

The Human Solution to the Problem of Death

- Become *more* than a mere *animal*, destined to die and decay
- Our ancestors invented a world that transcend the body, that never ends
- We are souls, spirits, minds – our bodies are mere containers for our “real essence”
- Greater spiritual powers that control our eternal destiny: Gods, deities, omnipotent spiritual beings
- Gives us hope of *literal immortality*
- We emphasize our minds and spirits and distance ourselves from our bodies

A Body of Terror

“Why did man not go insane in the face of an existential contradiction between a symbolic self, that seems to give man an infinite worth in a timeless scheme of things, and a body that is worth about 98 cents?”

Erich Fromm (1955)

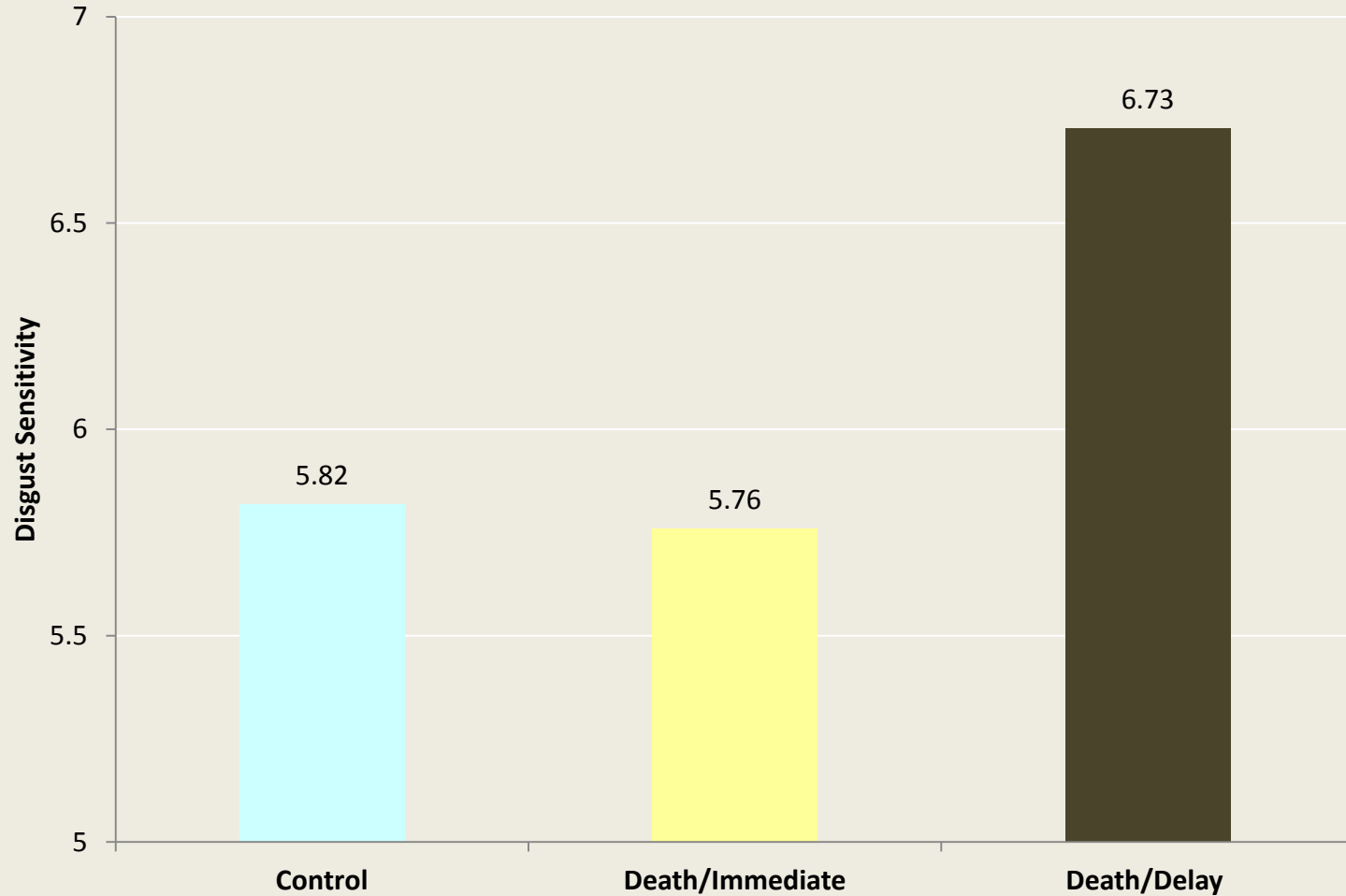
The Body Problem

- Bodies are frightening
- Blood, mucous, saliva, urine, feces, bones, organs -- we are physical creatures
- Bodies also become sick, age, lose their functioning
- Bodies DIE!!!
- So we MUST be more than our bodies

