

LITERACY IN A NEW PLAYGROUND:
YOUNG CHILDREN'S LITERACY PRACTICES IN COMMERCIALY
DESIGNED VIRTUAL PLAY WORLDS



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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
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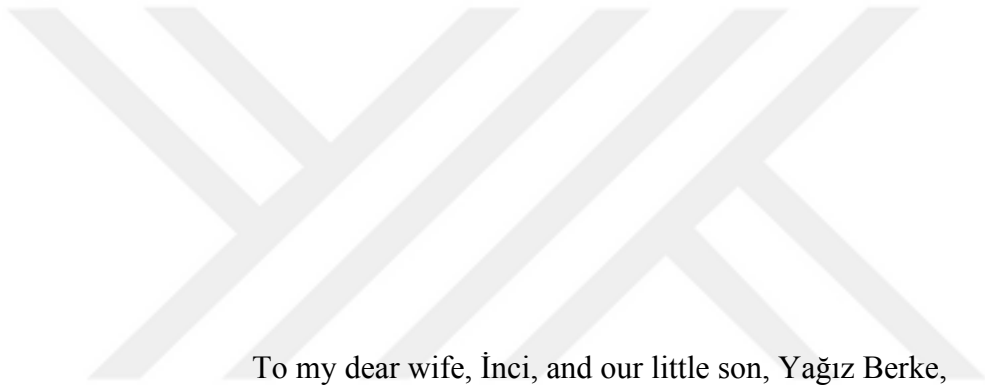
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To my dear wife, İnci, and our little son, Yağız Berke,
with tremendous love and gratitude.

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LITERACY IN A NEW PLAYGROUND: YOUNG CHILDREN'S LITERACY
PRACTICES IN COMMERCIALLY DESIGNED VIRTUAL PLAY WORLDS

This four-year ethnographic study examines children's collaborative play and digital literacy practices in commercially designed virtual play worlds; my study participants consisted of groups of children aged five to eight years of age in an afterschool setting. The field in which I conducted my research included two environments: the computer lab associated with an afterschool program and Disney's Club Penguin virtual world. I conducted participant observation, took field notes, interviewed the children, and videotaped the children's online and offline interactions in order to explore the goings-on regarding their online (i.e., virtual world) and offline (i.e., computer lab) engagements; the research occurred while the children played in Club Penguin in the afterschool program. I also conducted cyber-ethnographic research using my own avatar in Club Penguin, observed online players' interactions, and examined frequently occurring practices in effort to better understand my study participants' interactions. As a theoretical framework, this dissertation adopts the Mediated Discourse Theory, which draws upon the constructs of two main theories: *mediation* in the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991) and *capital and habitus* in the Practice Theory (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986). In my analysis, I focused primarily on how the commercial design of Club Penguin affected the children's literacy and participation practices. Club Penguin has two membership types: basic membership, which is free of charge and requires only an email address for registration purposes, and paid membership, which requires a monthly subscription fee of \$7.95 and provides members

with additional features, including unlimited access to virtual goods and virtual places. This study reveals that having a paid membership increased the quality and quantity of children's literacy practices, and it encouraged them to engage in more activities with their play partners. The study further reveals that the children found Club Penguin's two-tiered membership model unfair, and they took a critical stance. Under my guidance, the children wrote letters to Club Penguin, made comments on the official Club Penguin blog posts, and created YouTube videos in effort to affect change regarding this design feature.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	1
Virtual Worlds	1
Popular Culture, Literacy Practices, and Virtual Worlds	6
Defining Play and Literacy	9
The Rationale and the Research Questions.....	13
Theoretical Framework.....	16
<i>Capital</i>	17
<i>Habitus</i>	20
CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature.....	22
Commercial Designs of Virtual Worlds	23
Virtual Worlds as Identity Playgrounds.....	26
Virtual Worlds and Social Relationships.....	32
Literacy in Virtual Worlds.....	35
Critical Literacy with Young Children	40
Contribution to the Literature	47
CHAPTER 3: Design and Methodology	50
Ethnography.....	50
Research Design	52
Research Context	53
<i>Setting and Participants</i>	53
<i>Club Penguin Virtual World</i>	55
Data Collection	56
<i>The First Phase of the Data Collection</i>	57
<i>The Second Phase of the Data Collection</i>	58
<i>The Third Phase of the Data Collection</i>	59
<i>The Fourth Phase of Data Collection</i>	61
Ethical Considerations	62
Data Analysis: Nexus Analysis Methodology	64
<i>Engaging the Nexus</i>	65
<i>Navigating the Nexus</i>	69
<i>Changing the Nexus</i>	73
Credibility Procedures	74
CHAPTER 4: Engaging the Nexus: Club Penguin Club in an Afterschool Program.....	76
A: Engaging the Nexus: Club Penguin Website.....	76
Brief History of the Club Penguin Virtual World.....	77
General Information About the Club Penguin Virtual World	78
<i>Description of the Club Penguin Website</i>	80
Page Analysis of the Club Penguin Website	85
<i>Images in Rotation</i>	85
<i>Membership Page</i>	86
<i>Blog Page</i>	88
<i>Safety Page</i>	90
<i>Parents Page</i>	91

<i>Products Page</i>	92
<i>Apps Page</i>	92
<i>Help Page</i>	94
<i>Global Citizenship Page</i>	95
Conclusion	97
B: Engaging the Nexus: Afterschool Program	100
General Information About the Afterschool Program	100
A Typical Day with K-3rd Grade Students in the Afterschool Program	102
Computer Room Environment and the Rules Children Have to Follow	104
C: Engaging the Nexus: Club Penguin Club	108
A Typical Club Penguin Club Session	110
Five Program Cycles of the Club Penguin Club	114
Key Participants and Focal Pairs in the Last Program Cycle	116
CHAPTER 5: Engaging the Nexus: The Club Penguin Virtual World	120
Identifying the Participation, Literacy and Consumerism Practices in the Club Penguin Virtual World	121
The Initial Visit to Club Penguin and Identified Key Practices	123
<i>Creating a Club Penguin Account</i>	123
<i>Getting Oriented to Club Penguin</i>	124
<i>Discovering Different Opportunities Offered to Paid and Basic Members</i>	129
<i>Identifying Available Practices in the Initial Visit</i>	131
Learning to Participate in Club Penguin: Frequent Events and Identified Practices..	133
<i>Site Navigation</i>	133
<i>Chatting and Giving and Attending Parties</i>	134
<i>Sending Postcards</i>	138
<i>Reading and Writing for Club Penguin Times</i>	139
<i>Reading Yearbooks and Club Penguin Tales</i>	141
<i>Performing on The Stage</i>	142
<i>Friending Other Online Players</i>	143
<i>Taking Safety Quiz</i>	144
<i>Taking Tour Guide Quiz</i>	145
Identifying Key Practices.....	146
Conclusion	149
CHAPTER 6: Navigating the Nexus: Club Penguin Club	151
Last Program Cycle of the Club Penguin Club.....	151
Same Status Pairs: Basic Member Pairs and Paid Member Pairs	153
<i>Places Visited by Basic Member Pairs Compared to Paid Member Pairs</i>	153
<i>Transformative Event I: Ghost Puffle Reward Game with Paid Member Pairs and Basic Member Pairs</i>	158
Mixed Status Pairs: Basic Member and Paid Member Pairs	181
<i>Places Visited by Basic Member-Paid Member Pairs</i>	181
<i>Transformative Event II: Playing Across Membership Classes: Playing Together or Showing Off?</i>	186
Nodes in the Club Penguin Club Nexus	208
<i>Access to Virtual Places, Games and Rewards</i>	209
<i>Personal Style as a Node: Dressing Up Penguins</i>	214
<i>Puffle Ownership as a Node: Adopting Puffles and Shopping for Puffles</i>	218

<i>Igloos as a Node: Decorating Igloos and Inviting Other Players</i>	<i>221</i>
CHAPTER 7: Changing the Nexus: Taking a Critical Stance	226
Children's Feelings about and Reactions to the Paid Membership Implementation of Club Penguin.....	227
<i>William</i>	<i>230</i>
<i>Eric</i>	<i>238</i>
<i>Nick</i>	<i>243</i>
Conclusion	248
CHAPTER 8: Discussion of Findings	251
Summary	251
Connecting to Nexus Theory	254
RQ 1: How did the children's perceptions about Club Penguin and their preferred activities in the online context change over time with the different types of penguin accounts with which they played?	258
<i>Historical Body: Change in Perception Over Time</i>	<i>259</i>
RQ 2: What are the participation practices of the children in the Club Penguin club peer culture? Is there any difference with regard to the paid and basic members' participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture?	264
<i>Interaction Orders in Different Stages.....</i>	<i>266</i>
RQ 3: What discourses are used in the commercial design of the Club Penguin virtual world and how do these discourses affect the literacy practices of the children in the Club Penguin club? Is there any difference with regard to the quality and quantity of the literacy practices in which the paid and basic members engaged?	272
<i>Discourses in Place in Different Stages.....</i>	<i>274</i>
Implications	278
<i>For Parents: What to Know About Virtual Worlds.....</i>	<i>278</i>
<i>For Researchers: Merging Ethnographic Methods with Cyber-Ethnography and Using Nexus Analysis with Critical Literacy.....</i>	<i>280</i>
<i>For Teachers: Using Popular Culture Items in Class and Dealing with Consumerism</i>	<i>283</i>
<i>For Disney Company and Other Game Designers: Considering Laws and Ethical Rules in the Design Process.....</i>	<i>284</i>
References.....	309
Curriculum Vitae	

List of Appendixes

Appendix A: Research Setting.....	288
<i>After School Program Computer Lab</i>	288
Appendix B: Screen Shots from Club Penguin Virtual World	289
<i>Screen Shot 1: Club Penguin Background Information</i>	289
<i>Screen Shot 2: Club Penguin Paid Member Avatar</i>	290
<i>Screen Shot 3: Club Penguin Basic Member Avatar</i>	291
<i>Screen Shot 4: Club Penguin Paid Member Igloo</i>	292
<i>Screen Shot 5: Club Penguin Basic Member Igloo</i>	293
<i>Screen Shot 6: Club Penguin Chat</i>	294
<i>Screen Shot 7: Club Penguin Times Newspaper</i>	295
Appendix C: Tentative Questions to be Asked in One-on-One Conversations.....	296
Appendix D: Key Locations in the Club Penguin Website	298
Appendix E: Image in Rotation 1: General Welcoming Page	303
Appendix F: Afterschool Program Code of Conduct	304
Appendix G: Benefits of Having Paid Membership in Club Penguin.....	305
Appendix H: An Exemplar Play Script in The Stage Room: A Humbug Holiday	307

List of Tables

Club Penguin Club: Key Participation and Literacy Practices	113
Differences Between Paid and Basic Memberships	130
Participation, Literacy and Consumerism Practices Identified in Club Penguin	136
Identified Key Practices	147
Paid and Basic Member Interactions after Completing Ghost Puffle Reward Game Tasks.....	163
Microanalysis of Paid Member Interactions After Playing the Ghost Puffle Game	167
Paid Member vs. Basic Member Interactions	187
Basic Member vs. Paid Member: Consumerism, Participation and Literacy Practices	191
Theory and Findings Table	267

List of Figures

Population Distribution of Moshi Monsters by Country	2
Research Design Chart: Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) Filter Model.....	65
Growing Population of Club Penguin	78
The Home Page of the Club Penguin Website	81
Afterschool Program Tuesday Schedule	102
Afterschool Program Internet Safety Rules	105
Afterschool Program Computer Room Rules	106
Afterschool Program Code of Conduct Poster	107
Places Visited by Basic Members	154
Places Visited by Paid Members	154
Comparison of the Places Basic Members Visited When They Played with Basic Members and Paid Members	182
Comparison of the Places Paid Members Visited When They Played with Paid Members and Basic Members	185
Paid Member Igloo vs. Basic Member Igloo	201
Paid Member Avatar vs. Basic Member Avatar After Being Twins Play.....	204
StudioCode Analysis Table of Basic Member Interactions after Ghost Puffle Play	212
StudioCode Analysis Table of Paid Member Interactions after Ghost Puffle Play	212
Node of Practices: The Ghost Puffle Reward Game as an Example to The Paid Members' Unlimited Access to the Games and Rewards	213
Node of Practices: Paid Members' Personal Style Experiences	217
Node of Practices: The Paid Members' Special Puffle Experience	220
Node of Practice: Paid Members' Decorating Igloo Experience	223
Overarching Social Action: Intersection of the Elements of the Nexus	256
Children's Habitus Change in the Club Penguin Club Nexus	260

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Today's children are growing up in the digital age, an age in which media and technology play a significant role in their lives. In our global world, children have access to global texts and artifacts, such as television, video games, online social networks, magazines and comic books, which have shaped their popular culture (Marsh, 2010a). In fact, children in many countries are able to watch the same TV programs and cartoons (e.g., Sesame Street, Pokémon), visit the same social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and play in same popular virtual play worlds (e.g., Club Penguin, Webkinz, Moshi Monsters) (Marsh, 2013a). Today's children's preference for playing with digital and media-related toys, such as virtual worlds (KZero, 2011a), should not surprise anyone because the "toys [with which children play] reflect the zeitgeist of a given era" (Warner, 2009, as it is cited in Marsh, 2010a, p. 23).

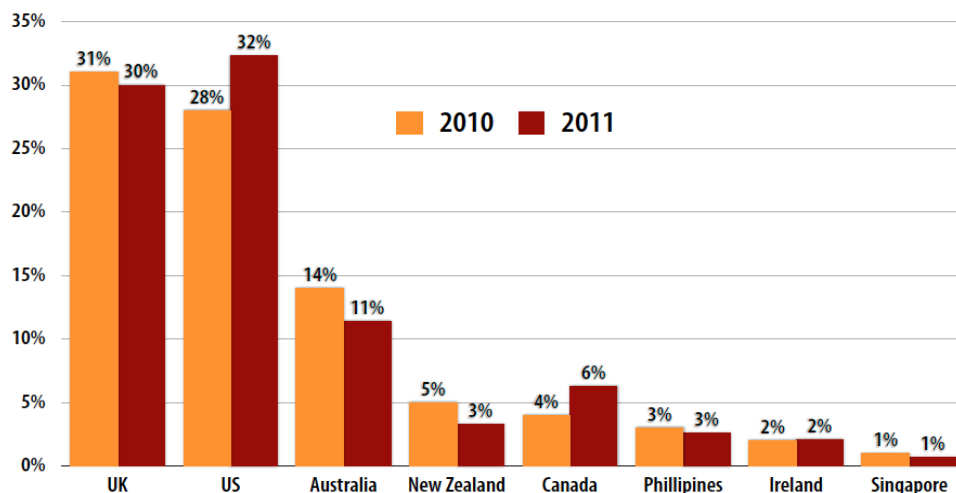
Virtual Worlds

In a very general sense, virtual worlds are two- or three-dimensional online spaces in which users are represented by avatars. In virtual worlds designed for young children, users interact with each other, play together, and use and design artifacts. Most of these virtual worlds offer children a home, which is a personal space in the virtual world in which children can place their avatars. In these virtual worlds, social interactions among children usually happen when they chat with one another. Children can travel throughout the virtual world from place to place and play several different games individually or with others. By playing games and engaging in other activities, children earn coins. They can spend this virtual currency by purchasing clothes and accessories for their avatars or

furniture for their homes. Virtual worlds generally offer two membership types: 1) a basic membership, which is free of charge, and 2) a paid membership, which requires monthly payments and provides additional opportunities or features such as greater freedom with regard to designing avatars and homes, and attending members-only events. The most popular virtual worlds for young children include Club Penguin by Disney, Webkinz World by Ganz, and Moshi Monsters by Mind Candy (KZero, 2011a).

Figure 1.1. Population Distribution of Moshi Monsters by Country (KZero, 2011b)

Moshi Monsters: Top 8 Countries



KZERO
WORLDWIDE

Today, virtual worlds are popular spaces among children worldwide. For instance, KZero (2011b) provides one of the most popular virtual worlds, Moshi Monsters, which has 50 million registered users in the 0-18 age range, as can be seen by the population distribution by countries in Figure 1.1. According to the KZero report, Moshi Monsters virtual world is most popular in the zero to 18 years age range in the U.K. and U.S., followed by Australia, New Zealand, Canada, The Phillipines, Ireland and Singapore, respectively. The number of users who participate in virtual worlds designed for kids

increases daily. According to another report published by KZero (2011a), 77 million children in the five- to 10-year-old age range had registered accounts in virtual worlds in early 2009. This number increased to 190 million within a year, and by mid-2011, the number of registered accounts for the children in this age range had reached 320 million. In order to reach more children around the world, some virtual worlds are offered in different languages. For instance, Club Penguin is offered in four languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

In 2011, AVG Technologies¹ conducted a 10-country survey called “Digital Diaries.” Via this survey, the company gathered information about children’s technology usage from 2,200 mothers with children aged six to nine. According to the reports, 71% of Canadian children, 69% of American children, 67% of children in New Zealand, 64% of British children, 60% of Australian children, 55% of Spanish children, 46% of German children, 38% of Italian children, 37% of French children, and 31% of Japanese children in this age range use virtual worlds designed for children such as Club Penguin and Webkinz.

Development of technology and young children’s increasing access to technology serve as catalysts of change with regard to children’s popular culture and, of course, their play habits. Today, children’s preference to play within virtual worlds is an outcome of their access to technology. And it should be noted that children’s access to technology corresponds to the countries in which they reside. According to a report about young children and their Internet usage in European Union countries (Holloway, Green, & Livingstone, 2013), children begin using the Internet at very early ages. Twenty-one

¹ AVG is a global security software maker that serves 110 million customers in 170 countries.

percent of the six- to seven-year-olds in the study and 48% of the eight- to nine-year-olds use the Internet at least occasionally in Germany, while almost half of three- to six-year-old children studied in Austria use the Internet regularly. In Norway, 58% of children just born to six years of age go online, while in Finland, 64% of seven-year-olds use the Internet. In Belgium, 70% of preschool children aged three to four are regularly online at least several times a month, 70% of children from this same age group in Sweden go online at least sometimes, and 78% of preschoolers and toddlers (and 5% of children classified as babies under one) go online in the Netherlands (p. 8).

In the U.S., 82% of children aged three to 17 live in households with Internet access (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), 87% of children aged eight to 18 have gaming consoles, and 66% of children from this same age group have their own mobile phones (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010, p. 9, 10). A typical home with a child aged eight to 18 in the U.S. has an average of two computers, 2.3 gaming consoles, one digital video recorder, and 3.8 TVs (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010, p. 9).

This situation is not much different in the U.K. According to an Office of Communications (Ofcom²) report (2011), 91% of children aged five to 15 in the U.K. live in households with access to the Internet (p. 15), 91% of children from this same age group have at least one gaming console (p. 15), and 52% of children from this age group have their own mobile phones (p. 17). In a study that surveyed 1,852 parents and caregivers of children who attended 120 early childhood settings in England, Marsh and colleagues examined young children's use of popular culture, media and new

² Ofcom is an independent regulator and competition authority for the U.K. communications industries.

technologies in the home (Marsh et al., 2005). According to their findings, young children begin using technological devices shortly after birth and develop a wide variety of skills early on with support from their family members.

The situation in Turkey, however, is different than it is in the U.S. and the U.K. A report from the Turkish Statistical Institute (2013) indicated that 60.5% of children between the ages of six and 15 have access to computers at home, and 45.6% of children from this age group use the Internet almost daily. Of this group, 24.3% have their own mobile phones. When compared to more developed countries, such as the U.S. and the U.K., children in Turkey have less access to technology. According to the statistics, 84.8% of the Internet-using children in Turkey use the Internet to help them with their homework and education, 79.5% use it for gaming, 56.7% use it for information searches, and 53.5% use it for joining social networks. Further, in addition to using their mobile phones for communication purposes, 80% of Turkey's mobile phone users between the ages of six and 10 use their mobile phones for gaming.

Statistical reports show that children's access to technology differs from country to country. Even in the same country, diversity exists among children in terms of access to technology. Warschauer (2008) analyzes access to technology in four general areas: physical, digital, human, and social resources. Physical resources refer to the children's access to the necessary devices (e.g., computers or mobile devices) and an Internet connection. Digital resources refer to the available content in the online platform. There is a diversity in terms of digital resources because of cultural and language diversity. Human resources refer to the knowledge and skills required to use technological devices. These skills include psychomotor skills, and the ability to read and write among digital

platforms. Finally, social resources refer to social relations and social structures in families and communities that help children to understand digital platforms and engage in digital activities. According to Warschauer, “there are many degrees of access to ICT [Information and Communication Technology], depending on a complex combination of physical, digital, human, and social resources available” (p. 144). However, it is still clear that this generation has more access to technology than any previous generation and that children’s interactions with technology and media increase daily (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; Ofcom, 2011; Turkish Statistical Institute, 2013), even when those children come from low-income families (Gutnick, Robb, Takeuchi, & Kotler, 2011).

Popular Culture, Literacy Practices, and Virtual Worlds

The texts, artifacts and practices related to popular culture are important in children’s literacy practices. Since children already have developed interests in the texts and artifacts related to popular culture, they are already highly motivated and engaged when they read, write or talk about topics related to popular culture. For instance, Marsh and colleagues (2005) conducted a study in nine early childhood settings in the U.K., within which they offered children popular cultural texts and artifacts and then observed the children’s interactions. The researchers revealed that the project played a significant role in the development of the children’s engagement with literacy, particularly with regard to reading and writing activities. After their play with the puppets, the children came together, sat on a carpet and concentrated on writing about the puppets. They were writing and “doing it for a real purpose” (Marsh et al., 2005, p. 70). They were writing about something of which they had prior knowledge, and they were writing not because their teacher told them to, but because they were willing to write.

In another study of three- to eight-year-old children in a preschool and before and after school center in a suburb of Toronto, Canada, Vasquez (2005a) indicated that since children watch Pokémon cartoons at home, they are very knowledgeable about Pokémon and are ready to discuss it and engage in literacy practices about it at home as well as in the afterschool programs or at school. In their everyday literacy practices at home or at the afterschool centers, the children read Pokémon magazines, had conversations about Pokémon with their friends, watched Pokémon cartoons on TV and created their own Pokémon cards (Vasquez, 2005a).

In addition, when we look at children's play on playgrounds, it is very common to see them replay scenes from their favorite movies or sing songs from their favorite TV advertisements (Marsh, 2010a). Children's personal interests and background knowledge about popular texts and artifacts make them ready to engage in play even at very young ages. Marsh and colleagues (2005) argued that children who are not very talkative in general engaged in play during their study and acted out scenes involving their favorite characters:

Once we'd done the puppet show and invented the puppets, one day I walked around the corner and they'd [children] put all the big blocks and made a puppet theatre and they were acting puppet stories. One of the little boys from the project, he's very hard to get onside, and he was PC Plum [a popular character from a British kids show Balamoray that is already brought to this setting] and I could hear him say, "One day, PC Plum..." and he's just, he has never used that story language before, at all. (p. 69)

As can be seen above, when popular texts are brought into early childhood settings, even shy or quiet children willingly engage in play and act on a stage to perform stories that involve popular characters.

Virtual play worlds (e.g., two- or three-dimensional game-based online spaces), as a part of children's popular culture, are becoming a popular space among five- to 10-year-old children. Today, there are more than 320 million users between these ages around the world (KZero, 2011a). These commercially-designed game-based spaces offer children different types of play such as "fantasy play" (i.e., adopting imaginary personas by wearing different costumes, such as that of a pirate, and creating imaginary narratives), "socio-dramatic play" (i.e., adopting adult roles by going to parties and having adult-like conversations), "play with rules" (i.e., earning online currency by playing games and purchasing virtual goods) and "ritualized play" (i.e., demonstrating affection by using emoticons) (Marsh, 2010b, p. 30-32).

These popular spaces work as global communities that bring children, many of whom live in different countries and have different cultural backgrounds, together. Further, these virtual spaces can provide children with places where certain norms and rules have been established so as to facilitate the children's abilities to meet and play together. In these global communities with active populations in the millions, children not only play simple games, but they also develop virtual friendships and engage in social activities with friends (Marsh, 2013b). While doing this, the children also engage in several literacy practices (Black, 2010; Marsh, 2010b; 2011; 2012; 2013c; Wohlwend, Zanden, Husbye, & Kuby, 2011; Wohlwend & Kargin, 2013). In addition, these virtual worlds expose children to consumerism and prompt them to address the producing companies' commercial interests (Grimes, 2010; 2013a; Connelly, 2013). Thus, in their virtual world engagements, children actually learn how to interact with today's increasingly digital and commercial world.

This dissertation study aims to offer teachers and literacy researchers detailed information about how children, in their out-of-school experiences, collaboratively play and maintain relationships with other players and engage in literacy while playing in commercially-designed virtual worlds. This study also aims to shed light on how the producing companies' (i.e., Disney) commercial interests and intentional designs of virtual worlds affect children's participation on these sites as well as their literacy practices.

Defining Play and Literacy

In the field of early childhood literacy, the play-literacy relationship is one of the most heavily researched topics. Roskos and Christie conducted a meta-analysis in 2001 in which they analyzed 20 play-literacy studies that were conducted in early childhood settings between 1992 and 2000. In this meta-analysis, the authors reported on how the terms *play* and *literacy* were defined in the studies they analyzed. According to their findings, the definitions of play included “a social context embedded in kindergarten classroom play centers,” “collaboration in a literacy-enriched play center at school,” “entertainment arising out of home experiences” and “global interactions that transpire in the play environments of early childhood settings (i.e., day care)” (p. 72). As is clear from the definitions, researchers who studied play and literacy in early childhood settings in the last decade of the 20th century defined play as “social,” “collaborative” and “entertaining” activities in which children engage while at play centers in early childhood settings.

According to Roskos and Christie (2001), the definition of literacy differed in the different play-literacy studies they analyzed according to the perspectives of the researchers:

Definitions [of literacy] range[d] from a multimodal semiotic view of literate behavior (for example response to books, see Rowe, 1998) to literacy practices (for example problem solving strategies, see Neuman and Roskos, 1997) to the traditional sense of literacy as phonological awareness, word identification and reading comprehension (Sonnenschein et al., 2000). (Roskos & Christie, 2001, p. 73)

One cannot expect today's children to play, read and write in the same ways as previous generations. Today, mobile devices, tablets and technological, and media-related toys are a part of daily life for even very young children. Therefore, today's children's experiences with the social world are different from those experienced by previous generations. As such, the definitions of what we understand the terms *play* and *literacy* to mean are in transition (Wohlwend, 2013a).

Play is and has always been a “complex, multifaceted and context-dependent, [and]... socially and culturally framed [activity]” (Marsh, 2010a, p. 21). However, what we understand play to mean is in transition simply because the contexts and cultures within which children play are continuously expanding. In addition to home and school contexts, 21st-century children play within online spaces and, as such, are affected by digital, consumer and peer cultures. In this dissertation, which examines children's play and literacy practices in virtual worlds, I define play as an enjoyable, freely chosen, valued (Garvey, 1977) and hybrid activity that happens in both online and offline worlds as children actively interact with one another by using their imagination and creativity while moving fluidly across the boundaries of real and virtual worlds (Marsh, 2010a).

Play can also be considered a means by which children engage in literacy. When children play with each other, they are collaboratively creating a text that they write and act out together (Wohlwend, 2013a). In her study, Wohlwend analyzed 18 key studies that examined young children's multiple literacies and created a list of potential literacy practices that young children engage in through play (see Wohlwend, 2013a for further information). No matter in what context or culture (i.e., school, peer culture, home, consumer and digital culture) children play, they engage in literacy in a number of ways, including creating a collaborative text in play, using play to reflect and replay lived experiences, and using literacy practices as a social glue to create cohesive social order in online spaces (Wohlwend, 2013a, p. 90).

In its traditional definition, the term *literacy* means to give meaning to and get meaning from printed text. However, in this dissertation, I have adopted a definition of literacy from two different but related perspectives: the New Literacy Studies (NLS) and New Literacies. The scholars from different disciplines, such as linguistics, anthropology, cultural psychology and education (e.g., Gee, 1987; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Wertsch, 1985), formed the NLS, which takes a different view of literacy than those associated with the traditional psychological approach who define literacy as a cognitive process that occurring within people's heads (Gee, 2010). The NLS assumed a sociocultural perspective and argued that, "literacy was a social and cultural achievement – it was about ways of participating in social and cultural groups – not just a mental achievement" (Gee, 2010, p. 17). Therefore, the NLS scholars studied, and suggested that others study, literacy in different social, cultural, historical and educational contexts. What I have done in this dissertation study is to analyze children's online and offline interactions in online

(i.e., Club Penguin) and offline (i.e., after school program) peer cultures as literacy practices.

The second approach that I adopted while defining literacy in this study is that of New Literacies, which emerged with the technological developments of the last two decades. New Literacies also takes a sociocultural perspective to literacy, but it emphasizes new digital technologies (Kress, 2003; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The plural form of literacy in New Literacies refers to “the new types of literacy beyond print literacy, especially digital literacies and literacy practices embedded in popular culture” (Gee, 2010, p. 31).

Today’s children are being raised in the digital age. They are surrounded by technology and have better opportunities than previous generations to become engaged with technological devices in their daily lives. With the increase in their interactions with technology, children are now able to see how technology and literacy are embedded in their everyday lives. While eating breakfast in the morning, children see their parents touch the digital board of the microwave and set it to warm up their food. They go to school and see their teachers use computers and Smart Boards in class. At noon, they get their lunch in school by scanning their student IDs at a reader. They check out books from the school library by scanning the barcodes of the books at a reader. When they return home in the evening, they see their brothers playing games on touch-screen tablets and their sisters sending text messages to friends. At night, they see their mothers reading e-books via Kindle and their fathers conducting searches on their smartphones. While interacting with their daily lives, children see how they and those around them engage in literacy by using technology.

In this rapidly changing world, the literacy practices of children are significantly different from the traditional print-based literacy practices of past generations. Beyond reading and writing a page of printed text, the new definition of literacy includes “video sharing, photoshopping, blogging, commenting, tweeting and retweeting, podcasting, text messaging, and other ways of participating in global social networks” (Wohlwend, 2013a, p. 81). It is important to consider the New Literacies approach in my study because I focus on young children’s use of digital and physical tools in online and offline settings as well as how their participation in this global game-based social network is mediated by their interactions in the online and offline settings.

When children play within virtual worlds, they have “a wealth of opportunities for mediated language play and experimentation with new literacies” (Black, 2010, p. 9). In these social virtual spaces, children meet, chat, play and become friends with other online players. They guide each other in virtual spaces in order to play collaborative games. While designing their avatars or virtual homes, they chat with each other and consider other online players’ opinions in the design processes (Marsh, 2013b). They also visit each other’s spaces in the virtual worlds and make comments about their designs (Burke, 2013). In virtual worlds, we see creativity embedded in the children’s choice of language, use of avatars, and design of their virtual spaces (Marsh, 2010a).

The Rationale and the Research Questions

The popular culture, media and digital literacy practices of adolescents and young adults have been heavily researched; however, far less attention has been paid with regard to how young children read, write and interact in commercially-designed social networks

such as the Moshi Monsters, Webkinz and Club Penguin websites. The aim of this study is to examine children's collaborative play and digital literacy practices in commercially-designed virtual worlds; the study participants consist of groups of children aged five to eight years of age in an afterschool setting in a small town in the Mid-Western United States. Today, by interacting with technological tools (e.g., PCs, laptops, tablets, game consoles, mobile phones) and using the Internet, children engage in a wide variety of literacy practices in virtual worlds in their everyday lives at home and in afterschool settings. Therefore, analyzing children's social interactions with one another in the online and offline settings and their interactions with available online and offline tools has become critical in determining young children's new literacy practices.

While playing in virtual worlds, children are, intentionally or unintentionally, exposed to the commercial interests of the producing companies because of the design features of these commercial spaces. For instance, Club Penguin provides different opportunities for their basic (free of charge) and paid members. Members who pay \$7.95 per month are granted access to more opportunities and features that will allow them to make their engagements more enjoyable. They are able to use their in-game currencies (coins) to purchase costumes and accessories for their avatars and furniture for their igloos. They are able to join members-only events and socialize with other paid members in private parties, and they are able to adopt additional puffles (the penguins' pets) with which to play.

Since the opportunities that are offered to the basic and paid members are different, the play and literacy engagements of these two groups in the Club Penguin

virtual world are also different. Researchers (Marsh, 2010b; 2011; 2012; 2013c; Wohlwend, Zanden, Husbye, & Kuby, 2011; Wohlwend & Kargin, 2013) who analyze children's literacy practices in virtual worlds have studied primarily children who have had access to non-paying accounts. However, current studies examining the design features of virtual worlds (Grimes, 2013a; Connelly, 2013) have revealed that paid members have access to a broader range of opportunities that enable them to have social interactions with one another and engage in literacy. While indicating that paid members have access to better opportunities than non-paying members in terms of their social interactions and literacy engagements, neither Grimes (2013a) nor Connelly (2013) were able to study such children or examine their actual interactions. Instead, they analyzed the design of the virtual worlds and indicated that not having observations of the children's actual interactions was a limitation in both of their studies. A gap exists in the literature with regard to examining how play and literacy practices of paid and basic members differ from each other. In order to fill this gap, this dissertation aims to examine five- to eight-year-old children's play and literacy practices in a commercially-designed virtual world and explore the role of commercialism in children's play and literacy engagements by comparing and contrasting the virtual world engagements of the basic and paid members in an afterschool program.

As such, this study examines the following research questions:

- 1) What are the literacy practices of today's young children in their new playgrounds, virtual play worlds (i.e., Club Penguin), and what is the role of the producing

companies' commercial interests in the children's play and literacy practices as well as their participation in the virtual play worlds?

- a) How did the children's perceptions about Club Penguin and their preferred activities in the online context change over time with the different types of penguin accounts with which they played?
- b) What are the participation practices of the children in the Club Penguin club peer culture? Is there any difference with regard to the paid and basic members' participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture?
- c) What discourses are used in the commercial design of the Club Penguin virtual world and how do these discourses affect the literacy practices of the children in the Club Penguin club? Is there any difference with regard to the quality and quantity of the literacy practices in which the paid and basic members engaged?

Theoretical Framework

Since this study focuses on children's play and literacy practices in commercially-designed virtual worlds, from a sociocultural perspective, it becomes necessary to look at how children interact with each other socially, how they use digital and physical tools in their activities, and what other components play a role in their participation in online and offline peer cultures. As a theoretical framework, this dissertation adopts Mediated Discourse Theory, which draws upon the constructs of two main theories: *mediation* in the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wetsch, 1991) and *capital and habitus* in the Practice Theory (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986).

In this study, Mediated Discourse Theory provides a lens through which to

examine children's social actions in offline and online settings (i.e., how children's activities in real and virtual worlds are mediated by the physical and digital tools with which they engage; how their participation in this global game-based social network is mediated by their online and offline interactions with other players; and how children's habitus and their economic, social and cultural capitals affect their participation in this commercially-designed virtual world and offline peer culture in the afterschool program). In this section, I will briefly define the capital and habitus concepts, and the importance of using these concepts in this study.

Capital

Even though Bourdieu does not consider himself a Marxist sociologist, it is clear that his thoughts were affected by Marx's theories. Marx argued that the more capital an individual holds the more powerful his social status in a society. Bourdieu's theory supports this idea. However, while Marx considered primarily the economic capital of people as criteria for determining their social status, Bourdieu (1986) expanded on this idea and explained that not only was economic capital important in determining social status, but social and cultural capital were also important in this regard. Bourdieu (1986) defined these three forms of capital as follows:

Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility. (p. 243)

According to Bourdieu's definitions, economic capital refers to the economic resources that an individual owns such as money and property; social capital refers to the advantages that an individual receives from the social groups to which he belongs and people to which he is connected; and cultural capital refers to more symbolic elements such as an individual's skills, educational qualifications, tastes (e.g., movies that he likes) and dialect. Bourdieu believed that these three forms of capital could be converted into one another.

In the Club Penguin virtual world, it is possible to see all three forms of capital as defined by Bourdieu. For instance, the virtual goods that come with a paid Club Penguin membership, such as clothes, accessories and furniture, can serve as an example of economic capital. As a paid member, being able to easily befriend other paid members and being able to join paid-members-only events can serve as a good example of the social capital. And being able to earn more in-game currency, stamps or fighting belts from games can be considered an example of cultural capital since indicates a player's game-related success. Of course, as Bourdieu (1986) mentioned, all three forms of capital are fluid and can be transformed into one another.

Even though all three forms of capital are important, Bourdieu's theory focuses on cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), three forms of cultural capital exist: embodied, objectified and institutionalized. Embodied capital refers to the cultural capital that is a part of an individual's character or personality. An individual's use of language, which includes several clues about his class, can serve as an example of embodied capital. In my research setting, being a member of the middle-class in a small town in the Midwest in the United States, being a member of this afterschool program, being a

member of the Club Penguin computer club, and being familiar with the language that is used in Club Penguin can be considered the participants' embodied capital. Objectified capital refers to the objects that an individual owns that signal information about his social class. For example, the costumes that only the paid members can wear in Club Penguin can be considered objectified capital since they include important clues about a member's paid membership status. Finally, the institutionalized form of cultural capital refers to an individual's educational background, his experiences and the degrees or titles he holds. In the virtual world, as it is mentioned above, having more virtual goods is indicative of one's success in the games and allows players a certain social status in the virtual world. In addition, having more experience in the Club Penguin virtual world than other players in the afterschool program permits the experienced players a certain social status among their friends, which can be considered an institutionalized form of cultural capital.

According to Bourdieu's concept of capital, individuals join groups and establish social relationships with others who share similar forms of cultural capital. People's tendencies to spend time with those who are similar allow individuals to feel more connected to their social groups. However, Bourdieu argued that since individuals value only certain forms of cultural capital and prefer spending time with the people like them, cultural capital influences formation of different groups and social inequality in societies. As important as economic capital is, cultural capital is also decisive with regard to an individual's social status in a society. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital permits individuals from the same social group to feel more connected to each other, but it also creates social inequality in a society.

Habitus

The term habitus can be defined as the tendencies of an individual, which are created over time by interacting with other individuals or social institutions in a culture (Bourdieu, 1977). Individuals, as social human beings, interact with their social world, observe their social environment, absorb the cultural norms and cultural practices of their society, and create their habitus over time. Then, their habitus begins to shape their behaviors and decisions, and they unconsciously decide how to act in a particular situation. For example, a child who regularly visits the Club Penguin virtual world knows that sending a direct friendship request to another penguin would not be appropriate in this online culture. Therefore, a child who is familiar with this culture would send a greeting message first and then send a fancy invitation postcard to the other person asking to become his friend. Their habitus, which is shaped in time by interacting with others in this culture, causes them act in this way. Users new to this culture, however, would not know the appropriate way to send a friendship request. A new user would likely just click on a penguin and send a direct friendship request, which usually ends in the request being ignored.

The nexus of the children's virtual world interactions in this study is based on Practice Theory (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986), and it includes the children's digital literacy practices, understanding of the consumerist values within the virtual world, and understanding the children's participation in the online and offline peer cultures. For example, this study will examine how the commercial design of the virtual world serves to mediate the children's frequent social practices, how the children use their economic

and cultural capitals while engaging in social practices with the other players, and what role their habitus plays in this process.



CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

In the growing body of research on virtual worlds, researchers have examined different aspects of this fairly new field of study. While some virtual worlds studies focus on use of virtual worlds in schools for educational purposes (Merchant, 2009; 2010; Beavis, Apperley, Bradford, O'Mara, & Walsh, 2009; Peachey, Gillen, Livingstone, & Smith-Robinson, 2010; Beavis, Muspratt, & Thompson, 2014), most of the studies in the body of literature consider virtual worlds to be places within which children spend time with friends as an out-of-school practice in their daily lives. As such, a number of researchers have approached the study of virtual worlds from this perspective, and they have assessed virtual play worlds from various aspects. For instance, some researchers analyze the commercial design of virtual worlds, the rules of game associated with the virtual worlds, and the virtual worlds' adherence to legal requirements pertaining to children and children's rights (Grimes, 2010; 2013a; 2013b). Others analyze children's virtual worlds as social platforms in order to examine how the children's engagement in these virtual worlds affects their identity constructions (Burke, 2013; Connelly, 2013) and how children's virtual world engagements foster their social relationships with friends (Marsh, 2013b) and with other family members (Reich, Korobkova, Black, & Sumaroka, 2013). And still other studies focus on children's literacy engagements in virtual worlds (Black, 2010; Marsh, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013c; Wohlwend, Zanden, Husbye, & Kuby, 2011; Wohlwend & Kargin, 2013). This dissertation considers virtual worlds to be children's new playgrounds, where they hang out with friends and engage in social interactions as an out-of-school practice, and its aim is to fill the gap in the literature by examining the role of virtual worlds' commercial designs in children's participation practices and literacy practices.

Commercial Designs of Virtual Worlds

Grimes (2010) conducted a unique study within virtual worlds by analyzing the political and social dimensions of children's virtual worlds. Grimes determined the existence of six popular virtual play worlds for kids (i.e., Club Penguin, Barbiegirls, Toontown, GalaXseeds, Nicktropolis, and Magi-Nation), and he analyzed the design features of these virtual worlds. She then examined the political and economic aspects of the policy documents, terms of use, privacy statements, game rules and promotional content and marketing discourse in and around the virtual worlds. She also visited these virtual worlds via her own avatars so that she could conduct participant observations over the course of two years. While conducting her observations, she focused on signs of tension born of conflict and resistance between the rule systems and the online players' engagements. Grimes revealed that children have disproportionate responsibilities (e.g., self-regulation, the need to monitor other players, manage rule breakers by blocking/reporting them and the need to adhere to copyright laws and privacy policy rules) in order to have secure and fun engagements. Grimes concluded her study by highlighting the importance of addressing children's cultural rights with regard to authorship, intellectual property, participation and fair use under the law. She also argued that promotional discourses and corporate priorities are embedded in these virtual worlds, and children become targets of the commercial interests of corporations by playing in the virtual worlds. This is an important study in terms of its unique perspective and because it served to analyzing virtual worlds' designs and children's online interactions to reveal what was missing in the laws pertaining to children's rights in these commercially-designed virtual worlds.

In a follow-up study, Grimes (2013a) focused specifically on the relationship between the “commercial priorities” of the producing companies and the “technological design” of the same six virtual worlds she had studied previously. Of these virtual worlds, three (i.e., Toontown, Club Penguin and Barbiegirls) provided both free and paid membership options; three (i.e., Barbiegirls, Club Penguin and Magi-Nation) offered in-game items that could be purchased online or toys and collectable items that could be purchased in stores; and two (i.e., Nicktropolis and GalaXseeds) included advertisements from third-party companies. Grimes argued that, in addition to “cross-promotion and branding” (i.e., containing themes or pre-existing characters produced by the same company that has produced the virtual world; for example, in the Barbiegirls virtual world, players were able to watch trailers of upcoming Barbie DVD movies) and “third-party advertising” (i.e., banner ads, links to other websites, and “immersive advertising,” which can involve a given place within the virtual world being sponsored by another company), the commercial design of the virtual worlds, which can effectively turn its users (i.e., the children who wear fancy outfits and decorate their igloos with nice furniture or themed items) into brand ambassadors that target the non-paying members who want all that comes with a paid account, serves the commercial interests of the producing companies. In her study, Grimes discussed two design features that were used for this purpose: offering children both free and paid membership options, and offering the “safe chat” feature.

Virtual worlds that offer both free and paid memberships aim to reach more members by providing children with content for free, but they limit the areas and game features that the non-paying members can reach (Grimes, 2013a). For instance, in the

Club Penguin virtual world, non-paying players are able to collect coins by playing games, but they cannot purchase clothes and accessories for their penguins or furniture for their igloos. This feature is obviously designed for promotional purposes and to make non-paying players demand paid memberships. In addition, Club Penguin's paying members whose avatars wear fancy clothes and whose igloos are outfitted with the newest theme-related furniture that the members purchased with coins they collected via game play are actually "acting as brand ambassador[s]" and promoting the virtual world to other paying and non-paying players.

All six of the virtual worlds that Grimes (2013a) analyzed included a "safe-chat" feature, such as Dictionary Chat or Pre-determined Chat, which prevents children from being exposed to inappropriate content and words. All six virtual worlds had the Dictionary Chat feature, which displays only the words that exist in the virtual worlds' respective vocabulary lists. Further, all of the worlds except for Magi-Nation employed the Pre-determined Chat feature, which allows children to choose pre-written words, phrases and sentences from scroll down menus. Pre-determined Chat was set as the default in four of the virtual worlds; Barbiegirls was the exception here. While creating their children's accounts, because of safety concerns, parents usually opt the accounts to be linked to the Pre-determined Chat feature. Even though the producing companies say that this feature was designed solely to create and promote a safe online environment for children, Grimes' (2013a) analysis revealed that the words and phrases in the Pre-determined Chat systems promote the producing companies' "television properties" and "tie-in products and toys." This feature also rarely permitted children to criticize brands, third-party advertisements or the "pay-to-play features" (p. 15). In addition, a significant

number of the phrases in the Pre-determined Chat systems refer to the items and game features offered only to the paid-members. While using the Pre-determined Chat feature, the non-paying players are reminded of the limitations they encounter with regard to, for example, game content.

Even though, with just a cursory glance, these technological design features seem like good features (i.e., having access to the content for free by having a basic membership and having safe-chat), Grimes (2013a) has argued that these features actually serve the producing companies and target the children as prospective customers. The limitation of Grimes' study is that she analyzed the design features and content of these six virtual worlds based on her own experiences. Observing children's actual interactions in the virtual worlds, their collaborative play, their socialization with other players, and chatting activities would help us to better understand how aware the children are of the restrictions and limitations to which they are subject as well as what their reactions are to these design features. Therefore, in this study, I observed the children as they played in Club Penguin with both non-paying and paying membership accounts, and I compared and contrasted their interactions in order to bring to the foreground the role of Club Penguin's commercial design feature in the children's participation in the peer culture as well as their literacy practices.

Virtual Worlds as Identity Playgrounds

Identity construction of young children in virtual play worlds is another popular topic of study among researchers. Recent studies indicate that children's identities are affected by the commercial design of virtual worlds. In order to examine the identity

construction of young children in the Barbiegirls virtual world, Connelly (2013) conducted a cyber-ethnographic research and gathered data by visiting this virtual world with her avatar, “Goonengerry.” When Goonengerry visited different places within the virtual world, Connelly adopted an applied linguist’s analytic perspective and “examined semiotic resources—modes of communication, imagery, dress, and everyday objects—to determine the nature of engagement and characteristics of the social practices performed by participants” (p. 100). As a cyber-ethnographic study, this research includes Connelly’s own analysis of the different aspects of this virtual world that might serve to construct the identities of young children.

Connelly (2013) examined this virtual world via four subtitles: *An Avatar*, *B Chat*, *My Room*, and *Locations in Barbiegirls.com Virtual World*. In each stage, Connelly was subject to the limited opportunities are offered to basic (non-paid) members. While creating an avatar, Connelly realized that there were big differences between the basic and V.I.P. (paid) memberships in terms of the physical features and accessories offered by Barbiegirls to design avatars. The design features of the game made Connelly feel as if *she was different* when she compared herself with other players, and it sparked her desire to have a V.I.P. membership.

When Connelly decided to approach other players, she realized that the B (Basic) Chat function was set up such that members could only discuss certain topics via sets of alternative messages from which the members could choose. Connelly (2013) argued that the limited phrase choices, which were offered to basic members, shaped the way basic members were perceived by others. As such, using only these phrases served to construct

Connelly's identity. The V.I.P. players, however, were permitted to type freely and express their own thoughts.

When Connelly tried to design her room within this virtual world, she realized that, as a basic member, she had very limited options. As was the case when designing her avatar, she was not able to use the B-Bucks (online currency used in the Barbiegirls virtual world) that she earned from the games to buy items with which to design her room. However, those players with the V.I.P. status had the power to personalize and design their rooms with items that they purchased with the B-Bucks. Due to this design feature of the Barbiegirls virtual world, Goonengerry's room was notably different when compared to the exemplar rooms introduced in the Mattel-sponsored blog *Barbiegirls is Awesome*. Connelly also realized that the V.I.P. players' rooms were ranked by other players who visited the rooms and the player who received the top score was rewarded with a best room award in the competition "*Rank-a-Rockin' Room*."

The locations Connelly could visit and the activities she could attend as a basic member were also limited. For instance, she could not answer many of the questions about the locations and activities in Barbiegirls when she attempted to answer simple quiz questions in the *Games Room*. In addition, she could not visit the *Twilight Woods* nor ride the *Sparkle Coaster* in the *Extreme DreamPark*. And, when she attempted to do these things, she encountered a pop-up screen message that reminded her that these particular features were only available to V.I.P. players.

Connelly (2013) analyzed the texts, artifacts and actions that she found in this virtual world, and she found that these things constantly exposed young girls to discourse

on consumerism within the Barbiegirls virtual world, and this in turn encourages the girls to be gendered consumers. This means of gender-based consumption prompted young girls to visit – via their Barbie avatars – stylists who would do their hair and makeup, and dress designers who would outfit them and encourage them to purchase clothing. As such, both consumer-based practices and gender shaping were taking place within this virtual world. Further, Connelly noted that the language used in the prewritten messages in B Chat is appropriate with regard to youth languages often encountered in online spaces (e.g., “*Hey, girl,*” “*wanna,*” “*cool,*” “*fave,*” “*run your own fashion biz,*” “*design idol,*”), but it limited non-paying members’ expressions and, when combined with the limitations pertinent to avatar and room design, prompted the basic players to more fully recognize the social hierarchy that exists within the Barbiegirls virtual world. The cyber-ethnography that Connelly conducted in the Barbiegirls virtual world revealed the existence of consumerism in this virtual world, but as in Grimes’ (2013a) study, Connelly did not observe children and their actual interactions; instead, she limited her study to her own experience in the Barbiegirls virtual world.

In another research study that focused on young children’s identity constructions in virtual worlds, Burke (2013) conducted a qualitative study using participant observations, side shadowing and interview methods. Burke and her research team examined the fluidity of childhood identity by focusing on the real- and virtual-world engagements of two 10-year-old female classmates who lived on the same street and who went to the same afterschool program, where they engaged in the Stardoll virtual world. Burke revealed that her research participants used the Stardoll virtual world as a place to extend their offline media interests. For instance, one participant who was interested in

reading popular magazines and watching celebrity shows created and designed her own McDoll album in the Stardoll virtual world. In addition, Burke revealed that the participants used this virtual world to gain social capital/popularity among their online and offline friends. For instance, being a top model and club owner in the Stardoll virtual world afforded one participant's newfound popularity among her classroom friends, and it helped her to manipulate her real classroom problems. Not unlike Connelly (2013), Burke argued that the producers of these virtual worlds should take into account consumerism and its effect on children's identity construction in the virtual worlds. In this study, Burke revealed that, even though children think that they are freely designing their avatars and virtual homes and interacting with their friends, they are actually being forced to follow the system's rules in these pre-structured, commercially designed virtual worlds. Therefore, children's identities are being shaped in these commercially designed virtual environments.

In addition to examining what role consumerism plays in children's identity construction in virtual worlds, some studies focused on how the virtual worlds affect children's freedom of choice; that is, how do these worlds affect children's identity construction as it pertains to choosing gender and deciding how to respond to particular events without feeling social pressure to act in one way or another. For instance, Kafai, Fields and Cook (2010) claimed that the Whyville virtual world serves as an "identity playground" (p. 34) for tweens. The researchers worked with 10- to 14-year-old children and analyzed these children's Whyville avatar designs. The Whyville virtual world gives the children more freedom than other virtual worlds in that it allows them to customize their avatars. It also lets children sell and trade their avatars' face parts and accessories in

exchange for clams (virtual currency). Some of the children in their study mentioned that they designed one boy and one girl avatar, and when they were bored with their real avatar, they used the second one of the opposite-sex in order to experience the other players' reactions to a different appearance. In addition, the players designed their avatars to satisfy desires that are not allowed or satisfied in real life (e.g., a particular hairstyle) either because their parent object or because satisfying these desires would be impossible to do without a plastic surgery (e.g., having fuller lips). Kafai et al. (2010) argued that, by allowing children to choose the gender and characteristics of an avatar and allowing them to play out their own desires, Whyville served as an identity playground for children.

In Whyville, children play various science games and earn salaries (in clams) from these games. Then, they use their salaries to design their avatars. Children can also design additional products to sell or trade to other players and earn more clams. In Kafai et al.'s (2010) study, over 70% of the online players mentioned that they designed and sold face parts and accessories in Whyville, which means that the majority of the players' virtual income came from designing and selling their designs. Kafai and colleagues revealed that the players thought "looking 'good' demonstrat[ed] social status, and [made] it more likely that people [would] talk to you" (p. 28). Similarly, in Club Penguin, the paid members who have better looking penguins are more likely accepted as friends, while basic members' friendship requests are usually ignored by online players. In these virtual worlds, since there is no game level, looking good actually means being successful, and being successful provides children with a better social status in these online peer cultures.

Burley (2010) also argues that virtual worlds are identity playgrounds within which children engage in actions they wish to practice, the actions that are somehow forbidden to practice in their physical worlds. Burley observed her daughter's experience in Club Penguin to better understand how the development of her daughter's *social identity* and *community relationships* were affected by playing in this virtual world. Similar to Kafai et al.'s (2010) study, Burley's study participant created an opposite gender avatar in Club Penguin to experience "being a boy" in this virtual environment. It was observed in this study that certain characterizations of boys were brought into the virtual space as the study participant acted as a more competitive player in the games and chose particular games to play that are often associated with male gender. It was also revealed that since children are away from their usual physical contexts, they are away from social pressures, so they freely act based on their values and emotions without considering the judgment of other people around. For instance, the study participant sent a friendship request to an online player after seeing another player rejected that player's friendship request because of the appearance of his or her avatar. Burley argues that if this happened in the physical context, the study participant might not have practiced the same action had she wanted to because of peer pressure. Thus, it was argued that virtual worlds help children to experience different identities by letting them choose their genders and allow them to act accordingly in the virtual space, which entailed engaging in activities based on values and emotions without feeling any social pressure.

Virtual Worlds and Social Relationships

In addition to identity construction, the effect of virtual worlds on social relationships between friends and among family members is another topic of interest

among researchers. To examine how children develop and manage social friendships in virtual environments, Marsh (2013b) analyzed children's practices in the Club Penguin virtual world. First, she conducted an online survey of 175 children, aged 5 to 11 years, who attended a primary school in a large city in England, in order to find out what the children knew about virtual worlds. The survey results indicated that 52% of these children regularly used virtual worlds, and Club Penguin was the most popular virtual world among the children. Then, Marsh interviewed 26 of these children over the course of two academic years in order to explore what types of activities they participated in while in the virtual worlds.

