

Investigating attentional biases towards food and body cues in a non-clinical population

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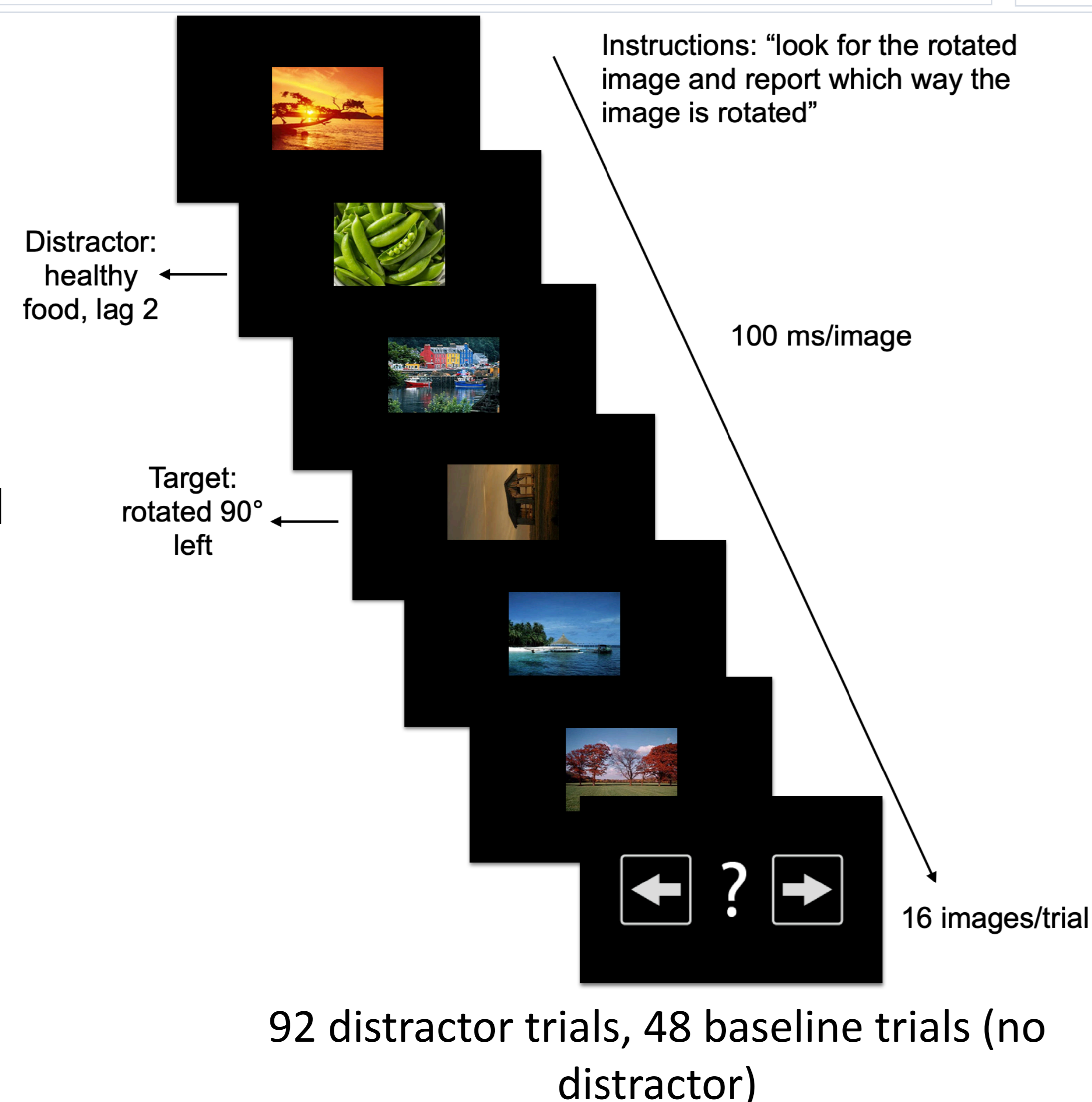
1 Introduction

- Over attending to **food** and **bodies** contributes to eating disorder development and maintenance¹
- Non-clinical populations show similar attentional biases^{2,3}; **But does healthiness matter?**
- RSVP task:** adapted to investigate how food and body stimuli capture attention⁴
 - High reliability in clinical and non-clinical samples⁵
 - Used to address limitations of stroop and dot-probe

