

Real vs. Ideal: The Effect of Virtual Body Ownership on Body Satisfaction

Janneke M. Schokkenbroek, Linda Kwakkenbos & Mike Rinck

(1) Study approach

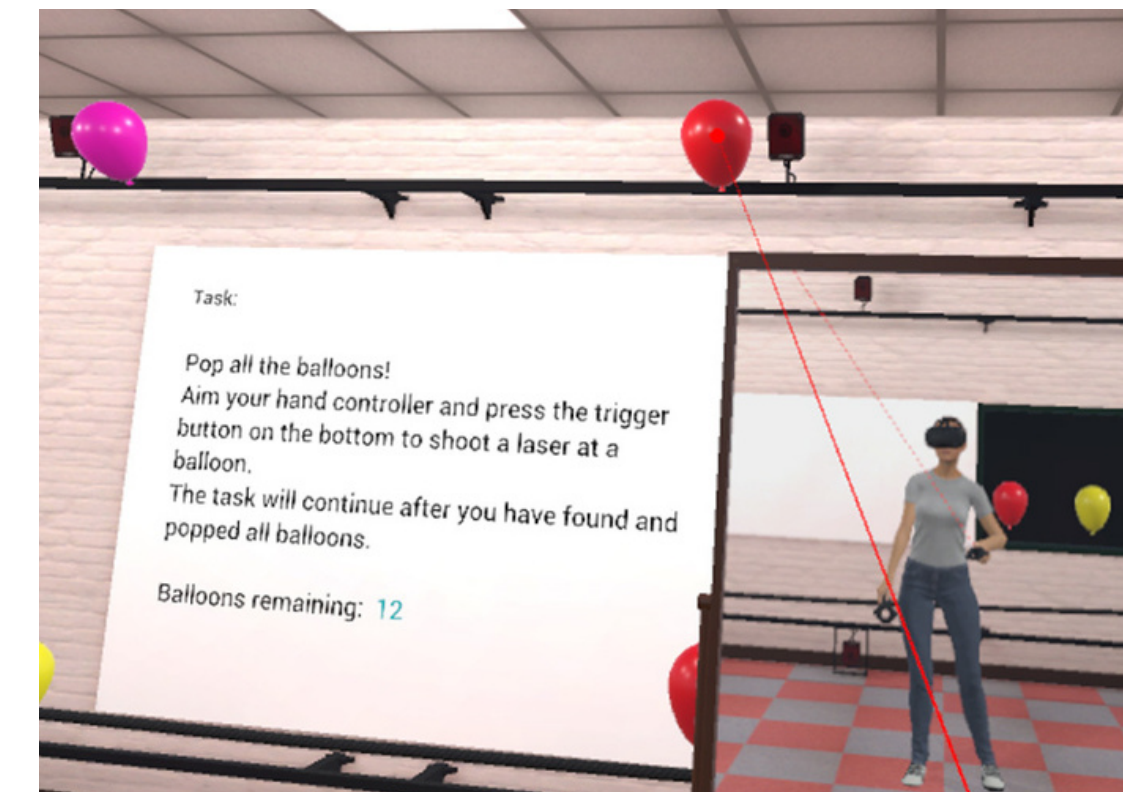
Many women are dissatisfied with their physical appearance. Body dissatisfaction is described as the result of a perceived discrepancy between one's own and ideal body. Arguably, two ways to address this discrepancy are:

- 1) by **attaining the ideal body** and/or
- 2) by **altering self-perceptions regarding the real body**.

In the present study, both approaches are tested using Virtual Reality (VR)

(2) Methods

In our experiment, 40 women experienced ownership over a **virtual body** that either **closely resembled** their **own** ($n = 21$) or their **ideal** body ($n = 19$). Before and after the VR experience, women reported dissatisfaction with their real body on the **BISS**, and they indicated which body on a figure rating scale most closely resembled their ideal and own body. During the VR experience, respondents saw themselves in a **mirror** in their virtual body and carried out several **(movement) tasks**.



(3) Findings & Implications

- 1) *Real body before VR vs. Virtual body*: We found that dissatisfaction with the real body **did not significantly differ** from that with the virtual own or ideal body.
 - This suggests that the strive for the ideal body might not be the most effective way for women to increase their body satisfaction
- 2) *Real body before vs. after VR*: Furthermore, we found that women in the ideal virtual body condition were **less dissatisfied with their real body after the VR experience** compared to before.
 - This implies that the presented VR paradigm offers fruitful application possibilities in the treatment of body image problems