In the final stage of her research, Marsh (2013b) visited three 11-year-old children in their homes four times while they were playing Club Penguin. At the end of the last observation of each child, Marsh interviewed the child and one of his or her parents about the child's use of the Club Penguin virtual world. The results of this study showed that five- to 11-year-old children used this virtual world to construct and maintain friendships. They used Club Penguin as a place to meet and socialize with their offline friends. In addition, the children developed different strategies to manage friendships in this virtual environment. For instance, older children preferred to accept only friendship requests from their offline friends and ignored requests that came from unknown players. This decision was not the case for the younger players, probably because they were not yet aware of the potential online dangers associated with exchanging information with strangers. In addition, the children in this study reported that they learned to keep themselves safe online via information they had gathered from their parents, their school and the online safety guidance employed by the Club Penguin website. Marsh also argued

that commercialism played an important role in their online friendships since the children reviewed the virtual goods of other players while deciding whether to accept their friendship requests.

Further, Marsh (2013b) argued in this study that the children's online and offline identities were similar to one another. For instance, the children who were more social and had more friends in their offline lives engaged with more children and collected more friends in the Club Penguin virtual world. One of the outgoing participants mentioned in the interview that she did not like declining anyone's friendship request in the virtual world because she did not want to be seen as nasty. Similarly, the children who had fewer friends in their offline environments preferred not to contact other online players and did not chat with others or send friendship requests.

In another study, Reich, Korobkova, Black and Sumaroka (2013) examined the role of children's engagements with virtual worlds in the construction of social relationships among family members. The researchers observed and videotaped five sibling pairs and one single child (the children ranged in age from four to 12 years) over time while they engaged in virtual worlds. The researchers also interviewed the participants, their siblings and their parents about their engagements in virtual worlds. The results revealed that the children's play in digital environments fostered social interactions and communication among the family members. "Children's family relationships often enable their use of games and virtual worlds (e.g., asking their mom to download an app on her iPhone), and [...] their play in digital games and virtual spaces often mediates family interactions" (p. 148). The participants used the digital environment as an extension of their "real" lives. For instance, two siblings who watched

and played soccer with their father in their real life created soccer game accounts for their father and uncle, and played the games together while discussing real soccer players. In addition, the children's use of digital media and virtual worlds fostered dialog among the family members. For instance, some of the participants chatted with their mothers about the storylines of the games, toys and videos while she cooked or conducted other work at home. Reich and her colleagues also argued that, while older family members assisted younger children in their use of digital media, younger family members also supported their older siblings and parents with their comments and verbal guidance while they were playing. In contrast to a common thought, which views children's media use as something that steals time from the family and damages family relationships, it was shown in this study that the participants' use of virtual worlds fostered social relationships within their families in different ways.

Literacy in Virtual Worlds

Even though children in several countries play within virtual worlds and engage in literacy in these online platforms, the amount of research that specifically focuses on literacy practices in virtual worlds is very limited. In addition, not all of the studies that examine literacy practices in virtual worlds focus on young children. For example, Steinkuehler (2007) studied the literacy practices in World of Warcraft, which is a massively multiplayer online game (MMOG) that serves mostly teens and adults. She stated that literacy has a central role in World of Warcraft and found that, in addition to the in-game literacy practices, players engaged in out-of-game literacy practices (Black & Steinkuehler, 2009) such as blogging, creating fan sites and having discussion board interactions (e.g., exchanging information about the game). Her study revealed that while

teen and adult players have fun in virtual worlds, they are also practicing literacy in multiple ways.

Gillen (2009) also analyzed teens' literacy practices in a virtual island world called Schome Park in the (Teen) Second Life virtual world by conducting a virtual literacy ethnography that took place over 15 months. The sources that employed during this virtual ethnographic study included teens' interactions via wiki posts, forum posts and chat logs that included near dialogs and instant messages, as well as her own field notes that she took as a participant observer. Gillen revealed that teens undertook a huge literacy activity by participating in Schome Park. They creatively used language and different features of a text in their in-game and out-game literacy practices.

While analyzing literacy in virtual worlds, other studies focused on virtual worlds designed for kids to bring to the foreground how young children engage in literacy in those virtual worlds, and how the design of virtual worlds lets children engage in literacy. For instance, Black (2010) observed the Webkinz virtual world as a participant observer and conducted a qualitative content analysis in order to figure out what affordances the virtual world offered with regard to children's literacy and language development. According to her analysis, Webkinz offered several literacy artifacts for children, such as signs, labels, posters, pet travel brochures, bulletin boards, advertisements, and a newspaper, and the virtual world "[encouraged] players to read site-related materials" (p. 12). The tutorials in Webkinz are conducted by an animated game character and include text, visuals and audio. While the animated character is giving information about the game setting, it usually points to the object or appropriate portion of the screen about which it is talking. This design feature helps early readers to develop game-related

vocabularies. Several play spaces in this virtual world also offer different literacy materials that help to scaffold language acquisition (e.g., Kinzville Academy offers their students a learning guide, report card, sign-up sheet and video tutorials). However, Black argued that some of the other game features, such as chat filtering, affect children's literacy interaction negatively. The chat-filtering feature, which was developed due to safety concerns, does not offer a safe environment for children and, instead, invites children to use invented spellings and simple misspellings to convey meaning. In addition, Black noted, as a caution, that the literacy practices in this virtual world included static and read-only textual artifacts that limit children's meaningful literacy engagements. From this perspective, the design of the site looks like a traditional learning setting that considers children as passive recipients of the information provided by experts.

While Black (2010) analyzed the online context of Webkinz by visiting the virtual world with her own avatar, Wohlwend, Zanden, Husbye and Kuby (2011) examined primary school-aged children's online play and collaboration in the Webkinz virtual world. In this ethnographic study, Wohlwend and her colleagues collected data in an afterschool program in a U.S. Midwest university community by observing and videotaping 35 five- to eight-year-old children's online interactions in the Webkinz virtual world. They, the researchers analyzed their data by applying a geosemiotics framework that included an analysis of social actors, interaction order, visual semiotics and place semiotics. In their study, due to the restrictions of the afterschool program, all of the computers were muted in order to reduce the noise level in the computer room. Therefore, the children could not benefit from the speech guidance that was given by the

animated characters. In order to understand the game rules, the children relied on the gaze of the animated characters and printed texts on the screen. The Webkinz guide print directions were text-heavy, and assuming children, like adults, turn to such guides when they struggle in the game, this was not an appropriate way to provide guidance for this age group; the children who only relied upon their intuitive interpretations could not participate in the multi-player games. This design feature of the Webkinz virtual world limited the children's interactions and meaningful literacy practices. This is not the case in Club Penguin. The pop-up screen messages and other text-based instructions given in Club Penguin are pretty short and appropriate for young children's language levels and are usually supported with other images and icons.

In order to find out for what purposes the children used literacy in virtual worlds, Marsh (2012) observed and videotaped three 11-year-old children in their homes on four separate occasions while they were playing in the Club Penguin virtual world. Similar to Steinkuehler's (2007) findings for teens and adults, Marsh revealed that literacy was central in the children's interactions with Club Penguin. Marsh argued that children use literacy for at least five different purposes in virtual worlds: 1) *establishing and maintaining relationships* (e.g., chatting, IMing, sending postcards, using emoticons), 2) *accessing or displaying information* (e.g., reading the newspaper, the *Club Penguin Times*; reading catalogues; using signs and other environmental prints to navigate their avatars through the world; reading the game instructions), 3) *pleasure and/or self-expression* (e.g., reading poems, jokes and stories in the newspaper; reading books in the library; searching for Club Penguin machinima on YouTube), 4) *identity construction and performance* (e.g., choosing clothes and artifacts for their avatars, choosing

emoticons and phrases to express their identities) and 5) *establishing and maintaining social networks* (e.g., communicating with two or more other penguins via chat, using chat in a group ritual) (p. 13). This study was important in terms of both identifying the different literacy practices in which children engage while playing in the Club Penguin virtual world and categorizing those practices according to their purposes.

Wohlwend and Kargin (2013) also analyzed young children's literacy practices in the Club Penguin virtual world. As a part of a three-year ethnographic study, they observed and videotaped eight five- to eight-year-old children for one hour, once a week for six sessions in the computer room of an afterschool program in a small U.S. town in a Midwestern university community, while the children were collaboratively playing in the Club Penguin virtual world. While analyzing their video data, Wohlwend and Kargin focused on the nexus of *peer mediation* (i.e., the teaching that occurs between children about how to access a game or complete a task) and *online connection* (i.e., having avatars in the same virtual place). In their analysis of the online and offline play spaces, Wohlwend and Kargin (2013) revealed the digital literacy practices of children in the Club Penguin virtual world: the children were *reading* pre-written words, phrases, and images; *messaging* others by reading and selecting pre-written phrases; doing *partner reading* by pronouncing words/phrases aloud and expecting responses from other players; *reading aloud to themselves (inner speech)* by pronouncing words/phrases aloud without expecting a response; and, in their interactions with other players, conducting *modeled reading, watching (assessing)* other players, *listening* to them and *re-teaching* when necessary.

Wohlwend and Kargin (2013) also argued that the children's helpfulness in the physical space balanced their lack of wealth in the online space. In the virtual, screen and discursive spaces, the children earned status by having coins, fancy clothes and pets. The players who had paid for memberships had access to a number of advantages (e.g., access to more virtual goods) to which other players were not privy. Having more virtual goods provided the paid members with economic capital, and positioned them as experts in this virtual world. In the physical space, however, instead of being wealthy, helping each other provided cultural capital. The players who were open to collaborative work and who helped others complete tasks earned status, which offset their lack of wealth in the online spaces.

Critical Literacy with Young Children

With the publication of Brazilian theorist Paolo Freire's (1970) famous book about poor communities in South America, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, critical literacy approach, which is rooted in Freire's social justice pedagogy, became a tool frequently used in education. Use of critical literacy in early grades, however, remains a relatively new phenomenon. Even with very young children, critical literacy "makes diversity and difference visible and helps teach children to critique their world, examine their own assumptions and beliefs, and take on new identities as they try to make a difference through social action" (Silvers, Shorey, & Crafton, 2010, p. 383). In this dissertation, I use critical literacy to help the study participants to see the inequity that is present in the Club Penguin virtual world, and to help them criticize the features of the virtual world they find unfair and take a social action to make a difference.

While some researchers who use critical literacy with young children focus on the methods of using critical literacy effectively with this age group (Aukerman, 2012; Labadie, Mosley Wetzel, & Rogers, 2012), others demonstrate how young children analyze the illustrations and language used in popular children's books to criticize assumptions that are often taken for granted (Bourke, 2008), and still others delve into such studies that discuss social issues with children and prompt the children to engage in social actions intended to make a difference (Evans, 2005; Flint & Laman, 2012; Silvers, Shorey, & Crafton, 2010).

For instance, Labadie, Mosley, Wetzel and Rogers (2012) analyzed the way a second grade teacher introduced children's books to her class. The researchers also introduced three methods that make it possible to use critical literacy effectively with children at this grade level: *careful selection of books* that are all about the same social issue so that children can read intertextually; *use of purposeful prompts* to make children think more critically about the characters of the books and messages given in the books; and *fostering students' voices through teacher silences* to let children more freely talk. In another study, Aukerman (2012) also discussed the best use of critical literacy in early grades. She identified and criticized three predominant orientations of using critical literacy in schools: *critical literacy as outcome*, within which teachers focus solely on the outcomes and analyze the text to underscore the important points from their own points of view; *critical literacy as procedure*, within which children follow explicit and direct instructions and a particular set of tools to critique texts; and *critical literacy as personal response*, within which children analyze texts and give personal responses to the texts, but miss the existence of other perspectives. Aukerman proposed an alternative

orientation of using critical literacy in schools: *critical literacy as dialogic engagement*, within which the children discuss the texts, and everyone freely discusses their understandings with other classmates; this encourages the students to understand that there are multiple perspectives – some similar and some dissimilar – with regard to the same texts.

In addition to these studies that focus on methods of using critical literacy with young children, there are a few good examples of using critical literacy in early grades in the literature. Comber and Nixon (2005), for instance, studied elementary students and discussed how children use critical literacy in the texts they created. The authors conducted their research in two different elementary schools in South Australia, and they analyzed two different texts created by the students in those schools. The first text is a book called *A is for Arndale*, which was authored by eight to 10-year-old children, and the other text is a magazine-style film called *Cooking Afghani Style*, which was produced by nine to 12-year-old children. In both cases, the teachers asked the children to work as researchers and investigate the neighborhoods in which they lived by rereading and rewriting the texts related to their neighborhoods. In the first case, the children created *A is for Arndale*, an alphabet book whose pages were each authored and illustrated by a separate elementary student attending school in a suburb of Adelaide, Australia. By using another alphabet book as a model, these children created their own alphabet book, within which they introduced their neighborhood and the personal lives they live with their families to the audience in an elementary school in South Africa. In turn, they would receive an alphabet book from the school in South Africa. Production of *A is for Arndale* is considered as a critical literacy practice since the children “redesigned the alphabet

book from an adult, Western, white, normative technology of early literacy instruction, representing somebody else's world, to an inclusive, multivocal, contemporary text inviting conversation about their lives, cultures, and times" (p. 143).

The other text, a film titled *Cooking Afghani Style*, was produced by a group of Afghani English as Second Language (ESL) students in an elementary school in Adelaide, Australia. The children, with the help of their teacher, researched generic cooking shows, recipes for Afghani dishes, and the history of Afghani people in the city. The children then produced the film that consists of two sections. In the first section, a group of Afghani children are shown making popular Afghani dishes just like in popular cooking shows on TV. In the second section, children are shown going to the part of the city where Afghani people have lived since the nineteenth century, and visiting restaurants and food markets as they discuss the diverse cultures represented in these places. Since this reread and rewritten text is "an explicitly political text that was designed to redress the absence of appropriate and up-to-date material about Afghani culture and history available to both Afghani refugee children and other people in the Australian community" (p. 134), producing this film/text was considered a critical practice as well. In both cases, the children changed the popular texts (i.e., an alphabet book and a popular TV show) that represented other people's worlds in order to introduce other people to their own lives. Producing these texts created a space for critical literacy for the children. The study's authors noted that, in both cases, the children investigated their own neighborhoods and home cultures, and then carefully and critically chose the illustrations and the language they used in their respective texts in order to express themselves and present their own lives in the right way.

Another critical literacy study of elementary students also called for children to create critical texts, but this time, they were tasked with doing so via another genre, poetry. Flint and Laman (2012) studied first, second, third and fifth graders in two elementary schools in the southeastern region of the United States. The study took place while teachers taught writing workshop units that integrated poetry with issues related to social justice. The researchers analyzed audio and video data they collected from poetry mini-lessons, writing conferences and share times; the researchers also collected data from children's poems as well as from the focus groups they conducted with teachers and students to see how the children maintained the four critical literacy practices identified by Lewison et al. (2002). These practices include *disrupting the commonplace*, *interrogating multiple perspectives*, *focusing on sociopolitical issues*, and *taking action to promote social justice*. Their analysis revealed that the children were *disrupting the commonplace* by more freely talking about their feelings, fears and lived experiences in the poems they wrote. They were *interrogating multiple perspectives* by reading and writing poems in their home languages and dialects including Spanish and African-American English. The children were *focusing on sociopolitical issues* by reading several texts, having discussions and writing poems on several social issues including immigration, divorce, bullying, homelessness, war and natural disasters. Finally, the children were *taking action to promote social justice* by simply writing these poems. In these poems, the children spoke out about the concerns they had regarding their worlds. Thus, integrating poetry with issues related to social injustice via a writing workshop created a space for these elementary students to engage in critical literacy in a meaningful way.

In another study, a group of first graders engaged in multiple literacies while working on a critical literacy project. Silvers, Shorey and Crafton (2010) studied 25 first graders in an elementary school in a suburb of Chicago; during the study, the children were exploring events related to Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans, as the hurricane had only recently occurred. The researchers' analysis focused primarily on a group of children (three girls and two boys) that called themselves Hurricane Group, and which met throughout the year to work on hurricane-related projects. The authors revealed that Hurricane Group engaged in literacy in multiple ways. First, the group used multiple resources including books, the Internet and magazines, and the children in the group drew their interpretations of hurricanes and wrote about Hurricane Katrina in their reflective journals. Further, the children in the group acted out their interpretations of running to a safe shelter, and they presented their findings as a PowerPoint presentation. Throughout the group's study of hurricanes, the teacher encouraged the children to ask critical questions while analyzing what they read from the print texts and the pictures, and she posted critical questions informed by Vasquez (2003) in the classroom so that they would serve as mentor questions. The teacher also reminded the children that there were victims of the hurricane, mostly poor African American people living in New Orleans, and it was important to take a social action to help those people. At the end of the year, Hurricane Group decided to engage in social action and asked for help from classmates to find a way to help the people suffering from the hurricane. Since, many schools in New Orleans have been damaged, the students decided to send books to a school in New Orleans. Hurricane Group first searched online and found a school in New Orleans that was damaged by the hurricane. Then, after seeking and receiving permission from their

families, all class members donated gently used books they had at home to the school in New Orleans. In this study, the children, while investigating Hurricane Katrina under their teacher's guidance, found out that most of the people affected by the disaster are poor African American people living in New Orleans. This prompted the students to critically think about how those suffering people could have been better helped both in and after the incident. Focusing on a real social issue and talking about poverty and a recent natural disaster encouraged these children to engage in social action and make a difference for those suffering people.

In another study, Vasquez (2004) used the McDonald's Happy Meal as the text in her junior kindergarten class while discussing with 3- to 5-year-old children how the Happy Meal serves McDonald's' commercial interests. With some prompting and help from Vasquez, the children, who had critically analyzed several texts by this point in the school year, criticized McDonald's use of toys to manipulate child costumers, the reason behind McDonald's ongoing changes with regard to the Happy Meal toys, the unfairness associated with poor kids' lack of access to Happy Meal toys, and the promotional strategies McDonald's follows to make children continuous consumers. The children were also made aware of the warning on the plastic bag used to package some Happy Meal toys: "To avoid danger of suffocation, keep bag away from babies and children." After Vasquez read the warning aloud, the children suggested that the packaging should be changed if it is really dangerous for children. Then, a group of children worked on alternative packaging methods, and one of the children wrote a letter, in which he proposed using boxes for toy packaging instead of plastic bags, and delivered it to the McDonald's store close to his home. In this study, Vasquez demonstrated that even

children in this age group are able to discuss the taken-for-granted issues we encounter in everyday life from a critical perspective, and in the end, they are able to take action in order to change the things they find problematic.

Contribution to the Literature

My literature review has revealed that even though the current studies, (Grimes, 2013a; Connelly, 2013) which have analyzed the design features of virtual worlds based on the researchers' self-experiences, indicate that having a paid membership provides children with several additional opportunities in terms of freely designing their avatars and virtual places and participating in additional activities, none of the studies offered children paid memberships and analyzed their interactions in virtual worlds . These privileged opportunities, which are only given to paid members, may serve to enrich children's participation and meaningful literacy practices in virtual worlds, and this will help us to better understand the role of virtual worlds' commercial designs in children's interactions. While it is argued in several studies that the commercial design of virtual worlds plays an important role in children's identity constructions (Connelly, 2013; Burke, 2013) and social relationships with friends (Marsh, 2013b), none of the studies compared and contrasted the interactions of paid and non-paid players in order to more fully assess the effect consumerism has on these interactions. Further, prior research has not addressed the ways in which the intentional design features of virtual worlds affect children's literacy practices. Therefore, in this study, to fill the gap in the literature, I provided my participants with paid and non-paid membership accounts, and I analyzed their interactions in the Club Penguin virtual world.

After my study participants' paid accounts expired, all of their accounts turned back into non-paid accounts, which meant that they lost their advantageous positions in the Club Penguin peer culture. To see what they thought about this design feature of Club Penguin, raise awareness to the inequity in the virtual world, and help them engage in social actions aimed at making a difference, I decided to meet with them one more time at the end of the study. As is seen in my literature review, even very young children *read the word and the world* via a critical lens (Freire, 1998) and engage in social actions. Therefore, as will be seen in detail in the next chapter as well as in Chapter 7, critical literacy is used to change the nexus in the last phase of this dissertation.

In the literature, the researchers who analyzed the online content of the virtual worlds (Black, 2010; Connelly, 2013; Grimes, 2010, 2013a) highlighted the fact that their studies were limited to their self-experiences, and it would be more meaningful to observe children's actual engagements in the virtual worlds. In my pilot study, I observed the children in their afterschool program while they played in the Club Penguin virtual world. However, I realized while analyzing my pilot data that I needed to be more knowledgeable about the virtual world and the social norms of this online peer culture such that I might better analyze/understand the children's interactions. Even though, as an adult player and researcher, it was not possible for me to look at this virtual world with the eyes of a child, I still might better understand their interactions if I had a similar experience within the same virtual world. As such, just before the dissertation research phase of my study, in the Spring 2014 program cycle, I played in the virtual world at the same time as the children in the afterschool program. However, after a couple of tries, I realized that it would not be possible for me and my study subjects to play in this virtual

world simultaneously during the afterschool program. As the leader of the afterschool program computer club, I was responsible for helping the children log onto the virtual world and answering their basic questions. Since, the participants were in constant need of my assistance, I was obliged to quit playing in the virtual world during the afterschool program.

While a study conducted via only the researcher's self-experience in a virtual world is limited in terms of understanding the children's actual activities, observing only children's interactions without having any personal experience is also limiting, in that it does not let the researcher to understand the children's activities. After reading Connelly's (2013) cyber-ethnographic study on the Barbiegirls virtual world, I thought that I could also conduct a cyber-ethnographic study in the Club Penguin virtual world in a similar way by visiting different places, playing different games and observing other online players' interactions with my own avatar at home. Thus, I decided to merge the Mediated Discourse Analysis and cyber-ethnography methodologies in this dissertation. In the methodology section in the next chapter, I explain how I used the Mediated Discourse Analysis while designing the study and analyzing my data, and how my cyber-ethnographic research contributed to my data analysis process.

CHAPTER 3: Design and Methodology

This chapter explains the procedures and rationale for an ethnographic study aimed at exploring children's play and literacy practices in virtual play worlds. First, I will describe the research design of this ethnographic study. Second, I will explain the research context, which includes the participants of the study and the online and offline settings within which the participants engage in activities. Third, I will describe the data collection process, which included cyber-ethnography and other ethnographic methods (e.g., conducting participant observation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010), taking field notes, and videotaping). Next, I will discuss how Scollon's (2001b) Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) filter model worked in the data analysis process of this study and how employing cyber-ethnography and critical literacy complemented this process. Finally, I will discuss the ethical considerations and credibility procedures of this qualitative study.

Ethnography

In a very general sense, ethnography can be defined as "the written description of the social organization, social activities, symbolic and material resources, and interpretive practices characteristic of a particular group of people" (Duranti, 1997, p. 85). Therefore, the aim of ethnographic study is to describe a group of people's social activities, their use of symbolic materials (i.e., language), their use of cultural materials, and their social interactions with one another. In this ethnographic research, I studied a specific group of five- to eight-year-old children who engaged in the Club Penguin virtual world with their peers in an afterschool program in a small town in the Midwestern United States. By employing ethnographic methods, I identified these children's literacy, participation, and

consumerism practices, and the effect of the commercial design of Club Penguin on the children's interactions.

In this study, the field in which I conducted my research included two environments: the computer lab associated with an afterschool program and the Club Penguin virtual world within which the children played. I chose to conduct an ethnographic study, as "Ethnography is well-suited to answering the question, 'What is going on here?'" (Wolcott, 2001, p. 166). By conducting participant observations and taking field notes, as well as asking questions and videotaping the children's interactions, I was able to explore what was happening with regard to this group of children's online (i.e., virtual world) and offline (i.e., computer lab) engagements. I focused especially on how the children used their economic and cultural capitals to earn status in the Club Penguin club peer culture.

In ethnographic study, it is important to look at the field from both insider and outsider perspectives in order to better understand the culture of the community and the activities taking place within the field (Harris, 2001). In studying this virtual world, I assumed both a player's perspective inside the game and an observer's over-the-shoulder perspective outside the game (i.e., watching children's interactions with the game, the computers, and each other). Using the MDA methodology helped me to analyze the children's play, social interactions and digital literacy practices in Club Penguin from an outsider perspective. In order to assume a player's perspective, I employed cyber-ethnography methodology; I logged into the Club Penguin virtual world with my own avatar at home, visited different places in the virtual world, observed the online players' interactions and noted the frequent activities in which the children engaged. As an adult

player and researcher, I am aware that it was not possible to fully understand what the children saw in this virtual world or how they felt while playing with their peers. Still, using cyber-ethnography helped me to look at the field from a player's perspective and better understand the Club Penguin virtual world's peer culture. Being more knowledgeable about the social norms and regular activities in this particular virtual world contributed to my ability to analyze my data later.

Research Design

This qualitative research uses ethnography methodology supported by MDA in order to examine young children's play and literacy practices as they engage in virtual worlds that become a part of the children's everyday play landscapes. When children play in virtual worlds, they usually use actions instead of speech as they interact with the available tools and their peers when creating their social and cultural environments (Wohlwend, 2009b). MDA "is an action-oriented approach to critical discourse analysis that takes sociocultural activity as its primary focus" (Wohlwend, 2013b, p. 56). In a very general sense, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) explores the power of discourse (language) and adopts a *discourse as action* perspective. However, MDA moves beyond the analysis of text "to consider questions about the actions people take with them, as well as with other cultural tools, and the social consequences these actions have" (Norris & Jones, 2005, p. xi). MDA focuses on physical actions and asks the simple question "*What's going on here?*" and then focuses on the texts and other things that play a role in that action (Jones, 2012). In short, MDA adopts a *discourse in action* perspective that "starts with *actions* and asks what role discourse plays in them" (Jones, 2012, p. 27).

In order to organize the ethnographic data collection and identify the key moments/mediated actions to conduct detailed observations and analyses, building on Scollon's (2001b) work, Wohlwend (2009a) identifies four filters that include Locating Participants and Mediational Means, Observing Scenes and Practices, Locating Nexus of Practice, and Locating Transformative Events (p. 69-74). To organize and analyze my data, I excerpted Wohlwend's (2009a) MDA filters, which were adapted from Scollon's (2001b, p. 153) original MDA filter model, extended it with Scollon and Scollon's (2004) Nexus Analysis tasks and adapted for my study (see Figure 3.1). After applying the MDA filters to my data, I reached the key moments/mediated actions necessary to conduct a microanalysis. The first filter, Participants and Mediational Means Surveys, is related to choosing the research setting and the participants and tools that are used in the setting. The rest of the filters are related to the organization and analysis of the data. I will discuss my MDA filter model in more detail in the Data Analysis section later in this chapter.

Research Context

Setting and Participants

Even though detailed information about the research context is given in Chapter 4, *Engaging the Nexus*, I would like to provide some information regarding the research context here in this methodology chapter. This study was conducted in an afterschool program, which serves mostly working- and middle-class families in a small town in the Midwestern United States. The afterschool program offers small group clubs organized around the children's interests. During the afterschool program, some of the participants work on homework, while others read books, play in the gym or play musical

instruments. Within this afterschool program, the children are divided into three groups based on their grades: K-3rd grade, 4th-6th grade and teens. Each group is allowed to participate in different club activities based on the appropriateness of the activities in relation to the group members' ages. In this research, I studied the K-3rd grade children. I only studied those children who were willing to participate in this study. The study took place in a computer room with children who were signed up for the Club Penguin club (see Appendix A for a picture of the computer lab).

I collected data from a total of 34 K-3rd grade children during the Fall 2011, Spring 2013, Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 program cycles. For the actual study, I collected data from 14 K-3rd grade children during Fall 2014. Originally, there were 20 registered children, four of whom were from previous program cycles, but six children never showed up, so there were 14 active participants in the actual study. Each participant consented at the time of registration before the beginning of the program cycle in each semester. Most of the participants did not immediately join the subsequent semester's program cycle. Therefore, in each semester, there were only a few participants from previous program cycles, and there were six to 13 new participants in the preliminary phases of this study.

In the Club Penguin club, the participants sat side-by-side in the computer room as they controlled their penguin avatars in the Club Penguin virtual world. The club met for one hour once a week for approximately seven sessions in each program cycle; the actual study consisted of 12 sessions. Whether or not to remain in the room for the entire duration of the session was a decision left up to each participant. Sometimes the participants became bored and left the room, and other times, the club time overlapped

with other activities the participants wanted to attend or their parents picked them up early from the afterschool program. During the club sessions, I observed whichever participants were in the computer room – sometimes it was all of them, and sometimes it was only a few of them.

Club Penguin Virtual World

Club Penguin is a two-dimensional virtual world in which users are represented by penguin avatars. Young children design their penguins and igloos, play online games with other children, and visit different places with their penguin avatars within the virtual world. The social interactions between the children usually happen when they chat with one another. They also send postcards, game invitations and friendship requests to each other. Having more friends in this virtual world enriches children's opportunities to participate in more social activities. Children also gain social capital when they have more Club Penguin friends since this symbolizes that they are valued members in this virtual world and are accepted by other players. In addition, by playing games, children are able to collect coins, which can be used to purchase clothes and accessories for their penguins as well as furniture for their igloos.

Club Penguin has two types of membership: basic membership, which is free of charge and requires only an email address for registration purposes, and paid membership, which requires a monthly subscription fee of \$7.95 and provides members with additional features and opportunities, including the ability to purchase fancy clothes and accessories for their avatars and to design their igloos more freely using several kinds of furniture (see Appendix B for the comparison of basic and paid members' avatars and

igloos). Paid members can also attend members-only events, go to secret places within the virtual world and adopt up to 75 puffles (the pets of the penguins).

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was undertaken in four phases. In the first phase, as a participant observer, I was in the computer lab of the afterschool program with the participants as the leader of the Club Penguin computer club. I helped the children to log onto the Club Penguin website and helped them when they needed further assistance. I also took field notes about their interactions and videotaped a pair of participants in each session. In the second phase, I employed cyber-ethnography methodology. Each week, before the Club Penguin club sessions, I logged into the Club Penguin virtual world with my own avatar from home and, as a participant observer in the virtual world, visited different places and took field notes and screenshots of the online players' interactions and recent activities. In the third phase, I waited until each participant had gained experience with the basic penguin accounts (after four sessions) and then allowed them to create their paid membership accounts while I asked them questions about Club Penguin and the differences between the basic and paid memberships in one-on-one interviews. These interviews were also videotaped and served as data. I conducted these interviews over the course of three sessions, after which I continued observing and videotaping the children for five additional sessions while they continued to play using their paid membership accounts. In the last phase of data collection, I returned to the afterschool program approximately four months after the end of Club Penguin club to ask the children their opinions about Club Penguin's commercial design. In this phase, I conducted one-on-one interviews with a total of six children, and under my guidance,

these children took a critical stance and offered their reactions to the commercial design of Club Penguin. The children shared their reactions via different digital platforms, including the Club Penguin official blog and YouTube. These final one-on-one meetings were screen recorded and served as data.

The First Phase of the Data Collection

The first phase of the data collection was identical to the data collection phase of previous program cycles. I went to the computer lab associated with the afterschool program approximately 30 minutes before each session was to begin; this allowed me time to prepare the lab before the children arrived. I turned on the computers and opened the Club Penguin website on each computer, and I set up my cameras to videotape a pair of participants. During the initial session, when the participants came into the computer lab, I assigned each participant a pre-created basic (non-paid) penguin account and helped the participants to log into the virtual world.

During the initial session, I recorded each participant's name and assigned penguin account so as to make sure that he or she used the same account during subsequent sessions. During each following session, I checked attendance and created a seating chart indicating where each participant sat; this helped me to see their interactions better in my analysis later. I also took field notes pertinent to participants' online and offline interactions.

In addition, I videotaped a pair of participants who were sitting side-by-side, using three cameras (left-middle-right). The left and right cameras captured the participants' computer screens, while the middle camera, which had a wider-angle, captured both of the screens and the physical interactions between the participants. In

each session, the participants sat at these two computers on a first come, first serve basis. After each session, the three videotaped recordings were synchronized and analyzed by applying MDA filters.

The Second Phase of the Data Collection

The second phase of the data collection consisted of my cyber-ethnographic research in the Club Penguin virtual world. After people began using online spaces for social activities, it became necessary for researchers to study human behavior as it occurred in cyberspaces. Cyber-ethnography or virtual ethnography (both are used to describe the same methodology within the literature) “represents a move to reconceptualise the traditional notion of ‘*the field*’ as adopted by ethnographers and take it to another special level” (Browne, 2011, p. 1). Cyber-ethnographers research virtual cultures and analyze people’s interactions in cyberspaces such as online social networks, websites, blogs, chat-rooms and virtual worlds (Browne, 2011). In the second phase of my data collection, I observed the interactions of the online players in the Club Penguin virtual world.

By employing cyber-ethnography, I rediscovered the Club Penguin virtual world as illustrated by Connelly (2013) in her cyber-ethnographic study of the Barbiegirls virtual world. I visited different places in the Club Penguin virtual world with my avatar and, as a participant observer, documented the events in which and the texts and artifacts through which the children engaged in this virtual world. I focused in particular on the materials the children owned (i.e., penguin outfits, furniture in their igloos), and their social relations with each other in the cyber-space.

The Club Penguin virtual world continuously renews itself and offers children new themes and activities almost each week. Therefore, it was important to know what was going to be offered each week before observing the participants in their afterschool program. Through a cyber-ethnography methodology, I visited the Club Penguin virtual world and observed online players each week while I was at home before observing the children in the afterschool program. By doing this, I was able to look at the field from the children's perspective, try to better understand the children's virtual playground, identify the ongoing activities in the Club Penguin virtual world, and explore the literacy practices that were available to the children. This also enabled me to let my participants know what activities were going to be available to them during a given week and plan my actual observations in the afterschool program accordingly.

The Third Phase of the Data Collection

The third phase of the data collection consisted of one-on-one conversations with the participants while they were creating their own paid membership accounts in sessions five to seven. The conversations took place after the participants had gained some experience with the basic accounts during the first four sessions. I met with each participant in a room in the afterschool program and asked him or her to log onto the virtual world with his or her current basic account. Then, I sat next to the participant and posed my questions while he or she engaged in different activities in Club Penguin. I asked questions about the participants' experiences with sending messages, postcards and friendship requests to other players, their favorite games, their ideal penguin avatars, and the differences between the basic and paid memberships (see Appendix C for the questions).

After asking these questions, I asked the participants to log off of the virtual world and begin creating their own paid membership accounts. During this process, the participants chose the color of their avatars and named them (for ethical reasons, I did not permit the participants to use their own names). After I paid for the accounts, the participants logged onto the virtual world with their new paid memberships. Then, the participants followed the instructions presented to them by an animated penguin character. During this process, the participants went to their igloos and designed them using the available furniture. Then, some participants looked at the catalog to see other furniture that could be purchased with coins (in-game currency). Next, participants went to the pet shop to see what puffles they could adopt. Some of the participants read the puffle cards to learn about the personality, favorite snacks and cool facts about each puffle before they decided which puffle to adopt. After adopting a puffle, they looked at the puffle catalog to buy food, accessories, toys and furniture for their puffles. Finally, they visited the clothing shop and looked at the penguin style catalog to see what penguin clothes they could purchase for their avatars. Since each person who created a paid account was given just 500 coins, the children could not purchase everything they wanted during their initial visits to the pet shop, the clothing shop and their igloos, but this did allow the participants to gain experience with regard to how to design an igloo, adopt a puffle and purchase accessories and clothes for their penguins and puffles.

These one-on-one conversations during the account creation process were videotaped and served as data. This data helped me to understand each participant's experiences within the Club Penguin virtual world based on his or her own expressions. This data also helped me to determine participants' reactions to the differences between

the basic and paid membership features and opportunities in this commercial virtual world and to assess their initial excitement for having a paid membership. After these one-on-one meetings with the participants, I allowed them to continue playing with their paid membership accounts for five to seven more sessions – based on when they got their paid accounts – in the computer lab. These sessions were also videotaped just as those in the first phase of the data collection process were, and they served as data. This permitted me to compare and contrast the children's participation, literacy, and consumerism practices with the paid and non-paid membership accounts, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6, *Navigating the Nexus*.

The Fourth Phase of Data Collection

The fourth phase of data collection consisted of the children's critical literacy practices approximately four months after the end of the Club Penguin club. After the end of Club Penguin club, I stopped paying for the paid memberships and, after a while, all of the accounts expired and turned into basic accounts. Even though the Club Penguin club ended, some of the children continued playing Club Penguin in the afterschool program and in their homes, this time with basic accounts. When the paid accounts turned into basic accounts, the children lost paid member privileges, their status in the virtual world, and most of the virtual goods they collected via long hours spent playing games. At this point, I decided to return to the afterschool program to ask the children what they felt and thought about the commercial implementations of Club Penguin after losing their paid memberships. I was only able to meet with six of the original 14 participants, as some of the children had already left the afterschool program, some were registered to participate in other club activities, and others were absent during the times I visited the afterschool

program. Since the afterschool program was pretty busy with other club activities, there were time and space limitations. Therefore, I met with the children individually and got their reactions regarding the commercial implementations of their new playgrounds.

Under my guidance, the children engaged in critical literacy practices, through which they analyzed the commercial design of Club Penguin, wrote letters to the editor-in-chief of Club Penguin Times newspaper, commented on the official Club Penguin blog posts, and created YouTube videos. The children engaged in all of these critical literacy practices using my laptop, so their entire engagements were screen recorded and served as data, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 7, *Changing the Nexus*.

Ethical Considerations

All of the study participants and their parents willingly signed the assent and consent forms and signed up for this research study. These forms state that the participants are free to leave the study at any time. The participants were also reminded during the initial session of each program cycle that they could leave the study at any time. In addition, the consent forms explained that, in order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms would be used in any descriptions of the children's activities in publications or lectures about the study, and all of the research files, including the video data, would be kept in the research team's computer files in their office at Indiana University.

In the cyber-ethnography phase of the study, since I also logged onto the Club Penguin virtual world with my own avatar and observed the online players' interactions in different places in this virtual world, it became necessary to consider the online

players' confidentiality as well. When I need to mention an online player's activity in this study, my other publications or academic lectures, in order to protect the child's online identity (Marsh, 2013c), I use pseudonyms for the name of the avatar.

In addition, in traditional ethnographic studies in educational settings, ethnographers are observable by the children while the researchers take notes or videotape the children's interactions. However, in cyber-ethnographic studies, the children do not realize that they are being observed or recorded by an ethnographer unless the ethnographer notifies them. In order to address this concern, Gillen (2009) used a "researcher" tag that appeared above her avatar's head while actively observing other avatars in the Schome Park Island of the (Teen) Second Life virtual world. However, in the Club Penguin virtual world, having a tag above an avatar is not possible. Therefore, like Grimes (2010) and Connelly (2013) did in their studies, I only observed the online players and tried not to get in touch with them other than to offer or respond to basic greetings and to answer basic questions asked by other players. However, this does not mean that I was not active in the Club Penguin virtual world. In order to gain an insider perspective, I played different games and earned coins, designed my igloo, adopted puffles, purchased different clothes according to the themes, read the Club Penguin Times newspaper, visited different places and observed the online players.

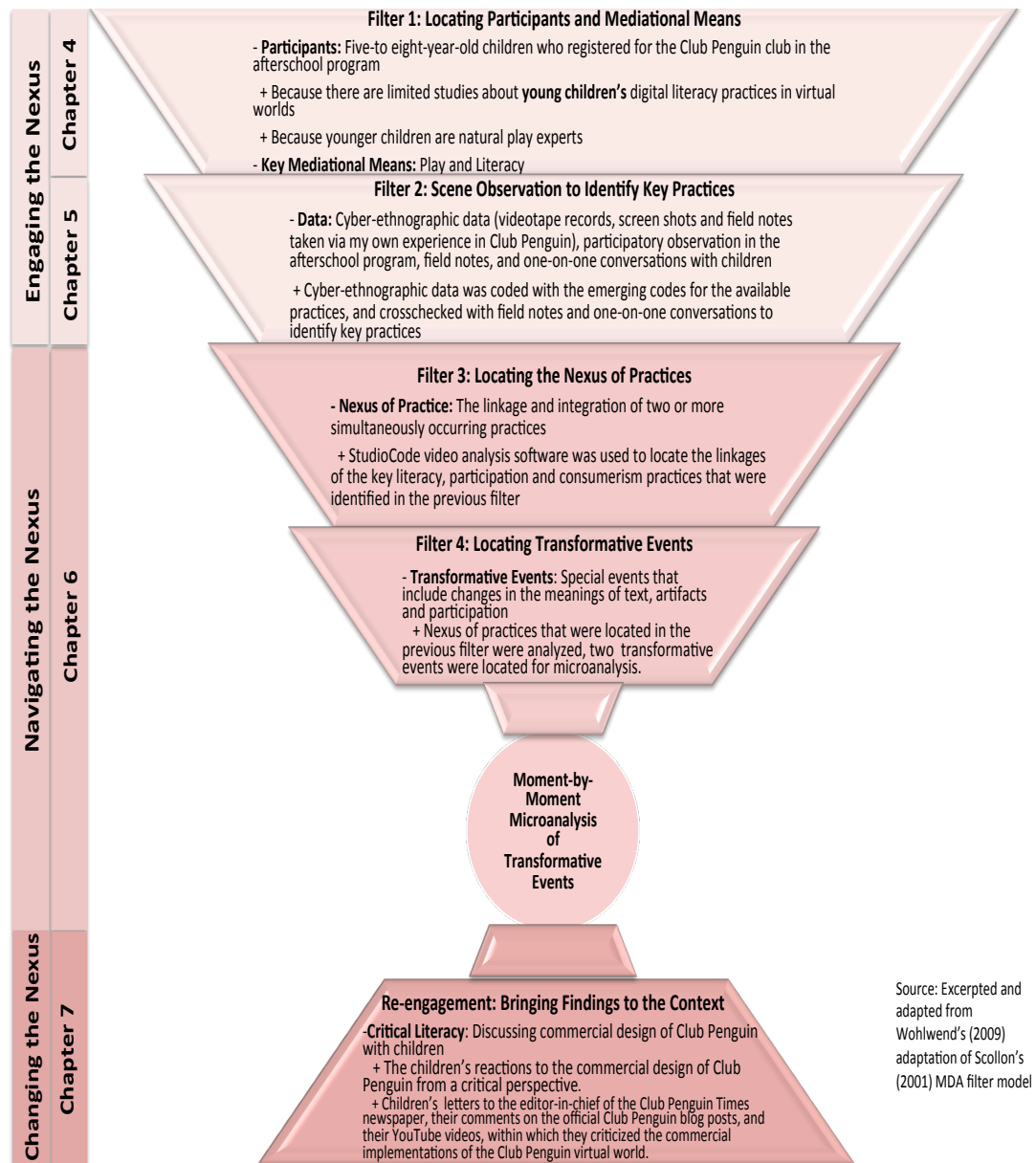
In the critical literacy phase of the study, as is mentioned above, the children created videos to be shared on YouTube. To protect their identities, the children were not allowed to share any identifiable information in the videos. I created a YouTube account just for the purpose of sharing the children's videos, and all of the children used the same account while uploading their videos. Because some of the children probably talked

about their YouTube videos with their friends at school or in the afterschool program, there were some comments under the videos that included the real names of the children. These comments were not made available for response, as they were deleted to protect the identities of the children.

Data Analysis: Nexus Analysis Methodology

In this study, I adopted Scollon and Scollon's (2004) nexus analysis methodology, which consists of three central tasks: engaging the nexus, navigating the nexus, and changing the nexus. In order to organize data collection and data analysis processes, I combined these three central tasks with the MDA filters (Wohlwend, 2009a) and added one more section at the bottom of the model, which is the critical literacy phase of this study, in order to create my own methodology model (see Figure 3.1). In this section, under each nexus analysis task, I will briefly discuss what filters I used in that particular task, and how I organized and analyzed my data. Engaging the nexus (Chapters 4 and 5), navigating the nexus (Chapter 6), and changing the nexus (Chapter 7) tasks will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. The data analysis process started immediately after my first observation in the afterschool program and continued simultaneously with my data collection throughout the study. I analyzed my data by using the MDA filters. Thus, I reached the transformative events on which to conduct a microanalysis, the transformative events in which the children engaged via both paid and basic membership accounts. Then, I compared and contrasted the paid and basic members' participation, literacy and consumerism practices, all of which are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Figure 3.1. Research Design Chart: Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) Filter Model



Engaging the Nexus

Engaging the nexus is the initial task of nexus analysis methodology, and it does not include data analysis. Instead, this task consists of initial steps that serve to ready the researcher for data analysis. With regard to this task, I will discuss the first two filters of

my methodology model, which are locating participants and mediational means, and scene observation to identify key practices.

Filter One: Locating Participants and Mediational Means

As a Turkish Ph.D. student interested in young children's literacy practices, my first intention was to study a topic that has not been studied and might shed light on my career in Turkey. Studying children's digital literacy practices was one possibility that would serve this end. Based on a suggestion from my advisor, I began reading about young children's literacy practices in virtual worlds, and I learned that, today, over 320 million five- to 10-year-old children worldwide use virtual worlds as playgrounds (KZero, 2011a) and engage in literacy as an everyday practice. As I reviewed the literature, I began to realize that the popular culture, media and digital literacy practices of adolescents and young adults have been heavily researched; however, far less attention has been paid to how young children read, write and interact in virtual worlds such as Club Penguin. Therefore, in this study, I decided to examine young children's play, social interactions and literacy practices in virtual worlds, which are "becoming a part of the everyday landscape of play for young children" (Marsh, 2012, p. 15).

Since engaging in virtual world games is still restricted in most schools in the U.S., an afterschool program that allows for greater flexibility with regard to children's engagement in virtual worlds was a good choice for a research setting. As such, I began my study in an afterschool program that offers children different club activities organized around the children's interests. This afterschool program divides the children into three groups (i.e., K-3rd grade, 4th-6th grade, and teens) and offers them club activities

according to their grade levels. Since the existing literature includes very limited studies pertinent to young children's digital literacy practices in virtual worlds, and younger children are the natural play experts, members of the K-3rd grade group who were interested in playing in the Club Penguin virtual world were chosen as the participant group. The participants of this study will be introduced in detail while engaging the nexus in Chapter 4.

In this study, the participants came together in the computer room of an afterschool program, logged onto the Club Penguin virtual world with pre-created penguin accounts, and played collaborative and individual games with their penguin avatars. If they logged on to the same server within the virtual world, they would see each other's avatars on the screen and would be able to have online and offline interactions with the other participants in the computer room. After my initial participant observations in this setting, I identified play and literacy as key mediational means. In Club Penguin, children use play and literacy as tools in the mediated actions in which they engage. To construct online and offline interactions with peers in this virtual play world, children use play as a mediational means. In their social actions in the online and offline settings, children's collaborative play mediates their social actions. Literacy is the other mediational means that the children use in their mediated actions while they interact with the virtual world and their peers. Children have to read the given instructions (e.g., pop-up screen messages, game instructions,) and images and icons on the screen (e.g., menu bars) and they must use them appropriately to be able to engage in activities in Club Penguin. To engage the nexus, as discussed in Chapter 4, I first analyzed the Club Penguin context, its rules and commercial motives; next, I analyzed the afterschool

program context, its rules and norms; and finally, I looked at the Club Penguin club context, which brings these online and offline contexts together. This permitted me to identify the study context within which the children used the mediational means of literacy and play in their actions.

Filter Two: Scene Observation to Identify Key Practices

In order to identify the key practices, I used my cyber-ethnographic research data. By analyzing the screen recordings and research journal notes regarding my own experiences in the Club penguin virtual world, I was able to create a list of practices in which Club Penguin players frequently engaged. I carefully assessed the data and coded the practices with the emerging codes (Merriam, 1998) in order to determine what practices appeared most frequently in the children's Club Penguin engagements.

The member checks during the one-on-one conversations, which I conducted with the participants after they gained experience in the virtual world, also helped me to clarify what practices the children engaged in via this online platform. During these conversations, while the children were playing in the Club Penguin virtual world, I asked them to tell me about their experiences, if they had any, playing with others; sending messages, postcards and friendship requests; and reading the Club Penguin Times newspaper. I also asked about their favorite games, ideal igloos and ideal penguins and puffles. These conversations helped me clarify the key practices so that I could determine whether I was missing or misunderstanding any practices in which the participants were engaging.

In Chapter 5, while engaging the nexus of the Club Penguin virtual world, and based on my own experiences in the virtual world, observations of online players and the member checks with the study participants, I identified several key practices in which children frequently engage while in Club Penguin. I grouped these together under one of three titles: literacy practices, participation practices, and consumerism practices. Through the activities available to them, the children engaged simultaneously in many literacy, participation and consumerism practices. Each key practice identified in this filter in the engaging the nexus task was used as a code in analyzing the actual data in the navigating the nexus task.

Navigating the Nexus

Navigating the nexus is the main task of nexus analysis, which includes locating the nexus of practice and locating transformative events filters and microanalysis of the transformative events. While navigating the nexus, as discussed in Chapter 6, I identified the places children visited in Club Penguin. The basic and paid members were spending time in different places. I also identified what practices the children frequently engaged in while in those places. Finally, I located two transformative events, and analyzed them to examine the paid and basic members' participation, literacy and consumerism practices, and the role Club Penguin's commercial design had on the children's engagements.

Filter Three: Locating the Nexus of Practice

The third filter in the MDA filter model uses the closer analysis to identify the nexus of the key practices. A nexus of practice consists of the linkage and integration of two or more simultaneously occurring practices (Wohlwend, 2009a) such as literacy

practices, participation practices and consumerism practices. In a nexus, each practice influences and is influenced by the other practice(s). In order to determine the nexus of practice, I carefully observed the online and offline interactions among the participants and watched the videotaped recordings with a particular focus on discovering the intersections of key practices by using StudioCode video-data analysis software. Using StudioCode in the analysis of the videos helped me to discover in what video sections the paired children played in the same virtual place, and in what video sections those children engaged in more than one practice at the same time. There were several places where the children had a nexus of practices. Even in very simple activities, such as dressing up an avatar, the children simultaneously engaged in participation, literacy and consumerism practices (see Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion). In the following filter, I located the transformative events that I analyzed in depth within the nexus of practices located in this filter.

Filter Four: Locating Transformative Events for Microanalysis

Transformative events are special events that include changes in the meanings of text, artifacts and participation that affect the participants' cultural capital and social status within their friend groups (Wohlwend, 2009a). In this study, the fourth filter in the MDA filter model identified the key moments within which the transformative events happened in the nexus of the literacy, participation, and consumerism practices. I carefully watched the video sections that include the nexus of key practices identified in the third filter and located two transformative events for microanalysis:

- Ghost puffle reward game of paid member pairs and basic member pairs

- Playing across membership classes: Playing together or showing off?

The first transformative event compared and contrasted the paid member pair's reward game experience with the basic member pair's experience in the ghost puffle reward game and revealed the differences in the literacy, participation, and consumerism practices among the players with these two types of memberships. The ghost puffle reward game was chosen as a transformative event because, after playing this game, based on being awarded or not being awarded, the children's participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture and the quality and quantity of their literacy engagements changed dramatically. The second transformative event analyzed a mixed pair's (i.e., basic member vs. paid member) interactions with each other. Since the experience of playing with someone who had different opportunities – in terms of access to virtual goods and virtual places – caused different interactions between the players and affected their participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture, a child's experience of playing as part of a mixed-status pair was identified as a transformative event.

Microanalysis of Mediated Actions

A careful analysis of my data using the four filters discussed in the previous section clarified the key moments that include the transformative events in the nexus of practices. In this section, I used an action-oriented microanalysis (Scollon, 2001a) of the children's interactions in the transformative events in order to understand how they engaged in different practices to create meanings in their online and offline spaces.

In this microanalysis process, I first transcribed the transformative events video sections that were coded during the fourth filter. These transcripts included both the

verbal and visual interactions. In addition to what the children said, I noted their body movements, gazes, gestures, and handling of materials. Since I was analyzing a pair of children's verbal and visual interactions, and literacy, participation and consumerism practices, I analyzed each interaction (row) using five columns: 1) action and speech of the first player, 2) action and speech of the second player, 3) consumerism practice, 4) participation practice, and 5) literacy practice. The last three columns indicated how these practices were happening at the same time in that particular interaction and created a nexus of practice (see Tables 6.2 and 6.4).

Since I experienced these activities in a similar manner while conducting cyber-ethnography in the Club Penguin virtual world, it helped me understand the Club Penguin players' homologous habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; Scollon, 2001a), which is a shared habitus constructed in the same social conditions by separate individuals (Scollon, 2001a). Being knowledgeable about different activities in the Club Penguin virtual world and the expected methods of participation with regard to those activities according to the homologous habitus of the online players helped me to analyze my participants' practices. In these two transformative events, I compared and contrasted the literacy, participation and consumerism practices in which the basic and paid members engaged, and I explored the role that the commercial interests of the producing company had on the children's engagements in the Club Penguin club.

Changing the Nexus

Changing the nexus is the last task of Nexus Analysis within which findings and understandings are brought back into the context in a re-engagement to make a change in the nexus.

Re-engagement: Bringing Findings to the Context

After all of the filters were processed, transformative events were located, and microanalysis of transformative events was conducted, the effect of consumerism on the children's participation and literacy practices was revealed (see Chapter 6). To bring these findings and understandings into the research context in a re-engagement, I added one more step at the bottom of Wohlwend's (2009a) MDA filter model (see Figure 3.1). This step, Re-engagement: Bringing Findings to the Context, is not an additional filter but an additional stage within which I discussed how the nexus changed in a re-engagement. As is previously described as the fourth phase of data collection in this chapter, four months after the Club Penguin club ended, I revisited the children in the afterschool program to talk about their thoughts regarding the commercial implementations of Club Penguin. Under my guidance, the children took a critical stance, and offered their reactions to the Club Penguin design features via different digital platforms. They wrote letters to the editor-in-chief of the Club Penguin Times newspaper, commented on the official Club Penguin blog posts, and created YouTube videos, within which they criticized the commercial implementations of Club Penguin. All of the children's critical literacy practices were analyzed and are discussed in detail in Chapter 7, *Changing the Nexus*.