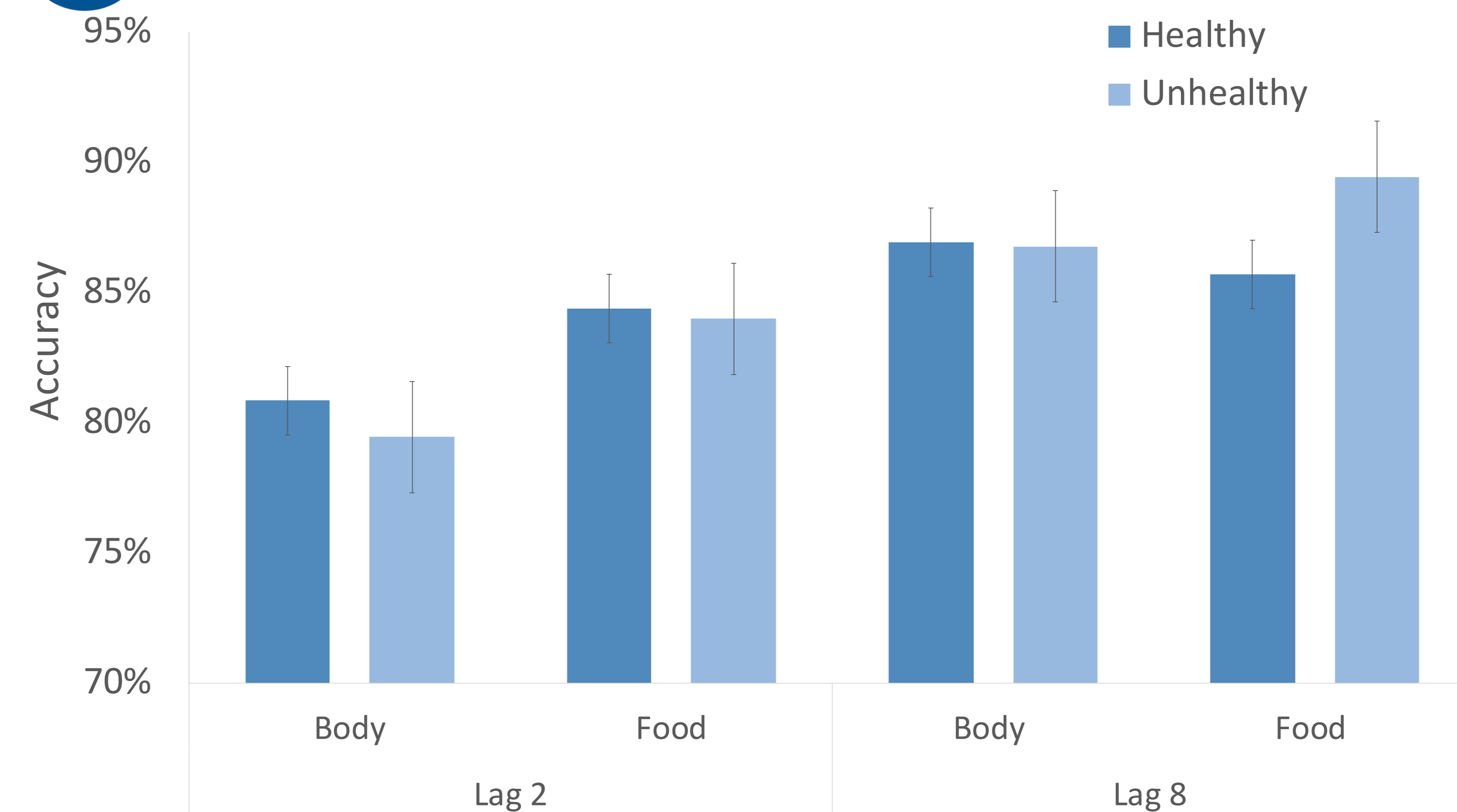
Is attention captured more by food or bodies and does healthiness matter?
Will eating disorder symptomology predict attentional biases?

2 Method

- 68 participants
- Participants recruited from Cloud Research (online study)
- EAT-26, BSQ-M, IPAQ and MPAM-R



