatar's head, body and/or limbs used to convey meaning and attitude, e.g. laugh, boo, cry.
Out-of-Character Communication	Communication which occurs as an individual breaks character or slips out of the role taken on in a Virtual World. Such communication may be used for seeking clarifications, providing insights into the what, why and how of gameplay, resolving conflicts and backstage planning (Mortensen, 2007).
Role-playing	There are two ways to define role-playing. The first refers to an individual taking on a character in a Virtual World with specific attributes and functions. In the second definition, an individual controls his character in such a way as to speak and act in the way she considers her character would (Williams, et al., 2011). I used the term role-playing in my thesis with the first definition in mind while researching whether the second definition held true for the participants in my study.
Second Life	A Virtual World in which users can explore landscapes and objects, socialise with other users through their avatars, engage in commerce, and build their own landscapes and objects.
SLURL	This is a link to enable a Virtual World user to teleport directly to a

specific location in *Second Life* without having to journey to the destination.

Virtual World A persistent three-dimensional environment accessible to multiple users at any given time (Davies & Merchant, 2009; Peachey, et al., 2010; Ulicsak & Wright, 2010).

Voice A feature in Second Life which enables its users to engage in audio communication.

1.5 Overview of Chapters

In Chapter 1, I describe the rationale and purpose of my study. I explain how my varied experiences professionally, academically and personally spurred me to undertake this research in order to account for how I positioned myself within my research. I outline my curricular and research goals and the research questions which my study sought to address. I define the key terms I used in my thesis.

In Chapter 2, I explain the theoretical underpinnings of my research. I review the literature on identity and identification, the Other, Virtual Worlds, agency, critical literacy and dramatic techniques primarily from the postmodern and poststructuralist perspective. I explain briefly how I used these theoretical constructs to inform my methodology.

In Chapter 3, I describe and account for my methodological framework which encompassed qualitative approaches to study design, analytical method and analytical report. Under study design, I discuss my choice of sites and participants, the curriculum design and data collection processes. Under analytical method I address the way I describe my data and how I used my conceptual and analytical framework to guide my analysis. Under analytical report, I explain my choice of a multiple case study approach to report my findings. In this chapter, I also review the procedures I put in

place to comply with institutional standards for ethical research practices and I discuss some ethical considerations when conducting research on the Other in a Virtual World.

In Chapter 4, I present my findings in terms of my participants' semiotic identifications or how they deployed their avatar to use language, gesture, movement, position, other avatars and/or objects in the Virtual World to enact the process of Othering or revolutionising. I compare their semiotic identifications with those of their chosen cases and use these comparisons to draw attention to the workings of dominant discourses.

In Chapter 5, my findings address my participants' phenomenological identifications or their lived experience as the Other within the Virtual World. I describe my first steps towards developing a framework for analysing processes in phenomenological identification. I use this framework to compare their phenomenological identifications with their chosen cases. My discussions are framed in terms of my participants' positions along a continuum ranging from Self-Other binary to Self-Other mergence and how these are constituted in power relations.

In Chapter 6, I address my participants' sociological identifications with the Other in a number of ways. I discuss themes reflecting their understandings of dis/ability. I describe the trajectories of my participants' sociological identifications with the non-Other and/or the Other in order to address complexities arising from identifications in the real world being layered upon the Virtual World. I use my findings to discern and describe the conditions which would have better supported my participants' role immersion.

In Chapter 7, I discuss my conclusions and implications for future research. I pull together the different strands of my findings on semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications to explain the nature and outcome of the interactions of these different aspects of identifications. My recommendations address possible developments in theoretical, analytical and curricular approaches relating to identifications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I draw mainly on literature situated within the postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives. These perspectives attend to the conflicting, the incomplete, the fractured and the unknown (Lyotard, 1984[1979]). Within these perspectives, we operate without rules because we are working towards discovering these (Lyotard, 1984[1979]). We struggle against the notion of overarching theories and question the authority and rationality of metanarratives as the power to make meaning is passed from the author to the reader (Barthes, 1977; Lyotard, 1984[1979]; Rabinow, 1984). As such, reality is constructed and, hence, varies across individuals and communities with subjectivities hinging on contextualised experiences of production, signification and power (Foucault, 1982).

I have chosen to situate my research within the postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives for several reasons. First, I think it is important to recognise that identities and identifications are always in flux both within and across contexts. Subjectivities constantly change in response to ever-changing circumstances. While we may abide by some moral principles we consider consistent with who we think we are, we are never as consistent in our identifications as we imagine ourselves to be. We adapt and we shape-shift as we pursue agendas of importance and interest to us. Second, the postmodern and poststructuralist perspectives better reflect the realities of identifications within VWs. Subjectivities are more prone to fluctuations as VW users have greater leeway to experiment with their identifications for reasons which will be discussed in a later section. Third, I wish to preclude the notion of a stable disabled identity or established disabled identifications. For far too long, we have deferred to the ideological values and assumptions of dominant discourses on dis/ability. We are only just beginning to disentangle ourselves from its grasp by examining how it renders disability and people with disabilities. I think it premature to talk about any sort of steady state in a transformative discourse as yet.

This postmodern and poststructuralist frame of reference has implications for my interpretation and use of key constructs (e.g. identity and identification, the Other, agency), intervention methods (e.g. critical literacy and dramatic techniques), analytical methods (e.g. discourse analysis in multimodal spaces to be discussed in Chapter 3) and tools (e.g. the Virtual World, *Second Life*). In this chapter, I provide a selective account of the literature drawn from varied fields such as sociolinguistics, cultural studies, feminist studies, critical disability studies, anthropology, education, and philosophy for the primary purposes of (i) informing my research aims and methodology and (ii) situating my work within relevant fields (Wolcott, 2001). This review is organised in terms of how identifications may be employed to explore and enact understandings of the Other, who the Other is and how Othering and identification may occur, the affordances and limitations of VWs for facilitating vicarious living experiences and the role of critical literacy and dramatic techniques in affording agency in identifications. I conclude the chapter with a summary of my literature review.

2.1 Theorisations on identity and identification

In this section, I explain theoretical understandings of identity and identifications. Because the literature on this is extensive, I focus on those which address (i) the "what" of identity and the "how" of identification and (ii) semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications (Lemke, 2009). These different aspects of identity and identification constitute a set of heuristics for my conceptual and analytical framework which I discuss in Chapter 3.

2.1.1 Identity and identification

I begin my discussion by addressing the "what" of identity. Identity is construed as multiple and hybrid identities that one enacts in different contexts for different purposes and with different people (Gee, 2001a; Hall, 1997; Lemke, 2008, 2009). In this sense, identity is who we represent ourselves to be and, at the same time, who we are recognized as being via our enactments (Butler, 1993). As such, identity is constituted

in practice (Butler, 1990; Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Wenger, 1998) and situated within a socio-historically and socio-culturally prescribed repertoire of practices reflecting the cultural models of a given community (Gee, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Street, 2003; Wenger, 1998). It is also informed by a layering of extended social networks and institutions (Norris, 2011). This makes identities a resource in service of power; for establishing relational positions and accessing networks (Moje, 2013; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008). Shifts in identities can occur in tandem with the introduction of new forms of cultural resources and participation in a given social context as identities are recognised, constructed, supported, contested, negotiated, and/or reified (Nasir & Saxe, 2003).

Identities are constructed through recognition of difference, that is, how they are distinct from the Other, the constitutive outside (Butler, 1993; Derrida, 1981). As such, they are often characterised in reductionist terms that allow for easy classification and demarcation of boundaries. This is not to say that an individual cannot occupy varied positions along several spectrums of enactments (Lemke, 2008). For example, an Asian student may be positively stereotyped as brainy along an intelligent-unintelligent spectrum and, at the same time, be negatively stereotyped as socially awkward along a socially proficient-socially inept spectrum. By means of these simplified cultural stereotypes, society bundles together a number of enactments and rejects any deviation from this norm (Lemke, 2008).

The “how” of identification refers to the processes by which identity is constructed, that is, the actions undertaken to project an identity or have an identity ascribed to oneself (Butler, 1990). It occurs as individuals immerse themselves in the culture of the community and appropriate these practices (Gee, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Street, 2003; Wenger, 1998). However, because of multiple affiliations within the complex social networks of contemporary society, identities are constantly in flux and are becoming progressively fragmented as they are multiply constructed across discourses which are unrelated, intersecting or antagonistic (Hall, 1996). This

necessitates a code-shifting of identity performance (Lemke, 2008) or navigating through hybrid spaces (Moje, 2013) as an identity "lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity" (Hall, 2006 [1990], p. 235). In this sense, these boundaries of difference are constantly being repositioned in relation to the different frames of reference (Hall, 2006 [1990]) of ideologically disparate communities. For example, the aforementioned Asian student may need to downplay her/his cerebral attributes among friends who value sporting achievements above academic accomplishments and then revert to overt displays of her/his intelligence in an academic setting.

Lemke (2008) conceives identification as a second wave in identity theorisations which address the limitations of the first wave. First-wave identity theory confines its study to enactments reflecting possibly multiple identity affiliations within a given time and space (Gee, 2001a; Holland, et al., 1998; Wenger, 1998) or "identity-in-the-moment" (Lemke, 2008, p. 23), whereas second-wave identity theory also considers "identity-across-events-and-lifespan" (Lemke, 2008, p. 23) and, more specifically, processes at different scales embedded in self-characterisations so as to facilitate an examination of the historical and relational nature of identity construction (Somers, 1994; Somers & Gibson, 1994). Essentially, the second wave encompasses both identity as performativity and identity as narrativity. An exploration of both forms of identity is needed to facilitate an examination of micro to macro linkages that account for shifts in identity (Lemke, 2008). I locate my study within the second wave of identity theorisation because of its broader scope. My study primarily addresses identity as performativity within the context of my participants' role-playing in a VW. At the same time, I examine identity as narrativity in relation to my participants' collective reflections in-world on their enactments, their written artefacts and their focus group discussions.

2.1.2 Semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications

In this section, I explain the processes of identification in terms of semiotic, phenomenological, and sociological identifications (Lemke, 2009). In semiotic identifications, identity is constituted within representations with both corporeal and

cultural resources being deployed to signify subjectivities (Butler, 1993; Hall, 1996, 2006 [1990]). The selection of representational markers is deliberate such that there is an accumulation of meanings across the chosen semiotic resources serving to distinguish or render more clearly the individual's relationship to different people and groups. These choices occur in conjunction with the recognition and/or desiring of some commonality or disassociation with characteristics and/or beliefs of another person or group (Hall, 1996; Lemke, 2009). To illustrate this, I return to my Asian student once more. To find acceptance in different social circles, s/he might adopt different linguistic forms such as using more erudite vocabulary when communicating with her/his geeky friends and professors or resort to boasting or putdowns when discussing the performance of her/his team or rival teams with her/his sports buddies. Her/His ability to switch to a different set of linguistic resources as s/he moves between social circles is likely to influence how s/he is received by her/his peers. As such, corporeal or cultural representational markers can convey differing permutations of power and status differentials depending on the community in which one positions oneself (Lemke, 2009). In Chapter 4, I examine my participants' semiotic identifications. I explore how they employ (i) language resources gleaned from their readings prior to the role-play and (ii) chat, voice, gestures, motion, positioning and/or objects in VW to support their enactments.

Phenomenological identification constitutes lived experiences (Lemke, 2008) and is mediated by others' phenomenological responses to the individual's enactments, resulting in a series of exchanges as the individual acts to refute or negotiate the assigned identity through his/her subsequent interactions (Norris, 2011). Lemke (2008) suggests that our identities are constructed in response to desires and fears that begin with corporeal wants and needs and extend to those elaborated by our cultures. In regard to desire, identification is "the feeling we get when we are our chosen self, when we feel the power—especially important perhaps when we are young and not confident of our power—to identify what we wish to identify with, and to perform

identities we wish to perform" (Lemke, 2009, p. 148). Conversely, we may conclude that fears encompass physical, psychological and emotional pains that signify a loss of agency and position and, hence, power. In Chapter 5, I examine my participants' lived experience within the social space of *SL* and how this constituted their negotiation of their identity within power relations.

However, Lemke (2008) problematizes phenomenological identification, noting that identities-in-the-moment as well as a cumulative identity over timescales cannot be captured in the present restrictive use of identity as a typology. The way forward, suggests Lemke (2008) is an examination of phenomenological accounts which narrate the dynamic flow of enactments and their affective impact in a more nuanced manner. Such phenomenological accounts are consistent with the conception of identity as narrativity (Ricoeur, 1991; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Somers, 1994; Somers & Gibson, 1994). The narrative identity is constantly being reconstituted as the narrative progresses with its shifting relationality to a matrix of other individuals, groups and institutions and their associated cultural resources, practices and narratives across time and space, serving as an analytic variable (Somers, 1994; Somers & Gibson, 1994). It is this relationality that links the identity-in-the-moment and identity-across-events or identity-across-the-lifespan through its recurrence (Lemke, 2008). Relationality is similarly shaped by power differentials such that identification is conceived in terms of desire and fear (Butler, 1993; Lemke, 2008, 2009). In this sense, both the semiotic and phenomenological can impact the sociological in that we "mobilize these identifications [or cultural capital] to perform the identities we wish to project and have recognized or ratified by others [or increase social capital]" (Lemke, 2009, p. 147) in a given community. This is because the ways of knowing, speaking, and acting associated with these semiotic identifications may be labelled in different ways by different communities, for example, confidence or arrogance as opposed to humility or false modesty. Such identifications map the trajectory of participation in discursive practices and are, at the same time, circumscribed by the invocation of

cultural models through the discursive practices of specific communities (Butler, 1993; Moje & Lewis, 2007; Moje, et al., 2008; Norton, 2000; Wenger, 1998; Wortham, 2006). In Chapter 6, I explore the relationality of my participants' narrative identity as trace my participants' sociological identifications. I compare their constitution of their identities in their performances in *SL* and in narratives across the social space of the in-world reflections and focus group discussions and the private space of their role-playing reflections and other written artefacts. I also compare their constitution of their identities as they shifted between role-playing a person with a disability and engaging in out-of-character communication with their group members or in their reflections as a student/classmate within and across different spaces.

2.1.3 Section Summary

In conclusion, I have given a selective account of the literature on identity and identification so as to provide a broad overview of developments in this field and to describe some of the keys concepts addressed in my study. In particular, the notions of performative and narrative identifications and semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications are employed as heuristics to frame the exploration of my research and presentation of my findings.

2.2 Theorisations on the Other

In this section, I discuss current definitional understandings of the Other and the process of Othering. I also explain how the literature has shaped my design of the curriculum for facilitating my participants' enactment as the Other as well as the foci of my analysis of their enactments.

2.2.1 The Other

Representations of the self and Other are mutually constitutive as these representations are judged in relation to one another as well as how the self represents the Other and the Other the self (Coupland, 2010). As such, the Other is fundamental to self-constitution through differentiation (Butler, 1993; Derrida, 1981). However, such differentiation tends to characterise the Other as subordinate, morally

inferior, abnormal, foreign and distant (Coupland, 2010; Jensen, 2011). This is because the Other is constituted in power relations. Power differentials, ascribing significance to differences, are founded on the politics of exclusion (Bulcholtz & Hall, 2005; Hall, 1996). They serve to impinge on those who hold identities of the Other. Differing values assigned to different sets of discourse practices and positions lead to differences in mobility and access and persistent pressure on the Other to take on dominant discourse practices and positions (Luke, 2003).

The Other is not a lone individual; it is a group or an individual who at the very least typifies attributes ascribed to a group in dominant discourses. The corollary of delineating group-based attributes is discrimination and conflict based on group identifications (Coupland, 2010). Coupland (2010) acknowledges that this concept of the Other may be considered reductive given the postmodern perspective in which group boundaries are multiple, fluidly enacted and not always clearly definable (Giddens, 1991). In identifying the Other, researchers also risk essentialising and reifying the attributes of a group. Nevertheless, the Other and its delineation in terms of group identity can be seen as meaningful because of the way skewed representations and ideological battles still persist between social groups (Coupland, 2010) and all the more in the postmodern world where contestations of power within a hierarchy are superseded by contestations occurring on horizontal plane between groups differentiated by their dis/ability, ethnicity, gender, class and age (Sandoval, 2000a). Moreover, even the most highly reflexive, protean, shape-shifting individuals cannot conceal differences based on dis/ability, ethnicity, gender, class and age. The Other is also a useful analytic concept when situated on a spectrum on comprising othering or outgrouping and hybridity (Coupland, 2010). This would enable me to attend to what Coupland (2010, p. 257) has identified as an area which needs addressing—a way to “assess the degree of openness/closure of social identification”.

Because the hidden Other in my study specifically explores the case of people with disabilities, it is pertinent that I address prevalent representations of them as an Other.

Within sites of oppression, the disabled Other is positioned as falling short of society's perception of the ideal self (Goodley, 2013). They are variously differentiated as "unfortunate, useless, different, oppressed and sickly" (Hunt, 1966, p. 145). Such differentiation culminates in the disabled Other being hidden or rendered invisible because their very presence is disruptive. They are a reminder to the able-bodied of the impermanence and vulnerability of their embodied state (Kleege, 1999). Moreover, the disabled Other actively or passively resists dominant cultural norms with respect to speech, conduct and movement and presents challenges to dominant cultural assumptions about bodily control and social conditioning (Goodley, 2011, 2013). Galvin (2003, p. 158) explains the Foucauldian subjectification of the disabled Other within dominant cultural metanarratives;

> A standard neoliberal narrative "template" is based on the belief that our society is a "level playing field" and that everyone has the same chances to succeed. Adversity is met with a strong will to triumph and those who "suffer" from "personal tragedy" will often serve as examples to the rest of society in their ability to succeed in life. This kind of narrative excludes stories which acknowledge social oppression and it also dismisses those which are not based on neoliberal qualities such as independence, autonomy, a priority for ritualised work behaviour, fitness, attractiveness and wealth, and, therefore leave people who have become disabled without a legitimate alternative narrative.

This subject position of the person with a disability as the passionate overcomer (see Connolly, 2009; Goffman, 1963; Gray, 2009; Moser, 2005; Tan, 2006) necessitates concealing those situated outside this metanarrative. It highlights how society is not only complicit in concealing the disabled Other, but how it also denies the central role it plays in the oppression of people with disabilities. It also suggests that the cloud of oppression can only be lifted when the gaze is shifted away from the disabled Other and towards "the production, operation and maintenance of ableism" (Campbell, 2009, p. 4). This entails unfolding dominant discourses to identify practices that lend themselves to ableism and initiating practices amongst people with/out disabilities to alter dominant discourses (Galvin, 2003).

While there is an increasing number of studies exploring how people construct discourses about their disabilities (see Cole, Nolan, Seko, Mancuso, & Ospina, 2011; Goodley, 2004; Gray, 2009; Moser, 2005), there is still a need to explore able-bodied people's constructions of disability. My study attempts to get at able-bodied people's tacit judgement of the values, assumptions and norms underpinning dominant and marginalised discourses through their enactments as the hidden Other. This is neither the hegemony arising from speaking *for* or *about* the Other, which some scholars (hooks, 1990; Trinh, 1989) oppose, nor the concerted effort of speaking *with* the Other (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996; Liddle & Rai, 2005[1993]), but the greater clarity of insight into Othering and/or identification that stems from speaking *as* the Other. It represents the first step towards infiltrating dominant discourses and bridging the gaps.

2.2.2 The processes of Othering

I now proceed to a discussion on how a person or group may be rendered into an Other, a process known as Othering. I used the processes outlined in this section to facilitate my analysis of my data. The intent is to arrive at an understanding of the discursive practices employed in Othering and how such knowledge can inform citizenship education (Coupland, 2010).

Othering is the construction of dichotomies in which one pole dominates and in so doing shapes definitional understandings of the other (Derrida, 1981). It is a discursive process exercised by the powerful to characterise the identity of subordinate groups in reductively unfavourable terms so as to legitimise the power and position of former and, at the same time, disadvantage the latter (Coupland, 2010; Jensen, 2011). Othering is accomplished by means of analytic strategies to simplify and reduce in order to explicate differences. I discuss some of these strategies in the following paragraphs, namely, stereotyping, homogenisation, objectification, fetishism, binary oppositions, naturalization and silencing (see Coupland, 2010; Hall, 1997; Langton, 2009; Nussbaum, 1995).

Stereotyping is an approach in which a person or group is reduced to their supposed essence through labelling or ascribing traits as exemplified by blacks being stereotyped negatively or positively as Toms, Coons, Tragic Mulattos, Mammies and Bad Bucks (see Bogle, 1973 Hall, 1997, p. 251). This frequently occurs in tandem with homogenisation. Homogenisation is achieved through selecting and imbuing a mark of difference with an unfavourable meaning and applying it across the entire group. Some examples include a label such as “Islamic fundamentalist”, an icon on a road sign depicting two bent figures and one holding with a walking stick to represent the elderly and the pronoun “they” accompanied by an ascribed pattern of behaviour (Coupland, 2010).

In more extreme forms, negative objectification and fetishism occur. In negative objectification, people are considered to lack autonomy and agency and their experiences and feelings are ignored. They may be treated as a tool, as something owned or interchangeable or violable (Nussbaum, 1995). They may be reduced to their body or appearance (Langton, 2009). An example reflecting a combination of these methods of objectification is the male rendering of female virginity as an elixir of youth and, hence, a tradable commodity in Cambodia (Haworth, 2014). This has resulted in young girls being reduced to their body, treated as property, sold for cash, and having no say over their body, life, desires and future. This example is also illustrative of fetishism. Fetishism occurs when the whole is substituted by a part and involves the fragmentation of the Other and a displacement of these parts (Hall, 1997). For example, women’s genitalia, rather than their whole body, become the focal point in their representation in pornographic materials. These body parts serve as objects of sexual gratification for consumers of such materials. The Othering processes I have highlighted in this paragraph illustrate how people are differentiated through a process of dehumanisation.

Differences in corporeal form and practices are then foregrounded through binary oppositions of “good/bad, civilized/ primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-

because-different/ compelling-because strange-and-exotic" (Hall, 1997, p. 229). Such binary oppositions deny the plausibility of overlaps (Galvin, 2003). They are used not only to juxtapose the powerful and the disenfranchised, but also to distinguish from amongst the disenfranchised. In this sense, binary oppositions can even lead to people who are grouped together in social categories such as dis/ability, ethnicity, gender, age, and class being cast as different in relation to one another (Hall, 1997). Receptivity towards these aforementioned differences is then established and legitimised by a recognised authority's tautological statements in the form of aphorisms and maxims (Sandoval, 2000a), normalising (Galvin, 2003) and naturalizing or attributing these differences to biological or inherited dispositions to preclude the possibility of change over any time frame (Hall, 1997) . It is to render meaning unalterable by securing "discursive or ideological 'closure'" (Hall, 1997, p. 245).

A "regime of representation" (Hall, 1997, p. 232) is established, ritualising these stereotypes and their associated practices and imputing further differentiations on the basis of the initial difference (Goffman, 1963; Hall, 1997). To prevent contestation of these regimes of representation, stereotyped groups are silenced by their internalising these representations (Bourdieu, 1991), through limited access to discourse within these domains or by being rendered invisible in other forms of representation (Coupland, 2010) and by being further labelled as unreasonable or over-imagining or crazy in the event that they might raise their objections (Galvin, 2003; Goffman, 1963).

2.2.3 Identifying with the Other

I begin by addressing the question of why we should endeavour to identify with the Other. Although my research question dwells on enacting the Other, the starting point of my literature review is on identifying with the Other. This is because identification with the Other is ultimately the lofty aim and endpoint of research of this nature and understanding possible approaches to identification with the Other informed my intervention to facilitate my participants' enactment as the Other.

Othering is essentially a societal rather than an individual problem (Galvin, 2003). As such, the responsibility and, hence, remedy for Othering lies with society. So how can we initiate a process of unOthering or identification with the Other? Levinas outlines the ideal impetus for identification. He argues that the encounter with the Other, as a rectilinear movement with no immediate end, should not arise out of a need for self-fulfilment or self-affirmation which would result in a transformation of the Other into the self but should be borne out of a desire for the Other which entails loss yet gain for the agent involved (Levinas, 2006[1972]). It is "the movement of the Same to the Other that never returns to the Same" (Levinas, 2006[1972], p. 26). It is a movement initiated by responsibility for the Other which arises through beholding the face of the Other (Levinas, 2006[1972]). Levinas' description of this process of identification is akin to the notion of "deconstruction" which Derrida (1984, 2001[1992]) characterises as an openness and attentiveness towards the alterity of the Other. It involves a crossing from self to Other within which deconstruction occurs and, in so doing, does justice to the Other (Derrida, 1992, 1997).

These philosophical claims shaped my considerations for curriculum design. One question I had during the curriculum design stage was how I could awaken this sense of responsibility or justice amongst my participants. It seemed to me then that such responsibility or justice could be summoned if the self as the Other were to both experience and witness the self/Other confronting challenging circumstances. The participant would then be prompted to move towards the Other as he/she discerned the needs of the Other and found ways to rally resources to address these challenges. In addition, the questions I sought to address in my analysis were whether and how such responsibility or justice manifested itself in my participants' enactments.

A few philosophers in their own theorisations about the Other and identification with the Other have revealed shortcomings in Levinas' contemplations, in particular, his lack of articulation of the processes by which identification with the Other is effected. For example, Derrida (2001[1992]) additionally frames the identification process in

terms of actively deconstructing the subject, that is, carrying out a historical, genealogical analysis to peel through the layers through which the subject has been constructed and legitimised. This is essentially an undoing of the process of the Othering—an acknowledgement of various spatial-temporal representations of the Other established through the aforementioned analytic strategies. Such deconstruction can pave the way for movement towards the Other (Derrida, 1989).

However, of particular importance is Derrida's (1978) claim that such crossings necessitate some attempt to conceptualise the other which he refers to as "transcendental violence" due to the representation of the non-representable in the condition in which it is most recognisable. This brings to mind Hall's earlier discussions about skewed and reductive representations of the Other that serve to disempower. In view of Derrida's assertions, I thus describe in my findings whether and in what ways my participants deconstructed these representations of the Other and whether or not their semiotic identifications were reflective of the Other in a manner that is recognisable but not reductive.

Limitations in Levinas' theorisations have also been highlighted by Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur (1994) argues that Levinas' underlying assumption about the absolute separation of the self and the absolute exteriority of the Other would preclude openness towards the Other. He points out that the face of the Other alone would not prompt responsibility and movement towards the Other. Instead, the self needs to have certain capacities such as reflexivity, discernment and recognition. So as to nurture these capacities amongst my participants, I designed a multifaceted curriculum which I describe in greater detail in Chapter 3. Suffice to say here, my curriculum provided opportunities for them to read or view and reflect on memoirs and video clips about the lives of people with disabilities produced by people with disabilities and to enact and reflect on their enactment as the Other in role-play.

Most importantly in my view, the self needs to engage in dialogue with the Other in order to internalise the voice of the Other (Ricoeur, 1994). But to do this, one must first

hear the voice of this Other and this voice must not be a subjugated voice but a voice which challenges dominant discourses. Sandoval (2000a, 2000b) has identified the characteristics of such a voice in her “methodology of the oppressed”. This methodology, which she has also termed “oppositional technologies of power”, stems from a commitment to a consciousness opposing the oppressive power of dominant discourses and refers to “a set of processes, procedures and technologies for decolonizing the imagination” (Sandoval, 2000a, p. 68). It enables those who are oppressed to discern associations as contrived and arbitrary rather than natural by means of five different technologies. For the purposes of my analytical frame, I have identified three out of the five as revolutionising processes which serve the purpose of unOthering, namely, semiotics, deconstruction, meta-ideologizing (Sandoval, 2000a). I drew on two other linguistic strategies she describes as one of the ways to counter ideology and this is zero degree of language and silence. While analysing my data, I found it necessary to broaden the definition of some of these terms in order to better account for the revolutionising processes I had come across. From my data, I also identified other processes which I have termed “silencing”, “humanising” and “counter-ideologizing”. I incorporate all these new understandings as I explain and illustrate these technologies and linguistic strategies in the following paragraphs.

The first oppositional technology of power is “semiotics” which specifically refers to attending to and interpreting signs used in cultural productions (Sandoval, 2000a, 2000b). I have renamed this “signification” to avoid confusing the terminology with “semiotic identifications”. Let me illustrate how this technology may be deployed. For example, to counter how the wheelchair is framed negatively in dominant discourse, I draw attention to assumptions of incapacitation and dependence associated with the wheelchair. I then introduce new signs illustrating alternative ways in which the wheelchair is used to underscore the freedom and independence it brings; for example, showing someone hurtling down the racetrack on a wheelchair (see Tan, 2006) or doing daredevil stunts in his wheelchair (see Moser, 2005). These new signs

introduce innovations into discourse in the form of metaphors which can imbue an object with new meanings to counter prevailing institutional usage (Galvin, 2003).

The second technology is “deconstruction” which is a process of “separating a form from its dominant meaning” (Sandoval, 2000b, p. 376). In this sense, this revolutionising process may be used to extract and account for an action undesirably labelled and rendered obscure in dominant discourses by able-bodied individuals such as the rocking motion of someone diagnosed with autism or the muscular spasms of someone who has cerebral palsy. However, in my analysis, I extended the meaning of deconstruction to encompass the act of making explicit what is tacit in order to expose the oppressive ideological assumptions and practices of dominant discourses. This may entail, for example, questioning the practice of ascribing value or worth based on economic productivity (Goodley, 2014) or drilling down into the meaning of labels such as “weird” or drawing attention to the uneven attribution of human rights.

The third technology of power is “meta-ideologizing” which transforms dichotomies by extending conventional categories to include “something else, something beyond them” (Sandoval, 2000a, p. 84). This is not the same as enforcing the use of politically correct terminology. Newly-coined terms conceal oppressive realities and can quickly assume negative connotations (Galvin, 2003). Instead, what I understand by this may be illustrated in the current practices amongst some people with disabilities of subverting the meaning of derogatory terms. Subversion occurs when an unfavourable word is appropriated and invested with positive meanings to strengthen, heal and re-educate (Fletcher, 1993; Galvin, 2003) such as in the case of conventionally pejorative terms like “crip” and “gimpy” (see Cole, et al., 2011; Mairs, 1997[1986], 2009; Overboe, 2007). I consider the example I have just provided also illustrative of the “language of revolution” because, in its generative, self-declarative and transparent state, it “transforms reality” (Sandoval, 2000a, p. 107). In this example, the language does not exclude ideology as claimed by Sandoval. Instead, it tackles ideology head on. Such linguistic strategies “shift disability and disabling qualities to the ability side of

the [ability-inability] binary, allowing for a 'purification' process of these qualities to take place" (Gray, 2009, p. 327) so that disability is repositioned as a "different kind of ability" or a "superior kind of ability" (Gray, 2009, p. 327).

I now proceed to two other linguistic strategies Sandoval (2000a) describes in her book. "Zero degree of language occurs" when an individual is able to circumvent ideological terms by connecting language to object through action to ensure his survival (Sandoval, 2000a). For a person with a disability, this entails responding to language about him and his wheelchair in the form of an action which is "operational" (Sandoval, 2000a, p. 105). For example, in the statement "he pushes his wheelchair", the person is transitively linked to the wheelchair and the statement is not about him and the wheelchair but describes the action. Sandoval (2000a) argues that such a material response liberates the individual from ideology. Therefore, what I looked for in my data was whether any of my participants undertook a material act when they were subjected to ideological impositions. Another strategy is "silence" which seeks liberation from ideology through active resistance (Sandoval, 2000a). However, ascribing intentions to silence can be tricky because silence can assume a submissive posture where one cowers in the face of oppressive ideology. As such, it is more accurate to characterise silence as non-cooperative. An example of non-cooperative silence may be found in one of the memoirs I selected for my participants to read. The memoir describes how Carly Fleischmann who has autism refused to type out a response in her laptop to communicate with her parents and caregivers because she felt that the behaviourist techniques they employed to train her were dehumanising to her (Fleischmann & Fleischmann, 2012).

As mentioned previously, I identified my own oppositional technologies to help me better describe my data. I now explain and illustrate these technologies. "Silencing" as a revolutionising process is the equal and opposite reaction to silencing as a process of Othering. These may include statements in the imperative mood commanding the oppressor to stop the bullying or to get lost. The goal is to stop the propagation of

prejudices embedded in dominant discourses by preventing their articulation. “Counter-ideologizing” refers to an attempt to marginalise the oppressor in the same way the oppressor has sought to alienate the oppressed. This is illustrated in the image below where the high heel represents the empowered female threatening to step on the male kneeling before her in submission (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Example of counter-ideologizing

Both silencing and counter-ideologizing are controversial because they are confrontational. They do not eliminate power differentials but, instead, seek to transform the discourse by shifting power over from the oppressor to the oppressed.

More reconciliatory technologies would be those of “meta-ideologizing” (discussed earlier) and “humanising”. “Humanising” is a revolutionising process aimed at countering attempts to dehumanise the Other. In this process, the Other gives vent to raw yet relatable emotions to emphasise shared humanity and to elicit empathy from those who are otherwise ignorant, afraid and prejudiced. Life stories of the Other are told as a way to make this Other known and understood. These life stories are a means to underscore the shared experiences of growing up and a way to account for

the nature of disabilities. The discourse seeks to dispel fear and ignorance by conveying the message “I am like you”.

My explication of these technologies and linguistic strategies demonstrate how the voices of the oppressed can reform language at the word, symbol, semantic and discourse levels in free speech arising from the ground (Galvin, 2003). These reformations are then circulated within the discourse. However, such technologies and strategies should not be confined only to those who are marginalised and to language alone. In my analysis, I extended these technologies and strategies to those who are able-bodied as well as to other modes of representation such as gesture, position and movement to examine whether and how my participants re-deployed the identifications of people with disabilities and whether instances of innovations occurred in their own discourse which reconstituted their identifications.

I conclude my discussions in this section with the importance of seeing in the mind’s eye what the Other is thinking, feeling and doing. Wenger (1998, p. 194) explains how the imagination enables the process of identification to encompass “the ability to try things, take liberties, reflect, assume the existence of relations of mutuality, and position ourselves in a completely different context.” The intent is not to become, assimilate or subsume the Other but to transform the self through the process, in Lacanian terms, of looking at ourselves from the place of the Other via the imagination (Hall, 1996, 1997, 2007). However, such is the temporal and ethereal nature of the imagination that I can only encourage my participants to imagine themselves as the Other by means of curricular materials, VW avatars and role-playing of scenarios. Much of their own visual contemplations remain known only to them.

2.2.4 Section Summary

To conclude, the discussion in this section surfaces important considerations pertinent to enacting the Other which informed the design of my study as well as my analysis of the data. These include i) the nature of differential power which informed the design of scenarios replicating these differentials, ii) the need to create opportunities and

mechanisms for juxtaposing the self and the Other to support efforts at deconstructing the Other and transforming the self through the design of the curriculum and VW avatars, objects and settings, iii) an understanding of the processes of Othering and identification and pertinent analytical approaches to facilitate my exploration of my participants' discourse.

2.3 Theorisations on vicarious living experiences in Virtual Worlds

In this section I draw from a range of descriptions of the features of VWs to convey my own understanding of what a VW is. Within this definition, I also explain why I selected a VW as a key location for my research; I discuss its affordances and limitations and how I sought to overcome some of its limitations. I highlight how this study can contribute to the literature on using VWs to facilitate identity construction.

VWs are persistent three-dimensional multi-user social environments in which avatars are employed to represent users (Peachey, et al., 2010; Ulicsak & Wright, 2010). By means of these self-fashioned visual representations of themselves, users interact visually with one another and with objects within the environment (Davies & Merchant, 2009). Users can potentially create as many avatars as they choose and participate in as many events or activities as they please such that each instantiation of identity is different. The self is thus multiplied (Turkle, 1995) as new identities are constructed and possibly integrated with the old. These instantiations of identity can enhance self-knowledge and thus represent new possibilities for personal growth (Turkle, 1995). Research on identity construction in these worlds has largely focused on alternative or multiple identities for self-expression and/or self-empowerment (Merchant, et al., 2013; Peachey & Childs, 2011) and there is emerging research on how VWs enable the creation of an empowered virtual self unfettered by ascribed differences for those subjected to Othering in the real world (see Cole, et al., 2011; Ford, 2001; Stewart, Hansen, & Carey, 2010). However, there is little focus on how those occupying a more privileged position within the social categories of dis/ability, ethnicity, gender, age, and

class can trespass socially-prescribed boundaries to encounter and experience being marginalised, disempowered and devalued.

2.3.1 Affordances of Virtual Worlds for enacting as the Other

I have distilled from the literature a number of ways VWs can potentially facilitate enactments as the Other in terms of semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications.

First, in relation to semiotic identifications in VWs, there is leeway for experimenting with a host of virtual identities or "second selves" for a variety of purposes because of the wider and more flexible range of self-representational resources that afford the opportunity to craft unique identities within the assigned role (Kafai, et al., 2010). A customisable avatar embodiment within a three-dimensional space also enables users to become physically and representationally part of the environment, thereby not only increasing body awareness, but also social agency (Pearce, 2007). This encourages greater ownership of the virtual self with user autonomy over the avatar's language, appearance, gestures, movements and/or positions to enact identifications in complex ways within the virtual space.

Moreover, VWs provide multiple spaces and pathways for developing one's identity in line with the notion that identity is complex and constitutes conflicting ideologies and practices (Bers, 2001). VW users typically have a primary avatar and one or more alternate avatars (alts) to perform specific functional roles such as shopping, banking, building, testing, exploring new lands, and avoiding others (Boellstorff, 2008; Kafai, et al., 2010). However, some have made their alts embody alternative representations of themselves in terms of attire and hairstyles and, with less frequency, gender, ethnicity and species (Boellstorff, 2008). Such deliberate attempts at polarising virtual and real-world characteristics represent a step towards discovering what it is like being embodied as the Other as alternative embodiments enable a different experience of the VW (Kafai, et al., 2010), multiplying the self and, thus, multiplying ways of seeing the world. As previously mentioned, Au (2008) describes how an *SL* resident was

subjected to racial slurs by strangers and alienated by her friends after she switched her avatar's skin from that of a blonde with a tan to that of an African American. This resident remarked that being in this skin for three months helped her to distinguish *SL* friends who were genuine and virtuous.

Second, with regard to phenomenological identifications, the tools of VWs foreground and support varied social interactions with greater opportunities for customising avatar-avatar and avatar-object interactions and narratives compared to massively multiplayer online role-playing games (Bell & Smith-Robbins, 2008; Boellstorff, 2008; Peachey, et al., 2010). This fosters greater participation in shaping the material and socio-cultural landscape of the VW (Boellstorff, 2008). In effect, individual identity and group identity are constitutive of one another and evolve over time through social feedback (Pearce, 2007). The persistent environments of VWs play an important part in sustaining social interaction to facilitate identity construction (Bers, 2001) such that social support has a cumulative effect, allowing those involved to commit to and give expression to specific identities such that "they feel 'more themselves' in the avatar persona than they do in real life" (Pearce, 2007, p. 316).

Another affordance of VWs in supporting phenomenological identifications is that, unlike in face-to-face settings, interactions are supported via both in-character and out-of-character communication channels (Mortensen, 2007). In addition, a slip into out-of-character communication is more readily forgiven as opposed to the real world where such acts would be construed as indicating a lack of sincerity (Mortensen, 2007). This represents the unique affordance of a VW for role-playing in that it simultaneously acknowledges the real and virtual identities and supports the endeavour to bridge the gap between them.

Furthermore, because of the "proteus effect" where representations of self in VWs impact online behaviour (Yee & Bailenson, 2007), inequalities in the real world are extended to the VW and are no less "real". For example, avatars with a higher stature acted more confidently and attractive avatars were the recipients of greater self-

disclosure and interpersonal interaction (Yee & Bailenson, 2007). This points to the affordance of VWs in replicating social differentiations and power differentials. Moreover, Goffman (1963, p. 25) observes that there is a heightened awareness of the body and of identifications being fostered through the body amongst the stigmatised who attend to the differences of between themselves and the non-stigmatised;

> During mixed contacts, the stigmatized individual is likely to feel that he is 'on,' having to be self-conscious and calculating about the impression he is making, to a degree and in areas of conduct which he assumes others are not.

As such, taking on the role of an avatar with a disability in *SL* amongst able-bodied peers can simulate to some extent the same unsettling experiences a person with a disability encounters in a mixed contact setting. At the same time, VWs provide a space for supporting low-stakes identity experimentation (Bers, 2001; Meyers, 2009) provided the users' identity enactments in VWs do not have repercussions for them in the real world.

Third, in terms of sociological identifications, VWs are "engagist" tools or "agent[s] of change" in a way that extends human experience beyond what the real world is able to offer, that is, it "provides tools and opportunities for participants to explore and experiment in that setting in ways that real life prohibits or discourages" (Tynes, 2007, p. 221). They are instructive in that they are "tools for letting people understand from the inside out the worlds other people inhabit" (Gee, 2007b, p. 14). VWs can remove the real-world limits of who people imagine themselves to be as defined by their dis/ability, age, ethnicity, gender and class and, in addition, enable them to traverse time and space in such a way that their identities develop in new directions (Wenger, 1998). In so doing, they expand the opportunities for identification with groups that were hitherto less accessible. They afford a shift away from mainstream discourse practices to those valued by a specific minority (Cole, et al., 2011). For example, when forced to choose between the loyalists and the patriots in the conflict preceding the American War of Independence, students who played the enslaved characters in the

game *Revolution* (http://education.mit.edu/projects/revolution) not only developed an appreciation for the primary concerns of this group of historical actors, but also understood that these concerns were competing, relationally complex and were prioritised in different ways by individual slaves based on their personal experience (Francis, 2011). As such, VWs enable the construction of sociological identifications congruent with the access to available semiotic resources and phenomenological experiences in VWs.

2.3.2 Limitations of Virtual Worlds for enacting as the Other

In this sub-section, I identify how VWs can limit research focused on encouraging enactments as the Other. Merely assuming the physical characteristics of the Other in VWs may be insufficient for facilitating enactments as the Other because of limited and/or pre-conceived notions about the Other, extant ideological valuations of social practices and the inclination to enact an empowered self.

First, research has shown that the majority of people tend to provide inconsistent or simplified identity enactments when they role-play an Other (Axelsson, 2002; Boellstorff, 2008; DeVane & Squire, 2008; Ho & Ong, 2007; Kafai, et al., 2010; Martey & Stromer-Galley, 2007; Nakamura, 2002; Park & Henley, 2007-2008; Taylor, 2006; Turkle, 1995; Williams, et al., 2011). "Identity tourism" may persist in which participants play out the identity of the Other by redeploying stereotypes typically found in the mass media (Nakamura, 2002). Alternatively, they transpose their persona and social practices from the real world onto the VW. The identities constructed frequently resemble their real-world identities and reflect how they view their physical appearance or personality regardless of whether they are perceived by others in the same light in the real world (Boellstorff, 2008; Kafai, et al., 2010). When they do take on a contrasting identity, this serves as a means of addressing perceived inadequacies, such as an introverted personality so as to attain an enhanced sense of control or efficacy or as an escape from reality (Boellstorff, 2008; Fine, 1983). These are their conceptions of possible selves situated on spectrums of potentiality and desirability

unfettered by immediate familial and community expectations (Boellstorff, 2008; Kafai, et al., 2010; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Limited semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications on the part of role-players may be due to several reasons. The ability to harness semiotic resources is contingent on the user's skill and status within the community. The cognitively and affectively demanding task of engaging in discourse practices socially, culturally and/or historically distinct from their own and unfamiliar to them may be too daunting for users. There may be an emphasis on roles based on positions rather persons which draws attention away from personalisation and representation (Fine, 1983). Finally, choices may be limited by group norms imposed by the community which will discipline the user for atypical social and material practices (Kafai, et al., 2010).

Second, users may refrain from adopting a range of identities and do so only for utilitarian purposes rather than for identity experimentation like the young children in Marsh's study (2011) did. This may be attributed to their lack of material, social and cultural knowledge impinging upon their online enactments. Alternatively, the children could have been aware that their avatar's attire, possessions and social networks could be used by their peers to assess their status. This is an apt reminder that "virtual identity is not a blank canvas and virtual space (like other space) remains a discursive arena *already* and *in the process of* being shaped by the social and the cultural" (Crowe & Bradford, 2006, p. 340). It also underscores how the desire to feel empowered represents a major challenge in facilitating enactments as the Other.

2.3.3 Addressing the constraints of Virtual Worlds for enacting as the Other

I now discuss how to plausibly circumvent the constraints encountered when enacting the Other in VWs. I focus on (i) the dual perspectives gained through enactment and reflection and (ii) role immersion by means of embodiment, embeddedness and experience.

Gee (2008) believes that individuals build context-specific simulations or models based on a given ideology, foregrounding certain beliefs, values and emotions and

dispensing with others. These simulations help the individual to anticipate how to act and, at the same time, are informed by the individual's experiences through the process of enactment. In order to enact a new identity, individuals have to engage in experiences which cause them to build new simulations reflecting the ideology associated with this identity. (This is akin to Bourdieu's habitus which I discuss in the following chapter.) The key challenges here are what interventions to include and how to include them so as to catalyse the creation of new simulations or models for the individual to enact the Other.

Designers, researchers and educators have undertaken a variety of curricular and pedagogical approaches to nurture various identities. Some turned to incorporating games or game elements such as game rules, tasks, reward systems and designated roles to scaffold the learning process (Dodge, et al., 2008, p. see ; Francis, 2011; Ho & Ong, 2007; Kafai, 2010). Others depended on community support in the form of apprenticeship within VWs for nurturing an understanding of culturally salient ways of knowing, speaking, and acting. In apprenticeship systems in VWs like *SL* and *Whyville*, there is less reliance on inbuilt mechanisms and more on timely "virtual altruism" on the part of residents who offer advice, support and objects for free (Boellstorff, 2008, p. 125). An exception is *River City* (http://muve.gse.harvard.edu/rivercityproject/) which adopted a formal two-pronged apprenticeship system comprising lectures and discussions with more knowledgeable others (Dieterle & Clarke, 2008). Still others designed Virtual World and real-world activities to both catalyse action and elicit reflection (see Chee, 2007; Rappa, et al., 2009). In one approach, those involved were deliberately extracted from the role-play and provided a space for contemplative reflection on their enactments. This space for reflection was designed to afford the opportunity to meld self as realised and revealed in the VW with on-going constructions of identity in the real world (Chee, 2007).

I avoided game elements and apprenticeship systems in an effort to minimise contriving the role-play and to provide a more natural setting. Instead, I drew my

inspiration for an intervention from *Space Station Leonis* (http://www.learnxscape.com/app/space-station-leonis/). In this project, role-players took on both the role of one of the protagonists (limited character perspective) and that of the President (omniscient perspective) when dealing with conflicts between the distinct sub-populations in the space colony (Chee, 2007). In the first capacity, they attended to key action-consequence causal relations as the "embodied self" (or performative identity) experiencing the events as they unfolded. In the second capacity, they managed events, came to decisions and provided justifications which illuminated their underlying beliefs and values as the "reflexive self" (or narrative identity) (Chee, 2007). Both perspectives are mutually constitutive and are a function of identity construction (Chee, 2007) and both act as bridges to an expansive view of the world—the former, experientially and the latter, explanatorily. Likewise, I incorporated two different modes of participation—enacting as the Other from the limited character perspective and standing outside of this perspective to reflect on these enactments. I discuss the specific curricular method in Chapter 3. These interventions were part and parcel of an attempt to help my participants to immerse themselves in their role. This is because role immersion would help counter shallow enactments as the Other and utilitarian motivations which impede identification.

However, what is meant by "immersion" in VWs is an on-going debate. Some scholars refer to immersion in terms of how the VW envelops users with a constant stream of synthetic sensory stimuli that shape their perception of the authenticity of the environment with respect to some consensus reality (Blascovich et al., 2002; Witmer & Singer, 1998). Others caution that such a technical orientation can lead to the mistaken notion that immersion is due to the graphics capabilities (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). However, this notion of immersion focuses a great deal on the impact of the environment on the user without taking into consideration the role of socio-historical understandings of the consensus reality nurtured by means of the user's active participation and interaction with others and objects in this space. I posit

that it is this latter sense of immersion that imbues the IVE with real-world qualities. The key to immersion then is no longer the extent to which the VW depicted via sensory inputs is grounded in the actual world, but human interaction and its associated cultural practices.