Credibility Procedures

In order to increase the trustworthiness of my study, I used several strategies in my data collection and analysis processes. First, I triangulated my data using multiple data collection methods and multiple sources of data to analyze the emerging findings (Denzin, 1978; Merriam, 2009). As mentioned above, I collected my data as a participant observer in the afterschool program, took field notes pertinent to the participants' interactions, and videotaped a pair of children in each session. In the first phase of the data collection, my video recordings and field notes served as the data. In the second phase, I conducted cyber-ethnographic research during which I recorded my experiences in the Club Penguin virtual world by using screen-recording software, and after each session, I recorded my reflections regarding my experiences in a research journal. Both the screen recordings and my research journal also served as data. In the third phase of the data collection, I met with each participant after he or she had gained experience in the Club Penguin virtual world and asked my questions while the participants engaged in different activities in the virtual world. These one-on-one conversations, which were videotaped, as well as the videotaped recordings of the following sessions during which the children continued using their paid membership accounts, also served as data. The children's reactions to the commercial design of Club Penguin, and their critical literacy practices via the various digital platforms, were also screen-recorded and served as data in the last phase of the study. Using multiple methods and multiple data sources in the data collection and data analysis processes offered increased validity in this study, as data from multiple data sources have been collected using different methods to triangulate the findings of the study.

Using the MDA filter model also allowed for greater validity of the study. In each step, while filtering the video data, I cross-checked the findings by using my observation field notes, the participants' views collected in the one-on-one meetings, my cyber-ethnographic study data, and the findings associated with the previously analyzed data. When I reached the key moments through which to analyze the literacy, participation, and consumerism practices experienced by the children, the video data had already been triangulated or cross-checked with other data sources several times as it had gone through each MDA filter.

Adequate engagement in data collection is also an important strategy by which to increase the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Since I have collected data from a total of 50 children (seven to 20 children in each program cycle) in the same setting while they played within the Club Penguin virtual world from Fall 2011 to Spring 2015, I have rich knowledge with regard to the children's online interactions in the virtual space as well as of their offline interactions in the physical space. This rich knowledge helped me to identify the rare and reoccurring practices of the children in my actual study.

CHAPTER 4: Engaging the Nexus: Club Penguin Club in an Afterschool Program

In this dissertation, I adopted Scollon's (2001b) nexus of practice concept while designing the study and analyzing the data. The nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) methodology adopts a *discourse in action* perspective that brings discourse analysis and action research together to critically analyze groups of human practices in a social context. It includes engaging, navigating and changing the nexus tasks, and brings to the foreground the hidden practices that we usually do not recognize within a cluster of practices and accept as expected ways of doing things without actually examining them.

This chapter consists of the first task of the nexus analysis, engaging the nexus of practice, which includes introducing the study contexts, identifying the social actions in which the children engage, and locating the key participants of the study. I will first discuss the Club Penguin context, its rules and commercial motives. Then, I will analyze the afterschool program context, the computer room environment and the rules the children have to follow in the afterschool program. Finally, I will look at the nexus of the Club Penguin club, which brings these online and offline contexts together in this study, to define the study context, locate the key participants, and identify in a very general sense what is happening when children play in a virtual world while sitting side-by-side with their friends in a computer room in an afterschool program, which will be analyzed in detail in a later chapter.

A: Engaging the Nexus: Club Penguin Website

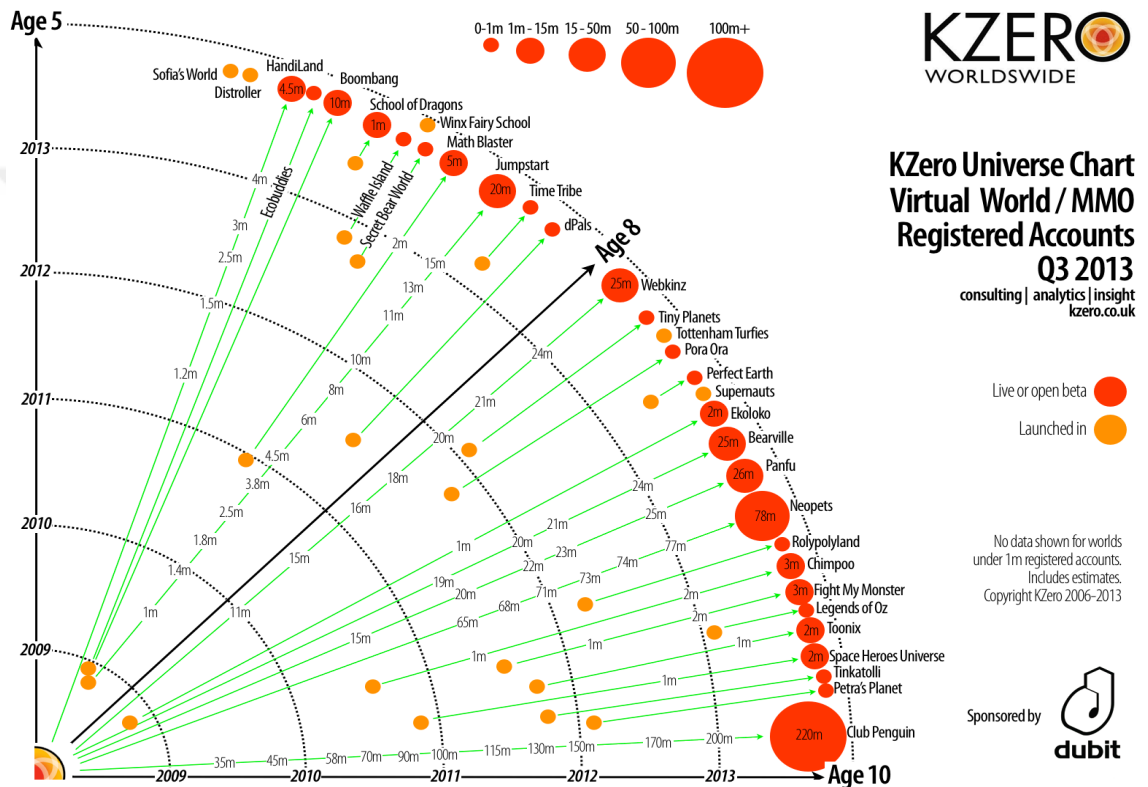
In this section, to engage the nexus of Club Penguin, I will first provide information regarding the history of Club Penguin. Second, I will describe the Club

Penguin virtual world and briefly discuss what is available for children in this new playground. Third, I will describe the home page of the Club Penguin website and what children see on the home page before they actually log into the virtual world, communicate with their friends and start playing games. Finally, I will analyze each page of the Club Penguin website (i.e., Membership page, Blog page, Safety page, Products page, Help page, Global Citizenship page) and discuss the information given to children on these pages.

Brief History of the Club Penguin Virtual World

A Canadian game design company, New Horizons Incorporation, designed Club Penguin as a safe and free-of-advertising two-dimensional virtual world within which children could play different games and have social interactions. After its beta test, Club Penguin was launched on October 24, 2005 (Club Penguin Developer Blog Archive, 2008) with 15,000 accounts; by August 2007, the user population had reached 12 million with 700,000 paid subscribers (Walmsley, 2007). After seeing the success of the Club Penguin virtual world, Disney purchased both New Horizons Incorporation and Club Penguin for approximately \$350 million (Arrington, 2007) in August 2007. Today, Club Penguin has over 220 million registered accounts (See Figure 4.1, KZero, 2013) all over the world, and it is one of the most popular virtual play worlds designed for children.

Figure 4.1. Growing Population of Club Penguin



General Information About the Club Penguin Virtual World

Club Penguin is a two-dimensional winter-set virtual world within which players are represented by penguin avatars. Creating penguin accounts requires parent permission. To be able to create an account, children need to provide their parents' email addresses and wait until their parents' complete the approval process. After the activation of a free or paid membership account is complete, children can go to the Club Penguin website, click on the *play now* icon, and type in their penguin name and password. In the

log in process, Club Penguin asks children to choose a server. There are several servers in the Club Penguin virtual world, and only those players who choose the same server are able to see each other in the virtual world. After logging into Club Penguin, children can see each other, play together, engage in different activities such as private parties, read Club Penguin Times newspaper or Club Penguin adventure books, and shop for their penguins with their online currency. Club Penguin offers children private places in the virtual world – igloos – within which children take care of their pets, throw parties for their friends, and host visitors. In Club Penguin, social interactions among children happen when they chat with one another and send each other emoticons or virtual postcards. Children can travel from place to place within Club Penguin, and they can play several games individually or with others. By playing games and engaging in other activities, children earn coins. They can spend this virtual currency by purchasing clothes and accessories for their penguins or furniture for their igloos.

Club Penguin offers two types of membership: a basic membership, which is free of charge, and a paid membership, which requires monthly a subscription fee (\$7.95) and provides additional features and opportunities such as having more freedom to shop for outfits for penguins and furniture for igloos, adopting several puffles (e.g., penguin pets) in different colors and personalities, and attending members-only events. The differences between the free and paid memberships will be discussed later in this chapter. Before I provide in-depth analysis of my own cyber-ethnographic experience in the Club Penguin virtual world in the next chapter, it makes sense to first analyze the Club Penguin website to better understand what Club Penguin is and what it offers the players.

Description of the Club Penguin Website

To be able to log into the virtual world and play with their friends, children need to visit the Club Penguin website. The homepage of the Club Penguin website includes several icons and links that direct children to different pages within the website. Since each session of my study was just 45 minutes long, instead of looking at different pages about Club Penguin, my study participants in the afterschool program preferred to click on the *play now* icon so that they could begin playing games in the virtual world as soon as they came into the computer room. However, in the interviews and the chats with their friends, the study participants mentioned that, while they were playing Club Penguin at home, they visited other pages in the Club Penguin website, such as the official blog, and learned more about Club Penguin. Therefore, before conducting an in-depth analysis of the virtual world, it would be helpful to draw a clear picture of the Club Penguin website in order to understand what kind of significant information the children might encounter while navigating between the website's different pages.

The home page of the Club Penguin website (see Figure 4.2) includes a menu bar at the top, two images in the middle of the screen that are in rotation and serve as flyers advertising various aspects of the virtual world, and some buttons and links at the bottom of the page.³ The images in rotation introduce Club Penguin and the current theme. Throughout the year, Club Penguin continuously changes its themes, and each theme lasts for two weeks. The home page menu bar and the links at the bottom of the page always remain the same, as they are indifferent to the changing themes, but the images in

³ This website analysis was conducted between September 23rd and November 6th, 2014, and includes specific information about the setting between these days.

rotation and the related buttons change when the theme changes. In the fall, when schools are in session all around the world, the theme that is maintained from September 18th to October 1st is called School & Skate. The menu bar at the top of the page includes the *Disney Club Penguin* logo, which takes us to the home page, and *Membership*, *Blog*, *Safety*, *Parents*, *Products*, *Apps*, and *Help* icons, which are described in Appendix D, and the *Play Now* icon, which takes players into the virtual world. In addition to the menu bar and the images in rotation, there is an *About Membership* button located in the bottom right corner of the images in rotation, two additional buttons that take players or parents to other pages that provide additional information about the current theme or ongoing projects, and quick links and adjustment buttons located at the very bottom of the Club Penguin home page.

Figure 4.2: The Home Page of the Club Penguin Website



The first image in rotation is a general welcome page that includes an overview scene of the Club Penguin virtual world with several igloos and other virtual places in which several penguins and puffles are shown hanging around. At the top of the page, in the middle, the message “Welcome to Club Penguin” is written in a large font. Disney’s copyright logo and a warning in a smaller font, which reads, “Some features require paid membership,” are located at the bottom left of the welcome page picture (see Appendix E). The places and games shown in this image are for both paid and non-paid members, but some other features depicted in the image, such as having access to fancy clothes, decorating igloos with new furniture and adopting puffles in all different colors, require paid membership.

The second image in rotation has to do with the current theme of the Club Penguin virtual world. On the left side of the theme page picture, it is written, “School & Skate Party Sep. 18-Oct. 1,” and just below that, it says, “NEW Skatepark!” In the foreground of the theme page picture, there is a skateboard-riding penguin wearing an orange sports t-shirt and matching helmet and elbow pads. A girl penguin is shown trying to tie her pink elbow pad, and she says to the skateboard-riding penguin, “Hey new dude!” In the background, there is a penguin looking for his homework in his bag, and two other penguins waving to each other. Again, on the bottom left of the page, there is Disney’s copyright logo, but this time there is a different warning message: “Features shown require paid membership.” All of the features shown in this image require paid membership because this image is about the current theme, School & Skate, and it includes several items designed specifically for this theme. In Club Penguin, the new items designed for new themes are available only to paid members, not to basic members.

In the bottom right corner of the welcome page pictures, there is a membership button, *About Membership*, which directs players to the subscription page. Below the welcome page pictures there are two buttons. The left button is aimed at parents, as it prompts them to buy theme-related products for their kids; in this case, the featured products for purchase are Club Penguin-themed skateboards to go along with the current theme, School & Skate. This button directs parents to a Club Penguin products page, which advertises several Club Penguin products that can be ordered online or purchased in-store. The right button directs visitors to a short video clip that serves as a call for children to engage in fund raising activities that will benefit a collaborative project put together by Club Penguin and an international charity, Free the Children. Club Penguin requests that children raise money in their communities for these projects, which aim to build schools in Ecuador, Haiti and India. Through this grant program, Club Penguin matches each donation up to \$5,000, and the goal is to raise \$25,000 in matched donations for a total of \$50,000 to support these school projects. With children's help, Club Penguin raises money throughout the year for several projects aimed at protecting endangered animals and habitats as well as supporting people in need in countries like China, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Kenya, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone; these latter projects result in the building of schools, libraries, playgrounds and community centers, the creation of education programs, and medical help being made available to people in these countries who are in need.⁴

At the very bottom of the page, there are quick links, including *Help*, *Awards*, *Global Citizenship*, *Contact*, *Fun Stuff*, *Company*, *About*, *News*, *Careers* and *Affiliates*;

⁴ The fund raising projects of Club Penguin will be discussed later in this chapter while analyzing *Global Citizenship* page of Club Penguin website.

these links allow users to reach additional information about Club Penguin. There are additional links as well that include *Activate Card*, *Parent Tools*, *Unlock Items* and *Language Select*; these permit users to make adjustments before playing in Club Penguin. When children access the *activate card* or *unlock items* links, they are prompted to use the codes that are purchased online or in-store to activate their paid memberships or unlock items or accessories (i.e., hoodies, hats, costumes) and gain additional coins without playing games. Parents are also able to create parent accounts by using the site's parent tools; through parent accounts, parents can review their children's account histories, review payment information, change account passwords, choose different chatting modes for their children, and set up days and times that their children can play in Club Penguin. It is also possible to choose the language of the website by accessing the *language select* link located at the bottom right of the opening page. Club Penguin content is offered in four languages, including Spanish, French, Portuguese and English. Since Club Penguin has members from all over the world, it is important to offer site content in different languages. This is especially important for young children who speak no languages other than their native languages in order to understand the given instructions and to meaningfully participate in the Club Penguin peer culture. Even though the site content is offered in four different languages, there are children who are waiting for Club Penguin to be offered in their native languages. For instance, I encountered Turkish children chatting in Club Penguin blogs, saying that Club Penguin would soon be offered in Turkish language. These children assumed that Disney is getting ready to add Turkish to the Club Penguin language selections because, in the last couple of months, Disney has advertised Club Penguin several times per day on Disney

Channel Turkey in Turkish. Turkish children interpret these advertisements as an action to collect subscribers from Turkey, and they assume that when Disney reaches a high enough number of Club Penguin subscribers in Turkey, Club Penguin will be offered in Turkish language.

Page Analysis of the Club Penguin Website

Images in Rotation

I will start analyzing the Club Penguin website by discussing the images in rotation since these are the first thing that I noticed when I opened the home page. Then, I will look at the menu bar icons one by one and analyze the pages to which those icons lead. On these images, the first thing that caught my attention was the emphasis on the word “new” and that a paid membership was required to reach the “new.” The first image welcomes everyone without any restrictions. The picture includes the very basic overview of the Club Penguin virtual world with penguins and puffles, their igloos, and the different places they visit. However, the second image speaks only to the paid members. It is emphasized at the bottom of the image that, “Features shown [on this page] require paid membership.” The word “new” is used twice on the image. The first use of the word is to announce the new skatepark in the current theme, and “new” is written in all capital letters. The second time “new” is used, one penguin is using the word to describe the new penguin style in this theme; one penguin says, “Hey new dude” to the skateboard-riding penguin. Based on my three years of experience as an inside researcher who has played Club Penguin and observed online and offline children who play Club Penguin, I know that staying up to date is a valued within the Club Penguin

community. For instance, the igloos decorated with the new themed furniture receive a lot of likes from other players, and the penguins dressed up with the new themed costumes and accessories receive compliments from friends. The second image in rotation on the home page emphasizes the importance of “new” in Club Penguin, but the “new” is available only for paid members. Having new themes, clothes, accessories and furniture every two weeks is a very exciting feature for children who play Club Penguin, but this feature is offered only to paid members, which is emphasized at the bottom of the second image.

In addition to the images in rotation, the home page of Club Penguin website includes several links and menu bar icons, including a *Global Citizenship* link and *Membership, Blog, Safety, Parents, Products, Apps, and Help* icons, which direct users to different pages of the Club Penguin website. In the following section, the pages to which these links and menu bar icons lead will be analyzed in depth (see Appendix D).

Membership Page

The membership icon takes site users to the membership page, which helps children and parents to understand the distinction between the paid and non-paid membership by sharing detailed information about the additional features and opportunities that are offered only to paid members. This page is also used to make payments to subscribe to the virtual world or to purchase gift certificates for children. Club Penguin offers three different options to subscribe via paid membership. The one-month subscription option is \$7.95, the six-months option is \$39.95, and the 12-months option is \$59.95. In the membership page, Disney also offers gifts to paid Club Penguin

members; for example, during the month of September 2014, the gift options included Disney Infinity characters or play sets. These game characters and play sets, however, can only be used to unlock characters and game settings in Disney's Infinity video game. By providing these gifts to Club Penguin players, Disney is actually promoting their newest video game, Disney Infinity. Of course, to be able to play with this gift, children need to either download the game from the Disney website or from the App Store or Windows Store to their computers or mobile devices, or they can purchase a Disney Infinity video game to play via their game consoles (i.e., Xbox 360, PlayStation, or Nintendo Wii). Disney claims that one of the most important features of Club Penguin is that it is an ad-free play environment for children, but by providing Disney Infinity characters and play sets through the Club Penguin website as a gift, Disney is actually advertising its new game. Because of its high number of users and the users' age group, the Club Penguin website is really the most ideal place for Disney to advertise its new video game.

On the Club Penguin membership page, the benefits of a paid membership are explained in depth under five headings: personalize a penguin, new experiences weekly, collect pet puffles, create unlimited igloos, and club penguin app exclusives. It is easy to see the difference between the free and paid memberships by looking at the pictures that depict the features and opportunities associated with a paid membership such as the dressed up penguins, their experiences in the new themes, the various types of puffles, and the igloos designed with new themed furniture. The paid members are described as the ones who follow the latest fashion trends, discover the new experiences every week, and creatively design and personalize their igloos and pet puffles, as well as the ones

whose igloos are most visited by others and who receive likes for their unique igloo designs.

In addition to listing the benefits of a paid membership, on the membership page, Club Penguin shares information about what paid members can do in the existing theme. With regard to the School & Skate theme, for example, paid members can shop for skate gear and outfits, buy new igloos and do tricks in the new skatepark. With all of this information shared on the membership page, Club Penguin is not only promoting the benefits of a paid membership, and creating desire among non-paid members for paid memberships, but it is also effectively creating two classes of players within the virtual world based on the economic status. Both paid and non-paid members can see, on this page, that there are two different groups of members in this virtual world: the basic members, who are of a lower socio-economic virtual status and who face several disadvantages of being from the lower class, and the paid members, who are of a higher socio-economic virtual status and benefit from all the different game features that are offered to them in exchange for their monthly payments.

Blog Page

Club Penguin Blog is used as an active platform through which Club Penguin makes announcements regarding several different topics and receives feedback from real players. Club Penguin values children's opinions and makes design decisions according to children's feedback. For instance, on July 29th, 2014, the site asked its members what costumes they wanted to wear for Halloween, and based on the hundreds of comments children made, a Dragon costume was chosen as the most preferred costume and was

added to the October 2014 issue of the Penguin Style catalog. By giving the children this opportunity to provide feedback, Club Penguin is including children in the design process, which improves the children's sense of belonging. Of course, this can also be seen as a marketing strategy. By directly asking the Club Penguin players who follow the blog posts for their input, the site designers are able to learn what real players consider the most desired features and items, and they are then able to make design decisions according to the players' opinions.

Paid membership is not only promoted in the common areas, but it is also heavily promoted in some featured articles in the in-game newspaper and the Club Penguin developer blog (Grimes, 2010). For instance, the penguin of the week (POTW) posts on the blog serve as to promote paid membership. POTW is announced on the blog every Thursday or Friday. Children nominate their friends and provide reasons as to why they think their friends should be the POTW, and one of the nominees is chosen by the moderators and announced on the blog. The winner receives 10,000 coins and a POTW background as reward. When I looked at the POTWs of last several months, I realized that all of the POTWs were paid members. I also noticed that, in the POTW announcements, the moderators directly or indirectly referred to the paid membership status of the POTWs. As is seen below, in some of the POTW announcements, it is directly mentioned that the reason why these particular penguins were chosen as POTWs is because of their valued actions such as playing with others, helping other penguins, shopping for their penguins or igloos, and adopting puffles:

[POTW (September 19, 2014)] has been a super active player for a couple of years now. She's sooo busy when she's online, she's rarely seen just sitting around doing nothing. If she's not in the Pet Shop adopting a new puffle, she's

playing games with her pals, helping new players around the island or checking out the latest Penguin Style catalogue in the Clothes Shop. She's a dedicated fan, a great buddy and a super stylish penguin about town! That's why she's the Penguin of the Week! :)

[POTW (October 2, 2014)] This kind penguin is always thinking of others and is a great buddy to many players. She's also a keen igloo designer and has created some very popular icy homes in her time on the island! Why not go check out her frosty abode some time?

In some other POTW announcements, it is mentioned that certain penguins were chosen as POTWs because they were actively working against bullying or were super helpful with regard to their friends, etc., but nothing related to their paid member status was mentioned. However, when I looked closely at the winners' profiles, I noticed that all of the POTWs were wearing fancy outfits, had perfectly designed igloos or several puffles in different colors, and this is all visible in the pictures shared on the blog. When I read the POTW announcements as a non-paid account holder, I got the feeling that, to be chosen as a POTW, rewarded with 10,000 coins and a POTW background, and announced on this blog, one would have to have a paid membership because all of the POTWs are paid members, and most of the valued actions that they have done, such as shopping for penguins, designing igloos with new furniture, adopting puffles in different colors, are the additional opportunities that are offered only to paid members.

Safety Page

The safety icon on the menu bar takes us to the Club Penguin safety page, where there is information regarding how Club Penguin prioritizes online safety for children. On this page, Club Penguin shares safety tips for children and parents, and announces that the children who take the eight-item safety quiz and answer all of the questions correctly will be awarded with the online safety sweater. It is always good to introduce

tips to children about how to be safe in online platforms, and it is also important to share information with parents about how Club Penguin deals with safety issues since online safety has become one of the biggest concerns among parents (Ofcom, 2011). Sharing detailed information about the safety precautions of Club Penguin on this page might be helpful in alleviating parents' concern or worry. Club Penguin's safety mechanisms are not limited to the ones mentioned on the safety page. Club Penguin also features live moderators who observe children's online interactions, safe servers with different chatting options, chat restriction features, a peer monitoring and peer reporting feature, and a blocking peer access feature (Grimes, 2010).

Parents Page

The parents page on the Club Penguin website serves as a place where parents can locate a collection of information from the other pages of the Club Penguin website. This page includes information for parents regarding the parent tools aimed at managing children's accounts, the history of Club Penguin, the safety awards that Club Penguin has received, the Club Penguin shopping links for children, etc. After welcoming parents and introducing them to the parent tools, which are used to manage children's accounts, the first thing Club Penguin shares with parents has to do with how to shop for Club Penguin merchandise for children on the Club Penguin or third-party company websites. This is indicative of Disney's priorities. Parents will then see information about what children can do in Club Penguin, and the next bit of information parents will see has to do with the additional features and opportunities to which children will have access if they have paid memberships. This message is aimed directly at the parents.

Products Page

Club Penguin products page introduces different Club Penguin merchandise, and it directs children or parents to different company websites so that they can shop. This page lets children or parents select the country in which they live (provided they live in one of 10 countries, including USA, UK, Argentina, Germany, Brazil, Canada, France, Mexico, Portugal, and Spain). Each country has a different set of featured products available for purchase, and each features a different list of retailers where users may shop. This page also shows that, with its millions of members from all around the world, Club Penguin is a part of children's popular culture, and not just a game anymore. With its multitude of products introduced on this page, including clothes, accessories, magazines, books, toys, phone cases, laptop sleeves and comforter sets, it is clear that Club Penguin has become a part of children's daily lives. In addition, some of these products, such as Club Penguin toys and books, come with codes that permit the recipients to activate in-game benefits. Children are able to go to the products page and unlock rare items by using the codes that come with Club Penguin toys and books (Grimes, 2010).

Apps Page

The apps page was one of the study participants' most frequently used pages. The participants stated in their interviews and in chats with friends that they enjoyed playing Club Penguin on their mobile devices at home. Downloading the Club Penguin apps to their or their family members' mobile devices lets children continue to play Club Penguin anytime, anywhere without being tethered to their computers. On the apps page, three

Club Penguin applications are introduced, the Club Penguin app, the Sled Racer app, and the Puffle Wild app. The Club Penguin app is available for both Apple and Android mobile devices through Apple's App Store and Google Play, respectively, but the other two applications are presently only available to Apple users. The Club Penguin app functions just like the Club Penguin virtual world does, and it also has two membership types and requires a monthly subscription fee (\$7.95/month) in order for players to benefit from the paid membership features and opportunities. The benefits of a paid membership are mentioned one more time on this page just as they are on the Membership and Parents pages of the Club Penguin website. However, The Sled Racer app is free to download and play, and it requires no subscription or monthly payment.

The Puffle Wild app is a match-3 game, which is very similar to *Candy Crush*, another popular mobile game that requires the player to line up rows of multiple, similar objects. Puffle Wild is not currently present in the Club Penguin virtual world. Children unlock different puffles (i.e., raccoon, rabbit, deer, and unicorns in different colors) by completing levels in Puffle Wild, and they can take these puffles back to the virtual world if they use the same penguin accounts both for the mobile application and the virtual world they access via their computers. As in the virtual world, there are many additional opportunities offered to the paid members in the mobile application. If the non-paid members want to benefit from these opportunities, they will either have to get a paid membership or make in-app purchases that will permit them – on a one-time basis – to unlock certain levels of the game.

Using the same account in both the virtual world and the mobile applications brought about a different level to children's interactions. Using different devices (i.e.,

computers, tablets, phones) and virtual spaces (i.e., the virtual world and the mobile application games) with the same account let children apply their application-based progress to their virtual world accounts. Children can collect several coins by playing Sled Racing, for instance, and they can use the coins in their virtual world accounts, or they can unlock different puffles that are available only via Puffle Wild and take them back to their backyard in the Club Penguin virtual world. This feature itself gives a different status to those players, who have paid membership accounts and use both the mobile applications and the virtual world to play Club Penguin.

Help Page

Club Penguin's help page includes several question and answers about the virtual world and the mobile applications, and it features an embedded tweets section for Club Penguin tweets. Children can find answers to their questions on this page and follow the social media updates about Club Penguin. On the help page, the questions are categorized based on which ones are the most viewed or which topics are most popular, as this makes it easier to find answers to common questions. Even though the question having to do with updating billing information and payment methods is far down on the list of most viewed questions, it is second on the list of popular topics, right after a question about how to change a password. I periodically checked the popular topics section and realized that the questions there change according to the current theme. There were always new questions about the new theme, but the billing and payment methods question always remained there in the popular topics list. This gave me the feel that this question remained on the list of popular topics due to the priorities of this commercially designed virtual world.

Global Citizenship Page

The global citizenship page includes detailed information about the projects that Club Penguin supports. These projects are carried out throughout the world, and this page provides information with regard to how children can actively participate in these projects. Club Penguin members are identified as global citizens and are encouraged to participate in these charity activities that aim to benefit people in need in different countries as well as endangered animals all around the world. Their slogan, “Change the world, together” is very convenient for their global citizen identity. To encourage children to fund raise on behalf of these support projects, Club Penguin has a Matching Grant Program that matches the donations children raise up to \$5,000.

On my initial visit to the Global Citizenship page, I was so excited to see all of these projects that present Club Penguin members with opportunities to help people in different countries. Then, I remembered that Club Penguin is a commercial virtual world that was established to make money. On one hand, Club Penguin is doing a great job by encouraging children to take action to support people in need in different countries and to protect endangered animals and their environments all around the world. Through these projects, children become aware of the global issues people in different countries face such as issues regarding the economy, safety, education, health and the natural environment. It is understood from the comments the children leave in the official Club Penguin blog that the children are very happy to be members of the Club Penguin community because of Club Penguin’s global support projects that help people in need throughout the world. Even though some of the children cannot raise money for these projects, they mention in their comments that they still support Club Penguin in heart and

wish good luck to the Club Penguin team in its efforts to reach its fund raising goals. On the other hand, Club Penguin makes millions of dollars per year by selling monthly subscriptions and other Club Penguin merchandise, and does not need children's fund raising efforts to support projects. Given Disney's commercial identity and that of its Club Penguin virtual world, I am left to wonder what the real purpose is behind including children in these fund raising projects.

Children make donations not only in the real world but also in the virtual world. Each year, in late December, via the Coins for Change project, Club Penguin invites children to donate their coins, virtual currency in the Club Penguin virtual world, to decide how Club Penguin's \$1,000,000 donation will be split (among three primary support categories, including Build Safe Places, Provide Medical Help and Protect the Earth). Each year, children donate millions of coins they have earned through hours of game play in the Club Penguin virtual world. Of course, giving their coins away in the virtual world is a good opportunity for children to practice sharing their goods with other people in need, and children seem happy to take part in this charity activity perhaps because they know that they are actively participating in the decision-making process as it pertains to splitting up \$1,000,000 so that it can go to Club Penguin's support projects. Again, though, why it is necessary for Club Penguin to have children donate their coins to decide how a \$1,000,000 donation will be split? If the purpose is to include children in the decision-making process, then it would seem just as reasonable to ask the children to vote on these support categories in the virtual world. After they donate their coins, the children have to continue playing games in the Club Penguin virtual world in order to earn back their economic power and save their socio-economic status in the virtual world.

Getting back their economic power may take months for some children depending on the amount of coins they donated to the Coins for Change project. This may be another commercially motivated strategy on the part of Club Penguin; by asking children to donate their coins, they are ensuring that two things occur: the children will feel a stronger sense of belonging with regard to the Club Penguin community, and the children will continue to play games in this virtual world so that they may earn back coins and thus their virtual economic or social status.

In addition to providing information about the support projects, the global citizenship page includes information about a bullying prevention program called “It starts with you,” which is run by Club Penguin and its charity partner Free the Children. Club Penguin and Free the Children organize speaking tours at U.S. schools that include multimedia presentations, interactive student workshops, and action-planning sessions to help young children tackle bullying-related issues in their local and online communities. This program is free, and the only thing school management needs to do to take part in this program is make an appointment with the Club Penguin team.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Club Penguin is a commercially designed website that promotes paid memberships again and again in different places throughout the website. The welcome page, which features images associated with the site’s new themes, is the first place where one will encounter the promotion of paid memberships. Further, the limits associated with a free membership and the benefits associated with a paid membership are emphasized numerous times on various site pages, including the parent page, the

membership page and the apps page. On the site's developer blog, the penguins of the week are chosen exclusively from among paid members, and shopping for penguins and igloos, being stylish, having a perfectly designed igloo, and adopting more puffles in different colors are among the reasons why certain penguins are chosen as the penguins of the week. Announcing these paid members' actions as the only valuable actions and sharing the profile pictures of the winner penguins is a good way to promote paid memberships.

In addition to the promotion of paid membership, the site promotes other Club Penguin merchandise. Through the products page, parents are directed to different online and offline stores to purchase Club Penguin items for their children. The site also serves to promote non-Club Penguin Disney products. There is no third-party advertisement on this website, but that does not mean that the site is free of advertisements, as Disney sometimes promotes its own products such as Disney Infinity. Considering the high number of site users and their ages, the Club Penguin website is a good place for Disney to promote or advertise its products, especially by offering new products as gifts in exchange for paid memberships.

Even the placement of the questions in the help page serves Club Penguin's commercial purposes. One can always see "How do I change my billing information or payment method?" listed under the popular topics on this page, despite the fact that this question is far down on the list of most viewed questions. Again, this made me feel as though keeping this question on the popular topics list is related to the priorities of this commercial virtual world.

It is also possible to take note of Club Penguin's commercial priorities via the mobile applications. Even though the Slide Race app does not require a paid membership, the other two applications, the Club Penguin app and the Puffle Wild app, provide additional features and opportunities only to paid members, the same way it is done in the virtual world. We also see Club Penguin offer in-app purchases for the first time with the Puffle Wild app that was launched in late 2014. With this new payment method, the non-paid members can make one-time payments that will allow them to benefit from the same additional features and opportunities generally only associated with paid memberships; for example, users can pay to unlock certain levels of the game that will allow them to access new puffles that they can adopt after completing given tasks. Playing Club Penguin in both the mobile apps and the virtual world as a paid member lets children adopt unique pets that give the children a certain social status in the virtual world. This mobile application design is intentional, as it causes children to desire paid memberships or to at least make in-app purchases that will permit them to temporarily access and benefit from some of the same features or opportunities usually reserved for paid members.

In addition, the calls for making donations in both the real world and the virtual world, which are announced on the global citizenship page, are questionable because of Club Penguin's commercial identity. While donating their coins in the virtual world is a good experience for children, as it allows them to participate in charity-related activities, one has to wonder whether there is something else behind this call to donate given the commerciality of this virtual world. For example, donating their coins might increase children's feelings of belonging in the virtual world, and this will also likely encourage

them to continue playing Club Penguin so that they can earn back their virtual money and save their socioeconomic status in the virtual world. As such, the Coins for Change project might be a commercial strategy employed by Club Penguin to keep its players in the virtual world. In addition, with regard to the real-world donations, Club Penguin makes millions of dollars per year and does not need the money that comes from children in order to make meaningful donations to people in need in other countries. In sum, as is seen in this analysis, almost every single page of the Club Penguin website includes something that serves its commercial purposes. Because of the commercial design of Club Penguin, the children who play in this virtual world are, in one way or another, engaging in consumerism practices.

B: Engaging the Nexus: Afterschool Program

In this section, to engage the nexus of the afterschool program, I will describe the context of the afterschool program through which I conducted this research. First, I will give general information about the afterschool program and how the K-3rd grade children spend a typical day. Then, I will describe the computer room within which my participants play Club Penguin, and I will discuss the rules that the children in the afterschool program have to follow and how these rules are similar to the Club Penguin rules as well as the unwritten norms of this online peer culture.

General Information About the Afterschool Program

The afterschool program through which I conducted this research is located in a small campus town in the Midwestern United States. The afterschool program serves

primarily children coming from working- and middle-class families. On a regular day in the program, children do their homework, read books, use computers, and play in the game room or the gym under the guidance of the program staff and the volunteers. The aim of the afterschool program is to raise caring, productive and responsible citizens. The mission statement associated with the afterschool program reads, “To empower all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as caring, productive and responsible citizens.” There are posters on the walls of almost every room in the facility about being a caring, productive and responsible citizen in the afterschool program.

In addition to the regular club activities, the afterschool program offers children several special club activities that are centered on children’s interests; these might include dance clubs, computer clubs or music clubs. The children in this afterschool program are divided in three groups based on their grades: K-3rd grade, 4th-6th grade, and teens. Each group is allowed to participate different club activities based on the appropriateness of the activity in relation to their grades. These club activities are usually the results of research projects of university faculty members, and faculty member volunteers, graduate students and college students, with the help of the afterschool program staff, generally lead the activities. The Club Penguin club is one of the computer club projects that are offered to K-3rd grade students in this afterschool program. I have led this project for last four years, each year with new participants who are willing to participate in this study and who have signed up with their parents’ permissions.

A Typical Day with K-3rd Grade Students in the Afterschool Program

The afterschool program runs Monday through Friday from 3:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The program starts with the project time from 3:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m., and it continues with homeroom from 4:15 p.m. to 5:05 p.m., program-I from 5:05 p.m. to 5:50 p.m., program-II from 5:50 p.m. to 6:35 p.m., and finally, the wrap-up time from 6:35 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The children start arriving from their respective schools at around 3:30 p.m., and continue arriving until 4:15 p.m. As such, there are only a few students during the project time, and there is no planned activity for this time period. During this time, some children do their homework, some read books with their buddies or the college student volunteers, and others play in the gym or the game room. The rest of the time in the afterschool program is accounted for, and there is a plan for each age group that has been put together by the program management. Each day, the schedule is shared on a board in the game room (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Afterschool Program Tuesday Schedule

Project Time 3:30-4:15	Teens		
	K-3rd Grade	4-6th Grade	Special Programs
Homeroom 4:15-5:05	Girls Art Room Boys Library	Girls Computer Lab Boys Gym	Club Penguin
Program I 5:05-5:50	Art Room Flag Football K-3	Computer Lab Games Room	Choir Violin
Program II 5:50-6:35	Games Room Computer Lab	Art Room Gym	
6:35-7:00			

During homeroom time, children go to their assignment rooms, and they do their homework or work on other school-related projects. For instance, on Tuesdays, as seen in the picture below, K-3rd grade girls go to the art room and K-3rd grade boys go to the library to do their homework from 4:15 p.m. to 5:05 p.m., which is homeroom time. Following homeroom time, there are two program times that are 45 minutes each. With the announcement of the program switch at 5:05 p.m., the children leave their homerooms and go to the other places within the facility that have been reserved for their respective groups. Again, on Tuesdays, the K-3rd grade children either go to the art room and engage in art activities with the guidance of the afterschool program staff and other volunteers, or they go the gym to participate in the Flag Football activity. When the second program starts with the program switch announcement at 5:50 p.m., the children again leave the rooms they are in and go to the room where their second program is scheduled. The K-3rd grade children go to either the games room and play tabletop games (e.g., billiards, foosball) and board games, or go to the computer lab to practice typing or to engage in other computer-related activities on Tuesdays. After the second program time, it is wrap-up time that, and this involves cleaning up the facility where the afterschool program is held with the help of children who volunteer. However, just a few of the children stay in the afterschool program until 7:00 p.m. and participate in all of these activities. The children leave the program whenever their parents or caregivers come to pick them up. Since each group, however, has a different schedule for each day, and since the order of the rooms to which the children go changes every day, the children get the chance to participate in the different activities that are happening in different rooms.

There are some special program activities that happen in the afterschool program at the same time as the regular activities. The children who are already signed up for a special program activity (e.g., violin, choir, hip-hop dance, and Club Penguin) are allowed to participate in those activities instead of the regularly scheduled activities. For instance, my study participants did not go to the art room or the gym like the other K-3rd grade students at 5:05 p.m. on Tuesdays; instead, they went to the computer room to participate in the Club Penguin club.

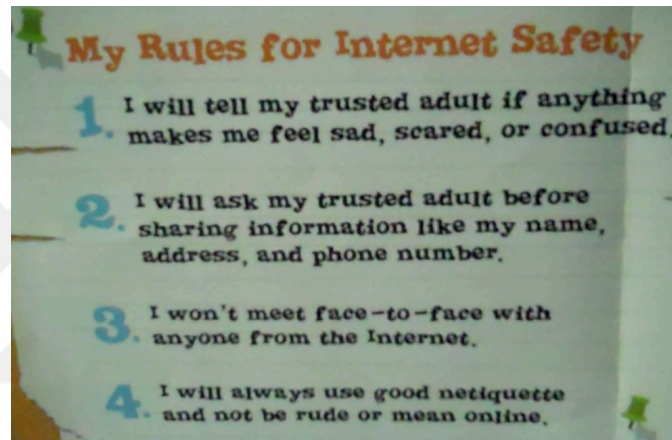
Computer Room Environment and the Rules Children Have to Follow

Since I conducted this research in the computer room in the afterschool program, I would like to describe the general computer room environment as well as the safety instructions and the computer room rules that the children have to follow. The computer room had 16 computers. Since the room was reserved for the Club Penguin club for the program-I time on Tuesdays, there were no other children in the room during our club sessions. There is a large table in the middle of the room that children usually use for drawing pictures or doing homework, but during our club sessions, it remained empty since the children were engaging with the computers. There are also several boards (e.g., member of the month board) and posters (e.g., safety instructions, computer room rules) hanging on the computer room walls.

Not surprisingly, children's Internet safety has become a primary concern for both parents and educators, and it is also of concern to the afterschool program management. The Internet safety poster (see the Figure 4.4) that hangs on the wall of the computer room encourages children to share anything that makes them feel sad or confused with

trusted adults, such as the program staff, and it warns about not sharing personal information, not personally meeting with the people they met online, and not being mean to other online people. There are always at least two program members present in the computer room to observe children's online interactions and help them when they struggle.

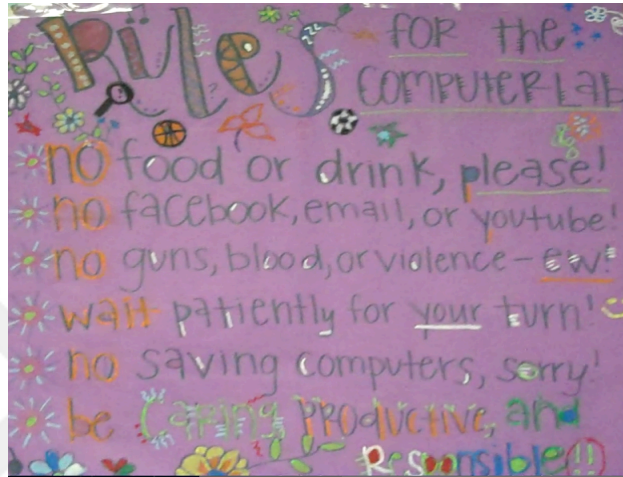
Figure 4.4: Afterschool Program Internet Safety Rules



In addition to the safety rules, there are computer room rules (see Figure 4.5) that the children have to follow. In the computer room, the children are not allowed to eat or drink when they are using computers. Further, they are not allowed to check their personal emails or online social network accounts, and they are not permitted to watch videos on YouTube. They are also prohibited from visiting any websites that depicts or otherwise involve violence. If the room is full when the children arrive, then they have to wait patiently for their turns to use the computers. In my study, while my participants played Club Penguin, they were required to follow the online safety rules and the computer room rules. They were not to engage in violence or to visit any of their personal accounts, and they were not allowed to eat or drink while using the computers. They were

allowed, however, to play collaboratively with their friends in the Club Penguin virtual world.

Figure 4.5: Afterschool Program Computer Room Rules



The last of the computer room rules encourages the children to be caring, productive and responsible; this mirrors the mission statement that is associated with the afterschool program. It is important to know what this means in order to examine the similarities between the afterschool program rules and the Club Penguin virtual world rules. The code of conduct associated with the afterschool program hangs on the wall of the computer room, and it provides information about what is meant by, “be caring, productive and responsible” (see Appendix F). Being caring refers to being respectful of other people and club property, using kind words and calm voices, helping each other and asking for help from each other. Being productive refers to participating in club activities and learning from activities without preventing others from learning, listening to the program staff members when they are speaking, not arguing about the game rules, and resolving conflicts calmly. Finally, being responsible refers to keeping the club and the club members safe, cleaning up the materials used in the club, using the club rooms and

bathrooms in an appropriate manner, and agreeing on game rules before playing. In another poster hanging on the game room wall, the afterschool program code of conduct was summarized as being caring, being safe, being respectful, being responsible, and being productive (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Afterschool Program Code of Conduct Poster



There are several similarities between the rules of the afterschool program and the rules associated with Club Penguin virtual world. As mentioned previously on the Club Penguin website safety page, there are online safety tips for kids that include three sets of rules: Be Cool, Be Heard, and Be Safe. Being cool refers to being respectful to other online players, using kind words and not being offensive to other online players. Being heard means talking to someone trusted about the things that make children feel uncomfortable in the online platform. Finally, being safe refers to not sharing personal information with other online players, keeping players' name and address information top secret, and sharing passwords only with parents. These rules are very similar to those that

are a part of the afterschool program (i.e., the being caring rules and the online safety instructions).

In addition to these written Club Penguin rules, there are several unwritten norms associated with this virtual world peer culture, and my long-term observations of the world have made it clear to me that the children adhere to these norms while in the virtual world. These unwritten norms are directly related to the afterschool program code of conduct, and they include things like being responsible and being productive. The Club Penguin players are aware of their responsibilities and of what is expected from them in this virtual world peer culture. They know how to keep themselves safe in the virtual world and how to friend or block other online players. They know that the Club Penguin team prohibits them from annoying other players, and if they see someone breaking the rules, they know to let the moderators know by clicking on the M icon on their player cards. Even if Club Penguin is not asking children to be productive, the intentional design of the virtual world, which involves decorating igloos, choosing outfits for avatars, and making music in a studio to play in the igloos, enables children to be more productive and to be different from other players.

C: Engaging the Nexus: Club Penguin Club

Club Penguin Club brings the online and the offline spaces together, the spaces within which the children interact with each other and engage in several social practices. To engage the nexus in the Club Penguin club, in this section of the chapter, I will first describe a typical Club Penguin club session and explain what was found in the earlier

program cycles, and discuss the participants' social interactions (i.e., participation practices, literacy practices) and the rules that have naturally emerged from within this peer culture. Then, I will identify the key participants and the focal pairs that joined most of the Club Penguin club sessions and actively engaged in this peer culture. The focal pairs' interactions will be analyzed in detail within the next three chapters, while I discuss navigating the nexus and changing the nexus.

The Club Penguin club is a new playground for children within which the children who have interests related to the content of Club Penguin willingly get together, play together, and learn from each other. Among the five- to eight-year-old children in the afterschool program, the ones interested in the Club Penguin virtual world willingly signed on to the Club Penguin club, and they got together in the computer lab during the afterschool program. Then, these children met with other players who have interests related to Club Penguin in the online space, and they engaged in activities with them as well.

The Club Penguin club brings the children from different expertise levels together, and it offers them a chance to learn from each other by engaging in activities with the more and less experienced participants. In this peer culture, the children used mediating devices (e.g., computers and Club Penguin virtual world) while engaging in the context and with the other players. The children used "distributed knowledge," which is "knowledge that exists in other people, material on the site... or in mediating devices," (Gee, 2004, p. 86) by playing with their pairs or with other players in small groups in the Club Penguin club. These children used "dispersed knowledge," which is "knowledge that is not actually at the site itself, but at other sites or in other spaces," (p. 86) by

looking at official Club Penguin blog or other fan sites to learn additional information about Club Penguin. They also used “intensive knowledge,” which is “specialized knowledge in one or more areas,” (p. 86) by focusing on specific events or games, becoming experts and helping out other players with regard to an event or game. And they used “extensive knowledge,” which is “broader, less specialized knowledge about many aspects of the space” (p. 86) that is shared with other players who use the same space, by hanging around the virtual world, playing together and teaching each other about different events and games in Club Penguin. Club Penguin also enables “tacit knowledge,” which is “knowledge players have built up in practice” (p. 86) in time. This knowledge includes learning how to play a certain game, how to decorate igloos, how to dress up penguins, etc., which the children learned by being in the virtual world and interacting with other players and the mediating devices in the Club Penguin club.

A Typical Club Penguin Club Session

As mentioned previously in this chapter, in a typical Club Penguin club session, the children who signed up for this study came to the computer room with the program switch announcement for a 45-minute Club Penguin club session. For each session, I was present in the computer room about half an hour in advance of the session start time, as this permitted me time to set up my cameras to record a pair of children’s online and offline interactions. The children sat at the computers being recorded on a first come, first serve basis, and the rest of the children sat at the other computers. Each child worked independently to command his or her avatar using his or her computer, but since the

children were able to see one another in the room and were able to see others' avatars on the screen, they played games together and helped each other.

The first thing that the children asked each other after they sat at their computers was what server they were choosing. Club Penguin offers several servers from which children can choose. Choosing different servers does not change the context with regard to what the children see on screen. However, players can only see other players who are in the same servers as they are. If children wanted to see each other on screen and play games together, then they chose the same server, and this became an important and a valued participation practice in the computer room. Going to the same server, reading the server name out loud to other players, scanning the server list, and choosing the server by using a mouse and/or keyboard were the literacy practices the children engaged in the Club Penguin club.

Another important practice in which the children engaged involved sitting in pairs or in small groups to play games together. The children who established good relationships in time usually sat in pairs or in small groups to talk about where to go and what to play in the Club Penguin virtual world. Sitting in pairs or in small groups was also a key participation practice in the afterschool program since it allowed children to participate in collaborative plays and help each other when someone struggled. While sitting in pairs or in small groups, children frequently read and discussed the given instructions together, and helped each other understand what they supposed to do in order to complete a particular task. Therefore, reading-in-pairs and discussing the instructions will be considered key literacy practices in the Club Penguin club.

Being an expert player and sharing knowledge with friends in the computer room was also a key participation practice that the study participants valued. Some of the participants had been playing Club Penguin for several years, and they were more experienced than the other participants in the computer room. The newcomers sometimes had a hard time understanding how to play a game or complete a task in the Club Penguin virtual world, and these children asked their questions out loud to other players. In the Club penguin club, the more experienced players left their games in order to assist struggling players and to explain what needed to be done within the context of the game. These expert players who were open to collaborative work and helping others complete tasks earned status in this peer culture. Therefore, sharing expertise with other players will be added to the list of Club Penguin club key participation practices.

The key participation practices (see Table 4.1) that were identified based on study participants' interactions include choosing the same server in order to see each other and play together on screen; sitting in pairs or in small groups to participate in collaborative play, help each other and ask questions of each other; and walking over to other players in order to share one's expertise with others. All of these key participation practices can also be considered unwritten peer culture rules since the children expected each other to engage in these practices as members of this computer club.

The key literacy practices (see Table 4.1) that were identified based on study participant interactions include *reading out loud* the server names, *scanning* the server list for a particular server, *using a mouse and/or keyboard* to choose a server, *reading in pairs* and *discussing* the given instructions. The participation and literacy practices are not limited to the practices that were identified here based on my observations and field

notes. While playing in the Club Penguin virtual world, the children engaged in many participation and literacy practices that can only be identified by analyzing the video records of children's online game plays. The key participation and literacy practices that were identified here will constitute the initial coding scheme for the analysis of the video data that will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Table 4.1: Club Penguin Club: Key Participation and Literacy Practices

Club Penguin Club: Key Participation and Literacy Practices		
	Key Participation Practices	Key Literacy Practices
Choosing a Club Penguin server	Choosing the same server and seeing each other's' avatars on screen	<i>Reading out loud</i> the server name <i>Scanning</i> the server list <i>Using mouse and/or keyboard</i> to choose a server
Sitting in pairs	- Sitting in pairs or in small groups - Participating in collaborative plays with other group members - Asking questions to partners - Getting help from partners	<i>Reading-in-pairs</i> <i>Discussing</i> the given instructions with partners
Sharing expertise	Sharing expertise with other players by walking over to other players and answering their questions	

In addition to participation and literacy practices, children engaged in consumerism practices in Club Penguin. Even though, consumerism practices were not so clearly observed in the children's general interactions in the Club Penguin club peer culture, they were present, as study participants complained about the commercial design of Club Penguin and the differences in opportunities offered to basic and paid members. The children's participation, literacy, and consumerism practices will become more visible when the video records of focal pairs are analyzed in detail in the following chapters.

Five Program Cycles of the Club Penguin Club

Since September 2011, five Club Penguin club cycles have been conducted in the same afterschool program, and data has been collected from a total of 34 five- to eight-year-old children. The first four program cycles, Fall 2011, Spring 2013, Fall 2013 and Spring 2014, were considered part of the pilot study, and they served to give the researcher rich information about the online and offline settings and children's routine interactions. The details of the dissertation study were based on the experience the researcher gained in the pilot study.

In the first program cycle, in Fall 2011, there were eight study participants in the Club Penguin club, and the data was gathered over the course of six sessions. In this program cycle, the analysis focused especially on peer mediation and online connection. With the analysis of video data, the key reading, writing, and play practices in which the children engaged were identified. It was also revealed that, while the online players gained status with their wealth, the study participants playing in the afterschool program gained status by helping out the struggling players; their helpfulness in the physical space balanced their lack of wealth in the online space.

In the second program cycle, in Spring 2013, there were nine study participants, including one participant who continued from the previous cycle. The data was collected over the course of eight sessions. The third program cycle included only six participants and lasted six sessions in Fall 2013. The data from these two cycles were analyzed together. The analysis revealed that playing with basic accounts limited the children's interactions in the online space; they were able to play some games in Club Penguin without any restrictions, but they were not able to dress up their avatars, decorate their igloos or adopt the puffles they wanted. The study participants were also willing to

become friends with the online players, but they were not successful in their friending efforts simply because of the way their avatars looked. These program cycles revealed the participants' demands for paid memberships; paid memberships were desired because of the several privileges offered to paid members in terms of access to virtual goods. The children who were experienced Club Penguin players were especially inclined to ask whether or not they would be offered paid member accounts. Therefore, in the following program cycle, the study was redesigned and the children were offered paid accounts.

In the fourth program cycle, in Spring 2014, it was announced in the afterschool program that the Club Penguin club would offer paid member accounts during that program cycle. A total of 17 participants, including four continuing participants, signed up for this program cycle, and we had to put some children on a waiting list since there were not enough computers in the computer lab. The program cycle lasted nine sessions. After children played with basic accounts for four or five weeks, they were offered paid accounts with which they could continue to play until the end of the program cycle. The data analysis revealed that the children engaged in many different practices in the Club Penguin club during this program cycle. They made more friends, dressed up their avatars, decorated their igloos, adopted several puffles, etc. They were continuously discovering different things in the online context and sharing their knowledge with other friends in the Club Penguin club. The fifth or last program cycle, which was conducted during Fall 2014, was considered the main study, and its data has been analyzed and discussed in this dissertation.

Key Participants and Focal Pairs in the Last Program Cycle

The fifth program cycle included 20 consented children, but six of these consented children never showed up to the Club Penguin club sessions. There could have been any number of reasons behind their nonattendance. Because of the heavy schedule associated with the afterschool program, after we collected the consent forms from the parents, we decided to change the Club Penguin club meeting day from Monday to Thursday, and this change may have caused some of the participants' nonattendance, as not all of the children go to the afterschool program every weekday. The children who signed up for the Club Penguin club thinking that it was going to be offered on Mondays may have not been going to the afterschool program on Thursdays, or they may have already signed up for another special program that met on Thursdays and decided to continue with that program instead of the Club Penguin club. Therefore, the Club Penguin club had 14 active participants in the Fall 2014 program cycle.