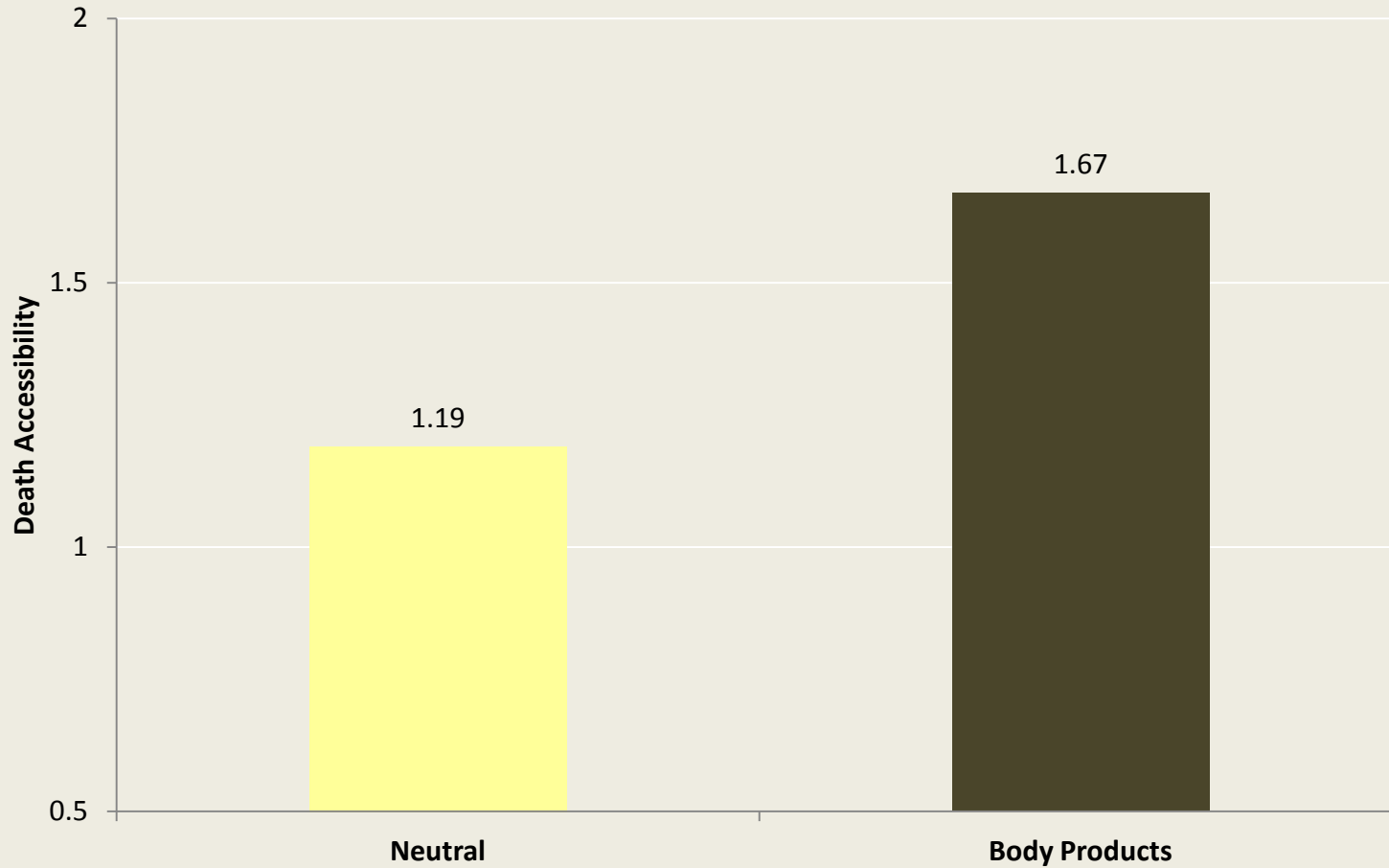
Negative Emotional Reactions to Our Bodies

- Remind us of our creaturely, animalistic, physical nature
- Which reminds us that, like all other animals, we die

Body Disgust



Body Disgust



What Happens when People are Reminded of their Creaturliness?

