



Exploring the subjectivities of young people: interdisciplinary visual arts-based practices in virtual spaces

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Overview

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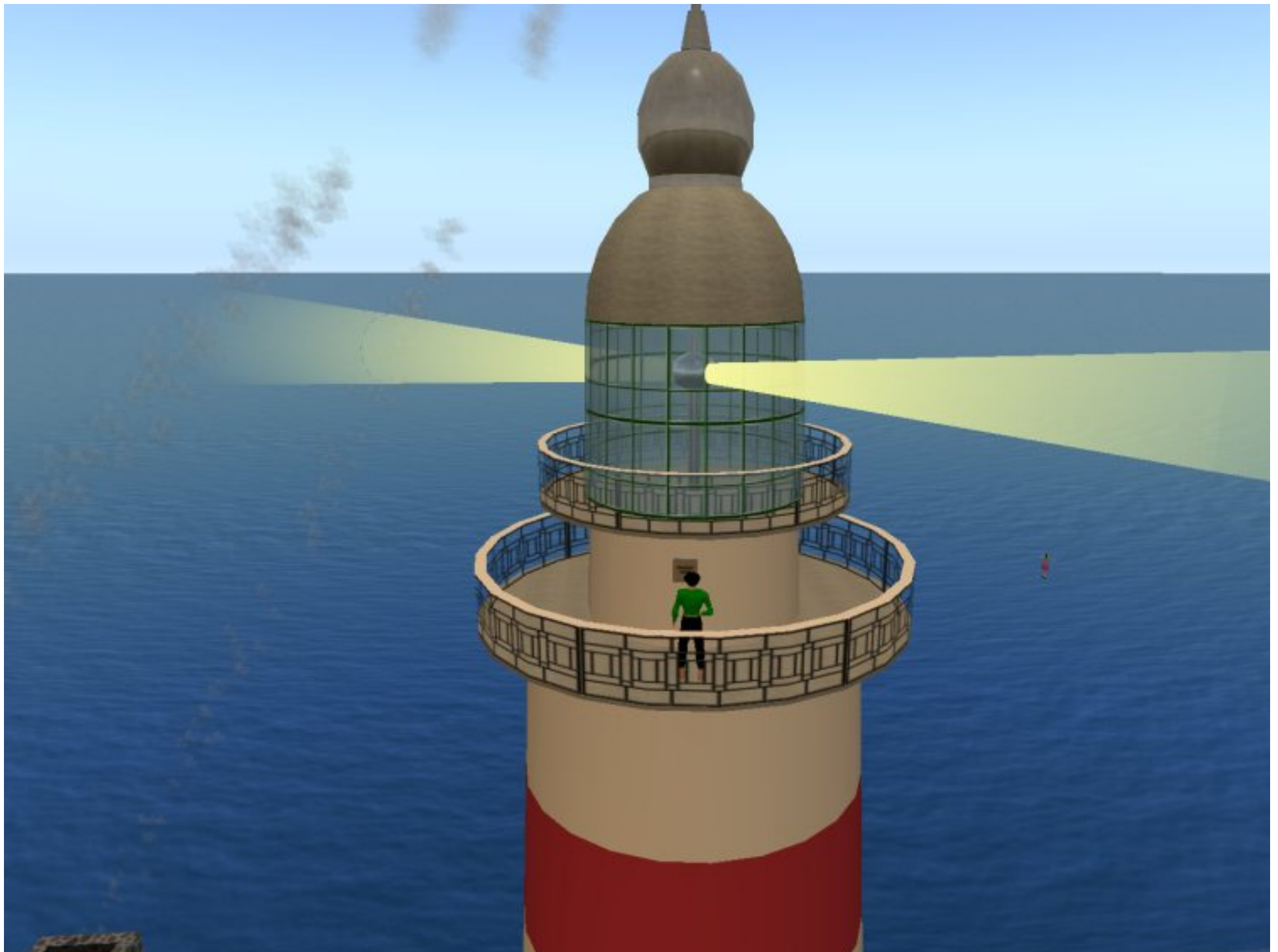


Background

- Interlife' is an ESRC/EPSRC funded Project (2008-2011) [UK Research Council]
- Inter-Life Island is a 3D multi-user environment founded in 'Second Life'
- Involved Young People (14-17) in Trinidad and Glasgow, Scotland (UK)
- Multi-disciplinary Team: Education, Art and Design Education, Psychology, Computing Science
- University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt University, University of Stirling and University of Sheffield (UK)
- Ethical Approval , University of Glasgow

Walking Underwater





Positioning the Research



Room 13 International Studio
Network

<http://room13international.org/>

Research Aims

- Acquiring and developing skills to enhance life transitions through a range of digital creative activities [photography, film making]
- How a 3D multi-user environment (based on Second Life[®]), with mobile device integration can be used to support the development of these skills

Aims – Quote I

“I think a lot of educational spaces that exist are deeply constrained by social, cultural and political forces that mostly don’t want them to be exploratory spaces and have very restricted views of knowledge creation and don’t want to accommodate a mixing of the social emotional and cognitive whereas I think a lot of our learning is a mixture of all three of those...and so as an educator I was attracted to Second Life as a space where that possibility exists...(1)”

Research Questions

- How can transitional change such as risk, conflict and goal-setting be handled in the virtual world?
- How do personas develop in the real and virtual worlds, and how might the personalisation of avatars assist this? How does this map onto real life?