Some of the study participants were siblings, natural play couples, who sat and played together in the computer room. Usually, the older sibling helped his or her younger sibling to understand the game settings and the virtual world peer culture. There were three pairs of siblings in the study: Jack and Joe, Rick and Aaron, and Ben and Dianna (names are replaced with pseudonyms). Jack, an eight-year-old experienced player was always helping his 6-year-old brother Joe to understand the basic practices associated with the Club Penguin virtual world, the rules of the games, and its commercial design. In the interview conducted with Jack and Joe, they told me that they continued playing Club Penguin at home in their spare time. Other sibling play partners, Rick and Aaron, were inexperienced players when they first came to the Club Penguin

club. Rick was eight years old, and his brother Aaron was six years old. They always sat side-by-side, shared their discoveries with each other, and guided each other to the same virtual places so that they could play games together. The third sibling play partners were Ben and Diana. Seven-year-old Ben was more experienced than his six-year-old sister Diana. Diana was a very curious player, and asked her brother, who sat next to her in the computer room, so many questions. Ben often answered Diana's questions and helped her figure out the games, but sometimes he just ignored her questions and continued to play his own game. To play games together, Ben would guide his younger sister to certain places, read the instructions aloud, and explain to his sister what needed to be done to complete the game tasks.

Some other study participants had met for the first time in the Club Penguin club, and they sat next to each other, played games together, asked each other questions, shared the tricks they had learned with each other, and became good friends after a couple of sessions. Eric and Nick, for instance, met in the Spring 2014 program cycle when they both were seven years old; they became good friends and play partners, and their friendship continued into the following program cycle in Fall 2014. Both of these players were inexperienced when they first came to the Club Penguin club. They played games, and discovered the game setting together. After a while, both of them became expert players and helped other players in the computer room when someone struggled. Nick also played Club Penguin at home, so he was able to make progress in some games, collect virtual goods, and share his experience with his play partner Eric. Nick also visited the official Club Penguin blog to learn about what was happening in the Club Penguin virtual world and what was going to be offered to children in the upcoming

themes. Eric's parents allowed him to play Club Penguin only on the weekends, and he also became very good at certain games (e.g., Puffle Lunch and Cart Surfer), and he shared the tricks he discovered with his play partner Rick when they came together in the Club Penguin club.

William and Scott were another pair of players. These eight-year-old boys met in the last program cycle of the Club Penguin club and became play partners. They sat next to each other and played games together when both of them were present during the Club Penguin club sessions. If one of the partners was absent, the other one found another play partner willing to play games together (usually this was either Eric or Nick since these two players were open to collaborative play with anyone in the computer room). Scott was an experienced player who joined the Club Penguin club for eight sessions in Spring 2013. Even though William had never played Club Penguin before, he had a good background with similar virtual worlds and learned Club Penguin pretty fast. These two boys became a good pair and helped each other while playing games together.

The other study participants usually sat wherever there was available seating, and they were able to play individually or to join other play pairs as a third player. For instance, Isabel was an eight-year-old girl who was only able to participate in five of the 12 Club Penguin club sessions, and she usually preferred to sit in a corner of the computer room and play individual games in the Club Penguin virtual world. Sean was another player who preferred to play Club Penguin games on his own. He was a six-year-old boy, and it was his first time playing Club Penguin. He rarely asked questions of other players, as he spent most of his time discovering the virtual world and its games on his own. He was so excited while playing games, and he was so busy learning the game

setting, so he did not take the opportunity to interact anyone else; rather, he played on his own in a corner of the computer room.

Steve was another eight-year-old boy, and he was only able to participate in six of the Club Penguin club sessions during the last program cycle. He was an inexperienced player, and since he could not be a part of many sessions, he needed more help to understand the Club Penguin virtual world. Eric was Steve's friend from school, and he always welcomed Steve into their play group as a third player and guided him to certain places to play games together. Oliver was another eight-year-old inexperienced player in the Club Penguin club. Like Steve, he could also only participate in six sessions, and he usually played individual games when he was present in the computer room. He rarely joined Eric and Nick as a third player.

Since the study participants sat at the video recorded computers on a first come, first served basis, the video data do not include all of the above mentioned study participants, but it does include most of them. As discussed in this chapter, the study participants in the Club Penguin club peer culture engaged in several participation, literacy and consumerism practices in both the online and offline settings. These practices will be analyzed in detail in the video records of the study participants' interactions in the following chapters, which discuss navigating the nexus.

CHAPTER 5: Engaging the Nexus: The Club Penguin Virtual World

The contexts of the Club Penguin website and the afterschool program have been analyzed in detail, and the rules that the children have to follow in these online and offline contexts were discussed in the previous chapter. Before navigating the nexus in the following chapter, within which I will analyze the interactions of my study participants who played in Club Penguin with basic (non-paid) and paid accounts, and discuss their interactions in the Club Penguin club, it is important to continue engaging the nexus by identifying the key practices—highly valued practices in which the participants frequently engaged—among the literacy, participation and consumerism practices in which the Club Penguin virtual world players engage. Therefore, this chapter will analyze the online players' interactions to determine what available literacy, participation and consumerism practices exist within the virtual world, and then identify the key practices in which the players engaged while in the Club Penguin virtual world; this will be done by considering what practices the Club Penguin club players in the previous program cycles valued most. To engage the nexus in this chapter, I will first examine the practices in which the online players engaged while within the Club Penguin virtual world, so the analyses of my cyber-ethnographic data will bring to the foreground the possible participation, literacy and consumerism practices in which the online players engaged while playing in the Club Penguin virtual world. Next, I will crosscheck them with my observations and field notes pertinent to the Club Penguin club members' interactions in the previous program cycles and the children's answers to my questions about their frequent practices, which were asked and answered during our one-on-one conversations.

Identifying the Participation, Literacy and Consumerism Practices in the Club Penguin Virtual World

In order to better understand the Club Penguin virtual world and identify the practices in which online players engaged, I employed cyber-ethnography methodology. Cyber-ethnography is a methodology that is adopted by researchers aiming to analyze people's social interactions in cyberspaces such as online social networks, fan sites and virtual worlds (Browne, 2011). Each week, before observing my study participants in the afterschool program, I logged into the Club Penguin virtual world with my own avatar at home, and I visited different places in the virtual world and observed the online players' interactions with each other.

In traditional ethnographic studies, study participants are able to see the researchers while the researchers taking notes and video/audio recordings. However, in cyber-ethnographic studies, the online players are unable to recognize the researchers, and it is difficult to notify every single online player that a researcher is observing him or her in a given moment. In order to address this concern, I decided not to get in touch with the online players other than to extend or respond to basic greetings, just as Grimes (2010) and Connelly (2013) did in their studies that took place in virtual worlds. However, this does not mean that I was a passive observer in the Club Penguin virtual world. In order to adopt the gaze of a young player and identify a young player's key practices, I travelled around the virtual world, visited several places, played games so as to collect coins, shopped for outfits and accessories for my avatar, purchased furniture and designed my igloo, adopted a puffle, took care of my puffle, and played games with my puffle. Initially, I encountered the restrictions that come with being a basic member,

so I got a paid membership, which allowed me to experience the benefits of having economic and social power while playing games and designing my avatar and igloo.

Even though, as an adult player and researcher, I was aware that it was not possible to fully understand what children see in this virtual world or how they feel while playing with their peers, it was still important to adopt the gaze of a young child in order to better understand the Club Penguin virtual world's peer culture. Being more knowledgeable about the social norms and everyday practices in the Club Penguin virtual world helped me to analyze my video data that I collected from my study participants in the afterschool program. First, I analyzed the screen recordings, screen shots and the field notes that I took through my cyber-ethnographic research in the Club Penguin virtual world, and I identified the practices in which the online players engaged. In this dissertation, the term "key practices" denotes the significant practices in which children frequently engage as members of their online and local peer cultures. The key practices are significant because they signify that the individual engaged in these practices is an insider member of these local and online peer cultures. Only those who are insiders with regard to these local and online peer cultures may know these practices and how to engage in them in a valued way amidst these online and local platforms. In the following paragraphs, I will share my own experience with the Club Penguin virtual world and discuss how the online players' practices are identified and grouped via subtitles.

The Initial Visit to Club Penguin and Identified Key Practices

Creating a Club Penguin Account

Although I have observed the young children's interactions in Club Penguin over the last four years, I had never experienced the process of creating a new account before creating my own account for my cyber-ethnographic research in the Club Penguin virtual world (this is because the accounts that I had used in this study were created by the previous co-investigators of this project). To create my account, I went to the Club Penguin website and clicked on the "create a penguin" icon and completed five easy steps that enabled me to create my own Club Penguin account. First, I chose the color black; second, I named my penguin Bgc Pengman; third, I created a password; next, I entered my email address in the space that asks for a player's parent's email address; and finally, I accepted the Club Penguin terms of use by simply clicking on the checkmark box and clicking the "next" icon. I had created my basic account, and I was ready to play after I clicked on the activation link that was sent to me via email. In contrast to other virtual play worlds, such as Barbiegirls (Connelly, 2013) and Magi-Nation (Grimes, 2010), which offer children a plethora of options pertinent to creating their avatars, the only customization available in this initial step in Club Penguin had to do with the color of the penguin.

Creating an account in Club Penguin requires that a child seek his or her parent's permission. The children who create a Club Penguin account are instructed to enter their parents' email addresses in the email address box and ask their parents to activate their accounts through the link that is sent to their email addresses. However, we do not know how many Club Penguin players actually provide their parents' email addresses instead

of their own, or how many players ask their parents to activate their Club Penguin accounts. Through my observations in the afterschool program over last four years, I have encountered some children who wanted to create their own penguin accounts instead of using the ones that I offered to them. None of those children wanted to use their parents' email addresses because it would take longer to then have to ask their parents to click on the activation links that were sent to them than it would to just use their own email addresses and click on their own Club Penguin activation links. I did not let my study participants create their own Club Penguin accounts without first asking for their parents' permission, but it is difficult to say how the children who play Club Penguin in their homes created their virtual world accounts. Grimes (2010) discusses this issue in her research on children's virtual play worlds, and she mentions that today's children easily find ways to work around the kind of design barriers that are created to restrict children's access to virtual worlds.

Getting Oriented to Club Penguin

After creating my account, I logged into the virtual world with my own avatar, and a tour guide, an animated penguin avatar, welcomed me with his puffle and introduced me to the virtual world. The introduction was given via word bubbles and on-screen animations; for example, as the tour guide provided information about a given icon, that icon would flash, and when the tour guide offered information about a place on the map, flashing arrows would point to that place. All of these animations and the language used in the introduction to the Club Penguin virtual world are part of the design of the Club Penguin interface, which includes icons with pictures to make it easier for younger children with limited literacy ability to understand the icon functions so that they

can more easily play in this virtual world. Because it uses pictured icons in the interface and introduced the virtual world via an animated avatar that uses special animations and simple language, Club Penguin resembles other popular virtual worlds such as Webkinz (except that Webkinz provides audio directions in its introduction) (Black, 2010).

The first thing the tour guide told me was that I would play games to earn coins, and then I could use those coins in Club Penguin to purchase items including clothes, furniture and pets. Then, the tour guide showed me the map icon that I would use to guide my avatar different around the virtual world. Finally, of course, the tour guide made sure that I was familiar with “the three important places” in the virtual world: the clothes shop, the pet shop, and my igloo that directs me to the furniture shop. The commercial identity of the Club Penguin virtual world was apparent as soon as the tour guide shared his first words with me, which, as stated above, let me know that Club Penguin was the place where I would play games *to earn coins*, and where I would spend these coins *to buy stuff*. I was further reminded of Club Penguin’s commercial identity when the tour guide informed me that the most important places within the virtual world were the virtual shops where children could purchase items their penguins, pets or igloos.

In my initial visits to the shopping places, I was awarded with different items, such as a t-shirt for my avatar, a hat for my pet, and a dining table for my igloo. I decided not to use those items because everyone with an account owned those items, and there was nothing particularly fancy about them. In the Club Penguin peer culture, using old or common items to dress a penguin or decorate one’s igloo is not valued. One of the most valued practices that serves to indicate that a player is an expert and that gives him or her a social status within the Club Penguin peer culture is being up to date, which is only

possible for the paid members who frequently check the penguin style catalog or the furniture catalog in order to purchase new items, such as new clothes or furniture that corresponds to the current Club Penguin theme, for their penguins and igloos.

Dressing up Penguins

My first stop in Club Penguin was the clothes shop. Again, the tour guide popped-up, and showed me the “penguin style catalog” and let me know that there is a new catalog available each month that features new styles. I looked through the catalog, and I realized that there were only a few very basic items that I could buy as a basic member, but there were a lot of cool clothes and accessories available to paid members. At the time, I did not want to buy anything because I only had the 500 coins that were given to everyone with a new account. Even if I had played games and collected more coins, I could not buy the items I wanted as a basic member. As was also the case in the Barbiegirls virtual world (Connelly, 2013), even the free membership holders collect virtual currency (i.e., coins in Club Penguin) by playing games, but they have very limited options when it comes to spending their virtual money. Paid members, on the other hand, can spend their coins however they choose. As such, I decided to save my money so that I could spend it later, after I upgraded to a paid membership.

It is important to learn to manage one’s budget in this virtual world, and this is well known by the insider players who have considerable experience with Club Penguin. There are so many items in the catalogs that children can buy and, if the children aren’t careful, they will quickly spend all of their money. Once players spend all of their money on unnecessary items, they will be unable to purchase additional items they desire, such

as an igloo designed for the new theme (~2000 coins/each) or a dog or cat puffle (800 coins/each), without first having to spend hours playing games in order to collect coins. Therefore, it is wise, in this virtual world, to save money so that it can be spent later on something a player truly needs or loves.

Adopting Puffles and Shopping for Puffles

My second stop in Club Penguin was at the pet shop. With the help of the tour guide, I found the pet shop, and the tour guide informed me with regard to how to go about adopting a puffle. There were total of 14 different types of puffles in the pet shop, 10 puffles all in different colors, a cat puffle, a dog puffle, a rainbow puffle, and a gold puffle. The paid members could adopt any one of these puffles, but the basic members, like me, were only allowed to adopt a blue puffle or a red puffle. Even though, I was not allowed to adopt other puffles, I read each puffle's card so that I could learn more about their personalities, favorite snacks, and cool facts that make them different from the other puffles. In order to adopt one of those 10 puffles in different colors, a player had to pay 400 coins. The cat and the dog puffles were 800 coins each. To adopt the rainbow or the gold puffle, the players did not need to pay in coins, but they did have to complete some tasks in the virtual world. There was also a puffle handbook in the pet shop that provided information regarding how to take care of puffles, how to walk around the virtual world and play games with puffles, how to feed puffles, information about the favorite games of each puffle, etc. There was also a puffle catalog in the pet shop, which was just like the penguin style catalog in the clothes shop. The puffle catalog included puffle food that any player, regardless of membership type, could purchase, and there were also puffle clothes, accessories, toys and furniture; only paid members could purchase these non-

food items. I decided not to adopt a puffie or purchase any puffie food until after I got my paid membership.

Decorating Igloos

Finally, I found my igloo, my very own place in this virtual world. The tour guide congratulated me and told me that I could decorate my igloo with furniture any time I wanted. I clicked on the “edit” icon so that I could decorate my igloo, but then I realized that because I was not a paid member, my igloo was locked, which meant that no one could visit except for my friends. Had I been a paid member, anyone could have come to see my igloo. I had no friends, and was not planning to make any because of the ethical considerations of this study. Therefore, no one would see my decorated igloo until after I upgraded to a paid membership; still, I wanted to decorate my igloo for myself. I checked the available furniture items that were given to new accountholders. I had a few very basic items: a brown chair and sofa, a wall clock, two flowerpots, and a doormat. I checked the furniture catalog to see if I could purchase any furniture as a basic member. Unfortunately, there was no furniture for basic members in the catalog. However, there were so many items, including both furniture and igloos, available to paid members. Some igloos for sale matched the current theme; for example, one was a huge classroom igloo that corresponded to the school and skate theme. I went back to my igloo and saw that there was a music icon; I clicked the icon and there was a list of sound tracks that could be played in the igloo. It was so nice to know that, if I ever had any visitors to my igloo, they could listen to the music that I chose to play in my igloo. I clicked on one of the sound tracks, and a pop-up screen message warned me that this feature was reserved for the paid members only. The paid members could play one of the sound tracks in their

igloos, or they could create their own music in the Sound Studio, which is a music and dance place in the Club Penguin virtual world, and save that sound track to play in their igloos. As a basic member, I was not allowed to play any music in my igloo. I abandoned the idea of music, and set about decorating my igloo with the basic furniture that was available to everyone with a new account. The basic furniture did not make my igloo look especially nice, but that was all right since no one could see my igloo until after I become a paid member.

Discovering Different Opportunities Offered to Paid and Basic Members

In this initial visit, as a basic member, I was confronted with so many restrictions. I was already aware of some of these limitations, but I did not know about some of the others. I knew that I would not be permitted to buy fancy clothes and accessories from the penguin style catalog for my avatar because those are reserved for the paid members (see Table 5.1 and Appendix G). I also knew that I would not be allowed to adopt just any puffle that I wanted, as non-paid members could purchase only red or blue puffles. Further, even if I purchased a puffle, I would not be able to purchase any clothes, toys, or furniture for it; the only thing I would be permitted to purchase from the puffle catalog was pet food. Something I did not know upon creating my account, however, was that no one except friends could visit my igloo. I had also not been previously aware of the fact that only paid members were permitted to choose sound tracks for their igloos.

Table 5.1: Differences Between Paid and Basic Memberships

	Paid Members	Basic Members
Access to Virtual Places and Games	• Have unlimited access to the virtual places and games	• Have limited access to the theme-related virtual places and games • Have limited access to the upper levels of some games
Dressing up Penguins	• Can personalize penguins by dressing them up with new outfits and accessories they purchase in the virtual world with coins (virtual currency) and the rare and exclusive items they have collected by completing game-related tasks	• Can earn coins by playing games but cannot purchase anything they want by with their coins. They can only shop for very limited and basic outfits • Can dress up their penguins with very basic outfits collected in the game such as the safety sweater that everyone can earn by completing the safety quiz
Adopting Puffles & Shopping for Puffles	• Can adopt up to 75 puffles out of 14 different kinds • Can purchase accessories, toys, furniture and food for their puffles with their coins	• Can adopt only two puffles out of two different kinds (i.e., a blue one or a red one) • Can only purchase food for their puffles
Decorating Igloos & Inviting Other Players	• Can decorate igloos with the new furniture they purchase with coins • Can purchase theme-related igloo designs, such as Ice Palace, which was offered through the Club Penguin Frozen Party theme in August, 2014 • Can purchase backyards for their igloos with different views such as forest, beach, mountain, age of dinosaurs, distant planet, soccer pitch, and under the sea • Can play soundtracks in igloos, or record their own music in Sound Studio and play it in their igloos • Can invite everyone to their igloos to show off their unique igloo designs and receive “likes”	• To decorate their simple igloos, basic members can use very basic furniture that is offered to everyone who creates an account, but they cannot shop for furniture • Cannot have theme-related igloos • Cannot have different views in their igloo backyards; rather, they can only have the default view • Cannot play soundtracks in their igloos • Can invite only the players from their friend lists to their igloos
Access to Mobile Applications	• Have unlimited access to the Club Penguin app, the Sled Racing app and the Puffle Wild app • Can take the goods (i.e., coins and the new puffle creatures) they gathered in the apps to the virtual world	• Have unlimited access to the Sled Racing app, and limited access to Club Penguin app and Puffle Wild app just like in the virtual world • Can unlock some levels to benefit from paid membership opportunities by making in-app purchases in the Puffle Wild app • Can take the coins they gathered in the Sled Racing app to the virtual world

Identifying Available Practices in the Initial Visit

The practices I encountered in Club Penguin are categorized via three subtitles: literacy practices, participation practices, and consumerism practices (see Table 5.2). The practices in which the children engaged by reading and writing multiple modes of text (e.g., written text, images, icons, postures, gestures, and voices) in the meaning-making process in the Club Penguin virtual world are considered literacy practices. The practices in which the children engaged in order to collaboratively play with other players and to become members of this online peer culture are considered participation practices. Finally, the practices in which the children engaged in order to gain social status (e.g., purchasing items, displaying virtual goods after considering their commercial value and thus ability to help the player achieve social status in this online peer culture) are considered consumerism practices. Because all of these practices occurred at the same time, they created a nexus of practices in children's engagements in Club Penguin, which might be better understood with an example. Let's look at children's frequent practice of decorating igloos with new furniture. Decorating igloos is considered a participation practice since it helps children to participate in this online peer culture, helps them to make more friends and become insider members of this online community. However, this practice requires the children to purchase furniture through the furniture catalog in order to keep their decor up to date, and purchasing items in order to achieve or maintain social status is considered a consumerism practice. Further, while purchasing items and decorating igloos, children have to read the given instructions and the texts in the catalogs, including the written texts and images and icons, and they have to use the appropriate images and icons to decorate their igloos, and all of these practices are

considered literacy practices. As such, it is clear that all three types of practices happened at the same time while the children engaged in a frequent practice in the Club Penguin virtual world.

My initial visit to Club Penguin allowed me to identify a few practices. First, I had to read and understand the instructions given by the tour guide. I was introduced to the icons and images that I would need to know how to use to be able to play in this virtual world. I read the icons and images, and I learned for what purposes I needed to use them. I also read the puffles cards and the puffle handbook, and I looked through the penguin style catalog, the puffle catalog, and the furniture catalog to learn about the features of the items offered, to learn to whom those items were offered, and to learn how much I would need to pay in order to procure the items. In addition, I read the pop-up screen messages that reminded me of my limitations as a basic account holder. Since all of these practices related to literacy, I collected these practices under literacy practices subtitle.

Decorating an igloo with furniture; listening to the sound tracks to decide which one to play for visitors; adopting a puffle and feeding him, hanging around the virtual world with him and playing different games with him; and choosing outfits and accessories for the avatar are the other possible practices that I identified as practices in which children could engage while in this virtual world. All of these practices were related to children's participation in this virtual world peer culture. Therefore, these practices collected under the participation practices subtitle.

While engaging in literacy practices and participation practices, because of the intentional design of this commercial virtual world, children must also engage in consumerism practices. As a basic member, I had very limited access to for-sale items for my avatar and igloo, and I was reminded several times that if I had a paid membership, I could purchase several items for my penguin, my puffle and my igloo by using the coins that I gathered from the games I played. The practices above were identified via my initial visit to the Club Penguin virtual world with my own avatar, and additional practices will be added as I analyze my follow-up visits to Club Penguin in the following paragraphs.

Learning to Participate in Club Penguin: Frequent Events and Identified Practices

Site Navigation

After creating my account and visiting the “three important places,” which include the clothes shop, the puffle shop and my igloo, I traveled around the virtual world by using the map, I observed other online players, and I became familiar with the places and games. During week five, I upgraded to a paid membership, and then, in order to wear the outfits that I wanted, adopt the yellow puffle that I liked, and decorate my igloo with new furniture, I played games and earned coins. Starting with the most popular ones, I played almost all of the games in the virtual world. I was pretty good at some of the games and collected a good amount of coins, and I was really bad at some other games and collected just a few coins. I also collected stamps in several games. I used some of the coins I collected from the games to adopt a yellow puffle I named him Togi, and purchased an outfit for my penguin, the Penguin Wrangler outfit and Wrangler hat that

were on the cover page of the penguin style catalog. After I upgraded to a paid membership, I received five friendship requests from three basic and two paid members, but did not accept any of these friendship requests because of the ethical concerns of this research.

Chatting and Giving and Attending Parties

After logging into the virtual world, the first place that my penguin appeared was either in The Plaza or The Town, which were usually occupied by several other penguins. The Plaza and The Town are not the places where penguins go to play games; rather, these are the places the penguins go to meet other penguins or invite other penguins to certain places in the virtual world. Some of the penguins I observed, for instance, were inviting others to come visit their igloos by typing, “party at my place, plz come” or “go to my igloo for awesome hangout”; these messages appeared over the avatars in word bubbles. Other penguins were telling jokes, such as “What do you call a penguin in the desert? Lost!” or sending each other emoticons and inviting each other to dance by saying, “Come relax!” Still, others were sending each other greetings and compliments, such as “Hello, you are a beautiful princess,” that served to initiate long conversations between penguins.

I observed online players’ interactions in these places, and I also visited the igloos of those penguins who invited other penguins to their parties. The igloos were decorated with so many beautiful items that were probably purchased years ago and saved for special themed parties such as Christmas parties. In Club Penguin, some items are purposefully offered for a limited period of time to let children make known their long-

time presence in the virtual world (Grimes, 2010). Even though being up-to-date is one of the most valued practices in the virtual world, the children who have those limited items, which were offered several years ago, in their igloos for their special themed parties, such as Christmas, are recognized as long-time, expert-level players. As such, there are some igloos that are decorated with these special items and have been liked by other penguins over 200,000 times, and visitors continue to compliment these igloos.

In these parties, in the igloos or other public spaces, it is possible to see a lot of collaborative play such as role-playing among a group of children (Grimes, 2010). For instance, in an igloo that was decorated as a Christmas store, the penguins were getting in line in front of a cashier. One of the penguins adopted the cashier role and asked others, “What would you like to buy?” And the first penguin in the line said, “I want to buy a reindeer,” and that was actually located in this igloo as a sale item. Another player in line spoke to a nearby player using an insider language; the first player said, “I remember you. You were my mom!” This player was referring to pretend play in which these players had once engaged in another place. As is seen in these examples, either in igloos or in other public places, such as The Plaza and The Town, children were chatting with each other (i.e., sending messages by typing or choosing from the pre-written phrases and reading the messages that appeared over penguin avatars) for several different purposes while playing in the Club Penguin virtual world. All of these reading and writing practices, including the penguin chatting in different places, will be grouped under the literacy practices. The reason why chatting is considered a key practice is because it is the most common practice in which the players engage as a means of communicating with each other and participating in the Club Penguin peer culture. Communicating with other

players in The Plaza, The Town or other places through safe chat, visiting each other's igloos, and engaging in pretend plays with available items and other online players are going to be considered participation practices (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Participation, Literacy and Consumerism Practices Identified in Club Penguin

	Participation Practices	Literacy Practices	Consumerism Practices
Site Navigation	Traveling around the virtual world, and playing games and collecting coins	- Reading and understanding the given instructions - Reading the icons and images and understanding how they work	Having a paid membership
Dressing up Penguins	Dressing up a penguin with outfits and accessories	Looking through the penguin style catalog for the new items and their prizes	Purchasing outfits and accessories for a penguin from the penguin style catalog
Decorating Igloos	- Decorating an igloo with furniture to impress other players - Listening to the soundtracks to decide which one to play in their igloos	- Looking through the furniture catalog for the new items and their prizes - Checking the soundtrack list to decide which one to play in their igloos	- Purchasing new igloos, backyards, and furniture from the furniture catalog - Recording their own music in Sound Studio to play for their visitors in their igloos
Adopting Puffles & Shopping for Puffles	- Adopting a puffle, feeding him, taking care of him, and playing games with him - Choosing toys, accessories and favorite snacks for a puffle from the puffle catalog	- Reading the puffle cards and puffle handbook to learn more about the personalities and favorite activities of puffles - Looking through the puffle catalog for the new items and their prizes	- Adopting up to 75 puffles out of 14 different kinds and displaying economic power as a paid member - Purchasing toys, accessories, furniture and food for a puffle from the puffle catalog
	- Communicating with others through safe chat - Engaging in pretend play by chatting and using available items	- Typing or choosing pre-written words to communicate with others - Using their imaginations to write storylines for	Displaying economic power with the words used in chatting

Chatting	Sharing jokes with others	- their characters in a pretend play they engage in with their online friends - Choosing the pre-written jokes and sharing them with others	
Giving / Attending Parties	Giving or attending private parties in igloos	Sending/receiving party invitations through safe-chat or postcards	Giving parties in the well-decorated igloos with theme-related items and inviting others to “like” their unique igloo designs
Friending	Sending friendship requests to other online players to establish relations and play games together	Clicking on the “add friend” icon on the penguin ID of another player, reading the pop up screens and clicking on Yes and OK icons to send a request	Choosing only paid members as potential friends and sending requests only to those penguins with fancy outfits and accessories, nice igloos or several puffles
Performing on The Stage	Performing a play on stage with other online players	Using the script or their imagination to act their character on stage	Purchasing costumes from the Costume Trunk for a play on the stage
Sending Postcards	Communicating with other players by sending postcards	Reading the received postcards and skimming through the postcard inventory to choose one to send to a friend	
Reading & Writing for Club Penguin Times	- Sending riddles and jokes to the editor of Club Penguin Times to share with other players - Getting published in the Club Penguin Times and the Club Penguin official blog	- Reading the Club Penguin Times, and writing riddles and jokes and sending them to be published - Using Penguin Art board to share drawings, pictures and photographs	
Taking Safety Quiz	Wearing the safety sweater earned from the safety quiz	Reading, understanding and choosing the right answer in the safety quiz	
Taking Tour Guide Quiz	- Being a tour guide and helping out the new players by introducing them to the virtual world - Wearing the tour guide hat	Taking the tour guide quiz, reading and answering the questions, and sharing information about each place with other players while giving tours	
Reading Yearbooks	As a member of this online community, becoming more knowledgeable about the Club Penguin events that happened during	Reading Club Penguin yearbooks and tales	

and Tales	previous years and the famous tales written about Club Penguin		

Sending Postcards

Another tool that children use to communicate with each other is the Penguin Mail. On the upper left side of the screen, there is a *Penguin Mail* icon that children use to send postcards to their friends or read the postcards they have received. Children can also send postcards to the penguins they see on their screens even if they are not yet friends with those penguins. All the children need to do is to click on the mail icon on a particular penguin's penguin ID, and choose a postcard from the postcard list. For each postcard a child wants to send, he or she must pay ten coins. Every few weeks, Club Penguin renews the postcards in their inventory. The postcards are classified as featured postcards, friendship postcards, igloo postcards, puffles postcards, games postcards, and rooms postcards. Because of the ethical concerns of this research, I decided not to send any postcards to other players. However, I have received several postcards from other players as well as from the Club Penguin team during my observations in this virtual world.

Even though I did not send any postcards to other players, I looked at Club Penguin's postcard inventory several times throughout my observation period. Each of the postcards includes a short note and a matching impressive picture. Some of these postcards are just simple greetings, compliments or thank you messages such as "Hey There!", "Awesome outfit!", "Your puffles are COOL!" and "Thanks for stopping by. Hope to see you soon." Some others are invitations for a game or a certain place in Club Penguin; examples of these include "I have re-decorated my igloo! Come check it out!",

“Party at my igloo!”, “Let’s go sledding. Meet me at the Ski Hill!” or “Meet me at the stage!” All of these invitations to specific places feature a “go there” icon that, when clicked, takes children directly to the destinations named on the cards. This kind of invitation postcard itself automatically creates a nexus of literacy practice and participation practice. Children first read the postcards and click on the links that take them to another place to participate in another activity such as playing a game or visiting a certain place in the virtual world.

In addition to postcards from friends, children also receive postcards from the Club Penguin team. Some of these postcards are thank you messages for adopting a puffle, for instance, others are simple reminders regarding paid membership expiration dates, and still others are congratulation messages for children’s progress in the games. For example, a child may receive a postcard after he or she earns a belt in the Card-Jitsu game. Communicating with other players by sending postcards is a participation practice available for children. Further, reading the received postcards and skimming through the postcard inventory to choose one to send a friend are literacy practices that will be included on the list.

Reading and Writing for Club Penguin Times

While traveling around the virtual world, I encountered penguins holding and reading newspapers. Then, I clicked on the *News* icon in the upper left corner of the screen, and the Club Penguin Times newspaper popped up on the screen. I realized that when someone chooses to read the Club Penguin Times, a newspaper appears in his or her avatar’s hands on screen and everyone knows that he or she is reading the Club

Penguin Times. Club Penguin Times comes out every Thursday. It consists of two pages, and it includes Feature Story, Support Story, News Flash, Upcoming Events, Ask Aunt Arctic, Secrets, Jokes and Riddles, and Get Published sections. Children read the Club Penguin Times to learn about current and upcoming events, secret information about the virtual world, jokes shared by other players, and the editor's column, which includes responses to questions asked by other players. The newspaper readers learn about what is currently happening in the virtual world, and they read about upcoming events such as the release days of the upcoming clothes and furniture catalogs or the locations and times of the themed parties. Some secret information about Club Penguin is also shared in the newspaper; this might include hints at how to earn more coins in the games or how to find hidden surprises in the virtual world. Lane Merrifield, the co-founder of Club Penguin, mentions that at least the two-thirds of the players in this virtual world read the Club Penguin Times (Grimes & Fields, 2012).

The children also use the Club Penguin Times as a means of asking questions of Aunt Arctic, the editor-in-chief of the Club Penguin Times; the questions most often have to do with current and upcoming Club Penguin events. Aunt Arctic answers the questions and shares the name of the penguin and his or her question in her column in the Club Penguin Times. In addition, children read jokes and riddles that are published in the newspaper, and they also send their own jokes and riddles to Aunt Arctic in hopes of having them published in the newspaper along with their penguin names. It is so impressive that every day around 30,000 players submit their articles, poems or other artwork to be published in this in-game newspaper (Grimes & Fields, 2012). So, children are not just reading the newspaper, but they are also submitting their writing to get it

published. These reading and writing practices will be included on my literacy practices list. In addition, children sending their own riddles and jokes to the editor-in-chief of Club Penguin Times in order to share them with other players will be considered a participation practice.

I visited the Club Penguin Times office, and the thing that caught my attention was the Penguin Art board next to the bookshelf. I clicked on the board, and another board popped up on the screen; this second board allows players to submit their art pieces. Through this page, the players send their Club Penguin-related drawings, pictures, and photographs of their toys or other Club Penguin items to the editors, and these art pieces are shared in the Fan Art section of the official Club Penguin blog. Therefore, this Penguin Art board serves as a link between the Club Penguin virtual world and its official blog. Sharing drawings and pictures with other players using this board is a literacy practice and a participation practice with regard to the Club Penguin peer culture.

Reading Yearbooks and Club Penguin Tales

In my visit to the Club Penguin Times office, I also wanted to see the previous issues of the newspaper. I could not find any previous issues, but I found several books in a bookshelf located in the Club Penguin Times office. In the bookshelf, there were Club Penguin yearbooks dated from 2005 to 2014, and there are also some storybooks about the Club Penguin. The yearbooks include pictures and brief summaries for each month of the year; the pictures and information might have to do with, for example, themed parties and special events held during each month. These books serve to summarize or take a sort of snapshot of each year that passes in the Club Penguin virtual world. The storybooks,

which include three volumes of Penguin Tales, Franky's First Show, The Spice of Life, Truth of Dare, Rockhopper and the Stowaway, and The Journal of Captain Rockhopper, are short tales written about the Club Penguin virtual world. Each volume of Penguin Tales includes three or four winning stories submitted to the Club Penguin Writing Contest. There are several player-generated stories about Club Penguin that were written and submitted to the 2007, 2008 and 2009 contests, and only three or four of these stories were selected as winning stories and were subsequently published in these volumes. The Journal of Captain Rockhopper is a bit different from the other books on the shelf; Captain Rockhopper, a famous character in the virtual world, wrote this book in journal format, and he wrote of his adventures on the seas that took place from March 2005 to April 2008. Although there are several books in the bookshelf, I have not seen many online players in the office scanning the bookshelf. I have observed children playing Club Penguin in the afterschool program for four years, but I have seen only a couple of players look at the books on the bookshelf. Even though reading Club Penguin yearbooks or tales in the Club Penguin Times office is not a common practice for the players, it will still be added to my literacy practices list since it is available to players in the Club Penguin virtual world.

Performing on The Stage

Another place children engage in literacy in Club Penguin is "The Stage" room. Every few weeks, Club Penguin's "The Stage" room offers children new short plays with all the necessary tools that children will need to perform the plays: actual play scripts, stage scenery, special effects and costumes (that are only available to paid members). The actual play script (see Appendix H for an exemplar play script) remains on the right

bottom of the page. The children who want to perform in the plays go to the stage, open the script and click on the prewritten phrases for their respective characters, or they use their imaginations and type whatever they want to say so that it will appear above their penguins. There are usually other players willing to act as the other characters, and they help to round out the cast rather quickly, so that the players can perform their play on the stage. The players can also send invitation postcards to their friends to invite them to perform in the current play on the stage.

In addition, there is also a play director who uses the control panel to adjust the stage lights and decorations. For each play, Club Penguin changes the stage decorations, and offers new costumes that correspond to the current play. Only paid members are allowed to purchase costumes from the catalog that is called Costume Trunk. This place is always crowded with several penguins engaging in literacy in a fun way. As such, performing in a play on the stage is going to be added to my list as a literacy practice. Getting together with friends to perform on stage, and using the script or their own words to act out the characters of the play will be included on the participation practices list. In addition, purchasing costumes from the Costume Trunk as a paid member is going to be considered a consumerism practice for the players.

Friending Other Online Players

One important practice in which children engage while in Club Penguin is becoming friends with other players. Other than the friendship requests I have personally received, I have not seen any other players sending friendship requests to other penguins because only the penguin that receives the friendship request can see it. However, while

observing my participants in the afterschool program, I became familiar with how they send friendship requests and what they take into account while adding others as friends. To send a friendship request, children need to first click on a penguin avatar so that its penguin ID pops up on the screen. Next, the children need to click on the “add friend” icon on the penguin ID; this will prompt another pop up message to appear on the screen, which asks, “Would you like to add [penguin name] to your Friends list?” Once the child clicks on the Yes icon in this message, a notification message pops up on screen that says, “Request Sent.” While deciding to whom they will send friendship requests, children usually look at the outfits of the other penguins, visit their igloos, or assess their puffles. Players with paid memberships, fancy outfits, several puffles, and nicely decorated igloos are recognized as more experienced and powerful players. They are more likely chosen as potential friends, and they likely receive more friendship requests from other players. Sending friendship requests to other players to establish relations with them and to play games together in Club Penguin is a participation practice, and reading the pop up screens and clicking on Yes and OK icons to send a request are literacy practices. In addition, choosing only paid members as potential friends and sending requests only to those penguins with fancy outfits and accessories, nice igloos or several puffles is a consumerism practice.

Taking Safety Quiz

In Club Penguin, there are also some quizzes that children can take such as the Safety Quiz and Tour Guide Quiz. The Safety Quiz is located in the upper right corner of the screen. When children click on the Safety Quiz icon, the quiz pops up on the screen. The quiz includes six multiple-choice questions that have to do with online safety. When

children answer all six questions correctly, they are awarded with the online safety sweater that their penguins may wear. Online safety is a topic of great concern among educators and parents, and as mentioned previously, the Club Penguin team addresses this issue in a number of different ways. When taking the safety quiz, the children read and understand the questions and choose their answers for each question. Reading, understanding and choosing the right answer when completing the safety quiz is one of the literacy practices in which children engage in the Club Penguin virtual world.

Taking Tour Guide Quiz

The other quiz that the children can opt to take is the tour guide quiz, which is located in the Tour Booth in the Ski Village. An experienced player who has had an account for at least 45 days ago can become an official tour guide who provides information about the places and games to players new to the virtual world. However, to prove that they are experienced players and ready to become tour guides, the children must first take a quiz and answer at least seven of eight questions correctly; the questions are multiple-choice questions and they test players' knowledge about game play, locations of specific items, puffles' features, and items in the penguin style catalog. If children fail the quiz, they may take it again, but each time they take the quiz, they will encounter different questions. The children who pass the quiz are awarded tour guide hats and are permitted to become official tour guides in Club Penguin. When giving tours to the new players, the tour guides travel around the virtual world, and in each place they visit, they use the pre-written messages prepared by the Club Penguin team that include information about the place they are currently in. Being a tour guide and helping out the new players is a participation practice in which players engage while in Club Penguin. In

addition, taking the quiz, reading and answering the questions, and sharing information about each place with other players are literacy practices.

Identifying Key Practices

Even though all of these different participation, literacy and consumerism practices are available within the Club Penguin virtual world for children, only a few of them are highly valued practices in which the children frequently engage; this study has deemed these key practices. To identify the key practices so as to differentiate them from the other available practices, Scollon (2001a) suggests conducting scene surveys and event/action surveys. By looking at a specific group of people's activities in particular places/scenes by focusing on the events/actions in which those people engage, as well as how those people engage in those events/actions, it is possible to identify key practices. To locate the children's valued events, I had to assess all of the events identified via the cyber-ethnographic research, my participatory observation, my field notes taken in the previous program cycles, and the one-on-one conversations I held with the children regarding their frequent activities. I found that dressing up penguins, decorating igloos, adopting puffles and shopping for puffles, chatting, friending, performing on The Stage, and giving and attending parties were identified as the valued events in which children frequently engaged. As such, all related participation, literacy and consumerism practices were identified as key practices (see Table 5.3) in which the children engaged.

However, sending postcards, reading and writing for Club Penguin Times, taking the safety quiz, taking the tour guide quiz, and reading yearbooks and tales were identified as less preferred events. As seen in the data collected in the previous program

cycles, the children did not check their mailboxes even if they had several unread postcards. When I showed them that they had unread postcards in their mailboxes, they tended not to express any interest in checking their mailboxes or reading their postcards; rather, they responded to me by saying, “I know!” or “Don’t worry!,” and they continued playing their games. Within four years of observation, I have seen only a few children send postcards to their friends to invite them to play together. Even though this event is available to children, they do not frequently engage in or highly value sending/receiving postcards. Therefore, the related participation, literacy and consumerism practices will not be considered key practices.

Table 5.3: Identified Key Practices

Valued and Frequent Events	Key Participation Practices	Key Literacy Practices	Key Consumerism Practices
Dressing up Penguins	• Dressing up a penguin with outfits and accessories	• Looking through the penguin style catalog for the new items and their prizes	• Purchasing outfits and accessories for a penguin from the penguin style catalog
Decorating Igloos	• Decorating an igloo with furniture to impress other players • Listening to the soundtracks to decide which one to play in their igloos	• Looking through the furniture catalog for the new items and their prizes • Checking the soundtrack list to decide which one to play in their igloos	• Purchasing new igloos, backyards, and furniture from the furniture catalog • Recording their own music in Sound Studio to play for their visitors in their igloos
Adopting Puffles & Shopping for Puffles	• Adopting a puffle, feeding him, taking care of him, and playing games with him • Choosing toys, accessories and favorite snacks for a puffle from the puffle catalog	• Reading the puffle cards and puffle handbook to learn more about the personalities and favorite activities of puffles • Looking through the puffle catalog for the new items and their prizes	• Adopting up to 75 puffles out of 14 different kinds and displaying economic power as a paid member • Purchasing toys, accessories, furniture and food for a puffle from the puffle catalog

Chatting	• Communicating with others through safe chat • Engaging in pretend play by chatting and using available items • Sharing jokes with others	• Typing or choosing pre-written words to communicate with others • Using their imaginations to write storylines for their characters in a pretend play they engage in with their online friends • Choosing the pre-written jokes and sharing them with others	• Displaying economic power with the words used in chatting
Friending	• Sending friendship requests to other online players to establish relations and play games together	• Clicking on the “add friend” icon on the penguin ID of another player, reading the pop up screens and clicking on Yes and OK icons to send a request	• Choosing only paid members as potential friends and sending requests only to those penguins with fancy outfits and accessories, nice igloos or several puffles
Performing on The Stage	• Performing a play on stage with other online players	• Using the script or their imagination to act their character on stage	• Purchasing costumes from the Costume Trunk for a play on the stage
Giving / Attending Parties	• Giving or attending private parties in igloos	• Sending/receiving party invitations through safe-chat or postcards	• Giving parties in the well-decorated igloos with theme-related items and inviting others to “like” their unique igloo designs

Reading and writing for Club Penguin Times is also not considered a valued event, and is not included in the list of key practices. Even though some of the participants sent questions to the editor-in-chief of Club Penguin Times, their purpose was not to be published in the newspaper, but to find answers to their questions. And only a few of the children engaged in this activity. In the one-on-one conversations I held with children, I recognized that most of the study participants were not even aware of how to open Club Penguin Times newspaper on the screen. While taking the safety quiz and the tour guide quiz was not something I ever observed in the children’s engagements in the

Club Penguin club, I did observe children reading the yearbooks, but as noted earlier in this chapter, I only observed this a few times in my four-year study.

Conclusion

As discussed in the previous chapter, the main practices in which children engage while in the Club Penguin virtual world are literacy, consumerism and participation in peer culture practices. In this chapter, while engaging the nexus of the Club Penguin virtual world, I discussed children's frequent events and identified the participation practices, literacy practices and consumerism practices, which I determine by observing the online players' interactions and by engaging in my own interactions in the Club Penguin virtual world. I then reviewed these practices to identify which ones were more valued among the practices in which the children frequently engaged in the Club Penguin club; I did this by examining my field notes and the answers the children provided to the questions I asked during our one-on-one conversations regarding their frequent practices in Club Penguin.

These different key practices are actually happening simultaneously and are affecting (and are affected by) each other. For instance, one of the very basic events in which children engage while in the Club Penguin virtual world involves dressing up their penguins; however, this simple event cannot be considered a single practice. First, dressing up is a participation practice because to be considered an insider member of this online peer culture, children need to know the appropriate ways of dressing up penguins, and they must appropriately engage in this practice in order to participate in the online peer culture. While dressing up penguins, children also engage in several literacy

practices: children need to open the penguin style catalog, look through the different items, check their prices, check their own budgets, click on the item(s) they wish to purchase, read and follow the given instructions, make payments using their online currency, check their own inventory, find the items they want to wear, and select those items using a mouse. Dressing up a penguin is also a consumerism practice because children have to be paid members in order to be able to access most of the items offered in the penguin style catalog, and then they have to make payments using their online currency when they choose to purchase clothing and accessories. It is difficult to recognize these separate practices via a cursory glance, as they are happening simultaneously in the background while the children are engaged in one simple event – dressing up their penguins in this virtual world. This is why the nexus analysis is a good analysis method to use to analyze the video data and to reveal all of the different practices in which the children engage with regard to different events.

These events and the related key practices are listed in the Key Practices of Online Players in Club Penguin table (see Table 5.3). These key practices will constitute my initial coding scheme as I analyze the video data I collected in the afterschool program in the next chapter. This coding scheme will be extended with emerging codes in the data analysis process.

CHAPTER 6: Navigating the Nexus: Club Penguin Club

To navigate the nexus in the Club Penguin club in the afterschool program, this chapter analyzes the study participants' online and offline interactions with each other and other online players to examine their participation, literacy and consumerism practices. The online players' interactions in the Club Penguin virtual world have been analyzed, and the key participation, literacy and consumerism practices in which the online players engaged have been identified in the previous chapter while engaging the nexus. In this chapter, those key practices will be used as codes in the analysis of the video data collected in the last program cycle (Fall 2014) of this research in the Club Penguin club. In the analysis, the study participants' interactions with both basic and paid member accounts will be compared and contrasted to reveal the effects of consumerism on children's participation and literacy practices in the Club Penguin club.

Last Program Cycle of the Club Penguin Club

Since Fall 2011, total of five Club Penguin club program cycles have been conducted in the same afterschool program with total of 50 five- to eight-year-old children. The last program cycle, which is analyzed in this chapter, was conducted in Fall 2014; it was conducted over the course of 12 sessions, and it involved 14 active participants. In the first four sessions of the last program cycle, all of the study participants were offered pre-created basic accounts that had been used in previous program cycles. These basic accounts were intended to offer children a basic understanding of the Club Penguin online space, the games in the virtual world, and basic member restrictions and paid member privileges.

After the fourth session, I visited the afterschool program on the days we did not have Club Penguin club, and starting with more experienced players, I met with the study participants one-on-one to let them create their own paid member accounts, which I funded. Talking about their experiences with the basic membership, their feelings about having a paid membership, and creating an account with the help of an animated avatar in Club Penguin took approximately an hour for each participant. Three weeks after the fourth session, I met with 10 out of 14 study participants. I created paid membership accounts for the remaining four participants, all of whom attended Club Penguin club on an irregular basis, without their contributions, and I offered them these paid membership accounts when they joined us during the following sessions.

Thus, in sessions five, six, and seven, some of the participants (those who had already created their paid accounts) played with paid membership accounts, and others (those who had not yet had a chance to create their paid accounts) continued to play with their basic membership accounts. These three weeks of paid member-basic member mixed play created another layer in data collection that revealed what happens when a basic account holder plays with a paid member.

From session eight to twelve, all of the study participants played with their paid membership accounts. Even though basic and paid members played in the same online and offline spaces, because of the additional opportunities offered to the paid members, several differences between paid and basic members' interactions with each other and the online space have been detected.

Same Status Pairs: Basic Member Pairs and Paid Member Pairs

Places Visited by Basic Member Pairs Compared to Paid Member Pairs

While analyzing the participants' interactions in the Club Penguin virtual world, the first thing I noticed was the difference between the places basic members and paid members prefer to visit. In Charts 1 and 2, the percentage of time the basic and paid members spent in different places in Club Penguin virtual world is indicated. I did not include the names of the places in which the participants spent less than 5% of their time, but I indicated the total time spent in those places under the Other Places slice in the charts below.

As is seen in the charts, when the basic members play with other basic members, they prefer to go to the places where they can play some popular games such as Card Jitsu, Puffle Lunch, Puffle Scape, and Sled Race. In addition to these games, since what's "new" always attracts children's attention, the basic members spent most of their time playing the new games offered with the new themes every other week. However, most of the time, their interactions in the new themed games turned out to be a disappointment as is discussed later in this chapter in the analysis of Ben and Diana's Adopting a Ghost Puffle game.

Chart 6.1. Places Visited by Basic Members



Chart 6.2. Places Visited by Paid Members

However, when the paid members play with other paid members, they prefer to stay in their igloos where they can shop for furniture and make new decorations, or take care of their puffles; visit other players' igloos to see the design of a friends igloo or to attend a party; go to the Puffle Hotel to complete some tasks or to adopt a unique puffle that is offered only to paid members; play the games offered with the new theme to collect the newest items in the virtual world; or play games, such as Puffle Scape or Fishing, which help them to earn coins quickly.

In general, while the basic members spent approximately 99% of their time in Club Penguin playing different games in the virtual world, paid members spent only 51% of their time on games, and used 49% of their time to shop for their penguin, puffles and igloos, design their igloos with new furniture, attend parties, visit friends, adopt unique puffles, and check their outfits inventory so that they could change their clothes or costumes. Even though paid members, in general, spent half of their times playing games, some paid member participants claimed that they played games only because they needed coins to design their igloos with new furniture or purchase new clothes for their penguins. William, for instance, while playing with another paid member, stated, “I am playing a game because I don’t have that much money for shopping” (November 4, 2014). After 10 minutes of play, he said, “Lets go shopping! Wait, I do not know if I have enough money!” Then, he went back to the games to collect more coins.

It is difficult to explain the differences between what paid members and basic members prefer to do while in Club Penguin based simply on the children’s personal preferences, because the paid and basic members I mention here are actually the same children. The basic members received their paid member accounts in weeks five to seven, and were paid members until the end of the program cycle. The difference in their online interactions can be explained by the different opportunities offered to paid and basic members with regard to access to virtual goods, and the change in their perceptions of Club Penguin will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

One important component to earning status in this commercially designed virtual world has to do with the possession of more virtual goods. Having a well-decorated igloo, nice outfits, and unique puffles show players’ economic power and their success in the

games (Grimes & Fields, 2012), and this give the players a certain status in this peer culture. To be recognized as an expert player and to have a better status in the Club Penguin peer culture, as is seen in the charts, the paid members spent half of their time playing games and earning coins and the other half of their time spending their coins in order to procure more virtual goods, and showing up their outfits, igloo designs or special puffles by visiting other players' igloos or inviting the other players to their own igloos.

The basic members, however, who weren't allowed to use the coins they earned from games to decorate their igloos or shop for their avatars (except for a few basic items), spent almost all of their time playing different games in the Club Penguin virtual world. In the chart that indicated the places visited by the basic members, the game called Card Jitsu stands out. The basic members spent approximately 27% of their time playing this one game, and the thing distinguishes this game from the others is its feature that allows children to earn virtual goods that indicate their success in the game. This is the only game through which children cannot earn coins; rather, this game rewards players with ninja outfits and belts. Some basic members used the virtual goods they earned in Card Jitsu (e.g., ninja outfits and belts) to balance the economic disadvantage they had against the paid members (see Scott in Table 6.4). While paid members wore fancy outfits and accessories they had purchased with their coins, these basic members used the ninja outfits and belts to demonstrate their expertise with regard to games. As is discussed later in this chapter, showing off their expertise would help them balance – up to a point – the economic disadvantage they experienced as basic members.

While the paid members see Club Penguin as not only a game setting but also as an online peer culture within which they have an avatar, a house, several pets, and other

friends with whom to hang out, which we can see by looking at the places they visited (see Chart 6.2) and the activities in which they engaged, it seems like most of the basic members, who encountered several restrictions in the virtual world, recognize Club Penguin as a collection of several games that they can play and have fun; this is evident, as the basic members spent 99% of their time playing games without allocating any time to other activities. This perception that the basic members seemed to share was also seen in a participant's comments. In my one-on-one conversation with William on April 29, 2015, he noted, "When the people do not have that much money [for paid membership], the only thing that they can do is pretty much play the games and walk around." The basic and paid members' different perceptions of Club Penguin prompted them to set up different goals, and in addition to the quantitative differences discussed above, these different perceptions made the children's interactions qualitatively different as well. While basic members expressed some disappointment regarding the restrictions they encountered, they tended to have fun playing age appropriate games without concern for the look of their avatars or igloos. The paid members, however, assumed more responsibility at it related to their efforts aimed at establishing status in this online peer culture, and they worked hard to show other players how successful they were in this virtual world by spending long hours designing their igloos, adopting several puffles in different kinds and colors, and shopping for their avatars, igloos, and puffles.

In the following sections of this chapter, the transformative events, which are the events that prompted changes in the children's participation in the online and the offline spaces, will be located. Then, moment-by-moment microanalysis will be applied to two representative transformative events to examine the role Club Penguin's commercial

design plays in children's literacy practices, and their participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture. To do this, with regard to the first transformative event, I will compare and contrast a pair of basic members' and a pair of paid members' interactions in a themed game that both pairs played at the same time in the Club Penguin club, and then I will discuss the role Club Penguin's commercial design plays in the practices in which the focal pairs engaged. Regarding the second transformative event, I will analyze a basic member-paid member pair's interactions while they were hanging around the virtual world, playing together and showing off their virtual goods to one another. This pair's analysis also helped me to discover the role Club Penguin's commercial design plays in children's interactions by revealing the changes in the practices in which the children engaged once they become play partners with someone from the other, - economically advantaged or disadvantaged, - group (e.g., basic member vs. paid member).