For heuristic purposes, I would like to make a distinction between immersion which is goal-oriented and being-oriented. In goal-oriented immersion, role-players achieve a state of “flow” where maximum attention and voluntary effort are exerted to achieve something deemed valuable while experiencing exhilaration and a sense of control (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). The consequence is higher levels of performance, increased confidence, transformation and complicating and, hence, growth of the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). In being-oriented immersion, Leander and Boldt (2012, p. 36), citing Deleuze and Guattari (1987), describe this as “simply becoming”, “responding to the energy of the moment” or “just trying to see what happens”. Such descriptions of being-oriented immersion are in line with the ludic quality of virtual spaces; a sandbox for constructing and having fun while constructing. As such, the character of role immersion varies and is highly dependent on the nature of the socially constructed barrier of the “magic circle”; a playground dedicated to specific enactments carved out in time and space (Huizinga, 1949). What I understand by this is that the rules enforced by adults standing outside the playground are ignored and the children in the playground decide what the rules are and when they apply moment by moment as play progresses. This affective and relational perspective (Leander & Boldt, 2012) of role immersion gave me deeper insights into my participants’ enactments. My task was to look for these oftentimes unspoken rules dynamically generated to address the needs of the moment to help me understand whether role immersion as defined by the group had taken place.

Having said that, I was not left without any means to facilitate being-oriented immersion. Being-oriented immersion can be nurtured through the threefold process of embodiment, embeddedness and experience (Chee, 2007). “Embodiment” refers to

ways of knowing-enacting arising from the brain-body being located in a material space and rooted linguistically and socio-historically (Chee, 2007) while "embeddedness" within VWs refers to the user being filled with the sense of telepresence or "a sense of being and of selfhood by being materially/virtually embedded in that [virtual] world" (Chee, 2007, p. 15) and being aware of which ways of knowing-enacting are valued. Embodiment and embeddedness give rise to "experience" or a refinement of ways of knowing-enacting through the processes of action and reflection (Chee, 2007). Embodiment, embeddedness and experience proved more of a challenge in this study because it involved the enactment of an identity which is marginalised within Singapore. I began by immersing my participants in the world of disability through their reading and reflection on various texts about and/or by people with disabilities prior to their role-play. My intent was to illustrate to them diverse perspectives on disability so that they would have varied resources at their disposal to enact the Other.

Given that my participants were trying to understand what it meant to be a hidden Other, they needed to experience marginalisation for themselves. As such, some participants took turns to assume the role of an avatar with a disability within *SL* where they experienced disabling attitudes. They inevitably experienced some discomfort in learning what it meant to be and do in this new identity. Nevertheless, such an approach can yield positive outcomes. For example, Chee and Yang (2009) found that placing students in circumstances in which they had to risk the life of their avatars enhanced their sense of identification with their roles. In another example mentioned previously, a resident in SL experienced discrimination but was able to discern who her real friends were when she took on a darker skin tone (Au, 2008). Such challenging encounters in the VW can enhance people's capacity to know, understand, and enact the Other. The hope of this shift to being-oriented social immersion is that "Virtual Worlds could augment actual-world capabilities, social networks, and concepts" (Boellstorff, 2008, p. 115).

2.3.4 Section Summary

In conclusion, I have described the various affordances of VWs for enacting as the Other in semiotic, phenomenological and sociological ways. Nevertheless, like many other porous virtual social spaces (Davies, 2014), there is a traversing of power relations and identifications across real world and VW experiences which can limit their potentiality as a space for enacting the Other. However, these limitations can be addressed in ways I described in the preceding paragraphs. Based on the literature, I chose to focus on curricular and pedagogical approaches to facilitate dual perspective-taking and role immersion to enhance vicarious living experiences within the VW.

2.4 Theorisations on supporting enactments as the Other

In this section, I discuss the notion of agency and explain why I consider it central in facilitating enactments as the Other. I explain how I attempted to effect agency through my design of the curriculum and the focus of my analysis as I examined my participants' agentive moves. I then describe the critical literacy practices and dramatic techniques which I incorporated into the curriculum.

2.4.1 Agency

Agency is "the strategic making and remaking of selves, identities, activities, relationships, cultural tools and resources, and histories, as embedded within relations of power" (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 18). It involves individuals honing the way they employ semiotic resources in response to a landscape where identities, practices, and group affiliations present opportunities and obstacles (Holland, et al., 1998). This notion of agency is consistent with its construal as "relational effects" (Thrift, 1995) in Actor Network Theory (ANT). Here, agency arises from and is distributed across time and space amongst the networked relations of people and objects. These networked interactions may be conceived in terms of orientation, directionality, and proximity (Leander & Lovvorn, 2006). Such a perspective of agency would preclude locating agency within individuals, artefacts, technology or structures as this could lead to "romanticizing" humans and their practices or a "naïve formalism" and "technocentrism"

as texts, tools and structures are then perceived as some kind of magic bullet (Leander & Lovvorn, 2006, p. 301).

It is also important to attend to the dimensions of power embedded within a network to understand how agency is effected. For this purpose, I employed Bourdieu's concepts to account for a power-related networked view of agency. I explain his concepts in greater detail in Chapter 3. Suffice to say here, agency is effected when individuals employ socially and institutionally approved means in a given context to distinguish themselves. In other words, people act agentively to draw on resources at their disposal within a network to gain and display power and to feel empowered. I had this view of a power-related networked view of agency in mind as I designed my curriculum and framed my analysis of my participants' interactions with one another and objects within the VW. To support my participants' agentive moves to transform dominant discourses as the Other, I incorporated a variety of my curricular methods. These include adaptations of Janks' (2010) approach to developing critical literacy and Augusto Boal's (1979) dramatic techniques from Theatre of the Oppressed and which are discussed in greater depth in the following sub-sections.

2.4.2 Critical Literacy

Critical literacy involves analysis which draws attention to the political and social agendas informing a set of literacy practices. It provides insights into how these practices are mobilised to support these agendas (Thompson, 1984) and points to the significance and implications of these practices for those engaged in these power relations. Because of the power differentials between the participants' identity and that of their avatar identity embedded in the role-playing scenarios, I considered critical literacy essential for facilitating their enactment as the Other.

Janks (2010) argues that critical literacy should encompass the process of deconstruction as well as that of reconstruction so as to address Luke's (2002, p. 106) call "to move beyond a strong focus on ideology critique…….to develop a strong positive thesis about discourse and the productive uses of power". In particular, such

reconstructive efforts should be directed at what Janks (2010, p. 188) refers to as the "little p politics" or the micro-politics of daily life which is about decisions that guide our construction of our identities and the identities of those around us in response to our fears and desires and the inequalities that we do or do not acknowledge and which, ultimately, shape how we treat other people. As such, the orientation I took towards critical literacy was to underscore the importance of unpacking and appropriating a discourse in service of social justice (Hyatt, 2006).

The approach towards critical literacy I took in this study involved repositioning my participants as researchers of language (Comber, 1992) who reflected on (i) how people with disabilities are represented in public texts and (ii) how people with disabilities represent themselves in their memoirs and (iii) how they themselves represented the people with disabilities in the VW. (I had intended for my participants to also reflect on how these various representations compared with one another but I was not able to carry out this activity because of time constraints.) The curricular tools which the teachers and I developed for the participants to support their textual analysis are described in Chapter 3 and listed in the appendices.

One theoretical endeavour to initiate transformative re-design encompasses the notions of "critical framing" and "transformative practice" put forth by The New London Group (1996). Critical framing is concerned with making learners "aware of, and…… able to articulate, the cultural locatedness of practices" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 85). It entails learners distancing themselves from the practice so as to question the historical, social, cultural, political, and ideological basis of that practice, that is, the ways of knowing, doing, and valuing within the social and cultural domain, in which practice occurs, that shape interpretations of the practice, and which are taken as a given (The New London Group, 1996). To achieve this, the participants had to "juxtapose and integrate (not without tension) two different discourses, or social identities, or 'interests' that have historically been at odds" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 87). My participants were presented with the opportunity to do so when they

collectively analysed representations of people with disabilities in different texts (narrative and expository). Such intertextuality, together with a framework for analysing how ideology is operationalized (Thompson, 1984, 1990) constitute “a critical notion of pedagogy” (Hyatt, 2006, p. 114) which affords denaturalizing of cultural assumptions (Morgan, 1994), dialogic thinking about the content and facilitates a meta-level discussion of these different representations (Gee, 2001b).

This deconstructive process also lays the foundation for “Transformed Practice” in which learners are able to appropriate the practice, “creatively extend and apply it, and eventually innovate on their own, within old communities and new ones” (The New London Group, 1996, p. 87). It refers to a re-engagement in the socially situated meaning-making process such that students are able to speak and write about the content in new ways to reflect new subjectivities. This is crucial given that critical reading is honed through writing or producing (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke, 1995). In this study, the opportunities to role-play a person with a disability and write personal reflections provided my participants such avenues to develop their ability to read critically. (I had intended for my participants to create a mashup but this did not materialise because of constraints in the curriculum.)

Nevertheless, Janks (2010) points out the limited impact of rationalist approaches in current efforts to employ Critical Discourse Analysis (see Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995) as a means to facilitating critical literacy. She argues that “[w]here identification promises the fulfilment of desire, reason cannot compete” (Janks, 2010, p. 212). This is similar to Lemke’s emphasis on the role of desire in phenomenological identification. As such, my study sought to spark the desire for greater social justice for the Other through my participants not merely standing outside of the text and critiquing it, but being located within the text and experiencing new subjectivities as the Other.

2.4.3 Dramatic Techniques

Given that VWs provide a landscape and a set of design tools but cannot facilitate learning unless there is rigorous intervention (Aldrich, 2009), I introduced dramatic

techniques as a means to support my participants' enactments as the Other. In this sub-section, I explain how dramatic techniques, in particular, Forum Theatre and Verbatim Theatre in their endeavour to establish social justice, could potentially facilitate the identification process. Moreover, Forum Theatre necessitates dramatizing a conflict which could facilitate the removal of the protective casing of able-bodiedness to catalyse a "moral experience" for participants (Goffman, 1963, p. 46).

Forum Theatre is a technique which emerged out of Augusto Boal's (1979) work on Theatre of the Oppressed. It is an intervention to collectively and actively trial, nurture and rehearse forms of social action, primarily discourses, which empower the individual to effectively resist oppression (Boal, 1979). The technique involves the audience actively participating in the dramatization of an event depicting power differentials and oppression and presents these "spect-actors" with the opportunity to initiate a change of action during the course of the play (Cavallo, 2008). The spect-actors' unperform assigned stereotypical identities by transforming the system of identification and objectification through the process of neutralising, disassembling and dematerializing the representation (Banks, 2006). For this to happen, some conditions must be present. First, there must be an increased representation of the underrepresented oppressed. Second, psychological and sociological complexity must be ascribed to the oppressed to preclude reductive perceptions. Such ascriptions occur by means of highlighting personal history to emphasise commonality of experiences and emotions and by altering subject locations to avoid circumscribing enactments (Banks, 2006). The spect-actors' performance thus enables them to deconstruct the narrative of oppression, rehearse strategies for initiating change and, thereby, be empowered to transform their enactments in the real-world (Boal, 1979). In Chapter 4, I discuss how my participants addressed these stereotypical identities of people with disabilities.

The dramatized conflict in Forum Theatre acknowledges a prevailing binary in order to address it. However, one shortcoming of formulating a binary of, for example,

dis/ability is that it assumes the internal heterogeneity of a group and thus fails to acknowledge multiple identity categories and social positions (e.g. age, ethnicity, gender, class) an individual can hold (Hammer, 2001). Nevertheless, other differentiations represent an opportunity for identification through “analogical induction” (Boal, 1995, p. 45). Here, spect-actors fall back on other identity and social markers to help them relate similar personal experiences of oppression with the scene of a person with a disability being oppressed (Boal, 1995). In this study, there was a departure from the conventions of Forum Theatre with a role reversal in which the participant who was not a member of the oppressed took on the role of the oppressed protagonist in the VW. As such, analogical inductions were all the more pertinent for facilitating identification.

To further facilitate my participants’ enactments as the Other, I adopted a number of theatrical methods. I wanted my participants to apply the general principle of Verbatim Theatre in their performance. In this theatrical method, the actual words of people interviewed are incorporated into the dramatic performance of actors playing them (Hammond & Steward, 2008). The focus is on the “amplification of an otherwise lost voice” (Soans, 2008, p. 32) and the intent is “to use people’s real words to move us to a new understanding of ourselves” (Soans, 2008, p. 41). Likewise, I had asked my participants to permeate their performance with the actual words uttered by people with disabilities who had been subjected to discrimination in the real world. They were to derive these from their reading of cases. In so doing, I wanted to ensure that there was some authentic representation of the voices of the people with disabilities in their enactments; that their responses were not just made up on the fly and involved some effort on their part to listen, process and represent these voices based on their own understanding of what they had heard to reflect their perceptions of the Other.

Another theatrical method was a variation of the introspective technique known as “the image of the rainbow of desire” (Boal, 1995, p. 151). This was employed to help the protagonist gain clarity on the full spectrum of desires and fears he or she considers

pertinent to the scene. The means for conveying these desires and fears was not the traditional mode of static image productions with the body (Boal, 1995), but through producing motions consistent with everyday enactments such as shouting, pushing, hitting, crying, hiding, running away, hugging, smiling or laughing, circumscribed by the particular disability of the avatar. The intent was for the protagonist to acknowledge sameness between himself/herself and the Other such that his/her own sensibility drives the enactment rather than second-hand knowledge of the Other's sensibility (Boal, 1995).

Finally, I adopted another theatrical device from Forum Theatre—that of the Joker. The Joker maintains the balance between performance and analysis for all the actors involved. The Joker facilitates analysis by means of abstracting, revealing and explaining within a basic structure encompassing dedication, explanation, episode, scene, commentary, interview and exhortation (Boal, 1979). The Joker, who is ascribed the divine traits of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence, also works towards ensuring that a clear yet dynamically evolving focus is maintained and aims towards complex renderings to preclude reductive interpretations on the part of the spect-actors (Boal, 1979). In my study, the teachers and I took on the role of the Joker for the three different groups, functioning as mediator between the students' real-world and avatar identities to facilitate their identification with the Other.

Through dramatic techniques employed within VWs, I sought to present my participants with the opportunity to establish some distance and carve out a space to evaluate their enactments to get at their identifications and desires, discover how these shaped their views of people with disabilities and use this as the starting point for their participating in and generating new discourses.

2.4.4 Section Summary

In conclusion, I explain in this section the critical literacy practices and dramatic techniques which I incorporated into my curriculum. By deliberately locating these nodes within my participants' network, I had hoped that these would be the catalysts

and the means by which my participants could potentially act agentively to interrogate, reposition and/or transform dominant discourses on people with disabilities. I discuss some challenges of this twofold approach in Chapter 3 and provide recommendations for the future in Chapter 7.

2.5 Chapter Summary

It is important to acknowledge that the kind of performative and narrative identifications and semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications which emerged in my participants' efforts to enact the Other are based on aspects of life they considered salient (Dodge, et al., 2008) as experiences across time and space intersected at the context of the VW and the real-world classroom. Although I could not with certainty dictate or determine these identifications, it was essential for me as much as possible to help my participants bridge their experiences in VWs with their personal reality by employing perspective-taking and role immersion to help them locate connecting points. This is because oftentimes the alternative identity in VWs is a self empowered and desired in ways consistent with the dominant ideology. Therefore, more overt approaches of critical literacy, dramatic techniques and being embodied with a disability combined with the disruptive force of encountering discrimination within the VW were needed to jolt my participants out of their present state of being into which they had been lulled by dominant discourses.

Given the shape-shifting portfolios of youths today (Gee, 2006), it would also be useful, to see these instantiations of identifications as falling along a continuum between being one's possible self and being the Other as young people locate themselves on different parts of this continuum on different occasions for different purposes. The challenge lies in persuading and guiding them to take steps to move towards the opposite end of this continuum.

Chapter 3: Methodology in Researching Identity Enactments in Virtual Worlds

I begin this chapter with a discussion of my methodological framework. This framework connects the literature review discussed in the previous chapter with my research methods. In this chapter, I also attend to ethical issues which need to be considered in general when research is conducted within VWs and those which arose during the implementation.

3.1 Methodological Framework

In this section, I provide an overview of my methodology which is essentially grounded in qualitative approaches. Given my novel research focus on how able-bodied adolescents enact the hidden Other with a disability in *SL*, my research is situated at an early exploratory stage. As such, my research questions are best addressed through small-scale qualitative inquiry. Within my methodological framework, I address the rationale for my choice of sites and participants, I provide a description of and justification for the curriculum designed as an intervention to support my participants' enactments as the Other, I describe the data collected and explain how and why they were collected and, finally, I describe and explain the conceptual and analytical framework which guided my analyses of the data.

My methodological framework comprises 3 stages employing qualitative design, method and report (see Figure 3).

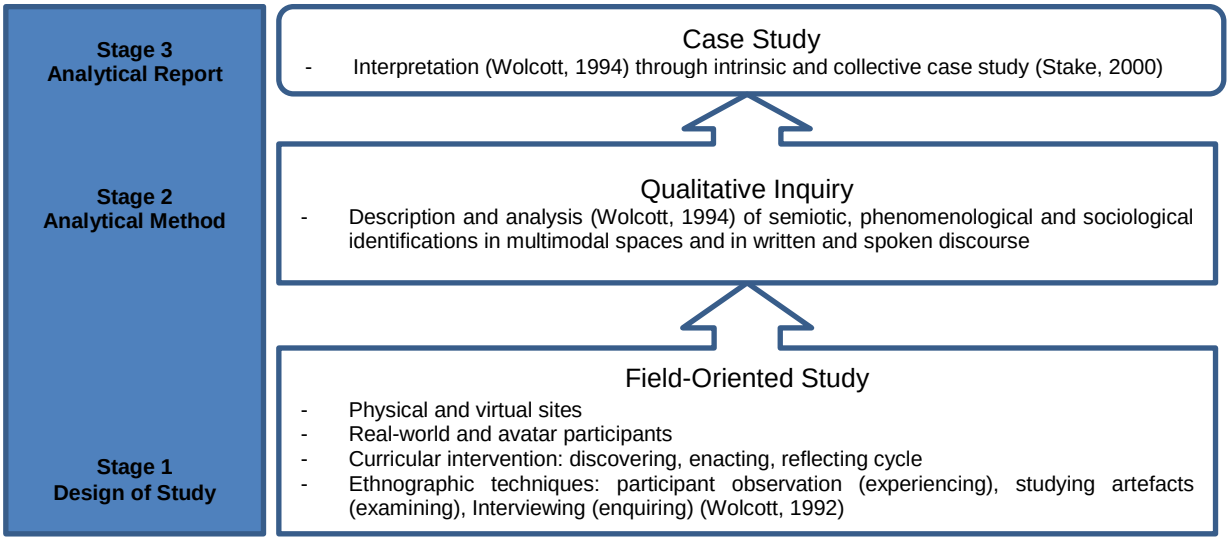


Figure 3: A methodological framework for study design, analysis and interpretation

3.1.1 Stage one: Study design

Stage one refers to the design of my field-oriented study. This encompassed my selection of physical and virtual sites, real-world participants and their accompanying avatars, my design of a curricular intervention and my engagement in ethnographic techniques of data collection.

3.1.1.1 Sites and Participants

In this section, I describe the physical and virtual sites of my study, my choice of avatars with disabilities and the profile of my participants. I selected the physical site, a pre-university institution in Singapore, because as the Centre of Excellence for New Media, it had already established the necessary infrastructure and a research-oriented culture focused on the integration of new media into the academic curriculum. In addition, in 2007, when I was Head of the English Department at this institution, I was involved in piloting a study using role-playing in *SL* to facilitate perspective-taking on issues relating to euthanasia and globalisation in the General Paper (Ho, et al., 2009; Rappa, et al., 2009). The focus in the study then was on students assuming *positions* rather than *identities* pertinent to debatable issues. My current study built on this previous research by examining identities and identifications as able-bodied adolescents were embodied as an avatar with a disability in *SL*.

Layered upon the physical site of the computer laboratory in which the role-playing sessions were held was the site within *SL*. The study was conducted on one part of an island owned by the pre-university institution. There were a couple of access and design considerations to facilitate the participants' enactments. These included (i) making the landscape accessible only to the participants to enhance their safety and their feelings of safety so that they could freely enact the Other, (ii) giving them access to meaning-making resources which they would otherwise have limited access to, and which would be difficult or dangerous for them to engage with in a face-to-face role-playing setting. The role-play on the *SL* island took place in a school gymnasium with an indoor basketball court (see Figure 4). There were five blue mats in one corner of

the gym which participants could sit or lie on. The participants could pick up basketballs from the storage bin and throw them around. There was a bag with a cell phone in it which participants could use to make a call to the school general office, parents, the press and the police. There was a security camera pointed at one part of the gym. With the design of this virtual landscape, I sought to present the students with the opportunity to maintain fidelity to their roles by speaking and acting in character.

Figure 4: The school gymnasium in *SL*

I commissioned the design of avatars with Asian features and three different skin tones. Each group could access 12 avatars evenly distributed in terms of gender with the skin tone randomly assigned. 8 of these avatars had disabilities; one male avatar and one female avatar for a range of disabilities, namely, autism, cerebral palsy, paraplegia and a misshapen arm. A wheelchair was available to the participant playing the avatar with paraplegia. S/he could make her/his avatar stand at any time during the role-play. The participants could select any one of these 8 avatars and I witnessed many doing so in consultation with their group members. I have included here screenshots of some of the avatars with disabilities (see Figure 5).

Autism Misshapen arm Cerebral palsy Paraplegia

Figure 5: Screenshots of some of the avatars with a disability

Because pre-university institutions in Singapore in totality take in the top 25% of students in each cohort, all participants in this study may be characterised as academically high achievers. My sampling procedure may be described as theory or concept sampling (Creswell, 2008) as it serves the purpose of informing conceptual understandings of embodiment and enactment as the Other in a VW. The study involved three groups of five 17-year-old able-bodied students from the same class. Of these 15 participants, 7 took on the avatar with a disability in the scenario. Of these 7, one of them did so twice. Only one participant of the 15 had regular contact with people with disabilities as he volunteered on a regular basis with various community groups. The rest reported during the focus group interviews that they had not regularly interacted with a person with a disability over the last year. However, two of them mentioned that they had close friends in primary school who had disabilities. The participants were of different gender, ethnicity and nationality which could have had implications on how they enacted the Other as they could have experienced Othering in terms of these distinguishing characteristics. However, as mentioned in my introductory chapter, I did not have leeway to explore these facets and, hence, did not seek clearance from the various institutions to collect data of this nature.

3.1.1.2 Curriculum Design

The teachers and I implemented a multifaceted curricular intervention to facilitate the students' role-playing. Such an intervention was important given that the scenario on ableism developed for *SL* involved students taking on roles which were more demanding because of the physical, psychological and emotional distance between their personal experience and those of their roles. In this sub-section, I walk through the decision-making processes regarding the curriculum. The reason for this is to highlight how the curriculum was really a constant work-in-progress as the teachers and I sought to work within the time and syllabus constraints. I describe the five components of the curriculum designed for this study which involved the participants accessing resources on dis/ability issues, learning how language is used to construct dis/ability in different ways, analysing a memoir or video produced by a person with a disability, role-playing in *SL* and reflecting on their enactments in *SL*.

The curricular intervention was designed to engage the students in the following ways:

(i) reading or viewing of resources outside curriculum time to establish foundational understanding of dis/ability issues globally and locally.

These reading or viewing resources comprising essays, news articles and video productions were meant to kick start the students' questioning of assumptions about dis/ability and to raise their awareness of the issues confronting people with disabilities. I identified the relevant materials and the teachers uploaded the links to these materials onto the class Facebook page for the students to read during their one-week school vacation (see Table 2). I did not monitor whether the students did in fact access these resources. The decision to do so was left entirely to them.

(ii) analysing lexical and grammatical choices in news articles to construct different realities of people with disabilities.

The purpose of these resources was to develop the students' critical literacy skills; to help them attend to the ways texts were being constructed. For the first tutorial session, I prepared two sets of paired news articles about a specific event or issue. The pairing

was so that the students could compare how the narratives about these events or issues could be constructed in subtly different ways which thus presented very different realities of dis/ability. The first set, on scholarships awarded to Singaporeans with disabilities, was used for direct instruction on critical literacy skills (see Table 2). The second set on the arguments for and against special education was for students to apply these critical literacy skills (see Table 2).

Table 2: List of reading/ viewing resources

No	Title	Session
1	Excerpts of Barnes, C. (1997). A Legacy of Oppression: A History of Disability in Western Culture. In Len Barton and Mike Oliver (Eds.), *Disability Studies: Past Present and Future, pp. 3 - 24*. Leeds: The Disability Press.	Holiday reading/ viewing
2	Excerpts of Takamine, Y. (2004). *Disability Issues in East Asia: Review and Ways Forward, Working paper*.	
3	*On the Red Dot: Building an inclusive society* (video)	
4	*Five-year roadmap to help the disabled* (video)	
5	Ng, J. (2009, April 6). Eden's curriculum will challenge kids, *The Straits Times*.	
6	My Paper. (2011, March 30). New centre aims to be hub for autistic care, *My Paper*.	
7	(a) Lim, L, K. (2013, January 16). Scholarship helps disabled go to university, *The Straits Times*.	Lesson on critical literacy skills (direct instruction and application)
	(b) Society for the Physically Disabled. (January, 15, 2013). Students with disabilities get a boost from Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Scholarship.	
8	(a) Tomsho, R. (November 27, 2007). Parents of disabled students push for separate classes, *The Wall Street Journal*.	
	(b) Rachman, A. and Haryanto, U. (June, 6, 2012). Disabled Indonesian students are separate but not always equal, *Jakarta Globe*.	

Besides the aforementioned news articles, I adapted a list of questions developed by Janks (2010, p. 63) and linked them to Thompson's (1984, 1990) modes of operation of ideology as a scaffold for the students to interrogate a text (see Appendix B). The teachers simplified this list of questions to make it more comprehensible for the students (see Appendix C). I also gave the teachers my analyses of these articles but I did not impose my own expectations about what they should specifically say and do during direct instruction on critical literacy skills. The teachers could decide for themselves what they wanted to highlight in these articles and how they wanted to go about comparing the paired articles based on their adapted list of questions.

For the second tutorial session, I initially selected a very broad range of reading materials comprising essays, reports and news articles to support paragraph development for two different perspectives on dis/ability education based on the United Nations convention of the rights of the child (see Appendix D). The teachers suggested that these materials be replaced with a simpler task because there was too much to cover during the limited curriculum time. As such, we removed the reference to the UN convention and instead focused on a debatable question on the benefits and drawbacks of mainstreaming vis-à-vis special education which the teacher would analyse with the whole class. The students would then develop an argument to support a stand of their own choosing (see Appendix E).

(iii) individually analysing specific cases in which a person talked or wrote about her/his disability and its effect on them and their relations within their social sphere.

The purpose of getting my participants to analyse a chosen case was to inform and facilitate their inclusion of voices of people with disabilities in the course of their role-playing. This was preparation for their engagement in technique of Verbatim Theatre. I had initially chosen a larger number of cases and each case was represented by several resources so that there was breadth and depth and complexity in the representations of people with disabilities (see Appendix F). However, because of the limited curriculum time, I had to reduce the number of these resources. My decision on

what to include or exclude was very much practically motivated. I removed the stories if the person's disability was not closely aligned with the way the avatars had been designed (e.g. Kevin Lee's account of his experiences with muscular dystrophy, see Appendix F). I excluded them if the experiences and sentiments described in some accounts were similar to others (e.g. Stuart Maloney's memoir of his life with cerebral palsy and Rosie's description of her Asperger's Syndrome and Tony, Ben and Lenny's experiences with Autism, see Appendix F) or if the resource required students to sieve through the materials (e.g. Carly Fleischmann's blog, see Appendix F) or if the stories were written with less emotional appeal or immediacy such as from a third person perspective rather than the first person perspective (e.g. The account of Austin Yong's journey with Asperger's Syndrome, see Appendix F).

My next criterion might be surprising to some, yet on hindsight, it was a very predictable. I eliminated negative portrayals such as a news article emphasising how Dr. William Tan's favourable public persona had been called into question because of a lawsuit (Yong, 2010). Why did I do this? Given the little contact my participants' had with people with disabilities, I did not want them to walk away from this project with negative stereotypical views of people with disabilities confirmed through the cases. The advocacy aspect of my research was at the back of mind. Having said that, I also understand that overwhelmingly positive stereotypes can do people with disabilities a great disservice when they are expected to display extraordinary talents and engage in extraordinary physical feats. Such a view of people with disabilities prompted criticism levelled at the celebration of Paralympians. For this reason, I ensured that these accounts of unparalleled courage and determination (e.g. Dr. William Tan and Kevin Michael Connolly's cases) were balanced by accounts of longing and vulnerability (e.g. Carly Fleischmann, Mathew Ryan Morin and Charisse's cases). The resources which I eventually settled on are listed in Table 3. The students analysed these cases using a guided worksheet I had prepared for them (see Appendix G).

Table 3: List of cases

No	Cases	Type of Disability	Source of the Case
1	Carly Fleischmann	Autism case 1	(a) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1uPf5O-on0 (b) Excerpts of *Carly's Voice*
2	Mathew Ryan Morin	Autism case 2	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciBCvssKLHc
3	Charisse	Cerebral palsy	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nnuHj5M5FE
4	Dr. William Tan	Paraplegia	(a) http://singaporeheroes.weebly.com/william-tan.html (b) Excerpts of *No Journey Too Tough*
5	Kevin Michael Connolly	Absence of limbs	(a) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCUOw3IbeeQ (b) Excerpts of *Double Take*

(iv) role-playing in groups a scenario in *SL* in which a disabled student was subjected to prejudicial treatment by two students and defended by another two students.

The specific types of disabilities I chose when commissioning the design of the avatars were based on my own judgements about the affordances of *SL* in enabling my participants to get some sense of what it was like to be embodied as a person with that particular disability. These judgements, however, proved flawed and I discuss this in terms of role immersion in Chapter 6.

Prior to their role-play sessions, the students attended an orientation session. During this orientation session, some of them seemed lost and could not follow my instructions even after I demonstrated how to activate certain functions several times. It was also evident that some were not focused on realistic portrayals but on playing or rather flying within the virtual space. Because they were trying out the different features of *SL*, they at times did not know how to undo what they had done, some of which included changing their avatars into vampires and werewolves, getting themselves out the gym area in which their role-play had been situated and building and deleting objects. Because of what occurred during this session, I developed a *SL* navigation guide providing step by step instructions about lighting, movement,

perspectives, communication, using objects and switching back to the original attire (see Appendix H). During the subsequent role-playing sessions, the students were not permitted to fly or to build or delete objects (I address the implications of this in Chapter 4).

Before the role-play commenced, the students were briefed on (i) the time allotted for the role-play and in-world group reflection, (ii) ground rules to help ensure that I could elicit coherent responses from them during the role-play and (iii) a list of in-world reflection questions (see Appendix I). I gave each group a handout listing the SLURL (or the link to teleport themselves directly to their assigned location in *SL*) and all the usernames and password (see Appendix J) and another handout with instructions for logging in and a brief description of the scenario and role cards outlining their character's sentiments to help them get started (see Appendix K). I reproduce the description of role cards in Table 4 and the scenario in Table 5. The participants enacted the scenario in groups of five. One participant played the avatar with a disability (see Role Card 1, Table 4), two participants adopted stances which were antagonistic towards the student with a disability (see Role Card 2, Table 4) and the remaining two were more neutral (see Role Card 3, Table 4). At the same time, the participants were informed that they could "deviate from the description in the role card but be consistent" in their characterisation (see Table 5). It was an oversight on my part that there was an underrepresentation of people with disabilities as there was only one member in each group who assumed the role of the avatar with a disability at a given role-playing session. Increased representation might have altered the discourse significantly and this is something to consider in future implementations.

Table 4: Role Cards

Role Card	Description
1	I have had a disability since birth. However, this has not hindered my educational pursuits. Even though I am less physically able, I have a good mind and I did well enough to gain entry into a junior college. Nevertheless, I still find it difficult to gain acceptance from my peers. I suppose it is because

	of my disability. I do not look “normal” so that gives my classmates the impression that I am not as clever and that I got into junior college through sheer luck. Even when I get high marks for my assignments, they attribute my success to my disability and say that the teacher pitied me. Initially, they made some derogatory remarks about my physical appearance and called me names or ignored me when I tried to join in on their conversations. I am trying my best to fit in but the more I try, the worse it gets. Now, some of them have started pushing me around. I have to think about how I should respond the next time such things happen again.
2	I am finding it hard adjusting to life in a junior college. My grades are dropping. I used do well academically. I could study at the last minute and still score high marks in secondary school. I also used to be very popular in secondary school. When I spoke, people listened. When I joked, people laughed. I feel like a nobody here. Why have things changed so drastically? To make matters worse, we have a disabled kid in our class. I do not like him/her. I find him/her very pesky. Why can’t he/she just leave us alone? He/She makes me very uncomfortable. Why are disabled kids even here? The teachers have to make allowances for him/her like giving him/her more attention during lessons and giving more time for him/her to complete assignments. Because of this, the teachers do not have time to answer my questions during the tutorial and seldom have time to meet me for conferencing sessions. That disabled kid should just go to some special school and stop wasting everyone else’s time. The next time he/she irritates me, I am really going to let him/her have it.
3	I have always been able to get along well with my peers. I guess it is because I am friendly and I try not to jump to conclusions. I really listen to what people have to say and I try to understand where they are coming from. However, if I see that something is not right, I hold fast to my convictions and I will try to set things right. To do this, I try to get to the root of the problem. I do not see the world in black and white. There is a lot of grey space and I think it is important that we always find a way to come to a compromise. Lately, I have noticed that some of my classmates appear to be quite hostile to the student in our class who has a disability. I have not actually seen them do anything wrong and I do not know why they are treating him/her this way. It could be that they are not used to working with someone with a disability and need to better understand his/her situation in order to empathise with him/her. I think I should do something about this soon.

Table 5: Scenario

Venue:	**Description:**	**Task:**
College gym **Items:** Basketballs Blue mats Bag with a phone in it Security camera	In this scenario, a group of students are relaxing and chatting with one another in the college gym during their tea break. The student with a disability tries to join in on their conversation. However, at least one member of the group begins making disparaging remarks and behaves aggressively towards him/her.	In your role, enact the scenario as described. Decide how you want your avatar to respond to the situation. Use the description provided in your role card to guide your response. You may deviate from the

		description in your role card but be consistent with the role you have taken on. Your response can be communicated through typed text and gestures.

In Forum Theatre, the participants can interject and take over any of the role-players if he/she is dissatisfied with the direction in which the role-players are heading or with the way the victimised character is responding. However, in this instance I wanted each role-player to have sufficient time to settle into their role and to explore possible enactments. Therefore, no such interjections were permitted. Each role-playing session lasted about 10 to 15 minutes. There were three iterations of role-playing. The first two occurred at the same seating and the last at a separate seating. It was conveyed to the participants taking on the avatar with a disability that their enactments should reflect how they think the person with a disability would have responded based in their prior reading and analysis of the cases. As mentioned in previous sections, the participants were asked to deliberately infuse words spoken or written by people with disabilities from these cases. However, because the teachers and I felt that a couple of groups had found it difficult to play out the scenes with a case in mind when the cases they had read individually prior to the role-play were different, the last iteration was modified to give weight to students drawing on one case to support their enactments. For the last iteration, they had to choose one case to review as a group prior to their role-play in *SL*.

The scenario was problematized with the introduction of a dilemma so that the participants were confronted with the necessity of making choices consistent with their virtual character's identity (Chee, 2007; Francis, 2011; Ho, et al., 2009; Rappa, et al., 2009). To achieve this, a dis/ability binary had to be established in the scenario. This was a way to (i) draw attention to power differentials and modes of oppression and

Othering and (ii) provide the opportunity for revolutionising processes to be enacted. Nevertheless, the role cards underscore complex motivations at play in each assigned role, that is, the role cards illustrate that responses to dis/ability were constitutive of a combination personal and social factors at work. For example, in Role Card 2, the character who was hostile towards the student with a disability was also struggling with a sense of loss of status and significance in the new school context (see Table 3.3). However, during implementation, I noticed that the reductive terms “aggressors” and “protectors” and “disabled” became common usage. This could have been due to the Singaporean cultural penchant for simplifying matters in order to get the job done. Nevertheless, it could have influenced the participants to position themselves in ways which solidified rather than abrogated the dis/ability binary. It was indeed challenging for participants to ascribe complexity through their enactments. Nevertheless, some of them did attempt to accentuate shared experiences with the able-bodied avatars and some did radically alter their subject positions. I elaborate these findings in Chapters 4 and 5.

I did not script a performance for the students because I wanted to explore their enactments, not conjure them myself. According to Mortensen (2007, p. 299), “the best role-playing situations [occur].....when players provoke each other, and the story grows in quick exchanges”. Moreover, role-plays which are more structured and possess a more didactic quality like those found in educational simulations might circumscribe my participants’ enactments (Fine, 1983). For these reasons, I also did not get them to script their performance. Although this plausibly would have increased their sense of ownership of their roles, it would have also diminished the sense of “free play” which Derrida (1978, p. 294) describes as a prelude to the conception of being. A scripted role enacted, as opposed to one spontaneously enacted, would have been the outcome of much thought and deliberation, it would have been the result of an assessment of social expectations and boundaries and might very well have yielded itself to the prevailing dominant discourses of dis/ability. Then again, it might not, if the

students had been asked to deliberately infuse the voices of people with disabilities into their roles and to work towards eliminating the binary of dis/ability. This was something that I had not considered and it is something to consider implementing in future.

(v) post role-playing reflections collectively in-world and individually on a reflection sheet.

In line with my earlier descriptions of dramatic techniques, we engaged the participants in collectively reflecting on the questions they had on hand (see Appendix I) and which the teachers and I asked them. They also engaged in reflections individually after the third role-playing session (see Appendix L). The intent of these group and individual reflections was to encourage students to account for and evaluate the varied enactments of their characters in order to raise their awareness of and critique negative and reductive portrayals of the Other. Moreover, by facilitating deliberate juxtaposing of real-world and virtual identities, I aimed to raise the participants' awareness of their constituents, that is, the values and beliefs that might otherwise be taken as a given. Such awareness, when combined with questioning and reflection, can provide an avenue for people to adopt a critical stance with respect to their existing practices and value system.

The teachers and I each took on one of the groups to facilitate their in-world discussions. As mentioned earlier, the intent was for us to perform the role of the Joker to push the discussion towards deeper reflection. However, we had no formal training and preparation as facilitators of the in-world reflection. I had prepared a set of questions for the participants to reflect on in-world (see Appendix I) and I had asked the teachers to probe them further when there was a need to do so. On hindsight, our lack of training for our role as the Joker in Forum Theatre was an acute omission on my part which possibly compromised the quality of the participants' reflections and hindered the move from the self-Other binary to self-Other mergence for some. Moreover, I had not anticipated that I would need to move from group to group to help

the participants with technical issues. As a result, I could not observe the enactments of my own group and, therefore, could not base my questions on any observations. I discuss the participants' reflection data in greater detail in Chapter 6.

As I review the whole curriculum design process now, it has become evident to me that I faced a couple of dilemmas. One struggle I faced was finding that balance between directing my participants and empowering them. The orientation session made me realise that they did need more guidance on how to use the features of SL given the limited lead time they had to learn the ropes. It also gave me the impression that the students only wanted to play in *SL* and would not have taken their role-play seriously if they lacked boundaries and clear instructions. Having said that, the notion of serious play is complicated as it is difficult to locate its boundary and unrestricted play may open the mind more (J. Davies, personal communication, December 24, 2014). The other concern was whether I would be able to systematically gather the data on their enactments and whether these data would provide insights into their enactments as the Other. As such, I gave them some basic rules to guide their enactments, instructions and guides to help them grasp some basic functions in *SL* and facilitate data recording as well as some questions to help them reflect on their enactments. In the end, I did exert a great deal of control over what the students could do in *SL*. This was in part due to conducting the research during the school curriculum time and having to ensure that we addressed the syllabus requirements. It also reflects the prevailing practice within the Singapore education system of fastidiously scaffolding all activities and closely monitoring and supervising students so as to maximise learning at all times. In short, I created a "walled garden-- a closed system that would make surveillance easier and learning more controlled" (Merchant, 2009, p. 46). Moreover, students in Singapore have come to expect such guidance during curriculum time and a failure to provide it would result in less effort on their part to remain focused and on-task.

Another difficult I faced was finding that balance between my role as a researcher and as a teacher. As a researcher, I wanted to explore my participants' response to being placed in a disempowered position they had not encountered before—that of a person with a disability experiencing discrimination. My prior teaching experience in Singapore has shaped how I view such explorations, that is, they should not preclude intervention particularly when there is a lack of foundational knowledge—in this case, it was a lack of knowledge about people with disabilities and the various conditions of disability. Therefore, I felt that I could not just let my participants be and that it was my responsibility to introduce interventions to both give meaning to their participation in this project and to better support their VW enactments. In this regard, I feel that the discovering-enacting-reflecting cycle in the curriculum was necessary and did facilitate my participants' enactment as the Other. As a researcher, I had an idea of a comprehensive curriculum which would serve this purpose. However, due to time and curricular constraints, the students had insufficient exposure to varied understandings of disability and too few opportunities to work out what they thought was important to articulate about dis/ability during the role-play and in their written artefacts. As such, while it appears that I did have in place an adequate overarching structure, there were gaps in the curricular intervention. Moreover, because I viewed the VW as place to address a serious educational agenda, I made the mistake of circumscribing their enactments by insisting on verisimilitude with the physical world. I had failed to recognise the VW as a space for play and for the imagination and a space for violating real-world physical and social parameters. Nevertheless, my experience analysing the data on their enactments has enlightened me. I discuss some instances of their boundary-crossing enactments in greater detail in Chapters 4 to 6.

3.1.1.3 Data collection

I provide an overview of the data collection process in this sub-section. I describe my approach to field-oriented study, my data sources and the data which I focused on. I account for missing data and explain why I chose these data sources.

I employed ethnographic techniques of data collection. These were participant observation (experiencing), studying artefacts (examining), interviewing (enquiring) (Wolcott, 1992). These techniques consisted of (i) observing my participants' role-playing to identify key incidents and histories, (ii) studying artefacts and (iii) conducting focus group interviews to gain insights into institutionalised and/or group norms and statuses (Wolcott, 1992). The purpose of these varied data sources was to understand "how things are" (Wolcott, 1992, p. 21) through the main data source of video recordings of the role-playing sessions in *SL* and to get at my participants' beliefs about "how things should be" (Wolcott, 1992, p. 20) from their written artefacts and focus group interviews so as to complement the main data source and triangulate my findings.

I collected the data between March 2013 and June 2013 from 15 participants who were placed in 3 groups of 5. The groups comprised participants whose pseudonyms I have included in Table 6:

Table 6: List of participants in the groups

G1	Henry, Rick, Daniel, Steven, Jeff
G2	Shannon, Cindy, Paul, Vanessa, Janet
G3	Evan, Samantha, Cassandra, Yvonne, Timothy

Table 7 lists the different data sources ((a) – (h)). Under each data source, the research objectives and questions are linked to one or more of the three aforementioned ethnographic techniques and the data collected from the different groups and individuals. The data sources are generally listed in the order in which the activities were implemented with the exception of the two in-world reflections which were carried out after the first and second role-playing sessions respectively. My main focus was the participants who role-played the avatar with a disability. There were 7 of

them with one participant taking on that role twice. They were Henry, Rick and Daniel from Group 1, Shannon and Cindy from Group 2, and Evan and Samantha from Group 3. The cases they chose to analyse are listed in the boxes highlighted in yellow (Table 7; Data Source (c)). I have also listed the disability they chose for their role-play (Table 7; Data Sources (d)). The data relating to these 7 participants were used to address my primary research questions about enactments in *SL* (RO1, RO3; RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ5). I also examined their written artefacts, out-of-character communication, in-world reflections and the focus group discussions which I collected prior to, during and after the participants' role-playing enactments. My purpose was to trace developmental trajectories of their stances and attitudes towards people with disabilities (RO2; RQ4).

There were several instances of missing data. These are labelled in red. Some of these were due to individual participants not turning up for the focus group discussions or not handing in written tasks (Table 7; Data Sources (a), (b), (f), (h)). Group 3 did not complete the first iteration of role-playing and in-world reflections as Timothy who had taken on the avatar with a disability encountered difficulty logging into *SL* (Table 7; Data Sources (d), (e)). The group did complete the second and third iterations. About half of the participants who took on the avatar with a disability did not activate the software for recording their spoken and possibly out-of-character conversations during the role-play (Table 7; Data Sources (d)). It is plausible that those who did so acted only after hearing repeated reminders from their teachers and me.

So why did I choose these data sources? I opted for focus group discussions rather than individual interviews and group role-plays rather than soliloquys because identifications are constituted by and constitute a given social ecology. There is a locatedness to Dominant-Other conflicts (Coupland, 2010, pp. 244-245);

> Each site and time period of intergroup conflict will have its own distinctive themes and tendencies, its own patterns and strategies of prejudicial representation, its own modes of resistance and rebuttal. Each will be a culturally and temporally specific formation.

This would also help me to examine how these students collectively framed a situation (Goffman, 1974) as well as compare and contrast how they managed multiple and conflicting frames with respect to one another (Tannen & Wallet, 1993). Therefore, it made sense to examine how the group as a whole constructed the notion of dis/ability for the duration of the study and how the individuals who had taken on the avatar with a disability during the role-play enacted their subject positions relative to their group members. I also gathered data on their out-of-character communication as a means to understand the complex layering of identifications as they role-played in the VW whilst seated in groups in the school computer laboratory. I used the software FastStone Capture to record their online interactions in *Second Life* and their simultaneous offline talk.

At the same time, data sources which attended to the socially-situated nature of identifications needed to be balanced by those allowing "private" spaces for participants to individually ponder and express the kind of stances they wish to take on issues relating to dis/ability. Added to this was the need for the students to get some practice in argumentative writing, an important component of the General Paper syllabus. Therefore, I included paragraph and essay writing as my data sources. I also gathered data from "private" spaces which were not associated with evaluation such as their analysis of a case and their reflection worksheet for the third role-playing session. Their identifications within these private spaces may, nevertheless, be influenced by their understanding of how certain viewpoints or arguments determine the identities their teachers and I ascribe to them.