View from the Lighthouse



Play on Interlife Island



How we worked [1]

- We set up a Virtual Research Community involving young people working in partnership with members of the research team
- We gathered (researchers and young people) together in Interlife at an agreed time
- We conducted weekly meetings sometimes supported by face to face contact (10-15 weeks)

How we worked [2]

- We co-planned an agenda of activities relating to interests, personal concerns, hobbies and issues
- We made available tools and resources to engage in personal and group projects
- We shared aspects of our lives using photography, film and writing
- We fostered collaborative activity

Inter-Life Island



Meeting in Interlife



Theoretical Perspectives [1]

- Communities of Practice (Wenger 1998)
- Paulo Freire 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1970);
- Auguste Boal (2000, 2006) 'Theatre of the Oppressed'
- Karl Rogers 'Freedom to Learn' (1969)
- Student/Young People's Voice (Fielding 2007) –
Pioneering work of Jean Rudduck

Theoretical Perspectives [2]

- **Activity Theory** (Engestrom, 1987; 2001) - a means of providing descriptive coherence, focusing on groups of people working together in activity systems.

Methods and Methodology

- Phenomenographic Techniques
- Mixed Method Data Gathering

Data Analysis

- Coding a sample of workshops – beginning, middle and end
- Selecting 'critical incidents'
- Developed a coding scheme to analyse data
- Triangulating data with interviews and participant led tours

Research Data



Sapphire re-inventing herself



Voices from Interlife

Interviewer: Tell me about your avatar?

Cyberstar: I am the really pink one with green hair.... I think everyone does their own avatar to suit their personality...pink for me is a sort of funky personality, don't care what people think of you if you go out with blinking boots up to here and a top down to there... you don't really care

Interviewer: This might seem like a stupid question to you ... I wouldn't go outside dressed as a fox [interviewer has an avatar that is a fox] – I would be scared of doing that...people would think I was seriously weird. People might not serve you in shops... my kids would think something strange had happened. So I wouldn't do that outside but I would be quite happy to be a fox on the Inter-life Island. What do you think of the possibility that you can have an avatar that you can change...?

Cyberstar: Well this is me and I want to [change it]. It's quite fun. In real life you can't change it. Every avatar is individual and they want that avatar to look like them, they want it to be unique. In real life people tell you what you should and shouldn't wear...like if I go out and I buy a pair of boots and they say that doesn't suit you and you're like 'how would you know' are you me? You get pretty annoyed that people tell you what you think you should wear and what they think you hair colour should be and [I think] Listen if I want to wear this I will wear it. You're the boss of your own person and you're the boss of your own style. It feels like there were no rules... people slag you off [insult you] more in the real world than they do in Inter-life because you are a person you want to be...I tried to be myself. [UK Group Interview with Cyberstar 11/11/2010]

Social Justice Issues



Excerpt – Online Dialogue

Jianhua Galaxy: Writing can be tough. What do you write?

Shelly Coy: Not really, it's easy for me

Jianhua Galaxy: Well, you are lucky

Shelly Coy: All sorts of different stories

Jianhua Galaxy: Have you had any published yet?

Shelly Coy: Yea most of my stories start as dreams or what i imagine in my head

Shelly Coy: No

Shelly Coy: Lol [laugh out loud]. I don't let others read my stuff kinda embarrassed but those who have read say I should

Shelly Coy: But I don't know

Cobalt Dertzer: I'm sure they're great

Cobalt Dertzer: If you are shy about your drawing you could take a photo of some of them and post them online

Cobalt Dertzer: It'd be great to have a look

Phillip Kroll: She has a book of her drawings

Shelly Coy: Phillip!

Shelly Coy: I have 2 books

Shelly Coy: And pages everywhere

Cobalt Dertzer: Brill

Cobalt Dertzer: You'll be an internationally famous artist 😊

Shelly Coy: Lol . My 3rd liking is photography so YAY

Shelly Coy: Lol thanks :)

Jianhua Galaxy: You can put that to good use here

Jianhua Galaxy: And your writing skills too

Preliminary Results [1]

- At the start of projects, analysis showed researchers leading and having a more dominant role than young people
- Later workshops reveal a deeper and more independent level of engagement in activity by the young people – a greater sense of agency on their part.
- Looking for instances of cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective and social learning

Preliminary Results [2]

- Research community building & the emerging social network among the participants.
- Realistic and positive self help resolutions.

Results [1]

- A sense of place and group history was created
- The environment felt authentic
- Individual identity could be explored and changed through creative activity and dialogue
- Enhancement of positive self image occurred
- Opportunities of open action were created

Results [2]

- Conflict and dialogue were stimulated in the process of building groups, conceptualising and undertaking joint creative projects
- Creative activities led to the exploration of emotional issues and the motivation to find positive solutions
- High level problem solving skills developed
- These skills mapped across the real world and back

What happened

- Developing Codes of Conduct on Interlife
- Agenda Setting
- Sharing personal stories: e.g. loss of friendships
- Co-construction of the space
- Developing artefacts, tutorials, tours
- Development of collaborative videos
- Formation of research communities - developing new bonds

Developing a Code of Conduct



Developing an Agenda



Introducing and Sharing



Sharing personal stories



Sapphire Cyberstar conducting a tour of the island



Caz creating beginners guide



Caz taking a tour of the island



Conclusion [1]

- In this project we analyse how young people in virtual research communities in Interlife became co-researchers in a suite of creative activities, supported by the Interlife team.
- These creative activities involved photography, digital film making and collage
- We argue that the research community participants' desire to express themselves creatively through these activities can help to address the challenges they may face as individuals.

Conclusions [2]

- This project investigated what can happen when young people act together in boundary spaces (ie between home and school) harnessing and utilising the energy to develop and rewrite their personal narratives
- 3D worlds can be creative spaces where students and young people can take the lead supported by tutors/mentors (but not led by them), blurring boundaries between formal and informal learning
- Significant un-realised potential for using 3D worlds in education guidance and training

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