Transformative Event I: Ghost Puffle Reward Game with Paid Member Pairs and Basic Member Pairs

Club Penguin has a dynamic environment that its design team renovates every other week. While most of the places and games in the virtual world remain as is, new games and items are offered every other week with creation of a new theme. Regardless of whether a player is a paid or a basic member, players frequently choose to play the new themed games and collect new items (see Chart 6.1 and Chart 6.2). In October 2014, Club Penguin's Halloween theme was released, which meant that a number of new games, new items (e.g., ID card backgrounds, special Halloween costumes and accessories), and a ghost puffle, which is the reward associated with the themed game, were issued. To qualify to adopt a ghost puffle, children had to complete all 12 tasks in

the new themed game. Having several puffles in different colors and kinds is an indicator of being wealthy and successful in this game, and this helps children to earn status in this peer culture. Before the Halloween theme, there were a total of 12 kinds of puffles that children could adopt in the Club Penguin virtual world. A dog and a cat puffle, and eight other puffles in different colors were available in the pet shop and could be adopted in exchange for the adoption fee, which was paid for via coins, the Club Penguin virtual currency. Two additional types of puffles, rainbow and gold puffles could be adopted only when members completing tasks associated with the game Puffle Hotel. Basic members, however, were only permitted to adopt the two very basic puffles, the blue one and red one, while paid members were allowed to adopt up to 75 puffles from among all of the puffle types available. With the Halloween theme, in addition to 12 kinds of puffles that were already available, a special puffle was offered to children, not as a puffle that could be adopted by paying coins, but as a puffle that served as the reward associated with the new themed game; this puffle could only be earned once players completed the themed game tasks.

In addition to being a new themed item, being a limited-time item also offer made the ghost puffle special in the eyes of players. Children were aware that the ghost puffle was not a puffle for which they can pay and adopt, but it was the reward associated with a game that was a part of the Halloween theme, which meant that, at the end of the Halloween theme, ghost puffles would no longer be available to collect (until perhaps the following years' Halloween theme was temporarily made available). Scarcity increases the value of the items in peer cultures (Ferne, Kantor, & Whaley, 1995). There are often items made available to children in virtual worlds that are only available for limited

times, and this can provide those children who possess these limited-time items in advantaged positions within their peer cultures (Grimes & Fields, 2012). As seen in the previous chapter, in my analysis of Club Penguin's online players, the children kept the items offered for a limited time in their inventories and used them later to set themselves apart from the other players. For instance, some online players observed in Club Penguin used the Christmas items they purchased in the previous years to decorate their igloos at Christmas time so as to display decorations that were more unique and special than the other players' decorations, and to show other players they had been playing Club Penguin as a paid member for lengthy enough period that they were able to have purchased those items during previous years. Children's tendencies to own limited-time or scarce items is what made ghost puffles special to the Club Penguin players and what prompted them to adopt these puffles before the Halloween theme was terminated.

The ghost puffle reward game was analyzed as a transformative event for two reasons. First, both basic and paid members' participation in the Club Penguin club dramatically changed after the ghost puffle reward game. Because of the commercial design features of Club Penguin, the paid and the basic members encountered different results when they completed the ghost puffle reward game tasks. While the paid members received ghost puffles as rewards, the basic members received only warning messages that informed them that a paid membership was required to be able to receive the ghost puffle reward. The very different results the children encountered prompted their respective participation habits in the Club Penguin club to change considerably after playing this game. While collecting ghost puffles motivated the paid members and empowered their collaborative play, not being allowed to earn a ghost puffle caused a

breakdown in the basic members' interactions both in the online and the offline spaces, and led them to play individual games in Club Penguin.

Second, having paid and basic members playing the same game at the same time allowed me better opportunity to more clearly compare the children's interactions in the online and the offline spaces. In week seven, which included a session during which there were both paid and basic members in the club at the same time, a pair of paid and a pair of basic member participants were videotaped while they completed the game tasks of a new themed game that would permit children to collect a ghost puffle as a reward. Since Club Penguin revises its online content every other week by offering a new theme with new games and items, it is hard to compare and contrast paid and basic members' experiences when they are captured at different times. The data gathered in session seven gave me a chance to see what paid and basic members experience while playing the same game in Club Penguin.

When the focal pairs were playing and completing the given tasks so as to be able to receive a ghost puffle, they had very rich interactions both in the online and the offline spaces. They were reading the instructions together, sharing their ideas, deciding on a strategy, completing the tasks and finally collecting (or not being allowed to collect) the rewards, which would permit them to impress their online and offline friends. Receiving a ghost puffle was indicative of not only one's paid member status but also of his or her status as an expert player. As such, if someone had a ghost puffle, that meant that he or she was a paid member and had economic power in the virtual world, and it also meant

that he or she was a more capable and experienced player who could complete all game tasks in order to earn a ghost puffle.

In the seventh session, both the basic and paid member pairs played for about 30 minutes in order to complete the game tasks and to earn ghost puffles; however, the basic members, Ben and Diana, were not aware that, even if they completed all of the tasks, they would not be permitted to receive ghost puffles since it was available only to paid members. When they came to the end of the tasks, paid members, Nick and Eric, earned ghost puffles, named their puffles, took them to their backyards and started playing with them. In contrast, when Ben and Diana completed all of the required tasks, they encountered a reminder at the end of the game that stated, “Adopting a ghost puffle requires a paid membership. Members can...” After this occurred, both the paid and basic member pairs’ interactions in the virtual world dramatically changed. While this commercial design of Club Penguin motivated Nick and Eric to continue playing together, it broke down Ben and Diana’s engagements in both the online and offline spaces. Ben and Diana became disappointed, and decided to play other games in Club Penguin individually. These kinds of events, which can either motivate children or break down their engagement, are called transformative events, and they are considered important events in Mediated Discourse Analysis because these events mediate children’s future activities and the connected practices in which they would engage later in the space.

To understand how the collecting a theme reward event transformed the children’s engagement in the online and offline nexus of practice, it is necessary to look

closely at their underlying consumerism practices, literacy practices and participation practices. Table 6.1 is a simple report regarding the participation, literacy and consumerism practices of a paid member pair (i.e., Nick and Eric) and a basic member pair (i.e., Ben and Diana) after each pair completed the ghost puffle reward game tasks.

Table 6.1. Paid and Basic Member Interactions after Completing Ghost Puffle Reward Game Tasks

Practices		Paid Member Pair (Nick & Eric) (10 min.)*	Basic Member Pair (Ben & Diana) (6 min.)*
Participation Practices	<i>Playing together</i>	10 min.	--
	<i>Helping out:</i> Asking questions when they struggle and answering the questions or taking over each other's mouse to solve the problems	1 min 7 sec.	26 sec.
	<i>Showing off:</i> Showing other players the puffles' tricks, igloo designs, and owned costumes/outfits	4 min. 6 sec.	--
	<i>Dressing up:</i> Choosing outfits/accessories from their inventory	2 min. 44 sec.	--
Literacy Practices	<i>Image and icon reading:</i> Reading icons and images and clicking on appropriate icons	4 min. 12 sec.	38 sec.
	<i>Print reading:</i> Reading pop-up screen messages, instructions and other available texts	2 min. 2 sec.	35 sec.
	<i>Writing:</i> Typing to send a message or to name a puffle	1 min. 3 sec.	--
Consumerism Practices	<i>Engaging in paid member-only events:</i> Purchasing outfits and furniture, adopting special puffles, collecting paid member-only rewards, etc.	2 min. 44 sec.	--

* Paid members had approximately 10 minutes after adopting a ghost puffle and basic members had approximately 6 minutes after not being allowed to adopt a ghost puffle until the end of the session.

Changes in Consumerism Practices

Nick and Eric, the pair of children with the paid membership, adopted their ghost puffles, visited each others' igloos, and showed each other their various puffles' (e.g.,

ghost puffles, rainbow puffles, gold puffles) tricks. Within approximately 10 minutes of play, after adopting their ghost puffles, Nick and Eric spent 6 minutes and 47 seconds in their own igloos or in their play partner's igloo, and they spent most of this time showing off their virtual goods to one another. Receiving a ghost puffle, as a paid and thus advantaged member, is a consumerism practice, and visiting other players in their igloos or inviting them to one's own igloo in order to show off one's economic power to the play partners and other online friends is a participation practice, which has an unspoken message says, "My economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) is greater than the others." These consumerism and participation practices serve Disney's commercial interests well, and they extend a message to basic members, which says, "If you pay for a membership, you may have one of these cool puffles."

While Nick and Eric engaged in these consumerism and participation practices, Ben and Diana encountered the restrictions that the virtual world had implemented for basic members, and they were disappointed that they were not allowed to adopt ghost puffles even though they played for about 30 minutes and had completed all of the required tasks. Ben and Diana's consumerism practice was totally different than the one in which Nick and Eric engaged. Disney follows a strategy aimed at building up a demand for paid memberships by offering these new games to basic members but not allowing them to earn the rewards even if they successfully complete the tasks. Only at the end of the play are basic members presented with a reminder that states that the rewards are for paid members only. Thus, the basic members play the game with, hoping to receive the big reward – the ghost puffle, in this case – but are instead presented with a warning at the end: "Sorry, get a membership!" This Club Penguin design feature causes

basic members to admire those who have paid memberships, and it directs them toward consumption practices. Playing in this virtual world with limitations is a less beneficial, more passive kind of consumerism practice that serves to affect basic members' participation in these online and offline spaces in a negative way. As is seen in Table 6.1, there is almost no interaction between Ben and Diana after they completed the adopting a ghost puffle tasks; this was the case, despite the fact that they had very rich interactions during the first 30 minutes of the session, just before they completed the game that let them down.

Changes in Participation Practices

In this study, children's participation practices in the Club Penguin club can be analyzed under two categories: participation in the online space and participation in the offline space. While being a paid member affected Nick and Eric's participation practices both in the online and offline spaces in a positive way, having restrictions in terms of gathering virtual goods caused Ben and Diana to stop participation practices in the online and offline spaces. As seen in Table 6.1, Eric and Nick had a powerful interaction in the offline and the online spaces. These children asked each other questions, helped each other figure out the things with which they struggled, played always by talking to each other, showed off their materials to one another, and dressed up their avatars by sharing ideas. The other players in the computer room picked up on Eric and Nick's talks about the materials they owned, and this helped the pair to earn status in the offline space. On the other hand, there was almost no interaction between Ben and Diana. Once Diana asked Ben how to fix her computer frozen screen, and Ben tried to fix it by handling her mouse. After a couple of attempts, however, Ben said "I do not know how to do..." and

returned to his individual game. Then, Ben and Diana played their individual games until the end of the session, without any further interaction with one another. Having a paid membership and being able to adopt puffles and collect virtual goods created a new play environment for Eric and Nick, and it opened a door to new social interactions and conversations. They continued playing and experiencing new things together. In addition to showing off their virtual goods to one another, Nick and Eric spent 2 minutes and 44 seconds searching tens of items in their outfits inventories to show the other person what costumes they had for the upcoming Halloween event (see Table 6.2). Eric wore his “most Halloweenish costume,” and he wandered through the town to scare other players while wondering about his partner’s and other online players’ reactions. And Nick showed his partner his collection of Halloween costumes that included a ninja costume, the Ghost of Tomorrow costume, and the blue dragon costume. Every one of these costumes had a hidden message in this online space that the insiders could easily understand. The ninja costume, for example, includes a black ninja belt and a ninja mask, and symbolizes the cultural capital of the player since earning this costume requires one to be a successful player and beat the Sensei in the Card Jitsu game. His second costume, The Ghost of Tomorrow, is the costume of the main character in a play in The Stage room, and it can only be purchased through the costume catalog in the Stage room. So, this costume indicated to other players that Nick is an insider within this peer culture, familiar with what is happening in the virtual world, and that he role-plays in The Stage. Nick’s last costume was the blue dragon costume, which was chosen as the most desired Halloween costume per the official Club Penguin blog just before the Halloween theme and its corresponding Penguin Style catalog were released. In my one-on-one

Table 6.2. Microanalysis of Paid Member Interactions After Playing the Ghost Puffle Game

Online Space	Player 1: Eric (Paid Member) Talk & Action	Player 2: Nick (Paid Member) Talk & Action	Nexus of Practices		
			Consumerism Practice	Participation Practice	Literacy Practice
Before this interaction, Eric and Nick played about 30 minutes to complete all 12 tasks to adopt a ghost puffle. Nick already had a ghost puffle at home, mostly watched Eric's play and gave him support up to the end of the game. Now, Nick has finished all of the tasks and has adopted a ghost puffle.	[Eric points out the greenish sticky tongue of his ghost puffle on screen, turns to Nick and says] <i>Its tongue!</i> [Eric turns back to his screen.] <i>But its tongue!</i> [Eric turns to Nick again and shares...] <i>I am gonna name him Icky Tongue.</i> <i>i-c-k-y t...</i> [Eric looks at his screen, and types out the name his puffle and spells out the letters.] [Eric reads the warning message that pops up on the screen that says the name he types is not available, and he turns to Nick and says] <i>I am just gonna keep on adding letters until it says this name is available.</i>	[Nick looks at Eric's screen and continues giving support to Eric.] <i>Do not worry!</i> <i>Do not worry!</i> [Looks at his own screen but talks to Eric.] <i>Hah ha ha... Perfect name!</i> [Nick turns back to his screen and continues playing with his puffles in the backyard of his igloo.] [Nick, at the time, plays with his puffles and wants to show a trick of his puffle to Eric.] <i>Dude, watch this!</i>	Adopting a ghost puffle offers players material and cultural capital, which transform into social capital and affects their participation in the online peer culture later.	Being able to adopt a ghost puffle motivates players to continue playing together and keeps their rich interactions going. Nick, here, takes an advanced player role, and gives his partner support when Eric discovers the new game and its new items.	First, the players use mouse and keyboard to navigate avatars on the screen. Then, they read the image of ghost puffle and talk about it. Then, Eric reads a warning message that pops up on screen. And finally, Eric types out the name his ghost puffle.
Nick continues playing in his own igloo, and Eric goes to his own igloo after adopting a ghost puffle. They start playing with their ghost puffles and other	[Eric looks at Nick's screen to see his puffle's tricks.] [Eric watches Nick's gold puffle and says] <i>I think... he likes his bath</i>	[Nick clicks on the bath icon on the upper left corner of screen, holds it and drags down to his gold puffle. His gold puffle jumps as if he is so happy.] <i>Watch out while this guy takes bath.</i> [The gold puffle jumps into the bowl filled with gold rust instead of water. Nick vocalizes his gold puffle and	Eric does not have a gold puffle, and Nick shows Eric the tricks of his gold puffle. This is kind of Nick showing off the material capital he has to his partner. Adopting a gold	In the Club Penguin Club, Nick is recognized as an expert player because of the puffles, puffle snacks and several items that he	Nick reads several icons on the menu and uses them to take care of his puffle. Nick also looks at his puffle and reads his facial expressions

special puffles in their own igloos, but at the same time; they watch each other's play from each other's screens.	<i>Whaaat! He takes bath in gold!</i> <i>He is king. Dude, you are gonna brush his hair? Qww, qww, qwwww.</i> [Eric laughs at the gold puffle's new hair after it's brushed.] [Eric turns back to his own screen.] [Eric clicks on his ghost puffle on the screen and a message pops up, 'walk your puffle creatures to the hotel to care for them.' Eric reads the message and clicks on the 'Go There' icon in the message menu.]	says] <i>This is how I wanna take a bath! Yea, and I...</i> <i>Yea.</i> [Again, Nick goes to the menu at the upper left corner of the screen and clicks on the brush icon, holds it and drags it down onto the gold puffle.] <i>Hahaa, hahha, ha ...</i> [Nick laughs with Eric, and continues taking care of his gold puffle.] [Nick looks at the menu at the top of the screen, clicks on several snacks and looks at his puffle's facial expressions to see what his puffle likes to eat. He, at the same time, verbally asks his puffle.] <i>Cookies, do you like cookies? No! Bubble gum? No, you are not getting a bubble gum. Pretzels? No! Cheese?</i>	puffle requires not only being a paid member but a successful player that is able to complete all the required tasks.	successfully gathered in the virtual world. Here, showing off the tricks of his gold puffle to his partner lets Nick earn status in his group of friends in the afterschool program. Reading and understanding the pop-up texts, icons and images also let both Nick and Eric manage the online space and participate in the online peer culture.	while deciding on what snack his puffle wants to eat. Eric reads the pop-up screen message, and understands what he needs to do to take care of his ghost puffle. He clicks on the icon in the message menu and takes his ghost puffle to the hotel.
Eric and Nick try several Halloween costumes and accessories they have and show each other their items. At the end, Eric wears his 'most Halloweenish costume' and walks through	<i>Dude, look what I made my guy look like; these are scary.</i> [Eric shows the Halloween costume of his avatar to Nick] [Eric looks at Nick and turns back to his screen.] <i>Ohh, I will show you my glasses.</i> [Eric clicks on arrow icons on the pop-up screen to find out his glasses in his clothes inventory.] <i>They are not so gold but they are kinda stupid.</i>	<i>Do not mess with me, I have golden glasses.</i> [Nick searches his own costumes at the moment on his own screen to find his golden glasses within the tens of items he has.]	Nick and Eric show each other and other online players several costumes they have. Eric wears his 'most Halloweenish costume' and takes a walk in town and wonders about his partner's and other players'	Nick and Eric's costumes show that they are successful players in this virtual world and have economic capital that comes with their paid membership. Eric's walk	Both Nick and Eric use mouse and keyboard to navigate the avatars and choose the materials they want. They hover over buttons, open pop-up boxes and read the texts, scroll

the town, and Nick wears his 'normal everyday clothes' and dances with his puffle.	No, I am gonna get my wings, actually. [Eric stops searching for his glasses, and finds his bat wings in his inventory and clicks on them.] Dude, I just opened the most Halloweenish costume I could have. Show me your costume, man?	[Nick searches through the head items in his outfit inventory.] Okay, I need time. I am gonna be a big bad wolf. [He clicks on the body items icon and uses arrow icons on the screen to find his costume.]	impressions. The costumes Nick shows to Eric include a ninja costume that can only be earned by making really good progress in Card Jitsu and shows how proficient a player he is in that game; The Ghost of Tomorrow costume, which is the one the main character wears in a play in The Stage room and also shows he role-plays in The Stage; and a Blue Dragon which has chosen the most desired Halloween costume per the Club Penguin official blog and shows other expert players that Nick reads the blogs and is an insider of this peer culture. And finally Nick's 'normal everyday outfits' are not	around the town with his "scary" Halloween costume makes him different from the other players and gives him a status in the Club Penguin club peer culture. Each costume Nick shows to Eric has a meaning. Either they show he is an insider in this peer culture by knowing what does each costume means to other players, or shows his wealthy and expertise in this virtual world. All of these materials he shows symbolizes his material and cultural capital and they let him earn status in the online and the offline peer	through drop down menus and clicks on the costumes they want to wear.
	What?	Not big bad wolf, I'll show you. It is kinda big bad wolf. [Nick finds a sheep costume in his inventory and clicks on it.] That's just one of that.			
	[Eric looks at Nick's screen to see Nick's Halloween costume.] I have that exact same costume. I have that exact same sheep costume.	Since, when did I have this... [Nick shows another costume from his inventory and talks about it.]			
	[Eric finds the same costume in his inventory and clicks on it.] See, look I have the big bad wolf. A Halloween...	Okay and here, and I have another one. [Nick clicks on the costumes icon in his inventory and uses arrow icons to find the other costumes] I have another one.			
	I am gonna see if I find the evilish costume. [Eric continues looking through his outfits inventory by using arrow icons]	[Nick clicks on several costumes he has so that he can show them to his partner.] Ninja, and the ghost of tomorrow, I can flip in be a dragon if I willing it. [Nick clicks on the dragon costume]			
	Dude that is awesome. [Eric watches Nick's costumes on Nick's screen and makes a comment on his dragon costume] Ohh drag... ohh man, I like the other one...	Yea, blue dragon. Do you wanna see my normal everyday clothes? [Nick chooses a hoodie in black and red colors and sneakers as his everyday outfit. Then, he turns his hair color			

	<i>Dude I can... I hate this [unclear] costume.</i> [Eric tries several costumes to decide which one he needs to wear.] <i>Then, this one. I am a super hero. I am a super hero.</i> [He wears a superhero costume.] <i>Wait, I am gonna make it look like I am wandering around the town.</i> <i>Gonna make it like I am wandering around the town and you need to watch out. Wings, where the wings man? Ohh. I have them already though. Here!</i> <i>Look, it looks like I am wandering through the town and you need to watch out for me. So, this is kind of a scary background.</i>	blonde, and takes sunglasses as accessories. Finally, he takes his skateboard in hand.] <i>Check this out.</i> [Nick dresses his avatar and his puffie in everyday costumes; at the same time, Eric wears his Halloween costume and gets ready to walk around the town.] [Nick turns to Eric's screen to see him walk in town.]	everyday outfits for most of the players. His everyday outfits show that he has a greater material and cultural capital, and he belongs to the upper class in this peer culture.
Nick wants to play with Eric in his own igloo and teaches him how to go to other players' igloos. While trying to go to Nick's igloo, Eric discovers the backyard of his own igloo, and realizes his puffies are staying there. Then, he decides to take his ghost	[Eric turns to Nick and asks] <i>Wait, where is my ghost puffie? Where is my ghost puffie? How do you find the ghost puffie?</i> <i>Okay, igloo, I am clicking on igloo.</i> [He clicks on the igloo icon on screen] <i>No, that was my igloo,</i> [After clicking on the igloo icon his avatar goes to his own igloo] <i>how do you get to other igloos?</i> <i>What door?</i> [Eric looks at another door. When he hovers his mouse on the door, a text	Here, Eric decides to use his ghost puffie that symbolizes his economic and cultural capital in this virtual world, to come together and be friends with the other players that own ghost puffies. Eric's economic and cultural capital transforms to social capital here (Bourdieu,	Eric tries to participate in the upper class with the advantage of holding a paid membership and successfully completing all the required tasks to get a ghost puffie. And, Nick, who sees himself as belonging to the upper class in
Both Eric and Nick read the images and icons on screen and in the menu bar to navigate the online space. Eric also hovers his mouse on the icons on screen and reads the pop-up text boxes while navigating his avatar to			

puffle to his backyard, so other players can see his ghost puffle, take their own ghost puffles to Eric's backyard and have a 'ghost company'.	box pops up, 'Backyard', and he reads it] <i>This, backyard?</i> [Eric clicks on the door icon on the right <u>bottom</u> side on the screen that takes him to the backyard of his igloo.] <i>Okay, I am here. Hey look, my red and pink puffles are here. Ohh, hi guys.</i> <i>Go to what back door?</i>	says] <i>No, not that!</i> [He turns to Eric's screen and sees he is not in the right place] <i>Go into your igloo.</i> <i>Press on that door</i> [This time, Nick closes up Eric's screen and touches the door on the screen.]	1986).	the online space, agrees with Eric's idea and decides to take his ghost puffle to Eric's igloo to be a member of this 'ghost company'.	different places in the virtual world.
	[Eric checks the menu bar at the bottom of the screen and clicks on the igloo icon again.] <i>I am going to my igloo.</i> [Eric sees his ghost puffle in his igloo, and he does not click on the door Nick points out.] <i>Hey, here is my ghost puffle. Walk, [Eric clicks on his ghost puffle and clicks on the walk icon on the pop-up menu], you are gonna come with me. Actually, I am gonna bring them all to the backyard</i> [Eric clicks on the backyard icon on the right bottom of the screen]. <i>So, my other friends can have a ghost company. Geez.</i>	[Nick watches Eric and agrees with his idea.] <i>Yes, I am gonna grab my ghost.</i>			

conversation with Nick, he told me that he frequently visited the official Club Penguins blog in order to learn about the goings on of the virtual world and to learn what items were going to be offered with future themes. So, he was aware of the how popular the blue dragon costume was because he had read about it in the blog, and he wanted to have this costume in his inventory. When the insider players – the long-time members of Club Penguin online community – saw Nick’s costumes that he has consciously chosen, they were able to easily understand that Nick was not just a paid member with purchasing power; rather, they were able to recognize him as an insider member of this online peer culture, a member who is a successful Club Penguin game player, who is knowledgeable regarding the current play going on at the Club Penguin Stage, and who follows blog posts about trending items and current affairs in the Club Penguin virtual world. And it became apparent that Nick took all of this into account while deciding what items to purchase for his avatar.

Nick’s costume choices also indicate that he uses different types of knowledge that he gathered about Club Penguin while deciding on what to wear. His ninja outfits, for instance, were proof of his “intensive knowledge” (Gee, 2004, p. 86) about the Card Jitsu game and show that he was able to collect the ninja outfits by beating the Sensei. With his Ghost of Tomorrow costume, he showed that he had an “extensive knowledge” (Gee, 2004, p. 86) about the current theme and the events that happening in different places in Club Penguin. His blue dragon costume, on the other hand, indicated that he used “dispersed knowledge” (Gee, 2004, p. 86), which he gathered by visiting the official Club Penguin blog, which made him aware of the popularity of this costume among Club Penguin players. All of this suggests that none of Nick’s costume choices were random,

as each costume choice was actually mediated by different types of knowledge that he gathered in and out of the Club Penguin Club.

In addition to the Halloween costumes, the paid members showed off their virtual goods to one another. For instance, Nick showed Eric his “normal everyday outfits,” which are not actually everyday outfits for most of the players in Club Penguin. Nick opened his inventory and chose a red and black hoodie and sneakers as one of his everyday outfits (see Table 6.2). Then, he changed his hair color to blonde, and wore sunglasses as accessories. Finally, he completed his “everyday outfit” by adding to it his skateboard. His everyday outfits show that he has greater material and cultural capital than most of the players in this virtual world, so he belongs to the upper class in this peer culture. In addition to their outfits, Eric and Nick talked about a number of other topics that were not topics of interest for basic members such as the snacks they chose for their puffles, the new look of their igloos, and the special items they collected from Club Penguin mini-games.

Not surprisingly, the basic members’ limited access to the virtual goods in the online space caused them to isolate themselves from the other players and continue playing individually. It seems facing several restrictions throughout the virtual world – in terms of purchasing outfits for their avatars, decorating their igloos with new furniture, adopting special puffles, and collecting new items from the games – caused basic members to develop a habitus, within which Club Penguin is not a virtual world where they can socialize with other players but rather a collection of mini-games that they can play and have fun. It is also possible to see this habitus in Ben and Diana. While Nick and

Eric spent most of their time in their own or in their partner's igloos, playing with puffles and talking about outfits and igloo decorations, Ben and Diana, who are restricted from having some of those virtual goods, could not engage in any social activities with other online players, and they never visited their igloos to play with puffles or dress up their avatars; instead, Ben and Diana spent their time playing mini-games in Club Penguin and doing so separately, on their own.

On the other hand, the new play environments and new opportunities offered to Nick and Eric as paid members caused them to change their habitus as well (Bourdieu, 1977), and it seems that they began thinking that they belonged to the upper social class, which was comprised of members with greater economic and cultural capitals. This change in their habitus also enriched their interaction with both one another and other online players, and it caused them to spend considerable time together talking about costumes, igloo designs, and puffle tricks, and not playing mini-games. It seems Nick and Eric had become aware of their advantaged positions, since they began trying to find their place in this online space by using the materials they gathered from the games, the materials that indicated that they were at least slightly different from most of the other players in this virtual world. This was apparent when Eric wore his "most Halloweenish" costume and took a walk in town, and when Nick showed off his Halloween costumes that had meaning for the insider players or wore his "normal everyday outfits" that were vastly different from the everyday outfits for most of the online players.

Bourdieu argues that "economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 177), and each type of capital can be converted into other types of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Economic capital can be transformed into social capital

since those who are economically advantaged can often easily make connections with other people whose economic conditions are similar. Cultural capital can also be transformed into social capital since people who are successful in their work are honored by others and are able to easily gain status in their communities. In the Club Penguin club, we see that Eric (see Table 6.2) was attempting to gain social status by transforming his economic and cultural capitals into social capital. For example, he used his ghost puffle to get together with other players with ghost puffles in the online space.

Walk, you are gonna come with me [talking to his ghost puffle]. Actually, I am gonna bring them all [referring his puffles] to the backyard to play. So, my other friends can have a ghost company. Geez! (Eric, Oct. 27, 2014)

Up to this moment, Eric's ghost puffle provided him with economic capital because it showed that he was a paid member and had economic power in this online space, and it also served as a means of cultural capital because it symbolized being a successful player in the virtual world. However, after this moment, his economic and cultural capitals were transformed into social capital that provided him with an opportunity to get together with other players with ghost puffles.

We see the effect of this habitus, feeling as though the player belongs to the upper social class, when the paid members only want to come together with other players who have access to the same opportunities and, as a result, disregard the basic members, the members from the lower class. During my three years of experience in Club Penguin, I came to realize that all of the paid members, not only these two, have access to several privileges, which makes them more willing to befriend others who have the same access to the same privileges. In the first two years of this study, my study participants played exclusively with basic member accounts, and when they sent friendship requests to online

paid members, they were rarely accepted as friends (Wohlwend & Kargin, 2013). In the last year of this research, when I began to look at what the paid member players did when they received a friendship request, I realized that the first thing they did was to check out the other player's outfits, and visit the other player's igloo to assess its decoration and furniture. The wealth of the player became the main factor that determined whether or not a friend request would be accepted. If the request came from a basic member with not-so-fancy clothes, and if the recipient did not know the basic member from the offline world, then the recipient would usually disregard the request and continue playing games. In contrast, if it was coming from a paid member with nice outfits and a well-decorated igloo, the recipient would usually accept the request right away and start chatting or visiting the new friend's igloo.

In sum, having economic power and being successful in the games are two important factors that affect participation in the online and offline spaces. It is revealed with the analysis of basic members' interactions that having restrictions in the online space and encountering warning messages in throughout the virtual space changed the basic members' habitus, and it made them feel as though Club Penguin was no longer a social context wherein they could spend time with friends and play games together; rather, it was just a collection of mini-games. This change in their habitus negatively affected their practices in both online and the offline spaces, and it prompted them to play individually. In contrast, having unlimited access to the online environment allowed paid members to experience new games and collect new items, which started new conversations and collaborative plays both in the online and the offline spaces. In addition, having material and cultural capital, and engaging in demanded participation

practices, led paid members to develop a habitus of believing that they belonged to the upper social class in the Club Penguin virtual world. They used their material and cultural capitals to earn status in this peer culture and to get in touch with other upper-class players.

Changes in Literacy Practices

While playing in the virtual world, children engaged in several literacy practices regardless of their membership type. First, they used the keyboard and mouse to navigate their avatars on screen. This is an important digital literacy practice for five- to eight-year-old children, as it allows them to practice hand-eye coordination and typing skills. In addition, the children read and understood the functions of all the different images and icons on the screen, and they clicked on an appropriate one when it became necessary. To be able to manage the virtual game environment, children needed to know what purpose each icon or image served. As seen in Table 6.1, within 10 minutes of play, Nick and Eric used images and icons on the screen for a total of 4 minutes and 12 seconds in order to navigate their avatars to the right places to serve their purposes. Ben and Diana, however, only used icons and images on the screen for a total of 38 seconds during their six minutes of play.

The children also read the text available in the virtual world, including pop-up screen messages, game instructions, information about puffles, and catalogs for new outfits and furniture, so that they could continue playing within the virtual space. With regard to the quantity of the children's readings, while Nick and Eric read the available texts 15 times (2 minutes and 2 seconds) during their 10 minutes of play, Ben and Diana

read such texts seven times (35 seconds) during their six minutes of play. When comparing these in terms of reading acts per minute, it is apparent that there was little difference between the paid member pair and the basic member pair. However, when we look at the quality of their readings, the differences are more profound.

With the advantage of experiencing “new” in the Club Penguin virtual world without any restrictions, Nick and Eric encountered new instructions and pop-up screen messages after adopting their ghost puffles. For instance, they followed the instructions while naming their ghost puffles, and they read the pop-up screen message that said, “Walk your puffle creatures to the hotel to take care of them.” After a while, when they got back to their igloos, they searched the dropdown menu associated with their outfits inventory to show each other the items they have. They opened their inventory, read through the dropdown menu and clicked on the *body items* icon, for example, while showing each other their Halloween costumes, or the *head items* icon to show one another the different kinds of hats they had each purchased. Nick also read through the list of soundtracks so as to choose one to play in his igloo.

None of these texts were necessary (if they were even available) for Ben and Diana to read as basic members. After the pair failed to adopt a ghost puffle, these basic members played several mini games with which they were already familiar and thus only encountered the messages with which they were already familiar. Therefore, in contrast to Nick and Eric, Ben and Diana did not pay as much attention to the texts they encountered. They knew that the texts they encountered with were just the directions to

start a new game, so they gave them a cursory and clicked on “Next” or “OK” icons to continue.

In addition to reading activities, children wrote in order to serve a number of purposes while in Club Penguin. For example, they typed so as to chat with other online players, they asked questions of the editor of the Club Penguin Times newspaper, they shared jokes in the newspaper with other players, and they wrote comments on the official Club Penguin blog. However, the number of writing activities in which the children engaged was considerably lower than the number of reading activities in which they engaged while in Club Penguin. For example, after adopting their ghost puffles, Nick and Eric wrote something only once (the name of their respective puffles), and because they had no cause to write anything, neither Ben nor Diana wrote at all during their six minutes of play.

To sum, children’s play in Club Penguin consists of the nexus of consumerism, participation and literacy practices. Each one of these practices is, in one way or another, linked to the other practices. In the transformative event analyzed here, paid members engaged in consumerism practices, and these engagements prompted a change in their habitus, which made them feel that they belonged to the upper social class. The material and cultural capitals of the paid members were transformed into social capital when they got together with other players who also had ghost puffles. Here, their consumerism practice affected their participation in the online space. Again, being equipped with the advantages that came with being a paid member motivated them to continue playing together with one another, and it also affected their participation in the offline space. The

rich interaction in the online and offline spaces and having no restriction in access to the online places and the virtual goods affected children's engagements with literacy practices. They read the instructions and pop-up screen messages they encountered in the new play environments, and used icons and images to navigate the online context. They also actively typed so as to name their puffles. Reading the instructions and pop-up screen messages and using the menu bar icons and images, served as means of engaging in literacy practices, which in turn, allowed the children to navigate the online context and engage in richer participation practices within the Club Penguin club.

As seen in this transformative event, Club Penguin's commercial design and its two-tiered membership policy mediated the children's interactions in the virtual world. On one hand, experiencing unlimited access to the virtual goods and the online places mediated paid members' consumerism, participation, and literacy practices in the Club Penguin club, and as a result, these players purchased several outfits and accessories; decorated their igloos with theme-related furniture; adopted several puffles, including the special ones; and collected several friends. On the other hand, the frequent warning messages that invited basic members to purchase memberships served to mediate the basic members' consumerism, participation, and literacy practices, and as a result, these members had no choice but to play games and collect coins that were of no use to them instead of dress up avatars, decorate igloos, or adopt special puffles.

Mixed Status Pairs: Basic Member and Paid Member Pairs

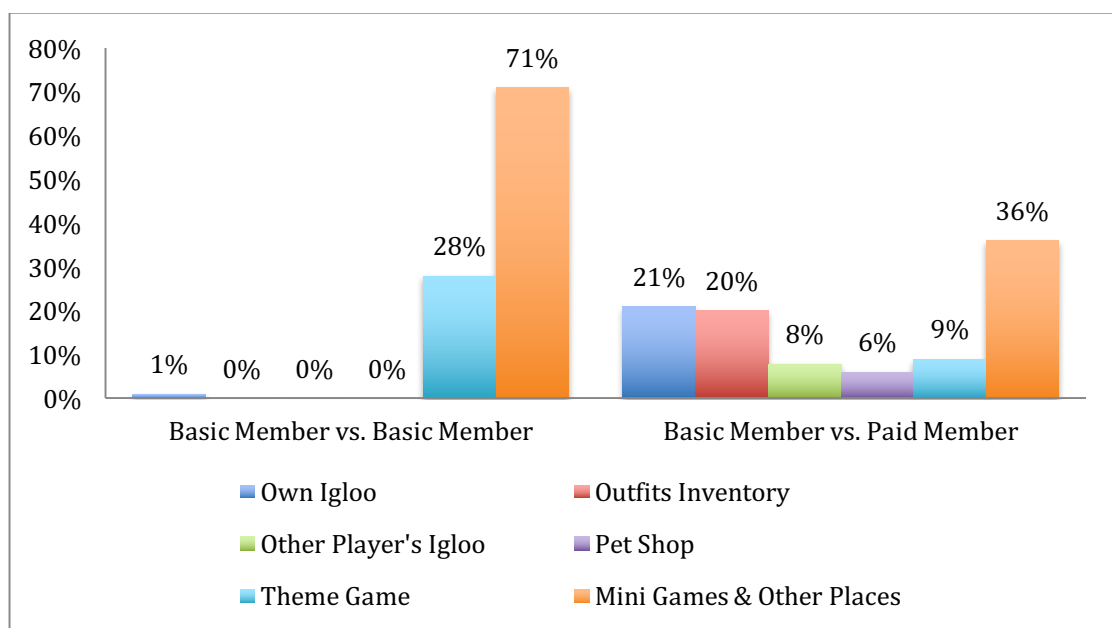
Places Visited by Basic Member-Paid Member Pairs

As discussed previously, paid members see Club Penguin as a social space within which they can spend time with friends. Therefore, they care about what other players think about their appearance in this online space. To gain status in this virtual world, they spend significant amounts of time in their igloos, decorating them with different furniture they had previously purchased and taking care of their special puffles they just adopted. Paid members also spend considerable amounts of time in their outfits inventories, looking through their clothes and frequently changing their outfits out of concern regarding what others will think of them and whether they will be able to achieve and maintain status in this virtual space. Because of the limited opportunities offered to them, basic members do not prefer to engage in any Club Penguin activities beyond playing mini games. However, when basic members were paired with the paid members in the afterschool program, both the paid members' and the basic members' interactions in the online space changed. While playing with their paid member partners, the basic members saw what kind of activities the paid members engaged in, in addition to playing games, and they started trying those activities. Conversely, to show basic members the fancy items they have purchased, the paid member-only rewards they have collected from games, and the special puffles they have adopted, paid members spent significantly more time their igloos, dressing up their avatars and taking care of their puffles.

Upon analyzing Chart 6.3, which simply reports the changes in places visited by the basic members when they switched their play partners to paid members by summarizing all of the data gathered from the basic members, it is evident that there is a

dramatic change in the time the players spent in their own igloos. While playing with the other basic members, the basic members spent only about 1% of their time in their own igloos, and the rest of the time, they played the themed game or the Club Penguin mini games. However, when they paired were with paid members, the basic members spent 21% of their time in their own igloos, and instead of playing other games, they played with their puffles. While the basic members played with other basic members, they did not care about their puffles because they were not allowed to have special ones. However, when they saw their paid member partners feeding their puffles, showing their puffles' tricks to other players, and taking them for walks in town, the basic members also began assessing what they could do with their own puffles. In addition, while the basic members never visited the pet shop when they played with the other basic members, it is noted in Chart 6.3 that when the played with a paid member partner they spent 6% of their time in the pet shop to adopt a basic puffle or to purchase puffle snacks to feed their puffles.

Chart 6.3. Comparison of the Places Basic Members Visited When They Played with Basic Members and Paid Members



Another important difference noted in the chart is the time the basic members spent visiting their outfit inventory. As was mentioned a number of in the previous chapters, basic members are subject to restrictions with regard to their ability to purchase outfits for their avatars. Even though they are allowed to purchase some basic items from the Penguin Style catalogs and earn outfits from some games (e.g., ninja outfits from the Card Jitsu game), they never visited their outfits inventory when they played with their basic member partners. However, when they played with the paid members, we can see that the basic members spent 20% of their time looking through the items in their inventories and choosing outfits for their avatars. Sometimes, when they saw their play partners' fancy outfits, they would say to those paid member partners, "This is my everyday clothing" (Scott, October 13, 2014) while talking about very basic items such as a t-shirt and sneakers. And sometimes, in attempt to balance the economic disadvantage to which they were subject, the basic members used the materials they earned by making progress in Card Jitsu and wore some special ninja outfits (see Table 6.4).

While, the basic members never visited their friends' igloos when playing with the basic members, after they spent some time in their own igloos, and saw their paid member partners play in their respective igloos, the basic members started visiting their play partners' igloos, and spent 8% of their time in other players' igloos. When we compare the ways basic members spent their time overall, we can see in Chart 6.3 that they spent approximately 99% of their time playing games when they played with other basic members, and they dramatically decreased the time they spent on games to 45% when they played with the paid members. The rest of the time, they engaged a number of other activities such as changing clothes, visiting other players' igloos, or staying in their

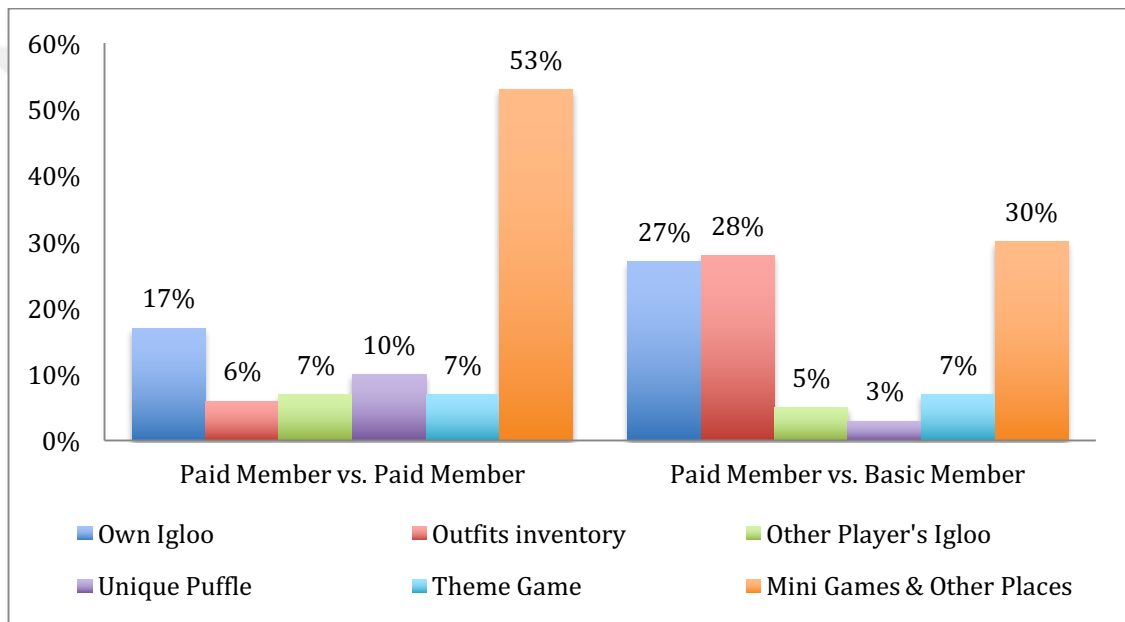
own igloos to take care of their puffles. All of these changes in the participation practices of basic members in the online space shows that the basic members learned from their paid member partners the values and expectations in this peer culture and socialized in the nexus. This “extensive” and “tacit knowledge” (Gee, 2004) the basic members built up over time by interacting with paid members served to mediate their future activities.

Bourdieu (1984) argues that in a society, the higher-level social groups determine the taste of the society (taste in food, taste in music, taste in arts, taste in clothing, etc.) based on their social origins, and economic, cultural and social capitals, and the lower social groups accept this taste, and the distinction between their culture and the higher-level culture as legitimate and natural. The taste of the higher-level group dominates the tastes of the other groups in the society and forces people to accept the aesthetic criteria of the higher-level group. The people who do not conform to those aesthetic criteria are recognized as tasteless persons in the society. The change in the activities of the basic members after playing with their paid member partners may be attributable to Bourdieu’s (1984) Distinction Theory. Even though they were aware of their limitations in terms of accessing virtual goods, so as not to appear to others as a crude or tasteless player, the basic members, who recognized the tastes of the paid members with regard to clothing, furnishings and engagement with puffles, tried to engage in similar activities to the extent to which the commercial design of Club Penguin permitted them.

When Chart 6.4 is analyzed, we can see that dramatic differences also exist with regard to the time the paid members spent in their own igloos and outfits inventories when they played with the basic members. Normally, when the paid members played with the other paid members, they spent 17% of their times in their own igloos either

decorating or taking care of their puffles. However, when they played with the basic members, they spent 27% of their time in their own igloos. In the time they spent in their own igloos, they primarily talked about their furniture, showed off their puffle's tricks to the basic members, and fed their puffles the snacks they had purchased.

Chart 6.4. Comparison of the Places Paid Members Visited When They Played with Paid Members and Basic Members



Similarly, the time the paid members spent looking through their inventories and changing their outfits was noticeably longer when they played with the basic members. While they only spent about 6% of their time on choosing outfits for their avatars when they played with other paid members, they spent 28% of their time in their outfits inventories when they played with basic members. While choosing their outfits, the paid members showed their inventory to their basic member play partners and sought their partners' opinions as well. To see how paring a basic member with a paid member prompted changes in both the basic and the paid members' interactions, and to bring to

the foreground how these players used their economic, cultural and material capitals to earn status in this peer culture, a case is analyzed in detail below.

Transformative Event II: Playing Across Membership Classes: Playing Together or Showing Off?

Being a play partner with a player who has the other type of membership is considered an important event and will be analyzed in detail in this section since having this experience caused different interactions between players and affected their participation in the Club Penguin club. The case that is going to be discussed in this section was videotaped in session six. In this case, eight -year -old boys, William and Scott, played together for about 32 minutes. William was one of the first players to receive a paid membership account in session five, and he progressed quite a lot within a week by playing at home. Even though William was not an experienced Club Penguin player, he had a strong background with several other online games, which meant that he was pretty fast in figuring out the game rules and the norms of the Club Penguin club peer culture. Scott was an experienced player who joined Club Penguin for eight sessions in Spring 2013. He was still a basic account holder in session six, but he had played several games, and collected thousands of coins and several virtual goods from the games by that time. During their play, both William and Scott engaged in consumerism, participation and literacy practices (see Table 6.3 and Table 6.4). While William used his economic and material capitals to achieve status in the eyes of his play partner, Scott used his cultural capital, his experience and the virtual goods (e.g., ninja outfits) he earned from the games by making progress to balance the economic disadvantage to which he was subject.

Table 6.3. Paid Member vs. Basic Member Interactions

Practices the Players Engaged In		William (Paid Member)	Scott (Basic member)
Participation Practices	<i>Playing together</i>	32 minutes	
	<i>Helping each other:</i> Asking questions when struggling and answering each other's questions or taking over his/her mouse to solve the problems	26 sec.	45 sec.
	<i>Sharing expertise:</i> Explaining the game rules and place features without receiving any questions	--	21 sec.
	<i>Inviting to play together:</i> Guiding partners to a certain place to play a game together	14 sec. (5 times)	19 sec. (3 times)
	<i>Showing off:</i> Showing other players puffles' tricks, igloos' designs, and owned costumes/outfits	1 min. 49 sec. (mostly the paid member-only purchased items)	1 min. 23 sec. (mostly the items earned from the games)
	<i>Dressing up:</i> Choosing outfits/accessories from their inventories	9 min. 21 sec. (mostly the paid member-only purchased items)	8 min. 31 sec. (mostly the items earned from the games)
Literacy Practices	<i>Image and icon reading:</i> Reading icons and images and clicking on appropriate icons	4min. 55 sec.	3 min. 30 sec.
	<i>Print reading:</i> Reading pop-up screen messages, postcards, chat messages, instructions and other available texts	3min.	2 min. 42sec.
	<i>Writing:</i> Typing to log in, to send a message or to name a puffle	1 min. 28 sec.	28 sec.
	<i>Icon writing:</i> Choosing an emoticon from the dropdown menu to express feelings	5 sec.	5 sec.
Consumerism Practices	<i>Engaging in paid member-only events:</i> Purchasing outfits and furniture, adopting special puffles, collecting paid member-only rewards, etc.	9 min. 21 sec.	--

Changes in Consumerism Practices

From the very first interaction to the end of the session, both William and Scott looked through their outfit inventories and showed each other what outfits they had collected. The intentional design of Club Penguin, which offers paid members a number of privileges, allowed William to transform his economic capital into material capital (Bourdieu, 1986) by offering him the freedom to collect virtual goods. Thus, William bought tens of items for his avatar and collected several rewards from the games within a

week, and used these items to earn status among his friends, including his play partner Scott, in the online and offline spaces. We can see how William used his material capital to earn status when he wore his gold hat, gold sunglasses, gold jacket, and gold shoes before taking his puffle for a walk in town. He also chose a dog puffle to take for a walk because only paid members can adopt dog puffles, so walking this puffle further demonstrated that William was a higher-level player with the means to adopt such a puffle.

William used his material capital to achieve status in this peer culture. This can also be seen in his comments, as they indicate that he used these items purposefully to affect other online players. For example, he stated, “People’ll be blind after they see me” (see Table 6.4), which makes it clear that he understood what his outfit would suggest to other people about his upper class status. Scott, however, as a basic member, encountered several hurdles as he attempted to balance his economic disadvantage against his play partner William. When William showed Scott all of his special items, Scott began to recognize William as an advanced player with more opportunities available to him in the online space. To balance the economic disadvantage that came with being a basic member, Scott used his cultural capital – his rich experience in the virtual world and progress in the games. His cultural capital was also transformed into material capital (Bourdieu, 1986) when he successfully completed tasks and earned special costumes from the games. For instance, one time Scott wore his spy outfit that he had earned by completing Elite Penguin Force (E.P.F.) agent missions, and he invited his play partner to complete the E.P.F. missions with him so that he could demonstrate how good was at the game. Another time, Scott played Card Jitsu with his partner while wearing his black belt

and explained to his partner that earning a black belt requires more practice. To balance his economic disadvantage against William, we see that Scott used one of the outfits (and outfit William did not own) he had earned via game progress. However, since William had several more fancy outfits and accessories than Scott did, Scott was successful only up to a point in his attempts to balance his economic disadvantage against William (see Table 6.4).

Changes in Participation Practices

This section will analyze the participation practices of the players in the Club Penguin club with regard to both offline participation practices and online participation practices. In the offline space, we can see that Scott used his expertise to gain status in the eyes of his play partner and the other players in the computer room (see Table 6.3). On several occasions, he shared his knowledge with his partner, answered his questions and followed him while he played to see if he understood what to do. For instance, even William did not ask, Scott was always ready to give William directions to find a place in the virtual world; he pointed out the places where William needed to go on the map. He also told his partner the things he has done as an E.P.F agent and gave information about what the E.P.F. agents do in Club Penguin. Scott also invited his play partner to play games with him; Scott chose games at which he had excelled such as the E.P.F. agent and Card Jitsu Fire games. And William recognized Scott's long-time experience in Club Penguin and asked him questions when he struggled. He got help from Scott when he could not log into Club Penguin because of a typo in the password field. He also asked questions when he could not figure out how to play the mini games. For example, William asked how to play Aqua Grabber, and Scott explained the game rules. Another

time, he could not skate in the Skate Park and asked Scott what he was supposed to do, and Scott showed him how to skate. Showing his expertise and being open to helping his play partner balanced his economic disadvantage up to a point and allowed him to earn status in the offline space.

When Scott's participation in the online space is analyzed, we see an interesting transaction in his practices as a basic member. As mentioned previously, while changing outfits, spending time in igloos and taking care of their puffles were very common participation practices for the paid members, basic members, who have very few items available in this virtual world, usually do not care about their outfits, their puffles or the design of their igloos when they play with the other basic members. However, when Scott paired with William, after watching his play partner, he began trying to do some of the things paid members do in this virtual world. For instance, right after they started playing in the virtual world, Scott watched William while he was changing his outfits and he admired several items he had in his inventory. Then Scott began thinking about what he could wear, and opened his inventory to find an appropriate outfit (see Table 6.4). Sometimes, this happened at William's behest, just like when he suggested that they play as twins, and other times, this was a result of Scott's initiation, just like when he wore his game-earned materials in order to balance his economic disadvantage. This change in the participation practices of basic members is an important change because wearing outfits and taking a puffle for a walk are important indicators that one is an insider in this virtual world, and this affects the players' status in this peer culture.

Table 6.4. Basic Member vs. Paid Member: Consumerism, Participation and Literacy Practices

Online Space	Player 1: William (Paid Member) Talk & Action	Player 2: Scott (Basic Member) Talk & Action	Nexus of Practices		
			Consumerism Practice	Participation Practice	Literacy Practice
After logging onto their accounts, and choosing the same servers, which is necessary to see each other on screen, the first thing both William and Scott did was to open their outfits inventories and change their outfits. This is very common practice for the paid members, but not for the basic members.	[William opens his outfits inventory, and begins searching for his gold outfits.] <i>I had gold hat one. And also had gold hair. No, I have a gold hat one.</i> [He clicks on the arrow keys on screen and clicks on the gold hat and gold hair in his inventory.] <i>I am gonna try, and put everything back on.</i> [He continues searching other items that he has by using the arrow keys. He finds gold sunglasses and clicks on it.] <i>Trying to remember, everything that I had. Wanna get gold jet-pack.</i> [He clicks on his gold jet-pack and continues searching.] <i>Go down... I want my gold shoes. Where's my gold shoes?</i> <i>Yep, there we go.</i> [William finally finds his gold shoes and clicks on them. Now, he has a gold hat, gold sunglasses, gold jacket, gold jet-pack, and gold shoes on him.] <i>My gold bank strippers... That's what I needed.</i> <i>And, now I need to go play.</i> [William closes his outfits	[Scott watches William screen and watches when he wears his gold outfits.] <i>Ohh, yea.</i> [Scott says when William wears his gold sunglasses.] [Scott turns back his own screen and opens his outfits inventory to see what he has.] <i>That is pretty much the only thing...</i> [says Scott, after he chooses his fire ninja outfits that he earned by making good progress in Card Jitsu game, then he stops talking and takes off his ninja outfit.] [Scott clicks on a red and blue hoodie in his inventory, and turns	William looks through tens of items he has in his inventory and wears gold items. And then, he takes his dog puffle, which is available only for paid members, for a walk in the town. The material capital that William has gives him a status in this online space. Appearance of his avatar and his puffle show that he is from the upper class in this virtual world. On the other hand, Scott can only wear his everyday outfits consisting of the items available for everyone in this virtual world.	While changing outfits is very common participation practice for the paid members, basic members, who have very few items available in this virtual world, usually do not care about their outfits. However, when Scott paired with his paid member partner, we see here that Scott watches William while he is changing his outfits and admires several items he has in his inventory. Then Scott begins thinking about what he should wear and opens his inventory to find an appropriate outfit.	Both William and Scott read the text in the drop-down menu of the outfit inventory, and icons and images on screen while finding their outfits. The players also use the mouse and the arrow keys to choose the outfit they want.