Table 7: Data collection process

Data Source (a)

Research Objectives & Research Questions	**Studying artefacts (Examining)**	**Data Collected**
RO2. To trace in the discourse on dis/ability, the trajectories of able-bodied adolescents' identifications in relation to the hidden Other across time and space. RQ4. How did the adolescent participants' focus group discussions, in-world reflections and writings about dis/ability compare with their role-playing enactments as the hidden Other with a disability?	Individually written paragraph in response to the question: *Should children with special needs be taught in a mainstream school?*	G1 G2 G3 (Missing data: Samantha)

Data Source (b)

Research Objectives & Research Questions	**Interviewing (Enquiring)**	**Data Collected**
RO2. To trace in the discourse on dis/ability, the trajectories of able-bodied adolescents' identifications in relation to the hidden Other across time and space. RQ4. How did the adolescent participants' focus group discussions in-world reflections and writings about dis/ability compare with their role-playing enactments as the hidden Other with a disability?	Focus Group Discussion 1	G1 G2 (Missing Data: Janet) G3

Data Source (c)

Research Objectives & Research Questions	**Studying artefacts (Examining)**	**Data Collected**					
RO2. To trace in the discourse on dis/ability, the trajectories of able-bodied adolescents' identifications in relation to the hidden Other across time and space. RQ4. How did the adolescent participants' focus group discussions, in-world reflections and writings about dis/ability compare with their role-playing enactments as the hidden Other with a disability?	A worksheet for individual analysis of a case study	G1	Henry (Tan-Paraplegia)	Rick (Tan-Paraplegia)	Daniel (Tan-Paraplegia)	Steven (Tan-Paraplegia)	Jeff (Tan-Paraplegia)
		G2	Shannon (Morin-Autism)	Cindy (Morin-Autism)	Paul (Fleischmann-Autism)	Vanessa (Charisse-Cerebral palsy)	Janet (Connolly-Limb absence)
		G3	Evan (Charisse-Cerebral palsy)	Samantha (Morin-Autism)	Cassandra (Connolly-Limb absence)	Yvonne (Fleischmann-Autism)	Timothy (Tan-Paraplegia)

Data Source (d)

Research Objectives & Research Questions	Participant observation (Experiencing) and Studying artefacts (Examining)	Data Collected	
RO1. To explore in the discourse how able-bodied adolescents in a physical classroom enacted the hidden Other as an avatar with a disability in the Virtual World. RQ1: What discourse features did the able-bodied adolescent role-playing an avatar with a disability confronting discrimination employ to address dominant discourses? RQ2: How did the able-bodied adolescent participants role-playing the avatar with a disability position (i) their avatar and (ii) others in relation to their avatar in the discourse during the role-play? What identities did these participants enact by means of such positioning? RQ3: What discourse moves did the able-bodied adolescent participants role-playing the avatar with a disability enact during the role-play? What does this communicate about their identifications? *RO3. To investigate the affordances and*	Video recording of group role-playing 1 Audio recording of out-of-character communication 1	G1	Henry (avatar with paraplegia) (Missing data: out-of-character audio communication)
		G2	Shannon (avatar with autism) (Missing data: out-of-character audio communication)
		G3	(Missing data)
	Video recording of group role-playing 2 Audio recording of out-of-character communication 2	G1	Rick (avatar with paraplegia)
		G2	Cindy (avatar with autism)
		G3	Evan (avatar with misshapen limb)
	Video recording of group role-playing 3 Audio recording of out-of-character communication 3	G1	Daniel (avatar with autism) (Missing data: out-of-character audio communication)
		G2	Cindy (avatar with cerebral palsy) (Missing data: out-of-character audio communication)

limitations of the Virtual World, Second Life, in facilitating identity enactments as the hidden Other with a disability. RQ5. What features of the Virtual World did the able-bodied adolescent participants employ during their role-play? How did they use them? To what extent did they consider these features effective in enacting the hidden Other? RQ6. What are the implications of deploying Second Life in a physical classroom which permits out-of-character face-to face communication between the group members?		G3	Samantha (avatar with autism)

Data Source (e)

Research Objectives & Research Questions	**Participant observation (Experiencing) and Studying artefacts (Examining)**	**Data Collected**
RO2. To trace in the discourse on dis/ability, the trajectories of able-bodied adolescents' identifications in relation to the hidden Other across time and space. RQ4. How did the adolescent participants' focus group discussions, in-world reflections and writings about dis/ability compare with their role-playing enactments as the hidden Other with a disability?	Video recording of group in-world reflections 1	G1
		G2
		G3 (Missing data)
	Video recording of group in-world reflections 2	G1
		G2
		G3

Data Source (f)

Research Objectives & Research Questions	**Studying artefacts (Examining)**	**Data Collected**
RO2. To trace in the discourse on dis/ability, the trajectories of able-bodied adolescents' identifications in relation to the hidden Other across time and space. RQ4. How did the adolescent participants' focus group discussions, in-world reflections and writings about dis/ability compare with their role-playing enactments as the hidden Other with a disability?	A worksheet for individual reflection on third session of role-playing in *SL*	G1 (Missing data: Jeff)
		G2
		G3

Data Source (g)

Research Objectives & Research Questions	Studying artefacts (Examining)	Data Collected
RO2. To trace in the discourse on dis/ability, the trajectories of able-bodied adolescents' identifications in relation to the hidden Other across time and space. RQ4. How did the adolescent participants' focus group discussions, in-world reflections and writings about dis/ability compare with their role-playing enactments as the hidden Other with a disability?	Individually written essay in response to the question: *"The disabled are weak." To what extent do you agree with this statement?*	G1 G2 G3

Data Source (h)

Research Objectives & Research Questions	Interviewing (Enquiring)	Data Collected
RO1. To explore in the discourse how able-bodied adolescents in a physical classroom enacted the hidden Other as an avatar with a disability in the Virtual World. RQ1: What discourse features did the able-bodied adolescent role-playing an avatar with a disability confronting discrimination employ to address dominant discourses? *RO3. To investigate the affordances and limitations of the Virtual World, Second Life, in facilitating identity enactments as the hidden Other with a disability.* RQ5. What features of the Virtual World did the able-bodied adolescent participants employ during their role-play? How did they use them? To what extent did they consider these features effective in enacting the hidden Other?	Focus Group Discussion 2	G1 G2 (Missing data: Janet) G3

3.1.2 Stage two: Analytical Method

At this stage, the analytical method I employed was in general characteristic of qualitative inquiry with the emphasis on description, analysis and interpretation (Wolcott, 1994) of my participants' semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications in multimodal spaces and in written and spoken discourse. Wolcott's terminology is similar to the notions of transcribing, coding and theming data which I use interchangeably in the following sub- sections.

3.1.2.1 Data Description

"Description" refers to my drawing on long chronological excerpts of "critical or key events" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 19) in my participants' discourse illustrating their subjectivities when enacting as the Other. I focused primarily on data gleaned from the three role-playing sessions, in particular, the 8 data sets relating to the 7 participants. My transcription of the role-playing data differed for the three groups because of differences in the way they used the features of *SL* to communicate. Groups 1 and 2 used the chat box as the main channel of communication for all their role-playing sessions (see Figure 6). As such, the transcriptions centred on the dialogue in the chat box. They were transcribed exactly as they appeared in the chat box based on key discourse positions or moves undertaken by the participants. For the data where there was out-of-character communication, I distinguished such dialogue from my transcription of the dialogue in chat box by italicising them. In order to present a more complete depiction of their discourse, I selected a few pertinent screen captures to show how the participants' enactments accompanying the dialogue illustrated specific discourse positions and moves. For example, when Daniel's peers were not sensitive to his explanation of his condition, he walked away and seated himself separately from the rest (see Figure 6) These screen captures were taken from the perspective of the participants playing the role of the student with a disability.

Figure 6: Screenshot of Group 3 chat communication and Daniel's enactments in SL

Group 3, however, used mainly the voice function during their second role-playing session and both the chat and voice functions during their third role-playing session. As the video recording software could only capture the individual participant's speech, I had to transcribe all the group participants' video files separately and piece together the dialogue. (In short, it was a transcriber's nightmare.) What was distinctive about the dialogue by this group is that their conversation was typical of spoken discourse. As such, I used some of Jefferson's (2004) transcript symbols for my transcription (see Appendix M). I also included screen captures taken from the perspective of Evan and Samantha while they were playing the part of the avatar with a disability. During the third role-playing session, Group 3 began with the chat function but Samantha later switched to the voice function and so did Cassandra who played the student who was antagonistic towards Samantha's character. Therefore, there was a mix of literal transcription from the chat box and transcription based on speech. I used italics to distinguish the latter. I also included the acronym "OCC" to mark instances of out-of-character communication.

I now explain how I transcribed the data from the remaining sources. The 5 data sets from the in-world group discussions conducted via the chat box were similarly literally

transcribed. No screen captures were taken as the participants' enactments had no bearing on their in-world discussions. The 6 sets of data from the focus group discussions were transcribed using Jefferson's (2004) transcript symbols (see Appendix M). From the 7 data sets based on the participants' paragraph on mainstreaming versus special education, 7 worksheets in which they analysed a case, 7 worksheets where they jotted their reflection after the third roleplaying session and their 7 essays, I gleaned discourse features illustrating the participants' positions and moves relating to dis/ability

3.1.2.2 Data Analysis

In this section, I begin with a discussion of my conceptual and analytical framework. I describe how this framework guided my analysis of the data collected. In analysing my data, I adopted the systematic procedures of locating key processes in my participants' discourse and describing the inter-relationships of elements which constituted the constructed discourse (Wolcott, 1994). My analysis was based on the patterns and relationships I discerned within and across various data sources. As such, my analysis is a selective account of what I considered important and relevant to my research questions. My analysis was guided by an eclectic mix of analytical constructs and tools which are reflected in my conceptual and analytical framework (see Figure 7).

This framework pulls together the theoretical constructs I discussed in my literature review and accounts for how these constructs are inter-related. It informed and was informed by this study based on a combination of the theoretical and analytical lenses of Lemke (2009), Hall, (1997), Nussbaum (1995), Langton (2009), Sandoval (Sandoval, 2000a), Bakhtin (1981) and Moje (2013). The framework should be viewed from the standpoint of the individual as s/he enacts as the Other.

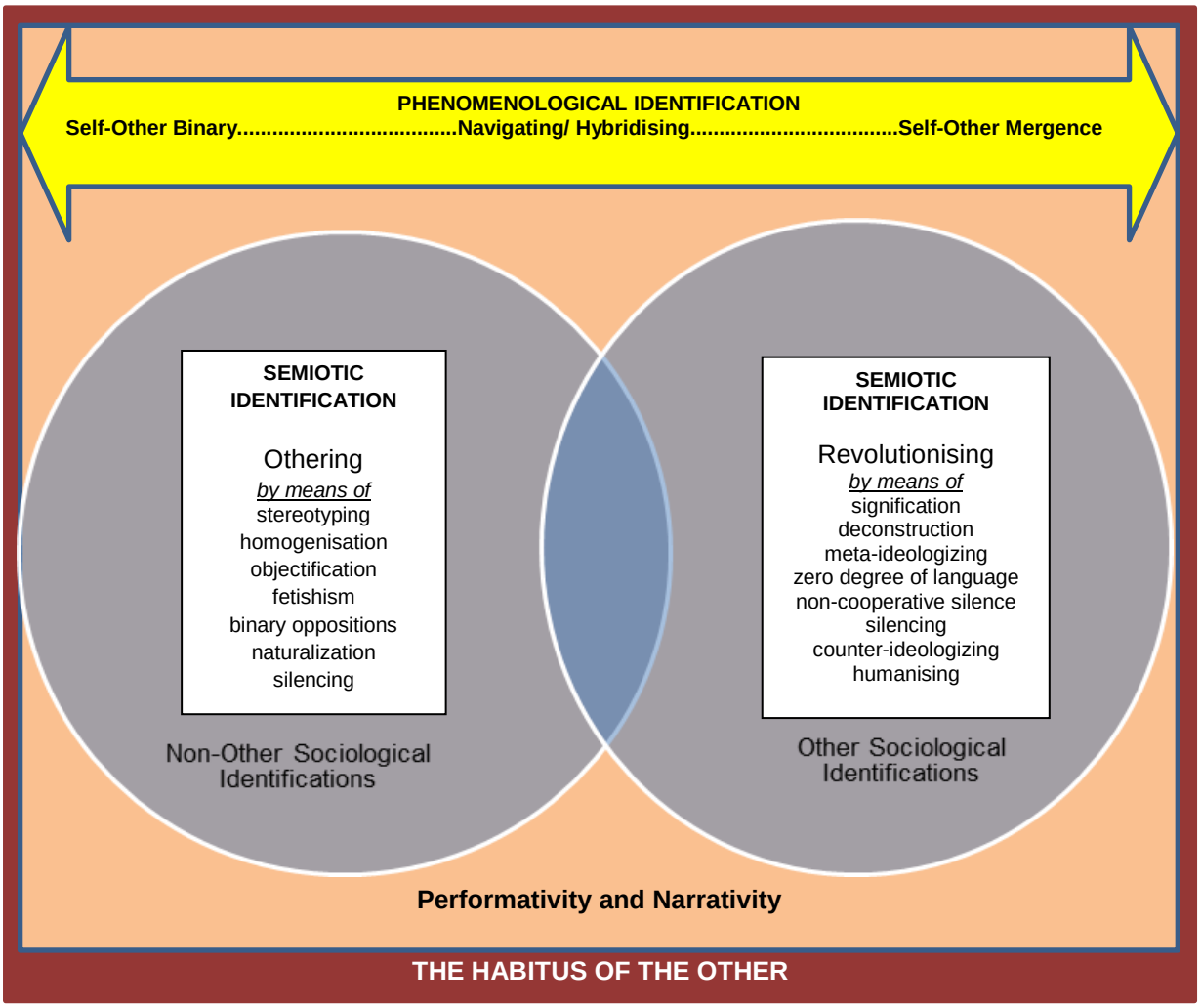


Figure 7: A conceptual and analytical framework on identifications in the Other's habitus

I begin by explaining Bourdieu's notions of *habitus, field, distinction, capital* and *profit of distinction* which underpin this framework. *Habitus* refers to an individual's ingrained and anticipated ways of thinking, speaking, and acting inculcated through frequent interactions within key social networks (Bourdieu, 1990). The habitus is situated within and shaped by one or more fields. The *field* is a space of practice (for e.g. education, medicine, law, politics) within which institutional power upholds the values, beliefs and practices of those already possessing valued forms of economic, social and cultural *capital*. People assume power-related positions within a field based on their access to such capital (Bourdieu, 1977). However, each field also reflects conflicts arising from on-going contest over the legitimacy and relevance of these different forms of

economic, social and cultural capital to the field of practice (Bourdieu, 1984). In this study, the habitus of the Other is located within the VW, the participants' written artefacts and focus group interviews. When my participants encountered the meshed fields of education (familiar) and disability (unfamiliar) in the VW, they were compelled to think, speak and act in ways different from their habitus of able-bodiedness. In my analysis, I focused on agentive moves that constituted their "radical resignifications of the symbolic domain.....to expand the very meaning of what counts as a valued and valuable body in the world" (Butler, 1993, p. 22) as they sought to establish a profit of distinction. I examined whether and the extent to which the semiotic resources of the VW and the social environments of the VW and the classroom seemed to help or hinder my participants' enactment as the Other.

Semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications of performativity and narrativity are constitutive of this habitus. The semiotic and phenomenological identifications can reflect the individual's sociological identifications or how s/he aligns her/himself with respect to different social groups. Although I recognise that each individual has multiple group affiliations and these are complexly related to each other and to the Other, I have simplified these group affiliations into two broad categories to facilitate my analysis—Non-Other and Other as illustrated in the Venn diagram. Tools for analysing semiotic identifications, drawn from the fields of cultural studies (see Hall, 1997) and feminist studies (see Nussbaum, 1995; Sandoval, 2000a), were the processes of Othering and revolutionising explained in Chapter 2. The two categories of sociological identifications with Non-Other and Other intersect to illustrate the plausibility of the individual at times straddling both groupings.

The continuum illustrates various phenomenological identifications an individual may assume when enacting as the Other. The participants' lived experiences during the role-play situated on the continuum may range from persistent Self-Other binary with no immersion where semiotic identifications reflect the processes of Othering on one end to Self-Other mergence with being-oriented immersion where semiotic

identifications reflect the processes of revolutionising on the other end. Along the continuum between these two poles are variable positions where the individual's enactment may be an instantiation of less Othering in the non-Other sociological identifications or less revolutionising in Other sociological identifications. Within the intersection of the two broad categories, the individual complexly navigates in and out of these sociological identifications or hybridises her/his enactments.

Hybridising and navigating represent two possible ways in which resources of a discourse may be employed and their instantiations are variable. I now briefly explain their theoretical assumptions. I drew on Bakhtin's notion of *organic hybrid* to guide the focus of my analysis. According to Bakhtin (1981, p. 305), an organic hybrid is

> an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two "languages," two semantic and axiological belief systems.

The organic hybrid is also perpetually evolving as it is "pregnant with potential for new world views, with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world in words" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 360). As such, "all our utterances are filled with others' words [with] varying degree of otherness or varying degrees of our-own-ness" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 89). Although Bakhtin (1981) believes the organic hybrid has no formal boundary and is essentially "opaque", I sought to identify these new internal forms by discerning emerging patterns of hybrid language use. Next, I drew on Moje's (2013) theorisations about *navigating* to account for both hybrid and non-hybrid language use amongst my participants. Navigating is deliberate action undertaken by an individual to position him/herself within a discourse. It arises out of an understanding of the norms and practices valued by different discourse communities in different social contexts to which an individual may choose to conform or not. Moje observes that as people shift between discourses and identities, they encounter challenges to their existing discourse and identities which they then need to negotiate (Moje, 2013, p. 1867);

> Literacies and identities are not hybrid; spaces are. People navigate within and across spaces and in so doing experience moments of hybridity as they confront the in-between, the discourse that is neither their own nor the other's, the practice that they both take up and change. They navigate—or need to learn to navigate—the positions in which they find themselves or which are made available to them in various spaces.

Moje (2013) also notes that an exploration of navigation requires researchers to observe how people's enactments differ in a context over time and to seek explanations for these different enactments. This was what I sought to do as I examined my participants' role-playing enactments and reviewed their in-world reflections and written artefacts.

Through these explorations of instantiations and the inter-relation of these instantiations of hybridising and navigating, I have taken some initial steps towards theory-building particularly in relation to phenomenological identifications. As such, my analytical method does include elements of ground theory practices as I generated broad categories reflecting instantiations of discourse moves through a systematic comparison of specific incidents in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These phenomenological identifications may be characterised in terms of the individual's discourse positions and moves based on Clarke (2005) and Goffman's (1981) broad analytical approaches and concepts. Clarke's (2005) method of mapping discourse positions involved "a full situation of inquiry" (Clarke, 2003, p. 556) which addressed i) key elements of the situation, ii) social worlds and arenas of the situation which are shaped by higher level social negotiations iii) positions within a continuum in relation to variation and difference, and concern and controversy concerning issues (Clarke, 2003, 2005) to "make the social and inchoate social features of a situation more visible" (Clarke, 2003, p. 572). The intent is to move toward conditional theorising rather than to develop an overarching theory (Clarke, 2003, 2005). Goffman's (1981, p. 128) notion of "footing" was used to make sense of the data in terms of discourse moves. The term refers the "alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self" of the

participants which can be located in an utterance in the form of “codeswitching” or “pitch, volume, rhythm, stress, tonal quality”. As with Clarke, Goffman (1981, p. 128) emphasises the need for a continuum to illustrate obvious to subtle changes in footing with the “new footing having a liminal role, serving as a buffer between two more substantially sustained episodes”.

Nevertheless, my participants’ sociological identifications were not merely the sum of their semiotic and phenomenological identifications. Their sociological identifications were far more complex and, as such, I employed a variety of analytical methods to drill down into and illustrate the complexity of their sociological identifications. I used constant comparative analysis to generate broad patterns and categories reflecting their understandings of dis/ability through systematic comparison of specific incidents in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I proceeded through the stages of i) open coding to identify properties of categories or themes relating to identifying or not identifying with the Other and show extreme possibilities within the spectrum of each category and ii) axial coding in which I focused on each category or theme and described its possible causal or intervening conditions and/or implications for my participants’ understanding of dis/ability (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

I also traced along a chronological trajectory fragments of my participants’ discourse across artefacts illustrating how each iteration of discourse on dis/ability across “space-times” or socially constructed spaces (Leander & McKim, 2003, p. 212) represented a different and shifting understanding of dis/ability. I deployed Leander and McKim’s (2003) notion of “siting” to examine how these space-times constituting dis/ability were articulated. I also employed Burnett and Merchant’s (2014) rendering of Kwa’s (2002) notion of “baroque complexity” encompassing the materiality of lived experience, the melding with a network of people, objects and landscapes and the production of novel configurations of elements drawn from across the network to frame my analysis of my participants’ sociological identifications with the Other and/or non-Other.

In sum, my analysis of each data set thus had three phases. I began with identifying semiotic identifications and used these to help me locate the participants' phenomenological identifications. Then I proceeded to investigate their sociological identifications. The intent of all these analyses was to produce a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) or "thick analyses" (Fosket, 2002) of semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications by describing the virtual landscape, how they interacted with other avatars and objects in the virtual environment, the social context, how they responded to the given scenario, their choice of avatar with a disability, their avatar enactments and the meaning and purpose of these avatar enactments, the changes in these various elements over time and the interrelations of these elements in a form that facilitated interpretation (Denzin, 2001; Fosket, 2002).

3.1.3 Stage three: Analytical Report or Data Interpretation

Wolcott (1992, p. 36) has described case study as "end-product", "outcome" or "format" for reporting the results of the qualitative inquiry rather than an analytical method or strategy. However, this downplays the importance of the end-product. I believe the reporting process shapes the way one constructs one's understanding of the data and can thus facilitate and limit data interpretation. Hence, I have conflated data interpretation with the analytical report. In this sub-section, I briefly describe and explain the case study approach. I highlight what I took into consideration when choosing to highlight examples drawn from my case studies. My findings from my case studies are discussed in Chapters 4 to 6.

Thick description or thick analyses of the sort described in the previous section supported my endeavour in stage three to develop an intrinsic and collective case study (Stake, 2000), that is, multiple cases reflecting *how my participants responded to the discrimination they encountered when they were virtually embodied as the Other within the bounded system in SL*. This is essentially the "quintain" or the phenomenon I wished to understand more thoroughly in my case studies (Stake, 2005). The intent of a multiple case study approach is to "seek a better description of the quintain" (Stake,

2005, p. 27) by “draw[ing] a purposive sample of cases.....to build in variety and create opportunities for intensive study” (Stake, 2005, p. 24). Stake underscores the importance of diversity in multiple case studies as the starting point for in-depth learning about a given phenomenon in his statement that “balance and variety are important, relevance to the quintain and opportunity to learn are usually of the greatest importance” (Stake, 2005, p. 26).

Stake (2005) has advised that multiple qualitative case studies involve 5 to 9 cases. I have 8 data sets from 7 participants. I will not be discussing all of them in depth. Instead, I will select only aspects of some of these case studies which are particularly salient in illustrating semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively). I have adapted Stake’s (2005) guiding questions on choosing cases to identify these aspects:

- Are the selected discourse segments from the case study relevant to the quintain?
- Do the selected discourse segments examined provide diversity across the 3 group contexts?
- Do the selected discourse segments provide good opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts?

These selected discourse segments illustrated different relationships to the quintain. Some were typical in terms of reflecting what the participants read or viewed in the memoirs and videos respectively, whereas others represented atypical responses. This enabled me to illustrate the broad range of responses and different readings of disability based on the medical, social, relational and socio-cultural models (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012) and the variation in how people configure and are supported or limited by socio-technical structures (Dodge, et al., 2008). It also facilitated multiple ways of interpreting the data using current theoretical understandings and, as such, enabled me to represent the complexity of discourse and complexity of the

interpretation required with respect to making sense of how those who are non-Other in terms of disability enacted as the Other.

3.2 Ethical Considerations in Virtual Worlds

In this sub-section, I outline the steps I took to comply with ethical research practices. I also describe how ethical considerations in my study went beyond basic compliance to ensure the safety of the students given the scenario in *SL* in which power differentials prevailed. Finally, I account for the non-involvement of people with disabilities in this study.

3.2.1 Compliance with ethical research practices

In compliance with the research ethics policy and procedures of the University of Sheffield (see the document entitled "Research ethics: General principles and statements" at http://www.shef.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.112655!/file/General-Principles-and-Statements.pdf), I prepared the following documents:

(i) An information letter (see Appendix N). I informed my participants about the purpose of my study, I provided a brief description of the study, emphasised the voluntary nature of their involvement in the research and I included information about data collection, confidentiality, security and storage. More specifically, I employed pseudonyms to replace the names of participants during the coding process for all data sets and only I have access to all video and audio recordings. I did use screenshots of participants' avatars but their actual names were not visible in the screenshots.

(ii) A consent form for participating teachers.

(iii) A consent form for parents of participating students.

(iv) An assent form for participating students.

(v) A set of questions for the first focus group discussion (see Appendix O).

(vi) A set of questions for the second focus group discussion (see Appendix P).

Ethics approval for data collection was sought from and granted by the University of Sheffield, the Singapore Ministry of Education Data Collection Centre and the

institution funding the research, Nanyang Technological University (see Appendix Q, Appendix R, Appendix S).

3.2.2 Establishing a sense of safety in SL role-plays involving power issues

The participants could not genuinely experience what it was like to assume the identity of the Other given safety considerations. As such, I created a fictitious scenario in which distinctive physical attributes of dis/ability were made to matter to the role-players. An added security measure was to limit access to participating teachers and students by situating all interactions in the restricted space of the institution's *SL* island monitored by the teachers and me. The participants' role-playing of discriminatory incidents was carried out online so they were not able harm on one another physically during the course of the role-play. Having said that, given that they were all seated in the computer laboratory, they could have acted out verbal or physical aggression through out-of-character communication in the lab. This did not occur but, having observed the amount of out-of-character communication that was going on in the lab, it is something that I will need to plan for and try to preclude in future.

While there was some potential for psychological distress as one participant volunteered actively with community organisations rendering assistance to people with disabilities and the others could have drawn on their personal experience to identify with the character with a disability through the process of analogical induction discussed previously, the participants did not appear distressed by a situation where there were characters in conflict. In fact, I would argue that the knowledge that they could easily step out of their role and/or walk away from the other avatars within the virtual space enhanced that sense of safety and made some of them feel that they were freer to do and say as they pleased in *SL*.

Nevertheless, I tried to preclude psychological distress in a number ways but, on hindsight, I realise some of their inadequacies. First, the environment was scripted to limit acts of aggression. The students could only throw a ball at one another. However, they did find alternative ways of physically enacting their hostility. This was again

something I did not anticipate and it is worth bearing in mind that people will find unconventional ways to surmount barriers in order to give expression to their thought and feelings. Second, I gave them a ground rule—profanities will not be allowed—to ensure that such language would not obscure or detract from the key issues their enactments were supposed to surface and address. However, this did not prevent a descent into hostile name-calling at times. While I wanted all my participants to feel safe, I am in two minds about this. Perhaps some were seizing this opportunity to give vent to what they could not and would not say in their own skin in a real-world public space. Then again, perhaps such name-calling enabled everyone involved to acknowledge the oppressive behaviour to which people with disabilities are subjected.

3.2.3 No direct involvement of people with disabilities in the study

Because this study revolves around the hidden Other, it is imperative that the study itself does not end up marginalising people with disabilities by excluding their voices. For this reason, the life stories of people with disabilities were represented in the cases analysed by participants. However, they were neither directly involved in the curricular intervention as information sources on dis/ability nor in the project as participants. There are several reasons for this. During our initial discussions, the teachers and I had talked about letting the participants visit a centre catering for people with disabilities at the end of the study. We felt then that this would be a suitable closure for the project because the participants would be in a better position to relate with the people they encountered at the centre after having analysed the cases to better understand various disabilities and after engaging in the role-play. However, this plan did not materialise because we were subsequently bogged down with the complexities of project implementation. This was most unfortunate as face-to-face communication with people with disabilities might have facilitated a revolutionising process in the lives of my participants. On hindsight, I had also not considered the importance of the participants engaging in face-to-face interactions with people with disabilities *during* the course of the implementation. During the second focus group discussions, a few

participants said that contact with people with disabilities *before* their role-play in *SL* would have helped them better understand how to enact the Other;

> G1 FGD
>
> Henry: Before (0.5) because we can get an understanding of their character also (.) understand what they're going to feel.
>
> G2 FGD
>
> Paul: So we get an idea of what we're going to (.) how we're going enact their role.
>
> Cindy: Because we get to interact with them (.) like face-to-face and ask questions.
>
> G3 FGD
>
> Samantha: for me I'm more of the 'experience'.

However, a couple of participants from G3 disagreed. Evan felt that the cases and role-play were complementary in building understandings of disabilities and providing opportunities to apply those understandings. Cassandra explained that extended contact with people with disabilities was needed before the latter would be willing to share their life stories;

> G3 FGD
>
> Evan: A complement (.) I mean (.) they're both equally (inaudible)(.) if you watch the case studies (.) they actually give you background information (.) and when you have hands on experience (.) it gives you more information of how (.0.5) the knowledge that you know then (.) apply (.) such that you know why they react this way.
>
> Cassandra: They must like (.) feel a sense of trust in us before we can actually talk about their lives.

One student expressed the view that face-to-face interaction, analysing cases and role-playing would not help change the way able-bodied people view people with disabilities as the tendency to differentiate would persist;

> G3 FGD
>
> Yvonne: because like even if we met and everything (.) but we still don't (.) because she (inaudible) (.) maybe view the disabled just the same (.)

> that's what I think (.) because we can't change our opinion just because after we watch a video or role-play (.) then we change our idea (.) because secret (.) even in ourselves (.) we sure think like how pitiful they are (0.5) you tend to (.) like pity them in the way that they can't do stuff that we-

Regular face-to-face contact over an extended period might have facilitated identifications with people with disabilities as the latter's individual complexity comes across and they cease to be an Other. This approach would perhaps be more suitable for a study examining interactions between people with and without disabilities and/or establishing causal relations between the intervention and the research outcomes. However, I am not examining the causal relations between the intervention and my participants' enactments. Instead, I focus on exploring the participants' discourse (language, gesture, position, movement) as the Other in order to highlight how able-bodied individuals chose to enact the Other after initial exposure to the world of disability from the perspective of disability advocates describing their personal experience. This was the purpose served by the curricular intervention in the form of the cases. I was careful in ensuring that people with disabilities were not being marginalised through my selection of the cases. As mentioned previously, I made sure that the cases I chose were those published by specific individuals with a disability. These were resources which people with disabilities wanted the public to access and read or view. I also ensured that the cases I chose reflected a range of disabilities, life experiences and responses to preclude stereotyping of individuals with disabilities. These cases represented the perspectives of people with disabilities in the study and the participants' learning of critical literacy skills helped them to discern different voices and representations of disability. Nevertheless, I now realise that I had prioritised the cases because I have a tendency to select interventions over which I have greater control and where there would be less unpredictability in the learning process.

There was no one with a disability involved as a participant in the study because there were no students with disabilities in the class which the school had identified. Having

said that, I also had reservations about involving people with disabilities particularly in the role-play in *SL* for several reasons. First, the intent of this study is to examine how those who are not differentially marked in one aspect, that is, disability, employed or transformed dominant discourses about dis/ability when they role-played the disabled Other. Moreover, those with in-group status tend to more freely express their views about a member of an out-group or the out-group as a whole when they are amongst their in-group peers. As such, the presence of people with disabilities might have led to able-bodied participants circumscribing their enactments and responses for fear of causing offence, thus resulting in differing enactments in the *SL* role-play and less frank responses during the focus group discussions. Even so, this warrants closer examination in future—the idea that the presence of out-group members compelling in-group members to stay within the social norms of respect and decency as another way of transforming dominant discourses through social pressure.

Second, this role-play involved discrimination against a person with a disability. While the responses of people with disabilities would have been instructive for those without disabilities enacting the Other, it might have caused distress to the former especially if they had been subject to a similar experience in real life. This same concern is circumvented in Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed by involving spect-actors marked in some similar way. A shared experience of oppression arising from a shared trait binds people together and provides the assurance that they can understand and empathise with one another. However, in a mixed group, those differentially marked not only would be clearly distinguishable but would also form the minority (especially a student with a disability in a mainstream school). More importantly, there might be no or little shared experience between the two clearly demarcated groups, resulting in competing interpretations of the discriminatory situation and further tensions. Such a group configuration is possible but requires facilitation by a very experienced and skilled negotiator (or Joker).

I do believe that there is value in having face-to-face interactions as a prelude to role-playing and in involving people with disabilities in the role-playing process. I had overlooked the former but I had deliberately not implemented the latter. These should be considered in future if they work in concert with the research agenda and can be supported by available resources and expertise.

3.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I sought to provide a comprehensive description of my methodological approach which is essentially qualitative in nature. Embedded within this description are the reasons substantiating the various theoretical, curricular, logistical and analytical decisions I made in this study. My main focus was exploring data drawn from the able-bodied participants who took on the avatar with a disability in *SL*. Their discourse from the role-playing sessions constituted the centrepiece of my analysis around which I situated other data sources (the focus group discussions, reflections and written artefacts) which complemented, contradicted or complicated my findings from these sessions.

The complexity of my methodology lies in extracting and reconfiguring theoretical understandings and practices from a variety of fields and subsequently applying them to research conducted in a VW. I acknowledge that in reconfiguring very complex concepts and processes, I may have inevitably simplified them for the purposes of explication and application. Nonetheless, I am confident that these various lenses and practices can inject new perspectives into research on identifications in VWs.

Chapter 4: Employing Semiotic Identifications in Multimodal Spaces

> *Boy: Do not try and bend the spoon. That's impossible. Instead.....only try to realise the truth.*
> *Neo: What truth?*
> *Boy: There is no spoon.*
> *Neo There is no spoon?*
> *Boy: Then you will see that it is not the spoon that bends, it is only yourself.*
>
> *The Matrix*

In the quotation above taken from the movie, The Matrix, the boy explains to Neo that the spoon is immaterial and, hence, impossible to shape. Instead, it is the self which ascribes materiality to the spoon and it is, thus, the self which bends. I chose this exchange because it draws attention to transformations in objects and the landscape arising from changes in the self. In this chapter, I present several case studies illustrating how my participants "bent" representations of themselves in *SL* to address the Othering they encountered. In so doing, they enacted a variety of semiotic identifications with varying effects on dominant discourses. I provide examples of how a participant (i) employed different communicative features of *SL* which had different implications for her identifications, (ii) altered the representation of key objects within *SL* to send a contrasting message about his disability, (iii) demonstrated superhuman strength and agility in *SL* to undermine claims reducing his identity to his body and (iv) attempted to create objects within *SL*. In other words, in this chapter, I show how these participants were able to use the semiotic resources of *SL* in ways that communicate identity. While they may have had different reasons for using these different representations in different ways, my focus in this chapter is not on these reasons or on what they thought or felt about the Other but on what they chose to do in this context in order to illustrate the range of representations and their implications for Othering or revolutionising processes.

4.1 From Acting to Speaking: Becoming and being from non-verbal to verbal discourse

In the case study of Samantha's role-play of the avatar with Autism Spectrum Disorder for G3's third role-playing session, I discuss Samantha's evolving use of the features of *SL* to support her identifications. Therefore, the segmentation in this case study is based on changes in Samantha's deployment of the communicative resources of *SL*. I show how being unintentionally silent due to technical difficulties in *SL* and engaging in self-stereotyping exacerbated the extent to which she was Othered. I explain how the use of the chat function alone limited her discourse and, as such, inevitably silenced her in some ways. Finally, I illustrate the role of voice in eventually facilitating Samantha's engagement in revolutionising processes to counter the processes of Othering.

Samantha began the role-play with the disadvantage of not being able to see the dialogue amongst her group members for a period of time because of a momentary technical fault. The whole section in purple shows the conversation she could not see on her own interface (see Table 8, Lines 4-20). This occurred while she was experimenting with various ways in which her avatar could move within *SL*. She did not know then that her actions were being seen or evaluated by others. Timothy was impressed with the way she glided across the gym (see Table 8, Line 7) but Cassandra mocked her for walking into the wall repeatedly (see Table 8, Line 17, 20). As she was unaware of these comments in the chat box, she could not account for her actions. This is in contrast to her explanation earlier that was she trying out to make her avatar lie down when Cassandra asked her what she was doing at the start of the role-play (see Table 8, Lines 1-2). The capacity to explain one's actions is integral to shaping other people's perceptions of one's enactments and identity. This can, in turn, determine whether one is ascribed in-group or out-group status. Where no such explanation is provided, the other participants could have inferred that Samantha was enacting the identity of an experimenter testing the virtual environment as she glided

across the gym and walked into walls. However, her actions were cast in a negative light and were used to justify reductive labelling of her appearance as “retarded”, weird” and “ridiculous” (see Table 8, Lines 9, 14, 20). I argue that this may be because of prevailing prejudices against people with disabilities.

Samantha herself inadvertently contributed to this *regime of representation* in which a spectacle of Otherness emerges as one difference negatively construed imputes more differences and imperfections (Goffman, 1963; Hall, 1997). She assumed the identity of a buffoon as she walked to a corner, declared herself “shy” and made a joke about wanting to pee (see Table 8, Lines 10-11). People who are Othered are often subjected to stereotyping where they are usually essentialised unfavourably (Hall, 1997). What is more insidious is the self-stereotyping that occurs in “minstrelization” when stigmatised individuals engage in self-deprecating humour or caricature themselves as they enact the whole gamut of negative qualities ascribed to their group (Goffman, 1963, p. 134) in an attempt, ironically, to defuse tension or make themselves appear less of a threat. Their own discourse then constitutes the regime of representation. This gives rise to debates about what is normal. Evan commented that what Samantha was doing was “[p]robably something normal people wouldn’t do” (see Table 8, Line 3). Timothy claimed that Samantha “looks just as normal as any other person” (see Table 8, Line 18) but later ascribed her behaviour to natural causes, conceding that she “was born this way” (see Table 8, Line 22).

Table 8: Samantha’s silence and self-stereotyping exacerbate her Othering

Line	Utterances during role-play	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
1	Cassandra: what’s the autistic girl doing?	Stereotyping
	((Yvonne lets Morin’s video play on while she is in *SL*))	
2	Samantha: trying to lie dow!	
3	Evan: Probably something normal people wouldn’t do	Binary Opposition
4	Cassandra: -.-	
5	Samantha :(	

6	Samantha: I no gestures ((Samantha glides her avatar across the gym and walks back and forth near the gym mats))	
7	Timothy: what the……how are you moving like that? ((Timothy walks towards Samantha)) ((Yvonne presses the hey playing gesture several times and Samantha sees Yvonne waving at her))	
8	Samantha: :)	
9	Cassandra: you look retarded. get a life please. ((Cassandra presses the stick out tongue gesture several times and then leaps high into the air))	Reduction to appearance Stereotyping
10	Samantha: i shy	Self-Stereotyping
11	Samantha: gonna pee ((The other participants laugh. Samantha goes to a corner))	
12	Timothy: theres no need to go that far	Silencing
13	Yvonne: stop bullying her!	Silencing
14	Cassandra: she looks weird. ((Yvonne switches screen to watch Mathew's video briefly and switches back to *SL*)) ((Samantha walks into the wall a few times. She swings her avatar around and sees the others some distance away typing into the chat))	Reduction to appearance
15	*Samantha OCC: eh how come I cannot see your conversation one?*	
16	Timothy: no she doesn't	
17	Cassandra: she's jumping at the wall.	
18	Timothy: she looks just as normal as any other person	Humanising
19	Evan: w ((Timothy swings his avatar around to look at Samantha in the corner and swings back))	
20	Cassandra: but she's doing ridiculous thing ((Timothy swings his avatar around to glance at Samantha and quickly swings back))	Reduction to appearance
21	*Timothy OCC: Oh, now I can hear you.*	
22	*Timothy: She may be doing something ridiculous but she-*	Naturalization

	-it's not like she has any choice. After all, she was born this way. ((Evan and Timothy walk towards Samantha)) ((Yvonne switches to Morin's video again))	
23	*Yvonne OCC: Wah. Entire essay!*	
24	*Yvonne OCC: 7 pages long. Oh yah, you can't hear. I'm like wah wah wah and I realise you cannot hear what I'm listening.*	
25	*Samantha OCC: That's why I'm thinking why they never talk anything one*. ((Yvonne switches to SL))	
26	*Samantha OCC: Hello? Hello?*	
27	*Yvonne OCC: He-he-he-he wrote 7 pages long for this speech.*	
28	*Samantha OCC: Oh my god I can hear you. Yeah.*	
29	*Samantha OCC: Sss….nobody talking.*	
30	*Samantha OCC: Hello?*	
31	*Evan OCC: Hi.*	

When the conversation in the chat finally appeared on Samantha's screen, she began to respond to her peers but her dialogue was exceedingly pithy (see Table 9, Line 18). As before, she used symbols instead of words in her responses (see Table 9, Lines 7, 26). Her responses in-character here were in marked contrast to her earlier out-of-character communication (see Table 8, Lines 15, 25, 28-30) to the extent that Cassandra pointed out Samantha's in-character "communication is bad" (see Table 9, Line 31). Samantha's use of emoticons did not constitute a revolutionising process for two reasons. First, the emoticon she chose, a crying emoticon, could be construed as humanising but it could also reinforce the tendency in dominant discourse to characterise people with disabilities as the "unfortunate" of society whose lives are "tragically upset and marred for ever" (Hunt, 1966, p. 4) in tandem with a "boosterism and do-gooder mentality endemic to the paternalistic agencies that control many disabled people's lives" (Linton, 1998, p. 14). As such, this discourse strategy can be just as disempowering and oppressive in some contexts. Second, emoticons are usually used in conjunction with written text to convey and confirm the tone in which

the text is being communicated. On their own, emoticons are a limited form of communication. This lack of communication despite the opportunity to elaborate her discourse also meant that Samantha was not forging her own identifications. She continued to hand the power to speak about her over to her peers.

Table 9: Samantha's pithy communication on chat exacerbates her Othering

Line	Utterances during role-play	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
1	Timothy: its not loike she can help it	Naturalization
2	Timothy: *like	
3	Timothy: she was born this way	Naturalization
4	Cassandra: I told you, she is weird/	Reduction to appearance
5	Evan: SHe totally is	Reduction to appearance
6	Timothy: that's no excuse	
7	Samantha: :'(	Humanising
8	*Timothy: that's no excuse. No excuse to bully her (inaudible).*	Silencing
9	Cassandra: what no excuse?	
10	Cassandra: she's avoiding us. ((Samantha walks out of the corner))	
11	Cassandra: weird girl	
12	Timothy: not an excuse to bully her	Silencing
13	Cassandra: doing weird things	Reduction to appearance
14	*Timothy: she's avoiding us* ((Samantha sits on the gym mat and seeks clarification on the identity of the others' avatars and their assigned roles))	
15	Cassandra: I'm not bullying her, just stating the fact that she is weird!	Reduction to appearance
16	Yvonne: hi do you want to play with me?	
17	Timothy: what makes one wierd?	Signification
18	Samantha: yes	
19	Timothy: is it because she is not similar to us?	Signification
20	Evan: Totally agreed, super weird	Reduction to appearance
21	Cassandra: why play with her?!	
22	Cassandra: she's weird!	Reduction to appearance
23	Yvonne: she a friend to me1	
24	Timothy: me too	
25	Cassandra: don't make friends like her!	
26	Samantha: :'(	Humanising

27 28 29 30 31	Yvonne: why can't I play with her./ Cassandra: she's not normal. Timothy: So? *Timothy: So?* Cassandra: Her communication is bad.	 Binary Opposition Reduction to appearance

Samantha appeared to have gradually found her footing when she used the voice function in *SL* as it was only then that her utterances became longer and complete. Her communication was more natural and interactional. She took the initiative to invite her peers to play with her (see Table 10, Lines 1, 9). She expressed the intensity of her emotions by extending the vowel sound in "why" (see Table 10, Line 3) and by using the intensifier "so" (see Table 10, Line 7). Her discourse also reflected greater complexity as she employed more sophisticated strategies to address the Othering processes employed by her opponent. Cassandra had conceived good or proper communication in terms of clear and full articulation of words. However, as Cassandra continued to mock her, Samantha turned the tables on her when she showed up flaws in Cassandra's own communication. Good communication to Samantha was the ability to convey meaning clearly. Samantha claimed that Cassandra's utterance of "wow" and use of the "wow" gesture was unintelligible (Table 10, Lines 16-17). When Cassandra then asked her to get lost, Samantha retorted, "I'm in the corner. How do I get lost?" (Table 10, Line 19). Samantha, therefore, highlighted how illogical Cassandra's command was given that Cassandra herself had cornered Samantha and prevented her from moving about. She thus juxtaposed Cassandra's definition of communication with her own. In doing so, she drew my attention to these differences and influenced my judgement about which was the better definition. Her characterisation thus had more depth as she projected an image of herself as a friendly person and a wise cracker. The greater complexity and depth of Samantha's

semiotic identifications when she used the voice function suggest that the medium of communication can influence the way people enact their roles.

Table 10: Samantha's sophisticated discourse for counter-ideologizing using voice function

Line	Utterances during role-play	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
	((Samantha uses the voice function))	
1	*Samantha: Hello you want to play with me?*	Humanising
2	*Cassandra: No I don't want.*	
3	*Samantha: Whhhhhhy?*	Humanising
4	Cassandra: how can you communicate with her?	
5	Yvonne: who give you the rights to determine who is	Deconstruction
6	normal and who is not?	
7	*Samantha: I'm so sad.*	Humanising
8	*Cassandra: Sad lah.*	
9	*Samantha: Let's play basketball?*	Humanising
	((Timothy gets hold of the basketball and moves it back and forth))	
10	Yvonne: everyone is different in their own ways.	Meta-Ideologizing Binary Opposition
11	Cassandra: I think she is weird because she is not doing what normal people are doing.	
	((Cassandra uses the voice function))	Reduction to appearance
12	*Cassandra: Well, I think she's very weird.*	Reduction to appearance
13	*Cassandra: No matter what I think she's weird. Weirdo.*	Humanising
14	*Samantha: I'll go cry already.*	
15	*Cassandra: Go cry!*	
16	*Cassandra: I'll be wow. I'll be wow.*	
	((Cassandra presses the wow gesture twice))	Counter-Ideologizing
17	*Samantha: What is wow?*	
	((Cassandra presses the get lost gesture))	Counter-Ideologizing
18	*Cassandra: Get lost! You're just blocking our way.*	
19	*Samantha: I'm in the corner. How do I get lost?*	Naturalization
20	Timothy: she has a disability. She cannot help such a thing u should pity her.	Naturalization
21	*Timothy: She has a disability. You cannot help it lah.*	Reduction to appearance
22	Cassandra: So she is disabled	

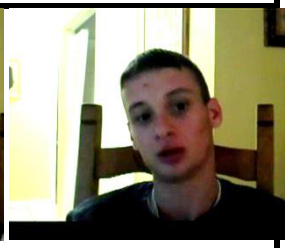
23 24	Cassandra: That's why she's weird! Evan: she doesn't even know how to talk.	Reduction to appearance

I now compare Samantha's revolutionising process with the case of Mathew Ryan Morin which Samantha's group had opted to review before engaging in their third role-playing session. I begin with an analysis of Morin's discourse. In his 18-minute video for a 7-page script which took him one week to film, Morin addressed a variety of issues relating to his autism and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). The primary focus of Morin's narrative was to explain his disabilities and declare how integral they were to his identity. It was his revelation of the disability identifications he had come to embrace. In this section, I focus on the audio-visual medium which facilitated his semiotic identifications. Morin appeared to understand the importance of self-representation in the audio-visual medium to effectively convey a message when he explained that "I am putting myself into this [video] because I want people to know who I am" (05.42-05.47). I highlight the segments where the audio-visual medium reinforced his message by showing his accompanying hand gestures, facial expressions and body movements. These segments were when he described the behavioural effects of autism and ADD and when he expressed his own self-acceptance and challenged his viewers to accept him as he was or to hate him.

Morin spoke fluently about his disability albeit in a pitch lacking variation. He mainly read off the script for his video but glanced into the camera at various intervals. His hand gestures, facial expressions and body movements accentuated his corporeal representation by animating his speech and thus gave his message greater clarity. I analysed these non-verbal aspects of Morin's communication, in particular, the deictic and iconic aspects. In one example, he described the problem he had in connecting with people as a result of autism. He used the words "shy", "nervous", "bashful" and "anti-social" to describe himself and explained that "unless I know that person well, it is

painful for me to talk". Then he followed this up with an explanation of his withdrawn behaviour accompanied by deictic gestures and iconic gestures, expressions and movements. Deictic gestures point to people, things and directions. Mathew used his hands to indicate his surroundings, his departure from the real world for the inner world of his mind (see Table 11, (b), (c) and (d)). Iconic gestures, facial expressions and movements visually reflect a particular referent. In Morin's case, most of these were his behaviours impacted by autism and ADD. His dramatic enactment of his typical responses helped his audience better understand what these were and why they might have been misunderstood. In the example I chose, he used an iconic representation to illustrate how expressionless he seemed to others while accounting for this behaviour verbally (see Table 11, (e) and (f)).

Table 11: Mathew's gestures, expressions and movements accompanying his speech

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
Speech	From me not socialising with people gets me uninterested in communicating	So I am unaware of all my surroundings	I leave the world behind me	And land into my little dream world inside my head	And then finally when someone shrugs me, "Hey Mathew, hey Mathew"	And I finally wake up, the first thing that comes out of my mouth is "Whaaat?"
Gesture, Expression, Movement	 (Morin, 2010)	 (Morin, 2010)	 (Morin, 2010)	 (Morin, 2010)	 (Morin, 2010)	 (Morin, 2010)
Type	Iconic – Right hand is moved from his left to right in front of him to signify his disinterest in communicating	Deictic – Both hands are raised and waved around to indicate "surroundings"	Deictic – Right hand is raised above his head to show him "leaving"	Deictic – Right hand is placed over his forehead to point to what is going on inside of his "head"	Iconic – Right hand placed over his left shoulder and used to shake himself to simulate someone rousing him from his dream	Iconic – Simulates leaning back against his chair with a glazed expression on his face to show his typical response

A comparison of Samantha and Morin's enactments show that both Samantha and Morin drew on available semiotic resources to represent who they were. However, by limiting herself initially to emoticons and brief replies, Samantha greatly limited her representation of her identity as I could not get much sense of who she was. Her characterisation of her avatar came across to me as lacking depth relative to Morin's self-representation and more of an archetype rather than an individual. Her limited discourse also led to attempts by her peers to control the talk about her and misrepresent who she was. In contrast, Morin adeptly employed multiple modes of representation—hand gestures, facial expressions and body posture and movements together with spoken discourse—to explain his disability. By comparing their differing use of semiotic resources, I see that the more limited the semiotic resources, the more limited the identifications were, whether these limitations were due to a technical fault or a lack of awareness of the resources at their disposal or how to use them.

