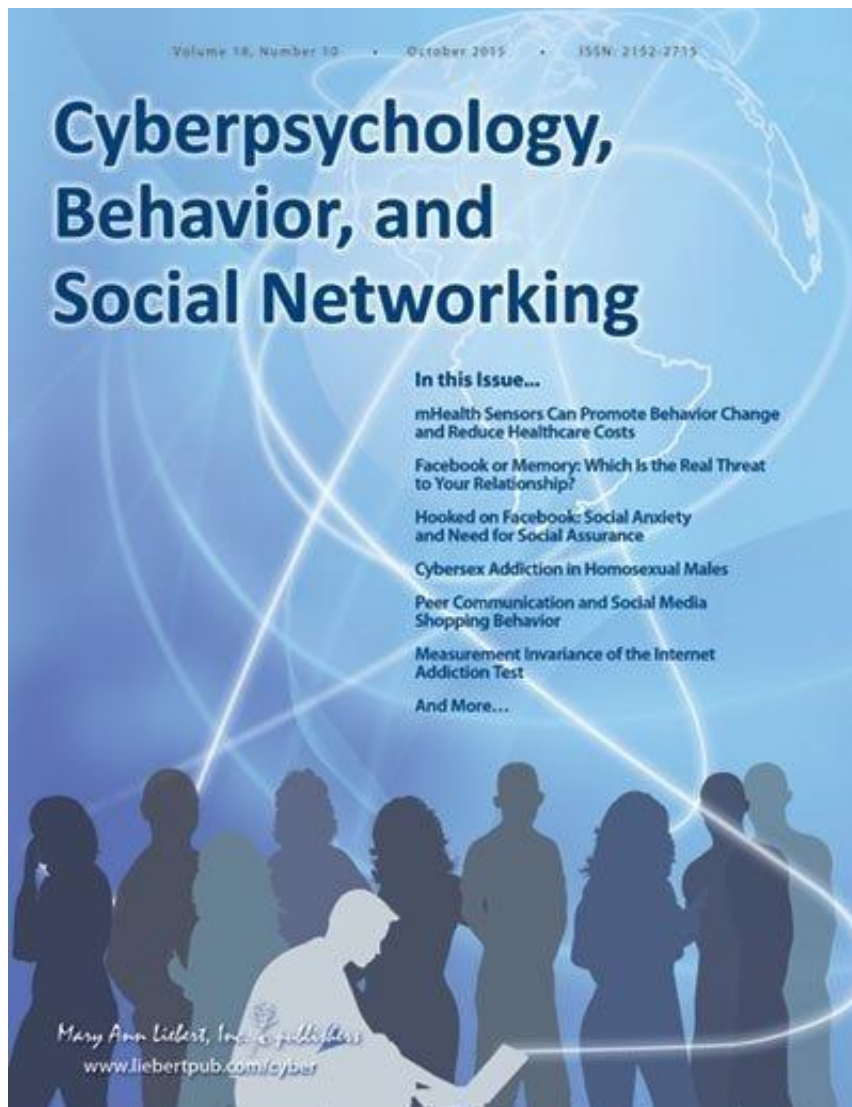


Can virtual reality body-swapping technique improve body image?

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Credit: Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers

In a new study using a body-swapping illusion, women shown images of themselves in virtual reality with a skinny belly estimated their body size more accurately compared to their estimates of various body parts made before the virtual body was substituted for their own. Virtual reality body-swapping may be able to change a person's "allocentric memory" of the body and be useful in treating individuals suffering from eating or weight disorders who overestimate their body size, according to an article published in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*.

In "[Virtual Reality Body-Swapping: A Tool for Modifying the Allocentric Memory of the Body](#)," Silvia Serino, Giuseppe Riva, and coauthors from IRCCS Istituto Auxologico Italiano, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, and University of Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy, University of Pavia, Italy, and Utrecht University, The Netherlands, report that after the women in the study embodied the [virtual body](#) with a skinny belly they updated their allocentric body, which is defined by a person's estimates of the width and circumference of various body parts.

"This research provides a valuable first step in understanding of body image distortion and disturbance in those with eating disorders and obesity," says Editor-in-Chief Brenda K. Wiederhold, PhD, MBA, BCB, BCN, Interactive Media Institute, San Diego, California and Virtual Reality Medical Institute, Brussels, Belgium. "Exploring the potential of this Virtual Reality approach in a clinical population will be an important next step."

More information: The article is available for free on the *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* website until December 4, 2015.

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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