After changing outfits. William and Scott meet in the town. Then, both of them got back to their own igloos and played with their puffles. They showed each other the tricks of their puffles. William also fed his puffles with several foods he had in his inventory. Finally, they compared the	inventory and goes to his own igloo.] [In his own igloo, William sees his puffles and begins thinking about which one he is going to play with.] <i>Himm, which puffle I... I wanna take Mr. Rainbow.</i> [He clicks on one of his puffles and looks at the pop-up text box for the puffle's name.]. <i>No, this is Eva, I am taking her for a walk.</i> [He realizes the name of the puffle is Eva, and looks at another puffle]. <i>Let's see, you know what, I am gonna take doggy for a walk.</i> [He clicks on his dog puffle and clicks on 'walk' icon on pop-up menu.]	to William and says] <i>Okay, I just put on my normal everyday clothes. This is what I normally wear. I just wear this...</i> [He clicks on a pair of shoes that basic members can purchase through Penguin Style catalog, and clicks on a red baseball hat, which is actually a reward that is given to everyone that opens a new account.] <i>This is my normal everyday clothes.</i> [He closes his outfits inventory and goes to the town.]	Again, spending time in the igloo and taking care of the puffles is a very common practice for the paid members. However, the basic members usually do not go their own igloos because there are only two puffles available for basic members to adopt and very few items to decorate their igloos. However, we see in this example, the basic member who sees his paid	While taking care of puffles, both Scott and William read the menu bar icons and images, and the pop-up texts on screen. While watching the reflections of their puffles when they brush their hairs or feed them with different snacks, they also read the facial expressions of their puffles. They also read and use the icons,
	inventory and goes to his own igloo.] [In his own igloo, William sees his puffles and begins thinking about which one he is going to play with.] <i>Himm, which puffle I... I wanna take Mr. Rainbow.</i> [He clicks on one of his puffles and looks at the pop-up text box for the puffle's name.]. <i>No, this is Eva, I am taking her for a walk.</i> [He realizes the name of the puffle is Eva, and looks at another puffle]. <i>Let's see, you know what, I am gonna take doggy for a walk.</i> [He clicks on his dog puffle and clicks on 'walk' icon on pop-up menu.]	to William and says] <i>Okay, I just put on my normal everyday clothes. This is what I normally wear. I just wear this...</i> [He clicks on a pair of shoes that basic members can purchase through Penguin Style catalog, and clicks on a red baseball hat, which is actually a reward that is given to everyone that opens a new account.] <i>This is my normal everyday clothes.</i> [He closes his outfits inventory and goes to the town.]	Again, spending time in the igloo and taking care of the puffles is a very common practice for the paid members. However, the basic members usually do not go their own igloos because there are only two puffles available for basic members to adopt and very few items to decorate their igloos. However, we see in this example, the basic member who sees his paid	While taking care of puffles, both Scott and William read the menu bar icons and images, and the pop-up texts on screen. While watching the reflections of their puffles when they brush their hairs or feed them with different snacks, they also read the facial expressions of their puffles. They also read and use the icons,
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likes they received from other players. Spending time in their own igloos and taking care of puffles is a common practice for the paid members, but not for the basic members.	[William takes a tour in his well decorated pretty large igloo by the way, and goes to upstairs. Then, he turns to Scott screen to watch his puffle while he is surfing. Then, he turns back his own screen, clicks on his rainbow puffle, and starts taking care of him.] <i>Himn, do you want food? He wants this!</i> [William is asking to his puffle here. He clicks on a cookie icon in the menu bar among several foods he has, and drags it down to his rainbow puffle. His rainbow puffle starts jumping as if he is so happy.] <i>Yea, because of the membership.</i> <i>Owww man, watch this, watch this. You are gonna watch this.</i> [William wants to show Scott a trick of his rainbow puffle. He points to his rainbow puffle on screen. His rainbow puffle sits in a king chair and watches another puffle bouncing out of a box.] [William continues playing with	surfing.] <i>Look! Look out what my red puffle does. He surfs.</i> [Scott turns to William and says] <i>I wanna take a bath like that!</i> [Scott laughs.] <i>He does not like this!</i> [Scott is talking about his own puffle. After his puffle takes a bath, Scott clicks on brush icon, and starts brushing his puffle's hair. His puffle's facial expressions show he is not so happy with this. Then, Scott turns to William screen and watches him when he is feeding his rainbow puffle.] <i>Damn, you have a lot food.</i> <i>I know.</i> [Scott turns to William's screen and watches his puffle's trick.] <i>It is just like, it is just like he is the king and he just watches something.</i> [After a while, Scott realizes	becomes very excited when he got a like from his friend and wants to show this to William. And William shows Scott that he has 30 likes, which is a lot more likes than Scott has. Finally, when Scott wants to visit his partner's igloo, he realizes that his partner's igloo is actually one of the most popular igloos. Each time Scott compares his stuff with William, he realizes that William has better stuff. All of these material capitals that William has with the paid membership give him a status among his friends in the afterschool program.	member partner takes his special dog puffle for a walk, decides to go back to his own igloo and play with his own puffle. He has fun spending time in his igloo and playing with his puffle, but each time he compares himself with his partner, Scott realizes that his partner has better opportunities, and this positions William in a better status in the eyes of Scott.	images and texts on screen while traveling in the virtual world and visiting each others' igloos. Again, they use the mouse and keyboard in an appropriate way to navigate their avatars and use the online space.

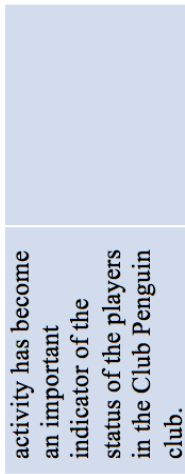
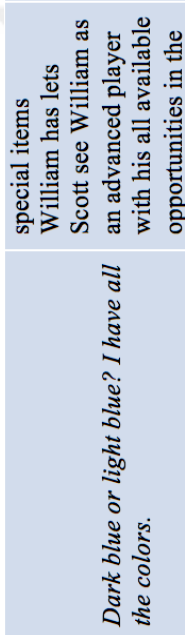
This time, William plays a	his rainbow puffle and watches his different tricks for a while.] <i>Dude, I <u>wanna</u> show you, I only got 30 likes.</i> [William checks how many penguins liked his igloo.] <i>Dude, your friends liked this.</i> [William takes a look at Scott's like list and sees they have a couple likes from the same penguins.] <i>Actually, I liked myself.</i> [He laughs.] [Both William and Scott play for a while in their own igloos.] <i>Sure, I would...</i> [William also clicks on the map icon.]	someone just liked his igloo and wants to show this to his partner. He turns to William and asks him to look at his screen.] <i>Look, look my friend liked my igloo. See? Look!</i> [He points out the right top corner of screen where the penguins that like the igloo appear.] <i>Here the penguins that liked my igloo. Do you see?</i> <i>That's what I just did. But, seriously, here is my only...</i> [Scott also checks both his and William's like lists and realizes he has less like.] [Scott turns to William screen after a while, watches him for a second and asks] <i>Okay, do you <u>wanna</u> play a game, like Card Jitsu?</i> [Scott clicks on map icon to go to Card Jitsu.] <i>Or, I am coming to your igloo.</i> [Scott clicks on igloos on the map to go to William's igloo and realizes that William's igloo is under the popular igloos list.] <i><u>Qwww</u>, wait, your igloo is popular, wow!</i> [Scott opens his outfits inventory, and starts taking off his 'everyday	To be able to balance the	Scott starts wearing outfits appropriate	William reads the pop-up menu to

Cart Surf game to collect coins, Scott again opens his outfits inventory and wears his spy outfits. Then, Scott invites William to play E.P.F. agent game at which he is very successful.	to navigate his cart and collect coins. He also takes a look at Scott's screen every few seconds.] <i>What?</i> [William is unfamiliar with E.P.F agent games, and does not understand what Scott means. He turns to Scott's screen and sees he is in Ski Lodge.] <i>Qww, is that your house?</i>	clothes'.] <i>I just wanna wear my spy outfit right now for some reason. For some reason, I just wanna wear my spy outfit, for some reason. I do not know why, just wanna...</i> [Scott searches through his outfits inventory, finds the E.P.F. agent outfit that he earned by completing missions, and clicks on it.] <i>I need to go to E.P.F place.</i> [E.P.F. stands for Elite Penguin Force. As an E.P.F. agent Scott goes to E.P.F. office, reads the missions and tries to accomplish missions to keep Club Penguin safe.] <i>I would, I tell you, do you wanna play [unclear].</i> [Scott invites William to play an E.P.F. agent game together.] <i>Do you?</i> <i>I wish it was. Sometimes, I come here and use it as my house.</i> [Scott walks back and forth in the Ski Lodge.]	economic disadvantage he has, Scott uses his cultural capital – his proficiency in games. He wears his spy outfits that he earned by completing E.P.F. agent missions, and invites his play partner to complete the E.P.F. missions together with him so that he can demonstrate that he is very good at it.	to the games he plays in Club Penguin. So, he chooses spy outfit before playing E.P.F. agent games. Scott also knows different places in the virtual world, and tells his play partner even though he does not have a nice igloo, he sometimes uses Ski Lodge as his house.	start the Cart Surf game, and uses arrow keys to play the game. Scott, reads the drop down menu, icons and images and pop-up texts while changing the outfits of his avatar. Then, he uses the menu bar onscreen, reads and uses icons, images and pop-up texts to navigate his avatar in the virtual world.
William and Scott decided to play Card Jitsu game together. After they finished their game, Scott invited William	<i>Here, go up to Chinese place.</i> [Chinese place refers to Card Jitsu game here, both William and Scott click on Card Jitsu in the map to play together] <i>Okay.</i> [William takes his	<i>Okay, let's just do a Card Jitsu battle. I am on black belt by the way.</i> [He navigates his avatar on screen and takes his position, and hits OK icon on the pop-up menu to start the game.] <i>I play this all the time at home.</i>	Card Jitsu is a game that both basic and paid members play and earn ninja outfits. Since, there are very limited items available to purchase for basic	In terms of participation in the online space, we see here something different from the other examples. This is the first time the basic member is in a	In this game, players have to read the type of the cards (e.g., fire, water, snow), and their power that is shown by number from 1 to

to play Card <u>Jitsu</u> . Fire, which is an upper-level Card <u>Jitsu</u> game. However, William did not want to play that game. They compared and contrasted their progress in Card <u>Jitsu</u> games by looking at their progress tables. Finally, they changed their outfits and made comments about each others' outfits.	position as well to start the game, and he listens to Scott while the game is loading.]	<i>You can probably <u>tell</u>. I am a fire ninja already.</i> <i>And you not look... [Scott sees William does not have a black belt but a red belt.] That's how I earned black belt.</i> <i>Do not look at what I am choosing. Got it? [Scott does not want William to look at his screen because in this game if a player sees the other one's cards, then he can choose a card from his own inventory accordingly to beat him. So, looking at other player's screen and seeing his cards is kind of cheating in Card <u>Jitsu</u> game.]</i> <i>I am already a fire ninja. [Scott opens his outfits inventory and starts wearing his fire ninja outfit that he earned by completing all the tasks in Card <u>Jitsu</u> Fire game.] Do you <u>wanna</u> play Card <u>Jitsu</u> fire battle?</i> <i>I am very good at the fire battle.</i> <i>I have all those stuff. Well, you can practice on your own.</i>	members, some basic members like Scott, try to balance their disadvantage with the outfits they earn in this game. Scott is an experienced player in Card <u>Jitsu</u>, and playing this game with William lets him earn status in the eyes of his less experienced partner. Scott encourages his partner by saying he earned his belt by practicing the game with others. On the other hand, William, who is not as good as his partner, does not want to continue playing this game. At the end, William wears available ninja outfit items he earned from this game, and then he changes his outfits with other special costumes that Scott does not have. William balances the disadvantage of being less	better position than the paid member. Scott is a more experienced player in Card <u>Jitsu</u>, and has several items earned from this game. Therefore, he is willing to continue playing this game with his paid member partner. However, William does not want to continue playing this game that puts him in a disadvantaged position.	10 to be able to choose the appropriate cards to beat their play partners. Therefore, both William and Scott read the images and the numbers on the cards. While comparing their progress, they also read the texts and images in the progress tables. While changing their outfits, they also read the drop down menu, icons and images and pop-up texts.

<i>stuff.</i> [William shows Scott on his own screen, what he already earned in the game and what still needs to be earned.] <i>This is my progress on this one.</i> [William shows water battle outfits on screen.] <i>I've only got shoes.</i> <i>I am gonna put the fire dress on.</i> [William chooses fire ninja outfit, and its hat from his outfits inventory, and searches for an appropriate shoes.] <i>Yes exactly. I am still, I still ...</i> <i>Oh my gosh, putting galaxy shoes on.</i> [William sees a pair of purple shoes in his inventory and clicks on them and continues dragging down in his inventory.] <i>No, they are galaxy.</i> [William finds another costume made out of ice, and clicks on it.] <i>Ouch!</i> [William shows the ice costume he was wearing and laughs at his costume.]	<i>Ohh man, I stuck on that water. The only reason why I have the mask and the sandal is just because I always loosing and you still get progress by loosing. That's pretty much the only reason.</i> [Scott watches William's screen when he opens his outfits inventory and chooses the fire ninja outfit.] <i>Fire dress?</i> [Scott continues watching William screen, when he searches through his outfits inventory.] <i>Aren't those kinda girlish, because of the purple?</i> <i>Okay.</i> <i>Owww, yea! My friend bought that.</i> [Scott also laughs at the ice costume.]	experienced player in this game with his material capital that offered to him with paid membership.	

After playing about 30 minutes together, William asked Scott to be twins by choosing the same outfits for their avatars. They opened outfits inventories, checked each other's outfits, and talked about different options they have. Finally, the idea of being twin ended up being totally different players: a wealthy paid member with gold outfits and a poor basic member with a pair of ice shoes.	<i>I am an ice penguin now.</i> [William continues trying some other costumes in his inventory.] <i>Let's be twins. Do you have this stuff?</i> [William shows his penguin on screen that wears a blue costume and ice shoes.] <i>You don't?</i> <i>Put ice shoes on. Do you have anything here at all?</i> [William turns to Scott, and shows accessories in his inventory including several types of glasses, necklaces, etc.] <i>No, like ice shoes, ice shoes, not water shoes.</i> [William looks at Scott screen and realizes he chooses water shoes, not ice shoes.] <i>Here.</i> [William clicks on all items icon to see the color choices he has for his avatar.] <i>Hmm, if you see any ... I don't have black, would you change your color?</i> [William sees Scott's penguin is in black color,	<i>You frozen, you frozen.</i> [Scott continues laughing.] [Scott watches William screen and shakes his head.] <i>No.</i> <i>Well, I do have the ice shoes.</i> [The ice shoes Scott talks about were earned via his progress in Card Jitsu Snow game.] [Scott looks at William screen and shakes his head.] <i>No.</i> [Scott turns back to his own screen and searches his inventory to find his ice shoes.] <i>I know. Let's see here, feet items...</i> [Scott takes off the water shoes he accidentally wore, and clicks on all items icon and feet items icon from the drop down menu, and chooses ice shoes instead of water ones.] <i>To orange?</i> [Scott sees William's penguin is in orange color.]	At the beginning, William wants to wear the same clothes as Scott. However, after some trials he could not find a nice outfit that both of them could wear. Then, he gave up the idea of being twins, and decided to wear his gold costume. William uses his material capital once more to earn status in this online space. It is seen in his comments when he says "people'll be blind after they see me" that he uses these items purposefully to affect other online players. On the other hand, as a basic member, Scott faces the disadvantage he has against to William one more time. Seeing tens of	Even though it is not a common practice for basic members, Scott opens his outfits inventory and changes his outfits several times while playing with his paid member partner. This sometimes happens with the invitation of his partner, and sometimes just because of his own willingness after seeing his partner choosing outfits. On the other hand, William spends several minutes in his outfits inventory every time he play in Club Penguin just like all the other paid members. However, when a paid member and a basic member become play partners in this game, it is seen that changing outfit	William and Scott change their outfits again in this interaction. To do this, they read and use the drop down menu, icons and images and pop-up texts appear on screen. While checking whether they have the same outfits, William and Scott also read the colors and shapes of the outfits they have.

	so wants him to change his color.] <i>Blue, lets do blue.</i> [William clicks on dark blue icon in his inventory and changes the color of his penguin.]	<i>Dark blue. Dark blue.</i> <i>And, do you have... Let's go skating. So...</i> [William goes down in his outfits inventory and finds a very fancy helmet in orange color.] <i>What? A helmet? Do you have that helmet?</i> [William points his orange helmet on his screen.]	<i>Dark blue or light blue? I have all the colors.</i> <i>I have literally all the colors.</i> [Scott shows all the colors he has in his inventory.] <i>I don't have a <u>ska</u>... I do have a helmet.</i> [Scott sees William chooses a helmet from his inventory, so he says he has a helmet.] <i>Oww, I don't know, we just recheck... Let's see...</i> [Scott clicks on all items icon, and then clicks on head items icon in the drop down menu. He uses the arrow icons on screen to find his helmet among his head items. He finds his very basic helmet in blue color.] <i>This one.</i> [He shows his helmet to William.]	special items William has lets Scott see William as an advanced player with his all available opportunities in the online space.	activity has become an important indicator of the status of the players in the Club Penguin club.
	<i>Okay, I am gonna see if I have it.</i> [William searches his inventory but cannot find that same helmet.] <i>Nope!</i> <i>No, I am gonna wear, I am gonna wear so much gold, I am</i>				

gonna be like... [William tries some accessories from his inventory such as a gold cape, a gold hoodie, and a rainbow hoodie.] People'll be blind after they see me.

No, I am gonna be a... I am gonna be rainbow today. [He takes off his gold hoodie and wears the rainbow one.] No, I am gonna be gold. [He changes his hoodie back to gold.] Yea, gold is better. Isn't it? Gold is better.

Yea. [Scott watches William when he chooses different items from his inventory with a disappointment in his face, and turns back to his own screen.]

While the basic members never changed their outfits when they played with other basic members, we can see that Scott used 8 minutes and 31 seconds of 32 minutes of play time to dress up his avatar while playing with his paid member partner during this session. Wearing the outfits he earned from different games, such as his spy costume and ninja outfits, demonstrated his experience in the virtual world, balanced his economic disadvantage up to a point, and allowed him to earn status in the Club Penguin peer culture. However, what we see in this transformative event is that William had tens of outfits and accessories in his outfit inventory, all of which he had purchased through the Penguin Style catalog. He also had a very well decorated igloo and several special puffles (see Figure 6.1). Even though Scott's use of expertise to balance his economic disadvantage worked in some cases, most of the time he failed when he compared his stuff with his play partner's. He compared his igloo, his puffles and his outfits with William's, and each time he was faced with the fact that his items did not measure up to those of his play partner.

Figure 6.1. Paid Member Igloo vs. Basic Member Igloo



In this event, playing with a paid member caused a change in the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) of the basic member. Scott began to see Club Penguin not as a

collection of mini games but as a social space that included members from two social classes. When he played with the other basic members, Scott saw Club Penguin as a collection of games and not as a place to spend time playing with his puffle in his igloo or dressing up his avatar. Scott saw this space just like all the other basic members did (see Chart 6.1). When he was paired with a paid member during this session, though, Scott realized that Club Penguin actually consisted of more than just mini games; he saw that it was a social space, within which people decorated their own places, dressed up, hung out with friends, and took care of their pets. However, each time he tried to engage in these activities, his disadvantaged position in this online space stopped him, and it was hard to balance this disadvantage with the materials he had earned from the games. This can be seen in the following example, where in Scott and William attempt to play as twins:

William and Scott's Being Twins Play

William: *Let's be twins. Do you have this stuff?* [William shows his penguin on screen that wears a blue costume and ice shoes.]

Scott: [Scott watches William screen and shakes his head.] *No.*

William: *You don't?*

Scott: *Well, I do have the ice shoes.* [The ice shoes to which Scott refers were earned via progress in the Card Jitsu Snow game.]

William: *Put ice shoes on. Do you have anything here at all?* [William turns to Scott, and shows accessories in his inventory including several types of glasses, necklaces, etc.]

Scott: [Scott looks at William's screen and shakes his head.] *No.* [Scott turns back to his own screen and searches his inventory to find his ice shoes.]

William: *No, like ice shoes, ice shoes, not water shoes.* [William looks at Scott's screen and realizes he has chosen water shoes, not ice shoes.]

Scott: *I know. Let's see here, feet items...* [Scott takes off the water shoes he accidentally chose, and clicks on the "all items" icon and the "feet items" icon from the drop down menu, and chooses ice shoes instead of water ones.]

William: *Here.* [William clicks on the "all items" icon to see the color choices he has for his avatar.] *Hmm, if you see any... I don't have black,*

would you change your color? [William sees Scott's penguin is black in color, so wants him to change his color.]

Scott: *To orange?* [Scott sees William's penguin is in orange color.]

William: *Blue, lets do blue.* [William clicks on dark blue icon in his inventory and changes the color of his penguin.]

Scott: *Dark blue or light blue? I have all the colors.*

William: *Dark blue. Dark blue.*

Scott: *I have literally all the colors.* [Scott shows all the colors he has in his inventory. Basic members can purchase colors from the Penguin Style catalog.]

William: *And, do you have... Let's go skating. So...* [William goes down in his outfits inventory and finds a very fancy helmet in orange color.]

Scott: *I don't have a ska... I do have a helmet.* [Scott sees William chooses a helmet from his inventory, so he says he has a helmet.]

William: *What helmet? Do you have that helmet?* [William points to his orange helmet on his screen.]

Scott: *Oww, I don't know, we just recheck... Let's see...* [Scott clicks on all items icon, and then clicks on head items icon in the drop down menu. He uses the arrow icons on screen to find his helmet among his head items. He finds his very basic helmet in blue color.] *This one.* [He shows his helmet to William.]

William: *Okay, I am gonna see if I have it.* [William searches his inventory but cannot find that same helmet.] *Nope!*

Scott: *You can probably still get it. Oww, never mind, you can't.* [Scott remembers this helmet is no longer available in the Penguin Style catalog.]

William: *No, I am gonna wear, I am gonna wear so much gold, I am gonna be like...* [William tries some accessories from his inventory such as a gold cape, a gold hoodie, and a rainbow hoodie.] *People'll be blind after they see me.*

No, I am gonna be a... I am gonna be rainbow today. [William takes off his gold hoodie and wears the rainbow one.] *No, I am gonna be gold.* [He changes his hoodie back to gold.] *Yea, gold is better. Isn't it? Gold is better.*

Scott: *Yea.* [Scott watches William with disappointment when he chooses different items from his inventory, and he turns back to his own screen.]

Though the pair set out to dress their penguins as twins, they ended up looking like two totally different penguins. William had a wealthy penguin that wore a gold outfit and a dog puffle, and Scott had a poor penguin with a pair of ice shoes (see Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2. Paid Member Avatar vs. Basic Member Avatar After Being Twins Play



While trying to be twins with William, Scott saw once again how weak his outfits inventory was compared to his paid member play partner's inventory, which included all of the items his partner had purchased or collected from different games. It seems that Scott realized yet again that it was not possible to fully balance his economic disadvantage with the items he earned from the games. Even just the appearance of the penguins (see Figure 6.2) made it obvious that there were two social classes in this virtual world. Even though Scott was a more experienced player, just because he did not have a paid account, he belonged to the lower social class, and his play partner, who had a paid account, was considered part of the upper social class.

When we look at the power dynamics between Scott and William, it becomes obvious once more that having more virtual goods positions the players in the Club Penguin club peer culture. William, with unlimited access to the virtual goods and places, had the power, and he used his power to hold his upper social class position. He is the one asking questions and making requests all the time, and Scott is the one answering the questions and following William's requests. For example, William wanted to wear the same outfits and be twins with Scott, and Scott agreed to do so. William always checked his outfits inventory and asked if Scott had certain items William wanted to wear, and Scott just checked those items in his inventory, but he did not say what he wanted to

wear. Since Scott had far fewer items in his inventory, and most of those items were given to all players for free, it would have been a lot easier to choose the same items by looking at Scott's outfits inventory, but William was in charge of choosing what to wear. They both changed the colors of their penguins to dark blue. Even though Scott had all of the colors in his inventory and thus could have changed the color of his penguin to any color, he did not tell William what color he wanted to be, as this too was left up to William to decide. In sum, the children's membership status affected their bilateral relations, as one player had more or less power than the other.

Scott, who played Club Penguin with his basic account for 14 sessions (including eight sessions during Spring 2013) without any problem, did not find being from the lower social class fair when he was paired with a paid member partner. It seems that being an experienced player and still not having unlimited access to virtual goods, and lacking power and status in this online peer culture, started to bother Scott. Just like all of the other basic members who played with paid member partners, Scott began asking when he was going to be offered a paid account after playing with William for only a few minutes.

Changes in Literacy Practices

While engaging in consumerism and participation practices, the players also engaged in several literacy practices. We see that both William and Scott were heavily engaged in visual reading while guiding their avatars through the virtual world. They read the images and icons that enabled them to complete a number of tasks, including choosing outfits for their avatars from the outfits inventory, feeding and playing with

their puffles, traveling in the virtual world, choosing the right type of playing card in Card Jitsu, and comparing their progress in the Card Jitsu progress table of Card Jitsu. Both of these players also read the facial expressions of their puffles to understand what they liked to eat or what they wanted to do. As seen in Table 6.3, out of 32 minutes of play time, William spent 4 minutes and 55 seconds reading images and icons, while Scott spent 3 minutes and 30 seconds on the same activity. In sum, reading images and icons was one of the essential literacy practices in which both of the players engaged while playing together in the Club Penguin virtual world.

In addition to reading images and icons, both William and Scott also read the printed text they encountered in the virtual world. During their 32 minutes of play, William read the printed texts he encountered for total of 3 minutes, and Scott read such texts for 2 minutes and 42 seconds. While choosing outfits for the avatars, they read the drop-down menu associated with the outfits inventory, they read the pop-up texts on the screen in order to start a new game, take care of their puffles, or travel throughout the virtual world, and they read the numbers on the Card Jitsu playing cards in order to beat their play partners. In terms of the quality of their reading, there was no significant difference between William and Scott. William, as a paid member, had no restrictions with regard to reaching new contexts in the virtual world. He played new games that he had never played before and encountered texts with which he was not familiar. Therefore, he slowly read the texts and followed the instructions. As a basic member, Scott also encountered texts with which he was not familiar since he had visited places he had never before visited (e.g., outfits inventory, his own igloo). He also read other new texts that were available to him such as the new E.P.F. agent missions and two new postcards he

received from the other online players. Scott also read the new theme advertisement on Club Penguin's opening page, which read, "Halloween Party: Solve the Mystery. Oct. 23-Nov. 5," and he shared this advertisement with his play partner by saying, "Cool, Halloween party! That must be fun!"

Even though there are some writing activities available to Club Penguin players, in this transformative event, neither William nor Scott engaged in writing activities other than typing in the appropriate field in order to log in to Club Penguin. However, they engaged in icon writing, choosing an appropriate emoticon from the menu bar to express their feelings. Each participant used emoticons once to express his feelings. William used a smiley face, which appeared above his avatar when he wore his gold outfits and took his dog puffle for a walk in town. And Scott used a red heart emoticon when he took his puffle to the Skate Park to demonstrate to his puffle that he loved him; the puffle responded by hugging Scott.

In sum, playing with a partner who has another type of membership is considered a transformative event since it caused changes to both of the players' participation in the online and offline spaces. Both William and Scott engaged in several participation, literacy and consumerism practices that are, in one way or another, linked to each other in the nexus of Club Penguin club. For instance, dressing up was a popular activity for both William and Scott in this transformative event. While dressing up their avatars, both William and Scott engaged in several literacy practices, including reading the drop down menu to find outfits and reading images and icons to navigate the online space and find the outfits and accessories they wanted. Dressing up itself is an important participation practice necessary to earning status in the Club Penguin peer culture. The penguins with

fancy outfits were recognized as successful players and insiders of the Club Penguin virtual world. As a paid member, William purchased several fancy outfits and accessories and he showed off his economic power to the online players. As is discussed above, engaging in the consumerism practice of purchasing outfits and accessories allowed William to earn status in the online space, and this changed his participation in the Club Penguin peer culture. As a basic member, however, Scott engaged in consumerism in more passive ways, as he was able to compare the outfits he earned from the games (e.g., spy costume, ninja outfits) to William's fancy outfits and accessories, and realize that William held a more advantaged position in this online space. Playing with his play partner and engaging in consumerism in a passive way changed Scott's habitus over time and directed him to see himself as a member of lower social class in this peer culture.

Nodes in the Club Penguin Club Nexus

As discussed above, the children's membership types serve as a distinctive factor that creates difference in children's practices in the Club Penguin club. Since the commercial design of Club Penguin offers paid members and basic members different opportunities in terms of access to the online space and the virtual goods, the children's interactions in the virtual world differ from each other. The differences in the practices of paid and basic members in Club Penguin were also revealed in this research, and are shared in Table 6.1 and Table 6.3. This obvious difference proves that consumerism plays an effective role in the practices in which children engage while in the online space. To bring to the foreground the role of consumerism in children's activities, I will look at the different opportunities available to the basic and paid members in the Club Penguin virtual world (e.g., access to virtual places, games and rewards, dressing up penguins,

adopting puffles and shopping for puffles, decorating igloos and inviting other players to visit igloos) that were identified in the previous chapter, and I will discuss the differences in the practices of the focal children in these areas by bringing in examples from the transformative events discussed above.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, while the study participants played in Club Penguin, they did so as either paid or basic members, and they engaged in several practices (e.g., consumerism, participation and literacy practices) at the same time in the Club Penguin club. These practices were not totally detached practices; they were intertwined practices that included several nodes, which are dense points of intersecting practices in nexus of practice that are often sites of contestation. These nodes of practices that were created in the children's online and offline interactions built up the nexus of practices. In this section, while analyzing the role of consumerism in the children's practices in the Club Penguin club, I will also identify the nodes of consumerism, participation and literacy practices in certain areas as well.

Access to Virtual Places, Games and Rewards

While paid members have unlimited access to the places, games and rewards offered in Club Penguin, basic members have a lot of restrictions. Most of the virtual places in Club Penguin are open to both basic and paid members, with the exception of some secret member-only places that usually appear during new themed parties. The basic members are also allowed to play almost all of the mini games and collect coins in Club Penguin, but there are some exceptions, including the upper levels of some popular games such as Puffle Launch. The restrictions of basic members become more obvious

when the players are collecting virtual goods. There is no game level in Club Penguin. Children purchase items with coins they have earned from the games, and they collect special rewards from the games they complete, and these virtual goods are indicative of children's success in the virtual world (Grimes & Fields, 2012) and help them to earn status in the eyes of other online players. Even though basic members are able to go to most of the places they want, and they can play Club Penguin mini games, they are not allowed to use the coins they earned from the games to purchase items for their penguins and igloos. This is the biggest limitation basic members have in Club Penguin.

Another limitation placed on basic members has to do with collecting special rewards from the new themed games. In almost every new themed setting, there are some basic rewards (e.g., player card backgrounds, hats, necklaces) that are available to both basic and paid members, but most of the special rewards (e.g., the ghost puffle) offered in the new themed games are available only to paid members. Therefore, while basic members have access to most of the places and games in Club Penguin, after long hours of game play, the only thing they will come away with are useless coins they earned from the games; in contrast, paid members will benefit from turning their coins into fancy virtual goods, and they can also benefit from the special rewards collected via the new themed games.

Just like purchasing fancy outfits, collecting the rewards that are available only to paid members is considered a consumerism practice since having these rewards is indicative of one being a paid member in this virtual world. Engaging in the consumerism practice of collecting rewards changed the children's participation in the online space, as is seen in the first transformative event. Table 6.1 shows that, while the basic members,

who had limited access to the rewards, had a breakdown in both the online and the offline spaces and preferred to play individual games, the paid members, who had unlimited access to the virtual goods, collected the ghost puffle as a reward and continued having rich interactions both in the online and the offline spaces.

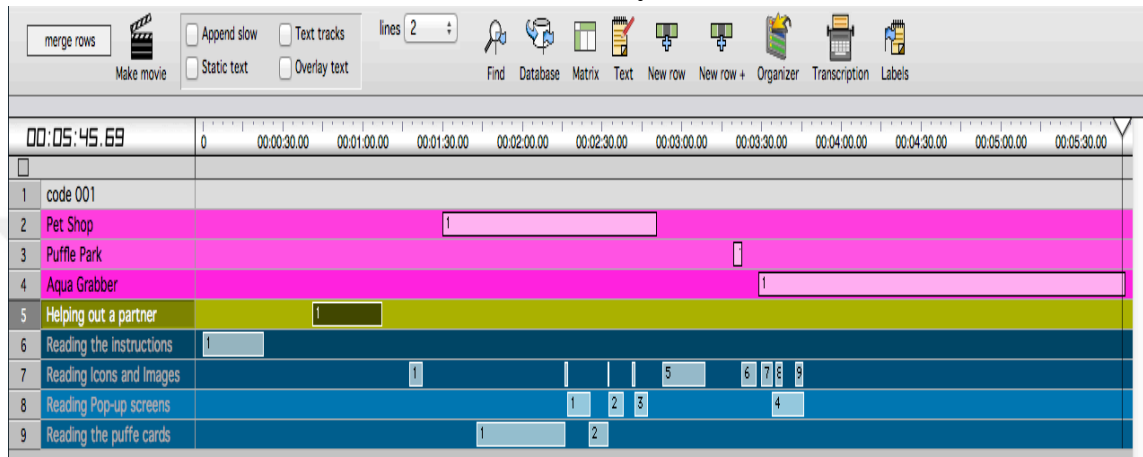
The ghost puffle reward game can be analyzed as an example to demonstrate how having unlimited access to the games and rewards motivated children to engage in several other practices. The Figures 6.3 and 6.4 below show StudioCode5 coding to contrast the basic and paid members' interactions after their ghost puffle play. In the offline setting (shown in yellow in the analysis tables), while the basic members had only one interaction, which involved Ben helping Diana to fix the frozen screen, the paid members asked questions of their play partners on three separate occasions, they helped their partners when they struggled on three occasions, and also they invited their partners to play a mini game together.

In the online space, while the basic members preferred to go alone to different places (shown in pink in the analysis tables) and play individual games (e.g., Aqua Grabber), the paid members spent most of their time in igloos, showing off their virtual goods to one another, dressing up their avatars, taking care of their puffles, and listening to the sound tracks. The paid members also played the Sled Race game together. Through these activities, however, both the basic and paid members engaged in several literacy practices (shown in blue in the analysis tables), such as reading the instructions, reading pop up screen messages, reading images and icons, and typing so as to name their ghost puffles, but the paid members had richer interactions, both quantitatively (as is seen in the

⁵ A video data analysis software.

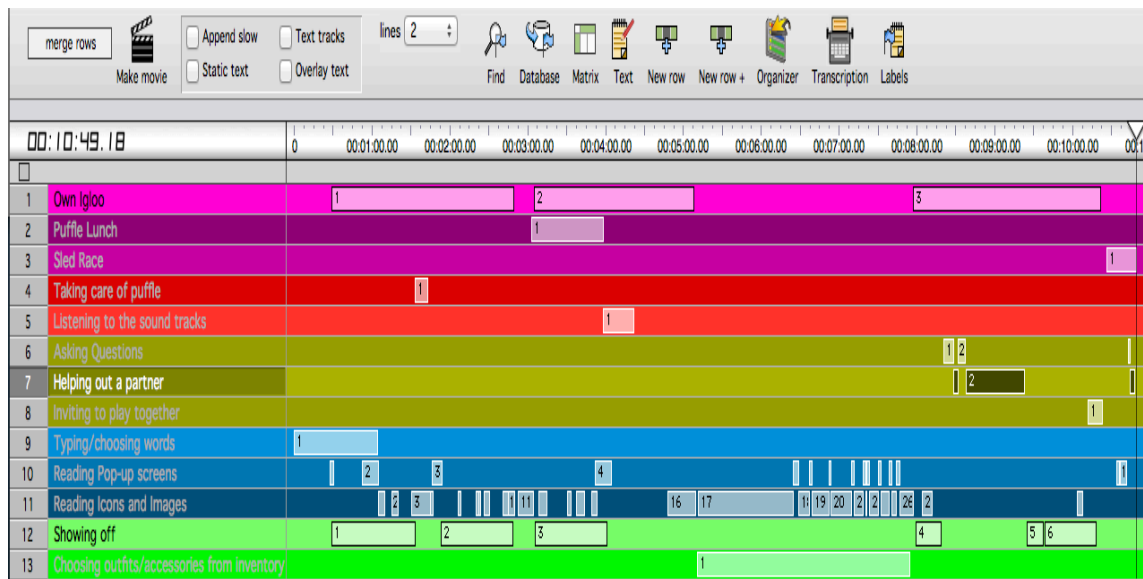
analysis tables in Figures. 6.3 and 6.4) and qualitatively, as discussed previously in this chapter.

Figure 6.3. StudioCode Analysis Table of Basic Member Interactions after Ghost Puffle Play



** Virtual places are coded in pink, offline interaction in yellow, literacy practices in blue*

Figure 6.4. StudioCode Analysis Table of Paid Member Interactions after Ghost Puffle Play

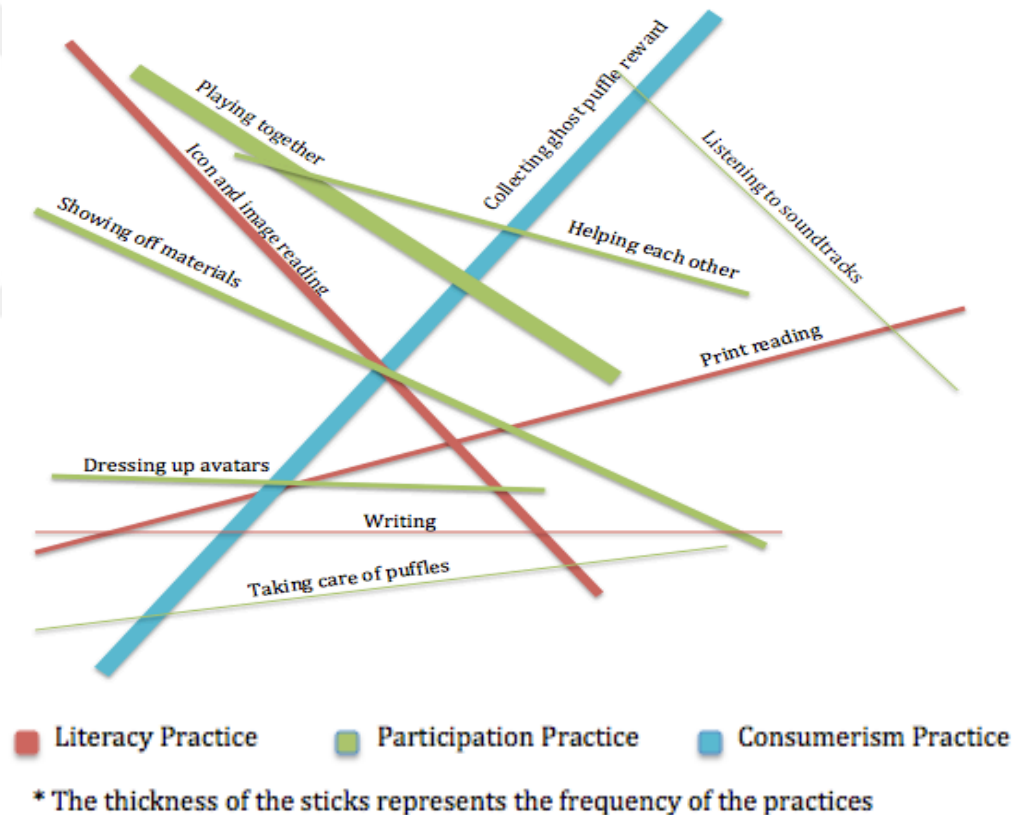


** Virtual places are coded in pink, offline interaction in yellow, literacy practices in blue, participation practices in red, consumerism practices in green*

The diagram below (Figure 6.5) shows the linkage of the practices in which the paid members engaged after playing the ghost puffle reward game. With the unlimited

access offered to the paid members, these members engaged in several consumerism, participation and literacy practices after collecting the ghost puffles as rewards. As shown in the diagram, all of these practices, in one way or another, are linked to each other. The frequency of these practices is represented with the thickness of the sticks (the thicker the stick, the more frequent the practice).

Figure 6.5. Node of Practices: The Ghost Puffle Reward Game as an Example to The Paid Members' Unlimited Access to the Games and Rewards



As seen in the diagram, the consumerism practice of collecting the ghost puffle reward is linked to the children's online and offline participation practices such as playing together, helping each other, showing off materials, dressing up avatars, taking care of puffles, and listening to the sound tracks. While engaging in these participation practices, the paid members also engaged in literacy practices such as reading printed

texts, reading images and icons, and writing (or typing) in order to name their puffles. Having unlimited access to the online space led the paid members to engage in several consumerism, participation and literacy practices, all of which are linked to each other. For instance, the paid members' consumerism practice of collecting ghost puffles led them to engage in the participation practice of showing off materials. And, to show off their materials to other players, the children engaged in several literacy practices; for example, they read the icons and images in the menu bar so that they could use these things for their intended purposes, they read the pop-up screen messages, and they typed in appropriate fields using their keyboards.

Personal Style as a Node: Dressing Up Penguins

Dressing up penguins is one of the main indicators that very clearly reveals the difference between the membership types. Club Penguin offers a wide variety of items to paid members, while offering very few items to basic members, and this gives the account holders' respective penguins completely different appearances (see in Figure 6.2). I define dressing up avatars as a participation practice that helps children earn status in the Club Penguin club peer culture. This participation practice is directly related to the consumerism practice of purchasing outfits. To dress up their avatars with fancy outfits, children have to purchase outfits through the Penguin Style catalog.

Not surprisingly, there is a parallel relationship between the children's engagement in the consumerism practice of purchasing outfits and the participation practice of dressing up avatars. As is seen in Chart 6.4, the paid members who had already purchased so many outfits and accessories spent a good amount of time in their

outfits inventories in order to dress up their avatars. However, since the basic members had very few items, none of which were fancy (e.g., red baseball hat, safety sweater), none of the basic members who played with other basic members observed in this study spent any time dressing up their avatars. These players did not go to their outfits inventories at all (see Chart 6.1); rather, they just played mini games.

The paid members who dress up their avatars with fancy and valued outfits were recognized as successful players and assumed their positions in the upper social class, just as Nick, Eric and William did in the transformative events mentioned above. While purchasing outfits is required if players are to dress up their avatars, it is not enough to be considered as a successful player. The important thing is not just to purchase any outfit but to know what outfit to purchase. In my visits to Club Penguin with my own avatar, after acquiring a paid membership, I opened the then-current Penguin Style catalog and purchased the costumes featured on the cover page, including a wrangler outfit and a wrangler hat. Then, I went to the town to observe other online players. Another paid member moved closer to me and said, “It looks ugly.” At first, I did not understand why she was telling me my outfit was ugly. After spending some time in Club Penguin, however, I recognized that players put different pieces together to create their own styles. So, in this online space, creating one’s own style by mixing and matching outfits is more valued than wearing an outfit as it appears in the catalog. Even though I had spent long hours observing the children while they played Club Penguin, it had not occurred to me, before this experience, that other players would fail to appreciate a cover page item from the Penguin Style catalog.

When I look at my paid member study participants' outfit choices, I see how careful they were while putting items together to dress up their avatars. Nick, for instance, is an insider player who knows what to purchase and what to wear. From his "normal everyday clothes" to his Halloween costumes, he knows what other members value, and chooses his outfits accordingly. To keep his upper class status in hand, he reads the posts in the official Club Penguin blog and several Club Penguin fan sites, follows the new trends, and continues purchasing items.

In sum, the paid members' participation practice of dressing up avatars helps them to gain status, but at the same time, to keep their upper class status, the practice of dressing up necessitates that the paid members engage in more shopping, and this furthers their consumerism practice of purchasing outfits. To follow the trend items and decide what to purchase, children engage in the literacy practice of out-of-game reading (e.g., reading the official blog and other fan sites). Thus, in this nexus of practice, we see that dressing up, purchasing outfits and out-of game reading practices linked to each other. While the paid members who engaged in the practice of dressing up their avatars were actually also engaged in all of these linked consumerism, participation and literacy practices, the basic members, who were not allowed to purchase fancy outfits, did not prefer to dress up their avatars and did not necessarily follow the blogs and other fan sites to keep up with trend items.

In addition, the online players considered the penguins that looked fancy to be potential friends. When the paid members received a friendship request, the first thing they did was to assess the wealth of the other penguin by looking at the other penguin's outfits. Paid members and basic members both wanted to be friends with the paid

members. The tendency of the basic members to attempt to make friends from among the upper-class members can be explained via the Distinction theory of Bourdieu (1984). The basic members, who did not want to be excluded in the online space, accepted the paid members' privileged status, valued the appearance of their penguins, and wanted to befriend as many paid member as possible. However, while the penguins with fancy outfits were more likely accepted as friends by the paid members, the basic penguins with non-fancy outfits were usually ignored. In sum, even though the basic members had a tendency to attempt to befriend paid members, they were often unsuccessful in their attempts. Wearing fancy outfits simply meant that paid members were likely to make more friends and communicate more successfully with other online players. Therefore, the consumerism practice of purchasing outfits is also linked to the participation practice of collecting friends.

Figure 6.6. Node of Practices: Paid Members' Personal Style Experiences



* The thickness of the sticks represents the frequency of the practices

The diagram above shows the participation, consumerism and literacy practices in which the paid members engaged while dressing up their avatars. Again, in this diagram the thickness of the sticks represents the frequency of the practices in this event. As is seen in the diagram, the consumerism practice of purchasing outfits is thicker than the other sticks, and it is the same thickness as the stick that represents dressing up avatars. As is mentioned above, there is a parallel relationship between these two practices. Furthermore, to dress up their penguins, the paid members had to use the icons and images from the menu bar and read the printed texts they encountered. And, as noted previously, they also read the blogs and other fan sites in order to keep up with and follow trend items. In addition to these literacy practices, dressing up avatars let the paid members engage in the participation practice of collecting friends, and it enabled them to have a more social environment.

Puffle Ownership as a Node: Adopting Puffles and Shopping for Puffles

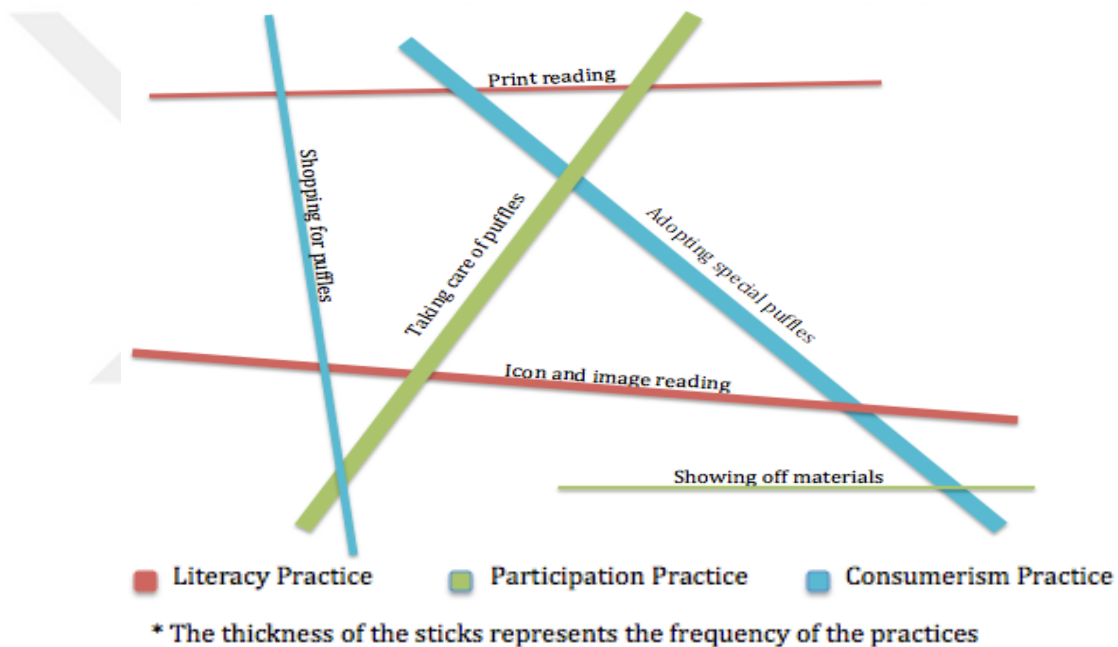
Adopting puffles is available to both basic and paid members, but there are some limitations regarding what the basic members can do. As is mentioned previously in this chapter, basic members can only adopt up to two puffles, which must be either blue or red. However, the paid members, by simply using their coins (or completing certain tasks, in the case of the rainbow and gold puffles), can adopt up to 75 puffles of any kind, including the ones in different colors and the dog and cat puffles. In addition, while the paid members are allowed to purchase several toys, clothes, accessories, furniture and food for their puffles, the basic members are not allowed to shop for their puffles.

The experiences of having the puffles the basic members cannot adopt and shopping freely for their puffles changed the paid members' practices in the Club Penguin virtual world. The data showed that, compared to the basic members, the paid members with puffles spent significantly more time in their igloos taking care of their puffles (see Chart 6.3 and Chart 6.4). They fed their puffles the several snacks they had purchased, bathed them, brushed their hairs after their baths, gave them their favorite toys with which to play, dressed them up with clothes and accessories, and took them for walks in town. The basic members who had access only to very basic puffles without any clothes, accessories or toys, however, very rarely visited their igloos (only 1% of their time) to play with their puffles. In sum, being able to adopt any puffle they wanted, and being permitted to shop freely for their puffles, motivated the paid members to engage in the participation practice of taking care of puffles.

Adopting those special puffles that were off limits to the basic members served as an indicator that one was a paid member; this was no different, really, than purchasing outfits and collecting rewards. Some paid members who aimed to express their economic power by showing off their membership status, dressed up their non-basic puffles and took them for walks all around the virtual world, just as William did in the second transformative event (see Table 6.4). Walking with such a puffle served to let other players know that one was a paid member with a higher socioeconomic status, and this helped them to gain status in this online space. In the offline space, we also see the paid members show off their special puffles' tricks to their play partners. While adopting those puffles, which are only available to paid members, is a consumerism practice, showing off the tricks of the puffles is a very common participation practice that let paid members

gain status in the offline space. We see how the children showed off the tricks of their different puffles to one another in Nick and Eric's interactions in the first transformative event, and William and Scott's interactions in the second transformative event (see Table 6.2 and 6.4). Therefore, the consumerism practice of adopting puffles is linked to the participation practice of showing off materials.

Figure 6.7. Node of Practices: The Paid Members' Special Puffle Experience



The data analyzed in this chapter showed that the paid members who are allowed to adopt any puffle they want, as opposed to the basic members who are only permitted to adopt certain puffles, spent significant amounts of time with their puffles. The diagram below indicates that the paid members did not only take care of their puffles but also engaged in several other practices at the same time. To feed their puffles, bathe them, brush them, put them to sleep, dress them up, let them play with toys or take them for a walk meant that the paid members read the icons and images on the menu bar, understood their purposes, and used those icons and images in an appropriate way; this is seen in

William-Scott and Nick-Eric interactions. The players also engaged in the practice of print-reading in that they read the names of the items and their prices in the puffle catalog as they shopped for their puffles; the players also engaged in this practice when they read the puffle IDs in the Pet Shop as they decided which puffle to adopt. All of the consumerism, participation and literacy practices seen in the figure above are, in one way or another, linked to each other in this nexus of practice.

Igloos as a Node: Decorating Igloos and Inviting Other Players

Decorating igloos is the other most common participation practice that helps children gain status, which is discussed earlier in this chapter. Because of the commercial design of Club Penguin, the paid members have way better opportunities in terms of decorating their igloos. To decorate their igloos, while paid members purchase theme-related furniture, theme-related igloo designs (e.g., Ice Palace for the Frozen Theme) and backyards with different views (e.g., forest, beach, mountain, under sea) through the furniture catalog with their coins, basic members are allowed to use only the free furniture offered to everyone who opens an account. When we look the igloos of the paid members, such Eric, Nick and William, we see that they purchased several items to decorate their igloos. Since the furniture catalogs are renewed every other week with the new themes, the children who were long-term players purchased and collected tens or hundreds of items for their furniture inventories. Having all those different items in their inventories enabled them to have numerous different alternatives with regard to decorating their igloos. They purchased all different types of furniture to decorate their igloos, and they frequently changed the decorations. The basic members, on the other hand, very rarely visited their own igloos. Some basic members used the free items they

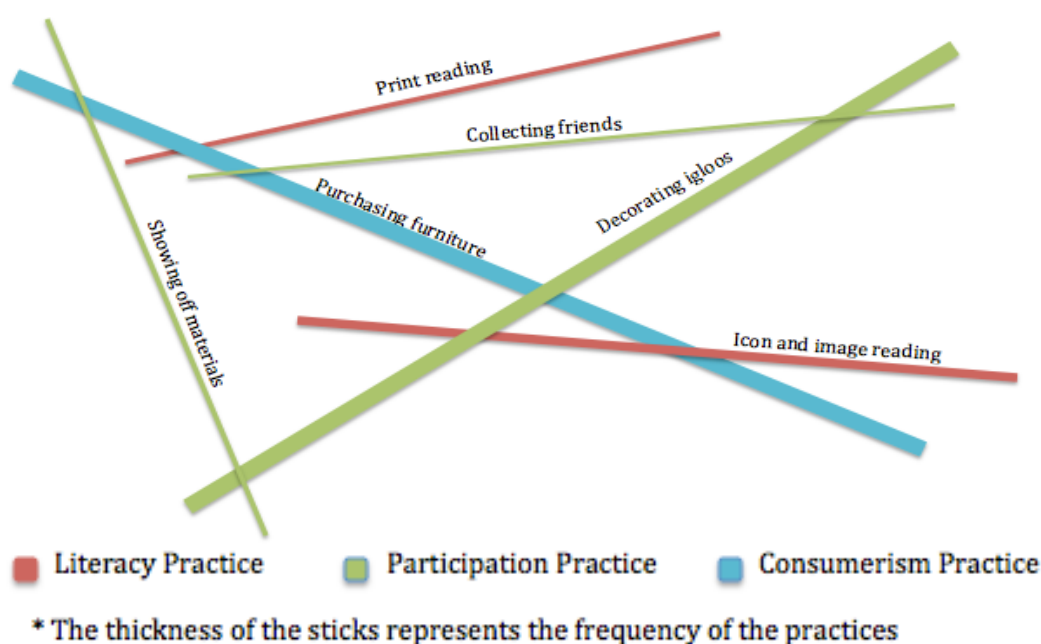
had to decorate their igloos, and some others totally ignored the decorations that were available for their own igloos. The difference between the igloo decorations that belonged to William and to Scott (shown in Figure 6.1) reveals the link between the consumerism practice of purchasing furniture and the participation practice of decorating igloos.