However, in his daily interactions, Morin's spoken discourse is probably different compared to that which he displayed in his video. He acknowledged this himself when he described his responses and explained that he was able to express himself so well verbally in this video because he was reading his script. Morin's example serves to highlight the particular affordance of the medium of video production which, (i) by removing immediate human interaction, gave Morin the distance and comfortable space he needed for self-expression, (ii) allowed a recursive process of scripting, reviewing and editing to control his identity performance, (iii) enabled him to communicate his message with greater clarity and more persuasively through audio and visual means and (iv) conveyed his humanness so that he seemed more comprehensible and relatable to someone without autism and ADD.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that all these affordances merely supported Morin in conforming to the values and expectations of dominant discourses. In the end, spoken discourse as a means to explain one's actions and oneself still appears to be fundamental to identity construction. This suggests that dominant discourses privilege

the spoken medium over other forms. Spoken discourse thus occupies a hegemonic position in semiotic identifications. This is something that needs to be acknowledged and addressed in any endeavour to help the hidden Other give expression to who they are.

In this section, I have demonstrated the fundamental role speech plays in the revolutionising process both in *SL* and in the physical world. I have shown how the use of emoticons, body positions and movements cannot stop the Othering process. The dominant meaning-making mode prioritises speech whenever this medium of communication is available. When combined with spoken discourse, gestures, facial expressions, body positions and movements can enhance the revolutionising process. However, given that (i) the voice and chat functions in *SL* allow for greater elaboration and explanation of one's identifications and (ii) role-play in *SL* is constrained by contrived and melodramatic gestures and, particularly, by limited scripting available for subtle facial expressions, it appears that the chat and voice functions take precedence in *SL*. Nevertheless, the supremacy of spoken discourse needs to be questioned and examined.

4.2 When a wheelchair is not just a wheelchair: negotiating and contesting ascriptions of meanings to objects

In the case study of Rick's enactment of the avatar in the wheelchair for G1's second role-playing session, I discuss how the wheelchair became a site for contestations of semiotic identification. I illustrate how Rick and his G1 peers struggled to make the wheelchair play or not play a central role in signifying belonging and status and how they wrestled with the varying and contrary meanings they were trying to ascribe to the wheelchair. I segmented the 10-minute role-play based on changes in Rick's discourse positions and moves.

In the first segment, I discuss how Rick attempted to expunge negative symbolic meanings typically associated with the wheelchair. The segment begins with Rick being rendered into an Other when he was told outright by Steven that he was being

excluded from the group because he was in a wheelchair (see Table 12, Lines 9). As such, this regime of representation began with his identity being reduced to nothing more than a wheelchair. Given that the wheelchair was cited as the reason for his marginalisation, Rick's initial reaction was to make a deprecating reference to his wheelchair as "a piece of scrap metal" (see Table 12, Line 15). In doing so, it seemed as if he agreed with his oppressors' view of the lowly status of the wheelchair and sought to disassociate himself from it. However, this may be construed as a maiden attempt at removing any symbolic meaning attached to wheelchairs in dominant discourses. When Steven co-opted Rick's reference to the wheelchair as "scrap of metal" and used that to set up the binary opposition of non-wheelchair and wheelchair users (see Table 12, Line 18), Rick took his approach of detaching symbolic meaning from the wheelchair one step further. He underscored the wheelchair's function of facilitating mobility (as opposed to its symbolism) and stated that this did not signify his overdependence on the wheelchair (see Table 12, Line 21). In attempting to deny symbolic meanings typically ascribed to a wheelchair, he was, therefore, trying to change how the wheelchair was viewed. He was thus addressing the signification of the wheelchair and deconstructing these meanings by isolating and emphasising the one which illuminated the practical affordance of the wheelchair and eliminating those which served the purpose of social differentiation.

Table 12: Rick de-symbolises the wheelchair

Line	Utterances during role-play	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
1	Steven: Hey Mary how was your day?	
2	Daniel: Hi Joseph how are u coping with school	
3	Steven: Not so good… im stuggling	
4	Daniel: Why are u here Tom	
5	Rick: Hi guys! how r u doing? :)	
6	Steven: Go away. you are not allowed here	Silencing
7	Rick: Whyyy	
8	Daniel: I bet u are struggling due to him right, Joseph?	
9	Steven: You're on a wheelchair	Reduction to appearance
10	Rick: I did not offend you in any way	

11	Henry: guys chill	
12	Daniel: Tom, you are getting all the attention from the tachers	Binary Opposition Silencing
13	Henry: don't make fun og him	
14	Daniel: teachers*	Signification Deconstruction Silencing
15	Rick: A wheelchair is just a piece of scrap metal	
16	Henry: guys i am saying it again not to bully him	Binary Opposition
17	Daniel: The teachers are too busy trying to help you with ur work. She neglected us	Binary Opposition Silencing
18	Steven: Well we don't have that scrap of metal	
19	Steven: so can you please go away?	Meta-Ideologizing
20	Henry: then its the teacher fault not his so chill	
21	Rick: im relying it to move around. not not over replying it	Signification Deconstruction

In the next segment, I highlight how Rick attempted to shift the focus away from his wheelchair and towards establishing a shared basis for his institutional membership. As a way to silence Rick, Steven rhetorically questioned Rick's membership in a mainstream school and insisted a special school was a more appropriate institution for him. He thus set up another binary opposition in terms of institutional membership based implicitly on wheelchair use (see Table 13, Line 1). Rick seized this conversational turn from his wheelchair to emphasise his aspirations which he thought a mainstream school would help him fulfil (see Table 13, Line 2). He, therefore, sought to legitimise his place within the institution as opposed to a special school by identifying a characteristic common to both wheelchair and non-wheelchair users in order to transcend the binary opposition created by his opponents. His opponents in turn tried to de-legitimise his place within the mainstream school system through binary oppositions which characterised institutional affiliation in terms of a very limited definition of mobility, that is, walking (see Table 13, Lines 11-13, 19). They harked back to his wheelchair use and negated the value and role of Rick's intellectual capacity in the academic setting. They also repeated their calls for his departure to a special school by naturalizing his institutional membership through their use of the high

modality “should” and the verb “belong” to signify affiliation (see Table 13, Line 6, 17). In the video data, I saw Rick reading the on-going dialogue but he chose not to address these processes of Othering at this juncture. Henry, however, came to Rick’s defence by introducing compassion as a defining characteristic of institutional membership. In contrast to Rick’s earlier conciliatory proposal of aspirations, Henry’s counter-ideologising strategy sought to exclude Rick’s opponents from institutional membership. This perspective was not taken up by Rick and was ignored by Rick’s opponents.

Table 13: Rick challenges the view of the wheelchair as a symbol of non-membership

Line	Utterances during role-play	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
1	Daniel: Why are you even in this school, shouldnt you go to a special school or something	Silencing Binary opposition
2	Rick: It is my choice to come here to achieve my dream	Meta-Ideologizing
3	Daniel: Tom why are you here	Silencing
4	Jeff: you should not segregate him just because he is disabled	Deconstruction
5	Henry: he can go wherever he wants	Deconstruction
6	Steven: Please jusr leave this school and go wghere you belonjg.	Naturalization
7	Daniel (whispers): Arent you being selfish?	Silencing
8	Steven (whispers): You don’t belong here!	Binary Opposition
9	Jeff: stop enforcing your ideals onto others	Deconstruction
10	Henry: guys he belong here	Naturalization
11	Steven: NO he does not	Reduction to
12	Steven: is he walking?	appearance &
13	Steven: NO	Binary opposition
14	Henry: I guess u don't belong here as u are being so cruel	Counter-Ideologizing
15	Jeff: he is entitled to every human right you have	Deconstruction
16	Daniel: Just because you want to achieve your dreams the rest of us cannot ask the teacher for consultation	Silencing
17	Daniel: No he should go to a special school	Binary opposition
18	Jeff: Sthappppppp	Silencing
19	Daniel: where teachers teach him how to walk	Reduction to appearance
20	Henry: donmt be mean	Silencing

After he had been confronted with repeated rejection as his peers fostered a regime of representation founded on differences in physical mobility, Rick made very rapid shifts in his discourse in the last segment. I discuss these shifts in the following chapter. In this section, I focus on Rick's use of his wheelchair as a weapon to ram three of his peers, including two of his supporters. He pushed them a short distance and they were unable to stop him or get out of his way (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Rick uses his wheelchair as a weapon to ram into Jeff, Steven and Henry

In this instance, Rick rendered his wheelchair into a revolutionising tool. Rick took the oppression ascribed to wheelchairs and turned it on its head. Instead of it being a symbol of his own oppression, the wheelchair was used to bear down on others and make those who were dominant feel powerless, albeit temporarily. His pushback was essentially a violation of social norms and an act of transgression to invert the prevailing power structure through a mélange of the processes of signification, deconstruction and counter-ideologising. His out-of-channel recording showed that he was giggling when he rammed his wheelchair into his peers. This does not mean that Rick's actions were unintentional. His irreverent actions and unapologetic stance suggest that he considered the VW a space where he was at liberty to respond to continued oppression in a manner he so chose. His was a discourse unconstrained by social conventions. It was a playful discourse. A discourse of anarchy. A discourse which I argue one is more likely to see in spontaneous enactments in role-plays conducted in a VW than in a real-world setting. A discourse reflecting what I term *virtual fantasy humour* in contrast to humour we find in the real world because our

behaviour in the real world is very much circumscribed by notions of rationality and physical realism. The VW enables role-players to throw off such inhibitions because the avatar creates a distance between the role-player and his/her enactments. As such, there is an increased sense of freedom and a diminished sense of culpability.

The group as a whole had chosen the case of Dr. William Tan (2006) to review for the first and second role-playing sessions. Before I proceed to compare Rick and Tan's revolutionising processes in relation to the wheelchair, I discuss Tan's representation of the wheelchair. Tan is paraplegic. In his memoir, he wrote about his experience with polio and growing up without the use of his legs and underscored his determination to excel in his studies and in sports despite the challenges he encountered. He framed each key event in terms of a setback and a description of how he surmounted these difficulties. In short, Tan represented himself as an overcomer. In terms of his representation of the wheelchair, he set up a contrast between his relative immobility prior to using the wheelchair and the greatly enhanced mobility he experienced after using it. For example, he described how, in kindergarten, his immobility rendered him vulnerable to bullying. His classmates would pull his ears and pinch him and then run away knowing he would not be able to chase them. When he began primary school, his sister would carry him on her back up and down the stairs to and from the classroom. When he got too heavy for his sister to carry him at age 10, his parents got him a pair of leg braces and crutches and he had to wear a body vest which made him feel very hot so he removed it whenever he could. These accounts of immobility, helplessness and discomfort stand in contrast with his description of the empowerment, freedom and exhilaration he felt on his first ride in a borrowed wheelchair at age 16 at a public running track in the chapter entitled "unbound" (Tan, 2006, p. 20);

> But once I felt in control of the chair, I decided to push as hard as I could. Down the stretch, I felt myself going at a speed I had never known before. I felt the wind in my face. After I had made the first turn, I was unstoppable, never mind that my hands, arms and shoulders were beginning to ache from the exertion. I wheeled round and round the track. I wheeled past a smiling coach again and again and again. I felt I was flying. I was unbound.

Tan's narrative was further supported by the visuals he included in this chapter. The photograph on the page next to this text shows a 17-year-old Tan seated on a wheelchair in the middle of his renowned school's running track (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Tan seated on his wheelchair at his school's running track.

Reprinted from *No journey too tough: My record-breaking attempt to race in 10 marathons in 65 days across 7 continent* (p.21), by W. K. M. Tan, 2006, Singapore: National University of Singapore. Copyright of photograph 2006 by William Tan Kian Meng. Reprinted with permission.

The association of the wheelchair with the running track reinforces the athletic achievement made possible by the wheelchair. His wheelchair, body and gaze are tilted at an angle away from the camera as he looks into the horizon. His hands are poised on the wheels as though ready to move off. Tan's positioning and posture convey the impression that he is focusing on and gearing himself up for a distant goal.

(None of the photographs in this book show anyone standing up next to Tan when he is seated in his wheelchair.)

Besides the photograph, the icon for the wheelchair placed above the chapter title is not the one usually used to signify disabled access (see Figure 10). Instead, it is a wheelchair typically used in racing events (see Figure 11). Once again, athleticism and speed are foregrounded.

Figure 10: Disabled access wheelchair

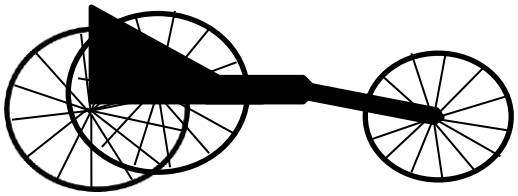


Figure 11: Enabled access wheelchair

Tan's characterisation of the wheelchair may be described as a combination of the revolutionising processes of signification and deconstruction. In Tan's discourse, the wheelchair is not a sign of disablement and dependence. Instead, the chapter title, photograph and wheelchair icon complement the text in its message about the psychologically and physically enabling quality of the wheelchair. It may be argued that, in his representations of the wheelchair, meta-ideologizing was employed too as the categories of mobile individual and immobile "wheelchair-bound" individual were fused, dissolved and transmogrified. The wheelchair came to represent more than what it usually does in dominant discourses. In this way, Tan transformed dominant discourses.

A comparison of Rick and Tan's enactments show that both of them used their wheelchairs in different ways and employed different approaches to change the discourse about wheelchairs. Rick initially tried to detach any symbolic meaning from his wheelchair by focusing on its functionality instead, but he eventually used his wheelchair as a weapon for charging at his opponents. In contrast, both the

functionality and the symbolic meaning of the wheelchair were important to Tan who used his wheelchair to give himself greater mobility and to demonstrate his resolute nature and capacity for physical endurance. Rick tackled persistent skewed representations of the wheelchair by putting an end to the discourse through an anarchical yet playful response, while Tan did so by introducing affirming representations reflecting new interpretive possibilities to transform dominant discourses. Despite these differences, their enactments were working towards the same end of self-empowerment. The point then is to recognise that, in an effort to empower oneself, one can tackle the oppression of dominant discourses through different semiotic identifications.

However, there is a need to be wary of how dominant discourses legitimise some semiotic identifications (e.g. Tan's) and proscribe others (e.g. Rick's). I asked myself why Tan's semiotic identifications in relation to his wheelchair seemed more acceptable whereas Rick's seemed less so. Was it because Tan's was non-threatening to dominant discourses? If so, why? I think this is because dominant discourses can remain intact with add-ons in the form of new ways of signifying disability without being interrogated for their conventional ways of signifying disability. As such, users of dominant discourses can switch between deploying the wheelchair as a sign of incapacitation and as a sign of empowerment as and when it suits them to do so. In contrast, Rick's signification of the wheelchair and counter-ideologizing do not allow for co-existence with the way the wheelchair is signified in dominant discourses. His enactment revolving around his signification of the wheelchair was a zero-sum game because it involved seizing power from the oppressor. In this sense, this case study was instructive in that it compelled me to question which was the better approach. Would Tan's representation eventually fundamentally change the way the wheelchair and, indirectly, how a person with disability is represented or would these be applicable only to Tan and perhaps a few other outstanding individuals like himself? Alternatively, should transformations in discourse necessitate a forceful rooting out of

old representations so that Othering processes such as reduction to appearance or body no longer remain as options and the users of these processes are silenced? This is something to consider in future attempts to address the processes of Othering.

This case study also highlights the importance of attending to specific semiotic resources. Not all representations within a regime of representation stand in equal relationship to one another. A representation may play a more important role in a regime of representation in that it catalyses all other representations. Such a representation is often found where there is on-going negotiation or contestation of ascriptions of meanings to an object such as the wheelchair in this context. When this key resource was identified and its representation altered in Rick and Tan's semiotic identifications, the resultant transformation produced a domino effect on other oppressive representations within the regime of representation implicit or otherwise in dominant discourses. As such, at the end of their enactments, Rick and Tan were no longer feeble, compliant, incapacitated and dependent individuals but strong, assertive, self-governing individuals with enhanced abilities because of a change in what their wheelchair stood for.

This section highlights the importance of attending to how we ascribe meanings to objects through the way we represent them and how these representations and their associated meanings play a part in the processes of Othering and revolutionising. I have illustrated different ways in which an object may be represented in semiotic identifications. I have shown how these representations sought to characterise people with disabilities in a different light from dominant discourses. In VWs, these representations can and are more likely to violate extant social norms in the physical world. In this sense, VWs are emancipating play spaces. They allow those enacting the hidden Other to transgress social norms without having to tangibly pay the costs of alienation or abuse which they otherwise would in the physical world. However, it remains to be seen whether such alternative representations can pave the way towards transforming dominant discourses in the long run.

4.3 The supernatural: Defying the laws of nature

In this section, I discuss the case studies of Evan's role-play of the avatar with the misshapen arm for G3's second role-playing session and Daniel's role-play of the avatar with Autism Spectrum Disorder for G1's third role-playing session. I chose segments illustrating these participants' transgression of real-world boundaries marking the limits of what is physically or naturally possible. I use these to show what characterised such transgression and what purposes they served. Each case study represents a different way in which the participants defied the laws of nature and, as such, the following sub-sections are organised in terms of Evan demonstrating his superhuman ability to leap very high and Daniel building objects within the virtual space.

4.3.1 I am superhuman: Citius, altius, fortius

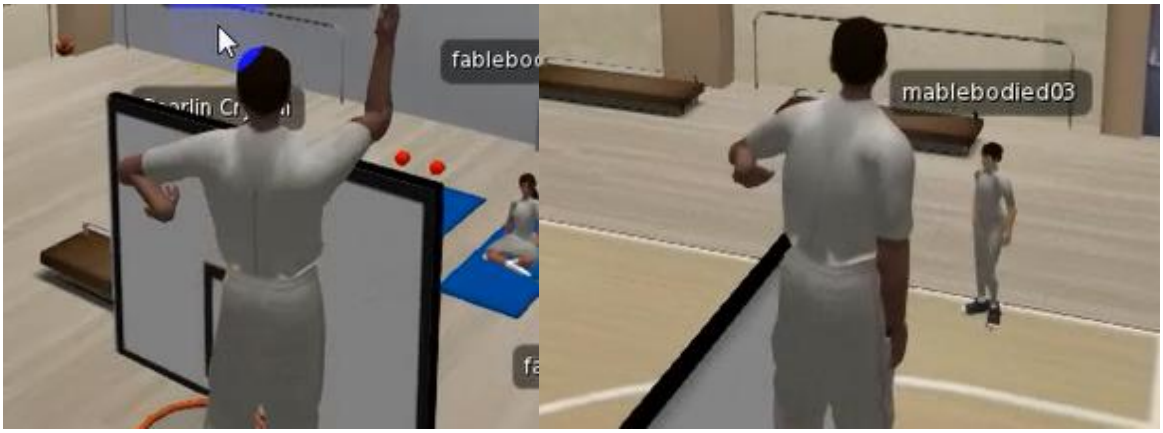
The event I wish to focus on is when Evan leapt onto the basketball post. This occurred after Evan threatened to make a phone call and before he withdrew to a corner. He did what is not possible in the real world. If this action is taken in isolation, I could have inferred that it was an indication of a lack of role immersion as Evan had not taken into account the physical limitations people with a misshapen arm face. Neither had he taken into account what is possible even for someone with no disabilities. However, when I examined the enactments and dialogue prior to this event, it shows that Cassandra had walked into him repeatedly to push him back, called him "deformed arm", "deformed guy" and "weak" repeatedly and accused him of not being able to run and do push-ups (see Table 14, Lines 6, 15, 21). Cassandra thus effected Othering by the process of reducing to body, that is, delineating differences in physical appearance and physical ability and underscoring physical ability as the main criterion for determining group membership and by stereotyping Evan as weak. Evan attempted to respond by throwing a basketball. Because of some technical problems, he could not retrieve the basketball. He then leapt very high near the basketball post. When he leapt a second time, he landed on the post (See Figure 12). Cassandra's initial

reaction was that of surprise as her voice trailed off as she said, “He’s climbing the basketball….” and then she audibly gasped as he remained standing on the post (see Table 14, Line 25; Figure 13).

Table 14: The context of Evan’s improvisations

Line	Utterances during role-play	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
1	*Cassandra: I am bullying you hahahaha* ((Cassandra walks into Evan to push him back))	
2	*Cassandra: I like it. Why? I just hate him. Why?*	
3	*Cassandra: Go away.*	
4	*Cassandra: Go away.*	
5	*Cassandra: Just don’t block my way.* ((Cassandra walks into Evan to push him back and continues doing so throughout the role-play))	
6	*Cassandra:[I don’t like him. Hahaha. Deformed arm. Deformed arm. Hahaha.]*	Reduction to body
7	*Evan OCC: [Eh why my hand so awkward ah like deformed until like this. Deformed 手是chicken wing]*	
8	*Cassandra: Why? Coz it’s fun okay.*	
9	*Evan: (inaudible)*	
10	*Cassandra: No, I’m not. [I just don’t like him.]*	
11	*Evan: [我去拿电话]*	
12	*Cassandra: He can’t even run. He can’t even run. Can’t even do push-up.*	Reduction to body
13	*Cassandra: [I despise him. I despise you.]*	
14	*Evan: [我在去拿电话 Yay. 我拿到了.]*	
15	*Cassandra: Eh, the deformed guy. I don’t like you [okay. Deformed guy, I don’t like you. Call what call? No, I just push, I didn’t even slap you.]*	Reduction to body
16	*Evan: [Magic. Harry Potter. Yah, I got the phone again. Eh I call police uh.]* ((Evan laughs))	Silencing
17	*Cassandra: [What’s this? You call your mama is it?]* ((Yvonne laughs.))	
18	*Yvonne: [Call the police. Don’t bully him.]*	Silencing
19	*Cassandra: [Weak ah you. Cannot do push-up.]*	Stereotyping Reduction to body
20	*Evan: [I call police eh. I can call police. Call police.]* ((Evan laughs and opens and bag to retrieve the cell phone))	Silencing

	((Yvonne walks towards the group))	
21	*Cassandra: [Weak ah, weak ah. Weak, weak, weak.] You can't even do a push-up. Weak, weak, weak.*	Stereotyping Reduction to body
22	*Yvonne: [No you cannot bully him. You're not supposed to bully him.]*	Silencing
	((Evan tries to pick up a basketball and fails. Evan jumps up very high near the basketball post))	
23	*Cassandra: [You can't even fly. Go away. You're annoying. Why are you all so protective against him?]*	
24	*Yvonne: [Not supposed to bully him (inaudible)] go away. Get away. Get away.]*	Silencing
	((Evan jumps onto the basketball post and stays there))	Signification Zero degree of language
25	*Cassandra: He's climbing the basketball……*	
	((Cassandra gasps))	
26	*Yvonne: [Because he's scared of you.]*	
27	*Evan: [Hah, you cannot touch me already.]*	
28	*Teacher Facilitator OCC: Not supposed to fly.* ((Evan jumps down from the basketball post))	



Evan jumps up very high near the basketball post.

Evan jumps onto the basketball post and stays there.

Figure 12: Evan leaping onto the basketball post

Cassandra sees Evan jumping very high

Cassandra sees Evan standing on the basketball post

Figure 13: Cassandra's perspective of Evan's enactment

Evan's action brings to mind Holland et al.'s (1998) example of an individual of a low caste, Gyanumaya, climbing up the exterior of a house in order to reach an interview that was being conducted on the second floor. In their view, Gyanumaya's actions were shaped by the prejudiced cultural forces of her time which forbade someone of a low caste from entering the abode of a higher caste member as well as the specific power relations within the given situation which caused her to take up this subject position. More importantly, Gyanumaya's actions may be seen as an improvisation—a spontaneous response to changing and sometimes contradictory social and material circumstances which offers an individual opportunities for taking on an alternative subjectivity and identity and this, in turn creates opportunities for others to appropriate and ritualise this subjectivity and identity.

So what was the impetus for Evan's improvisation? From his remark, "Hah, you cannot touch me already" (see Table 14, Line 27), I infer that he was trying to get away from

his opponent. Nevertheless, it is also possible that Evan was attending to and refuting Cassandra's attempts to circumscribe his physical ability. His enactment was an instantiation of both zero degree of language and signification. Rather than speaking up in order to defend himself from Cassandra's stereotyping or to go on the offensive and disparage her, he engaged in an act which was a way of signifying his physical prowess. Evan's improvisation, whether intended or otherwise, disproved Cassandra's prejudiced assertions and metaphorically and literally elevated him to a more empowered subject position. Having said that, there is no indication that this new subjectivity was permanent. More opportunities to role-play might have resulted in a ritualization of this new subjectivity but there is no certainty of this occurring beyond the given scenario, let alone the VW.

How much further would Evan have taken this? Where would he have taken this? Unfortunately, I was not able to discover this because of the rules I had put in place. I heard students were attempting to fly and repeated my instructions that they must not fly because I had been too focused on maintaining verisimilitude with real-world enactments. This instruction was also reinforced by the teacher who was their group facilitator. Our instructions were the consequence of not recognising the complex architecture of *SL* and how meanings were being made by the participants as themselves and as their avatars within the inter-related social realities of lesson, classroom and virtual world (Merchant, 2009). As a result, Evan jumped off the basketball post and had difficulty getting back on when he tried to do so later. Ironically, people in authority such myself and the teacher had circumscribed his enactments by rejecting the reality that Evan had attempted to construct to challenge his oppressor.

Prior to this role-play, Evan had chosen to analyse the case of Charisse who is diagnosed with cerebral palsy and ataxia. However, for the role-play, he chose the avatar which had a misshapen limb instead of the avatar with cerebral palsy. I do not know his reasons for doing so. Nevertheless, I examine Charisse's revolutionising processes, in particular, those which bear some relation to the idea of "faster, higher,

stronger" and compare these with Evan's. In her video, much of what Charisse focused on was her feelings about being alienated and her shared humanity with people without disability. She humanised herself by demystifying her disability; explaining how her condition arose from being strangled with her umbilical cord and talking about the treatments she received in her early years while showing photos of a sweet and happy toddler and pre-schooler. She also humanised herself by acknowledging her emotional frailty as she talked about the impact being alienated had on her. Her sadness was conveyed in a poem she wrote while in the eighth grade (see Table 15, Lines 1-9).

Table 15: Charisse's poem

Line	Poem	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
1	As others treat me, how people look at me	
2	Sitting by the lonely tree, looking at others wishing that was me	Humanising
3	As others come, think I would never know	
4	Telling things about me, "that she never knows"	
5	Oh what they say, makes me cry	Humanising
6	Saying "she's not our type", "have you heard her talk"	Reduction to appearance
7	"Look how she acts" but they don't really know my type	
8	I know I can't swim, I know I can't speak right	
9	I know who I am, I know people treat me the wrong way	Deconstruction
10	But I know the right way, that God made me like this	Meta-Ideologizing
11	To be how I am, this is how I would stay	
12	Forever and ever, because God made me this way to stay	

The pivotal moment for her in helping others recognise her humanity was when she began producing Youtube videos explaining her condition and giving her audience a sense of who she was. It was then that her schoolmates understood her better and she ceased to be alienated in high school (see Table 16).

Table 16: Transcript of Charisse describing the impact of her Youtube video productions

Taken from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nnuHj5M5FE

Time Stamp	Utterances	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
11:33	In the 10th grade (.) I started making Youtube videos and I didn't really know how many people would actually watch them so I just continued making more and more (.) and later on kids from my school found my videos and they- some told me that they understood me more now. and understood more about Cerebral Palsy and that inside I'm not as different as them and I can do what they do just in my own unique way and it helped a lot just seeing my videos they started understanding me more (.) and more people began talking to me at school (.) and it was just really great (.) So I continued my videos and hoping they can help others understand that people with disabilities can do what other people do just in their own unique way and spread awareness of the disabled and show what we can do and that on the outside we may be different but on the inside we're like everyone else (.)	Humanising Humanising Humanising
13:48		

Charisse balanced her humanising of herself which made her more relatable with her signification of her superhuman quality of positivity and perseverance which impressed her audience a great deal. Although she did not perform any superhuman stunts like Evan, her video reflects signification of her superhuman-like qualities. Her survival at birth was nothing short of a miracle as she had been deprived of oxygen for 7 minutes. She went through a lot a therapy from a very young age. She endured being mocked and alienated by her peers from grade two onwards. She produced her own Youtube videos to raise awareness about Cerebral Palsy. She helped out students with mental impairments and spoke enthusiastically about their abilities. She described her initial trepidation about participating in varsity basketball cheerleading and drama and the struggle to graduate from high school. However, she framed each as a challenge she not only overcame, but also enjoyed immensely. Towards the end of her video, she displayed courage and optimism when she talked about taking on challenges in future (see Table 17). In short, she defied the laws of human nature. A lesser human being might have caved.

Table 17: Charisse's perspective on future challenges

Time Stamp	Utterances	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
16:55 17:20	I'm planning to go to college (.) and I know life is gonna give me more challenges along the way but I think I'm ready to face them and I can't wait to see what I have in my future(.)	Signification

The story of an underdog who rises to become the champion because of some outstanding trait or skill is one of the most enduring narratives in popular culture. The narrative reflects the performance of a power earned and is, hence, well-deserved. This power silences its critics (initially, at least) and galvanises its followers. Charisse's story typifies this narrative. Although Evan's enactment does not because it was cut short by the teacher facilitator and me, Cassandra's gasp in response to Evan's feat is an indication of the impact such superhuman stunts can have on one's opponents. The self-fostered representations of super-humanness counter the imposed representations of sub-humanness and can lead to a re-classification of the person with a disability to become more than his or her disability.

The key question is whether a superhuman rendering of a person with a disability transforms dominant discourses. Cassandra's subsequent response to Evan's feat is telling. She continued not only to reduce his identity to his body, but also mocked him for not being able to fly even though she herself could not fly (see Table 18). This suggests that when people who are oppressed are able to achieve what was thought previously impossible for them to achieve, users of dominant discourses may impose new and higher expectations.

Table 18: Cassandra's reaction to Evan's leaping feat

Line	Cassandra's utterances during role-play	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
1 2 3	*Can he come down?* *With one arm only?* *I'm supposed to be evil.*	Reduction to body

4	*I'm the bad one.*	
5	*Hey the….*	
6	*Stop flying deformed arm.*	Reduction to body
7	*Don't fly deformed arm.*	
8	*You can't even fly.*	Reduction to body
9	*You can't fly!*	
10	*How can you fly with only one arm?*	Reduction to body
11	*That's amazing*	

Moreover, a superhuman rendering may lead to raised expectations in all other aspects of one's life. It is as though a person with a disability cannot speak ill of or get angry with or manipulate other people. It becomes inconceivable that s/he would tell lies or have an adulterous affair or commit a crime. The rendering can thus result in a discomforting epitomising of perfection. Charisse, however, was able to avert this by humanising herself. In sharing her vulnerabilities, I understand and empathise with her struggles better and realise that, like everyone else, her accomplishments do not come so easily. This points to the need for balance when enacting the hidden Other; even as there is a concerted effort to valorise people with disabilities, they should not be turned into saints. The goal of revolutionising processes, ultimately, is to emphasise our shared humanity.

4.3.2 I am the creator: Stigmergic communication in virtual spaces

Stigmergic communication refers to the alteration of the environment to communicate a message (Bell, Smith-Robbins, & Withnail, 2010; Davies & Merchant, 2009). The event depicting stigmergic communication which I have identified occurred towards the end of the role-play when Daniel isolated himself physically from the group within *SL* and turned the camera upon himself (see Figure 14) but continued to chat with them. He made two attempts to build objects within *SL*. The first was an elongated object which he subsequently deleted (see Figure 15) and the second was a tree which he could not build because he did not own the land (see Figure 16).

Figure 14: Daniel sitting upfront and swinging his arms

Figure 15: Daniel built an object

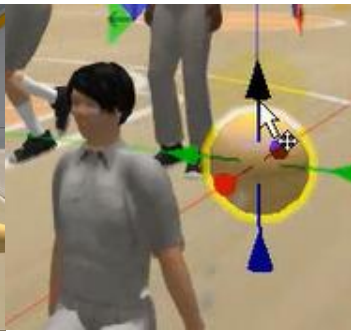


Figure 16: Daniel attempting to build a tree

I now describe the context in which Daniel's building of these structures ensued. It was an unusual situation where he had put physical distance between himself and his peers and yet continued to dialogue with them on chat. This is perhaps a unique aspect of interactions in VWs in that they allow both distance and proximity at the same time. Positions and movements are not always expected to complement chat, gestures and voice. One's avatar may be flying or building or shopping while discussing matters unrelated to their enactments. I am not suggesting that this is always socially accepted in VWs. Positions, movements, gestures, chat and voice are all subjected to the expectations of a given discourse community. In this regard, all of Daniel's responses to prejudiced remarks on chat did not transgress social norms. He came across as reasonable and emotionally-balanced; he deconstructed the process of reduction to appearance or body when his peers focused on his awkward bodily movements (Table 19, Lines 10, 19), explained his physical difficulties in an effort to humanise himself and elicit their empathy (Table 19, Lines 4, 26) and managed their continued haranguing with firmness (Table 19, Lines 22, 36).

Table 19: The context of Daniel's building of these structures

Line	Utterances during role-play	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
	((Daniel sits down on the ground and his arms continue swinging. He spins the camera around so that he faces his own avatar))	
1	Jeff: we should not blame him just because he was born	Deconstruction

	with different circumstances from us	
2	Henry: why not u go to some disable school	Binary Opposition
3	Steven: But isn't he supposed to be in a special school?	Binary Opposition
4	Daniel: I want to have the chance to learn like everybody else	Meta-Ideologizing
5	Henry: u are slow and always moving in class	Reduction to appearance
6	Steven: see, look at what he is doing now	
7	Henry: So u are not normal	Reduction to appearance
8	Daniel: I am normal	Humanising
9	Rick: People should have the freedom to choose where they want to study	Meta-Ideologizing
10	Daniel: i just cant control my body movement	Deconstruction
11	Steven: But you think he is the one who choosed it	Denial of autonomy
12	Steven (whispers): he cant even speak	Reduction to body
13	Steven: he can only type	Reduction to body
14	Henry: waste of time]	Denial of subjectivity
15	Rick: But at least it is a way of communication	Deconstruction
16	Daniel: Ya at least you guys can still communcate with me	
17	Jeff: heis making the best of his life	Humanising
18	Henry: u know u are slow	Reduction to body
19	Daniel: but bear with my random aggressive movements. I cant control it	Deconstruction
20	Henry: so its going to be hard to talk to u	Reduction to body
21	Steven: you are making the class suffer as well	Binary Opposition
22	Daniel: don't judge me you silly guy	Silencing
23	Steven: HEY	
24	Henry: dont talk so much	Silencing
25	Jeff: that was not nice!	Silencing
26	Daniel: If only you can switch bodies with me, you would understand	Humanising
27	Steven: you should just leave this school now	Silencing
28	Steven: im sorrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrry	
29	Henry: dont be sorry	
30	Steven: ggwp	
31	Henry: [Daniel] please go away	Silencing
32	((Daniel tries to build an object and then deletes it))	
33	Jeff: [Daniel] dont listen to what they say I know youre doing your best	Humanising
34	Steven: I knew you were trouble when you walked in	Stereotyping
35	Rick: Can you all look at the positive side of him?	Deconstruction
36	Daniel: why should I. I deserve my rights to be here	Humanising

38	((Daniel tries to build a tree))	
39	Henry: im sorry [Daniel]	
40	Henry: I should understand you	

I do not know why Daniel turned to building objects when he faced continued harassment and mockery. He did not completely disengage from interacting with his peers during the process so it is unlikely to have been an attempt to detach himself from the situation. It is possible that he was trying to (i) create an object to express what he was going through, that is, an externalisation or exteriorisation to represent in embodied form his thoughts and feelings in response to the bullying, (ii) develop an alternative means of communicating with his peers given that they were not open to his reasoning and appeal for empathy and/or (iii) demonstrate that he possessed other skills as a way to counter the disparaging remarks by his peers. If creations do not speak for themselves as they would in written text, then understanding messages produced through stigmergic communication may prove elusive. It would be better to give creators the opportunity to talk about their creations and the messages these were intended to convey—why they built them, who or what these represent, who their audience is, what they think will be the impact of their creation. This is what I have learnt on hindsight after grappling with the data.

Prior to role-playing, Daniel had examined a news clip and excerpts written by 14-year old Carly Fleischmann who has a more physically incapacitating form of autism. The biography largely written by her father about their journey with autism contains excerpts of Fleischmann's writings including the book's epilogue. Fleischmann wrote and Daniel built. However, writing is as much an act of creation as building structures in VWs. It is from this perspective that I examine excerpts of Fleischmann's writing. In her chapter, Fleischmann writes about her "inner voice" (see Table 20, Lines 1-5, 21-25, 28- 31). She expressed the view that her inability to articulate her thoughts out loud was the factor playing a part in her Othering (see Table 20, Lines 17-18, 25-28). Her

disability silenced her and this led to her reduction to body even by those who knew her well (see Table 20, Lines 1-5, 13-16).

Table 20: Excerpt from the chapter written by Carly Fleischmann in Carly's voice

Line	Excerpt 1	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
1	So, why do I call my voice my ***"inner voice"***? ***The truth***	
2	***is ever since I was a young child, I talked. The words***	
3	***never flowed out of my mouth or came out of my***	
4	***head to be shared with the outside world, but I***	
5	***talked to myself in my head.*** The earliest thought I	
6	have of me talking in my head and wanting to share	
7	something with the outside world was when I must have	
8	been five or six years old and my nanny was in the	
9	kitchen making some food for Matthew, my brother, and	
10	Taryn, my sister. She was asking them what they	
11	wanted to eat. I remember my brother replying first and	
12	then my sister yelling in her idea. I recall telling her in my	
13	head that I wanted Kraft Macaroni and Cheese. ***My***	
14	***nanny at the time repeated the orders back to my***	Reduction to body
15	***brother and sister but never repeated mine back to***	
16	***me.*** I think that was the first time I really realized that my	
17	outer voice wasn't like Matthew's or Taryn's. ***I remember***	
18	***thinking at that point in time that I was different***. I	
19	kind of knew it, I guess, but never really realized it until	
20	that day.	
21	***So, as you can see, I always had a voice. It was just***	
22	***inside of me. I would talk to myself and even reply***	
23	***back to people sometimes though they couldn't hear***	
24	***me. My voice was always special to me even though***	
25	***it was only for me to hear. I remember thinking that I***	
26	***could get my inner voice out and share it like***	
27	***Matthew or Taryn then maybe I wouldn't be so***	
28	***different***. ***However, my inner voice stayed inside of***	
29	***me for over ten years of my life. I do believe we all***	
30	***have an inner voice and it's just trying to find its way***	
31	***out***.	

Her writing was, therefore, a work of fostering that inner voice to give expression to her identity by sharing her memories of experiences, her emotions and her desires. She explained how the ability to communicate through writing in social media, her blog, for interviews and lectures impacted her life—how it enhanced her sense of agency and disproved claims about the effects of her disability (see Table 21, Lines 7-11).

Table 21: Fleischmann writes of the impact of writing on her life in Carly's Voice

Line	Excerpt 2	Processes of Othering or Revolutionising
1	My life had changed. I started to write on social media	
2	websites	
3	and writing my own blog. I felt that I needed challenges in	
4	my life so I challenged myself to be on *Larry King Live* and	
5	to even be invited to a conference called the Annual	
6	International Technology & Persons with Disabilities	
7	Conference at CSUN in San Diego. ***These challenges***	
8	***kept me thinking and knowing that I am capable of***	
9	***doing anything and everything I set my mind to. Well, I***	
10	***mean of course, my whole life I was told I wouldn't talk***	Signification
11	***and here is my voice talking to you.***	

The difference between Fleischmann and Daniel's creations is that Fleischmann chose a genre well-received in dominant discourses, the biography. The biography explains who the protagonist is and how she has become what she is by narrating the story of her life. It commiserates with her struggles and disappointments and celebrates her accomplishments. It leads its readers to a place of inspiration and empathy for the protagonist. In contrast, Daniel's created works (albeit incomplete) stood outside dominant discourses. It was not logical to build an unrecognisable object or plant a tree in the middle of a gymnasium. Daniel's works did not communicate anything about his experience with autism and demonstrated no exceptional talent on his part. Dominant discourses expect disability to be framed as integral to one's identifications. For example, well-known artist, Stephen Wiltshire, diagnosed with autism, is able to draw from memory an entire city landscape (see http://www.stephenwiltshire.co.uk/). This is the awe-inspiring depiction of a savant accepted in dominant discourses. Nevertheless, Daniel's case study reflects the possibilities for performative and narrative identifications. The creator's performative identifications are enacted during the process of creation while narrative identifications are woven into the fabric of the artefact created.

The case studies I have examined in this section illustrate what the participants did or tried to do that reflected a kind of supernatural power. However, they could not take their enactments further because of the constraints put there by me or due to the default functionality of *SL*. Nevertheless, these case studies are instructive as they highlight some aspects of the integration of *SL* which I had not taken into account. I had initially planned for my participants to create a mash-up only towards the end of the study to reflect their understanding of disabilities. (Unfortunately, this plan fell through.) But I had not considered the importance of letting my participants move, fly and build freely in *SL* if they so choose. When left to their own devices, young people do express their identifications in ways which, although unconventional, present alternative approaches that may transform dominant discourses.

4.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I highlighted examples of how the participants in this study used the features and resources of *SL* in different ways to enact their semiotic identifications. I showed how the voice function of *SL* was integral to identity enactments in dominant discourses and how the absence of voice exacerbated the Othering process. At the same time, I questioned the assumption that spoken discourse should take precedence in all our communication and call for alternative modes of expression which harness the individual's unique dis/abilities rather than conceal them. I also drew attention to how the ascription of meanings to objects playing a key role in a regime of representation is the battleground for transforming discourse. I discussed how the case studies illustrate alternative approaches to alter these meanings. I pointed out how one approach may allow both these new affirming representations and meanings and extant deleterious representations and meanings to co-exist while another entails the eradication of old representations and meanings to transform the discourse. Finally, I highlighted instances of participants engaging in unconventional demonstrations of supernatural abilities in-world. I proposed that a superhuman rendering of a person with a disability needs to be balanced by the humanising of this individual in order that

this individual remains relatable. I also discussed the sense of empowerment that comes from the act of creating and whether the creation needs to conform to well-known genres in order to impact dominant discourses.

All the participants in these case studies had examined texts produced about and by people with disabilities before the role-play sessions. However, they were likely to have had only an inkling of the environmental and socio-cultural forces at work in the life of a person with a disability. As such, their representations at times appear somewhat reductive. Nevertheless, my participants appeared able to focus on bending themselves, that is, altering their identifications to address their situation. The range of their semiotic identifications illustrate how they themselves chose to cope with the pressures of Othering and these differing ways reveal a liminal space for transforming dominant discourses.

Chapter 5: Shaping Phenomenological Identifications in Role-Play

"I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir, because I'm not myself, you see."

Alice in Wonderland

The quotation above was uttered by Alice after she had grown and shrunk repeatedly. These sudden changes in her physical embodiment had caused her to feel confused about her identity to the extent that she could not account for who she was. The participants in this study experienced similar changes in that each of them was virtually embodied as an avatar with a disability in *SL* and, at the same time, physically embodied as their able-bodied self in a classroom setting. There were changes in their phenomenological identifications within *SL* as they (i) shifted between discourse positions and moves while in-character and (ii) switched between their virtual selves' in-character communication and their classroom selves' out-of-character communication in response to the Othering they encountered in *SL*. These shifts in their identifications within the virtual landscape helped lay the groundwork for developing a preliminary identification framework reflecting the processes of identification. In this chapter, I discuss my emerging identification framework as I mapped the shifts in my participants discourse moves during role-play. I provide examples in the form of case studies to illustrate their differing discourse moves and discuss the insights they provide with respect to relations of power. I examine the phenomenon of rapid fluctuations in discourse moves in *SL* in a couple of case studies and conclude with a discussion on the theoretical underpinnings of these shifts.

5.1 The space between us: Towards a framework on identification

In this section, I explain how I used the data gleaned from this study to develop an identification framework in order to depict various phenomenological identification processes. This preliminary framework represents my endeavour to orient identity studies away from identity as typology and towards identification processes. It moves

my exploration beyond a list of assumed positions and identities to develop metacognitive understandings of identifications and to facilitate comparisons with an antecedent case.

As stated earlier in section 3.1.2.2, Goffman (1981, p. 128) describes footing as "alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self" which involves code switching or changes in pitch, volume, rhythm, stress, tonal quality. I have incorporated discourse moves into this notion of footing to facilitate my analysis of the data. These discourse moves illustrate how able-bodied participants rendered the discourse of persons with disabilities; highlighting changes in footing relative to that projected in the cases they had read prior to their role-play. I developed a list of terms I used to describe the participants' discourse moves. I provide definitions of these terms in Table 22.

Table 22: Definitions of terms used in the footing sequence

Term	Definition
Echoing	Repetition of words and/or actions employed by the antecedent to depict a similar identity
Extending	Using words and/or actions to introduce a new identity without contradicting that conveyed by the antecedent
Reconstituting	Refashioning words and/or actions uttered by the antecedent to present a new identity
Circumscribing	Using words and/or actions to present a more limited identity than that depicted by the antecedent
Subverting	Undermining the identity represented by the antecedent through words and/or actions
Inverting	Using words and/or actions to depict a identity opposite of that depicted by the antecedent

In order to identify a broad range of moves within each participant's discourse, I segmented their discourse based on when they said, wrote or did something to project a different position or identity. In this sense, their change in footing coincided with a change in their assumed position or identity. However, these moves were not

characterised in terms of the position or identity but in terms of how each move stood in relation to the specific case they had read prior to their role-play. In Table 23, I list all the participants' footing sequence comprising the discourse moves I identified and their positions or identities. I also provide a brief description of their enactments as they took on an avatar with a disability in *SL* during the course of their role-play. Some participants employed certain discourse moves with greater frequency. For example, Cindya showed an inclination towards inverting her identifications. This suggests a lack of affinity for the case she had read. In contrast, Rick, Daniel and Cindyb made efforts to echo the words and/or emulate the actions of the protagonists of the cases they had analysed. And yet, Rick's moves of circumscribing and subverting the original identifications reflect volatility in his discourse. Indeed, many of the other participants' footing sequences encompassed opposing stances (e.g. Henry, Shannon and Evan). These indicate that their identifications were in constant flux. There were also relatively few instances of participants reconstituting and subverting their identifications. This is understandable given that such discourse moves require more complex and nuanced renderings of the original case.