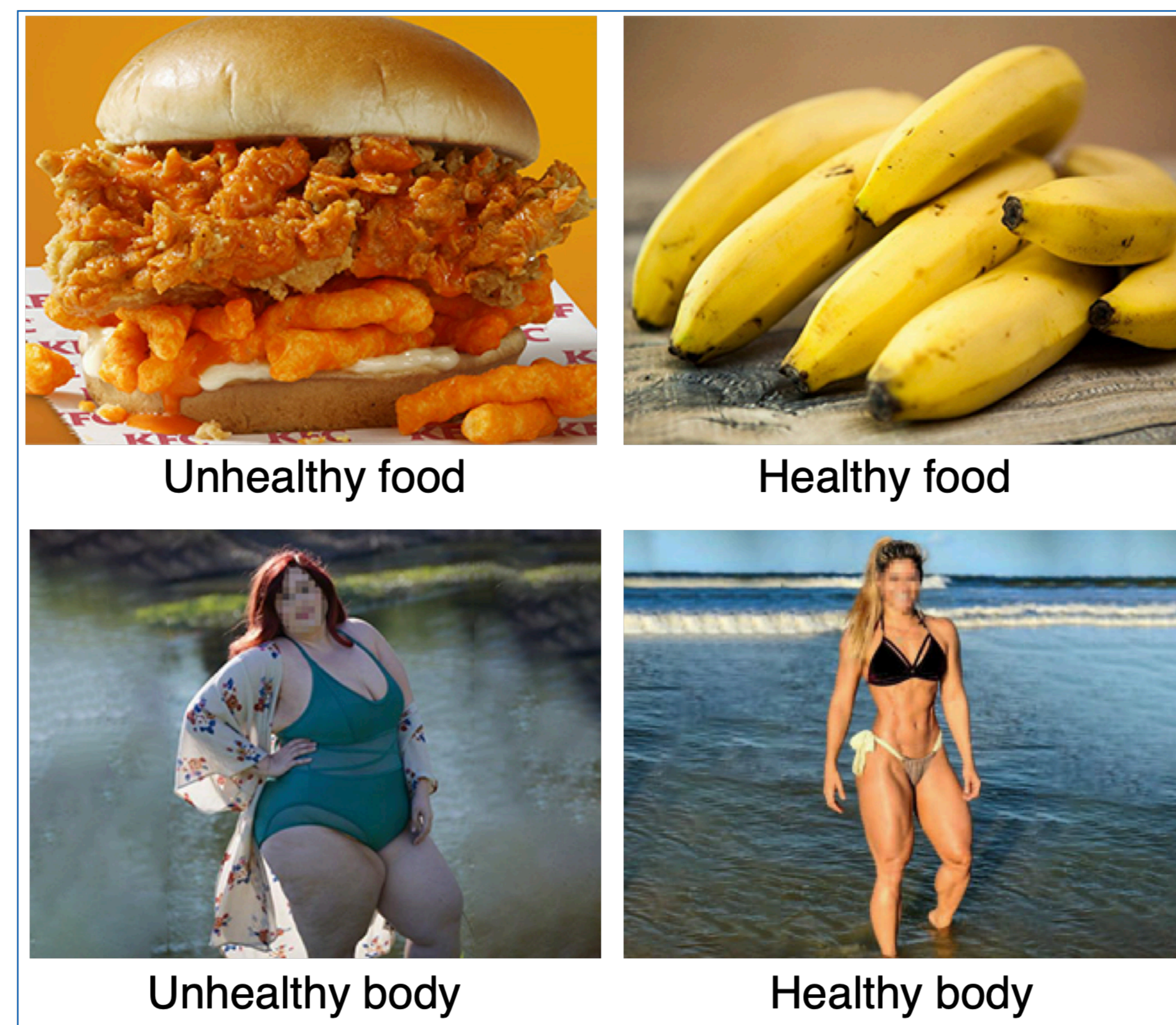
3 Results



- Greater impairment when distractor presented at lag 2 compared to lag 8 ($r^2_p = .41$)
- Great impairment following body than food images ($r^2_p = .16$)
- No difference between healthy and unhealthy distractors ($r^2_p = .01$)
- Lag x healthiness interaction** ($r^2_p = .10$): greater recovery from lag 2 to lag 8 for unhealthy ($d = 0.81$) compared to healthy ($d = 0.54$) stimuli
- Lag x distractor interaction** ($r^2_p = .08$): greater recovery from lag 2 to lag 8 for body ($d = 0.73$) compared to food ($d = 0.54$) stimuli
- EAT-26, BSQ-M, IPAQ and MPAM-R (appearance & fitness subscales) scores did not predict attentional bias towards food ($F(6, 61) = 1.99, p = .08$) or body ($F(6, 61) = 0.33, p = .92$)

4 Discussion

- Impaired performance at lag 2 compared to lag 8 confirms RSVP task effective
 - Bodies and food are appropriate distractors
- Bodies are more distracting than food
 - Media's overemphasis on importance of body shape → bodies induce feelings of unease⁶
- No significant difference between healthy and unhealthy bodies: were stimuli too extreme?
- No significant difference between healthy and unhealthy food
 - Suggests attentional bias toward food⁷ may not be unique to high calorie food
- Body dissatisfaction and eating and exercise habits did not effect attentional biases
- Future research:**
 - Include extra lags (e.g. lag 4 & 6) to investigate how food and body stimuli hold attention over time
 - Replicate with eating disorder and/or adolescent sample



Distractor images: presented at lag 2 & 8, serial position 2-6

References

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