

# How Diet Choices and Weight Change Person Perception.

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## Background

### Weight Related Prejudice and Discrimination

- Self-reported weight-based discrimination increased 66% in past ten years (McLeod, 2008).
- Overweight people are described using more negative and fewer positive attributes (Brochu & Morrison, 2007).
- Overweight people are seen as overindulgent, lazy and overall less successful than average-weight people (Teachman & Brownell, 2001).
- This discrimination causes overweight individuals to have lowered self-esteem and self-confidence, as well increased stress levels (Elison, 2017).

### Idea of Weight as Controllable

- Belief that weight gain and obesity is due to laziness and overeating (easily changeable), (Carr, Jaffe, Friedman, 2008).
- Weight-control effort tended to elicit more positive characteristics for average-weight people, although not for overweight people (Mussup, Manger, & Gold, 2016).

## Methods

**Participants:** 80 students (63 female, 17 males) from the University of San Diego were recruited. Their races includes Latino(a), Asian, Black or African American, and White.

### Independent Measures:

- 4 situations, including a picture of either an overweight or average-weight woman, and a description of her diet habits, either healthy or unhealthy.

### Dependent Measures:

- The participants took a 19-question survey regarding the target's lifestyle and personality traits.
- Some characteristics included: loneliness, motivation, health, intelligence, introversion, confidence and likability.

**Procedure:** On Qualtrics, each participant was randomly assigned one of the previous situations, then they answered questions about their personal demographics and the survey regarding the target's lifestyle and personality traits.

## Results

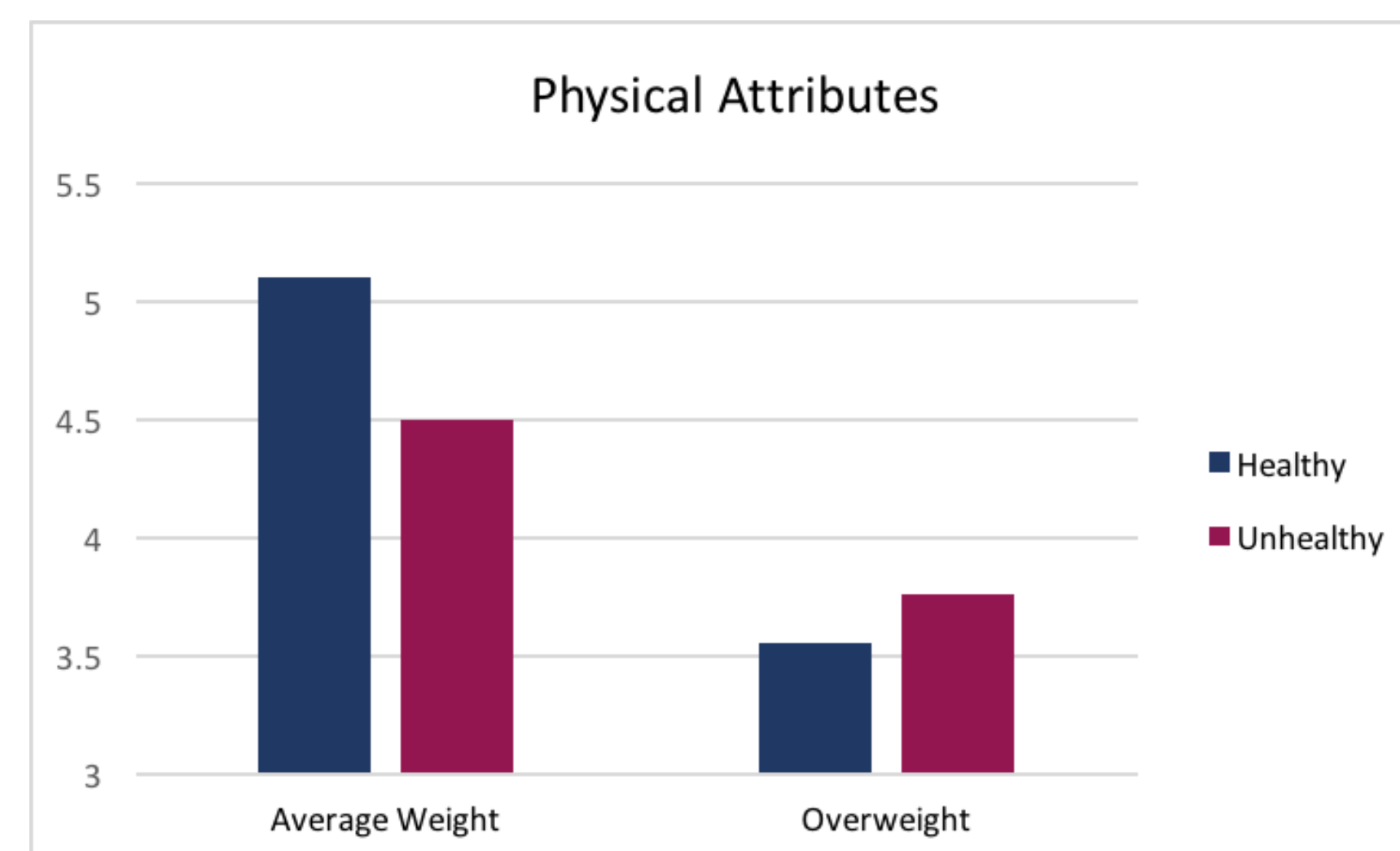
### Manipulation Check:

- To ensure targets' weights were correctly perceived by participants
- Chi-Squared Test was significant,  $\chi^2(2, N = 86) = 21.01, p < .000$

### Dependent Variables: ANOVA

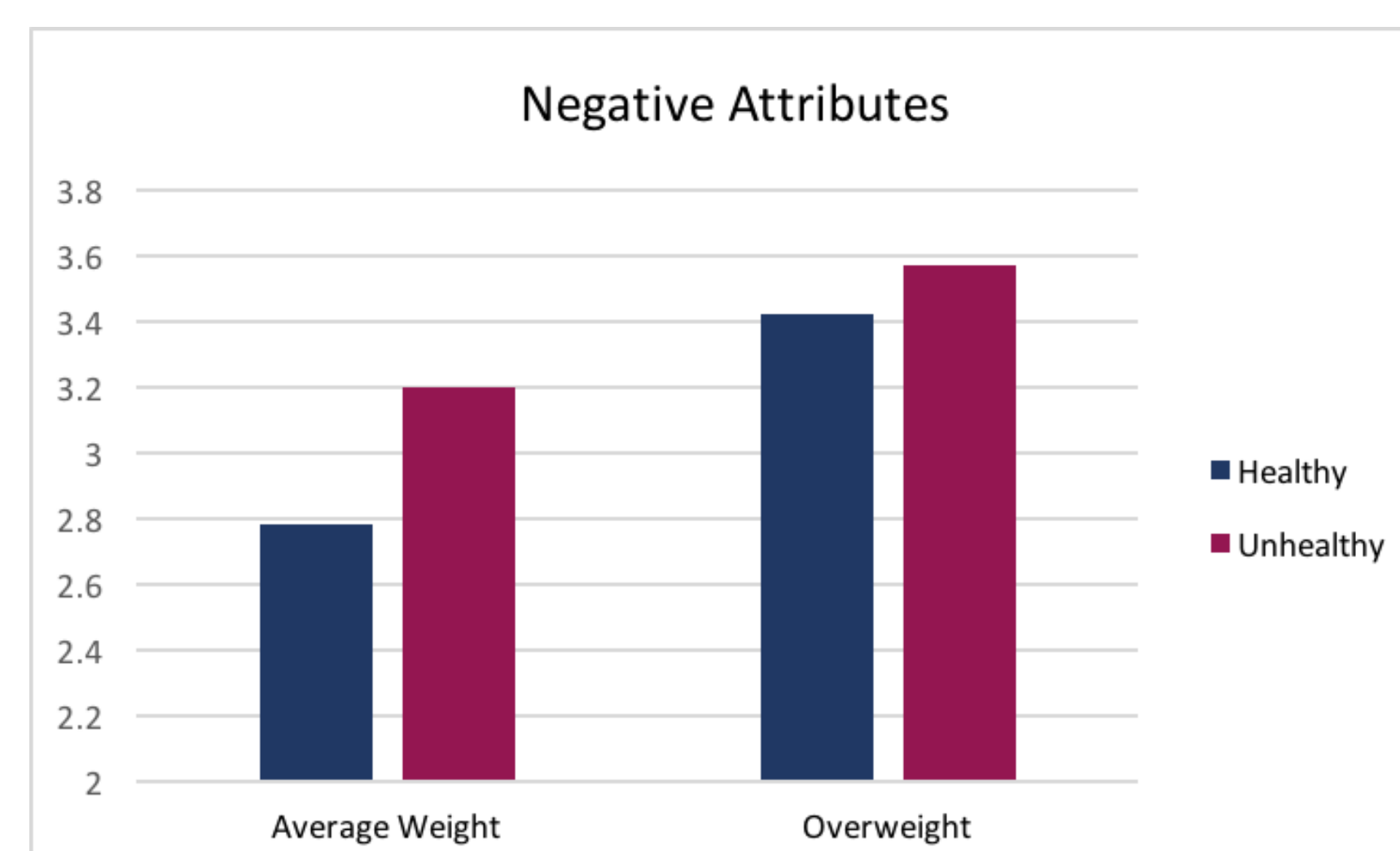
#### • Physical:

- Overall health, perceived activity level and laziness
- Weight Main Effect: Significant,  $F(1, 80) = 57.75, p < .000$
- Diet Main Effect: Not significant,  $F(1, 80) = 1.69, p < .198$
- Diet and Weight Interaction: Significant,  $F(1, 80) = 5.43, p < .022$