Just like dressing up avatars, decorating igloos also directs children to purchase more items in order to maintain their upper class status. For the igloo designs, one important thing to keep in mind is being up to date. In Figure 6.1, it is seen that William, the paid member, has furniture related to the Halloween theme in his Puffle Tree House Igloo that he unlocked via a membership card, and Scott, the basic member, has a Schoolhouse igloo without any furniture related to the Halloween theme in it. Even though Schoolhouse igloos look better than the basic small igloos most of the basic members have, in this peer culture, it is still not of much value to have this igloo during the Halloween theme, since this igloo, which was offered in September 2014 with the School & Skate theme, become outdated. Like William, the paid members who have a better social status in this peer culture continue purchasing themed items to keep their igloos up to date with the existing theme. In their igloo designs, they mix their favorite items with the themed items and create their own decorations. In sum, decorating igloos with furniture helps children gain status, but at the same time, to keep their upper class status in hand, decorating igloos directs children to purchase more items related to existing themes.

In order to gain or maintain status in the Club Penguin club peer culture, however, it is not enough just to have a well-decorated igloo. Children have to find ways to show

their igloo designs to other online players, otherwise nobody knows how well-decorated their igloos are. The most common way for children to show off their igloos to other players is by giving parties in their igloos. In the online space, it is possible to see several paid members in town typing messages aimed at inviting other players to parties in their igloos, as mentioned in the previous chapter. In this way, the players are able to show off the materials they have in their igloos and their special decorations to other online players and get likes from them, which helps paid members gain status in the Club Penguin club peer culture.

Figure 6.8. Node of Practice: Paid Members' Decorating Igloo Experience



The paid members' igloo designs also help the players to collect friends. The online players who join a party at a well-decorated igloo usually send friendship requests to the igloo owner and the igloo owner decides what players he or she will accept as friends. However, inviting other online players over to their igloos is a practice that is only available to paid members. Basic members are allowed to invite over only the

players who are already on their friends list. While having well-decorated igloos and the opportunity to invite other online players over permits paid members to collect more friends, not having these opportunities limits basic members' access to other online players and thus potential friends. In conclusion, in this nexus of practice, there are links between the practices of purchasing furniture, decorating igloos, showing off materials, and collecting friends.

While having more freedom to purchase furniture, decorate igloos and invite friends over allows paid members to engage in several linked practices, being limited with regard to these activities reduced the basic members' consumerism, participation and literacy practices. The diagram above shows the linked practices in which the paid members engaged by decorating their igloos and inviting their friends over. To decorate their igloos, they purchased furniture through the furniture catalog, and after decorating their igloos, they gave parties and invited other players over to their igloos. They show off their igloo designs to other players, gain the attention of other players, and receive friendship requests from prospective friends. While engaging in all of these consumerism and participation practices, the players read icons and images on the screen and use them appropriately for their purposes, and they also read the printed texts they encounter such as the names and prices of the furniture in the furniture catalog or the pop-up screen messages that provide directions. Either consciously or unconsciously, the paid members engage in all off these linked practices in this nexus of practice when they decorate their igloos and invite other players over for a visit. The practices frequently linked to each other in the children's activities, as mentioned above, enter into the children's habitus as linked practices (Scollon, 2001a) and change their understanding of the Club Penguin

virtual world and the practices in which these children engage while in the Club Penguin club peer culture.

In this chapter, while navigating the nexus, the effects of Club Penguin's commercial design on the children's participation and literacy practices were discussed in detail. The nodes between different practices were identified and shown in the diagrams for each area within which the basic and paid members have different opportunities in the Club Penguin online space. The next chapter, which discusses changing the nexus, will include the children's reactions to the commercial design of the Club Penguin virtual world after their paid member status expired.

CHAPTER 7: Changing the Nexus: Taking a Critical Stance

While analyzing children's practices within the Club Penguin club in the navigating the nexus chapter, it was found that the study participants internalized the commercial design of Club Penguin after they were offered paid memberships and had access to all virtual goods in the virtual world. Without any complaint about the commercial design of Club Penguin, the study participants with paid memberships engaged in several consumerism practices (e.g., purchasing outfits and accessories for avatars, adopting special puffles, purchasing furniture for igloos) while simultaneously engaging in participation and literacy practices in the Club Penguin club. In this last phase of the study, changing the nexus, I wanted to help children read the Club Penguin virtual world through a critical literacy lens, realize its intended commercial design, and take social actions to change the parts of the design with which they were unhappy.

Nexus analysis suggests taking action by using documentation and analysis of data as a tool to redesign the following steps of data collection and change the nexus of practice to transform actions to mediational means, which participants may use in further activities (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). This study was originally supposed to end during Fall 2014 – right after all of the study participants had the opportunity to play with their paid accounts for a while. When the study ended, their paid membership funding would automatically end, and their accounts would turn into basic accounts. However, when this happened, it became apparent that this transformation of membership type presented an opportunity to see how children felt about the commercial design of Club Penguin. Therefore, I decided to visit the children in the afterschool program once more. These visits would also present an opportunity to help the children change the nexus.

Considering Club Penguin as a text, and adopting Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model*, I would argue that beyond being a "code breaker," who understands the functions of the keys and icons used to navigate avatars in the virtual world, a "meaning maker," who understands the structure of the online context, the game features and the norms of the online peer culture, and a "text user," who uses Club Penguin as a playground and engages in several practices with friends, the children should be "text analysts," who understand the intentional design of the text, Club Penguin in this case, the designers' purposes, and their positioning of children within the text. Children who become text analysts have the potential to read Club Penguin via a critical lens, and understand the designers' intentions. This chapter, which looks at changing the nexus, discusses the analysis of the study participants' feelings and their reactions to the producing companies' commercial implementations in children's virtual play worlds.

Children's Feelings about and Reactions to the Paid Membership Implementation of Club Penguin

In Spring 2015, I visited the study participants in the afterschool program and conducted one-on-one unstructured interviews while they played Club Penguin on my laptop and showed me what they had lost with the expiration of their paid memberships. In my visits to the afterschool program, I met a total of six participants out of the original 14 who participated during the Fall 2014 program cycle; these six participants included Rick, Aaron, Joe, William, Eric, and Nick. The other participants were either absent on the days I visited or were no longer attending the afterschool program. All of the participants I met were so excited to see me again since they thought it meant that they would have another Club Penguin club through the afterschool program.

Some of the study participants were aware of the expiration of their paid memberships and asked me whether or not I would give them new paid memberships. Others who were no longer playing Club Penguin were unaware of the fact that their accounts had turned into basic accounts; these children did not have access to computers at home. As is discussed in Chapter 1, there is enormous diversity among children in terms of their *access to technology*. It was clear in this study that not all of the study participants had the same degree of access to technology. Some had access to most physical, digital, human and social resources (Warschauer, 2008), but others were without access even to physical resources. The afterschool program was the only place where all of these children had at least some degree of access to technology.

However, when I visited the children four months after the end of the Club Penguin club to see if they were still playing Club Penguin at home and were aware of their expired paid accounts, the diversity among the children with regard to their access to technology became even more pronounced. For instance, brothers Rick and Aaron mentioned that they would like to play Club Penguin, but their parents did not let them use the computer at home anymore. Another participant, Joe, also mentioned that he did not have a computer or a tablet at home, so he could not play Club Penguin after the last session of the Club Penguin club. When I asked these children what they feel about Club Penguin and its paid membership implementation, their approaches were different from the other three participants' reactions, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Since Joe, Aaron and Rick have stopped playing Club Penguin after their paid membership expired, they were unaware of what they had lost from their outfits inventories and their igloos, and they had not experienced the disadvantage of having

basic accounts after playing with paid accounts for a time. Therefore, their answers were based on their experiences from the last program cycle with their paid accounts. Aaron, for instance, mentioned that he likes Club Penguin and its paid member-basic member differences. He stated that the paid account is “way better” than the basic account because he could adopt the puffles he wanted, and because he was able to purchase items for his avatar, but having basic account was also good as, according to Aaron, it was at least better than not having any account at all. Ryan agreed with his brother and said that he found the paid member-basic member differences fair, and continued, “Because, I mean, any other good video games should be like that [pause] which they mostly are.” These children, who live in a consumerist society in their real lives, already recognized that companies that produce good quality stuff work for their consumerist interests, and it was fair, they thought, to expect producing companies to charge those people who wanted to benefit from additional opportunities or features.

The other three participants, Nick, Eric, and William had no problems accessing computers and the Internet at home. They were aware that their accounts had turned into basic accounts, and they now had limited opportunities to access some places and virtual goods in Club Penguin. They stated several times that they were so disappointed when they recognized that their memberships had expired. When I asked Nick about what he thinks about Club Penguin’s paid member implementation, he said, “I don’t know why you would need to pay money for [pause] every single year?” He continued, “If [the designers] make it free, I’ll be glad they are not greedy anymore. Cause I think the only reason is that they wanna, well [pause] just get money from parents.” William and Eric

mirrored Nick, as they mentioned, during our one-on-one conversations, that it is unfair to ask people to pay money for children's games.

In the following section, I will analyze Nick, William and Eric's critical literacy practices in which they engaged during the last phase of this study. In this dissertation, critical literacy practices can be defined as the practices that "encourage students to use language to question the everyday world, to interrogate the relationship between language and power, to analyze popular culture and media, to understand how power relationships are socially constructed, and to consider actions that can be taken to promote social justice" (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2014, p. 3). By engaging in critical literacy practices, these children began to read Club Penguin via a critical lens, realized the producing company's commercial interests in the design of Club Penguin, and offered their reactions to its paid member implementation through digital platforms.

William

William is an eight-year-old boy who had no experience with Club Penguin before the last program cycle that take place in Fall 2014. However, he had played several online games, so he learned the norms associated with Club Penguin pretty quickly. He played with a basic account for the first six sessions, and then he received his paid account and played with it for two months. William likes gold, so, while playing with his paid account, he purchased several gold items such as a gold hat, gold sunglasses, a gold jacket, and gold shoes. He also adopted three gold puffles that he liked to take for walks in town. After his paid membership expired, his paid account turned

into a basic account, and he continued playing with that basic account at home for approximately four more months before our one-on-one conversation.

Early on in my conversation with William, I, as a researcher, asked him some basic questions (e.g., Do you still play Club Penguin?, What do you feel about its two-tiered membership policy?) aimed at getting him to start thinking about the commercial design of Club Penguin. William claimed that he was “disappointed” about losing his paid account and all of his items. He stated that, “It would mean a lot to me if [the expiration of paid membership] did not happen. Because [pause] really [pause] I find it disappointing that people always have to constantly pay to do something that probably should be free.” This eight-year-old boy was thinking pretty straightforward and stating that playing with friends in an online space should not require any payment.

I thought that William had a clear understanding of Club Penguin’s commercial design and was ready to take action. So, I asked him what his plan was to get back all the clothes and accessories he used to have, and the igloo decorated with the furniture he purchased, and he asked me back if I could pay for his account for a couple more months. Since the aim of these meetings was to make the children more conscious about the commercial design of online spaces in which they play, I said I would not be able to pay for memberships anymore because the Club Penguin club was already finished. William continued to brainstorm to find a solution to the problem he faced, and he said that his mother would get her tax refund soon, and each year after getting her tax refund she gives William \$20 to \$30 and lets him purchase anything he wants; he asked if I could pay for his membership with that money after he got it from his mother. I told him that I could do that for him, but that money would cover only a couple more months of Club Penguin

membership. To lead him to think further and to take critical action, I asked him what he would do then. He said that he would no longer be able to afford it, and I responded, “You should have a better plan to handle this issue, then.” My conversation with William continued as follows:

William: I am lucky that I keep my golden sweatshirt, I am not gonna change that, cause I like it.

Tolga: So, if you change that, you will not be able to get it back anymore?

William: I [pause] I probably wouldn’t get it back.

Tolga: Oww, okay. What do you think about Club Penguin’s paid member, basic member kind of stuff?

William: I find it upsetting because, you know, like, kids that do not have enough money don’t get to play this game to its full potential, because they do not have the money to pay for a membership. And, it’s not really fair because, like, I don’t have the money to set aside to constantly renew my membership.

Tolga: Yeah.

William: And, I will kind of like it if they would change this policy, so the kids like me can actually play.

Tolga: Yeah.

William: And, not have to wait until you have bunches of money to set aside to get it. Because, then it’s just not fair.

Tolga: Yes. I understand.

William did not change his Penguin’s outfits for four months because he was afraid that he would lose them after his paid membership expired. The rest of his paid member clothes and accessories was still a part of his inventory, but now it was only visible via blurred pictures, and he was no longer allowed to access any of it. Showing those clothes and accessories in the inventories, but not letting players gain access to them until making payments was a commercial strategy Club Penguin used to continue selling paid membership to children whose memberships had expired. After a while, our conversation

became more involved, and William started thinking more critically and began offering suggestions regarding how Club Penguin's policy could be reasonably changed:

William: Once you pay once for Minecraft,⁶ you don't ever have to pay again. You already have that account for life.

Tolga: I see.

William: And, it doesn't really take that much to get a Minecraft account, all you need is \$25 once, and then you have it forever.

Tolga: Okay.

William: That's just something that never expires.

Tolga: Okay. So, what you mean is Club Penguin can be something like Minecraft, and people pay just once and it never expires?

William: Yes, and also it would be better if it wasn't something outrageous like that. Something little like \$1 to \$10. Cause, this really isn't something as complex as Minecraft.

William's idea of finding someone to pay for his Club Penguin membership account turned into him finding Club Penguin's policy that requires payment to play the game with friends unfair. He finally started giving some suggestions to make this policy fairer, and proposed that membership should not expire once a one-time payment is made, just like in Minecraft.

As Vasquez and Felderman (2013) argue, "Text design and production can provide opportunities for critique and transformation" (p. 5). However, the first thing that needs to be determined is the problematic part of the text; then, a space can be created for critique and transformation of the text. During my conversation with William, he figured out that the commercial design of this virtual world offered paid members several additional opportunities and features, which resulted in inequity among the players in the virtual world. Considering Club Penguin as a text, William became aware of the

⁶ A very popular online video game developed by Mojang, 4J Studios and Microsoft Studios.

problematic part of the text, so we needed to create a space for critique and transformation. Therefore, I asked William if he wanted to take action and reach out to Club Penguin to share his thoughts and suggestions with them. He replied “Yes,” and when I asked him how he thought he could reach Club Penguin, he said, “Probably a way that they would get the fastest.” Then, he logged into Club Penguin to look for what he could do to reach them.

After he spent some time in Club Penguin, searching to find someone with whom to share his feelings, I told him that his friend Nick had once sent questions to the editor-in-chief of the Club Penguin Times Newspaper. This prompted William to open the newspaper, click the “write for us” link in the upper left corner, and choose the “send questions” option from the pop-up menu bar. Then, a box appeared on the screen that William could use to share his feelings with the editor-in-chief of the newspaper. William wrote the following:

Will you please change your policy if you have to pay for a membership to play for it to full potential and change it to you only have to pay one time. So, that you can always be able to get puffles that only paid members get and all the clothes that only the paid members get. I find it disappointing only the people that have a lot of money can play as a member. When the people that do not have that much money, only thing that they can do is pretty much play the games and walk around. When they could be playing with different puffles instead of only blue and red puffles, and they could be working on customizing their house, and getting golden puffle, getting rainbow puffle, it would be better and more fun. The people that do not have enough money would lose interest very fast because there is not much to do. (William, April 29, 2015)

This letter sounded as though, William, who lives in a consumerist world in his real life, was aware that telling Club Penguin “do not charge money for paid memberships” would not work because of their commercial interests. As he mentioned before, similar games

for kids also required payments, but those other games only required one-time payments. As such, William was accepting that there would be two types of membership, one paid and one non-paid, but he recommended that there be a change to the way the paid memberships were charged; according to William, people who paid only once benefit from the unlimited opportunities offered to paid members without making additional payments. His letter also served as a warning to Club Penguin that their current policy could cause players to stop playing Club Penguin altogether because basic members are more likely to lose interest quickly since they cannot adopt the puffles they want or decorate their igloos. According to William, just playing games and walking around is not much fun.

By writing this short letter to the editor-in-chief of the Club Penguin Times newspaper, I thought that, at least William did something to share his feelings about the unfairness of Club Penguin's policy, and this could be considered an initial step to critical action. As I was contemplating this, William said that he wanted to post the same letter on the official Club Penguin blog, which he frequently visited in his everyday life, and he stated, "I wanna see how fast people will comment on that." He was so excited to initiate a social action in Club Penguin, and it was encouraging to him to think that other people would support him in doing this. He opened the blog, and we began skimming the blog posts together to find an appropriate post under which he could share his letter as a comment. He finally found a blog post, which invited players to a themed party and recommended that they wear their party clothes appropriate for the current theme. Under the previous 347 comments made on this post, William shared his letter with the hope that he would receive support and comments from other readers. After William submitted

his post, a warning message appeared on the screen that said that all comments made under the blog posts had to be approved by the site administrators before they were published. We did not wait to see if the letter would be published immediately; rather, we left the blog for the time being and returned to it later. We visited the blog post several times after William submitted his post, but it never appeared, which means that the site administrators never approved and published it, which was disappointing for both William and I.

William engaged in another social action when he decided to make a YouTube video, within which he showed the differences between the paid and basic accounts, and explained that he found Club Penguin unfair because of its outrageous membership implementations. After his attempt to share his letter in the official Club Penguin blog, William began talking about how people make YouTube videos about different games, including Minecraft. Then, I told him that if he wanted to initiate a bigger social action to reach other people who feel like he does about the commercial design of Club Penguin, then I would help him to make and post a video to YouTube. He agreed to make a video; we met three times more, and each time, he worked on recording his videos. Then, in the final meeting, I helped him trim and edit the video to publish on YouTube through a YouTube account I created just for this purpose.

Before making his video, William and I briefly chatted about what the video could include. Via my questions, I tried to lead him to clearly show the features of Club Penguin with which he was unhappy. I asked him what the videos he watched included, and he responded by telling me that they showed the progress the players made in different games, and he let me know that he could not show his progress since the items

he gathered were not available to him anymore. Then, I suggested, “Well, you can visit different places and show people what you used to have.” I turned on screen recording on my laptop, and then he logged into Club Penguin and started his video record by saying:

Hey guys, I am making this video because I find Club Penguin’s policy of you have to be a member to get all the cool stuff unfair. I find it unfair, cause [pause], like [pause], people don’t have that much money can’t buy [pause], they can’t buy a membership, and they can’t play the game that much.

After explaining why he finds Club Penguin’s policy unfair, William visited his friends’ igloos to show what they had in their igloos as paid members, and he then returned to his own igloo and showed viewers his pretty basic igloo with no furniture in it. He also showed viewers his storage, where the items he purchased when he was a paid member remain but are inaccessible. He said:

See, you have to be a member to get all these things. I had a bunch of good stuffs that I won from [pause], I bought things, I played lots of games cause there was actually a point to play them, not just playing games to just play games... People that do have memberships, they actually have a reason why they should play the games so they can get cooler stuff.

After showing what he lost with the expiration of his membership, William mentioned that he played a lot of games to collect coins and buy those items. He also highlighted a primary difference between paid and basic members, and stated that paid members have a reason to play games because they can access and acquire cooler items. The paid members can collect any and all rewards offered in games, and they can use their coins to go shopping and purchase all of the items they want. However, basic members can only collect some basic rewards, and even though they can collect all of the coins, they cannot use the coins they collected to purchase the items they want. Finally, William showed viewers some of the items he got when he was a member and stated that he was not allowed to use those items anymore. He finished his video by saying:

If you are with me about that Club Penguin should change that you have to constantly pay to be a member, then just please leave a comment down below. Also talk to [pause], maybe post something on the blog about what you want to change. Cause, really, when you are not a member, you can't really do cool things. So [pause], goodbye. (William, May 4, 2015)

In this last phase of the study, we have seen how William, as a “critically literate individual” (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Vasquez, 2005b; Vasquez & Felderman, 2013), read the commercial design of Club Penguin and offered his reactions to its redesign.

Under my guidance, to reach people, critique the inequity in the virtual world, and invite the designers to redesign Club Penguin for himself first, and then for the other children, William engaged in three different actions. First, he personally contacted the editor-in-chief of Club Penguin and shared his feelings in a short letter. Then, he attempted to start two social actions via two different online platforms: the official Club Penguin blog and the well-known video-sharing website YouTube. As a critically literate individual, instead of looking for someone to pay for his Club Penguin membership, William used different genres of texts in the digital platform (e.g., blog posts, videos, and letters) to serve a “real-life function” (Vasquez & Felderman, 2013, p. 5) by directly reaching out to the appropriate people in order to deal with a real issue.

Eric

Eric is an eight-year-old boy, who joined Club Penguin club during the Spring 2014 program cycle and continued his attendance in the club in Fall 2014. Even though he started Club Penguin club as an inexperienced player in Spring 2014, he played together and discovered the virtual world with Nick, and he became an expert player in a short time and began helping other players in the club. Eric's parents let him play Club

Penguin at home only on the weekends, and he became very good at certain games, such as Puffle Lunch and Cart Surfer, and he shared the tricks he discovered with his play partner Nick and the other study participants in the Club Penguin club. Eric played Club Penguin as a basic member during the Spring 2014 program cycle and the first four sessions of the Fall 2014 program cycle, and then he received his paid account and played as a paid member for two months. As a paid member, Eric purchased several outfits for his avatar, and he adopted a ghost puffle, a cat puffle, and a purple and a red puffle. After his paid membership expired, his account turned into a basic account, which meant that he could no longer use most of the items he gathered when he was a paid member. After he played with his basic account for approximately four more months, I met with him in the afterschool program to talk about his feelings regarding this Club Penguin design feature.

My one-on-one conversation with Eric started with my questions regarding his feelings about losing his paid member status. He expressed to me that he was unhappy with losing the ability to purchase items since he wanted to purchase the new themed items, including super hero costumes and the evil snowman costume. He said that he was jealous of the paid members' new costumes when he saw them. Then, I asked him what he thought about Club Penguin's two-tiered membership policy. He explained that he found Club Penguin's policy of letting only paid members buy the items they want unfair, and he stated, "I don't think you should have to pay money just to become something in a video game." After hearing this statement, it was evident to me that Eric had already figured out the problematic part of the virtual world, so it was time to create a space for critique and transformation (Vasquez & Felderman, 2013). I told Eric that, to

try to affect change regarding Club Penguin's policy, his friend William had written a letter and created a YouTube video to share his feelings and gain the attention of the other players. Eric said that he was willing to write a letter as well. I explained that there were two ways to post letters to Club Penguin: one way is to write to the editor-in-chief of the Club Penguin Times newspaper, and the other way is to post on Club Penguin's official blog. He wanted to post his letter on the blog, which he frequently visits. He opened the official Club Penguin blog, and the first post he encountered was about the new super hero costumes that corresponded with the new theme. He, with no doubt, decided to share his letter under this post as a comment. He wrote:

i thoht it was fun to be a member and now im not and it wants me to pay money to be a member and i dont think you shud have to do that in a children game. i think it shod be free and im sad and im wundering if you chud make it free. (Eric, May 6, 2015)

Eric believed that children's games should be free, so he asked Club Penguin if they could change their policy and make it free for everyone. Just like the blog post his friend William wrote, Eric's post was not approved by the administrators or published in the blog. After Eric submitted his letter to the blog, I explained to him that Club Penguin may or may not accept his request, so we would wait to see what they would say, and he continued:

Hopefully they say yes, most comments I do, say yes about this kind of stuff. But, I think they should definitely make it free, and the only reason that I have that coat on in the game is cause I never took it off. And if I did take it off, right now, I could never wear it again... And yeah, I really want the super hero [pause]. Like, it'll be really cool to have a penguin waddling around in a superhero outfit.

Eric again mentioned in here that he did not want to take off his black hoodie because the outfit made him look like he was a member. After our conversation, he told me that he was also willing to make a video just like William did, but his ride was ready to pick him up, so we met the next day to record his YouTube video.

In our next meeting, we briefly chatted about what William's video included. Then, I started screen recording on my laptop and let Eric record his video. After a couple of practice videos, he recorded his actual video. Then, we trimmed and edited his video together, and made it ready to be published on YouTube. Eric's final video, the one we uploaded on YouTube, was 11 minutes and 42 seconds in length. Throughout his video, Eric did as William had done, and he visited several places in Club Penguin and explained what he used to do as a member and what he was not allowed to at the moment. However, Eric's video did not mimic William's video. Eric created a video that was unique, as it included fascinating examples from Eric's own experiences in Club Penguin.

He started his video by saying, "Hi guys, in this video, I will explain why it's not fair to pay for a membership," and he showed viewers that paid and basic members do not have equal rights in terms of access to virtual goods. First, Eric showed his inventory and his black hoodie, and he explained why he did not want to take it off, and then he visited the pet shop and showed that he was not allowed to adopt most of the puffles in the pet shop. Next, he showed viewers all of the games he is not permitted to play as a basic member such as Rainbow Puffle Lunch. He then found another online player who was wearing a Captain America costume, and he used this player as an example to explain the difference between the basic members' and paid members' outfits. He finally

played one of his favorite games, Sled Race, with an online paid member and showed that the paid member could purchase a sled for himself and used it in the race, but Eric had to use a regular red sled that is available for everyone to use in this game for free. While playing Sled Race, Eric stated, “I think everyone should get the privilege to be a member. I don’t think, like, any kid game that you will have to pay. That is wrong. Cause, kids don’t make money, and that is a kids game.” While showing the inequity in the virtual world, Eric was also explaining why it was unacceptable to expect payment from children for Club Penguin memberships.

As was decided in our brief chat at the beginning of our meeting, Eric finished his video by speaking directly to the designers of Club Penguin; he did this in effort to get them to change their paid member policy, and he invited other players to comment under his video:

Like I said, if you are creator watching this, I hope you like this video, comment, and agree with me, and maybe even change the game a little bit. And yeah, I hope a lot of you like this video. I hope a lot of comments, and good-bye.

Again under my guidance, just as William had, Eric analyzed Club Penguin as a product of children’s popular culture, and took actions to promote social justice (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2014). He looked through Club Penguin with a critical literacy lens, found the problematic parts in the design from his perspective, and engaged in social actions via digital platforms in effort to affect change with regard to the design of the virtual world for himself as well as for other children.

Nick

Nick is an eight-year-old boy who first joined Club Penguin in Spring 2014 and continued in the Fall 2014 program cycle. He played Club Penguin at home as well, and made great progress such that he became one of the most experienced players and was willing to help other kids in the room when they struggled. Nick played with a basic account in the Spring 2014 program cycle and the first four sessions of the Fall 2014 program cycle. He then received his paid account, and he played as a paid member for two months. Dressing up his avatar, decorating igloos, and adopting puffles in different kinds and colors became so important to Nick. In addition to the outfits he bought for his penguin through the Penguin Style catalog, he unlocked several outfits for his avatar by using the codes he collected from several Club Penguin fan sites by contacting other fans. He used to have a pretty rich inventory with a total of 275 outfits, accessories, background cards and other items before his membership expired. Nick also owned three different igloos, each with its own design and features; Nick described his igloos as “an epic party igloo that has epic background music, a little school igloo that I’d like to go every now and then, and my normal igloo that is pretty epic.” All three of these igloos were decorated with furniture related to the concepts or designs that he gave his igloos. Nick also adopted a total of 21 puffles, including a ghost puffle, a gold puffle, a rainbow puffle, a dog puffle, a cat puffle, and 16 other puffles in different colors. Just like William and Eric, Nick played with his basic account for about four months after the expiration of his paid membership, and then I met with him in the afterschool program so as to assess his feelings. His initial impressions regarding the paid membership implementation of Club Penguin were: “it is unfair” and “[the developers] are so greedy.”

I met with Nick three times during the afterschool program. In our first meeting, we just chatted about the expiration of his paid account and his feelings about losing his igloos, most of his outfits, and his ability to take his puffles for a walk in town. This first meeting was an unstructured interview, which ended after only seven minutes because he had to leave for another afterschool program club. Nick and I met the next day to talk more about his feelings. Since he had already mentioned that he found Club Penguin's implementation of paid membership unfair, I decided to ask him if he wanted to do anything to change this and told him what kind of critical actions William and Eric took. Since he had already submitted several questions to the editor-in-chief of the newspaper and was familiar with how to contact the editor, he said he could ask Aunt Arctic, the editor-in-chief of Club Penguin Times to change this policy. He opened the "write for us" page in the newspaper, and he typed his request into the box that appeared on the screen; he wrote, "Can you make it so you don't need a payed membership to buy clothing etc." His question was obviously pretty short compared to the letter William had written. In a previous conversation, Nick had mentioned that he did not believe that Aunt Arctic read every message she got because he had yet to receive a response from her. It seemed that he wanted to keep his question short this time either because he believed that he would not get a response or because he thought that keeping his question brief might increase the likelihood that he would get a response. As was the case with his previous questions, Nick did not hear from the editors about his requests and/or suggestions regarding Club Penguin's paid membership policy.

At the end of our second meeting, I told Nick that William and Eric had created YouTube videos to talk about their feelings regarding Club Penguin's commercial design

and to gain other people's attention. Nick got so excited and said that he could create a video as well. We decided to meet the next day to record his YouTube video. I wanted to chat about what the video should include, but Nick was pretty confident, and he told me that he knew what he would say, and he started working on it. After a bit of practice, during which Nick visited several places in Club Penguin and decided what to share in his video, he recorded a video that was 7 minutes and 40 seconds in length and needed no editing at all. It seemed that Nick knew how to express his feelings and get the attention of other people. He started his video by saying:

Hey guys, this is a guy that is using this account for Club Penguin things. And [pause], you see? You can get, this, this, this, this, this [pointing to the pictures of special items for paid members on the opening page of Club Penguin], and this with the membership. I used to have a membership, but guess what? It expired. And that is the exact reason why I am making this video.

Then he logged into Club Penguin and began visiting different places and showing viewers all of the items he had lost, one-by-one. First, he went to the Penguin Style shop, and he opened the Penguin Style catalog to show that, as a basic member who recently lost his paid membership, he was not allowed to purchase any of the items he wanted. He said, "I mean you can't get Ironman [showing the costumes of Marvel characters available in Penguin Style catalog at the time], or you can't get the War Machine wear, or Hulk, or Thor, Captain America, you can't get any of the cool stuff that you want." Then, he went to his very basic igloo within which he has no furniture and only a few puffles. He clicked on his puffles and showed the membership icons that appeared on the screen, which meant that he had to have a paid membership to be able to play with those puffles. Then he shared his anxiety, "Some people say, I believe this, that if you don't care for it,

[your puffles] all leave, and I believe that is what will happen which is not, not, NOT COOL [he said this with emphasis and typed it using all capital letters as well]... Okay?" Even though he was not a paid member anymore, his puffles has not been taken from him entirely. He was able to see them in his igloo or in the backyard of his igloo, but he was not allowed to take care of them or play with them, which was more painful for him. It was also painful for me as a researcher, because this meant that each time my study participants went to their igloos, they would see the puffles they adopted when they were paid members, but they would not be able to take care of their virtual pets, which caused them to worry that their puffles might eventually leave forever. This was actually another commercial strategy Club Penguin used to redirect children to purchase paid memberships. However, this reminded me that these types of commercial strategies used by the producing companies made it more clear how important it was to educate young children to engage in critical actions against the unfairness and inequity they encountered in their everyday lives.

Then, Nick started showing viewers his previous igloos (his party igloo, school igloo, and normal igloo) that were taken to storage. He was able to see his previous igloos in the igloo-editing mode, but he was not able to change his basic igloo to one of those igloos because he no longer had a paid membership. He stated in the video, "I can't go to my actual igloos [pointing to his previous igloos with the mouse], only this one [showing the basic igloo], but nothing else." This is also a commercial strategy that Club Penguin uses; after the expiration of paid membership, the players do not lose their previous items, but those items are taken to storage until the players renew their paid memberships. This strategy is aimed at convincing children to renew their paid

memberships; without this strategy, the children would not be so readily reminded of all of the items they lost when their memberships reverted to basic memberships. This strategy, just like the one that limited children's abilities to play with the puffles they had previously adopted as paid members, needed to be reconsidered in order to protect children's rights against the producing company's unfair commercial-based policies.

After showing viewers what he lost with the expiration of his paid membership, just as William and Eric had, Nick finished his video by inviting the audience to comment on or like the video in order to get the attention of Club Penguin:

So yes, if you agree or disagree with me, just put why you agree or disagree in the comments. Or, leave a like if you agree. But, if you don't, leave a thumb down if you want. It is really up to you. Maybe if, maybe if we get enough likes, and comments that say 'oww hey, I agree with this dude, or this, or that, or that,' well maybe Club Penguin will notice us and change that rule basically.

Nick clearly explained his reason for making this video, showed viewers what items he used to have and what he had lost with the expiration of his membership, and he invited viewers who think like he does to take action and leave a comment under his video or like his video. Only then, Nick claimed, would Club Penguin take notice of the unhappy players and make changes to their policy. Nick named his video "Club Penguin + Paid Membership = Not Fair," which is actually a pretty clear summary of his reaction.

After posting his video on YouTube, Nick received likes and several positive comments such as "I totally agree with you" or "I love your video." Even though he never used his real name in the video, he got some comments that include his real name from the people whom, I assume, he knows personally. Because of the ethical concerns of this study, those comments were deleted to avoid disclosing Nick's real name.

Nick had more outfits and accessories, more puffles, and more furniture in his three different igloos than other players in the Club Penguin club, and he lost most of the items he had with the expiration of his paid membership. Therefore, he was more emotional in his reactions. Even though Nick did not request any help from me, his YouTube video was organized very well. It explained what was taken from him with the expiration of his paid membership, and it served to express the unfairness of this policy. Creating this video allowed Nick the opportunity to address a real issue he had encountered in his new playground by criticizing the problematic parts of this new playground and asking other people to take similar action.

Conclusion

These three children, all of whom read Club Penguin through a critical literacy lens, were not thinking in the same way four months prior when they were paid members. After losing their virtual goods in Club Penguin, they were better able to see its commercial design as well as the inequity that existed among players in terms of offered opportunities and features. The last phase of this dissertation study offered these children opportunities to take social action in order to affect change, and these three children individually engaged in critical literacy practices for this purpose.

Even though William, Eric and Nick took actions to promote social justice among the digital platforms, their individual reactions were limited to their personal experiences. These children always talked about what happened to their paid accounts, and what they felt when they lost their virtual goods; as a researcher, I found it painful to hear how upset the children were. However, in the end, at least the children had a chance to engage

in critical actions against the social injustice that exists among today's new playgrounds, and this helped to change their points of view with regard to the inequity they encountered. In the last phase of the study, because of the limited time I had and the busy schedule of the afterschool program, instead of meeting with the study participants as a whole group in the computer lab, I met with the study participants individually, and I just talked about their personal experiences. Thus, the study participants did not engage in critical literacy from a social perspective or discuss the social, cultural, political and economic dimensions behind their personal experiences as a group, which may be considered a limitation of this study.

It is important to note that, even though starting with a personal experience is meaningful, it is important to move beyond that experience to understand the actual powers that are shaping our experiences (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2014). If we had continued Club Penguin club for another full program cycle, instead of meeting individually, we could have met in regular sessions as a whole group, worked in solidarity, and focused more on the social, cultural, political and economic dimensions of the children's personal experiences. Then, the study participants might have had the opportunity to think more broadly and discuss the other similar events happening in their communities; they could have potentially evaluated the event from different perspectives such as those of the producing company, a paid member, a basic member, and a parent; they might have thought about the complex power relationships driven by economic capital in their everyday lives; and finally it might have been possible for them to plan a collective, more powerful action via social platforms.

However, even if these children's individual attempts did not result in some big social action in the world, and did not cause a change to the design of the virtual world, they changed these children's perceptions. These children addressed a real problem they encountered by creating texts in digital platforms aimed at reaching real people, sharing the problem, and getting the attention of the producing company to make design changes. This practice of creating texts for a "real-life function" helps children become "critically literate individuals." Their new critical perspectives with regard to reading texts, the virtual world in this case, and their new perceptions regarding Club Penguin and its commercial implementations will mediate these children's future literacy, participation and consumerism practices in their new playgrounds.

CHAPTER 8: Discussion of Findings

Summary

This four-year ethnographic study invited readers into a new playground designed for children, and permitted readers to assess this playground while young children, such as Nick, Eric, William, Scott, Ben and Diana, played within it via both basic and paid Club Penguin accounts. The aim here was to observe how these children's participation and literacy practices, as well as their habitus, changed over time when they switched from basic membership accounts to paid accounts and back again. The larger aim of this ethnographic study, however, was to bring to the foreground the effects of the two-tiered membership feature associated with commercially designed virtual play worlds on children's participation and literacy practices as they pertain to their new playgrounds; this was achieved through examination of the differences in paid and basic members' interactions in the Club Penguin club. This study consists of three tasks: engaging the nexus, navigating the nexus, and changing the nexus.

Engaging the nexus task is preliminary to a nexus of practice, so it does not include the analysis of the actual data; instead, it includes identification of frequent practices and key participants at the site of engagement. In chapter 4 and chapter 5, while explaining what has been done in the engaging the nexus task, I defined the research contexts, both online and offline, identified the key practices the children in which the children usually engaged, and located the key participants. To do this, in chapter 4, I analyzed the Club Penguin website, its commercial motives, norms, and rules; I analyzed the afterschool program's computer room, its rules and norms; and then, I looked at data from previous program cycles gathered from different children playing the same game in

the same context to see how these online and offline contexts came together, and what practices the children frequently engaged in in the Club Penguin club context. Finally, by looking at the original data collected in the last program cycle, I identified the key participants of the study.

Then, in chapter 5, to better understand the key practices of the children in the Club Penguin virtual world, I conducted cyber-ethnographic research, within which I created my own paid member avatar, logged into Club Penguin, traveled within the virtual world from place to place, and observed the online players' interactions. This self-experience in the Club Penguin virtual world helped me to better understand the participation, consumerism and literacy practices in which children usually engage while in this online space, and how these different practices are actually happening at the same time and affect, and are being affected by, each other even with regard to very simple events such as dressing up avatars.

Navigating the nexus task is the main task of nexus analysis, within which transformative events are located and analyzed. Transformative events can be defined as special events that include a change in children's participation to peer culture, or a change in the meaning of text. To navigate the nexus in the Club Penguin club, in chapter 6, I first identified the places the children visited while in the Club Penguin virtual world, and their frequent practices in those places. Then, I located two transformative events, and conducted a microanalysis to bring to the foreground what kind of consumerism, participation and literacy practices the children simultaneously engaged in, and how the commercial design of Club Penguin affected the children's literacy and participation practices.

While analyzing the focal children's interactions in chapter 6, I focused especially on the concepts of capital and habitus as associated with practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986). For instance, I looked at the role of *economic capital*, which is economic resources that children have, such as paid memberships, in children's access to the online context and the virtual goods in Club Penguin as well as its effects on the children's literacy practices and participation practices. I also examined the children's *transformation of economic capital into social capital*, which involves using economic resources to gain entrance into a group or connect with other people; an activity that may serve this end includes purchasing special outfits in order to attract friends with paid memberships while establishing relationships in the Club Penguin club peer culture. I also analyzed the children's *habitus change*, which is the change in children's tendencies and perceptions of events in time as they played with different types of accounts in the Club Penguin club.

The task of changing the nexus is the final task of nexus analysis, which helps to bring the analyses and understandings back into the research setting via re-engagement. Some time after the Club Penguin club finished, the children's paid accounts expired. Therefore, the children continued playing Club Penguin with their basic accounts either at home or in the afterschool program. This gave me a chance to see what the children thought about the commercial design of Club Penguin after they lost their paid accounts and almost all of the virtual goods they had previously gathered, and how this situation allowed for the nexus to change. In chapter 7, while changing the nexus, I analyzed the children's reactions to the commercial design of Club Penguin and their critical literacy practices. Thus, in the last stage of this ethnographic research, I merged Mediated

Discourse Analysis (MDA) with Critical Literacy by guiding the children as they offered their respective reactions regarding the commercial design of the Club Penguin virtual play worlds.

Connecting to Nexus Theory

In this chapter, using the following research questions as a frame for each section, I aim to synthesize my findings recorded in chapters 6 and 7 (navigating the nexus and changing the nexus, respectively) associated with the different social actions in which the children engaged via the different types of penguin accounts. This time, however, I will focus more on theory by employing the three elements of the nexus (i.e., historical body, interaction order, and discourse in place):

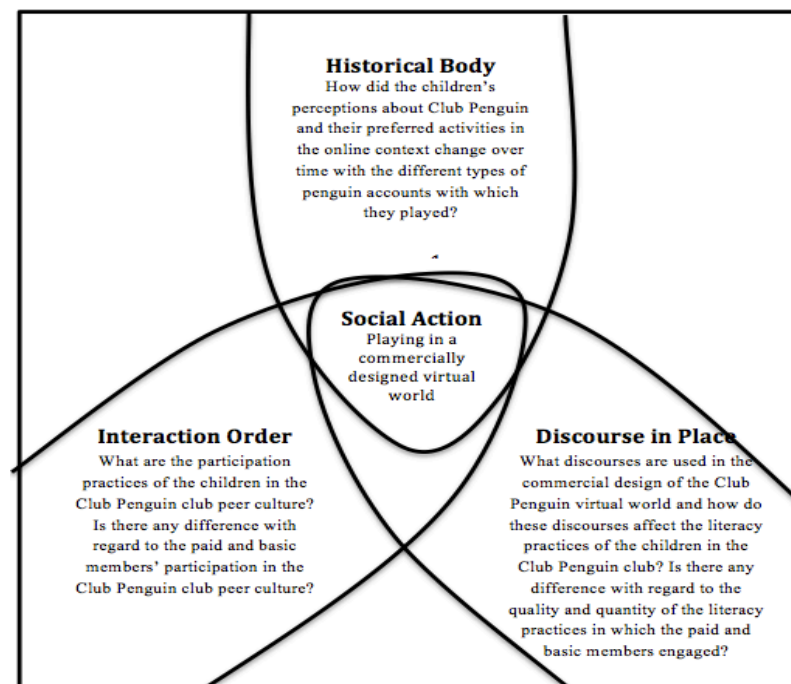
1. How did the children's perceptions about Club Penguin and their preferred activities in the online context change over time with the different types of penguin accounts with which they played?
2. What are the participation practices of the children in the Club Penguin club peer culture? Is there any difference with regard to the paid and basic members' participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture?
3. What discourses are used in the commercial design of the Club Penguin virtual world and how do these discourses affect the literacy practices of the children in the Club Penguin club? Is there any difference with regard to the quality and quantity of the literacy practices in which the paid and basic members engaged?

Scollon (2001b) argues, “We will never discover simply one action upon which to focus, but we must necessarily conceive of any mediated action as one which is constituted by lower level actions and which, in turn, constitutes higher level actions” (p. 162). In Club Penguin, there are several social actions that constitute or are constituted by other social actions. For instance, the social action of dressing up avatars is constituted by several lower level actions, such as purchasing outfits, opening the outfits inventory, choosing an outfit from the inventory, which in turn, constitutes higher level actions, such as attracting other players and collecting friends or earning status among friends, which also constitute the overarching social action of interest in this study, which is playing in a commercially designed virtual play world. I argue that even though for each social action explored in the previous chapters, the intersections of the elements of the nexus produce the particular social actions, the synthesis of these elements in different social actions in which the children engaged over time (i.e., synthesis of historical bodies, synthesis of interaction orders, synthesis of discourses in places) produce the elements of the nexus for the overarching social action of interest in this research: children’s play in a commercially designed virtual play world.

Each research question noted above offers an overarching structure for the discussion of an element of the nexus and its development over time for the overarching social action (see Figure 8.1): RQ 1, the change in children’s perceptions about Club Penguin and preferred activities is more about their *historical bodies*; RQ 2, the children’s participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture is more about their *interaction orders*; and RQ 3, the literacy practices of children is more about *discourse in place*.

Scollon and Scollon (2004) define the term *historical body* from Nishida (1958) as people's "life experiences, their goals and purposes, and their unconscious ways of behaving and thinking" (p. 46) that play a role in the social actions in which people engage. When we think about the Club Penguin club context, the study participants' historical bodies, or their habitus, according to Bourdieu's (1977) terminology, changed over time since they had different experiences at different stages of the study, as they started with basic accounts and changed to paid accounts after a few weeks, and finally lost their paid accounts and most of their virtual goods at the end of the study. At each stage, the children also had different goals and purposes and different perceptions about Club Penguin that were shaped by the opportunities offered to them based on the account types with which they played. The children's historical bodies, and the way they changed over time, will be analyzed under the first research question later in this chapter.

Figure 8.1. Overarching Social Action: Intersection of the Elements of the Nexus



*excerpted and adapted from Scollon and Scollon's (2004, p. 154) social action diagram

The second nexus element that intersects with historical body to produce social action is *interaction order* (see Figure 8.1). Scollon and Scollon (2004) borrowed this term from Goffman (1983) to explain the role of other people around us with regard to the social action in which we engage. There are two main distinctions among those people: there are those who are actually part of our social group and who are taking action with us (as in, alongside us), and there are others who are present at the moment of action but who are not part of our social group (Scollon & Scollon, 2004). The people taking action with us directly affect the action in which we engage, and the other people present at the moment of the action affect the action indirectly just by being there. This is the foundation of the notion that there are “people who are together with others will behave in ways that they might not behave when they are alone” (p. 22). In my research, the children’s interaction orders differed in different stages of the study as they sometimes played mini games alone; and other times, they played games and engaged in other activities with their partners; and still other times, they engaged in activities by considering other online and offline players. The role of interaction order on the social actions in which they engaged will be examined under the second research question later in this chapter.

The last nexus element that intersects with historical body and interaction order, and produces social actions, is *discourse in place*, which refers to the relevant and foregrounded discourses at the moment of social action. “All places in the world are complex aggregates (or nexus) of many discourses which circulate through them” (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 14). However, people background the irrelevant discourses and use the relevant ones in the meaning-making process of a particular social action. In

the Club Penguin club, the children made meaning through several discourses in different stages of the study. To understand how to play a game, for instance, they made meaning through *instructional messages* such as pop-up screens that direct children in their play. In their interactions in Club Penguin, they not only used textual discourses, but they also made use of other discourses embedded in the design of the virtual world such as *commercial messages*. The children became aware of Club Penguin's two-tiered membership feature and the privilege associated with paid memberships throughout their play in the different stages of the study by reading the *commercial messages* that are embedded in the design of Club Penguin. The foregrounded discourses through which the children made meaning in the different stages of this study will be discussed later in this chapter under research question three.

RQ 1: How did the children's perceptions about Club Penguin and their preferred activities in the online context change over time with the different types of penguin accounts with which they played?

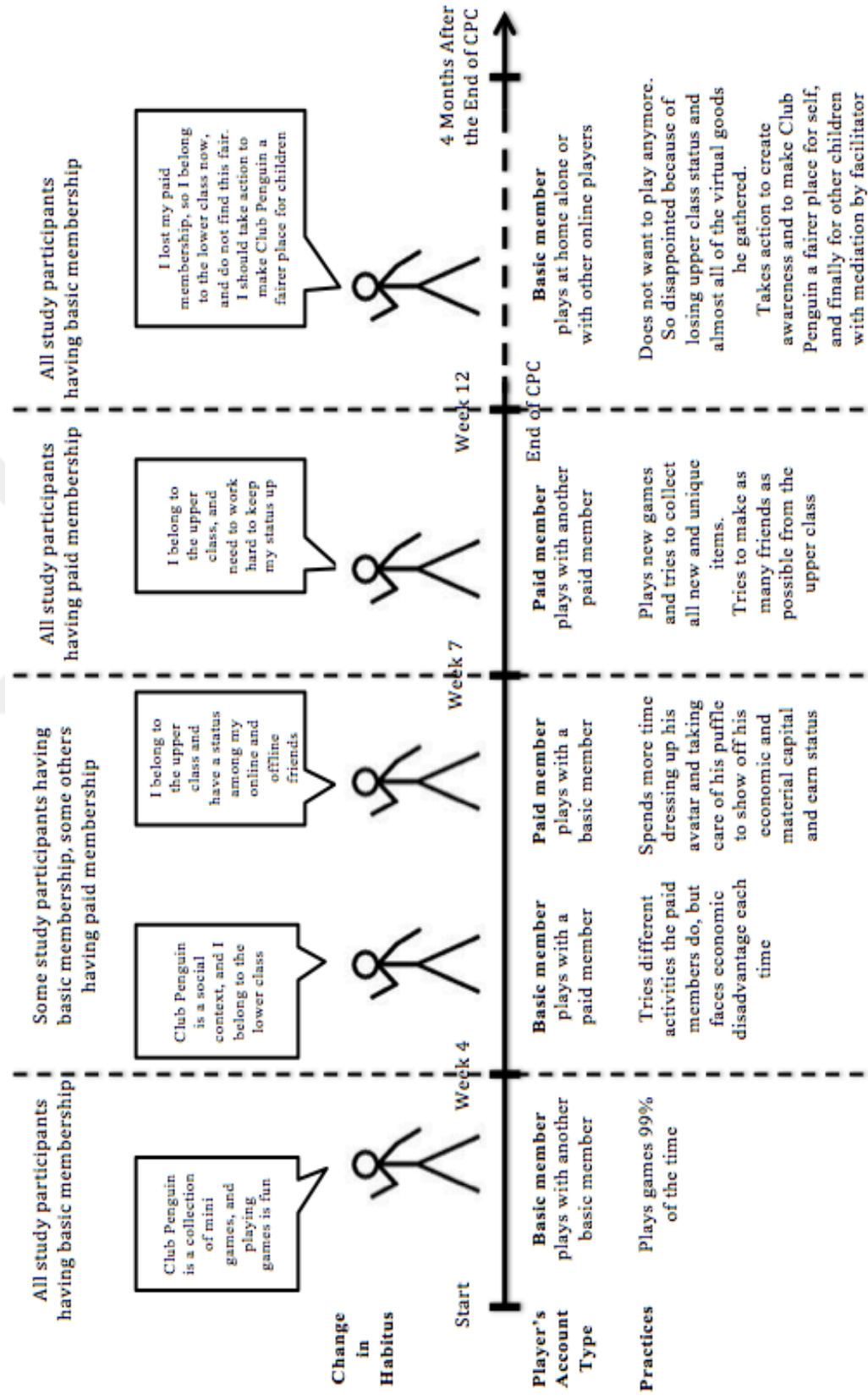
Once all of the data was analyzed, it became clear that the children's habitus changed based on the type of account with which they and their play partners played. These changes in their habitus caused changes with regard to their perceptions of the Club Penguin virtual world. When their perceptions changed, their participation within the online and the offline spaces changed accordingly, as did the quality and the quantity of their literacy practices (see Chapter 6). While playing in the Club Penguin club, what was available to the children in the online space changed their online and offline participation practices. Both the paid and the basic members become aware of the items and activities available to them as well as the links between the different practices in which they engaged. As Scollon (2001b) argued, "...it is not only practices that are

constituted in the habitus over a history of social actions, but also the linkages are constituted in the habitus as well over a history in multiple sites of engagement” (p. 149). For example, the basic members encountered several restrictions in the online space, and they also watched the rich play opportunities of their paid member play partners, and these passive consumerism engagements led them to see the links between the consumerism and participation practices in Club Penguin. The basic members understood that paid members had no restrictions with regard to purchasing items, so they were able to dress up their avatars with nice outfits, decorate their igloos with up-to-date furniture, take care of their special puffles, etc., and all of these consumerism and participation practices were linked to each other. Thus, the children’s habitus changed over time by not only engaging in several practices but also by understanding the linkages among the different practices such as purchasing outfits and dressing up avatars; purchasing furniture and decorating igloos; and adopting special puffles, purchasing food, outfits and accessories for them, and taking care of puffles.

Historical Body: Change in Perception Over Time

While playing together in this commercially designed virtual world, the children’s habitus changed several times in different stages of this study. Once their habitus changed, their perceptions of Club Penguin changed as well, and the participation and literacy practices in which they engaged changed (see Figure 8.2). I argue that the children’s habitus change over time in different stages of this study gives us the historical body element of the overarching social action of interest of this study.

Figure 8.2. Children's Habitus Change in the Club Penguin Club Nexus



At the beginning of the study, when basic members played with other players with basic accounts, they saw Club Penguin as a collection of mini games and preferred to spend 99% of their time playing games in this virtual world. Even though they knew that there were other things going on in Club Penguin, they had limited access to those activities (e.g., decorating igloos, dressing up avatars), so they did not see any other player experiencing those activities in the afterschool program, and they simply ignored anything that was not merely playing games. This was not because of their lack of knowledge about the game or because they were less experienced players. In the previous program cycles, I also observed that most of the players preferred to play mini games and did not spend time engaged in other activities. In the beginning of the study, the children's historical bodies were limited to watching their partners play with basic accounts and playing mini games in Club Penguin with limited access to the online context and virtual goods. Their historical bodies, or their observation of play partners, and their own experiences in Club Penguin via basic accounts – their limited access to the online context and virtual goods – led them see Club Penguin as a collection of mini games, and encouraged them to engage in these simple practices.

After week four, when these basic account holders were paired with players with paid accounts, they watched the activities in which their play partners engaged and became aware of their partners' rich opportunities, which caused their historical bodies/habitus to change (see Figure 8.2). Club Penguin was not just a collection of mini games anymore. It was a social space within which children could decorate their own places, dress up their avatars, attend parties in friends' places, and take care of their pets. This change in basic members' historical bodies led them to engage in similar activities

with paid members. These basic members also started dressing up their avatars and visiting their igloos to play with their puffles, and they spared only 45% of their time to play games. However, while engaging in these activities, they encountered several warning messages that told them that given activities were available only to paid members, and they understood that, in this commercially designed online space, there were two social classes, and with a basic account, they belonged to the lower social class. Even though, some of the basic account holders used their expertise and the materials they collected from games to balance their economic disadvantage, they could close the gap in the online space only up to a point.

When the study participants were offered paid accounts and got a chance to play with basic account holders, their historical bodies/habitus changed one more time (see Figure 8.2). Now, they had unlimited access to the online contexts and the virtual goods in Club Penguin, which led them to experience new activities (e.g., dressing up avatars, adopting special puffles, decorating igloos), and this caused their historical bodies to change. By using the advantage of their economic capital, they tried to earn status in this peer culture. When they were paired with basic account holders, they spent more time dressing up their avatars and taking care of their puffles. While engaging in these activities, they showed off their economic and material capitals to their basic member play partners, and they earned upper-class status in the Club Penguin club peer culture.