Table 23: Participants' footing sequence, identity positions and enactments during role-play

No	**Participant (Case)**	**Footing sequence, identity positions and enactments**							
1	Henry (Tan's case –paraplegia)	Inverting	Extending	Extending	Inverting	Circumscribing			
		Powerless person	Opponent	Opponent	Power-less person	Protected person			
		He entreated his peers to come to his aid against the bullies. He shifted to name-calling and defiant gestures which antagonised both the bullies as well as his supporters. This resulted in his peers bullying him even more. He then resorted to entreating his peers for help again. Finally, when he threatened to call the police, all his peers quickly backed down and tried to resolve the matter by offering to help him.							
2	Rick (Tan's case - paraplegia)	Subverting	Echoing	Extend-ing	Circum-scribing	Circum-scribing	Circum-scribing	Echo-ing	Echoing
		Human	Student	Blame-less person	Human	Blame-less person	Sufferer	Loner	Aggressor
		He disassociated himself from his wheelchair. Then he explained his reasons for attending a mainstream school rather than a special							

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>school. However, with continued bullying, his stance wavered increasingly as he adopted an accusatory tone, expressed his desire to be like his peers, tried to exonerate himself of blame, cried, withdrew and then rammed his wheelchair into his peers.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>Daniel (Fleischman’s case - autism)</td><td><table>
<tr><td>Echoing</td><td>Echoing</td><td>Extending</td><td>Extending</td></tr>
<tr><td>Human</td><td>Human</td><td>Loner/Creator</td><td>Human</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">He tried to educate and enlighten his peers about the nature of his disability. However, with continued bullying, he isolated himself and tried to build structures in-world while maintaining communication with his peers on chat. Towards the end of the role-play, he became more assertive.</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>Shannon (Fleischman’s case - autism)</td><td><table>
<tr><td>Inverting</td><td>Circumscribing</td></tr>
<tr><td>Aggressor</td><td>Sufferer</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">She resorted to intimidating her peers to pre-empt any attempts to bully her. She persisted for some time and then she paused and abruptly switched to the crying gesture as she thought that that would be more consistent with her role.</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>Cindy a (Morin’s case- autism)</td><td><table>
<tr><td>Echoing</td><td>Inverting</td><td>Inverting</td><td>Reconstituting</td><td>Inverting</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sufferer</td><td>Opponent</td><td>Mocker</td><td>Trash-talker</td><td>Opponent</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">She began by crying abruptly and momentarily. She then spent most of the time defying, threatening and mocking her peers. She was not cowed by their threats. In the face of repeated put downs, she bragged about herself. She remained defiant at the very end and refused to cry.</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>Cindy b (Charisse’s case- cerebral palsy)</td><td><table>
<tr><td>Inverting</td><td>Echoing</td><td>Echoing</td><td>Echoing</td></tr>
<tr><td>Aggressor</td><td>Normal person</td><td>Sufferer</td><td>Normal person</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">She tried to appear intimidating at first and gave a quick retort. But when one of her peers made fun of her speech, she abruptly cried on two separate occasions. When he continued to show no empathy, she challenged his definition of normality.</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td>Evan (Charisse’s case- cerebral palsy)</td><td><table>
<tr><td>Inverting</td><td>Echoing</td><td>Echoing</td><td>Inverting</td></tr>
<tr><td>Opponent</td><td>Physically-able person</td><td>Loner</td><td>Mocker</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">He initially threatened to call the police and then demonstrated his dexterity by leaping onto the basketball post. Later he retreated to a corner but was pursued by his opponents who harassed him with several mocking gestures. He cried initially but began to be defiant. He then retreated to another corner and they followed him and continued with their harassment. He turned around and began directing the same mocking gestures at them.</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>8</td><td>Samantha (Morin’s case-</td><td><table>
<tr><td>Circumscribing</td><td>Circumscribing</td><td>Extending</td><td>Inverting</td></tr>
<tr><td>Buffoon</td><td>Sufferer</td><td>Friendly person</td><td>Wise cracker</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

	autism)	She initially chatted in a staccato rhythm and clowned around to entertain her peers and then cried as a means to elicit sympathy. However, once she used the voice function, she became more assertive, taking the initiative to befriend others and challenging one of her peers with a quick retort.

I then mapped the participants' footing sequences along an imitating-recasting continuum of being the Other and being one's possible self. The continuum illustrates changes in footing in terms of similarity or difference from that reflected in the antecedent case as participants located themselves on different parts of this continuum for different purposes (see Table 24). A continuum was chosen to illustrate that shifts between these discourse moves can be quite seamless.

Table 24: Identification framework depicting discourse moves along an imitating-recasting continuum

Imitating (Other) ……....Recasting (Self)					
Echoing	Extending	Reconstituting	Circumscribing	Subverting	Inverting

I would like to qualify that these discourse moves only provide insights into the individuals' stance in relation to dominant discourses if the antecedent or referent case has been analysed to determine how it engages with dominant discourses. All subsequent comparisons with the antecedent using the identification framework would then reflect stances relating to dominant discourses. As such, this framework also does not assume uniformity amongst people with disabilities and acknowledges the need to analyse the *unique* configuration of identifications of *specific* Others.

In the following sections, I refer to four case studies to illustrate how the framework can be used to provide insights into the process of phenomenological identification (Self-Other Mergence) or lack of phenomenological identification with the Other (Self-Other Binary) and how the framework sheds light on the processes of navigating and hybridising within these two poles. In particular, I examine Henry, Cindya and Shannon's case studies and I re-visit Rick's case study and, using the identification

framework, compare their phenomenological identifications with the antecedent cases of Tan who has paraplegia and Morin and Fleischmann who were diagnosed with autism. I discuss their case studies because, collectively, their discourse moves encompass the full range I identified from the data. My analysis also serves to illustrate (i) different lived experiences of the participants during the course of the *SL* role-play and (ii) different renditions of the Other in relation to dominant discourses. Each example is instructive and must be understood in context.

5.2 To empower or not to empower: Power relations constituting discourse

In this section, I examine Henry and Cindya's case studies and the cases they had read prior to role-playing, namely, Tan and Morin's cases respectively. I focus on how power relations underpinned their enactments. Henry and Cindya's case studies provide contrasting examples of (i) how the discourse worked in ways to compel the individual to relinquish his power and (ii) how the individual can shape the discourse to empower herself.

5.2.1 Within the magic circle of the disempowered: The subjectification of the individual

In this sub-section, I use my case study of Henry to illustrate, on one level, how immediate social pressures can curb the lived experiences of the hidden Other in a given context and, on another level, how a persistent hierarchy of power underpinning dominant discourses functions in the subjectification of individuals. In other words, Henry's case study reflects how power relations impinge on the individual's phenomenological identifications.

Henry analysed Tan's memoir prior to his role-playing session. Therefore, I begin by discussing Tan's phenomenological identifications in relation to dominant discourses when he faced peer harassment because of his wheelchair. Although the bullying he was subjected to was mentioned only briefly in his memoir, Tan's response provides insight into his phenomenological identifications. Tan described how the children in his kindergarten teased him, pulled his ears and pinched him. As a result, he caught hold of their hands and bit them very hard and he was, subsequently, expelled for this (Tan,

2006). In tandem with his semiotic identifications discussed in section 4.2, this particular account of Tan's lived experience portrays him as unyielding. However, the manner of this unyielding response violated social norms and contravened the expectations of compliance and rationality on the part of the hidden Other within dominant discourses. For this, he was severely penalised.

In contrast, during G1's first role-playing session (see Table 25 below), Henry played the defenceless victim in the midst of initial hostility between those who supported him and those who criticised him. When mean remarks were directed at him, Henry appealed to his peers for help several times (see Table 25, Lines 28, 34, 41). This disempowering stance stood in contrast to the overtly aggressive manner of his peers, Steven and Daniel, who had come to his defence (see Table 25, Lines 8, 9, 11, 15, 25, 32, 36, 37, 38, 40, 43). Therefore, in the initial footing sequence, I identified Henry's discourse move as inverting, given that he had characterised his lived experience in a manner opposite that of Tan. His initial identifications also reinforced the self-Other binary. His virtual identity as a powerless person conformed to the tendency of dominant discourses to portray people with disabilities as weak and dependent. Nevertheless, Henry, plausibly taking his cue from Steven and Daniel's assertive defence of him, began to similarly accuse and speak assertively to his opponents towards the end of this excerpt (see Table 25, Lines 44, 48).

Table 25: Henry inverted his identifications as the defenceless victim

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Henry: Hey guys how was ur day today
2	Jeff: What do u want
3	Rick: What do u want???
4	Henry: hmm I just want to talk to both of u
5	Rick: It doesn't seemed that way
6	Jeff: imm sory but I don't want to talk to you
7	Henry: why not
8	Daniel: You guys are being mean.
9	Steven: STOP
10	Jeff: whats your problem
11	Steven: don't bully him
12	Steven: he just wants to talk
13	Rick: in what way am i being mean

14	Jeff: then you talk to him
15	Daniel: yeah stop being so hostile towards him
16	Steven: you didn't want to talk to him
17	Rick: Look at the reality. He got a wheelchair.
18	Jeff: (whispers) did i hit him?
19	Steven: What's wrong with him having a wheelchair.
20	Henry: Please don't bully me
21	Jeff: i did not say anything about him being in a wheelchair
22	Rick: He require more care than any of us
23	Jeff: stop assuming
24	Jeff: we did not bully him
25	Steven: but you obviously discriminating him
26	Jeff: on what basis are you saying this?
27	Steven: Im not assuming. I stating the fact
28	Henry: Please save me guys
29	Jeff: fact without substance?
30	Daniel: I think he is as independent also any of us
31	Jeff: I think you are just using him as a reason to pick a fight with us
32	Steven: STOP SITTING ON HIM
33	Rick: Oh? In what way?
34	Henry: help!!!!
35	Henry: dont hit me
36	Steven: stop pushing him
37	Daniel: au guys are being very mean
38	Steven: It's not nice
39	Jeff: we did not do anything to him and you come in assuming we are bullying him because he is disabled
40	Daniel: stop pushing him
41	Henry: help me
42	Jeff OCC: we are off tangent
43	Steven: STOP RIGHT NOW
44	Henry: dont push me
45	Rick: It's so fun!!!
46	Jeff: I cant take this anymore
47	Henry: me too
48	Henry: u are mso cruel.

A change in Henry's discourse moves occurred when he accessed the menu for gestures. In response to Rick's repeated attempts to trample on him (see Figure 17), he clicked on the "get lost" gesture. Then he directed the "laugh" gesture at Jeff (see Figure 18) who had earlier laughed at him. Jeff retaliated by enacting the "nya" gesture to mock Henry (see Figure 19). Henry then clicked on the "get lost" gesture five times. Finally, he clicked on the "embarrassed" gesture when no one was near him so it was not apparent at whom this gesture was directed. In this sequence of interactions, Henry actively defended himself. However, unlike Tan, he employed dismissive

gestures. I have, therefore, identified this as an instance of Henry extending his identifications.

Figure 17: Rick trampling on Henry

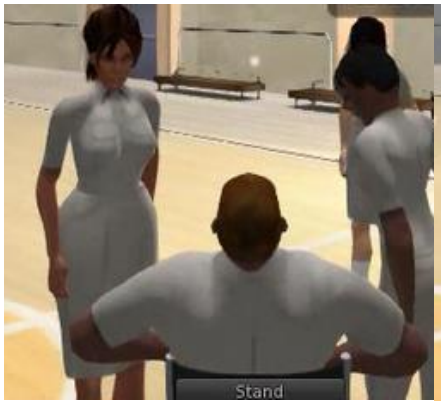


Figure 18: Henry laughing at Jeff

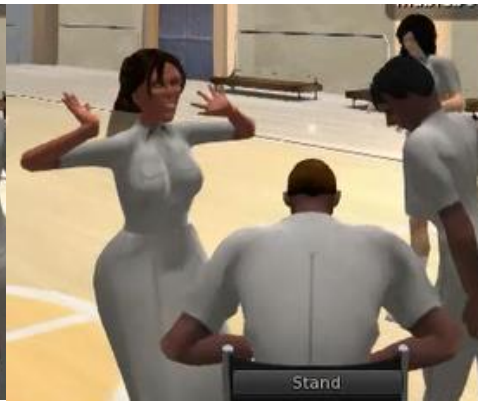


Figure 19: Jeff mocking Henry

Henry continued to extend his identifications by resorting to name-calling (see Table 26, Lines 6, 7). What is surprising is that his increased aggression provoked a negative reaction from previously supportive peers. In the same way they addressed his opponents, Steven and Daniel used the imperative mood to get him to stop his name-calling and described him as being “mean” (see Table 26, Lines 9, 11). Their responses reveal how dominant discourses can accentuate and vigorously defend rational and moderate discourse regardless of the circumstances. When Henry persisted in deviating from this practice with his defiant response (see Table 26, Lines 10, 12), it led to diminished support and increased harassment.

Table 26: Henry extended his identifications by demonstrating greater verbal aggression

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Daniel: [Henry] lets go play
2	Steven: Lets be friends? My name is [Steven]
3	Daniel: I am [Daniel]
4	Henry: lets play together
5	Daniel: ball?
6	Henry: lets not be with this losers.
7	Henry: idiots
8	Rick: Hey! Watch ur words
9	Steven: stop with that harsh words
10	Henry: noooooo!!!

11 12	Daniel: WOW now u are being mean Henry: yes i am

Daniel, Jeff and Rick responded to Henry's hostility by deliberately sitting on him whilst he was in his wheelchair. Daniel, who had earlier defended him, was the first to sit on Henry (see Figure 20). This was done somewhat playfully as Daniel remarked that he could get a free ride from Henry (see Table 27, Line 2). Henry responded by appealing for help and crying out (see Table 27, Lines 3-6) and then he got Daniel off by standing up from his wheelchair thus momentarily breaking off from the virtual world reality of his physical disability (see Figure 21). However, when he sat down again, Daniel, Jeff and Rick all sat on him (see Figure 22). This time he responded by appealing for help repeatedly (see Table 27, Lines 12, 19, 23). As such, their retaliatory actions curtailed his enactments and led to an about-turn as Henry inverted his identifications and took on the role of the defenceless victim once again while his supporters again became hostile towards his opponents (see Table 27, Lines 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 28, 29).

Figure 20: Daniel, Jeff and Rick sitting on Henry while he is seated in his wheelchair

Figure 21: Henry standing up to stop Daniel from sitting on him

Figure 22: Daniel sitting on Henry while he is seated in his wheelchair

Table 27: Henry reverted to inverting his identifications as the defenceless victim

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Jeff: stupid wheelchair boy
2	Daniel: its not bad that you have a wheelchair, i can get free rides
3	Henry: I need help

4	Henry: wwwwwwwwwwwww
5	Henry: aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
6	Henry: aaaaaa
7	Jeff: haha
8	Steven: STOP NOW
9	Jeff: give me a ride top
10	Daniel: yes stop
11	Jeff: [Henry]
12	Henry: help me pls
13	Steven: BEFORE I SIT ON YOUR LAP [JEFF]
14	Rick: Sharing is caring
15	Daniel: get off him
16	Jeff: tom give me a ride
17	Steven: GET OFF NOW
18	Jeff: if you know what I mean
19	Henry: help me\
	((Daniel uses the cell phone to call the police))
20	Jeff: haha
21	Jeff: noob
22	Jeff: poop face
23	Henry: help me guys
24	Steven: we are here to help you tom
25	Henry: I am just trying to make friends
26	Rick: Can you jump?
27	Steven: we can be friends
28	Steven: Stop mocking him
29	Daniel: stop mocking him

With the exception of Rick, all the G1 participants had not switched on their OCC during this role-playing session. When I listened to Rick's OCC, I heard his laughter and some laughter in the background emanating possibly from his group members. Therefore, these role-play enactments were carried out with much hilarity. I had earlier discussed laughter as a sign of a playful discourse or a discourse of anarchy (see Section 4.2). However, laughter can detract from oppressive tendencies in our discourse. Henry's extension of his phenomenological identifications had proceeded along a path deemed socially unacceptable. As such, like Tan, he had to be taken to task for overstepping the boundaries of rationality and moderation. The punishment for this social transgression, however, was melodramatic and seemed comical to the participants. Nevertheless, laughter at over-dramatizations should not be allowed to

conceal how dominant discourses permeate responses. Smith and Sapon-Shevin (2008) have identified a number of ways to evaluate disability humour. In this instance, it would seem that there is a cost that Henry paid for such humour which is that he was compelled to once again assume the part of the powerless person.

Henry's role-play is also a telling example of how even initially supportive peers could turn against an individual who failed to abide by social norms. Henry seemed to have mustered courage from seeing his peers come to his defence. He then harnessed the gestural affordance of *SL* to convey his defiance and began making defiant statements. However, he antagonised both his opponents and his defenders who then took to physically harassing him in-world. As a result, he quickly backed down and played the part of a defenceless person. His example suggests that there is a prevailing assumption in dominant discourses that the marginalised and oppressed should adopt the submissive posture of being needy and ever grateful for help rendered. Help is retracted and they are penalised once they become assertive or aggressive.

The narrative took a different turn and reached a climactic point when Henry took the initiative to pick up the cell phone to call the police (see Table 28). All parties involved then appeared to make an effort to reconcile with one another. His supporter, Steven, sought to keep the matter amongst themselves (see Table 28, Lines 1-2) while Daniel offered to push him to class in his wheelchair. The gap between Henry and his supporters and the opponents then narrowed abruptly when one of his opponents, Rick, emulating Daniel, also offered to help push Henry to class (See Table 28, Line 5). Henry himself closed the gap further when he acquiesced (see Table 28, Lines 4, 6) even though he had not indicated that he needed such assistance.

Table 28: Henry circumscribed his identifications by calling on legitimised institutional authority to defend him

Line	Utterances during role-play
	((Henry retrieves the cell phone from the bag))
1	Steven: I think we can resolve this on our own
2	Steven: no need to call the police

3	Daniel: (whispers) do you need me to help to bring you to class?
4	Henry: yes
5	Rick: Hey! Need me to push you to class?
6	Henry: yes

This turn of events illustrates what dominant discourses would consider a legitimate course of action to take in the face of oppression. Power does not emanate from Henry and Henry cannot seize power for himself. He remains an Other. However, he is allowed to call on the benevolent powers-that-be to aid him in resisting the hostility directed at him. It is the use of the hierarchically-superior sovereign power to counter the oppression arising from lateral contestations of power, provided that this sovereign power considers the offence committed against the Other as an offence against its own power. Sovereign power is not an objective arbiter. The ties it forges are based on whether these ties support the pre-eminence of its power. This power is what competing groups try to leverage at different times to serve their own ends;

> An offence, according to the law of the classical age, quite apart from the damage it may produce, apart even from the rule that it breaks, offends the rectitude of those who abide by the law..... Besides its immediate victim, the crime attacks the sovereign: it attacks him personally, since the law represents the will of the sovereign; it attacks him physically, since the force of the law is the force of the prince..... The intervention of the sovereign is not, therefore, an arbitration between two adversaries; it is much more, even, than an action to enforce respect for the rights of the individual; it is a direct reply to the person who has offended him [the prince] (Foucault, 1977, pp. 47-48).

In the struggle against the subjectification of the individual, it is imperative that we understand power relations and the power processes at work. Foucault (1982, p. 789) defines power relations as “a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions”. Henry’s case study reflects how others had acted to curb his actions so that he would occupy a subjugated position. Henry’s phenomenological identifications were thus mediated by his judgements of others’ phenomenological responses to his enactments (Norris, 2011). And yet, freedom exists where power relations reside

(Foucault, 1982). Henry's avatar was a "free subject" in that he was "faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized" (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). He demonstrated this when he navigated towards self-Other mergence by extending his identifications to display greater aggression in the face of hostility.

However, he eventually succumbed to peer pressure and returned to a position of self-Other binary. This was done largely through "the effects of the word" (Foucault, 1982, p. 792) and the process of "punishment" in the form of physical harassment (Foucault, 1982, p. 787). Consequently, he chose a subjugated response from a field of possible actions and thus demonstrated his acceptance of the victim identity assigned to him. Even when he tried to call on a recognised institutional power in the "pyramidal hierarchy" (Foucault, 1982, p. 787) to intervene on his behalf, he remained situated within the self-Other binary as this action conceded his lack of power within dominant discourses. As such, I would situate Henry's phenomenological identifications generally within the self-Other binary. His compliance reflects his subjectification and enabled power differentials and Othering to persist.

5.2.2 You can't touch this: Self-fashioning for a power play of words

In this section, Cindy's case study shows how she went beyond the phenomenological identifications depicted in her chosen case and moved agentively in her discourse to ensure she stood on an even footing with her peers. She was able to identify and emulate group practices as a strategy for struggling against extant power relations which place a person with a disability at a disadvantage.

Cindy analysed Morin's video prior to her role-playing session. As such, I discuss Morin's phenomenological identifications in relation to dominant discourses when he faced peer harassment because of his autism and ADD. Morin spent some time talking about the mistreatment he received from the teachers and his peers in middle school and how it made him fearful of going to school and caused him to cry himself to sleep. He freely expressed his emotional vulnerability. However, he also spoke with gratitude

about his next school where most of the students had the same condition he had (see Table 29). Morin’s response is very much anticipated in dominant discourses. Dominant discourses acknowledge oppression and yet expect a particular narrative, that is, one beginning with an expression of the individual’s hardship followed by her/his determination and resilience and concluding with her/him filled with hope or achieving resounding success. The discourses tend to cast aside narratives concluding only in heartache or to treat them as incomplete.

Table 29: Morin recounting his experience of discrimination in middle school

Time Stamp	Utterances
08:26 10:57	The torture I went through in middle school (.) the previous school I went to was (0.5) was downright disgusting from the way the kids treated me and the way the teachers treated me let’s (.) let’s start with the bullying (.) I was called everything from freak to retard to faggot and (.) believe it or not I was called a lot worser things that I’m not gonna repeat (.) but basically that was all that was in a child’s vocabulary back in middle school (.) swear words (.) hate words that’s all I heard the whole entire day (.0.5) now (0.5) all I can say is I was bullied to the point where I was afraid to go to school (.) those three years I was in middle school were the most depressing years (.) of my life and at one point I cried myself to sleep thinking about the way I was treated (.) stress not only came from (.) the bullying but also came from the teachers (.) I’m not saying all the teachers but a good majority of the teachers in that school treated me like crap (.) in the end they never gave me a chance in that school (.) now I’m going to go into any details and I’m not gonna give out the name of the school because I don’t wanna get anyone in trouble plus it is over and done with and it’s not worth my time anymore (.) so basically I just wanna say that I left public school to go to a private school and it has been the best three years (.) I love it (.) the kids and the teachers treat me good (.) actually half the kids in that school have ADD just like me so (.) I can relate to them and (.) if (.) anybody from the school is watching this I just wanna thank everyone for helping me and supporting me (.) the teachers in my old school were run by a bunch of animals (.) but in this school you guys are actually human beings

However, Morin did go on to challenge dominant discourses when he emphasised that he would not change anything about himself and saw his difference as integral to his identity and essential to our humanity (see Table 30). His stance stemmed from an acceptance of his condition founded on his religious beliefs and also from a refusal to see his condition as a disability in his lived experience. This goes against the

orientation towards rehabilitation in medical readings of disability in dominant discourses identified by Goodley and Runswick (2012).

Table 30: Transcript excerpts of Mathew's video on his life with autism and ADD

Time Stamp	Utterances
07:51 08:14	If there were a cure for my autism or ADD (.) I would not take it because it makes me who I am and I don't want to change that (.) I am what I am (.) I was born like this God made me this way (.) and I am proud of myself (.) and I couldn't care less what people think of me
13:03 13:32	If there were a cure for autism or ADD (.) I will never take it because to me autism and ADD is a gift of life for me (.) it is a blessing so (.) so if you ask me and all the other people who are on the autism spectrum (.) they'll all tell you the same thing (.) none of us are looking for a cure (.) don't feel bad for us (.) just accept us for who we are
15:24 15:41	I just want to give the message out that autism for me is not disability (.) it is something God (.) I believe that God created to show humanity how to be human (0.5) to understand each other better

Cindy reflected both these aspects of Morin's discourse in her role-play (see Table 31). In G2's second role-playing session, Cindy began by echoing Morin's phenomenological identifications (see Table 31 below). After some initial out-of-character communication and in response to her peers' name-calling, she abruptly declared "I'm crying inside" and reinforced this declaration with two crying emoticons ":'(:'(" (see Table 31, Line 14). However, she expressed this emotion only for a fleeting moment. It seems this enactment did not sit comfortably with her.

Table 31: Cindy echoing Morin's identifications in the face of hostility

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Paul: haha u r autistic u cant think like normal people
2	Vanessa: HAHA
3	Shannon: Don't bully her you mean people!!!
4	Cindy: woah! hars..
5	Vanessa OCC: OMG sorry I was the protector
6	Cindy OCC: yes! U useless person!!
7	Vanessa: yeah don't bully her
8	Cindy OCC: :p
9	Vanessa OCC: what?!
10	Paul: muahahaha
11	Vanessa: dio;hsg;roankl;lejtig
12	Shannon OCC: You don't seem to mind being bullied hahaha

13 14	Vanessa: hey disabled say something Cindy: I am, I'm crying inside :'(:'(

Instead, she switched to mainly inverting her identifications (see Table 32 below). Unlike Morin, she displayed a lot more aggression. She showed her defiance by questioning her peers' use of the term "cripple" to label her (see Table 32, Line 12). She called Paul "dumb" and told him that he too was on her top ten list of people to kill (see Table 32, Lines 16, 27). The out-of-channel recording reveals that she frequently laughed at the insults directed at her. On the whole, she was bold, feisty, judgemental and defiant. Cindy's empowered persona meant that she was not always at the receiving end of the bullying and the taunts. Power relations both within character and out-of-character were very fluid and power differentials switched as the conversation turned. When Janet announced in *SL* that her real self had figured out how to use the gestures menu, Paul, Janet and Cindy railed against her to the point where she said she felt like she was the person taking on the role of the avatar with autism (see Table 32, Lines 24-32).

Table 32: Cindy inverted her identifications to empower herself

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Paul: disabled? more like crippled
2	Paul OCC: >:D
3	Shannon: uh really?
4	Paul: yes, really
5	Vanessa: how could u say such thing!!
6	Cindy: I have autism!!
7	Shannon: I thought you're born to be bullied --a
8	Shannon: Why are
9	Vanessa: Im gonna report this to the teacher!
10	Shannon: Why are you so meannnn
11	Paul: like im scared
12	Cindy: how does that make me a cripple??
13	Paul: and that's my idea you stole!
14	Paul: you are crippled in the brain
15	Janet: hahahahahaha!!!
16	Cindy: so dumb..^.^
17	Vanessa: u r cripple in the face
18	Cindy: epic [Janet] epic
19	Janet: omg that's bad…..
20	Shannon: I'll just eat popcorn and watch

21	Janet: thankyou thnakyou
22	Cindy: (whispers) gimme sm!
23	Paul: oh ur in my top 10 list of people to kill
24	Janet OCC: I just figured out how to use the gestures
25	Paul OCC: congrats
26	Vanessa OCC: stupi……..
27	Cindy: yea, mine too
28	Paul OCC: what an amazing achievement
29	Cindy OCC: muahahaha
30	Janet OCC: THANKYOU
31	Paul OCC: you're welcome
32	Janet OCC: now I felt i'm the autistic --a

Upon reviewing their communication, I realised that this small group made one-upmanship based on a play on language an important element in their communication and identifications. Hence, there was a preponderance of insults in the form of irony and quick comebacks. For example, in Table 32 above, Cindy asked Paul how did having autism make her cripple, his response was to extend his insult with the description that she was crippled in the brain, to which Vanessa responded by telling Paul that he was crippled in the face (see Table 32, Lines 1, 12, 14, 17). The same kind of exchange can be found in Table 33 below. Cindy's description of herself as "awesome", "unique" and "one-of-a-kind" were in response to insults directed at her when, first, Paul expressed his disdain at being near to her and then Janet denied the association of awesomeness and disability and tried to degrade her (see Table 33, Lines 1, 2, 3, 7). However, Cindy did not echo Morin's words describing how he embraced his autism as an integral part of his identity. Instead, she reconstituted her identifications by adding a new dimension. She engaged in trash talking[2] to boast about her disability (see Figure 23). This went beyond Morin's words. Morin had expressed his acceptance of his autism whereas Cindy celebrated it. Having said that, her response was not something she initiated entirely of her own accord. Her lived experience within *SL* was shaped by her group's interactions which made trash-talking

[2] Trash talking refers to "disparaging, taunting, or boastful comments especially between opponents trying to intimidate each other" (www.merriam-webster.com).

an important element. And yet, Cindy was able to identify and work on what the group recognised as *profit of distinction* or socially and institutionally recognised ways of elevating their position within a field (Bourdieu, 1991) and act agentively to employ the cultural capital of trash-talking at her disposal to position herself advantageously. It also suggests that identifications may be reconstituted in accordance with group norms and that group norms may be the impetus for reconstitution so that one seems more like the rest of the group members.

Table 33: Cindy's reconstituted identification involved trash talking

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Paul: ironically I'm the person who's nearest to the autistic person
2	Cindy: Yeah, cause I'm awesome. hahaha ((Janet clicks on the laughter gesture))
3	Janet: uh lame how can you be awesome you're DISABLED DUDE please know your place
4	Paul: I second that
5	Shannon: ohh….that's harsh
6	Janet: MUHAHAHAHAHHAHAHA
7	Cindy: cause disabilities make you unique! hah! one-of-a-kind..
8	Janet: No it doesn't! MINORITIES
9	Janet: hahahahahahaha

Figure 23: Cindy (on the right) confronting Janet's mockery in Second Life

Towards the end of the role-play, Cindy reverted to inverting her identifications with her defiant stance. In contrast to her initial enactment and identification, she refused to cry (see Table 34, Lines 6, 10). Her initial crying did not result in her peers empathising

with her. Given the culture of one-upmanship I mentioned in the previous paragraph, it seems crying would not have served any purpose apart from that of catharsis which Cindy did not need as she did not experience marginalisation as Morin did. It also seems that this defiant stance was her preferred discourse position and move; where she was perceived as a strong person who did not reveal her vulnerabilities.

Table 34: Cindy inverting her identifications

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Cindy: should i start crying now?
2	Vanessa: no. tmr
3	Janet: no you shant
4	Paul: yes
5	Paul: cry
6	Cindy: well, i won't. bwahahaha
7	Paul: person
8	Paul: cry
9	Paul: no wait
10	Cindy: in your face :P
11	Paul: animal
12	Paul: cry u animal
13	Paul: cry!!
14	Vanessa: that's really insulting…….
15	Shannon: I want to cry
16	Vanessa OCC: cry in real life
17	Janet: hahahahahaha!! omg don't cry I'll feel bad

What I witnessed in Cindy's case study was the initial stage of a confrontation. There was a very dynamic exchange of words during their interactions illustrating the "free play of antagonistic reactions" amongst the group members as mechanisms in their discourse in *SL* had not stabilised (Foucault, 1982, p. 795). The target of that free play was "a fixing of the power relationship" in a way that would enable them to exert control over their peers to serve their own interests (Foucault, 1982, p. 795). Cindy's case study thus exemplifies a "strategy of struggle", in particular, a confrontation strategy to undertake actions she thought her adversaries would have undertaken and what her adversaries might have viewed as a manifestation of her power so as to give herself the upper-hand (Foucault, 1982).

The group did not arrive at a conclusion during their role-play. However, Foucault (1982, p. 794) suggests that, at the conclusion of this struggle, there can be no consensus or compromise, no melding of the identities of two oppositional forces;

> Every power relationship implies, at least in potentia, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not super-imposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal.

In contrast to Foucault's aforementioned claim, I had initially believed Cindy's case study was illustrative of self-Other mergence. Her reconstituted identification by trash-talking with her peers was an instantiation of hybridising. Her inverted identifications also put her at the forefront of vigorously defending her identity as an avatar with a disability. She did not yield to the pressures of dominant discourses and tried to seize power for herself through her discourse. The power play of words was, therefore, a way for her to resist what dominant discourses perpetuate about disability. However, after I reviewed her data in the light of my literature review, it seems that Cindy's case study illustrates to a greater extent the transformation of the Other into the self rather than the transformation of the self into the Other. It was borne out of a desire to establish her profit of distinction amongst her group members to gain some sense of self-affirmation rather than a desire for the hidden Other (Levinas, 2006[1972]). Having said that, she did not try to downplay or conceal her avatar's disability. As such, Cindy exemplifies the shape-shifting individual who is able to hybridise her discourse to serve her own interests. The question then is how would an individual role-playing a member of a marginalised and oppressed group react if that individual attempted to but could not establish a profit of distinction?

5.3 I am in flux: Metamorphosing assemblages of the Other

In this section, I examine Rick and Shannon's case studies and the cases they had read prior to role-playing, namely, Tan and Fleischmann's cases respectively. I describe the phenomenon of fluctuating discourse moves in the case studies

represented here and account for them in terms of (i) “mixed contacts” where different identities come into contact with one another (Goffman, 1963) and (ii) lamination or over-layering of identities onto the avatar in *SL* (Goffman, 1981; Leander & McKim, 2003).

5.3.1 Let me belong: Searching for an entry point

I will not reiterate my description of Tan’s phenomenological identifications as these were described earlier in section 5.2.1. Instead, I briefly describe how Rick subverted his identifications relative to Tan’s at the start of the role-play when he described his wheelchair as “just a piece of scrap metal” (see section 4.2, Table 12, Line 15). Rick distanced himself from the wheelchair and thus subverted Tan’s representation of the wheelchair as being integral to his identity as a strong and independent individual. In so doing, Rick recast himself during the role-play and thus made it more difficult for him to identify with an important turning point in Tan’s personal experience. He chose not to, or could not, enact the case as was represented to him and, instead, reinterpreted aspects of Tan’s biography.

As I have already discussed in section 4.2 Rick’s justification of his place within a mainstream school like Tan had done, I now proceed to focus on the very rapid shifts in Rick’s discourse positions and moves towards the end of the role-play. He began with a more aggressive manoeuvre—an accusation directed at his peers about their own disinterest in their studies in order to silence their charge that the teachers were devoting too much time to help Rick at their expense (see Table 35, Line 1). In so doing, he extended his identifications relative to Tan’s. Tan did not overtly compare his academic performance with that of his peers but he did highlight his outstanding academic results (Tan, 2006). Following this, Rick made a sudden move to conform to his peers’ beliefs and assumptions about the importance of physical mobility by expressing his desire to possess their mobility (see Table 35, Line 2). He thus circumscribed his identifications. Although Tan underscored the importance of physical mobility, he did not value the physical mobility of the non-wheelchair user over that of

the wheelchair user (Tan, 2006). Rick then followed up by deconstructing the situation of teachers rendering him help with an interpretation that the teacher chose to help him. This was to exonerate him from blame (see Table 35, Line 10). I consider this an instance of circumscribing his identifications because Tan did not assign blame in any of his interactions in order to gain acceptance. Rick's somewhat conciliatory moves and tone were in marked contrast to those of his supportive peers who tried to silence his opponents with several comebacks (See Table 35, Lines 4, 6, 8). At the very end, his discourse positions and moves shifted from the rational when he provided explanations, to the emotional when he cried using an emoticon and thus circumscribed his identifications, to the physical when he withdrew from the group to echo Tan's sense of isolation and, finally rammed his wheelchair into his peers (see Table 35, Line 12; Figures 24, 25 and 26). Rick's final discourse move most strongly resembled Tan's response to being bullied. It is possible that Tan's aggressive response to bullying actually sanctioned such responses in Rick's eyes.

Table 35: Rick's rapid shifts in discourse

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Rick: You guys only want to play sports after school, where can you find time to consult teachers?
2	Rick: I would also like to be like you
3	Daniel: We are here because cher refuse to help us with our consultation
4	Henry: then get lost la
5	Steven: Well he is taking most of the teachers' time. So we don't have time to consult them
6	Henry: ur problem
7	Daniel: Can you stop getting all the attention from the teachers Im going to fail my summer test if this continues
8	Jeff: Since he is here now why don't you go find the teachers mr smarty pants
9	Steven: You better watch out Tom
10	Rick: Im not Teacher just want to help me
11	Daniel: Teachers are having a meeting
12	Rick: :'(
	((Rick backs away from the group))
	((Rick pushes his wheelchair forward and rams it into the others))

Figure 24: Rick ramming his wheelchair into Jeff

Figure 25: Rick withdrawing from the group

Figure 26: Rick explaining to the group

Of all the participants, Rick was the only one who had regular contact with people with disabilities because of his involvement in voluntary service. He would be considered a member of, in Goffman's (1963, p. 41) terminology, "the wise", because he has relatively deeper insights into the life of the stigmatised individual and is more sympathetic towards and probably more well-received by members of this community. This status is reflected in his post-role playing reflections illustrating his understanding of the basic longings which all humanity share, "The disabilities [*sic*] wanted to life [*sic*] their lives similar to us (i.e. make friends, interact, learning, playing, etc.) but some of us threat [*sic*] them differently due to the differences that they have". The fluctuations in his identifications thus came as a surprise to me as I had thought that he would have found it easy to emulate the lived experience as the disabled Other. However, by being privy to what it means to be stigmatised, he perhaps understood how important it was to gain acceptance within a community in order to fulfil these basic longings. As such, it is plausible that Rick altered his discourse moves in order to try out different ways to engage his opponents whenever he encountered hostile responses. He was basically trying to find a way to gain entry and recognition as an equal in the group discourse. This could have distracted him from establishing consistency in his enactments. Remaining within the role-playing frame is not solely within the individual

participant's control. According to Fine (1983, p. 203), the nature of the group interactions can shape the individual's ability to remain within this role-playing frame;

> The possibility of rapid oscillation of frames suggests that frame stability and change should be conceptualized as an interactional achievement of members [during gameplay] rather than as a function of stable situated meaning.

Moreover, I would argue that in emotionally charged encounters, such consistency of enactments would have been unlikely. In fact, his discourse moves were in line with the observation that "mixed contacts" involving interactions between the non-stigmatised and the stigmatised in a given context give rise to "anxious unanchored interactions" (Goffman, 1963, p. 29) which can sometimes result in the stigmatised individual "vacillat[ing] between cowering and bravado" (Goffman, 1963, p. 29). So Rick's shifting identifications were actually consistent with the way phenomenological identifications play out in the real world, depicting the realness of the unreal.

5.3.2 So what am I? Shifting laminations of self and the presumed Other

I now discuss Shannon's case study. Shannon analysed Fleischmann's text prior to her role-playing session. Therefore, I begin by discussing Fleischmann's phenomenological identifications in relation to dominant discourses. Fleischmann did not describe any encounters with overt forms of discrimination directed at her because of her autism. Instead, her writing provides insights into more subtle forms of marginalisation (see Table 36). Fleischmann was acutely aware of the impact her behaviour had on her peers. She acknowledged that her behaviour scared and distracted her peers (see Table 36, Lines 3-6, 15, 19-21). She expressed her desire to isolate herself physically and learn remotely so that her peers would not be able to witness her behaviour and be scared by it (see Table 36, Lines 19-21). She, therefore, preferred self-imposed marginalisation to conceal her behavioural differences as she felt the pressure to conform to classroom behavioural norms which she knew that she was incapable of doing. These norms encompass interaction patterns like speaking in turn and raising hands to ask a question to facilitate student participation and learning

in an enclosed space within a limited time. The norms were developed in conjunction with mass schooling and, like work norms in factories in the industrial age, they are geared towards facilitating mass production (Luke, 2000). They do not cater for individual differences. As such, Fleischmann's lack of conformity would have been all the more noticeable and "disruptive" to her peers' learning. What is of interest in relation to dominant discourses is that Fleischmann saw it as her responsibility to eliminate differences in order to preserve classroom norms rather than her peers' responsibility to be educated on the behavioural effects of autism. Her desire to render herself in this way exemplifies and legitimises the rendering of people with disabilities into a hidden Other in dominant discourses. An alternative way of reading her situation could be that her peers did not understand and, therefore, did not accommodate her differences. The onus then would be on them to educate themselves about autism so that they would not be afraid.

Table 36: First excerpt written by Carly Fleischmann in Carly's voice

Line	Written Text
1	My dad and mom say that everyone takes tests to help let people know what level they are at
2	But I have taken lots of test and I know what I can and cannot do
3	You want me to be in a room with three kids and concentrate on playing a game I probably cant do in the first place and at the same time try to control my behaviors
4	You don't have to be smart to know what is going to happen
5	I wont be able to play the game
6	I will end up scaring the other kids and I will feel bad inside and you will make me feel this way for a test
7	How does that help me?
8	Don't tell me it shows you what level I am at because you know what is going to happen
9	I try so hard to stop my behaviors but it is too hard
10	I can't walk by food without having a fight with my self
11	You want me to spell but it takes a lot of concentration just to hit one letter on the keyboard
12	It is so hard to be me
13	And you would not even understand
14	I wish I could put you in my body just for one day so you can feel what its like
15	All my friends are double my age because it's hard for me play with kids without scaring them
16	I was asked why I like MSN so much.

17	Its because I can talk to people without them seeing me hit the table or screaming
18	I want to clear something up. Just because I am hitting the table or screaming does not mean I am not reading or listening·
19	I wish I could go to school on MSN.
20	I could do the work but no one would have to be distracted by my behaviors.
21	And I could pay attention more to my work

However, Fleischmann did not wholly comply with dominant discourses. The views expressed in her writing reflect a number of conflicting stances with respect to dominant discourses (see Table 37 below). She was paradoxically both resistant to as well as compliant with a medical reading of autism. She expressed the view that medical intervention was useless unless people went through what the person with autism experienced (see Table 37, Lines 8-13). Then she went on to list some of her yearnings. Within that list are behaviours conforming to medical delineations of normality such as not experiencing excessive sensory reactions to physical stimuli (see Table 37, Line 22), having the ability to restrain impulses (see Table 37, Lines 25-26, 30) and to sustain concentration on a given task (see Table 37, Line 29). At the same time, she expressed resentment towards mindless drilling of behaviourist methods of therapy which one would associate with a medical reading of disability (see Table 37, Lines 14-19). However, without such behaviourist training, Fleischmann would not have attained the practice needed for her to communicate in writing as she did in the book. Fleischmann, therefore, comes across as a bundle of contradictions who hybridises and navigates at different times. That is precisely the point I want to make. Dominant discourses gloss over inconsistencies and conceal differences in an attempt to support an unquestioning belief in a particular norm and compliance with this norm. However, we are never consistent and we should not expect consistency of thought and actions in ourselves and those around us. Such shifts occur in tandem with the desire to establish new subjectivities to empower ourselves (Foucault, 1982). As such, our phenomenological identifications are constantly shifting as we act to align

with the ideologies of different people or groups such as Fleischmann's desire to associate herself with "normal kids" (see Table 37, Line 27). In sum, the general pattern of Fleischmann's discourse suggests that in her lived experiences she desired the normality of Taryn, her fraternal twin, while acknowledging her differentness as Carly so much so that the self-Other binary persisted for her (see Table 37, Lines 35-37).

Table 37: Second excerpt written by Carly Fleischmann in Carly's voice

Line	Written Text
1	I do want to go to school but I cant
2	Its not that I cant do the same work as all the other kids
3	I went to school before and even did well on tests
4	But I could not stay in class because of all my behaviors
5	I was hard for me to sit in the class without banging or screaming or standing
6	I tried so hard to control it
7	But it is too hard to do when I need to spell and do other things at the same time
8	My dad said that is why we see the doctor in the hospital she is trying lots of medication to see if she can help me
9	You say you to want to help me
10	But how can you when you don't know what its like to be me
11	You don't what it feels like when you can't sit still because your legs feel like they are on fire
12	Or it feels like a hundred ants are crawling up your arms
13	How can you help me when you don't know?
	.....
14	I hate when people ask me to do things that they already know I can or can't do
15	Like ask me to spell "chips" for a chip
16	It makes me feel like I am stupid
17	"spell your name." Good have a chip
18	"spell your name." You did not get it right I guess you are not smart
19	How does that make you feel?
20	My mom asked me a question that no one ever asks me
21	What do I want?
22	I want not to feel what's happening in my body
23	I want to stay at home
24	I want to be like every other kid
25	I cant sit for long times or even walk past an object without having fights in my head
26	I know I can't take the object but my mind is fighting with me
27	I want to be able to go to a school with normal kids but not have to worry
28	about them getting upset or scared if I can't help myself and I hit a table or

	scream
29	I want to be able to read a book by myself without having to tell myself to sit still and not close the book and follow each word and concentrate
30	I want to sit at a table with my mom and dad and not be worrying about what my body might do that I might not be able to control
31	I want to be able to talk to people and have them understand me the first time
32	Not respell over and over again
33	It's too hard
34	What I want is to have, someone programming for me that knows what I am feeling inside
35	What I want is to be like taryn
36	But I cant
37	because I am Carly

I now examine Shannon's discourse moves in the light of Fleischmann's conflicting stances in relation to dominant discourses. Shannon's identifications fluctuated in an extreme fashion but with less frequency than Rick's. In G2's first role-playing session, Shannon positioned herself as a bully (see Table 38). She first initiated what she perceived to be a form of "bullying" when another student who had walked in circles said that he was dizzy and she mocked him by saying "serve you right. hahahaha". She later reflexively questioned the consistency of this statement with her role when she said, "wait why am I bullying people" (see Table 38, Lines 9, 12). The role card Shannon received may have shaped her response. It described how she was being bullied by her peers and thus implied that she was a victim. However, the instructions in the role card also stated that she could deviate from the description provided in the role card as long as she ensured that her role was consistently enacted. Nevertheless, Shannon initially considered her remark incongruent with her role, that is, she could not envisage a person with a disability being a bully. This reveals what she presumed about the disabled Other. During the subsequent in-world group reflections, Shannon tentatively suggested that the reason for bullying her peers was "to scare them?" and during the second FGD, Shannon explained that she wanted to "bully them before they

bully you". These point to her attempt to establish this new subjectivity in order to empower her virtual persona.

Table 38: Shannon hesitates being a bully and then makes the decision not to be a victim

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Cindy OCC: We are not allowed to flyyyy
2	Cindy OCC: :'(
3	Paul OCC: I know right
4	Paul OCC: have to walk around the girls instead
5	Cindy OCC: no fun :(
6	Shannon OCC: = =;;;;
7	Cindy OCC: so walk in a circle instead?
8	Paul: im dizzy now
9	Shannon: serve you right hahahaha
10	Cindy: no kidding.. even looking at it makes me dizzy -.-
11	Paul OCC: how to do gestures?
12	Shannon OCC: wait why am I bullying people
13	Cindy OCC: hahahaha yea!
14	Cindy OCC: we r supposed to bully u!!

She next activated the gesture menu, placed her cursor over the crying gesture and paused for five seconds (see Figure 27). However, she chose not to click it and briefly considered other gestures, symbols and utterances such as "bored", "embarrassed", ":-(" and "hey" before exiting the menu. That pause and her eventual decision not to enact a behavior typically associated with those who have been victimised shows that she thus made a conscious decision at this juncture not to play the part of a victim as well. This perhaps reflects the lamination of an empowered self onto her avatar identity in *SL* as Shannon was averse to playing the part of a victim in the real world.

Figure 27: Shannon placing her cursor over the cry gesture option in Second Life

The following excerpt illustrates how Shannon acted aggressively and sought to intimidate her peers (see Table 39). When Cindy subsequently wondered out loud how to bully Shannon, Shannon responded with the suggestion, “why not I bully you instead” (see Table 39, Line 4) and followed this up with laughter “mwahahahahahahahahha” (Muwahahahaha [Def. 1], 2014) (see Table 39, Line 8) which is usually interpreted as evil or threatening in social media communications. She thus inverted her identifications relative to Fleischmann whose resistance was of a passive-aggressive nature.

Table 39: Shannon, the bully

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Cindy: how do we bully (Shannon)?
2	Cindy: help!
3	Paul: im supposed to be helping her
4	Shannon: Why not I bully you instead
5	Paul: STAY AWAY AGRRESSORS
6	Cindy: she doesn’t evn need protection..
7	Cindy: I need protection frm her!
8	Shannon: mwahahahahahahahahha
9	Paul: :O
10	Cindy: :P
11	Cindy: u r evil, just evil :(

	((Shannon faces Cindy and presses the get lost gesture followed by the hey gesture))
12	Cindy: this is not working.

However, Shannon abruptly switched to being the victim in the following excerpt (see Table 40). Just as Shannon was enacting threatening laughter (see Table 40, Line 12) in response to Cindy's threatening smile, she stopped herself short and said "no wait" (see Table 40, Line 13) and then re-positioned her stance to be what she considered consistent with her role as a person subjected to bullying by, first, appealing to join the group (see Table 40, Line 14) and, second, selecting the crying gesture. As such, Shannon demonstrated meta-level awareness of her enactments during the course of her role-play. She stopped a couple of times to evaluate whether these enactments were consistent with what she perceived to be reflective of a student with a disability. This perception of a person with a disability as a victim was, however, limiting and she thus circumscribed her identifications relative to Fleischmann's.

Table 40: Shannon, the victim

Line	Utterances during role-play
1	Janet: what's happening?
2	Paul: booo
3	Cindy: nothing!
4	Paul: stay away from my friend
5	Paul: dont hurt her
6	Paul: how dare you
7	Paul: I dont like this
8	Paul: please
9	Paul: I will complain
10	Paul: to the teacher
11	Cindy: hello…(evil smile)
12	Shannon: mwahahaha
13	Shannon: no wait
14	Shannon: Let me join you :D
	((Shannon selects the crying gesture))

Shannon's shift from aggressor to victim and, in particular, her overtly conscious endeavor to enact a victim might have been due to several other factors. She could

have misinterpreted her teacher and researcher's expectations. She was perhaps influenced by prevailing images of disability in dominant discourses. Underpinning these factors is her view of this victim identity in functional terms, that is, that this was the basic identity she thought she had to adopt when interacting with her peers as an avatar with a disability as opposed to giving her avatar a unique combination of attributes to support her playing out the story in *SL* (Williams, et al., 2011). She was laminating what she presumed to be the identity of the disabled Other onto her avatar. Shannon saw differences where there were none. There was no incongruity between playing the part of a bully and playing the avatar with a disability. This realisation of Shannon's presumed identity of people with disabilities was truly disconcerting to me. This was where the critical literacy programme could and should have come in to expose and root out the assumption that people with disabilities are fundamentally victims—whether they are victims of their circumstances or victims of their own doing. As a researcher, I think I did not prepare the research participants enough in this regard. I discuss this in greater depth in the next chapter.