- Distancing self from their bodies
- Emphasize mental, spiritual, romantic aspects of self – how we are DIFFERENT from animals
- Find bodily experiences more disturbing

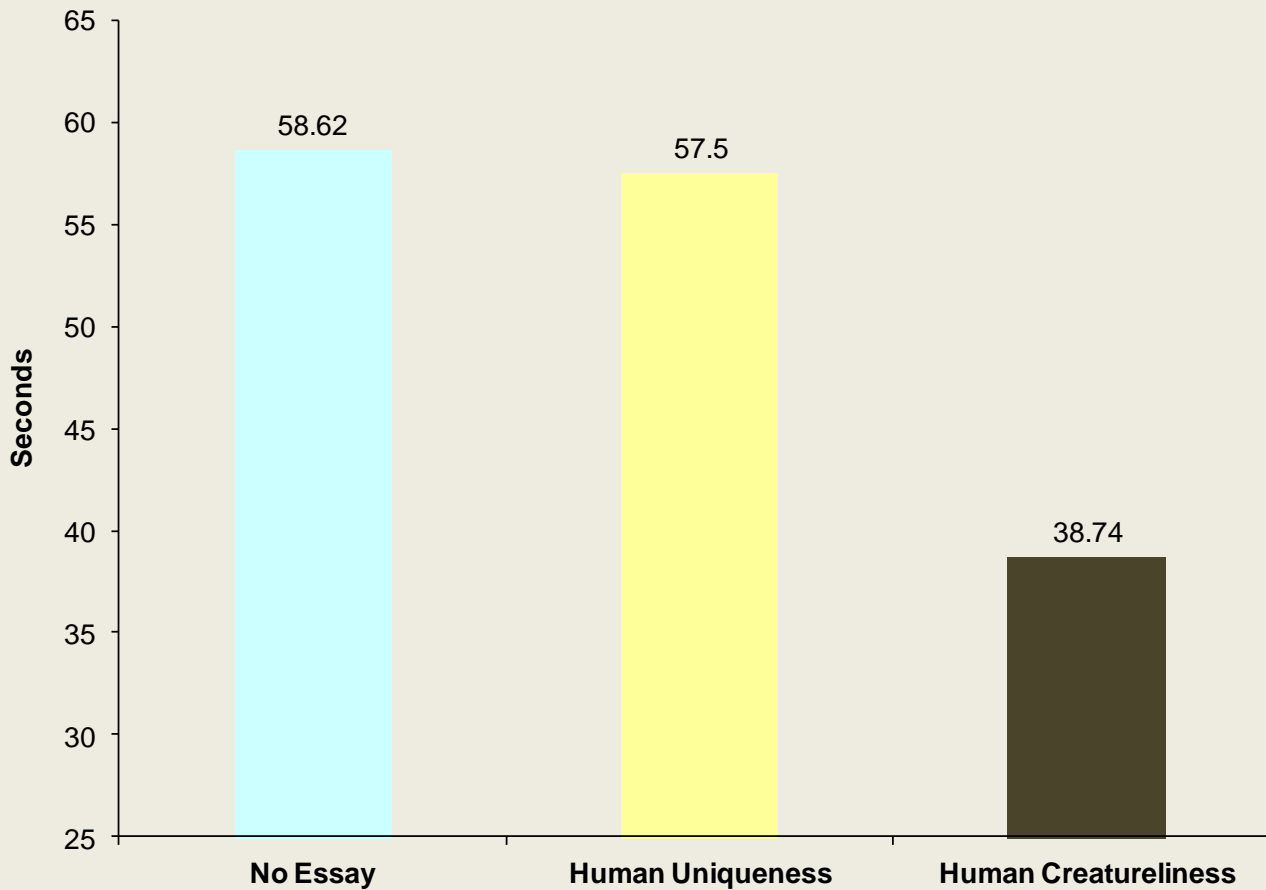
Creatureliness Prime:

Creatureliness: *“the boundary between humans and animals is not as great as most people think ... our bodies work in pretty much the same way as the bodies of all other animals ... whether you're talking about lizards, cows, horses, insects, or humans, we're all made up of the same basic biological products...”*