When the paid account holders were paired with the other players with paid accounts after week seven, their historical bodies/habitus changed again. This time, the paid account holders watched their play partners play with their all-cool items, and they learned new things from their partners' play. They realized that to be able to keep their

upper-class status in this peer culture, they had to work harder. They had become aware that it may not take much work to achieve status, but it takes work to maintain that status. To maintain their status, these paid members worked hard – playing is now working – by playing new games to collect new and unique items (see Table 6.2), and following new trends (for example, Eric followed the official Club Penguin blog for this purpose) while purchasing items to decorate their igloos or to dress up their avatars.

After week 12, the Club Penguin Club ended and the children's paid accounts were not renewed. However, the children could continue to play as basic members in the afterschool program and at their homes. This gave me a chance to observe how the expiration of their paid accounts affected the children's play and their perceptions regarding the Club Penguin virtual world. In my follow-up visits four months after the end of the Club Penguin Club, I realized that the children's historical bodies had changed again because of the loss of their upper-class status as well as almost all of their previously collected virtual goods, for which the children worked for many hours, days, weeks, or even months. This change in their status affected the children's activities in Club Penguin. They were no longer willing to play as much in Club Penguin, and they found this commercial implementation unfair.

In conclusion, when we look at the historical bodies of the children in different stages of this study, we see that at the beginning, Club Penguin was considered a collection of mini games that children could play and have fun with friends. Later, when the study participants began playing via paid accounts, Club Penguin became a social space within which the children could engage in several activities with friends, take care of their puffles, dress up their avatars, or decorate their igloos. And at the end, with the

expiration of their paid membership, the children lost their virtual goods and their social status, and Club Penguin was found unfair because of its commercial implementations, which caused it to become an unpopular game among the children. With my guidance, the children who perceived Club Penguin as unfair engaged in several activities aimed at changing the virtual world's policy, which would make Club Penguin a fairer place for themselves and finally for other children. In sum, when we look at the overarching social action of interest of this study, playing in a commercially designed virtual world, the children's historical bodies with regard to the overarching social action can be defined as the following: the commercially designed virtual worlds are fun places, within which children can play mini games or engage in several social activities with their friends, but these virtual worlds have some unfair commercial implementations that need to be reconsidered and changed in order to make these virtual worlds better places in which young children can play.

RQ 2: What are the participation practices of the children in the Club Penguin club peer culture? Is there any difference with regard to the paid and basic members' participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture?

As is discussed in detail in Chapter 6, the children's participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture differs in different stages of this study based on the membership types of the children and their play partners. To compare and contrast the participation practices of paid and basic members in the Club Penguin club peer culture, it is important to look at the interaction orders of children regarding certain activities in which they engaged. Analyzing interaction orders helps us to understand how certain person(s) act in a certain way with regard to a particular activity. According to Goffman's (1983) interaction order theory, the people around us with whom we engage in activities

together play an important role in the development of our attitudes and the way we engage in activities. Goffman considered the world a stage, and according to his argument, people either act on the front stage or on the back stage. He explained that, when we are in social settings, which means when we are at least with one other person, we are on our front stage, where we act as our best character to impress other people and to be accepted in and by society. And, when we are alone, we are actually on our back stage, where we do not need to act anymore. We behave in the way we are most comfortable. Scollon and Scollon (2004) adopt Goffman's theory of interaction order, and explained, "our interest in the interaction order grows out of the fact that people behave differently depending in part on whether they are alone when they act or if they are acting together in consort with other people" (p. 13). In their argument, Scollon and Scollon go one step further and argue that this claim is true not only in face-to-face interactions as in Goffman's original argument, but also in technology-mediated interactions. The nexus of interaction orders of the people in place at the moment, discourses in place, and historical bodies of the person(s) produce social actions.

In this part of the chapter, to examine how the children's interaction orders changed over time in the different stages of the study, I will first consider each stage of the study as a higher level social action (for instance, the first stage of the study is considered the social action of playing in a commercially designed virtual world as basic members) that is made up of lower level social actions in which the children engaged (i.e., playing mini games, dressing up avatars, etc.). Then I will analyze the children's interaction orders in each higher level social action (i.e., each stage of the study), which

later constitutes the children's overarching social action, playing in a commercially designed virtual play world (see Table 8.1).

Interaction Orders in Different Stages

In the beginning of the Club Penguin club, while the children played in this commercially designed virtual world as basic members, they spent almost all of their times playing mini games individually. Since they were not allowed to purchase outfits for their avatars or furniture for their igloos, except for a few basic items, they did not yet engage in the social activities that would become the norm a few weeks later, after they received their paid accounts. At this point, they were still focused primarily on *solitary game play*. Since, in their solitary play, they had no concerns about what the other people thought about their activities or the appearance of their avatars, the basic members were acting on their back stage at the beginning of the study (Goffman, 1983). They were playing in the way that was most comfortable, and they were just having fun.

Table 8.1. Theory and Findings Table

Overarching Social Practice	Playing in a commercially designed virtual play world			
	Playing in a commercially designed virtual world as basic members	Playing in a commercially designed virtual world as mixed status pairs	Playing in a commercially designed virtual world as paid members	Criticizing the commercial design of virtual worlds to make a change in their designs
	Stage 1 Week 1-Week 4 <i>All study participants have basic memberships</i>	Stage 2 Week 4-Week 7 <i>Some study participants have basic memberships, others have paid memberships</i>	Stage 3 Week 7-Week 12 <i>All study participants have paid membership</i>	Stage 4 4 Months after the End of Club Penguin Club <i>All study participants have basic membership</i>
	- Shared Meanings: - CP is a nice place to play with friends - CP is a collection of mini games - Practices - Children played mini games 99% of the time, and did not engage in other activities in CP - Dispositions - All players were basic members but they were happy with that	- Shared Meanings: - CP is a social context with two social classes - Paid members belong to the upper class and have unlimited access to the online space and virtual goods - Practices - Paid members dressed up their avatars, took care of puffles, and earned status among their friends - Basic members tried different activities the paid members did, but encountered economic disadvantages each time - Dispositions - Both paid and basic members were aware of CP's two-tiered design and the privileges of paid	- Shared Meanings: - CP is a social context with two social classes and upper class requires monthly subscription fee - Asking young children to make payment to play games is not fair - Losing previously collected virtual goods with expiration of membership is not fair - Practices - Children did not want to play CP much anymore - Children criticized CP's commercial design and took actions to create awareness and to make CP a fairer place for	
	Historical Bodies: Shared Meanings, Practices and Dispositions: Change in perception of Club Penguin (CP) and preferred activities			

		members	work harder now to keep their upper class status in hand	• Dispositions ◦ All members were basic members and believed that the commercial design of Club Penguin is unfair, and needs to be changed
Interaction Orders: Participation in the Club Penguin club peer culture	• Solitary game play	• Paired play • Showing off • Demonstration • Teaching	• Playing as one to whole group in CP • Working hard to keep status • Attracting other players to collect more friends	• Using insider practices to change the nexus
Discourses in Place: Play, consumerism and literacy	• Instructional messages • Communicative texts • Commercial messages ◦ Two-tiered membership ◦ Gatekeeping messages	• Instructional messages • Communicative texts • Commercial messages ◦ Two-tiered membership ◦ Gatekeeping messages ◦ Paid member privilege	• Instructional messages • Communicative texts • Commercial messages ◦ Paid member privilege ◦ Consumption	• Commercial messages ◦ Two-tiered membership ◦ Gatekeeping messages ◦ Paid member privilege • Critical messages • Discourse of Social Media ◦ YouTube videos ◦ Blog posts ◦ Letters to the editor of CP Times newspaper

After week four, in the second stage of the study, the children started playing as mixed status pairs (i.e., a paid member versus a basic member). In this stage, the children were not playing individually, as they spent most of their time *playing in pairs*. Therefore, they had begun to act on the front stage (Goffman, 1983), and their interaction orders were different than they had been previously. Compared to the paid members, the basic members had very few virtual goods. When paid and basic members engaged in activities together, there were obvious differences between the practices in which they engaged. The basic members, who were actually happy with what they used to have, now felt the difference between themselves and the paid members, and they started asking questions such as, “Why don’t I have the opportunities the other children have?” Meanwhile, the paid members also felt the difference. Since paid members had unlimited opportunities in terms of access to the virtual goods and the online context, they tried new activities (dressing up avatars, decorating igloos, adopting special puffles, etc.) in the virtual world instead of just playing the mini games. They started engaging in more social activities, and in their activities, it was observed that they tried to *show off* their economic capital to the basic member play partners to earn status among them. They also *demonstrated* their frequent activities, and *taught* the basic members some game tricks, which let them become recognized as expert players in this peer culture.

The unlimited opportunities of paid members had affected not only their interaction orders but also the basic members’ activities and their interaction orders in the Club Penguin club in this stage of the study. While playing together, and acting on the front stage (Goffman, 1983), the basic members also tried to act their best selves so that they would be accepted in this community. As discussed in Chapter 6, some basic

members tried to balance their lack of wealth with the rewards they earned from games, which included a ninja outfit that the Card Jitsu game awarded players who beat Sensei; this was not enough, however, to close the gap between the basic and paid members.

In stage three, since both of the partners had paid accounts, they started comparing their virtual goods and play skills with their play partners and other paid members in the online context, and they realized that they had to *work harder to keep their upper class social status* among their friends. Again, in this social context, the children were playing with their play partners as well as other online players, so they were acting on their front stage (Goffman, 1983). Since, they all had similar opportunities in terms of the materials they own, and similar background in terms of the activities in which they engaged in the Club Penguin club, to be able to earn status in this community, they had to demonstrate in some other way that they were better than the others. This time, they have to work harder to attract other children. They had to have at least as many materials as the other children have, but they had to go one step further than the other children by demonstrating their talent in another way. Only by showing that they were, in one way or another, better than the other children, could they attract other players and collect more friends. The children did not only play within their pairs, but also they played with other online players *as one to whole group in Club Penguin*. To maintain their status in the virtual world and the afterschool program, the children played new themed games, and collected new and unique items. They visited the official Club Penguin blog and other Club Penguin fan sites to learn about the trend items and current popular games. These children also transformed their economic capital into social capital by using their virtual goods to *attract other players and collect more friends*. By

decorating their igloos with trend items, dressing up their avatars and adopting special puffles, they tried to collect as many friends as possible who, like themselves, were from the upper social class, which allowed them to become insider members of the upper social class.

In stage four, as is discussed above, the children's habitus changed after they lost their paid accounts, their upper-class status, and almost all of the virtual goods they had previously collected. Now, they were not finding Club Penguin to be a fair place to play because of its intentional commercial design. This dramatic change in the habitus affected their interaction orders as well. The children started criticizing Club Penguin by requesting a change in its design to make it a fairer place for young children to play. Each child I visited in the afterschool program engaged in critical literacy practices in different ways to raise awareness regarding the producing company's commercial implementations in children's game sites, and to reach the Club Penguin game designers so as to encourage them to make changes to their commercial design. While doing this, the children worked alone, but they tried to reach other children by employing familiar techniques or forums such as writing letters to the editor-in-chief of the Club Penguin Times newspaper and making comments on the official Club Penguin blog posts. They were not insiders anymore since they had lost their virtual goods along with their paid membership, and they had lost interest in playing in Club Penguin, but they were still *using these insider practices to change the nexus*.

In conclusion, when we look at the interaction orders of the children in different stages of the study, we see a change occur over time, which is dependent on the children's and their play partners' account types, and their access to the virtual goods and

the online context. While in the beginning of the study, interaction orders were limited to *solitary game play*, later in the study, while playing as mixed status pairs, the interaction orders became more complex with more social activities. I observed *paired play*, *showing off*, *demonstration*, and *teaching* among the children's interactions. Later, in the third stage, all of the children had their paid accounts, so their interaction orders were different from those associated with the previous stages. The children were *playing as one to whole group in the virtual world*, *working hard to keep their status in hand*, and *attracting other players to collect more friends*. However, in the last stage of the study, with the loss of their paid memberships, the children became less willing to play in Club Penguin. In the critical literacy practices in which they engaged, in effort to change Club Penguin's commercial design, it was seen that they were *using insider practices to change the nexus*. When we look at the overarching social action of this study, playing in a commercially designed virtual play world, which is made up of higher level social actions that take place at different stages of this study, the overarching interaction orders of the children should include all of the aforementioned interactions.

RQ 3: What discourses are used in the commercial design of the Club Penguin virtual world and how do these discourses affect the literacy practices of the children in the Club Penguin club? Is there any difference with regard to the quality and quantity of the literacy practices in which the paid and basic members engaged?

As discussed in Chapter 6, while playing in the Club Penguin club with their partners, in addition to participation and consumerism practices, the children engaged in several literacy practices in the different stages of this study. The quality and the quantity of the literacy practices in which the children engaged differed in different stages of the study because of the differences in their access to the online context (see Table 6.1 and

Table 6.3) and their familiarity to the texts they encountered. While playing in Club Penguin, and engaging in several socially mediated literacy practices, the children encountered and made meaning through several discourses including *instructional messages*, *communicative texts*, *commercial messages*, and *critical messages* (see Table 8.1).

The main text the children frequently encountered in Club Penguin, the pop-up screen messages that served primarily to share information about particular games and activities, will be considered *instructional messages*. The basic members who encountered the same texts again and again in the limited activities available to them, began not paying attention to the texts anymore either closed the pop-up screen messages before reading them, or they quickly skimmed through the messages and then closed them quickly. On the other hand, the paid members who engaged in several new activities during their visits to different places in Club Penguin encountered new and unique texts, so they paid attention, read them slowly, and took action accordingly. In addition to the instructional messages, the children made meaning through *communicative texts*. They chatted with each other either by simply choosing from the prewritten words or phrases from the chat bar or typing out words and phrases themselves to communicate with other players. They also sent each other emoticons in their online interactions so as to share their feelings. In addition to these text related discourses, we see that the children used a “system,” consumerism, as a means of discourse while producing meanings in their interactions.

An MDA would be incomplete without taking into account the language used in mediated actions, and it would be equally incomplete without taking into account the other mediational means which are germane to the mediated

action under study... MDA takes the meaning of 'discourse' in the broadest sense (Gee, 1999; Gee et al., 1996; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) of whole systems of the possibility of producing meanings, with or without language. (Scollon, 2001b, p. 181)

While the children played in Club Penguin, they read the images and icons in the game setting to understand how to play particular games, how to engage in particular activities, and how to establish friendships in this virtual world. They were also reading the hidden *commercial messages* in the design of the virtual world to resolve the hierarchic structure of the online peer culture that includes children from the upper and lower social classes, and their limitations or freedom regarding different activities based on the account types with which the children played. To earn a status in this commercially designed virtual world, the children also purchased virtual items for their avatars and igloos. In this part of the chapter, I will discuss the types of discourse through which the children made meaning in different stages of this study.

Discourses in Place in Different Stages

When we consider the first stage of the study to be one of the higher-level social actions, we can say that even in this very early stage, when the children had their basic accounts, there were several discourses through which the children made meaning. The children, for instance, encountered *instructional messages*, and they read the available texts they encountered in Club Penguin to learn how to play games and understand the general structure of the game setting. In addition, the children produced meaning through *communicative texts* while playing in Club Penguin club. They contacted other online and offline friends, sometimes to ask simple questions such as "Where did you get that costume?" and sometimes to share their feelings or to play together. While contacting

each other, they usually used the chat bar, and they either typed out what they wanted to say, or they chose words and phrases from among the prewritten messages, and then they pressed the send icon, and the messages appeared above the players' avatars. The children also used emoticons to express their feelings.

While engaging in all of these activities, the children were exposed to the *commercial messages* in Club Penguin in two different ways. While playing with their basic accounts, the children became aware of the *two-tiered membership* design of Club Penguin, and they encountered the *gatekeeping messages* throughout their play, which served to remind basic members of their limitations. In their attempts to collect virtual goods, purchase outfits and accessories, adopt puffles, purchase furniture for their igloos, or play upper levels of some games, they were often stopped via the commercial design of the virtual world, which prevented the basic members from engaging in these activities and directed them to purchase paid memberships. The children read these commercial messages that were embedded in the design of Club Penguin.

In the second stage of the study, in addition to two-tiered membership and gatekeeping messages, the children encountered *commercial messages* that informed them of the *paid member privilege*. As seen in Table 8.1, the second stage of the study involved mixed status play pairs – one of the players had a basic membership and the other had a paid account. The basic account holders watched their play partners' interactions in the online space, and they took note of their unique igloo decorations, the ways they dressed their avatars, and their special puffles, and by reading about the difference between these two accounts, they became more aware of the disadvantages associated with basic accounts and the privileges associated with paid accounts. Most of

these different commercial messages were not actually text but a design feature of the virtual world and considered a discourse, through which the children made meaning.

In the third stage, all of the children had paid accounts, and all were aware of the fact that they belonged to the upper social class in this virtual world; they recognized that they were now among the privileged. However, in Club Penguin, being successful means having more virtual goods. Therefore, to maintain their upper class status among the other paid members, the children had to work harder now than they did in the past. They played new games, collected coins, and purchased more virtual goods. Thus, in this stage, another form of commercial messages, *consumption*, became more apparent since the children tried to earn and spend more. In addition, communicative texts were becoming apparent at this stage. The children considered friends as capital, so they tried to make more friends from the upper level. More friends from the upper social class would mean that one was *more* a member of the upper social class. Therefore, in this stage, we see the children communicate with other online players more frequently through the communicative texts mentioned above.

In the last stage of the study, when the children lost their paid accounts, they become even more heavily exposed to the *commercial messages* with the two-tiered membership feature, gatekeeping messages, and paid member privilege. As a result, most of the children decided not to play Club Penguin anymore. Therefore, in this stage, the discourses through which the children made meaning were slightly different from those associated with the previous stages. Instead of *instructional messages* and *communicative texts*, this stage involved *critical messages* and *commercial messages*, which became more apparent in the activities in which the children engaged. In this stage, the children

wrote letters to the editor-in-chief of the Club Penguin Times newspaper, and they posted comments on the Club Penguin official blog in order to communicate with a person in charge of the design of Club Penguin. They also created YouTube videos aimed at criticizing the design features of Club Penguin that they found unfair. In each one of these critical literacy practices, it was evident that the children were familiar with the *discourse of social media*. For instance, while creating a YouTube video, each child began with a greeting and a brief summary of the aim of the video, and each shared his feelings about Club Penguin's commercial design by showing viewers missing virtual goods, igloo decorations, etc., and finally at the end of each video, the child invited people to react, at least by liking the video or commenting on the video to give support to the child's reaction. Thus, in this stage, the children made meaning through the embedded *commercial messages* to which they were exposed after they lost their paid memberships, as well as *critical messages* and *discourse of social media*, which they used while sharing their reactions to Club Penguin's commercial design features.

In conclusion, while the children played in the Club Penguin club, they used different discourses in the meaning-making process in different stages. The discourses they used changed slightly when the children's account types changed. In the first three stages of the study, the children had instructional messages and communicative messages in common, and they were exposed to the commercial messages in every single stage of the study in different ways. In the second stage, we see paid member privilege become apparent since there were mixed status pairs in this stage. In stage three, consumption became more apparent because of paid members' urge to purchase more virtual goods and collect more upper-class friends. The children played more games and collected more

virtual goods. Then, they transformed this economic and material capital into social capital by using their virtual goods to attract other players and collect even more friends. In the last stage of the study, commercial messages, critical messages and discourse of social media became more apparent through the children's reactions to Club Penguin's commercial design. In sum, when we look at the overarching social action of interest, playing in a commercially designed virtual world, the children did not only use text-based discourses, but they also used several other discourses, including commercial messages embedded in Club Penguin's design, critical messages, and discourse of social media while making meaning in this commercially designed virtual play world and in sharing their reactions to the intentional design of Club Penguin virtual world.

Implications

For Parents: What to Know About Virtual Worlds

Many important implications arose from this research for parents, educators, researchers, and even virtual world designers. In a recent survey conducted with over 10,000 North American parents, it was revealed that 14% of parents of preschool kids and 24% of parents of elementary kids are digital *enablers* who let their kids spend plenty of time with digital devices. In contrast, 47% of parents of preschool kids and 36% of parents of elementary kids are digital *limiters* who minimize their kids' technology use as much as possible. Finally, 39 % of parents of preschool kids and 40% of parents of elementary kids are digital *mentors* who actively guide their kids while they spend time with digital devices (Samuel, 2015). This survey also revealed that the children of digital limiters are the ones who more frequently get into trouble online:

In a survey that asked parents about where their kids get into trouble online, I found that among school-aged kids, children of limiters who are most likely to engage in problematic behavior: They're twice as likely as the children of mentors to access porn, or to post rude or hostile comments online; they're also three times as likely to go online and impersonate a classmate, peer, or adult. Shielding kids from the Internet may work for a time, but once they do get online, limiters' kids often lack the skills and habits that make for consistent, safe, and successful online interactions. Just as abstinence-only sex education doesn't prevent teen pregnancy, it seems that keeping kids away from the digital world just makes them more likely to make bad choices once they do get online. (Samuel, 2015, para. 7)

By limiting their children's access to technology, the digital limiters do not only lead the children to engage in problematic behaviors, but they also miss an opportunity to teach their children some critical skills associated with the digital age such as "recognizing and adapting to the specific norms of different social platforms and sub-communities; adopting hashtags, emojis, and other cues to supplement text-based communications; and learning to balance accountability with security in constructing an online identity" (Samuel, 2015, para. 8). Therefore, to prepare children for the digital age, instead of being limiters, parents should be mentors to their children and help them to learn how to use technology in a safer and more meaningful way.

When it comes to the virtual worlds, we need to know that these popular game-based spaces offer children in-game literacy practices (e.g., chatting, sending and receiving post cards) and out-of-game literacy practices (e.g., fan sites, blogs, chat rooms). Engaging in these spaces also offers children opportunities to develop skills that can be used to navigate interactions with known or unknown others in online environments. It is also true that these spaces are designed with producing companies' commercial interests in mind, and they direct young children toward consumption.

There is a need to explore the complexities embedded within the relationship between childhood and the commercial world in order to identify the ways in which children are positioned within markets and to develop strategies for

facilitating their critical engagement with this positioning. In this way, a reductive and narrow rejectionist agenda is avoided and children's own agency in navigating these waters will be enhanced. (Marsh, 2010b, p. 25)

Forbidding children's virtual world engagements in the twenty-first century should not be considered any different than banning children from reading comics in the 1960s and 1970s. Instead of labeling virtual worlds as potentially harmful environments, we as parents should examine what affordances these spaces offer young children, and think more about how we can educate our children as digital citizens and conscious consumers.

For Researchers: Merging Ethnographic Methods with Cyber-Ethnography and Using Nexus Analysis with Critical Literacy

One important implication for research that arises from this study has to do with merging ethnographic methods with cyber-ethnography to analyze children's engagements in the digital world. Connelly (2013) and Grimes (2010; 2013a) conducted cyber-ethnography in popular virtual play worlds, including Barbiegirls, Webkinz and Toontown, respectively. They analyzed the design features of these virtual worlds and revealed the existence of consumerism. However, they stated that their studies were limited to their own experiences in the virtual worlds, and suggested that researchers observe children's actual interactions in these virtual worlds in future studies. Instead of conducting only cyber-ethnography and analyzing the virtual world based on my own experiences or only employing other ethnographic methods and observing children as they played in a virtual world in an afterschool program, I merged ethnographic methods with cyber-ethnography in this study. Even though, as an adult player and researcher, it is hard to fully understand what children saw and how they felt while playing in Club Penguin, conducting cyber-ethnography and identifying children's frequent key practices

in the engaging the nexus stage helped me to better understand Club Penguin peer culture and the way children engage in activities. Being more knowledgeable about children's frequent activities in this virtual world contributed to my data analysis while navigating the nexus in Chapter 6. Thus, this study contributed to the existing literature by introducing how to draw a clearer picture of children's interactions in virtual play worlds by combining ethnographic methods with cyber-ethnography. It is important to become more knowledgeable about the online context and children's frequent practices by conducting cyber-ethnography, but it is not enough to fully understand children's engagements; as such, to examine children's actual engagements, the researcher should employ traditional ethnographic methods after becoming more knowledgeable about the virtual world via a cyber-ethnographic experience.

This study also contributes to the existing literature by examining the effect of consumerism on children's participation and literacy practices, and it has done so by observing the children when they played with both paid and non-paid member accounts. Even though prior research (Burke & Marsh, 2013) argued that the commercial design of virtual worlds impacted children with regard to things like their social relationships with friends (Marsh, 2013b) and their identity constructions (Connelly, 2013; Burke, 2013), there was no study in the literature that compared and contrasted the interactions of the children with paid and non-paid member accounts in order to fully understand the impact of consumerism on children's interactions. Again, in prior studies (Burke & Marsh, 2013), it was claimed that compared to non-paid members, paid members had more opportunities to engage in literacy practices and to participate in the online peer culture, but none of the studies had actually examined children's interactions when they were

playing with paid member accounts. Therefore, this study has filled the gap in the literature by comparing and contrasting the paid and non-paid members' interactions in many different ways, and by introducing the role of consumerism in children's literacy and participation practices. However, further research is required to examine children's engagements in virtual worlds with paid member accounts when they access virtual worlds from their homes. It was revealed in this study that the children have achieved significant progress in Club Penguin when they accessed the virtual world from their homes.

Another important implication of this study for research has to do with merging Nexus Analysis with Critical Literacy with regard to the task of changing the nexus. As discussed previously in this chapter, I adopted Scollon's (2001b) nexus of practice concept while designing the study and analyzing the data. Nexus Analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) involves the tasks of engaging the nexus, navigating the nexus, and changing the nexus. The task of changing the nexus requires that the researcher bring his/her understandings and findings back into the research setting as re-engagement – this time, to change the things that had happened previously in the research setting for good. Although in the field guide for nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) the task of changing the nexus is the final task of Nexus Analysis, the Scollons indicate that it is not required to wait until the end of study to change the nexus; study findings can be used to change the nexus throughout the study. Even though the task of changing the nexus was not used throughout the planned study, getting back to the research setting four months after the end of the planned study gave me a chance to change the nexus by bringing in questions about the commercial design of Club Penguin. At this point, critical literacy

stepped in. Thus, this study also shows how using critical literacy in changing the nexus contributed the Nexus Analysis methodology.

Via the critical literacy perspective, I brought in my findings, such as those having to do with the inequity that exists in the Club penguin virtual world in terms of virtual goods and participation opportunities offered to the paid and non-paid members, to the research setting to raise awareness among my study participants. Then, our one-on-one conversations began with discussions regarding what was fair and what was unfair in this virtual world, and ended with discussing individual social actions aimed at making a difference. By taking a critical stance, the study participants were better able to see the commercial design features of their new play grounds, and they were able to offer reactions so as to attempt to make the virtual world a better place first for themselves and then for other children. Therefore, critical literacy might be a good method for other researchers who have adopted the nexus analysis as their research method and whose aim is to change the nexus.

For Teachers: Using Popular Culture Items in Class and Dealing with Consumerism

Unfortunately, today, many early childhood settings still ignore children's popular culture interests. Today, virtual worlds as a part of children's popular culture, are becoming popular spaces among five to 10-year-old children, which is demonstrated by the fact that there are 320 million registered accounts all around the world (KZero, 2011a). It is important to use popular culture items, such as virtual worlds and their characters, in classrooms since children are already knowledgeable about these items and have well-developed interests. However, as these spaces are designed to serve producing

companies' commercial interests, it is important to teach children how to deal with the commercialism that exists among the virtual worlds.

Critical literacy engagements can be a good starting point when addressing commercialism in classrooms. In this study, my interactions with the children aimed at raising awareness regarding the commercial design of Club Penguin were limited to one-on-one conversations because of the lack of time and space in the afterschool program. Therefore, the study participants developed primarily individual reactions instead of a collective group reaction. However, teachers can plan or schedule better in order to promote critical practice, and they can use critical perspective more powerfully in dealing with commercialism in their classrooms by starting with personal stories, evaluating the cases from different perspectives, and taking into account their social, cultural, political and economic dimensions (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2014). This may result in more powerful critical action that may bring about actual change, at least for people in the immediate environment (i.e., other students and teachers in the school).

For Disney Company and Other Game Designers: Considering Laws and Ethical Rules in the Design Process

Another important implication is for game designers. As discussed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, children are exposed to commercialism in the Club Penguin virtual world in almost every single action in which they engaged (e.g., dressing up, decorating igloos, adopting puffles). Especially after they lost their paid memberships, the children were reminded in several ways that they could regain access to their items and the additional opportunities to which they once were privy by simply paying again. For instance, when

they were dressing up their avatars, they saw the outfits they previously owned, but they were no longer allowed to choose those outfits to dress up their avatars. Or, when they got back to their igloos, they saw their previous igloos which were decorated with theme-related furniture, but they were not allowed to use those igloos unless they renewed their paid memberships. They could not play certain games they liked, such as Rainbow Puffle Lunch, and they were not allowed to take care of their puffles, even if those puffles were still in their igloos or backyards.

In addition, paid members, intentionally or unintentionally, worked for the commercial purposes of the producing company by dressing up their avatars and decorating their igloos, which made basic members, who were playing in the same context, watch paid members' interactions and admire the unique opportunities available via paid memberships. As noted in Chapter 7, the children who lost their paid accounts found all of these commercial design features of Club Penguin, which serves millions of 5- to 10-year-old children, to be unfair.

Furthermore, even though Club Penguin reminded parents in several places on the Club Penguin website that Club Penguin is an “ad-free play environment” for children, it is revealed in the analysis of the Club Penguin website that this is not so true. It is true that there is no third-party advertisement on the website, but Disney is actually advertising its new video game, Disney Infinity, simply by providing a play set of Disney Infinity for free to the Club Penguin members while they are renewing their memberships. There is no better target population to which Disney can advertise its new game, as the game is designed for children in the same age group as those who are already interested in Club Penguin and who are paid members.

Another problematic part of Club Penguin that serves its commercial structure is its invitation of players to its charity activities in its global citizenship page. Club Penguin invites children to fund raise for its charity activities aimed at helping people and animals in need all around the world. To encourage children to participate in these charity activities, Club Penguin matches the amount the children raise up to \$5,000. Working for these fund raising projects might increase children's feelings of belonging in the virtual world, and this is also likely to encourage them to continue playing Club Penguin. There is no doubt that Club Penguin does not need children's fund raising efforts to support projects, as it makes millions of dollars per year by selling monthly subscriptions and other Club Penguin merchandise, and it is able to take advantage of all of tax deductions with regard to all of the money it uses for its support projects.

In addition, on the global citizenship page, via the Coins for Change project, Club Penguin invites children to make donations with their coins; this time, the children decide how Club Penguin's \$1,000,000 donation will be split among three primary support categories, which include Build Safe Places, Provide Medical Help and Protect the Earth. This invitation gets responses from children, and each year, thousands of Club Penguin players donate millions of coins they have earned through hours of game play in the Club Penguin virtual world. If the purpose is only to include children in the decision-making process with regard to how to split this donation up among the different support projects, is it really necessary to have children donate their coins? What prevents Club Penguin from simply asking children to vote on these support categories in the virtual world? The answer is simple: to get back their economic power in the virtual world after donating

that many coins, the children have to continue playing games in the Club Penguin virtual world, and it may take months for some players to get back their economic power.

At the least, it seems that from an ethics-based perspective, Club Penguin's membership policy and other commercial policies are unethical. However, "any online content that is targeted to or primarily used by children under the age of 13 years must comply with a number of special laws and ethical requirements designed to protect children from online harm and commercial exploitation" (Grimes, 2010, p. 102). Disney and other companies that produce virtual play worlds, which serve as children's new playgrounds, should consider ethical rules and laws in the design process so as to protect children from any kind of harm, including sharing of personal information, commercial exploitation and inappropriate content. Producers of virtual worlds should reconsider their design features so as to make these places ethically fair for use by young children.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Research Setting

After School Program Computer Lab



Screen Shot 1: Club Penguin Background Information



Screen Shot 2: Club Penguin Paid Member Avatar



Screen Shot 3: Club Penguin Basic Member Avatar



Screen Shot 4: Club Penguin Paid Member Igloo



Screen Shot 6: Club Penguin Chat



Screen Shot 7: Club Penguin Times Newspaper



Appendix C: Tentative Questions to be Asked in One-on-One Conversations

1. Tell me about the first time you played in the Club Penguin virtual world?
2. Can you describe your penguin? Tell me its color, its belts, and other accessories as if I am at a distance and cannot see.
3. Can you describe your igloo? Tell me about your furniture and your pet and everything in your igloo.
4. Do you know anyone who is a (paid) member? What does his/her penguin look like? What does his/her igloo look like?
5. Tell me about your ideal penguin. How is it different from your penguin?
6. Can you tell me about your puffle (pets of the penguins in this virtual world)? How do you take care of your puffle?
7. I know puffles have different personalities according to their colors. Would you like to have a puffle in a different color?
8. Tell me about any experience you have shopping for your igloo or your puffle?
9. How do you decide where to go, and what to play in Club Penguin?
10. Tell me what you do when you encounter a game that you do not know how to play.
11. Tell me about your experiences with sending messages. Have you seen other penguins while they are sending messages to each other? What were they talking about?
12. Let's say that you want to play with a penguin, what do you do to let him/her know?
13. Show me your favorite game in Club Penguin. Tell me why you like it.

14. Is there any game you do not like in Club Penguin? Tell me why.
15. Some kids prefer to play on their own, and some prefer playing with their friends.
Which do you prefer?
16. How do you decide to whom you will send a friendship request? What do you look for?
17. How many penguin friends do you currently have? When you become a (paid) member do you think this number is going to be more or less?
18. Tell me about the time you first learned about Club Penguin Times newspaper?
Have you seen other penguins while reading Club Penguin Times? Have you written anything to send to Club Penguin Times?
19. Have you searched for information about Club Penguin games on the Internet? If yes, tell me about your experience. What were you looking for specifically? If no, why not?

Appendix D: Key Locations in the Club Penguin Website

Club Penguin Home Page Icons and Links	Page Descriptions	Significance for	
		Researchers	Club Penguin Members
Membership	This page includes: • Subscription options (1 month / 6 months / 12 months) • Lists of benefits of paid membership with pictures • Payment options • The things that only paid members can do with regard to this week's particular theme • Gift certificates (membership cards) that parents can purchase online as gifts for their children • Links to local retailers to buy membership cards • Parent tools to manage their children's accounts (i.e., parents can set up a play timer, change chatting options or cancel an account)	• Club Penguin (and sometimes other Disney games like Disney Infinity) is advertised here with detailed information about paid membership. • To address the parents' concerns regarding security, information is provided about how parents can manage their children's accounts. • Two classes are created based on players' economic status.	• Members can see the benefits of paid membership and subscription options from this page. • Members can also learn how and where to purchase Club Penguin merchandise.
Blog	This page includes two main sections: <i>Blog—What's New</i> and <i>Fun Stuff—Fan Art</i>. <i>Blog—What's New</i> includes posts from the Club Penguin team and comments from players beginning February 23, 2011. Common blog posts: • Club Penguin feature updates (clues about how to use new features) • Announcements about the current theme (e.g., new items, party announcements) • Competitions with prizes (i.e., who finds such and such item in the Club Penguin first will receive this amount of coins) • Penguin of the week (i.e., penguins are nominated by their friends for specific reasons, and the winner is chosen by Club Penguin staff and awarded 10,000 coins and other gifts) • Mod Meet-up - Featured mod of the week is chosen and announced by the Club Penguin staff with specific descriptions • Video clips (e.g., Club Penguin supports bullying prevention month, building schools for kids in need)	• Blog is an active platform through which the players can read and write about Club Penguin. The Club Penguin team gives information about current and upcoming events and gets feedbacks from the players. Thus, the players are included in the design process. • Making design decisions according to player feedback might be considered a marketing strategy.	• Members can follow the blog to stay up to date regarding current and upcoming events in Club Penguin. Children read the blog posts and watch the short video clips posted by the Club Penguin team. • Members can engage in different activities, such as competitions, to earn awards; these are announced in the blog.

	Fun Stuff—Fan Art includes: • Drawings/paintings submitted by fans • Photos taken by fans • Igloo designs submitted by fans • Stuff to do (e.g., in door/outdoor activities for kids, Club Penguin coloring pages, and food recipes shared by Club Penguin) • Club Penguin banners and wall papers that can be downloaded for free • Club Penguin comics • A poll that allows children to vote for questions about the current theme (e.g., Halloween is coming! What is your favorite costume from this month's Penguin Style catalog?)	• Paid membership is promoted via some blog posts such as the Penguin of The Week (POTW) posts (because all of the POTWs are chosen from among the paid members). • Blog gives a chance to the players to publish their own art pieces, including Club Penguin-related drawings, paintings and photographs.	• Members can read about the popular mod of the week and wear outfits accordingly. • Members can post their own drawings, paintings or photos to be shown in the Fan Art section of the blog. • Members can read Club Penguin comics or download banners and wallpapers through the blog.
Safety	This page includes: • A short video about online safety and a direct link to an online safety quiz in Club Penguin • Downloadable online safety tips for kids that include three sets of rules: Be Cool, Be Heard, and Be Safe • Online safety tips for parents that include three sets of rules: Be Aware, Be Curious, and Be Engaged • Downloadable items (i.e., Parent Tips, Certificate of Completion for safety quiz, Online Safety Poster)	• How Club Penguin prioritizes online safety for children is shared on this page again to address parents' safety concerns.	• Members can learn how to take the safety quiz in the virtual world and learn more about how to stay safe in the virtual world by reading safety tips.
Parents	This page includes: • Parent tools to manage children's accounts • Online shopping links for Club Penguin merchandise such as t-shirts, hoodies, notebooks, and phone cases • Brief information for parents about what kids can do in Club Penguin (i.e., play games, adopt pets, customize their penguins, chat with friends, decorate their igloos, join themed parties, become ninjas or a secret agents in different games, experience new content every week) • Information about what additional opportunities the paid members have • Detailed information about how Club Penguin contributes to children's learning and development: ○ <i>Motor skills</i> (i.e., hand-eye	• The parents page serves as a collection of information for parents that is already mentioned on other pages of the Club Penguin website; this includes parent tools to manage children's accounts, online shopping links, benefits of paid membership, and information about this being a safe place for children. • We also see the	

	- coordination and typing skills) <i>Creativity</i> (i.e., decorating igloos and designing costumes) <i>Teamwork</i> (i.e., collaborative play) <i>Money management</i> (i.e., children gain coins by playing games, and save coins to be able to buy the items they want the most) <i>Global awareness</i> (i.e., through the Coins for Change campaign, children donate their coins, and Club Penguin donates real money to endangered animals as well as people in need around the globe) <i>Socialization</i> (i.e., making friends, and play games together) <i>Responsibility</i> (i.e., in Club Penguin, children work in different jobs, such as at a pizza store, to make money) - History of Club Penguin and a short video clip about its history - Information about this being a safe place (i.e., having live moderators, filtered chat, ad-free environment and parent tools to ensure children's safety) - Safety tips for parents to share with their children - Information about Club Penguin's Global Citizenship projects (i.e., building safe places, protecting the earth and providing medical help) - Safety Awards granted to Club Penguin	priorities of the Club Penguin website on this page. After introducing parents tools to the parents, the first things shared with parents are the online shopping links. Then, there is some information about what children can do in Club Penguin, followed by detailed information regarding the benefits of paid membership (this time, the information is meant specifically for the parents). Club Penguin's contribution to learning and development is also shared with parents.	
Products	This page includes: <i>Featured product</i> sections that lead parents to third-party company websites (i.e., www.zazzle.com and www.ibitz.com) that sell Club Penguin merchandise online <i>Unlock items online</i> section that paid and non-paid members use to unlock items by entering the codes they already have from buying either toys or Club Penguin books <i>Where to buy</i> section that provides information about third-party companies that sell Club Penguin products in different countries <i>The treasure book</i> that includes virtual items that can be unlocked <i>Newest products</i> section within which Club Penguin products are promoted via pictures and brief information about the items <i>Product categories</i>: Zazzle sells t-shirts,	- This page speaks more to the parents, as it promotes available Club Penguin merchandise and includes information about how to purchase the items from third-party websites or stores in 10 different countries. - Through this page, Club Penguin sells real-world products that come with codes to activate in-game benefits.	Members can use this page to unlock virtual items by using the codes in Club Penguin books or Club Penguin toys.

	hoodies, notebooks, phone cases, laptop sleeves, and Ibitz sells an activity tracker, a wireless pedometer that syncs with Club Penguin, tracks children's movements and gives them points that they can use to unlock items in Club Penguin		
Apps	This page includes: • Free download links through the Apple App Store for three applications that are designed by Disney for Club Penguin: Club Penguin app, Sled Racer app, and Puffle Wild app • Club Penguin app is the mobile version of Club Penguin virtual world and syncs with children's virtual world accounts so they do not lose the coins and other items they earned by playing the Club Penguin app. The distinction between the paid and non-paid members in the virtual world remains as is in the Club penguin app, and the additional opportunities that are offered only to paid members are mentioned in detail on the introduction page of the app. • Sled Racer app is the mobile version of one of the popular games in Club Penguin • Puffle Wild is a new match-3 game and is not currently available in the virtual world. Children unlock different puffle creatures by completing levels in this game. The distinction between paid and non-paid members remains as is in this application and the specific opportunities offered only to the paid members are explained in detail on this page. This is different from the other apps; if the non-paid members want to benefit the paid membership opportunities, they make one-time, in-app purchases to temporarily unlock some levels	• Using the same account in the virtual world and the mobile applications brought a different level to children's interactions. Using different physical devices and virtual spaces with the same account let children access their progress in the apps in the virtual world. Children collect several coins by playing the Sled Racing app, for instance, and use them in their virtual world accounts, or to adopt different puffles (i.e., raccoon, rabbit, deer and unicorn) by completing levels in the Puffle Wild app, learn how to take care of them and take them back to their backyards in the virtual world.	• Members can download the apps to their (or their family members') mobile devices and continue playing Club Penguin when they are away from the computer.
Help	This page includes: • A search engine for questions about the Club Penguin virtual world and Club Penguin apps • Questions/answers that are categorized for the virtual world and the mobile applications • The most viewed questions section • The popular topics section • A tweets section through which Club Penguin tweets are shared	• Even though the question regarding billing information and payment methods is at the back of the most viewed questions list, it remains among the top three questions in the	• Members can find information about their questions on this page. • Members can follow social media updates about Club Penguin on this

		popular topics list. This is related to the priorities of this commercially designed virtual world.	page.
Global Citizenship	This page includes: • A call for donations to support Club Penguin projects, featuring the slogan “Changing the World, Together” • Three main support project categories with “learn more” links that take members to other pages that give detailed information about each project category: Build Safe Places, Provide Medical Help, and Protect the Earth • Information about “It Starts with You,” a bullying prevention speaking tour project sponsored by Club Penguin and its charity partner, Free the Children; there is also a “learn more” link for detailed information. Club Penguin and Free the Children organize speaking tours at U.S. schools that include multimedia presentations, interactive student workshops and action-planning sessions to help young children tackle bullying-related issues in their local and online communities • Information about the “Matching Grant Program” sponsored by Club Penguin and Free the Children, and a “learn more” link. Club Penguin matches donations from children up to \$5,000, if children apply to the Matching Grant Program • Information about the “Coins for Change” project sponsored by Club Penguin and its partner Free the Children; and a “learn more” link. Every year, in late December, Club Penguin members donate their coins, virtual currency, at Coins for Change stations in the Club Penguin virtual world for the three main support project categories to decide how the Club Penguin \$1,000,000 donation will be split among the three main project categories • Information about the charities that Club Penguin supports • A link for children to send notes about what they do to change the world	• Club Penguin encourages children to donate their money in the online world with the Coins for Change project and the offline world with the Matching Grant Project to run its support projects. It is always good to participate in charity activities, but Disney does not need children’s money to run these projects. It reminds me of the commercial identity of Club Penguin causes me to question the real purpose of including children in the support of these projects.	• Members can learn about the projects that Club Penguin supports and how they can actively participate in those projects. • Members can share their charity activities by writing to the Club Penguin team through this page. • Members can learn about the Club Penguin bullying prevention speaking tour and ask their school management to participate in this free activity.

Appendix E: Image in Rotation 1: General Welcoming Page



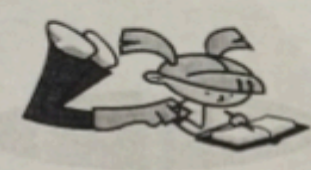
Appendix F: Afterschool Program Code of Conduct

I. Be Caring



- A. Say excuse me, please and thank you.
- B. Listen and show respect to all members, staff, and volunteers.
- C. Ask a staff or volunteer to help when you are having troubles.
- D. Do not create grief for others. Help each other.
- E. Use calm language and voices.
- F. Treat all personal and club property respectfully.

II. Be Productive



- A. Work at becoming Youth of the Year or Member of the Month
- B. Participate in the programs, don't just hang around.
- C. Learn and do not prevent others from learning during programs, Power Hour or Library.
- D. Stay out of vacant hallways or rooms where there is no staff.
- E. When one staff person is talking to the group, listen.
- F. Agree to not argue about game rules or the idea of fairness
- G. Resolve conflicts calmly and no play fighting

III. Be Responsible



- A. Bring/ use your membership card everyday.
- B. Wash your hands before eating and after going to the bathroom.
- C. Put your possessions in a locker and bring a lock.
- D. Keep the club and our members safe.
- E. Clean up any materials you and your group leave behind.
- F. Running is allowed in gym games and outside only.
- G. Only visit bathroom that are for your gender.
- H. Agree on game rules before playing.
- I. Keep your toys and hats in your locker.

Appendix G: Benefits of Having Paid Membership in Club Penguin

In Club Penguin, paid members can:

1. Personalize a Penguin
 - a. Dress up and express their unique styles
 - b. Shop for new items in different catalogs every month
 - c. Get the latest fashions, accessories and sport styles
 - d. Collect rare and exclusive party items
2. New Experiences Weekly
 - a. Discover all new experiences every week
 - b. Challenge the latest quests and puzzles
 - c. Get new and rare items
 - d. Earn special Stamps to impress friends
3. Collect Pet Puffles
 - a. Collect 14 kinds of puffles with unique personalities
 - b. Adopt up to 75 pets to care for and walk around the island
 - c. Personalize puffles with the latest pet hats and accessories
 - d. Take puffles into special games to help earn coins and points
4. Create Unlimited Igloos
 - a. Express their creativity with countless igloo combinations
 - b. Shop for the latest igloo designs, furniture and music every month
 - c. Customize, save, and show their perfect homes to friends
 - d. Make one-of-a-kind igloos that others can visit and "Like"

5. Club Penguin App Exclusives

- a. Get UNLIMITED ACCESS to parties & items
- b. MIX special items to trigger dance moves & more
- c. CUSTOMIZE an igloo with furniture items
- d. SHOP for styles, igloos & furniture
- e. ADOPT all the available colors of puffles—including the CAT & DOG

(Retrieved on September 28, 2014 from <https://secured.clubpenguin.com/membership>)

Appendix H: An Exemplar Play Script in The Stage Room: A Humbug Holiday

Ghost of Yesterday: Knock knock!

Humbug: Who's there? Go away I'm sleeping!

Ghost of Yesterday: It's the Ghost of Yesterday. Hi!

Humbug: So? What do you want?

Ghost of Yesterday: I'm here to remind you...

Humbug: Bah! I know this story. I've been unkind, I get it

Ghost of Yesterday: Nah, I don't care about that. I'm here to remind you...

Ghost of Yesterday: ...about your laundry! You left socks in the dryer

Humbug: Oh, thank you!

-Humbug goes back to sleep-

Ghost of Today: Knock knock!

Ghost of Today: I said KNOCK KNOCK!

Humbug: Bah! I'm trying to sleep! Who is it now?!

Ghost of Today: It's me the Ghost of Today

Humbug: What's so important?

Ghost of Today: There's a holiday sale on fruit cake. TODAY ONLY!

Humbug: Dried fruit dessert! My favorite! Thank you, ghost

-Humbug buys eleven fruit cakes-

Humbug: Now to enjoy this dried fruit delicacy in peace

Humbug: Ooh extra prunes!

-Ghost of Tomorrow scratches at window-

Humbug: Ugh what's that awful sound?!

Ghost of Tomorrow: Fruitcaaaaaake

Humbug: Who said that?

-Ghost of Tomorrow steps out of shadows-

Humbug: Ghost, are you here to show me my future?

Ghost of Tomorrow: Yes!

Humbug: Well what is it?

Ghost of Tomorrow: I foresee disappointment

-Ghost snatches Humbug's fruitcake and runs away-

Humbug: BAH! My fruitcake! Come back thief!

-Humbug shakes flipper-

Humbug: And everyone wonders why I'm so grumpy!

THE END!

Director

Director: Places please!

Director: 5 minute call, actors to the stage.

Director: Let's take it from the top!

Director: That's a wrap!

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Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

2011- 2016 Ph.D., Indiana University-Bloomington, Literacy, Culture and Language Education Department (GPA, 3.96/4.00)

2009-2011 M.Ed., University of Missouri-Columbia, Literacy & Reading Education Department (GPA, 3.91/4.00)

2002-2006 B.A., Gazi University, Gazi Faculty of Education, Primary School Teaching Program (Honor Degree)

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Children's Digital Play, and Digital Literacy Practices

Digital Storytelling

Mediated Discourse Analysis/Nexus of Practice

Cyber-ethnography/Virtual Ethnography

Teacher Education and Professional Development

PUBLICATIONS

Wessel-Powel, C., **Kargin, T.**, & Wohlwend, K.E.. (2016). Enriching and assessing young children's multimodal storytelling. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(2), 167-178. doi:10.1002/trtr.1491

Wohlwend, K. E., & **Kargin, T.** (2013). "Cause I know how to get friends-plus they like my dancing": (L)earning the nexus of practice in *Club Penguin*. In A. Burke & J. Marsh (Eds.), *Children's Virtual Play Worlds: Culture, Learning, and Participation* (pp. 79-98). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Kargin, T. (2013). The world of penguins: The role of peer culture in young children's interaction in online games. *Working Papers in Literacy, Culture, and Language Education*, 2, 185-198.

Temur, T., **Kargin, T.**, Bayar, S. A., & Bayar, V. (2010). Metacognitive awareness of grades 6, 7 and 8 students in reading. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 4193-4199.

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PRESENTATIONS

- Kargin, T., Wessel-Powel, C., Wohlwend, K.E., & Lu, Y. (2016, April 9). Literacy Playshop in a K-1 Classroom: Multimodal Literacy's in Place in Teaching and Assessment. Paper presented at the *American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2016 Annual Meeting*, Washington, DC.
- Kargin, T. (2015, December 5). Children's Social Interactions and Literacy Practices in Virtual Play Worlds. Paper presented at the Fatih Educational Technologies Summit 2015, Ankara, Turkey.
- Wessel-Powel, C., **Kargin, T.**, & Wohlwend, K.E.. (2015, December 3). Teaching Drama but Assessing Print: Multimodal Literacies, Workshop Assessments, and Children's Play Performances. Paper presented at the *Literacy Research Association (LRA) 65th Annual Conference*, Carlsbad, CA.
- Kargin, T. (2015, April 16). Literacy in a new playground: Young children's literacy practices in virtual worlds. Paper presented at the *American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2015 Annual Meeting*, Chicago, IL.
- Kargin, T. (2014, December 4). Mediated discourse analysis: Young children's digital literacy practices in Club Penguin virtual world. Paper presented at the *Literacy Research Association (LRA) 64th Annual Conference*, Marco Island, FL.
- Kargin, T. (2014, June 7). Play in a new playground: Children's play and literacy engagements in the Club Penguin virtual world. Paper presented at *Educational Researches and Publications Association (ERPA) Congress 2014*, Istanbul, Turkey.
- Kargin, T. (2014, April 11). Literacy in children's commercially designed virtual worlds. Paper presented at *The 14th Instructional Systems Technology (IST) Conference*, Bloomington, IN.
- Kargin, T. (2014, April 11). Considering multiculturalism in digital reading applications: A content analysis of Reading Rainbow e-book collection. Paper presented at *The 14th Instructional Systems Technology (IST) Conference*, Bloomington, IN.
- Wohlwend, E.K. & **Kargin, T.** (2012, November 17). "Hey dude, how do you go to...?" Collaboration and peer teaching in virtual worlds. Paper presented at the *102nd Annual Convention of National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)*, Las Vegas, NV.
- Temur, T., **Kargin, T.**, Bayar, S. A., & Bayar, V. (2010, February 4). Metacognitive awareness of grades 6, 7, and 8 students in reading process. Paper presented at the *World Conference on Educational Science 2010*, Istanbul, Turkey.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

2011- : Web-Toy Project, Boys & Girls Club, Bloomington, IN

Goal: Investigating young children's digital literacy practices in virtual play worlds

Role: Project Leader

2013- : Literacy Playshop Project, work for Prof. Karen Wohlwend's play and literacy in early childhood project

Goal: Investigating children's puppet making and story telling experiences in K-1 settings

Role: Co-investigator

2013-15: Squishy Circuits Project, work for Prof. Kylie Peppler's creativity lab project

Goal: Investigating early childhood children's exploration of electronics by playing with play dough.

Role: Co-investigator

2015- : Playshops, Puppets, and 3D Printers Project, work for Karen Wohlwend's integrating makerspaces into PK-6 literacy teacher education project

Goal: Investigating associate teachers' and teacher candidates' implementation of Design Playshop module in teaching digital literacy

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ATTENDED CONFERENCES & PROJECTS

2010, Summer: Attendee, *Missouri Writing Project (NWP in Missouri): Digital Composition and Digital Storytelling*, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

2006, April 14-16: Attendee, *National Primary School Teaching Program Congress*, Gazi University.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION

American Educational Research Association (AERA)

Literacy Research Association (LRA)

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SERVICE EXPERIENCE

2014- : Reviewer, Annual Conference of Literacy Research Association (LRA).

2013- : Reviewer (Assistant to the Editors), Working Papers in Literacy, Culture, and Language Education (WPLCLE).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2006-08: Classroom Teacher, Yeniyapan Elementary School, Kirikkale, Turkey

2006: Third Internship Class (Profession Practices), Cankaya Kilicali Pasa Elementary School, Ankara, Turkey

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AWARDS & HONORS

2015: Recipient, R. Strickland Fellowship, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

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2006: Recipient, Honor Certificate by Cankaya Kilic Ali Pasa Primary School for the unique internship studies, Ankara, Turkey

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PERSONAL INFORMATION

Date of Birth: 09/27/1983

Marital status: Married

Interest: Mobile devices, digital games, sports (tennis and swimming), singing Turkish folk music and playing authentic music instruments, reading for fun (cars, digital technologies, and children's literature)