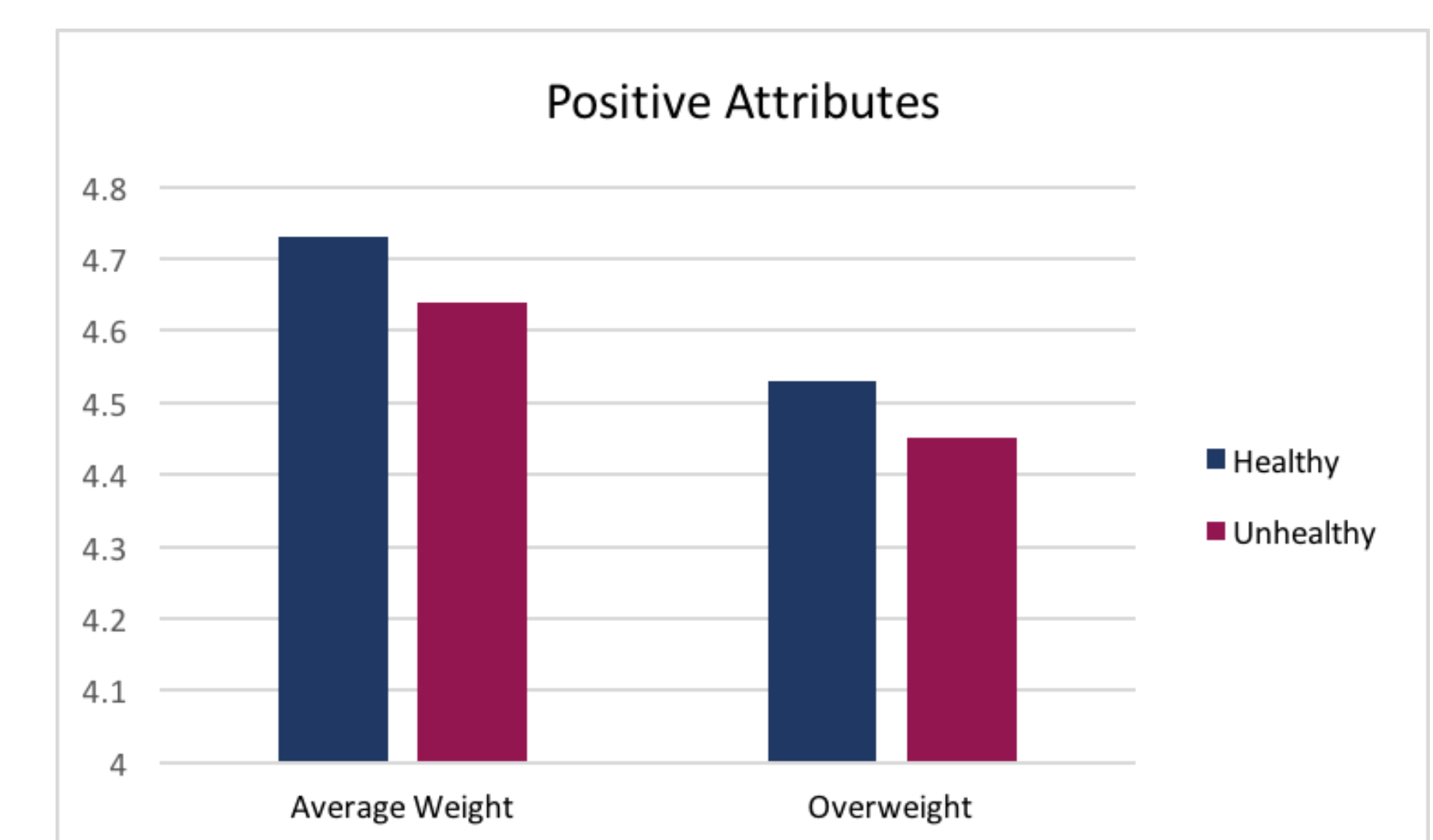
#### • Negative Psychological:

- Perceived depression and loneliness
- Weight Main Effect: Significant,  $F(1, 80) = 5.16, p < .026$
- Diet Main Effect: Not significant,  $F(1, 80) = 1.39, p < .243$
- Diet and Weight Interaction: Not significant,  $F(1, 80) = .51, p < .479$



#### • Positive Psychological:

- Perceived intelligence, confidence, and motivation
- Weight Main Effect: Not significant,  $F(1, 79) = .19, p < .170$
- Diet Main Effect: Not significant,  $F(1, 79) = .26, p < .615$
- Diet and Weight Interaction: Not significant,  $F(1, 79) = .01, p < .942$



## Discussion

- Overall, the target's weight had the largest effect on the participants perceptions of them.
- More negative psychological and physical attributes were assigned to the overweight targets.
- Interestingly, overweight targets with unhealthy diets were rated more positively for physical attributes than overweight targets with healthy diets.

## References

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