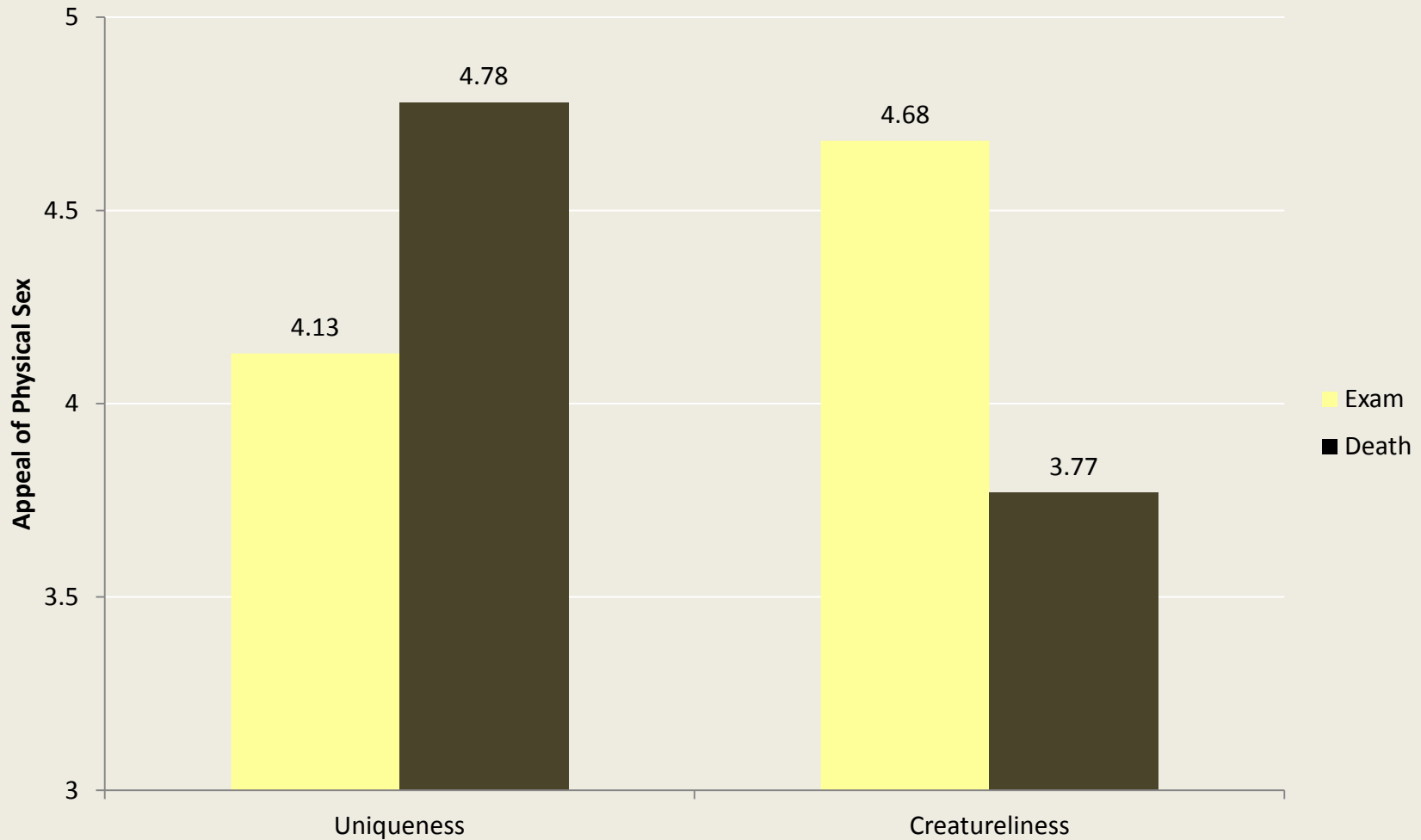
Uniqueness: *“although we humans have some things in common with other animals, human beings are truly unique ... the potential of the human mind and spirit go far beyond anything remotely similar to what is found in simple animals ... humans have language and culture ... we create works of art, music, and literature ...”*

- Women read essay about humans are similar to or different from animals, or neutral control
- Watch video teaching how to do breast self-examination for tumors
- Asked to do breast self-examination
- Measure how much time they spend on breast self-examination

Creatureliness and Breast Exams



Creatureliness and Sex



Why is Sex Such a Problem?

