I wonder if avatar choice is determined by multiple factors such as personality, gender, culture and that age and/or experience in online and virtual environments also plays a factor?

I would guess that the 15-22 year olds right now have a lower concern about their avatar choices as perceived by others and are just more concerned if it expresses some form of their identity. Is this just lack of inhibition--they don't care what others think or is more just familiarity with the medium.

I would venture that even as I play more online both academically and in game settings, that I am less concerned with how others perceive me and am more concerned if my choices just represent/reflect me.

However, I do know that when adding to realism of virtual experience some social/personal aspects are affected. In World of Warcraft, when voice capabilities were added, the females in our guild, even though most were spouses, were still more reluctant to join in voice conversations and yet they were some of the most conversant in text chat situations. By adding voice, why exactly did they become either more self-conscious? Is this power/identity related or are females more self-conscious of how their voice sounds?

These are the readings I've completed so far, though I hope to read more this week but wanted to get my post up.

Basic findings of this study are that those who are assigned a tall avatar are more assertive in their virtual experience. Those avatars that were tall and attractive were also viewed as more successful in an MMO game. Also, there appeared to be some carry over of assertive behavior from virtual experience to f2f experience. I found the literature review from this article very informative and plan on reading more of the articles mentioned here. I found several problems with the study itself however. In the World of Warcraft segment of the study, avatars were viewed as successful in they were more of them at higher levels. This is not exactly an indication of player performance. Two avatars could be both the same level and be far different in performance ability. Secondly, rogues and hunters are two of the most popular player choices. On the allied side of WoW, the best race for a rogue is Night Elf and Night Elf is also arguably one of the best for hunters. In this case more players might choose Night Elf as character. This race is seen as the tallest and one of the more attractive. Therefore these results could be largely skewed. In the second study of going from virtual to f2f negotiations, the authors admit to a significant limitation: the same scripts were used in the same order. In addition after the first instance there does not seem to be a carry over effect so I feel this experiment would need to be performed again, with variability in order and also possibly in variability of fairness.


This article uses an interesting frame to compare avatars to the limited-ability alien life forms in Dr. Who, called Daleks. In this study, the authors find that the then available virtual avatars had great limitations in body movement and expression that severely limit them. It finds that the humans used the avatars as extensions of self and were affected by these avatars in social ways, such as perceived closeness, unresponsive gesturing, lack of eyemovement, etc.


This study aimed to find how subjects might manipulate avatars depending on context to be presented in. They hypothesized that for dating situations, subjects would exaggerate attractiveness and personality factors and in a game that they would exaggerate strategic (and personality since there was some overlap in my opinion) factors. The authors found that in general, subjects did not greatly exaggerate avatars away from their perceived sense of self. In dating contexts there was a significant factor of highlighting physically attractive traits but subjects still felt these were close representations of self. It is interesting to wonder that since their hypothesis was based on earlier studies if the current generation of subjects has less concern about representing their self online compared to earlier generations that might have more consciously decided to make their avatars more like or less like themselves