Shannon's fluctuating discourse moves were a reflection of her abruptly shifting laminations. These changes in laminations may be accounted for in terms of Goffman's (1959) analytical concepts of sincerity and cynicism. Sincerity and cynicism are polar ends of a continuum reflecting the extent to which a role-player believes or does not believe in his/her or others' performance of a role. Shannon's vacillation was due to her difficulty locating herself permanently on one end of the spectrum;

> [Sincerity or cynicism] provides the individual with a position which has its own particular securities and defences, so there will be a tendency for those who have travelled close to one of these poles to complete the voyage (Goffman, 1959, p. 9).

To conclude, I characterise both Rick's and Shannon's discourse moves as fluctuating as they navigated in and out of self-Other binary and self-Other mergence. They navigated somewhat erratically across the spectrum of phenomenological

identifications as their discourse moves fluctuated. Both Rick and Shannon experienced difficulty in engaging in "pretense awareness" (Fine, 1983, p. 188) where the role-player has to pretend to be ignorant of all knowledge and experience attained outside of this character so as to facilitate engrossment in the fantasy self. Moreover, because role-players more effectively role-play characters whose perceived essential traits are similar to their own or when they can easily mask the dissimilarities (Fine, 1983), role-playing a character with a disability can be more challenging. Even so, these metamorphosing assemblages of themselves gave me insights into the kind of support and interventions people would need if they were to enact the Other. Rick and Shannon's case studies reflect the complexity of enacting the Other because of (i) persistent power differentials, (ii) highly fluid and unpredictable group interactions (iii) superficial renderings of the Other and (iii) the over-layering of different identities at the intersection of multiple spaces. (I discuss the over-layering of identifications in greater depth in section 6.2.)

5.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I analysed the participants' discourse moves to see how they responded with respect to the antecedent case they had read or viewed when they were placed in a power relation different from that to which they were accustomed. My purpose was to identify and describe patterns in their phenomenological identifications and thus develop a preliminary framework to represent these processes of identification. My framework recognises that comparisons can only be made with a specific antecedent case. As such my participants' discourse moves say more about their enactments in relation to a specific rather than a generalised Other as they situated themselves along the continuum from imitating the Other to recasting the Self. And yet, the antecedent cases (Tan, Morin, Fleischmann) themselves depict shifting discourse positions and moves of people with disabilities within their own narratives (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012). This complicates the identification process further as my participants (i) might not have fully appreciated the reasons for these shifts and

(ii) might have chosen only one facet of a configuration of complex discourse positions and moves to emulate.

Because the participants regarded the VW as an exploratory space where identities were not rigidly cast, their case studies show a lot of variability across and within the different participants' phenomenological identifications with the Other. These shed light on the different ways in which identifications can be used to affirm or transform power relations. Their rendering of the Other also complicates understandings of how dominant discourses function and illustrates how identifications cannot always be clearly delineated as conforming to or opposing dominant discourses. There are many shades of grey and our understanding of power relations and their associated identifications are best served by recognising these nuances and complexities. Having said that, it is also important to recognise that the participants may be willing to engage in phenomenological identifications inconsistent with their own worldviews only when these are limited to the confined space of the VW and do not intrude upon their real-world identities. Their phenomenological identifications in *SL* might not reflect what they would do in real life.

Chapter 6: Traversing Sociological Identifications

Masquerade!
Every face a different shade . . .
Masquerade!
Look around -
there's another
mask behind you!

The Phantom of the Opera

The quotation above draws attention to the multiplicity of masks donned by attendees of a masquerade to project something other than the self in order to conceal and deceive. However, my standpoint is that these masks constitute the self. On a daily basis, we switch our masks numerous times to convey our sociological identifications or group affiliations. In this chapter, I examine my participants' discourse on dis/ability to gain insights into their sociological identifications. I thematise their understandings of dis/ability mainly from data collected towards the end of the study. I examine how this discourse on dis/ability at different stages and contexts of the study over-layered, inflected or folded into one another (Burnett & Merchant, 2014; Kell, 2011; Leander & McKim, 2003) in order (i) to identify what specific understandings about dis/ability they pulled across contexts and (ii) to discern general patterns in their sociological identifications from these understandings. Finally, I address the conditions facilitating or impeding immersion as a means of supporting their sociological identifications with the Other.

6.1 Now I know in part: Understandings of the disabled Other

In this section, I examine my participants' sociological identifications in terms of what they *reported* to have learnt about people with disabilities. I drew the data mainly from the second focus group discussions held at the end of the study with the three groups (only Janet from G2 was absent) and supplemented these with some data from the case analyses held before the role-play (no missing data) and post-role-playing reflections (only the data for Jeff from G1 were missing). I avoided citing from the

supplementary data source when the main data source adequately illustrated the theme. I used constant comparative analysis to generate broad patterns and categories reflecting their understandings of dis/ability through systematic comparison of specific incidents in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

These themes on their understanding of dis/ability comprise my participants looking beyond behaviours to acknowledge the factors driving them, acknowledging similarities, accepting differences, recognising abilities and not just disabilities, being prepared to respond positively in future interactions, asserting the ungeneralisable nature of the cases they had read or viewed and conceding people's inclination to resist change. Most of these understandings arose from their reading or viewing of their chosen cases rather than from the role-play.

Looking beyond surface behaviours

Daniel, Shannon and Cindy said they better appreciated the extent of the challenges confronting people with disabilities. Steven and Rick expressed greater understanding of the behaviours displayed by some people with disabilities.

> G1 FGD
>
> Daniel: Through the case study (.) you actually know (0.5) how are they living and what troubles and difficulties they are facing everyday (0.5) they actually don't want this to happen to them (.) and learn how to (0.5) understand them.
>
> Steven: For me (.), is that you learn more about them (.) like how their disability works (.) like for example (.) autism (.) so through the case study (.) I learnt (.0.5) there are certain reasons to how they are acting. It's not just about what I think last time (.) so it changed my perspective.
>
> Rick: Initially I don't know why they are acting this way (.) after looking through (.) then I realise oh (.) so it's because of this that they're acting this way.
>
> G2 FGD
>
> Shannon: I mean like (.) before my impression of the disabled was kind of (.) the impression of what they go through is like (.) much lighter than what they actually go through (.) so this information allow me to understand them.

> Cindy: Because you actually get to see them (.) and the fact that they went through all that trouble (.) and you know (.) you can see how hard it for them to like (.) say (.) and then (.) how the guy had to actually prepare a really long script (.) so (.) the effort that they go through (.) just to let the world know that (.) you know (.) they're not so different (.) it kind of (inaudible)

Acknowledging similarities

Shannon placed people with/out autism on equal intellectual footing when she affirmed that the thoughts of people with autism were no different to those without. Cindy emphasised shared intrinsic attributes rather than differing external traits, declaring the commonality of all humanity.

> G2 Individual Case Analysis
>
> Shannon: People with autism are able to think like other people, but it's just that they have no control over their body sometimes.
>
> G2 Individual Post Role-playing Reflection
>
> Cindy: It is not easy to fit in as everyone is more concerned on what is on the outside but when you truly get to know the person, you realise that we are all the same.

Accepting differences

Their discourse still showed some evidence of differentiation in terms of their use of the phrase "normal people" to distinguish people with/out disabilities. This might be in part due to a lack of understanding of language norms and how to avoid Othering in discourse. Nevertheless, their discourse reveals increased acceptance of differences. Yvonne recognised that people with disabilities had different abilities and different ways of accomplishing a task rather than inferior abilities. Cassandra acknowledged differences not only in terms of abilities, but also more individualised differences based on personality and points of view and underscored the importance of accepting one another and learning to work through these differences. In line with this idea of accepting differences, Samantha referred to Morin's declaration that he would not

change anything about himself and that he was not looking for a cure for autism. What Morin said struck a chord with a number of participants and several of them, in their analysis of his case, quoted him. Samantha expressed her admiration for his stand.

G3 FGD

Yvonne: Then I think (.) at first I thought it's because they can't express (.) but it's just that (.) they (.) just not doing it how normal people do it.

Cassandra: Despite they disabled (.) they still able to overcome difficulties and accept their difference with the more normal people (.) so it's like everybody have different personality (.) different characteristics (.) we have to accept each other (.) despite (0.5) some conflicts or disagreements between us (.) we still have to like (.) sort it out first (.) because different personalities different views (.) so (.) yah (.) that's what I wanted to say.

Samantha: I see it differently (.) because like (.) for my case study (0.5) the person was like saying that if there is a cure for him (.) he wouldn't want to take it away (.) like (.) whoa.

Interviewer (Natasha): Okay (.) the one with (.) erm (.) autism (.) yeah (.) he wouldn't want to take it.

Samantha: yah (.) then I was like (.) okay (.) that's cool.

Seeing abilities rather than disabilities

Henry, Vanessa and Cassandra attended to the abilities demonstrated in the cases they had chosen. Henry expressed the view that having disabilities need not limit what people with disabilities can accomplish. Vanessa was impressed by Charisse's perseverance and determination to speak despite the difficulty she had in articulating words. Likewise, Cassandra considered Connolly inspirational and underscored the drive which some individuals with disabilities demonstrated.

G1 FGD

Henry: so yah (.) I didn't really know about that (.) until I saw the case study (.) and realised that (.) even though you're disabled you can still accomplish a lot (.) that's what I think I learnt.

G2 FGD

Vanessa: Cerebral palsy (.) The girl was suffering from the disability (.) and then she seemed to be very difficult to speak (.) then she tried to

speak for twenty minutes (.) I was very impressed by that (.) her experience (.) also very touching.

G3 FGD

Cassandra: so it's like a motivation for us to-

Cassandra: by their (0.5) physically disabled (.) they still can motivate themselves.

Interacting positively

Daniel, Paul, Cindy, Yvonne and Evan reported that what they had learnt about people with disabilities affected them on a personal level in that they would respond more positively in their interactions with them in future. They said that they would be more patient, empathetic, supportive, less judgemental and friendly.

G1 FGD

Daniel: Because of the case study (.) then you start to sympathise with them (.) then you actually know how they feel (.) then you can actually help them.

G2 FGD

Paul: Like maybe the attitude we portray towards them (.) be a little bit more kinder (.) more patient with them (.) because they do take time to do some stuff (.) so be patient and (.) yah (.) be supportive.

Cindy: A bit like I am more willing to help them (.) like (.) if they're facing a problem (.) I'll (0.5) be more eager to help them and more compassionate with them.

G3 FGD

Yvonne: Just (.) get to know them better (.) then (.) don't let us judge them so much.

Evan: And how you would like (.) react more friendly (inaudible)

At the same time, I also identified some themes which point to the limited impact this study might have had on their sociological identifications. These pertained to the participants' claims about the ungeneralisable quality of each case and the individual's resistance to change.

Ungeneralisable quality of each case

Henry observed that the uniqueness of the cases would preclude generalising understandings of disabilities gleaned from in these cases. In so doing, he draws attention to the instinct to differentiate, compare and develop new categories. This inclination may work to the disadvantage of people with disabilities if they are constantly being compared to some other person with a disability in order to gauge the severity of their condition. The consequence is that the impairment and measurements of the impairment then take centre stage.

> G1 FGD
>
> Henry: Okay (.) but the disabled (.) because (.) that case study we did was like focused on that disability (.) that disorder (.) and then (.) when you meet face-to-face with a guy with a different disorder (.) it wouldn't really affect much (.) because to me I feel like this guys is suffering from a different disorder which is not the same (.) so could be better off or something like that (.) so not relevant like that.

Resistance to change

Yvonne opined that the curricular resources and role-play would have had minimal impact because of the human tendency to resist change. She argued that while people may seem receptive to new understandings of dis/ability on the surface, they would persist in thinking about people with disabilities in the same light. The façade of acceptance makes the situation more problematic as prejudices cannot be identified and addressed directly.

> G3 FGD
>
> Yvonne: because like even if we met and everything (.) but we still don't (.) because she (inaudible) (.) maybe view the disabled just the same (.) that's what I think (.) because we can't change our opinion just because after we watch a video or role-play (.) then we change our idea (.) because secret (.) even in ourselves (.) we sure think like how pitiful they are (0.5) you tend to (.) like pity them in the way that they can't do stuff that we-

In sum, my participants' reported perspectives reflect that, as a result of their reading or viewing of the cases, their understandings of dis/ability did undergo some transformation. Does this necessarily mean that they identified with people with disabilities as a social grouping or that their perspectives were permanently set on a new course? Not necessarily so. However, the emergent themes suggest that my participants were beginning to understand the worldview of dis/ability represented in these cases and that the boundaries demarcating them and us were dissolving. These are hopeful signs that they were on route to developing sociological identifications with the Other.

6.2 Labyrinth upon labyrinth: Complicating group affiliations across spaces

In this section, I chose segments from several artefacts Daniel and Evan had produced during the course of this study, tracing what they had read, said or written about dis/ability in a given "space-time" or socially constructed space (Leander & McKim, 2003, p. 212) which was later employed or adapted to produce a different but related space-time. In another study, my colleague and I traced the paths our participants had taken between their chosen texts and developed network diagrams to illustrate differences in the extensiveness of their network of interactions with texts in the formal and informal domains and how closely intertwined these chosen texts were with one another (Rappa & Tang, 2013). In this study, however, because the same text types (e.g. group interview dialogue, in-world chat, reflections, expository essay) were produced by the participants and the focus is not on their choice of texts, there is a need to go beyond the flow or path or network of texts to do a fine-grained analysis of the discourse they produced. The intent is to examine *how* space-times are forged, delineated and expressed through the individual reconfiguring various material and discursive practices (Leander & McKim, 2003). Leander and McKim (2003, p. 213) have termed the examination of this productive process "siting". Siting has been adopted by a number of scholars who have variously explored (i) analytical approaches to facilitate perspectival understandings through lists as ways of

provisionally organising selected knowledge, walks through a provisionally laid out path enabling immersion in specific experiences along the way, cases as unique and destabilising yet instructive depictions of a phenomenon, maps to show spatial relations between objects within a site (Law & Moll, 2002) and stacking up multiple tellings of an experience (Burnett & Merchant, 2014) and (ii) the impact of interactions between space-times such as "classroomness" or the classroom as a multiple-layered space with distinctive practices yet allowing for fluidity and hybridity (Burnett, 2014, p. 2) and how the physical/affective and material/virtual dimensions inflect one another in novel and complex ways (Burnett & Merchant, 2014).

I build on this work through my case studies. I traced along a chronological trajectory fragments of Daniel and Evan's discourse across their artefacts illustrating how each iteration of discourse on dis/ability across space-times represented a different and shifting understanding of dis/ability. In linking discourse across space-times, I sought to examine "the ways that this interconnecting mesh of emotions, materialities, activities and intentionalities inflect and interfere with one another" (Burnett & Merchant, 2014, p. 11). To do this, I employed Burnett and Merchant's (2014) rendering of Kwa's (2002) notion of "baroque complexity" to examine the interlacing of the materiality of their real world experience and the immateriality of their experience in *SL*, their direct and indirect connections to and experiences with a network of people with disabilities and a variety of artefacts on dis/ability, and the novel configurations of discourse they drew from this network to produce various understandings of dis/ability. I also examine how identities were laminated or over-layered onto another context (Goffman, 1981; Leander & McKim, 2003). In so doing, I address how all these impacted their sociological identifications with the Other or non-Other across space and time. Given that my focus is on exploring my participants' enactments as the Other, the starting point of my analysis was their discourse in *SL* and their discourse about their enactments in *SL*. I compared their discourse in *SL* with the other texts they had read

or produced to search for connections in the form of convergence and divergence and then began establishing links across these texts.

6.2.1 The mediating identity: Student identity as an inserted identity in sociological identifications

I begin my analysis with an examination of Daniel's case study. His case study provides insights into the complexity of group affiliations, illustrating how his discourse both converged and diverged from several strands of discourse on dis/ability arising from the layering of multiple identities. In Table 41 below, I list segments of Daniel's discourse from the first focus group discussion, his paragraph and his analysis of Tan's case, some of which were reproduced later in his essay. I also extracted segments of Fleischmann's discourse which Daniel appeared to echo later in his own discourse from the role-play chat, his post role-playing reflections, essay and the second focus group discussion. I linked these segments on the basis of similar words, phrasings, examples and stances.

When I examined Table 41, I noticed Daniel's prior personal interactions with a friend who used a wheelchair fundamentally shaped his understanding of what was possible for a person with her disability to accomplish. Despite pointing out that she faced constraints in participating in physical activities, he acknowledged that she was "still able to cope" (see part 1, marked in blue). Moreover, he had been provided several examples in his secondary school of people with physical disabilities (e.g. visual-, speech-, hearing-impairments and absence of limbs) who had overcome these disabilities to accomplish tasks considered impossible for them to do. He used these examples in his essay to support the view of people with disabilities having superior abilities in some respects, being a role-model and being independent (see part 7, marked in blue). This celebratory introduction to the world of dis/ability when he was in secondary school resulted in him imbibing the view of people with physical disabilities as people with a great deal of tenacity and courage and people who sometimes have superior abilities. When he analysed Tan's case, he stated a similarity between himself

and Tan in terms of their academic pursuits, “He is still able to further his studies like us”, he saw the only difference between himself and Tan in terms of Tan’s superior physical and mental strength in his statements, “He can go for maratons [*sic*]” and “He is mentally stronger than me” and he held Tan up as a role-model by quoting from his memoir and declaring, “This shows that Dr Tan is extremely positive and optimistic. We should learn from him.” (see part 3, marked in blue). All these served to erode any perceived distinctions between himself and the disabled Other or to persuade him to present these differences in a positive light.

In contrast, Daniel had no prior knowledge of autism and no contact with people with autism. His first understanding of autism was drawn from Fleischmann’s case. From Table 41, it appears that Daniel was making a conscious effort to echo Fleischmann’s words during his role-play. His chat utterances were very similar to the statements Fleischmann made in her memoir. For example, Fleischmann had written about her inability to control her body, “If I could stop it [autism] I would but it is not like turning a switch off” and Daniel likewise wrote, “I cant control my body movements and I cant express myself like how you people can”. Fleischmann declared her desire to attend a mainstream school, “I want to be able to go to school with normal kids” and Daniel too explained to his peers his decision to attend a mainstream school by declaring, “I want to have a chance to learn like everybody else”. Fleischmann asked people to refrain from judging her, “Take time to know me before you judge me” and Daniel similarly declared, “don’t judge me you silly guy”. Fleischmann stated her desire for people to empathise with her, “I wish I can put you in my body for just one day so you can feel what its like” and Daniel likewise expressed the same desire when he wrote, “If only you can switch bodies with me, you would understand” (see parts 4 and 5, marked in green). As such, it seems that during the role-play he echoed the words she had employed to make her disability comprehensible to her readership and to help them understand and accept her position. This was an instantiation of a lamination or over-

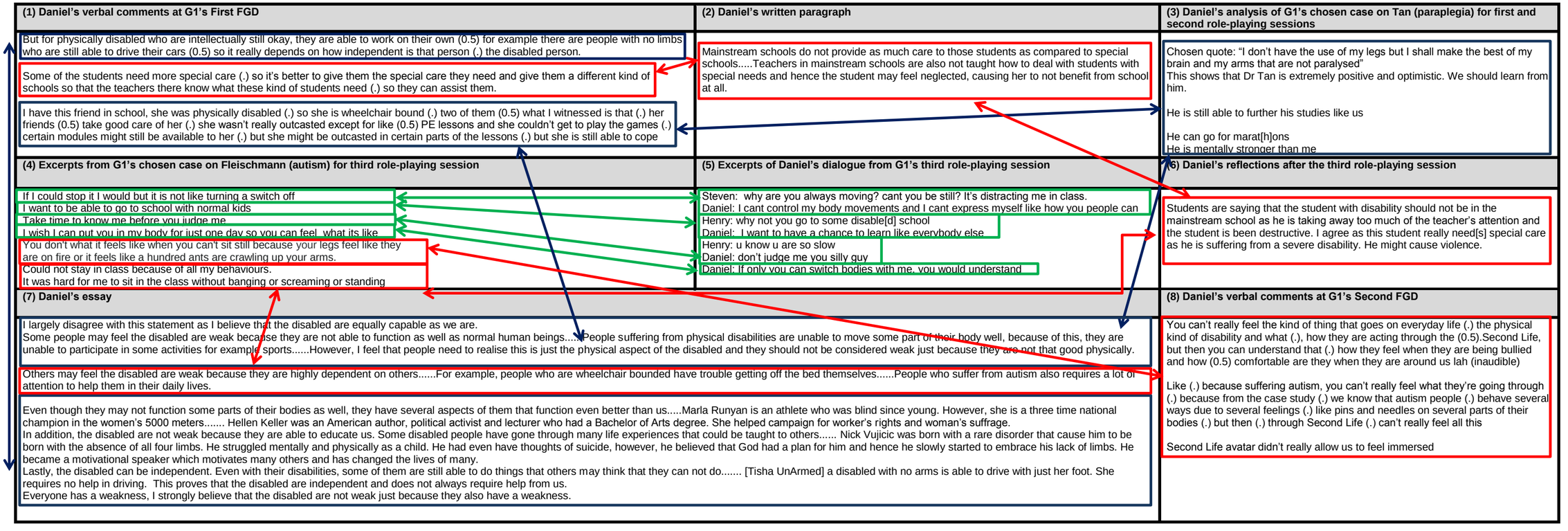
layering of Fleischmann's identity on Daniel's avatar identity which seems illustrative of his sociological identification with the Other.

However, Daniel's post role-playing reflections shed a different light on his understandings of dis/ability, and autism specifically, which Daniel derived from Fleischmann's case. In response to the question on his stand on what the characters in the role-play said about the student with a disability, Daniel proffered the view that the student with autism "should not be in a mainstream school as he is taking away too much of the teacher's attention and the student is be[ing] destructive". He refers to autism as a "severe disability" and says that the student "might cause violence" (see part 6, marked in red). Despite Fleischmann's efforts to demystify autism and increase acceptance of people with autism, it seems that Daniel's focus was on the Fleischmann's description of the behavioural effects of autism, "But I could not stay in class because of all my behaviors. It was hard for me to sit in the class without banging or screaming or standing" and "You don't what it feels like when you can't sit still because your legs or feel like they are on fire or it feels like a hundred ants are crawling up your arms" (see part 4, marked in red). This also suggests that Daniel was aware of certain classroom practices Fleischmann would not be able to conform to such as the conversational turn-taking during whole-class and group discussion, raising hands to ask a question and working quietly on a task during independent learning. Fleischmann's case confirmed his initial assertions during the first focus group discussion and in his paragraph that people with disabilities should not be studying in a mainstream school as they need care and assistance which teachers in a mainstream school would not be able to provide (see parts 1 and 2, marked in red).

Daniel's interpretation of Fleischmann's actions as "destructive" and "might cause violence" is unusual given that the excerpts the participants read did not describe any instances of Fleischmann physically harming others or damaging her environment. Perhaps, there is an unseen and unknown layer which I was not privy to which mediated his interpretation of Fleischmann's actions. Alternatively, if Fleischmann's

text itself resulted in the meaning he brought to bear on Fleischmann's actions, then his focus may be on control or rather Fleischmann's lack of control over her body. This stands in contrast to the extreme discipline and control over both mind and body described in Tan's case and exercised by the people with physical disabilities whom Daniel cited as examples to support the view that the disabled were not weak. I had previously referred to how such people had been characterised in the literature on disability as overcomers (Connolly, 2009; Gray, 2009; Moser, 2005) (although Moser (2005) did point out that high-risk sports necessitated yielding to rather than controlling bodily instincts).

Table 41: Discourse on dis/ability drawn from the artefacts Daniel read or produced



Daniel's rendering of the two cases (Tan and Fleischmann) helped me to some extent unravel the binary of in-group and out-group affiliations and hence, complicate the notion of sociological identifications with the Other. Goffman (1963) argues that group alignments with the stigmatised entail observing a code of conduct objecting to the extremes of ministrelization and normification. In ministrelization, identification with the non-Other results in seeing the self through the eyes of the non-Other and this leads to a negative self-Othering process as in the case of an elderly person conforming to the stereotype of being grumpy or senile. In normification, identifications with the non-Other take the form of concealing differences and/or transforming the self to become more like the non-Other such as by not voicing the difficulties they experience as a result of their disabilities. The stances or actions taken by those who identify with the stigmatised and non-stigmatised are described by Goffman (1963, pp. 137-147) in Table 42 below.

Table 42: Stances and actions to align oneself with the stigmatised and non-stigmatised

Alignment with Stigmatised	Alignment with Non-Stigmatised
• adopting a "militant and chauvinistic line" • embracing "a secessionist ideology" • "giv[ing] praise to the assumed special values and contributions of his kind" • "flaunt[ing] [positive] stereotypical attributes" • questioning the sincerity of non-stigmatised	• fulfil normative standards to the best of his ability yet avoid giving the impression of denying his differentness • ignoring the prejudices of the non-stigmatised • patiently and sympathetically educating the non-stigmatised about his humanity reducing tension by addressing the stigma matter-of-factly, with humour or in serious conversation and by being receptive to unsolicited offers of interest, sympathy and help • refraining from making further demands • avoid conveying the impression that he is encumbered by his differentness or that this differentness distinguishes him from the non-stigmatised

From Goffman's (1963) standpoint, the data from Daniel's case study would suggest that Daniel displayed affiliations with the non-stigmatised as he had focused on

educating his peers about his condition in a matter-of-fact style. He displayed none of the behaviours to align himself with the stigmatised. However, contrary to aligning with the non-stigmatised, Daniel imposed a demand upon his peers to recognise his right to be in a mainstream school, “I deserve my rights to be here” (see section 4.3.2, Table 19, Line 36). This suggests that group affiliations and, hence, sociological identifications with the Other are far more complex and cannot be reduced to conformity to or deviance from a list of stances or enactments. So what am I to make of Daniel’s sociological identifications? After having traced the flow of his interactions with the texts he produced, I began examining the “boundedness” of his interactions with texts as described by Burnett (2014, p. 204) as this would reveal what he considered salient to his understanding of dis/ability;

> Looking at boundedness emphasises who or what is included in a literacy event and who or what is excluded. A focus on flow foregrounds the “paths of literacy practice” generated as individuals move between different resources, purposes and media.

Daniel does make distinctions between the various kinds of disability. These distinctions, however, cannot always be not neatly categorised into physical disabilities versus neurological-physiological disabilities. In his essay, he cited the examples of those who use wheelchairs and those with autism to support the view held by some that people with disabilities were dependent on others. In the same essay, he then went on to show why people with disabilities were not weak by citing examples of individuals with physical disabilities who had accomplished a variety of tasks which their disabilities would have made accomplishing difficult. He did not, however, provide any example of a person who had a disability other than a physical disability who had overcome the odds. This suggests that the distinction he makes begins with the physical versus neurological-physiological disabilities and then proceeds to what that person with a physical disability does with his/her body and what this reflects about his/her attitude in life. As such, his sociological identifications with the Other seemed confined to people with physical disabilities who were passionate overcomers. It is this

specific group for which his questioning the essay's assertion that the "disabled are weak" applies, "Everyone has a weakness, I strongly believe that the disabled are not weak just because they also have a weakness".

But how can I account for Daniel endeavouring to echo Fleischmann's words during the role-play? I briefly mentioned the notions of sincerity and cynicism in section 5.3.1. I now elaborate here how this notion can provide insights into Daniel's sociological identifications. Daniel's "primary framework" or the "commonsense understandings of the real world" (Fine, 1983, p. 186) could have been his student identity as opposed to his avatar identity with its more limited knowledge. Because frame switching occurs within a nested structure comprising a collection of identities associated with the different frames (Fine, 1983), it was crucial that I did not examine the avatar identity in isolation but also consider how, in this case, the student and avatar identities simultaneously shaped the construction of meanings about the Other. It is thus plausible that Daniel could have been sincere about his own enactments as a *student playing an avatar with a disability* and, hence, he endeavoured to do his best to echo the discourse of his antecedent case, but he remained sceptical of his role as *an avatar with a disability*. During the second focus group discussion, I was surprised to learn that Daniel, who had echoed his antecedent case most frequently, expressed the most scepticism about the effectiveness of the role-play in helping them to identify with the Other. Daniel remarked that, "Second Life avatar didn't really allow us to feel immersed". He pointed out that he could not feel the same physical sensations Fleischmann had felt, "we know that autism people (.) behave several ways due to several feelings (.) like pins and needles on several parts of their bodies (.) but then (.) through Second Life (.) can't really feel all this" (see part 8, marked in red). His echoing of Fleischmann's words thus reflects the "classroom-ness" of the study or the impact of the "situatedness of the classroom settings" (Burnett, 2014, p. 193) on the role-play in that Daniel drew on his *student identity* to propel his enactments. As such, it would be

misleading to take his echoing of Fleischmann's words as evidence of his sociological identification with the Other, more specifically the autistic Other.

6.2.2 The mediating discourse: Genre as space-time impacting sociological identifications

I now proceed to discuss my analysis of Evan's case study. His case study provides variations on the theme of complicating group affiliations, attending to how genre as a reified and ritualised space-time can shape convergence and divergence amongst the differing threads of discourse on dis/ability. In Table 43 below, I list segments of Evan's discourse from the first focus group discussion which had ideas reiterated in his reflections after his group's third role-playing session. I include ideas in his paragraph which he repeated in his analysis of Charisse's case and his essay. I provide extracts of articles Evan had read which contained ideas he reproduced in his essay. I saw links between Evan's discourse (movement and position) during the role-playing session where he had taken on the avatar with the misshapen arm and his in-world reflections on his role-play, the case his group subsequently chose to read for their third role-playing session, his essay and what he said during the second focus group discussion. I linked these segments on the basis of similar words, phrasings, examples and stances.

Like Daniel, Evan held a positive view of people with disabilities who strove to succeed despite the odds stacked against them. In his analysis of Charisse's case, he underscored similarities between them and drew attention to her independence and determination to excel academically, "Yes. They [Charisse] showed that they are just like us and it showed how independent they can be even without the help of others" (see part 4, marked in blue). He held her up as a role model for able-bodied students to emulate, "They made me believe in 'human will' even stronger. It just shows how these people could live through life even with these difficulties, and thus why can't we do the same [as] them?" and "If people who is not exactly like us could do such amazing thing, why can't we then?" (see part 4, marked in blue). He cited the

examples in his essay to highlight the dexterity and perseverance of people with disabilities (see part 9, marked in blue). For Evan, it boiled down to their attitude; whether they had a “mindset” or the “human will” to overcome challenges (see parts 2, 4 and 9, marked in yellow). This was what he meant when he distinguished disability as a “psychological condition” as opposed to a “physical condition” (see part 2, marked in yellow).

In contrast to Daniel’s texts, the theme of similarity and differentiation characterised many of the texts Evan produced. In Table 43, his narration of a recent interaction with a person with a disability concluded with his claim that the person wanted “to show that they are also like us” (see part 1, marked in green). In fact, many of the texts Evan produced couched his discussion on disability in terms of similarities and differences with able-bodied people. Some of these were due to the way the questions were framed in my data collection tool so that comparisons were inevitable such as in the written paragraph and the analysis of the case. Nevertheless, Evan did start off with a them-and-us frame of reference at the outset and continued accentuating this perspective in his post-role-playing reflections and essay. In his post-role-playing reflections, Evan observed differences but underscored the similarities that could be unearthed if able-bodied people took the initiative to be friendlier and more patient in their communication, “Yet they might be different but if we were to just be more friendly to them or simply try to approach them, they are in fact the exactly the same as us but just need more time that us to express something” (see part 8, marked in green). In contrast, Evan’s discourse on disability took a different turn in his essay. Evan repeatedly juxtaposed people with/out disabilities to support the view that the disabled (them) were *weaker* than the able-bodied (us). For example, comparisons can be seen in phrases such as “they process things slower than us”, “physically disabled people are weaker than us” and “cannot obtain the same level of education and knowledge and education with us” (see part 9, marked in green). As such, for Evan, these ability differences at times meant that people with disabilities were to be looked up to and, at

other times, these rendered them inferior. On other occasions, Evan considered these differences negligible because they could be overcome with a positive attitude or be easily accommodated, while on other occasions, these differences created an unbridgeable chasm. But in any case, they were always rendered an Other.

And yet, over the course of the study, Evan appeared to have gained a better understanding of the difficulties which people with disabilities might encounter when interacting with their peers. When he first played the role of the avatar with the misshapen arm, Evan moved to a corner twice to get away from his peers, explaining "I go emo in one corner" (see part 5, marked in red). During the in-world group reflection, he wrote in the chat that "I feel very left out" during the role-play (see part 6, marked in red). In this sense, the emotional isolation he encountered precipitated his self-imposed physical isolation but this self-imposed isolation also exacerbated the sense of alienation he felt. Subsequently, having read Morin's account of his bashfulness due to autism, Evan later expressed the view during the second focus group discussion that he understood that while people with disabilities may have seemed "very unsociable" and "very bad tempered", "they did not want to react this way (.) it's just that somehow (.) they are reacting this way" (see part 10, marked in red).

Table 43: Discourse on dis/ability drawn from the artefacts Evan read or produced

(1) Evan's verbal comments at G1's First FGD

Yah (.) I mean (.) why not [hire a person with a disability] (.) they can still do the work (.) it's just whether they want or not (.) it's just that in efficiency (.) they may not be as good as normal people (.) but instead they still does some work to contribute
Err (.) there was this man who was wheelchair bound (.) and (.) the (.) he was trying to board the bus (.) however (.) when the driver tried to help him (.) he like (.) somehow had pushed people away
I don't think they really need help ah (.) yah
Yes [he managed to get on the bus] (.) because we need a space for him to get on (.) and then (.) because the bus was very crowded already (.) and we had to move back (.) but there was no more space (.) so he actually pushed me in like (.) rather hard
No (.) not really [that they need to be to some extent aggressive or assertive to get their way] (.) maybe it's because they think that we are pitying them (.) then they like (.) they just want to show that they are also like us

(2) Evan's written paragraph

I believe they should be taught in a mainstream school as he disability is more of a psychological that a physical condition where if they are willing to put in the effort to strive and the correct mindset, the would be on par with the normal students.
On the other hand, putting them in a mainstream school might cause people around them to pity them or even favour them. Pitying this people would only re-enforces their "special needs" and thus may lead them to not be able to move out of their disabled mindset and they might grow more dependent as they grow and thus children with special needs should not be taught in a mainstream school

(3) Excerpts of articles Evan read

Article: Parents of disabled students push for separate classes
Mary Lou Walker, an aide, crouched beside the desk of Teresa Condora, a petite 7-year old who suffers from cerebral palsy and is largely non-verbal. "All right, come on," Ms Walker said gently urging the girl to press a big red button attached to a buzzer. Responding with a soft moan, Teresa pushed against the button as though it were impossibly heavy.

(4) Evan's analysis of his chosen case on Charisse (cerebral palsy) for second role-playing session

She grew stronger and learnt more to how to live by the day though they were different.
Yes. They [Charisse] showed that they are just like us and it showed how independent they can be even without the help of others.

Chosen quote: I never took myself as someone with a disability"
They made me believe in 'human will' even stronger. It just shows how these people could live through life even with these difficulties, and thus why can't we do the same then?
Chosen quote: "Able to study all the way through high school and graduate"
If people who is not exactly like us could do such amazing thing, why can't we then?

We all loved school and loved our friends. Both of us equally dislike how we had to separate from our friends when a certain thing happened.

(5) Excerpts of Evan's dialogue, movement and gesture from G3's second role-playing session


(Evan stands on the basketball post)


I go emo away in one corner (Evan moves towards a corner at the other end of the school gym)

(6) Evan's in-world reflections

I feel very left out
Many bullied me and I don't even know the reason why. I hurts me emotionally. However, there are people who treat me very nicely which made me felt inclusive. I am assuming that people hate me. They tend to push me around and boo-ed me. Yes, it [assumption] is valid as they just continued to do what they do even countless discouragement from other good students.
They assumed that I need additional aid from people but thinks that I should still be treated equally as them in school.

(7) Excerpts from G3's chosen case on Morin (autism) for third role-playing session

The autism that I have has to do with the way I connect with people (.) I have social problems such as (.) I can't interact with people that well (.) I get shy and (.) nervous when I'm around people and (.) I'm not gonna lie (.) I am probably the most bashful person ever unless I (.) know that person well unless I get to know that person it's painful for me to talk (.) it's hard for me to hang around in crowds without getting anxiety and pissing my pants (.) well not pissing my pants (.) well you guys get my point (.) I'm very anti-social

(8) Evan's reflections after the third role-playing session

I have to first agree that they are indeed weird, but still they did not choose to be the way they are and thus I do not agree with the views. Yet they might be different but if we were to just be more friendly to them or simply try to approach them, they are in fact the exactly the same as us but just need more time that us to express something.

The conclusion that I have made is that they are actually not very different from us, as before I have always thought the are people with special needs and they are hard to approach and communicate with

(9) Evan's essay

There are people who use their foot to do daily stuffs such as switching channels on the television set, use it to write and some who pushed themselves so far that they can even play the piano with their feet. That person is called Liu Wei, a 23 year old man from China, 26 this year. Thus they are not physically challenged at all, just that they would have a certain limitation to some things. Moreover, there even people who train themselves to lead in the world such that they would compete with people from all around the world who has similar physical limitation as them, an example would be William Tan, a Paralympic marathon runner who has his lower body paralysed since young. To sum up, the physically handicapped does not mean that are weak in any way if they have their mindset on the correct path.
Their brain would generally process information slower than us, but still we all have the same brain just that they process things slower than us. For example, in a group project where everyone has to come up with an idea to share with the whole class, people like us can think of one almost immediately or some a bit more time, but who the special students, the might have to squeeze all their brain juice for possibly a few hours or even more to come up with the same idea or in certain cases, an even more brilliant idea that the ones we can come out with.
physically disabled people are weaker than us as they no longer possesses arm strength and power if they have lost their arms.
In fact, I think that the disabled nowadays are much weaker because can not even obtain the same level of education and knowledge with us, they could not process information as fast as us. For example, we could easily press thousands of buttons with a given time but to those people, pressing a button would even require the most of their strength or mental strength to do a simple thing such as pressing a button. In a nutshell, the[y] are weak in the sense that they could not do the simplest thing [compared] to us while we could do so much [more] then them.
In addition, some disabled [people] has grown an extent of weakness that they do not know how to communicate with people. They would feel socially awkward or simply afraid of others when a group of people approaches them for a simple chat, and they might even run away in fright as they simply do not know how to talk or socialise with others.
The[y] are definitely weaker compared to us.

(10) Daniel's verbal comments at G1's Second FGD

I suppose (.) usually (0.5) before I listened to the case studies (.) erm (.) they are very unsociable (.) and sometimes very bad tempered (.) but actually (.) in fact (.) they (.) they did not want to react this way (.) it's just that somehow (.) they are reacting this way

In tracing the flow of Evan's discourse on dis/ability, I found it initially more difficult to pin down Evan's understanding of dis/ability and, hence, his sociological identifications. An overview of this interweaving mesh of words across texts gave the impression of someone wavering between commonalities and differences. I thus decided to begin by comparing his case study with Daniel's. The indomitable spirit of the overcomers resonated with Evan just as it did for Daniel and he similarly considered them role models. Unlike Daniel, Evan did not distinguish between physical disabilities and neurological-physiological disabilities. The pianist Liu Wei who had no arms, the athletic Tan who used a wheelchair and student Charisse diagnosed with cerebral palsy were all held in high regard (see part 9, marked in blue). As such, his sociological identifications with the Other were less restrictive than Daniel's but were similarly confined to people with disabilities who were passionate overcomers. Like Daniel, Evan experienced a disconnect with every other person with a disability who did not fit into this mould.

But why was there this vast difference in Evan's discourse on dis/ability particularly in his essay vis-à-vis all the other texts and what does this say about his sociological identifications? I suggest that one way to better understand Evan's sociological identifications in this context is to examine genre as a space-time complicating group affiliations. In an expository essay, students have to commit themselves to a particular stance in relation to the essay question and, the student is often advised to adopt a stance which will enable him to better argue his case. The arguments developed are then geared towards supporting that stance (see https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/02/). The purpose of this genre to convincingly present a clearly delineated standpoint may account for why the discourse on dis/ability Evan produced in this text had far fewer overlaps in the characterisation of people with/out disabilities compared to his other texts. Instead, based on his understanding of this genre, his discourse drew a clear dividing line between people with/out disabilities. In tracing the flow or boundaries of ideas

circulating in a network of texts, Evan's case study thus exemplifies another aspect of the impact of the classroom on literacy practices in that his literacy practice was bound by academic writing convention.

What is also distinctive about Evan's essay is how, as an instantiation of novel combinations reflecting baroque complexity, he co-opted the discourse on dis/ability in other texts to support his stance in his own text. For example, the excerpt of an article debating the placement of students with disabilities in special schools or mainstream schools provided an example highlighting how difficult it was for the student to keep pace with lesson because of her psychomotor difficulties. Evan used this example to support a different assertion; to illustrate the weakness of a person with a disability. In another example depicting a more radical departure from the original usage, Morin had exemplified his difficulty communicating with people due to autism describing himself as "shy", "nervous", "bashful" and explained that it was "painful for me to talk" and "it's hard for me to hang out in crowds without getting anxiety" (see part 7, marked in red). However, Evan then incorporated aspects of Morin's description in his essay and positioned these as characteristic of a disabled person's weakness in socialising as reflected in the phrases "socially awkward", "afraid of others" and "run away in fright" (see part 9, marked in red). In this instance, the curricular resource on dis/ability to educate and enlighten the participants was used by Evan to support a view of dis/ability contrary to what it had been intended for. Evan did so in an effort to provide the requisite evidence to support his argumentation. Co-opting thus occurred in service of the genre of the expository essay.

As such, it appears that the over-layered student identity at times took precedence within a given space-time for both Daniel and Evan. While Daniel's student identity was most evident in his echoing of Fleischmann's words during the role-play, Evan's student identity was most noticeable when he conformed to the demands of the genre of the expository essay. This student identity mediated their sociological identifications, conveying a seeming affinity for the stigmatised in Daniel's case and disassociation in

Evan's case. Their case studies illuminate the complexity of group affiliations in the interplay of multiple identities which the individual layers upon one another as Burnett explains (2014, p. 204);

> Classroom literacy practices may be experienced differently for individuals and characterised by intersections between what each brings to each moment

In sum, Daniel and Evan's understanding of dis/ability was situated at the intersection of personal interpretations of texts, personal experiences and personal beliefs and values. In attempting to trace their specific words, phrasings, examples and stances across texts, I was aware that the texts they read or produced collectively could provide only a snapshot of their sociological identifications, only a partial print of what they believed and valued or devalued about people with disabilities. There was much about their perspective of dis/ability which was not captured in these texts. It is also important to bear in mind that even as I trace the individual participant's discourse across space-times, such space-times are relational in nature (Davies, 2014) and thus the words, phrasings, examples and stances they produced were constitutive of voices of their group members, their teachers and me as their interviewer. That said, what has been captured already points to a lot of complexity in Daniel and Evan's understandings of dis/ability and who they affiliated themselves with and how they affiliated themselves. Much of this was tied to how they positioned themselves within space-times (Burnett & Bailey, 2014) prioritising academics in general and the subject of dis/ability specifically; as a student, an able-bodied person and/or an overcomer.

6.3 The elephant in the room: conditions supporting role immersion in VWs

I have been sidestepping the topic of role immersion because I do not have definitive answers as to whether my students were or were not immersed in their roles. It is now time to address the elephant in the room as I conclude my analysis. Immersion is a slippery notion and its relationship to sociological identification is even more tenuous in a VW. It has been variously described in terms of role-players' perception of the real-

world quality of the virtual environment (Slater, 1999), commitment to playing a role to the exclusion of their natural self (Fine, 1983) or role-players achieving a “role-playing high” (Mortensen, 2003, 2007). In my literature review in Chapter 2, I referred to being-oriented immersion which I described in terms of Leander and Boldt’s (2012, p. 36) articulation of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) ideas of “simply becoming”, “responding to the energy of the moment” or “just trying to see what happens” (Leander & Boldt, 2012). Being-oriented immersion entails viewing immersion as a process rather than an outcome. As such, all things remain fluid and things flow according to what matters temporally to these role-players. Identity is not entrenched and identifications evolve. Therefore, being-oriented immersion occurs within the liminal space between the real-word identity and virtual world identity and manifests in the form of improvised enactments based on on-going interpretation of the social situation. In the light of my analytical framework, being-oriented immersion is reflected in (i) my participants’ deployment of revolutionising processes in conjunction with their semiotic identifications with the Other and (ii) their use of the discourse from their chosen case or other materials from the critical literacy programme to enact their avatar in their sociological identification with the Other. I acknowledge at the outset that my participants in general did not have a sustained experience of being-oriented immersion for much of their role-play. As such, my goal in this section is to discuss the conditions that played a part in facilitating or impeding their immersion. Burnett and Bailey (2014, p. 57) have identified different types of “in-the-moment improvisations” enacted in response to individual concerns unfolding and being foregrounded momentarily;

- aesthetics, e.g. playing with material, colour, texture, size and shape
- location, e.g. moving to different sites
- timeframe, e.g. continuing a project or responding contemporaneously
- storying, e.g. generating events or locations around or through their buildings
- acting on other players, e.g. playing tricks
- drawing on, or perhaps showcasing, inter-textual references, e.g. associated with popular media

At the heart of all these improvisations is the issue of whether they reflect some measure of ownership of the role in relation to what the role-player makes the avatar say or do in its interactions with others and the virtual landscape. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the role delineated by the role-player may take a different direction from that which teacher, researcher or curriculum designer may have intended.

My request to the participants to reproduce the responses in the cases they had read or viewed to facilitate role immersion proved woefully inadequate. Those like Daniel who extensively echoed their chosen case still felt a disconnect. Therefore, it would be useful to examine what did and did not help. As such, in this section, I build on Burnett and Bailey's work by addressing the supports for and impediments to being-oriented immersion in *SL*. I draw on the participants' views of their role-play in the light of or in spite of their enactments. I organise the following sub-sections to examine how their improvisations were facilitated or hindered in terms of the mode of communication, the tactile experience of the body and the opportunity to reflect on action.

6.3.1 Art imitating life: Naturalising communication to support immersion

When I examined the role-play data, it initially appeared that some of the participants who had taken on the role of the avatar attempted to identify with people with disabilities through in-the-moment improvisations. However, the second focus group discussion opened my eyes to some of the impediments to identification resulting from their using the chat feature of *SL*. Tables 44, 45 and 46 show a distinction between the two groups (G1 and G2) which used the chat feature to communicate and the group (G3) which used the voice feature. In Table 44, Henry found the delay in responses on chat resulting from having to type their responses and the lack of sequential order represented in the chat box "irritating" (see Table 44, Line 1). This suggests some participants felt a sense of incongruity and frustration when they were expected to communicate as though they were speaking and yet could not communicate as they would have in spoken discourse. Having said that, interruptions and overlaps in

dialogue occur all the time but, because they are not recorded as they are in *SL* chat, these interruptions and overlaps are less noticeable in spoken discourse.

Table 44: G1 participant's comments on the chat feature of SL

Line	G1 dialogue
1	Henry: I think that irritating (.) you want to say something (.) then another person say another thing (.) then you see.
2	Interviewer (Natasha): So it wasn't like real world connection.

In Table 45, Cindy said that she found it "hard to portray the disability" when she was typing into the chat box (see Table 45, Line 1). This points to the possibility that the participants found the diverse facets of multimodal discourse in *SL* too overwhelming and/or that they lacked the know-how and experience in enacting identity, let alone a marginalised identity, through written text.

Table 45: G2 participants' comments on the chat feature of SL

Line	G2 dialogue
1	Cindy: It was still hard because we were just chatting (.) like just typing (.) it's hard to portray the disability when-
2	Interviewer (Natasha): the problem was just the typing (0.5) in the fact that you can't use your voice and communicate naturally (.) or was it just that you just didn't know how to?
3	Cindy: I think both.
4	Paul: A bit of both.

In contrast, G3 ignored my instructions not to use the voice feature and they claimed that this improvised use of voice enhanced the affective quality of their role-play. G3 participants talked about how the "tone" and "pitch" (see Table 46, Lines 13, 15, 16) conveyed through the voice feature of *SL* had an affective impact such that Samantha felt "damn sad" (see Table 46, Line 3) and Cassandra said "it hurts the feelings" (see Lines 6) and "actually deep inside their heart (.) they take it seriously (.) because it (.) everybody has emotions" (see Table 46, Line 9). This is not to say that written text cannot convey tone which impacts the reader emotionally. Perhaps, the participants were more accustomed to attending to tone in spoken rather than written dialogue.

