**COMM 105G READING WORKSHEET**

Author, publication date, title: “Personhood (excerpt).” Tom Boellstorff, 2008. Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human, pp. 118-134

What is this reading’s topic? Where and when was the research done?

The topic of this reading is about avatars and persona’s that people create on online games. Online you’re allowed to be whoever you want and look however you want. The research was done in the mid to late 2000’s (specifically 2004).

What is the author(s)’s argument? Try to find it in the reading—noting the page number—and then restate it in your own words:

The author’s argument is that when given the opportunity, people that create their own avatars and screen name’s online feel more confident and act differently than they would in real life. They do so because they get to hide behind their computer screen, avatar and screen name and since nobody knows their identity, they can act however they want.

Which methods did the author(s) use to collect data?

The author used natural observation to collect data. They played the games they were focusing on and participated in it with the participants they were observing.

What pieces of evidence help support the argument? Note page numbers:

An example within the writing is when there is a person named “Seth”, but Seth wasn’t actually “Seth”. The person that was playing as Seth was actually Seth’s wife using his account, and if she hadn’t told the other plays that she was his wife, they would have thought that he was Seth. This shows that it’s really easy to pretend to be someone else online. (131-132)

What did this reading make you think about? Is there anything that you are still confused about/would like to know more about?

This reading made me think about how much people hide behind their computer screens. In video/computer games, it’s okay because you aren’t doing anyone harm by pretending to be someone else, unless you are bullying, sexually abusing, or pretending to be someone. Cyber bullying is a very big thing nowadays and it’s become a big problem. A lot of students get cyber bullied because you can be anonymous online now. Thinking about how we can create our own avatars and choose our own screen names to pretend to be somebody we’re not, gives us an advantage of being mean to others.