The different experience of *SL* articulated by G3 participants in comparison with G1 and G2 participants suggests that there is a need to make better and greater use of the voice feature of *SL* in role-plays in order to preclude the aforementioned sense of frustration, disorientation and artifice.

Table 46: Table 6.6: G3 participants' comments on the voice feature of SL

Line	G3 dialogue
1	Samantha: The Second Life make me (.) really can feel like them, because everybody talking (.) and saying (.) why she so blah blah blah.
2	Interviewer (Natasha): Yah (.) I heard you guys using the voice function right?
3	Samantha: Yeah (.) she was very mean to me (.) I tell you! Then I was like damn sad
4	Cassandra: I was the main one using.
5	Interviewer (Natasha): Oh you're the main one using the voice function (.) do you think the voice had more impact as opposed to just typing? Cassandra, Yvonne, Samantha and Evan agree. No response from Timothy.
6	Cassandra: It hurts the feelings.
7	Yvonne: Speech (.)
8	Interviewer (Natasha): The speech (.) oh Cassandra you were saying (.) it hurts the feelings? What do you mean?
9	Cassandra: As in like (.) you verbal (.) you just shoot the person right in the face (.) so it's like (.) directly towards them (.) so (.) maybe you will like (.) erm (.) we're just saying only (.) but actually deep inside their heart (.) they take it seriously (.) because it (.) everybody has emotions.
10	Interviewer (Natasha): But is there a difference between like using the voice and just reading? Cassandra, Yvonne and Samantha agree.
11	Interviewer (Natasha): What's the difference?
12	Samantha: The feeling.
13	Yvonne: Tones (.) very (.)
14	Cassandra: For chatting right (.) you may be just kidding (0.5) nobody knows your intention (.) they'll just ( ) only typing lah (.) but when you speak (.) and then in your different kind of-
15	Evan: [Tone]
16	Cassandra: [Tone and pitch] (.) yah (.) err (.) it's really different

Nevertheless, the voice feature of *SL* is no magic bullet for being-oriented immersion. When the specific disability affects communication as it does in autism and cerebral palsy, then it is all the more important that participants trying to understand the experience of the Other similarly undergo the disabling experience of not being able to

easily and effectively communicate their thoughts. However, I found that in such cases, *SL* provided an enabling rather than a disabling experience. In Table 47 below, Paul explained that the role-play made no difference to the way he viewed cerebral palsy because he could use the chat to communicate rather than struggle to articulate his words as Charisse had done, "we didn't really experience how the person is going through because we were communicating still by chat (.) so we couldn't really see what the problem of the disabled person was" (see Table 47, Line 2). Even if I had conveyed my expectations that the participants emulate the communication challenges confronting Morin, Fleischmann and Charisse, Shannon observed that "it might be hard for us to imitate." (see Table 47, Line 4). Why? Because the participants would, as would all other users of *SL*, have looked for and employed the mode which facilitated their communication best. In short, they would have improvised in order to enhance their communicative ability. Therein lies the challenge of facilitating identification with people with disabilities facing challenges in communication.

Table 47: G2 participants' comments on using chat to overcome communication challenges

Line	G2 dialogue
1	Interviewer (Natasha): Okay (.) so just going there and taking on the role of the avatar. Did it change the way you see the disabled at all? I mean can just be frank.
2	Paul: Not really (.) because like the disabled people (.) we were given the role like (.) I suppose (.) cerebral palsy (.) through Second Life (.) we didn't really experience how the person is going through because we were communicating still by chat (.) so we couldn't really see what the problem of the disabled person was.
3	Interviewer (Natasha): Okay (.) so even though there was some awkward movements it wasn't a big deal (.) yeah (.) so like for example the case (.) the video (.) I think name was- Charisse (.) yah (.) so for her case (.) it was more speech (.) so do you think if we had gotten you guys to use the speech function (.) because Second Life has speech function (.) would it have been better? But then you'll have a role to play and pretend to talk to her (.) do you think that would make a difference? It might? Not really? The reasons? We start with Shannon because you said not really.
4	Shannon: Because ( ) you have to imitate (.) like (.) and I feel that it might be hard for us to imitate.
5	Interviewer (Natasha): So the difficulty of having to imitate her as well.
6	Shannon: Then if you cannot imitate (.) then it would be kind of pointless.

6.3.2 Sensing is believing: The role of tactile experiences in immersion

I now address another aspect of the role-play which impacted role immersion. The biggest drawback of a three-dimensional virtual space is the absence of the tactile experience—the physical sensations which are fundamental to a "lived body" where material, cultural and social processes are meshed together in an experience (Blackman, 2008, p. 83). Table 48 illustrates how this lack of material verisimilitude with the real world not only exacerbated the prevailing tendency to separate material and sociocultural processes (Blackman, 2008), but also impeded immersion (Ata, 2014; Peachey & Childs, 2011). In Table 48, Daniel distinguished emotional and bodily experiences. He acknowledged the alienation and discomfort he felt during the role-play, "but then you can understand that (.) how they feel when they are being bullied and how (0.5) comfortable are they when they are around us lah" (see Line 1). However, he pointed out that the physiological experience was absent, "we know that autism people (.) behave several ways due to several feelings (.) like pins and needles on several parts of their bodies (.) but then (.) through Second Life (.) can't really feel all this" (see Table 48, Line 5). Likewise, Henry said that he could not feel the awkward movements or the wheelchair, "you just click a button (.) and you just move" (see Table 48, Line 21). This reveals the lack of opportunity for participants to enact and experience difficulties with bodily control and mobility described in their chosen cases and they themselves recognised this limit in *SL*. All complicated physical enactments were reduced to the uncomplicated materiality of clicking the computer mouse. This reflects a gap between virtual embodiment and physical embodiment limiting able-bodied participants' experience of disability and, plausibly, impinging on their identification with people with disabilities so much so that Daniel bluntly stated that "Second Life avatar didn't really allow us to feel immersed" (see Table 48, Line 12). At the same time, while not experiencing a lived body, the participants in trying to emulate the cases they chose, had to act like person with a disability who was not allowing their disability to hinder their enactments. This was indeed a tall order.

Table 48: G1 participants on the absence of tactile experience

Line	G1 dialogue
1	Daniel: You can't really feel the kind of thing that goes on everyday life (.) the physical kind of disability and what (.), how they are acting through the (0.5).Second Life (.) but then you can understand that (.) how they feel when they are being bullied and how (0.5) comfortable are they when they are around us lah (inaudible)
2	Interviewer (Natasha): So you mean the physical.
3	Daniel: And mental, a bit.
4	Interviewer (Natasha): Maybe physical (.) mental a bit (.) so physical strain that they feel (.) maybe like having to exert themselves when they use a wheelchair (.) is that what you mean?
5	Daniel: Like (.) because suffering autism, you can't really feel what they're going through (.) because from the case study (.) we know that autism people (.) behave several ways due to several feelings (.) like pins and needles on several parts of their bodies (.) but then (.) through Second Life (.) can't really feel all this.
	.....
7	Henry: Like for example (.) Jeff says a very nasty remark (.) but ( ) it's a game (.) it's just Second Life or what (.) but if let's say face to face (.) the impact would be obviously greater (.) because you'll be like (.) whoa (.) okay.
8	Interviewer (Natasha): So you feel that the avatar is not really you.
9	Henry: Definitely not.
10	Interviewer (Natasha): So the avatar didn't help you relate to the disability (.) Would have been more useful if it was face to face role play? But you wouldn't have that physical condition either.
11	Henry: True. Laughter
12	Daniel: Second Life avatar didn't really allow us to feel immersed.
13	Rick: (inaudible)
14	Henry: You can fly.
15	Interviewer (Natasha): The one who had autism and cerebral palsy (.) basically you didn't feel that much (.) a bit (.) the movements were a bit awkward (.) did it make you feel uncomfortable?
16	Daniel: It was just somebody walking.
17	Henry: Movements were awkward (.) I didn't feel it.
18	Interviewer (Natasha): You didn't feel the awkward movements (.) how about the (.) who played the one with paraplegia?
19	Henry: Wheelchair? You don't feel it what (.) I mean (.) you don't feel it.
20	Interviewer (Natasha): Okay.
21	Henry: You're not really (.) you just click a button (.) and you just move.
22	Interviewer (Natasha): So it's almost as if the keyboard sort of created a distance lah.
23	Henry: Yah you can say that.

6.3.3 Know thyself and others: Surfacing conflicting reflections on enactments

In my literature review in Chapter 2, I described the experiential and explanatory modes of participation I had incorporated in *SL* through in-world enactment and reflection respectively in an effort to facilitate immersion. In this sub-section, I discuss one case study which reveals differing interpretations and accounts of the experience—those of the teacher, peers and the student playing the part of the avatar with a disability. It illustrates the student's lack of awareness of how he was characterising himself to others through his enactments. I refer to Henry's case study for G1's first role-playing session and subsequent in-world reflections. I had earlier provided a detailed analysis of Henry's enactments in section 5.2.1, outlining how power relations played a part in the subjectification of his character in the discourse.

During the role-play, Henry had called out repeatedly for help. In Table 49, the teacher who facilitated the group's in-world discussion noticed this and asked about this portrayal of helplessness, "Why does the disabled person portray himself as needy?" (see Table 49, Line 8). She probed further to ask about the implications of such a representation, "if he is helpless, doesn't it make him 'unequal'?" (see Table 49, Line 11). This question was also in response to earlier assertions by the participants about the importance of fairness, equal opportunities and equal treatment (see Table 49, Lines 3-7). In effect, the teacher was pointing out that Henry had rendered his character less than equal in his representation. However, Henry cited the physical condition of his avatar as the reason for this representation, "as I was disabil [*sic*] and cant walk" (see Table 49, Line 12). As such, he did not share his teacher's interpretation that he had played in part in making his character less than equal. For Henry, the physical condition of his avatar was the only causal factor. This shows that Henry felt some ownership of the avatar itself but perhaps less ownership of his avatar's characterisation.

Table 49: G1's conflicting interpretations of characterisation

Line	G1 dialogue
1	Jeff: I don't understand why people treat him special just because he is disabled
2	Daniel: I believe [Henry] should not be bullied just because he is disabled
3	Jeff: it's not fair
4	Steven: I believe that everyone is given equal opportunities to make friends
5	Henry: thats what I think tooo
6	Steven: no matter if they are disabled or not
7	Rick: I agree because everyone should be treated the same
8	Teacher: Ok. Why does the disabled person portray himself as needy?
10	Daniel: agreed. we shoudln't bully him just because he is disabled
11	Teacher: if he is helpless, doesn't it make him 'unequal'?
12	Henry: as I was disabil and cant walk
13	Henry: disable*

The teacher also noticed that Henry did assert himself and sought his reasons for it, "Towards the end, the disabled person kind of stood up for himself. Why did you choose to do that?" (see Table 50, Line 1). I found it incongruous that Henry's responded, "as I wanted to pour out my sorrows" (see Table 6.10, Line 2). His name-calling (see Table 26, Lines 6-7) and attempt to call the police (see Table 28) seemed unrelated to giving expression to his emotions. The teacher then followed up by asking what the response of the rest was to Henry's more assertive stance. Henry's interpretation that they were more sympathetic, "they understood my feelings and knew what kind of life I liv[ed] in" (see Table 50, Line 7), was the exact opposite of those described by his peers. Daniel noted the minimal impact his change in stance had on them, "the aggressors continue to make fun of him" (see Table 50, Line 6) while Jeff pointed out, "we sat on his wheelchair" (see Table 50, Line 10) and Steven observed that "it made the bullying worse" (see Table 50, Line 14). Only then did Henry concede that "maybe I made them more angry" (see Table 50, Line 17). Perhaps it was a problem of recall rather than interpretation. In a previous study, my co-authors and I mentioned a similar problem as there was a mismatch in the depth and complexity of the ideas discussed in *SL* and the participants' post-role-playing

written reflections (Rappa, et al., 2009). We had assumed then that this discrepancy was due to the lapse in time between the enactment and the reflection. So I was surprised to find problems with recall even when the reflections were conducted in-world immediately after the role-play. This would diminish the value of having in-world reflections based on participant recollections. Instead, as my co-authors and I suggested in the previous study, print outs of their logged conversations might have better supported their reflections (Rappa, et al., 2009).

Table 50: G1's conflicting accounts of enactments

Line	G1 dialogue
1	Teacher: Towards the end, the disabled person kind of stood up for himself. Why did you choose to do that?
2	Henry: as I wanted to pour out my sorrows
3	Daniel (whispers): Maybe because he could not tolerate the bullying anymore
4	Teacher: How did the rest respond to that?
5	Rick: Maybe he want to voice our his personal opinion
6	Daniel: the aggressors continue to make fun of him
7	Henry: they understood my feelings and knew what kind of life I liv in
8	Steven: by doing things that he cannot do e.g. jumping
10	Jeff: we sat on his wheelchair
11	Teacher: So it didn't help that he stood up for himself,
12	Daniel: Yes agreed
13	Steven: In my own opinion, no
14	Steven: it mad ethe bullying worse.
15	Steven: made*
16	Teacher: Why?
17	Henry: maybe I made them more angry

It is evident from the in-world reflections that the teacher and student participants recalled or interpreted characterisations and actions very differently. This highlights the methodological value of incorporating group reflections in that they serve as a means to surface such differences. However, as observed earlier, such reflections should be supported with access to logged conversations in *SL*. The idea of incorporating reflections appears to run contrary to the idea of supporting spontaneous and responsive enactments. However, such self-awareness can facilitate immersion if the participant is able to observe any gaps between his representation of character and

how the character is represented in other texts and then endeavour to emulate the latter. It is a process of learning to become rather than just becoming. In addition, in order to paint the full picture of a participant's improvisations, research methodologies need to incorporate some opportunity for the participant to talk about what he or she was doing or had intended to do as there may be a disjunction between their intentions and actions.

One way to follow-up on whether the participants' group reflections had any impact on their subsequent role-play would be to get the same student to take on the role of the avatar with a disability. However, because I wanted to give as many students as possible the opportunity to take on the role of the avatar with a disability, I did not do this. In doing so, I was unable to observe whether those who had taken on the avatar with a disability during the first role-playing session altered their enactments during the second session. On hindsight, opportunities to take on the role again would have better supported an examination of their immersion in their roles.

In this section, I have outlined some conditions which impact in-the-moment improvisations and, hence, being-oriented immersion. At the same time, I have highlighted some shortcomings of VWs in simulating the discourse and experiences encountered in the body of the disabled Other. I have also evaluated my attempts to incorporate reflection as a means to support role immersion. My findings illustrate that, in any endeavour to support sociological identifications via VWs, there is a need to recognise and compensate for the limits of the affordances of VWs with respect to the mode of communication and bodily experiences. Where such recompense is not possible or adequate, then it is important to delineate which social group or which specific sub-groups within the larger social group one can represent in the VW to better serve the purpose of nurturing sociological identifications.

6.4. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have illustrated the varied analytical approaches I employed with varied data sources to examine my participants' sociological identifications. Each

approach serves different purposes; (i) to identify important themes depicting understandings of dis/ability, (ii) to discover the nature of the network of interactions amongst people, texts and objects or (iii) to examine the conditions supporting or impeding role immersion. The findings in this chapter are best characterised as complex. I have no straightforward answers or solutions to nurturing sociological identifications. Nevertheless, these various facets do reflect the multiple ways sociological identifications may be understood.

In most VWs, in-character enactments are referred to as a "something other" emancipated by means of online role-playing games (Mortensen, 2007, p. 305) and as "mimicry" (Caillois, 2001) in which alternative realities enable us to be "more than what we actually are" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 73). However, the "other" and "more" that these scholars speak of are not the Other who is marginalised and disempowered, but rather a potential self that one desires—a self that is more powerful and talented and good-looking. This is because role-players seek accomplishments and affirmation in VWs just as much as they do in real life. In many instances, the criteria for success and acceptance in VWs are defined in the same way as the real world such that role-players are likely to nurture identifications consistent with the dominant ideology. I had initially thought of entitling my thesis with the statement "I have become what I beheld". After reviewing my case studies, I changed my title to a question, "Have I become what I beheld?" to convey the uncertainty of becoming the Other.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter, I discuss the themes which emerged from my analysis and pull together the different strands of my findings on semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications to address different aspects of identifications. I discuss and evaluate the various ways to transform the discourse on dis/ability in order to curate the Other in ways that liberate people who are being oppressed and marginalised. I account for the role of power relations and examine ways to transform these power relations. I make recommendations for designing curricular interventions that might help facilitate the shift towards self-Other mergence. I address a number of assumptions I held about the affordances of VWs for supporting enactments as the Other and some important takeaways about my research methodology.

While I hesitate to draw generalised conclusions about semiotic, phenomenological and sociological identifications enacted in *SL* from the case studies I analysed in my thesis, these case studies, nevertheless, provide an overview of a variety of ways in which multimodal resources can be employed, a glimpse into a broad range of discourse positions and moves and how these are realised, insights into the complexity of understanding a social group, establishing group affiliations and experiencing role immersion. In short, these case studies highlight the promises and shortcomings of *SL* in facilitating enactments as and identifications with the Other. To better understand the role played by *SL*, I draw on Carrington's (2005, p. 468) delineation of Freud's notion of the uncanny or "Das Unheimliche" as "a reflexive space where taken-for-granted status is suddenly suspended and a range of social and individual themes rise to the surface in unexpected ways." The *SL* environment thus serves as a way to render unfamiliar the school setting familiar to the participants by incorporating differences in abilities and the power differentials arising from these differences which they had not encountered and not experienced previously. The resulting themes of individual case studies and groups captured in the headings or subheadings of the sections in Chapters 4 to 6 reflect the heterogeneous experiences

of the participants individually and collectively (Carrington, 2005) which I recapitulate in the Table 51 below;

Table 51: Summary of the emergent themes

No	Themes
	Semiotic Identifications (Chapter 4)
1	Becoming and being from non-verbal to verbal discourse
2	Negotiating and contesting ascriptions of meanings to objects
3	Being a superhuman: Faster, higher, stronger
4	Being a creator: Stigmergic communication in virtual spaces
	Phenomenological Identifications (Chapter 5)
5	Subjectification of the individual
6	Self-fashioning through powerplay of words
7	Searching for an entry point
8	Shifting laminations of self and the presumed Other
	Sociological Identifications (Chapter 6)
9	Understandings of dis/ability
	• Looking beyond behaviours
	• Acknowledging similarities
	• Accepting differences
	• Seeing abilities and not disabilities
	• Interacting positively in future interactions
	• Ungeneralisable quality of cases
	• Resistance to change
10	Student identity as an inserted identity in sociological identifications
11	Genre as a space-time impacting sociological identifications
12	Conditions facilitating role immersion

	• Naturalising communication to support immersion
	• The role of tactile experiences in immersion
	• Surfacing conflicting reflections on enactments

7.1 Approaches to curating the Other: Facilitating the deployment of revolutionising processes

In Chapter 4, I addressed how semiotic resources within the virtual landscape were used to represent the Other. This involves curatorship which Potter (2009, p. 265) describes "as a practice and a process involving ways of being active in gathering together and assembling the resources needed to represent both the anchored and the transient forms of identity (Merchant, 2006) in a variety of spaces for different purposes and audiences" and characterises the actions of curating as *"collecting, cataloguing, arranging and assembling for exhibition, displaying"* (I discuss Merchant's notion of anchored and transient identities in the following section). However, we do not curate our own identities in silo, we curate our identities in ways that help us establish our profit of distinction within a field. In a similar fashion, we curate the identities of those around us for better or worse. It is the able-bodied person's curatorship of the disabled Other which is the focus of my discussion. My participants' enactments as the Other were complex, reflecting different configurations of Othering and revolutionising processes. The case studies I described in Chapter 4 showed as broad a range of these processes as possible and illustrated insights into how these processes constituted dominant discourses. These are my conclusions regarding the deployment of semiotic resources for the purposes of expressing identifications.

First, as mentioned previously, dominant discourses privilege the spoken medium. As such, the questions researchers and educators need to ask in any given context are: (1) Are there other ways to represent the views of/as the hidden Other which would (i) not only be not disabling but would also acknowledge rather than conceal their disabilities and (ii) would be more in tandem with their unique abilities for self-

expression? (2) How can VWs like *SL* be used to support the empowerment of/as the hidden Other in these ways? A more radical approach may be to limit discourse to just emoticons, gestures, positions and movements within *SL* for *all* participants to determine whether the absence of the voice and chat medium impacts the Othering and revolutionising processes and creates a more level playing field.

Second, when those who are oppressed do not communicate who they are, a vacuum of identity is created which will be filled with other people's representations of who they are. Unless control of spoken discourse is wrested from the oppressor, the oppressed will continue to find themselves in a disadvantageous position. In short, the one who controls the discourse sets the agenda for the preferred meanings that the group might attribute to those representations. For this reason, I disagree with Sandoval's (2000a, p. 108) claim that silence for those who are oppressed is a "form of resistance" which "refuses to engage ideology". My own conclusion is that ideology must not be ignored. It must be engaged in oppositional ways or transcendently in order that the discourse may be transformed.

But how can ideology be engaged in a VW? Oppositional engagement in the form of playful and anarchic discourse which violates social norms may be one way to draw attention to how semiotic resources are being deployed to support Othering. It is in essence deconstruction and signification and possibly counter-ideologizing and silencing with a humorous twist. However, the examples from this study show that oppositional engagement can result in a backlash of a disproportionate nature as the person playing the part of the avatar with a disability may be punished for violating the norms of rationality and moderation. This finding is consistent with the practice of online communities disciplining users for engaging in atypical social and material practices (Kafai, et al., 2010). Although the repercussions for violating group norms may be confined to the VW, there may nevertheless be some fallout in the real world.

A transcendental approach is thus more advisable. One example is to underscore the importance of avoiding ascribing symbolic meanings to objects used by people with

disabilities and, instead, focus on the functionality of these objects with a view to enhancing the relationship between the person's capabilities and the functional demands of the environment as prescribed in the Nordic relational model of disability (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012, p. 59). This may be realised in terms of deconstruction and meta-ideologizing as a way to replace disempowering medical readings of disability which perpetuate the processes of Othering. When targeted at a key representation within a regime of representation, such as a wheelchair, this approach may be instrumental in transforming other elements within that regime of representation.

Another example of transcendental engagement is improvisations in the use semiotic resources to establish new subjectivities. These may be achieved through zero degree of language and signification in which actions in the form of gesture, position and/or movement are undertaken to disprove an Othered representation. The passionate overcomers exemplify this best when they engage in daredevil stunts (see Connolly, 2009; Gray, 2009; Moser, 2005; Tan, 2006). However, this results in further Othering of people with disabilities who do not or cannot exhibit such physical prowess as a binary opposition is set up within the disabled community. The attempt to battle dominant discourses on dis/ability on this front then necessitates concealing people within the community who do not conform to the metanarrative of the passionate overcomer (Galvin, 2003). *SL* would then be a means for them to do what is otherwise difficult or impossible for them in the real world such as chatting, running, shopping and/or building. This counters the Othering process and facilitates the capacity for engaging in improvisations in the VW. However, the question is whether their accomplishments would receive the same recognition as the physical accomplishments of people with disabilities in the real world. But what do such improvisations mean for the able-bodied who take on an avatar with a disability in a VW? Will it create distance rather than identification? Perhaps the opportunity to alter the rendering of a marginalised person into someone autonomous and empowered

might alter the way the able-bodied perceive people with disabilities. This is something to consider examining in future.

An additional way to engage the Othering process transcendentally would be emphasise one's humanity to make oneself relatable. This involves demystifying the disability by explaining the causes, conditions and implications and demonstrating emotional vulnerability. However, as shown in the case studies, several other problems may arise. This approach on its own would project the image of a victim. Instead, it needs to be combined with the improvisations of passionate overcomers in order to balance depictions of vulnerability with heroic qualities. In addition, these explanations may be co-opted by the able-bodied in ways that exacerbate the Othering process. The challenge is that semiotic resources regardless of their intended purpose can be adapted and redeployed and there is no way to safeguard against their use for the purpose of Othering.

The final transcendental approach is the act of creation. Building or creating facilitates signification. The creator breathes life into the created such that it is distinct from its creator yet represents an aspect of the creator's prerogatives and identity at that given time and place. It can be a cathartic process as the individual is able to give expression to ideas and feelings typically suppressed in dominant discourses. Moreover, building or creating gives the individual focus, purpose, agency and a sense of accomplishment. S/he decides what to create, what materials to use and how to go about creating it. This results in a greater sense of empowerment. More importantly, ownership and improvisation come hand-in-hand and novel combinations with an emphasis on incorporating revolutionising processes in the discourse are more likely. Building or creating within *SL* can, therefore, be a very affirming experience for people with/out disabilities. The question is whether there is a need for the creator to use a well-known genre to communicate his/her identifications in order that his/her creations may be understood and well-received.

Finally, strategies for more overt attempts at juxtaposing the self and the Other whilst role-playing are needed. One possible hindrance is that the default camera angle for *SL* is positioned behind the avatar such that participants never get to see themselves face-to-face unless they deliberately change their camera angle. Perhaps participants need to see themselves face-to-face as the Other, reflect on what they see before them and consider how they can deliberately use their avatars as a resource to support their identifications with the Other. This is not for the purpose of assimilating or subsuming the Other but for facilitating *the encounter* with the Other (Levinas, 1979) and a *conceptualization of* the absolute-other (Derrida, 1978) which is not skewed or reductive. It directly addresses the problem of the hiddenness of the Other by acknowledging the Other's presence and, more importantly, by recognising the inability to always control bodily condition and movement and the ephemeral and vulnerable nature of our embodied state (Goodley, 2011, 2013; Kleege, 1999).

As illustrated in my introductory chapter, people with disabilities remain very much a hidden Other in Singapore. However, in being the hidden Other, representations of dis/ability have not been reified and are perhaps more amenable to change. As Singapore works towards establishing an inclusive society, all who engage in discussions about dis/ability are curators of the Other and producers and disseminators of discourse on dis/ability and the cultural perceptions of dis/ability. Therefore, it is imperative that revolutionising processes take root in this nascent discourse on dis/ability so that the Other no longer is an Other.

7.2 From an anchored self and a transient Other to an anchored Other? Recommended curricular interventions

In Chapter 5, I identified a range of identification processes which I used to describe and account for my participants' moves within *SL*. To better understand these shifts, I draw on Merchant's theorisation of anchored and transient identities. Merchant (2006, p. 239) uses the term "anchored identity" to refer to "positions which are profoundly influenced by a long history of socio-cultural practices". These relate to permanent or

enduring facets of life over which people have little sway such as dis/ability, ethnicity, gender, class and age. He uses the term “transient identity” to refer to “[positions] which are more easily made, remade and unmade” over time due to changing maturity, cultural influences and group affiliations. These relate to “media narratives, ideologies, popular culture, iconic objects, social activities and networks”. Instantiations of identity performances are situated between these two polar identities. The challenge in this study then is that I attempted to alter the less alterable anchored identity and found that what anchored this identity was not the materiality associated with it but the power relations within which this identity was embedded. I also found that the Other remained transient with its assemblages metamorphosing in response to contexts where different anchored identities came into contact with one another or when various identities were laminated onto the avatar.

I begin my discussion by addressing how power relations performed during the course of the role-play in *SL* resulted in shifts in identification which produced an anchored able-bodied self and a transient disabled Other. Burnett (2014) observes that power relations associated with different identities resulted in her study participants altering their positions on different occasions. I discuss the ways in which power relations shaped the discourse on dis/ability and made it difficult for the participants to alter their position to empower the Other. Power relations constitute discourse and identity. My contention is that, at the same time, power relations can be concealed by the discourse, more specifically, the discourse of rationality and discourse of humour. Rational discourse is often held up as the beacon of civilised behaviour. Displays of anger in the form of dismissive gestures, name-calling and physical aggression are frowned upon and are quickly suppressed with self-policing or policing by others. Rational discourse thus precludes a hostile defence as part and parcel of the lived experience of the oppressed even in the face of harassment. However, rationality is a form of rationalization of power which needs to be recognised for what it is and

interrogated (Flyvbjerg, 2003) before fundamental changes in the discourse on dis/ability can take root.

Laughter, on the other hand, is a more complicated phenomenon on *SL*. It constitutes the playful, anarchic discourse typical of VWs which can support liberating and empowering forms of self-expression. However, it can also make light of oppressive behaviours and conceal and divert attention away from power relations. It is difficult to make the role-players' aware of how specific enactments are tied to the maintenance of power differentials when their enactments can be easily dismissed as a joke. Smith and Sapon-Shevin's (2008) guidelines for interrogating disability humour (or humour relating to any marginalised group) is a useful starting point. It is important to recognise that power relations pervade play as much as they do any other contexts. My view is that when people in a VW respond *submissively* to playful "physical" aggression in the VW even though they feel no pain, they are playing out what they think they ought to do or what ought to happen in real life in accordance to prevailing power relations.

So what are the possible ways out of oppressive discourses on disability? Enlisting the help of sovereign power in lateral contestations of power only serves to reinforce the prevailing power hierarchy and power differentials (Foucault, 1977). That said, for marginalised groups and individuals who otherwise have no access to power, a temporary alliance with sovereign power to achieve a particular end seems a better option. However, this means that power can be lost as easily as it has been gained should sovereign power deem it not within its interest to continue its support (Foucault, 1977). It also entails no fundamental change in the discourse on dis/ability, a loss of agency and little incentive to identify with the Other.

Alternatively, a hybridised discourse on dis/ability which allows one to conform to group discourse norms such as trash-talking while making one's dis/ability an integral part of identity may be a more empowering approach. It allows the individual to act agentively to shape the discourse in ways with which s/he is comfortable and to gain

acceptance from peers because s/he is able to engage in the kind of discourse valued by the group. Reconstituting as a discourse move in phenomenological identifications in which discourses are hybridised may be a key resource for marginalised individuals to gain entry into a community. It is also a move which many, marginalised or not, undertake as they navigate across contexts. Both hybridising and navigating support the individual's attempt to shape-shift as s/he navigates across a network of communities. However, not all who navigate, hybridise. Entry into a community can also be achieved by echoing the community's extant discourse practices. It is only those who seek to emphasise rather than downplay their marginalised anchored identity who must engage in a strategy of struggle in the discourse to make this identity relevant or important to the new community. As for those role-playing a member of a marginalised community, it is more likely that, even in hybridity, facets of the Other such as values, beliefs, perspectives and knowledge are assimilated into the self rather than the self become the Other. The Other when role-played remains transient.

I now proceed to discuss the transient Other with its assemblages metamorphosing in response to contexts where different anchored identities intermingle or when various identities are laminated onto the avatar. In view of Merchant's (2006) definition of anchored identity, it seems that the individual would not experience self-Other mergence sufficiently to facilitate propelling the avatar with a disability from the status of transient to anchored identity unless s/he takes on that avatar within a socially-situated setting for a period of time long enough to develop and delineate a range of pertinent sociocultural practices. Given the brief exposure to these avatars in this study, it is perfectly understandable why the Other holds the status of a transient identity---a status also affirmed by fluctuating discourse moves and variable phenomenological identifications illustrating the making and remaking of positions.

The implications of the transience of the Other are that it is an identity which can be forged in different ways in different times and in different contexts. This is to say that an individual will have with an ever-changing sense of who this Other is. As such,

there may be greater receptivity to attempts to alter the lived role-play experiences in order to transform the individual's phenomenological identifications. However, it also means that the lived role-play experiences play a very important part in shaping phenomenological identifications. Based on my review of the curricular interventions of this study, I discuss a number of recommendations to enhance these lived role-play experiences in the following paragraphs.

First and foremost would be the involvement of people with disabilities in this study. I explained in section 3.2.3 why there was no direct involvement of people with disabilities as study participants in this project. With regard to gleaning insights into the dis/ability, Professor Dan Goodley who has extensive and in-depth knowledge in the field of disability studies, gave me invaluable advice when he was on my upgrade committee. However, I had not considered the importance of involving people with disabilities as an informant and/or a critical friend to provide feedback on all aspects of the curricular intervention, namely, (i) the choice of materials for the critical literacy programme and the cases, (ii) the design of worksheets for the case analysis and post-role-playing reflections, (iii) teacher preparation for facilitating in-world reflections and (iv) the focus group discussion questions. These would have directly and indirectly impacted the participants' lived experiences within the role-play as well as their perception of their lived experiences within the role-play.

The materials from the critical literacy component of the study and the antecedent cases the participants read or viewed reflect a great deal of complexity in enactments and understandings of dis/ability. They were useful in helping many of the participants who had minimal contact with people with disabilities view the portrayals of dis/ability with a different lens and hear the voices which had been hitherto concealed or distorted in dominant discourses. However, in general, participants adopted a reductive approach by selecting the most obvious and simplest enactments to emulate. As such, more time and opportunities in our critical literacy programme could have been given to the participants to identify the assumptions underpinning a text so as to

underscore the importance of interrogating representations of people with disabilities. More time could also have been spent examining the what, why and how of the enactments in the cases. These measures could have precluded reductive emulations and perhaps supported more complex renderings of dis/ability.

The participants in general frequently chose enactments which bore little resemblance to their cases despite being told to do. This might have impeded their phenomenological identifications with the Other. It was perhaps due to how I designed the role-play. First, the frequency and duration of the role-play should have been increased to give those role-playing more opportunities to familiarise themselves with the features of SL and to develop their avatar's character and back story, forge their own discourse and delineate their relationships with other avatars in accordance with evolving group norms (Moore & Gathman, 2007; Mortensen, 2007; Schroeder, 2002). Second, there could have more direct links between their chosen case and the role-play, that is, the role-play should have been an extension of what the participants had read or viewed in the case. Having avatars with a similar disability as that reflected in the case was not enough. Similarities between physical and virtual embodiment but dissimilarities in narratives can still produce too much of a gap for the role-players to bridge. Third, the difficulties arising from the creation of mixed contact scenarios with avatars with/out disabilities should have been avoided. Instead, I could have assigned the majority or all of them an avatar with a disability to increase the representation of similarly embodied peers. Studies of this nature in future should consider how increased representations of the marginalised group within the VW can impact how role-players' lived experiences in the VW play out.

As for the lamination of various identities, the primary difficulty arose because of the confrontational nature of Theatre of the Oppressed. I adapted the tried and tested method of Theatre of the Oppressed to help my participants understand the oppression faced by marginalised group. Theatre of the Oppressed represents the stark reality of oppression, it exposes power differentials and it helps oppressed and

marginalised individuals find ways and means to confront their oppressor. Having my participants grapple with opposition to their identity as an avatar with a disability might have run counter to my purpose of facilitating their enactments as the Other and phenomenological identifications with the Other. If they had been engaged in role-play where they had to plan and discuss inclusive school activities with supportive peers, this might have provided greater encouragement to enact the Other or at least may have removed some impediments to enacting the Other. It would not have been in line with the dramatic techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed but it would have, nevertheless, provided participants with a moral encounter and nurtured a sense of responsibility towards the Other and a seeking of justice for the Other as they focus on strategies founded on inclusivity. More explorations of dramatic approaches and techniques are needed to better understand how best to harness their potential and integrate them into virtual role-play.

This research study highlights the value of a number of curricular interventions in transforming the participants' understandings of dis/ability such as (i) direct instruction on critical literacy to raise the participants' awareness of how people with disabilities are commonly portrayed in dominant discourses, (ii) the cases the participants examined in preparation for their role-play and (iii) the multiple opportunities for the participants to reflect on and/or reproduce or recast in different modes of communication what they had read, viewed and/or experienced. The teachers and I tried out our incipient interventions for the first time. As such, at times, we fell short in our implementation and this might have impacted our participants' phenomenological identifications with the Other and, consequently, their ability to hybridise or navigate their way towards self-Other mergence. I cannot speak with certainty that the recommendations I make here would move people from the self-Other binary to the self-Other mergence end of the spectrum or that it would turn the Other from a transient identity to an anchored identity. Nevertheless, these recommendations are

based on the lessons I have derived from this research experience and I believe they represent a step in the direction towards self-Other mergence.

7.3 Of myths and analytical methods

Chapter 6 encompasses an eclectic mix of analytical approaches I employed to examine my participants' sociological identifications. I was attempting to drill down into the ways in which my study participants were open or closed to identifying with people with disabilities (Coupland, 2010). While my analysis did illustrate this, on another level, it also showed me that I had blinkers on. I had made a number of wrong assumptions about (i) the affordances of VWs, and specifically *SL*, for enacting the Other and (ii) the consistency of identity enactments. However, I have gained insights into the role of narratives as a catalyst of identifications and the importance of examining the trajectories of identifications across space-times. I discuss these various facets in the following paragraphs.

First, I found that the nascent changes in their understandings of dis/ability arose from their analyses of their chosen case rather than from the role-play. This suggests that I may have placed too much emphasis on the role-play as a catalyst for changing values, beliefs and perspectives. I had presumptuously given weight to virtual embodiment. I mentioned previously the limits of the affordances of *SL* for supporting enactments as the Other in my discussion of role immersion. These include (i) constraints on the modes of communication the participants were accustomed to using for self-representation such as some iconic gestures and facial expressions, (ii) the less conducive use of the chat mode of communication for being-oriented immersion as chats in comparison to voice in *SL* made the participants more deliberate and self-conscious about their enactments and (iii) grappling with the issue of letting participants use *SL* features such as the chat and voice function to write or speak as they usually would when this precluded the authentic experience of difficulties in writing or speaking due to a disability. As such, I realised the importance of the materiality of the experience. It was less important that I stopped them from flying and

building and more important that they experienced bodily the absence of physical function and control and all the physical sensations associated with a particular disability. This means that there are specific disabilities which would never be adequately represented in *SL* or any VW unless the tactile sense can be incorporated. The danger if I were to persist in ignoring the importance of the tactile sense is that I might mislead participants who are less self-aware into thinking that this is what being disabled is all about and exacerbate the problem of Othering.

On the flipside, I had also ignored the important role of narratives in persuading and catalysing a change in dispositions or identifications. This is because my study primarily addresses identity as performativity within the context of my participants' role-playing in a VW while narrativity took a back seat in my analysis. Studies in future might want to consider examining the role of narratives in facilitating identifications. Narratives, besides facilitating a representation of the Other, have the added advantage of being able to incorporate explanations and reflexive discussions of the Other so as to direct interpretation of the Other in a specific way. Some key questions to ask would be as follows; What stories or parts of stories do people choose to retell or perform or adapt for retellings or performance? What sort of non-academically related narrative to represent their understandings of dis/ability would the participants have produced had they been given the opportunity to do so? Was there a kind of ventriloquism (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) embedded within this narrative and how was this achieved (see Davies, 2011; Davies, 2014)? Alternatively, were voices being reconstituted to signal group affiliations?

Second, I was looking for consistency and development in my participants' enactments. Instead, I found an erratic quality in their enactments, contingent upon their priorities at a given time and place. My observation is consistent with Potter's (2009) observation that his participants at different times included and excluded different meaning-making resources and affiliated themselves in different ways during the study. Potter (2009) also notes that his participants located themselves in different ways compared to how

they did so at the outset of the project. I would take this one step further. My participants were not who they were each time they produced new artefact--written or verbalised or enacted. In the context of my study, I found that the student identity with individual perceptions of its obligations and disciplinary understandings intersected and shaped the discourse on dis/ability. My participants drew on resources within their extant network or which I had placed within their network to achieve their space-time specific goals and priorities. These resources were employed or co-opted for the purposes which mattered to them or which they perceived mattered to their subject or their teachers. As such, their sociological identification with the Other or lack of sociological identification was temporal. These complicating group affiliations subverted my attempts at finding consistency and development.

Nevertheless, my analysis did highlight the importance of the method by which I was able to discern these shifting group affiliations. More work is needed in the terms of tracing the individual's movements across space-times within a network of people, objects and landscapes in order to examine the reconfiguring of material and discursive practices to forge, delineate and express a particular space-time (Leander & McKim, 2003) and to learn how these different space-times are interconnected in novel ways across the real and virtual worlds and across group affiliations (Burnett & Merchant, 2014). Another aspect which warrants further examination is how these individuals navigated group norms and discourse practices in order to forge these space-times into being. So to what extent did group norms and practices constitute these space-times? To achieve this, the examination of a far more complicated web of interweaving discourse practices is needed. The goal of such analyses is ultimately to surface what cannot be learnt through discourse analysed in-situ, to find out how people act agentively to achieve their purposes, that is, to explore the variations in how they configured and were supported or limited by socio-technical structures (Dodge, et al., 2008). In so doing, then possibly extrapolate these findings to situations where

people need to learn how to act agentively to achieve their purposes—to learn the art and science of shape-shifting.

7.4 Chapter Summary

To conclude, I return to Lemke's (2008, p. 20) quote which I cited at the beginning of this thesis;

> Everyone of lower or weaker status must learn as part of survival how the minds of the powerful work. Asymmetrically, the powerful are often much less able to put themselves in the shoes of those whose ways of thinking they are privileged to ignore.

Those who are empowered one way or another in a given context need to be able to better understand the perspectives of those who are less empowered. This is not for the purpose of fostering benevolent interactions within these relations of power but for transforming the discourse which typically dehumanises and alienates the hidden Other within a regime of representation. The ultimate goals are that the discourse on dis/ability becomes an empowering discourse, enabling people with/out disabilities to stand on an equal footing and that alterity can be engaged without fear and ignorance as people, regardless of their group affiliations, make the effort to understand and respect the differentness and uniqueness of others.

I would say that Carrington's (2005, p. 468) notion of the uncanny applied to me as much as it did to the study. In this study, my attention was drawn to my taken-for-granted status as a researcher, a teacher, a curriculum designer, a member of a little known racial Other, a person without a disability and an advocate for the Other. My research has rendered unfamiliar the identities which have been familiar to me all this while. In this confusing mélange of identities, a multitude of concepts drawn from various research fields and wide-ranging positions on a broad range of issues, I have tried my best to articulate what I have learnt about my research topic on identity enactments as the hidden Other. If I have caused discomfort or offense or have not expressed my ideas with clarity, I beg your indulgence. This thesis captures but a moment in my ever evolving understanding what it means to accommodate alterity.

Appendices

Appendix A1

No	Statements	Year	Agree	Disagree
1	People with disabilities should be accompanied by a nondisabled person when going out to public places like the market, shopping centres, using ATM etc.	2011	53.1%	25%
		2009	66%	25%
2	It is harder to communicate and deal with people with disabilities than non-disabled people.	2011	25.3%	46.6%
		2009	43%	45%
3	People with disabilities are able to perform as well as non-disabled people at work.	2011	68.1%	8.8%
		2009	66%	23%
4	People with disabilities are dependent and need other people to help them all the time, which can be troublesome.	2011	13.4%	61.7%
		2009	47%	39%
5	More can be done to help people with disabilities on public transportation in Singapore.	2011	93.1%	1.5%
6	Members of the public should give way to people with disabilities who are getting into lifts and boarding trains.	2011	96.1%	0.8%
7	Children with disabilities should be studying in mainstream schools alongside non-disabled children.	2011	60.8%	10.1%
8	I have helped someone with disabilities in the last 12 months such as given way to them on public transport, helped someone with visual impairment to cross the road, or helped to push a wheelchair user up a slope.	2011	67.6%	14.3%
9	I will not hesitate to help people with disabilities whom I see might need help.	2011	90.2%	1.4%
10	I am willing to hire someone with physical disabilities.	2011	80.3%	1.6%

Source: Society for the Physically Disabled. (January, 13, 2012). Survey shows Singaporeans more accepting of people with disabilities. Retrieved on August 28, 2014 from http://www.spd.org.sg/news/detail/i-accept-campaign-2011survey-117.html

Appendix B

TEXT ANALYSIS

1. **Lexical Choices**
   a. Look at all the word used to describe the disabled/elderly and decide which ones convey i) a positive image, ii) a negative image or iii) neutral image. **(SYMBOLISATION OF UNITY or DIFFERENTIATION, NATURALISATION)**
   b. Are there any metaphors used? What are the disabled/elderly, their actions or circumstances being compared to? What image does this convey? **(TROPE, NATURALISATION)**
   c. Are there any euphemisms being used? What negative actions or implications is the writer trying to conceal? **(EUPEHMISM, NATURALISATION)**
   d. Are the disabled/elderly described in an unconventional way? How so and why? **(SYMBOLISATION OF UNITY or DIFFERENTIATION, NATURALISATION)**

2. **Grammatical Choices**
   a. Look at the number of words used to provide a static description of the disabled/elderly relative to them engaged in doing, being or having, thinking or feeling or perceiving, saying or behaving? How are the descriptions distributed across these two broad categories? What does this say about the writer's perception of the disabled/elderly? **(NATURALISATION)**
   b. When is the active voice or passive voice used? The passive voice conceals the agent of action. When has and why does the writer choose to give less emphasis to who is doing the action in some instances? **(PASSIVISATION)**
   c. When has the writer chosen to describe a process as an event or thing thus concealing the participants and the actions (for e.g., who discriminates against whom and the nature of these discriminatory actions are concealed with a general reference to "discrimination"). Why do you think the writer has done this? **(NOMINALISATION)**
   d. Who is quoted in direct speech, indirect speech and free indirect speech (i.e. the writer's voice merges with that of the person being quoted)? What do you think is the writer's intention for using these various forms or for switching between these different forms? **(DIFFERENTIATION)**
   e. When does the writer use statements, questions, offers or commands? What does this tell us about what the writer is trying to achieve with his/her readership?
   e. Are there instances where the writer disassociates himself or herself from certain ideas, actions, people and events based on his or her word choice? For example, in the choice of pronouns, does the writer include or exclude himself or herself from the views expressed or the groups being referred to in the text? **(SYMBOLISATION OF UNITY or DIFFERENTIATION, NATURALISATION)**
   f. Does the writer focus more on what is or what is not? What do you think are his or her reasons for doing so? **(DIFFERENTIATION)**
   g. The present tense is used to convey timeless truths and absolute certainty

whereas the other tenses set up definiteness of events occurring in time. What does tense the writer predominantly use and why? **(NARRATIVISATION, EXTERNALISATION)**

h. Varying degrees of probability is conveyed through the use of modals such as “may”, “could”, “will”, adverbs such as “possibly”, “certainly”, “hopefully”, intonation and question tags. When does the writer convey absolute certainty about what he or she is writing and when does he or she hedge? Why do you think this is so?

i. Look for patterns in what is frequently provided in the first bit of the clause (before the verb) and the new information introduced in the second half of a clause. What ideas, people, action and/or events does the writer foreground in the first half of the clause? What new ideas, people, action and/or events does the writer introduce? What claim does the writer make about the relationship between these two parts of the clause? **(NATURALISATION)**

3. Sequencing

a. Look at the use of additive conjunctions like “because”, “so”, “therefore” and adversative conjunctions such as “although” and “yet”. Does the writer use these to make or refute claims about causal relations between various ideas, people, actions and events? **(RATIONALISATION)**

b. Does the writer use temporal conjunctions such as “when”, “while”, “after” and “before” to specify conditions or occasions for the occurrence of certain actions or events? Are these reasonable or limiting? **(RATIONALISATION, UNIVERSALISATION)**

4. Construction of Reality

a. How many views of the disabled/elderly and versions of their reality does this text offer the reader? What are they? Which view and version does the writer prefer? How do you know this? **(NATURALISATION)**

Adapted from:
Janks. H. (2010). Literacy and power. NY: Routledge

Appendix C

Critical Literacy Questions

Whenever you analyse a text which may be in written or pictorial form, consider the following questions. Not all questions may be applicable. Quickly glance through the list to find those most pertinent to the text you are analysing.

1. Lexical Choices

a. Look at all the words or images used to describe or depict persons with disabilities and decide which ones convey i) a positive image, ii) a negative image or iii) neutral image.

b. Are there any metaphors used? What are the persons with disabilities, their actions or circumstances being compared to? What image does this convey?

c. Are there any euphemisms being used? What negative actions or implications is the writer/ narrator trying to conceal?

d. Are the persons with disabilities described in an unconventional way? How so and why?

2. Grammatical Choices

a. When is the active voice or passive voice used? The passive voice conceals the agent of action. When has and why does the writer/ narrator choose to give less emphasis to who is doing the action in some instances?

b. Who is quoted in direct speech, indirect speech and free indirect speech (i.e. the writer/narrator's voice merges with that of the person being quoted)? What do you think is the writer/ narrator/ videographer's intention for using these various forms or for switching between these different forms?

c. When does the writer/ narrator use statements, questions, offers or commands? What does this tell us about what the writer/ narrator is trying to achieve with his/her readership/ viewership?

d. The present tense is used to convey timeless truths and absolute certainty whereas the other tenses set up definiteness of events occurring in time. What does tense the writer/narrator predominantly use and why?

e. Varying degrees of probability is conveyed through the use of modals such as "may", "could", "will", adverbs such as "possibly", "certainly", "hopefully", intonation and question tags. When does the writer/ narrator convey absolute certainty about what he or she is writing or saying and when does he or she hedge? Why do you think this is

so?

3. Construction of Reality

a. How many views of persons with disabilities and versions of their reality does this text offer the reader/ viewer? What are they? Which view and version does the writer/narrator/ videographer prefer? How do you know this?

Adapted from:

Janks. H. (2010). Literacy and power. NY: Routledge

Appendix D

ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE CRITICAL LITERACY

PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

- *Article 2* states that all rights shall apply to all children without discrimination on any ground and specifically mentions disability
- *Article 3* states that in all actions the child's best interests "shall be the primary consideration"
- Article 23 states the right of disabled children to enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions, which ensures dignity, promotes self-reliance, and facilitates the child's active participation in the community. It also states the right of the disabled child to special care, education, health care, training, rehabilitation, employment preparation and recreation opportunities
- *Article 28* states the child's right to education on the basis of equal opportunity
- *Article 29* states that a child's education should be directed at developing the child's personality and talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Opposing Views

Read these two viewpoints. In the light of the articles listed in the convention on the rights of the child, which viewpoint do you agree with more? Why?

Viewpoint A

In every society across the world there will always be some children who have special needs. These children have particular problems that prevent them from learning and developing like other children. These children need special teaching in response to their problems. It is best to teach children with similar problems together. Separate special schools are the best places to meet the special needs of these children. Teachers need extra training to be able to teach these children.

Viewpoint B

Every child has different learning needs. Any child may experience difficulties in school. Such difficulties can point to ways in which teaching can be improved. These improvements lead to better learning conditions for all children. The child is not the problem. The education system is the problem. Every child is an individual. Teachers

need to be flexible so they can meet the needs of every child in their class, whatever difficulties they have.

Source: http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/cambodia_module3.pdf

Reading Resources for Viewpoint A

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB119610348432004184.html

http://www.slideshare.net/DeeARoss/cons-of-inclusion-education

http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues43/concerns.html

http://www.readingrockets.org/article/39151/

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB118763976794303235.html

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/dec94/vol52/num04/Full-Inclusion-Is-Neither-Free-Nor-Appropriate.aspx

Reading Resources for Viewpoint B

http://www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2011/03/28/3175451.htm

http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/disabled-indonesian-students-are-separate-but-not-always-equal/522271

http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/legal-rights/1595-inclusive-education-benefits.gs

http://www.inclusion-boltondata.org.uk/PdfData/Data%2039.pdf

Appendix E

Question Analysis (Whole Class Teaching)

Identify the key words in the following question.

● What terms would require definition or elaboration in your introductory paragraph?

● What terms would require you to establish context(s) or specific condition(s) in which your arguments would hold true?

● Is the question oriented towards what is the case or what ought to be the case?

● Whose perspectives would you take into consideration?

Should children with special needs be taught in a mainstream class?

Paragraph Development (Individual Work)

Instructions

● Choose one of the opposing viewpoints listed below.

● Apply the relevant critical literacy questions to this viewpoint to help you understand the values and assumptions underpinning its statements.

● Come up with one argument to support this viewpoint. Develop a topic sentence (opinion) and supporting evidence (reasons, examples, statistics, analogy) for this argument. You may refer to articles which you read and analysed previously to help you develop your paragraph.

Viewpoint A

In every society across the world there will always be some children who have special needs. These children have particular problems that prevent them from learning and developing like other children. These children need special teaching in response to their problems. It is best to teach children with similar problems together. Separate special schools are the best places to meet the special needs of these children. Teachers need extra training to be able to teach these children.

Viewpoint B

Every child has different learning needs. Any child may experience difficulties in school. Such difficulties can point to ways in which teaching can be improved. These improvements lead to better learning conditions for all children. The child is not the problem. The education system is the problem. Every child is an individual. Teachers need to be flexible so they can meet the needs of every child in their class, whatever difficulties they have.

Source: http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/cambodia_module3.pdf

Appendix F

ROLE-PLAYING

A) Autism

Case 1:

- Arthur and Carly Fleischmann's memoir: *Carly's Voice (refer to folder)*
- ABC News Report: Teen with Autism Finds Inner Voice *(refer to folder)*
- CTV News: Carly Fleishmann blogs about her journey with autism http://www.ctvnews.ca/carly-fleischmann-blogs-about-her-journey-with-autism-1.579345
- Carly's Cafe: Experience autism through Carly's eyes http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmDGvquzn2k

Case 2:

- My Life with Autism and ADD: A 17-year old explains what it is like http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciBCvssKLHc

Case 3:

- BBC- My autism and me http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ

Case 4:

- Stories to Inspire: Austin Yong- Journey from special school to mainstream school http://www.spd.org.sg/clientstories/austinyong.html

……

B) Cerebral Palsy and Muscular Dystrophy

Case 1:

- Charisse's Story: My life journey with cerebral palsy http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nnuHj5M5FE

- Charisse's Facebook page
  https://www.facebook.com/pages/Charisse-Living-with-Cerebral-Palsy/201848813189522

Case 2:

- Stuart Maloney's memoir: *26 A behind-the-scenes tour of life with cerebral palsy (refer to folder)*

Case 3:

- Stories to inspire: Kevin Lee
  http://www.spd.org.sg/clientstories/kevin.html

…….

C) Limb Deformity and Paraplegia

Case 1:

- Kevin Michael Connolly's memoir: *Double Take (refer to folder)*
- TODAY SHOW interview
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCUOw3IbeeQ
- Legless Sky
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTTAW1N7Cq8

Case 2:

- Dr William Tan's memoir: *No journey too tough* (refer to *folder*)
- Singapore Heroes: Dr William Tan
  http://singaporeheroes.weebly.com/william-tan.html
- Sia, L. X. (2010, January 8). William's foundation will be his legacy, My Paper. Retrieved on February 19, 2013 from
  http://newshub.nus.edu.sg/news/1001/PDF/WILLIAM-mp-8jan-pA6.pdf
- Yong, A. (2010, March 19). He's creating a facade, The New Paper. Retrieved on February 19, 2013 from
  http://www.asiaone.com/News/The%2BNew%2BPaper/Story/A1Story20100318-205411.html

Appendix G

Name:_____ Date: _____

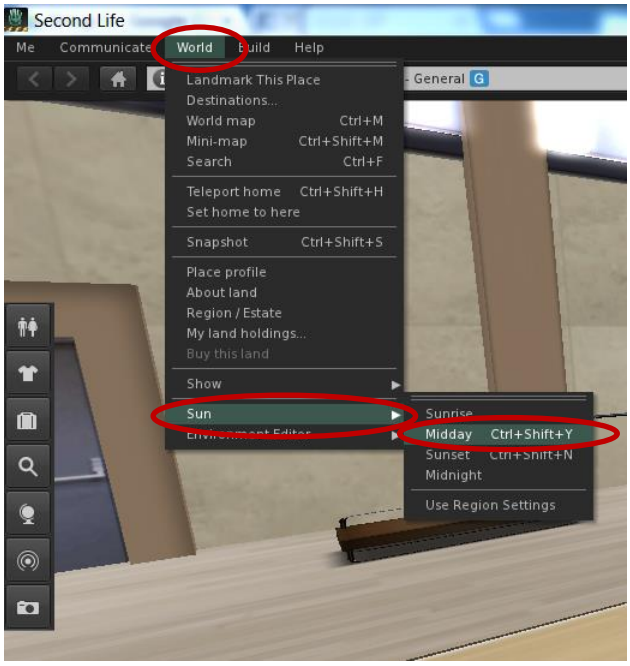
Chosen disability:_____ GP Class:_____

Refer to your Class Facebook page. Choose one type of disability to focus . Read the cases for your chosen type of disability and respond to the following questions:

1. Why have you chosen to focus on this specific disability? Do you know someone with this disability?
2. What do the different cases tell you about this disability?
3. What do these cases tell you about the experiences of persons with this disability? What are the similarities or differences between the various cases?
4. How did these experiences shape the way they responded to their own disability?
5. Do you agree with the way the people with this disability have portrayed themselves in the various cases? Why or why not?
6. List specific ideas or quotes from the videos you have watched or the articles and memoirs you have read which have made an impact on you. Explain why you have chosen these ideas or quotes.
7. What similarities and differences do you see between yourself and the persons with the disability in the cases you have read or watched?

Appendix H

1. Lighting



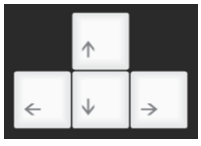
Go to the top menu bar, click on “World”, scroll down to “Sun” and click on “Midday”.

2. Movement

Focus on realistic movements such as walking or running. Go to the bottom menu bar and click on “Walk/run/fly”. Then click on the walk or run icon.

To move, use the arrow keys in the pop up menu—swing left, move forward, swing right, move backward or move sideways towards the left or right. The up and down arrows on the right of the menu are for jumping or squatting.

Alternatively, use the letters “W”, “A”, “S” and “D” or the arrow keys on your keyboard.

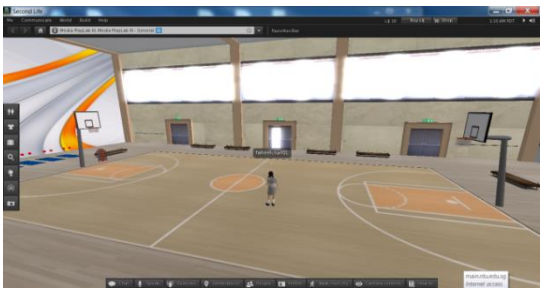


3. Perspectives

The rear view is the default perspective. To change this, go to the bottom menu bar and click on "Camera controls". A dialogue box will appear.

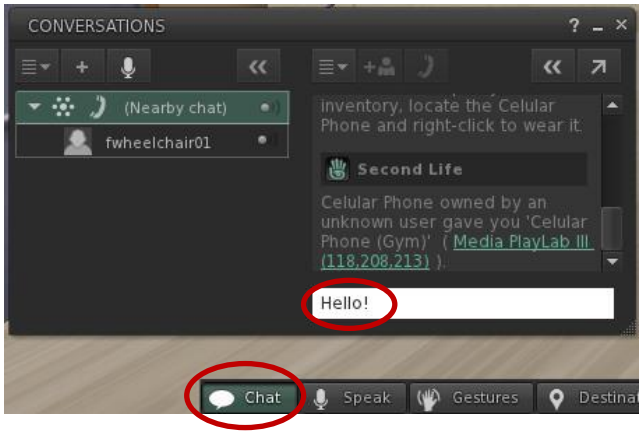
a) Click on the eye icon, followed by "Front View" or "Side View".

b) Alternatively, click on the camera icon. You may choose Object View where the focus is on any object or avatar you click on. You can also choose Mouselook view. This is as though you are looking through the eyes of your avatar as you move your mouse. *Note: chatting is not possible when you have these views.*



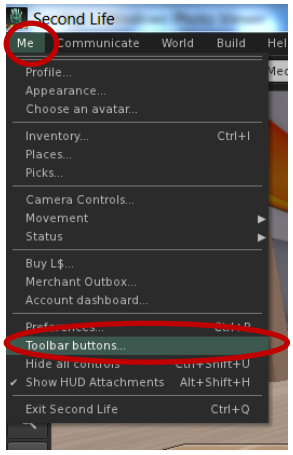
You can also scroll your mouse up to zoom in or scroll down to zoom out.

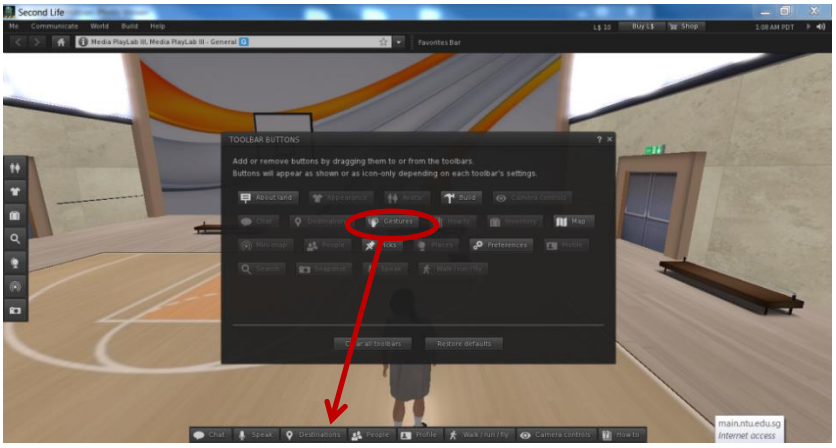
4. Communication



To communicate via text, go to the bottom menu bar and click on "Chat". A dialogue box appears. Then type in your text and hit "Enter".

To start a private conversation, right click on another person's avatar and click on "IM". Then start typing.

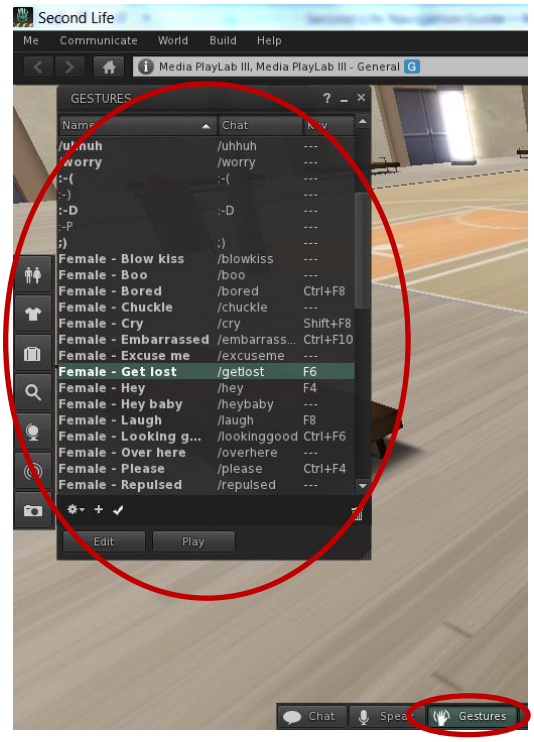




To communicate via gestures, you need your gestures button. Go to the top menu bar and click on "Me". Scroll down and click on "Toolbar buttons".

A dialogue box will appear. Click on and drag the "Gestures" button down to the bottom menu bar.

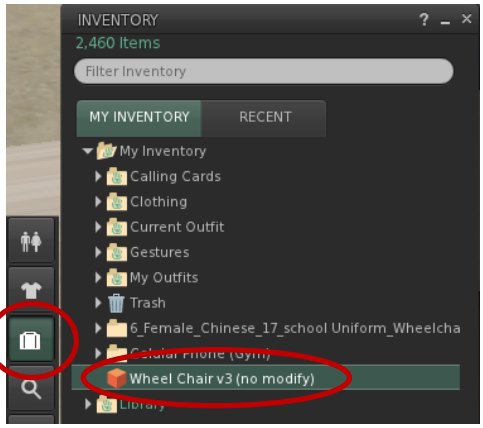
Then go the bottom menu bar and click on "Gestures". A dialogue box will appear. To choose the gesture, just click on it.

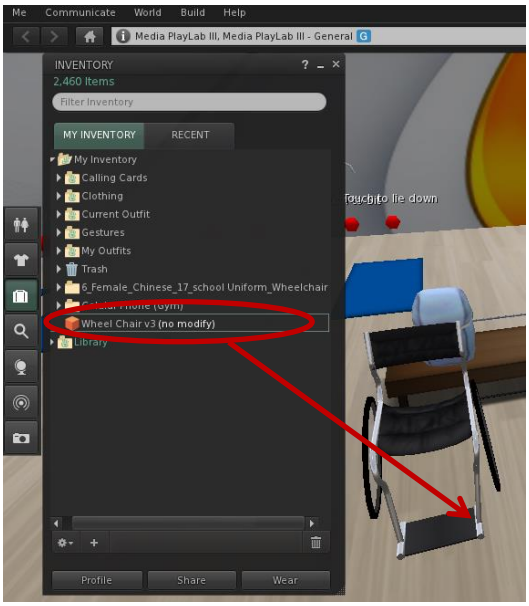


5. Using objects

(a) Wheelchair

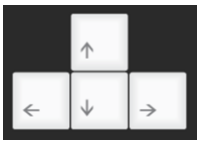
If you are playing the paraplegic avatar, retrieve the wheelchair from the inventory. Go to the side menu bar and click on the suitcase icon. Then click on “Wheel Chair v3” and drag it out to where you want it to be. A wheelchair will appear.



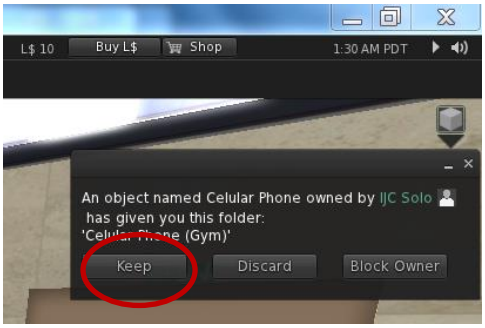


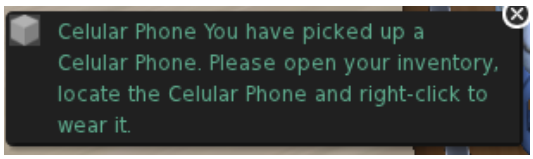
Right click on the wheelchair and a menu option will appear. Click on “Sit Here”.

To move, use the letters “W”, “A”, “S” and “D” or the arrow keys on your keyboard.



(b) Phone





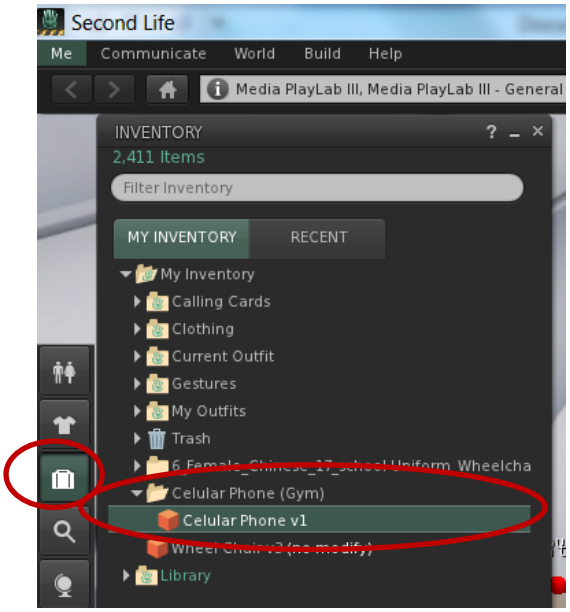
To retrieve the cell phone from the bag, click on the bag and then click on the cell phone.

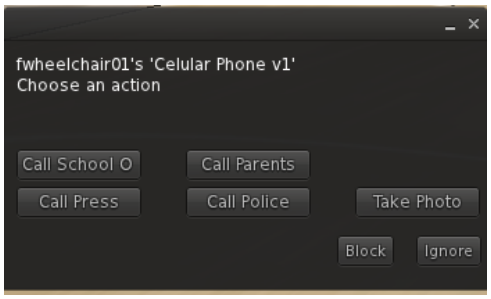
A dialogue box will appear. Click on "Keep".

A notification will appear informing you that the cell phone is now stored in your inventory.

To retrieve the phone from the inventory or to put it away, go to the side menu bar and click on the suitcase icon. Double click on the "Cellular Phone" folder and double click on "Cellular Phone v1".

There are several call options to choose from. When you click on any of these, your call will be announced to everyone in your group.



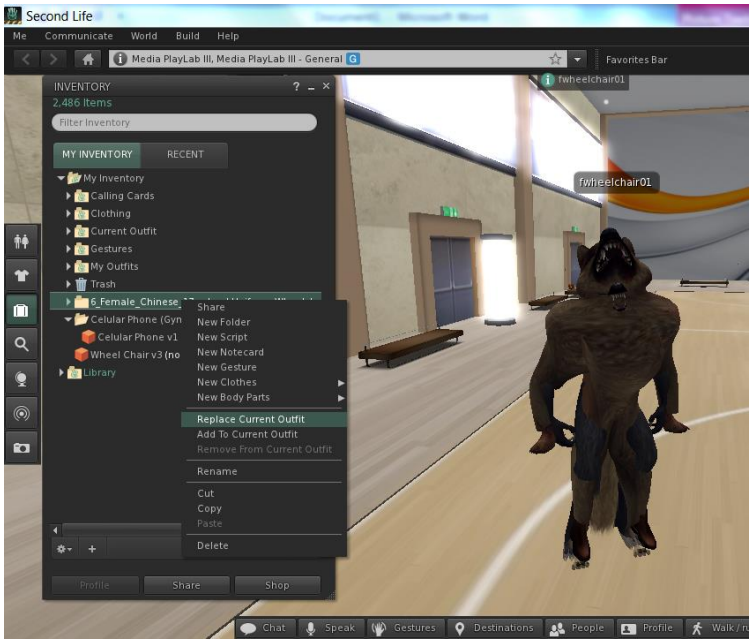


(c) Basketball

To retrieve the basketball, double click on it. The ball will fall out of the storage bin.

To fling the ball, place your mouse cursor over the ball and quickly drag it across the screen.

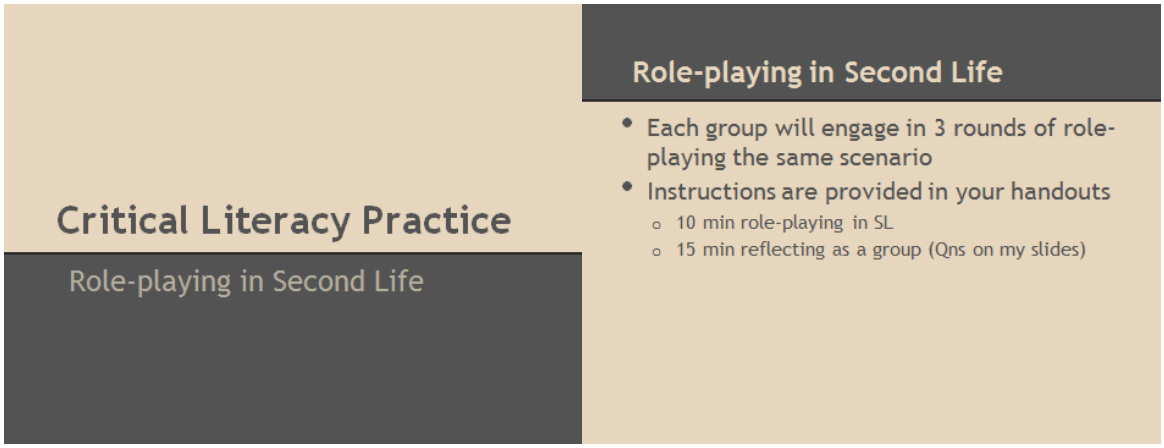
6. Switching back to original attire

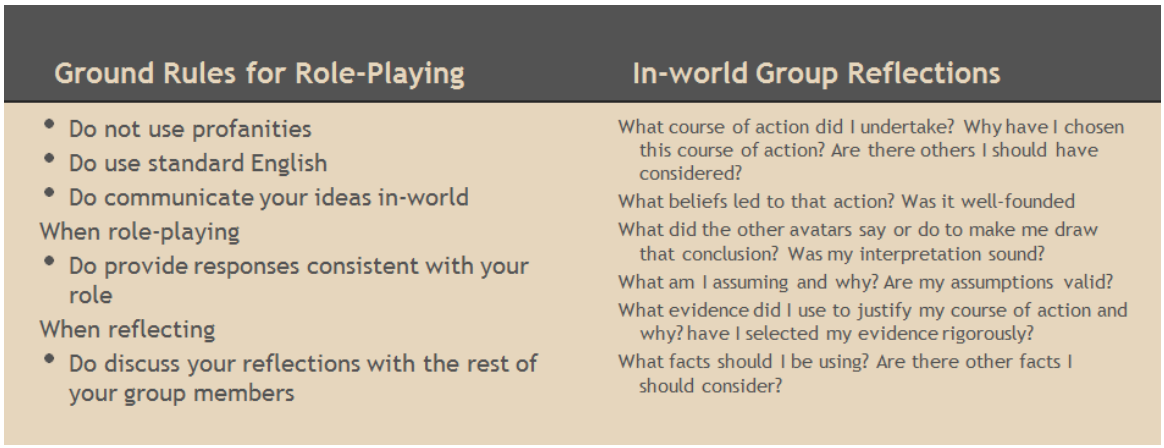


If you end up changing your avatar's appearance, you can return to the student outfit by going to the side menu bar and clicking on suitcase icon. Then right click on the original attire, scroll down and click on "Replace Current Outfit".

If the avatar still does not revert to its original form, log out and then log in again.

Appendix I


Critical Literacy Practice
Role-playing in Second Life
Role-playing in Second Life
Each group will engage in 3 rounds of role-playing the same scenario
Instructions are provided in your handouts
10 min role-playing in SL
15 min reflecting as a group (Qns on my slides)


Ground Rules for Role-Playing
Do not use profanities
Do use standard English
Do communicate your ideas in-world
When role-playing
Do provide responses consistent with your role
When reflecting
Do discuss your reflections with the rest of your group members
In-world Group Reflections
What course of action did I undertake? Why have I chosen this course of action? Are there others I should have considered?
What beliefs led to that action? Was it well-founded
What did the other avatars say or do to make me draw that conclusion? Was my interpretation sound?
What am I assuming and why? Are my assumptions valid?
What evidence did I use to justify my course of action and why? have I selected my evidence rigorously?
What facts should I be using? Are there other facts I should consider?

Appendix J

Group 1 (Admin access to Second Life)

SLURL: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Media%20PlayLab%20III/137/205/215

Password:
secondlife2013
Username:
Accounts for the person with a disability (Choose one)

- mautistic01
- fautistic01
- mcerebralpalsy01
- fcerebralpalsy01
- mwheelchair01
- fwheelchair01
- mdeformedarm01
- fdeformedarm01

Accounts for non-disabled persons

- mablebodied01
- fablebodied01
- mablebodied201
- fablebodied201

Group 2 (Admin access to Second Life)

SLURL: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Media%20PlayLab%20III/237/207/315

Password:
secondlife2013
Username:
Accounts for the person with a disability (Choose one)

- mautistic02
- fautistic02
- mcerebralpalsy02
- fcerebralpalsy02
- mwheelchair02
- fwheelchair02
- mdeformedarm02
- fdeformedarm02

Accounts for non-disabled persons

- mablebodied02
- fablebodied02
- mablebodied202
- fablebodied202

Group 3 (Admin access to Second Life)

SLURL: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Media%20PlayLab%20III/31/209/315

Password:
secondlife2013
Username:
Accounts for the person with a disability (Choose one)

- mautistic03
- fautistic03
- mcerebralpalsy03
- fcerebralpalsy03
- mwheelchair03
- fwheelchair03
- mdeformedarm03
- fdeformedarm03

Accounts for non-disabled persons

- mablebodied03
- fablebodied03
- mablebodied203
- fablebodied203

Group 4 (Admin access to Second Life)

SLURL: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Media%20PlayLab%20III/30/209/437

Password:
secondlife2013
Username:
Accounts for the person with a disability (Choose one)

- mautistic04
- fautistic04
- mcerebralpalsy004
- fcerebralpalsy04

- mwheelchair04
- fwheelchair04
- mdeformedarm04
- fdeformedarm04

Accounts for non-disabled persons

- mablebodied04
- fablebodied04
- mablebodied204
- fablebodied204

Group 5 (Admin access to Second Life)

SLURL: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Media%20PlayLab%20III/232/209/437

Password:
secondlife2013
Username:
Accounts for the person with a disability (Choose one)

- mautistic05
- fautistic05
- mcerebralpalsy05
- fcerebralpalsy05
- mwheelchair05
- fwheelchair05
- mdeformedarm05
- fdeformedarm05

Accounts for non-disabled persons

- mablebodied05
- fablebodied05
- mablebodied205
- fablebodied205

Appendix K

A) Instructions for beginning role-playing

1. Decide together with your group members who will be the first to take on the role of the person with a disability (Role No. 1). Then decide who will take on the compulsory role for a non-disabled person (Role No. 2). The remaining three members can decide to take on any of the two roles for on-disabled persons (Role No 2-3).
2. Read through the scenario and your role card.
3. Go to Google Drive, access your group folder and then click on the document "Admin (Access to Second Life)".
4. Choose one of the eight accounts listed to role-play a person with a disability.
5. Launch Second Life.
6. Enter your Username and password. Copy the link listed under "Venue" and paste it in under "Start at". Click on the "Log In" button.
7. Once in the school gymnasium in Second Life, activate FastStone Capture.
8. Think of a name for your avatar. Type out your real name first and then your avatar's name e.g. This is _____ and I am role-playing as_____.
9. Use what you have read from the cases to help you respond to the situation. Make yourself sound like the individuals in the cases you have read about.

B) Instructions for reflecting on the role-play

1. Look at the questions on my (Ms Yeo) slides and take turns to share your responses to these questions while in Second Life.
2. Then discuss as a group whether there are other ways the student with a disability could have responded to the situation based on your reading of the cases.
3. Stop Faststone capture and SAVE your recording onto the Desktop.

C) Instructions for role-playing and reflecting the second and third time

1. Decide who will next play the student with a disability and hand this instruction sheet to that student.
2. You may choose an avatar with the same or a different disability.
   a. To choose the same disability, just switch seats with the student who was previously playing the disabled student.
   b. To choose another disability, go to Google Drive, access your group folder and then click on the document "Admin (Access to Second Life)" to see the eight accounts listed to roleplay a person with a disability.
3. Log in as instructed earlier.
4. Once in the school gymnasium in Second Life, activate FastStone Capture.
5. Think of a name for your avatar. Type out your real name first and then your avatar's name e.g. This is _____ and I am role-playing as_____.
6. Again, use what you have read from the cases to help you respond to the

situation. Make yourself sound like the individuals in the cases you have read about. In addition, consider what you discussed in your group reflections. Think about how the group reflections will affect your roleplaying or try to incorporate some of the suggested responses into your role-playing.

Scenario

Venue: College gym Items: Basketballs Blue mats Bag with a phone in it Security camera	Description: In this scenario, a group of students are relaxing and chatting with one another in the college gym during their tea break. The student with a disability tries to join in on their conversation. However, at least one member of the group begins making disparaging remarks and behaves aggressively towards him/her.	Task: In your role, enact the scenario as described. decide how you want your avatar to respond to the situation. Use the description provided in your role card to guide your response. You may deviate from the description in your role card but be consistent with the role you have taken on. Your response can be communicated through typed text and gestures.

Role Card

Role No 1. Avatar Name:_____ (Compulsory Role)

I have had a disability since birth. However, this has not hindered my educational pursuits. Even though I am less physically able, I have a good mind and I did well enough to gain entry into a junior college. Nevertheless, I still find it difficult to gain acceptance from my peers. I suppose it is because of my disability. I do not look “normal” so that gives my classmates the impression that I am not as clever and that I got into junior college through sheer luck. Even when I get high marks for my assignments, they attribute my success to my disability and say that the teacher pitied me. Initially, they made some derogatory remarks about my physical appearance and called me names or ignored me when I tried to join in on their conversations. I am trying my best to fit in but the more I try, the worse it gets. Now, some of them have started pushing me around. I have to think about how I should respond the next time such things happen again.

A) Instructions

1. Decide together with your group members who will be the first to take on the role of the person with a disability (Role No. 1). Then decide who will take on the compulsory role for a non-disabled person (Role No. 2). The remaining three members can decide to take on any of the two roles for non-disabled persons (Role No 2-3).

2. Read through the scenario and your role card.
3. Go to Google Drive, access your group folder and then click on the document "Admin (Access to Second Life)".
4. Decide together with the group members role-playing non-disabled persons which of the four accounts you will use. You cannot share the same account.
5. Launch Second Life.
6. Enter your Username and password. Copy the link listed under "Venue" and paste it in under "Start at". Click on the "Log In" button.
7. Once in the school gymnasium in Second Life, activate FastStone Capture.
8. Think of a name for your avatar. Type out your real name first and then your avatar's name e.g. This is _____ and I am role-playing as_____.
9. Use what you have read from the cases to help you respond to the situation.

B) Instructions for reflecting on the role-play

1. Look at the questions on my (Ms Yeo) slides and take turns to share your responses to these questions while in Second Life.
2. Then discuss as a group whether there are other ways the student with a disability could have responded to the situation based on your reading of the cases.
3. Stop Faststone capture and SAVE your recording onto the Desktop.

C) Instructions for role-playing and reflecting the second and third time

1. Decide who will next play the student with a disability.
   a. If you wish to play the disabled student, get the instruction sheet from the member who role-played the disabled avatar earlier and switch seats with him/her.
   b. If not, continue using this account. You may choose Role No 2 or 3. (Note: There must be at least one group member playing Role No 2.)
2. Log in as instructed earlier.
3. Once in the school gymnasium in Second Life, activate FastStone Capture.
4. Think of a name for your avatar. Type out your real name first and then your avatar's name e.g. This is _____ and I am role-playing as_____.
5. Again, use what you have read from the cases to help you respond to the situation. In addition, consider what you discussed in your group reflections. Think about how the group reflections will affect your role-playing or try to incorporate some of the suggested responses into your roleplaying.

Scenario

Venue: College gym Items:	Description: In this scenario, a group of students are relaxing and chatting with one another in the college gym during their tea break. The student with a disability tries to	Task: In your role, enact the scenario as described. decide how you want your avatar to respond to the situation. Use the description provided in your role card to

Basketballs Blue mats Bag with a phone in it Security camera	join in on their conversation. However, at least one member of the group begins making disparaging remarks and behaves aggressively towards him/her.	guide your response. You may deviate from the description in your role card but be consistent with the role you have taken on. Your response can be communicated through typed text and gestures.

C) Role Card

Role No 2. Avatar Name:_____ (Compulsory Role)

I am finding it hard adjusting to life in a junior college. My grades are dropping. I used do well academically. I could study at the last minute and still score high marks in secondary school. I also used to be very popular in secondary school. When I spoke, people listened. When I joked, people laughed. I feel like a nobody here. Why have things changed so drastically? To make matters worse, we have a disabled kid in our class. I do not like him/her. I find him/her very pesky. Why can't he/she just leave us alone? He/She makes me very uncomfortable. Why are disabled kids even here? The teachers have to make allowances for him/her like giving him/her more attention during lessons and giving more time for him/her to complete assignments. Because of this, the teachers do not have time to answer my questions during the tutorial and seldom have time to meet me for conferencing sessions. That disabled kid should just go to some special school and stop wasting everyone else's time. The next time he/she irritates me, I am really going to let him/her have it.

Role No 3. Avatar Name:_____ (Optional Role)

I have always been able to get along well with my peers. I guess it is because I am friendly and I try not to jump to conclusions. I really listen to what people have to say and I try to understand where they are coming from. However, if I see that something is not right, I hold fast to my convictions and I will try to set things right. To do this, I try to get to the root of the problem. I do not see the world in black and white. There is a lot of grey space and I think it is important that we always find a way to come to a compromise. Lately, I have noticed that some of my classmates appear to be quite hostile to the student in our class who has a disability. I have not actually seen them do anything wrong and I do not know why they are treating him/her this way. It could be that they are not used to working with someone with a disability and need to better understand his/her situation in order to empathise with him/her. I think I should do something about this soon.

Appendix L

Name:_____ Date: _____

Chosen disability in Second Life (if applicable):_____ GP Class:_____

Reflect on your role-playing in the Virtual World and answer the following questions.

1. What are the characters saying about the student with a disability? Do you agree with the points of view offered by any of the characters? Why or why not?
2. How were these views being communicated (e.g. chat, gestures, movement, interaction with between avatars, interaction between avatar and object)?
3. What conclusions does this role-play lead you to make about those with disabilities? How is this similar to or different from the views in the other resources you have examined?
4. What events or points of view were not considered in the role-play? Why do you think they were not considered? If you were to role-play again, would you have included them? Why or why not?
5. Were there any implicit rules for taking turns to speak? Who controlled the turn-taking? How many turns did each avatar get to speak? Whose views dominated the discussion? Who was silent? Who was silenced? Whose views were followed through? Whose views were interrupted? Why do you think this was the case?

Appendix M1

Symbol	Meaning
(0.5)	Number in brackets indicates a time gap in tenths of a second.
(.)	A dot enclosed in brackets indicates a pause in the talk of less than two-tenths of a second.
=	'Equals' sign indicates 'latching' between utterances.
[ ]	Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and end of a spate of overlapping talk.
(( ))	A description enclosed in a double bracket indicates a non-verbal activity.
-	A dash indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior sound or word.
:	Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter.
(inaudible)	Indicates speech that is difficult to make out. Details may also be given with regards to the nature of this speech (eg. shouting).
.	A full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone. It does not necessarily indicate the end of a sentence.
?	A question mark indicates a rising inflection. It does not necessarily indicate a question.
↑↓	Pointed arrows indicate a marked falling or rising intonational shift. They are placed immediately before the onset of the shift.
<u>Under</u>	Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis.
CAPITALS	Words in capitals mark a section of speech noticeably louder than that surrounding it.
° °	Degree signs are used to indicate that the talk they encompass is spoken noticeably quieter than the surrounding talk.
< >	'Less than' and 'More than' signs indicate that the talk they encompass was produced noticeable slower than the surrounding talk.

Source: Jefferson, G. (2004). Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. Lerner (Ed.), Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation (pp. 13–31). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing

Appendix N

Information Sheet for Research Participants

My name is Natasha Anne Rappa. I am conducting a research study related to my PhD dissertation with the University of Sheffield and funded by the National Institute of Education. The study is entitled 'Developing Students' Capacity for Perspective-taking in the General Paper' and wish to invite your child to take part in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore how a three-dimensional avatar-based virtual environment can be used to facilitate adolescents' identification with the physically and mentally disabled and the elderly. I have commissioned the design of landscapes with structures, objects and avatars within the Second Life island owned by XXX. These have been customised to support students' role-playing within the virtual environment to help them experience and learn alternative ways of living in and seeing the world which are possibly far removed from their personal experience. In conjunction with this research study, students will participate in curricular activities based on the topic of prejudice and discrimination in accordance with the General Paper GCE AO-level syllabus and the college's General Paper scheme of work. All students in the class will take part in the curricular activity designed to provide them with the opportunity to enhance their understanding of key issues relating to prejudice and discrimination. However, students may decide whether or not to participate in the data collection process for this study.

For the purpose of the research study, participants will be asked to take part in focus groups and classroom observations to help determine their learning process and outcomes. Some of their school work will also be collected for analysis. Their participation in the focus groups and observations will only be assessed for research purposes and **will not affect their grades** in any way. The research study is expected to be carried out between March 2013 and June 2013.

To uphold the confidentiality of all research participants, personal information will be encoded. Pictorial representations and video records of your child's assigned avatars may be used but his/her name will be kept strictly confidential and his/her identity will not be used in the reporting of the research data nor in any intended publication of any sort, be it electronic or print media. Pseudonyms will be used to replace the names of your child, his/her teachers, and the school in every publication and communication. All audio and video records are restricted to the researchers for the sole purpose of this research study and will not be shown to the general public.

Data and information collected during the study will be securely stored. Care will be taken to protect the data against loss or theft, unauthorized access, disclosure, copying, use, and modification. Security measures taken will involve restricted access and password protection. For research purpose, the study data will be kept indefinitely. However, you may request for the information gathered from your child to be disposed at any time after the study is concluded.

Your child's participation in the research study (focus groups and observations) is fully voluntary. His/her participation or non-participation will not affect his/her learning process in the designed curricular activity in any way. If you allow your child to take part in the research study, you will be asked to sign an informed consent form before he/she embarks on it. Your child is

free to withdraw from the research study at any time prior to publication without penalty, prejudice, negative consequences, repercussion, or disadvantage. Your decision to withdraw your child from this study will also be kept confidential. Upon withdrawal, all data obtained from your child and associated with him/her will be erased and destroyed. If you would like a summary of the research findings from this study or a copy of the final research report/paper published, please inform me so I can provide you a copy.

This research study has met the ethical standards and received clearance from the Institutional Review Board of Nanyang Technological University and the Ethics Review Panel of The University of Sheffield.

Appendix O

Focus Group Questions on Participants' Perception of People with Disabilities

Introduction

Hello. Thank you for coming for this focus group. I am going to ask you a few questions about your perceptions of the disabled and the elderly and I will be recording your verbal responses. This focus group will be completely confidential, and will not affect your class grade in any way. Your teacher will come to know some of the content of what is said, but he/she will not know specifically who has said what. Your answers will inform our design of the upcoming curricular activity.

A. Definitions of the Disabled

1. What do you understand by the term "physical disabilities"? Name some examples of physical disabilities.
2. What do you understand by the term "mental disabilities"? Name some examples of mental disabilities.

B. Attitudes towards the Disabled

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about people with (a) physical or (b) mental disabilities? Explain why.

1. People with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities should be accompanied by a non-disabled person when going out to public places like the market, shopping centres, using ATM etc.
2. It is harder to communicate and deal with people with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities than non-disabled people.
3. People with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities are able to perform as well as non-disabled people at work.
4. People with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities are dependent and need other people to help them all the time, which can be troublesome.
5. More can be done to help people with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities on public transportation in Singapore.
6. Members of the public should give way to people with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities who are getting into lifts and boarding trains.
7. Children with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities should be studying in mainstream schools alongside non-disabled children.
8. I have helped someone with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities in the last 12 months.
9. I will not hesitate to help people with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities whom I see might need help.
10. If I were an employer, I would be willing to hire someone with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities.

Appendix P

Focus Group Questions on the Curricular Activities and Participants' Perception of People with Disabilities

Introduction

Hello. Thank you for coming for this second focus group. I am going to ask you a few questions about your perceptions of the curricular activities and your perceptions of the disabled and the elderly after having gone through the curricular activities. I will be recording your verbal responses. This focus group will be completely confidential, and will not affect your class grade in any way. Your teacher may know some of the content of what is said, but he/she will not know specifically who has said what. Your answers will help us improve our teaching instruction.

A. Curricular Activities

1. Now that you have completed the curricular activities, can you describe to me what you now know about the disabled and the elderly?
2. Can you tell me some of their experiences and perspectives?
3. Did the curricular activities help you to better understand the disabled and the elderly? If so, which aspects and how?
4. Did the curricular activities change your perception of the disabled and the elderly? If so, which aspects and how?
5. What else do you think would have helped you to understand the disabled and the elderly better?
6. Do you think the curricular activities were useful to you academically and personally? Why/ why not?

B. Definitions of the Disabled

1. What do you understand by the term "physical disabilities"? Name some examples of physical disabilities.
2. What do you understand by the term "mental disabilities"? Name some examples of mental disabilities.

C. Attitudes towards the Disabled

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about people with (a) physical or (b) mental disabilities? Explain why.

1. People with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities should be accompanied by a non-disabled person when going out to public places like the market, shopping centres, using ATM etc.
2. It is harder to communicate and deal with people with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities than non-disabled people.
3. People with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities are able to

perform as well as non-disabled people at work.

4. People with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities are dependent and need other people to help them all the time, which can be troublesome.
5. More can be done to help people with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities on public transportation in Singapore.
6. Members of the public should give way to people with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities who are getting into lifts and boarding trains.
7. Children with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities should be studying in mainstream schools alongside non-disabled children.
8. I have helped someone with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities in the last 12 months.
9. I will not hesitate to help people with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities whom I see might need help.
10. If I were an employer, I would be willing to hire someone with (a) physical disabilities or (b) mental disabilities.

Appendix Q

The University Of Sheffield.

The School Of Education.

Natasha Rappa
PhD

Head of School
Professor Cathy Nutbrown

School of Education
388 Glossop Road
Sheffield
S10 2JA

Telephone: +44 (0)114 222 8180
Email: MPhil-PhD@sheffield.ac.uk

19 February 2013

Dear Natasha,

ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER
Developing Students' Capacity for Perspective-taking in the General Paper:

Thank you for submitting your ethics application. I am writing to confirm that your application has now been approved.

We recommend you refer to the reviewers' additional comments (please see attached). You should discuss how you are going to respond to these comments with your supervisor BEFORE you proceed with your research.

This letter is evidence that your application has been approved and should be included as an Appendix in your final submission.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Dan Goodley
Chair of the School of Education Ethics Review Panel

cc Julia Davies

Enc Ethical Review Feedback Sheets

Appendix R

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Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

EDUN N32-07-005

Request No.: **RQ18-13(02)**

6 February 2013

Ms Natasha Anne Rappa
National Institute of Education
NIE2-03-26
1 Nanyang Walk
Singapore 637616

Dear Ms Rappa,

DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CAPACITY FOR PERSPECTIVE-TAKING IN THE GENERAL PAPER

I refer to your application for approval to collect data from schools.

2. I am pleased to inform you that the Ministry has no objections to your request to conduct the research in **1 junior college**, subjected to the following conditions:

a) the approved research proposal is adhered to during the actual study in the school;
b) the data collected is kept strictly confidential and used for the stated purpose only; and
c) the findings are not published without written approval from the Ministry.

3. When conducting the data collection in the school, please ensure that the following are carried out:

a) consent is obtained from the Principal for the study to be conducted in the school;
b) written parental consent is obtained before conducting the study with the students;
c) students and teachers are informed that participation in the study is voluntary and they do not need to provide any sensitive information (e.g. name and NRIC No.);
d) participation by the school is duly recorded in Annex A; and
e) the data collection in the school is completed within 6 months from the date of this letter.

4. Please show this letter and all the documents included in this mail package (i.e. the application form, research proposal and research instrument(s) marked as seen by MOE) to seek approval from the Principal and during the actual study.

Yours sincerely

Teo Kie Eng (Ms)
Head, Data Administration 3
Data Administration Centre
for Permanent Secretary (Education)

Note to Principal: Please refer to MOE notification PA/25/12 for the Guidelines on Data Collection from Schools.

Appendix S

Research Support Office

Reg. No. 200604393R

IRB-2013-01-018

04 March 2013

Madam Rappa Natasha Anne
National Institute of Education

NTU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
Project Title: Developing students' capacity for perspective-taking in the General Paper
(Amount Approved: SGD$18,085; to be funded by NIE SUG)

I refer to your application for ethics approval with respect to the above project.

The Board has deliberated on your application and noted from your application that your research involves collecting behavioral data from participants through role-play discussion.

You have also confirmed that informed consent will be obtained from the participants and you have guaranteed the confidentiality of your participants' biodata obtained from them.

The documents reviewed are:

a) NTU IRB application form dated **30 January 2013**
b) Participant information sheet and consent form: version 2 dated **27 February 2013**
c) Data collection form: version 1 dated **27 February 2013**

The Board is therefore satisfied with the bioethical consideration for the project and approves the ethics application under **Expedited** review. The approval period is from **04 March 2013** to **28 June 2013**. The NTU IRB reference number for this study is **IRB-2013-01-018**. Please use this reference number for all future correspondence.

The following protocol and compliances are to be observed upon NTU IRB approval

1. All research involving procedures greater than minimal risk on minors (individuals who are less than the legal age of 21 years old) requires IRB approved written Parental Consent and assent from the participant to be obtained before any research protocols can be administered. Minimal risk refers to an anticipated level of harm and discomfort that is no greater than that ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the performance of routine educational, physical, or psychological examination.

2. Only the approved Participants Information Sheet and Consent Form should be used. It must be signed by each subject prior to initiation of any protocol procedures. In addition, each subject should be given a copy of the signed consent form.

Blk N2.1, B4-01, 76 Nanyang Drive, Singapore 637331 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798
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www.ntu.edu.sg

3. No deviation from, or changes of, the protocol should be initiated without prior written NTU IRB approval of an appropriate amendment.

4. The Principal Investigator should report promptly to NTU IRB regarding:
   a. Deviation from, or changes to the protocol.
   b. Changes increasing the risk to the subjects and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the trial
   c. All serious adverse events (SAEs) which are both serious and unexpected.
   d. New information that may affect adversely the safety of the subjects of the conduct of the trial.
   e. Completion of the study.

5. Continuing Review Request/ Notice of Study completion form should be submitted to NTU IRB for the following:
   a. Annual review: Status of the study should be reported to the NTU IRB at least annually using the Continuing Review Request/ Notice of Study completion form.
   b. Study completion or termination: Continuing Review Request/ Notice of Study completion form is to be submitted within 4 to 6 weeks of study completion or termination.

Prof Lee Sing Kong,
Chair, NTU Institutional Review Board
encl.

cc Director, National Institute of Education
Members, NTU Institutional Review Board

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