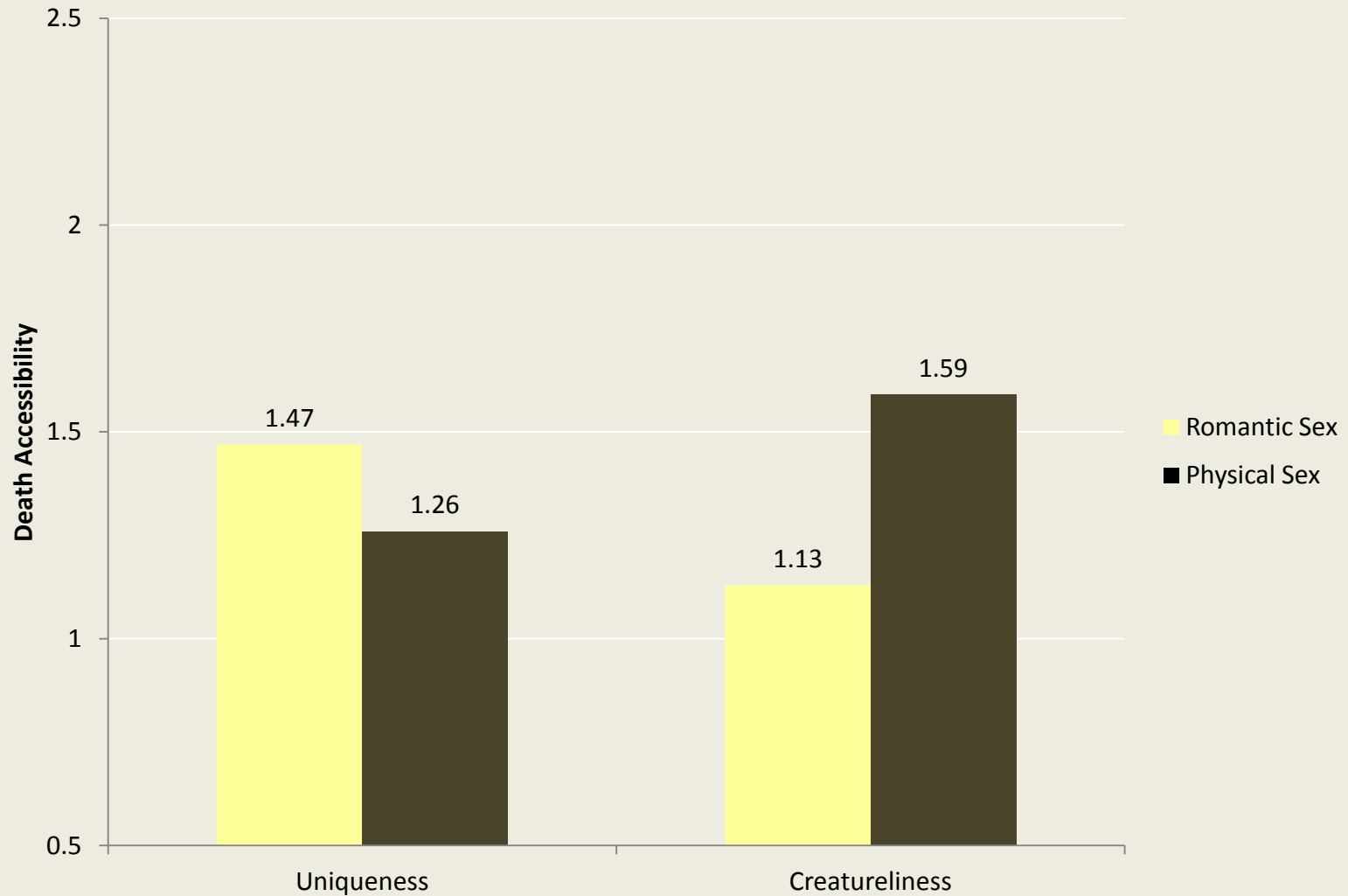
- Do you remember the first time you learned about sex?
- Why do ALL cultures have taboos and rituals surrounding sex? Why do all cultures restrict sex?
- Some cultures very restrictive; some cultures very permissive
- Most theories simply blame it on society --- but the real question is WHY?

Sex is a Reminder of our Physical, Animalistic, Creaturely Nature

- Sex is of the body ... and the body is of death
- Sex is troubling becomes it indirectly reminds us of death
- Transform sex into something more than a mere animalistic act:
 - Love
 - Spiritual enlightenment
 - Sexual athlete or hero

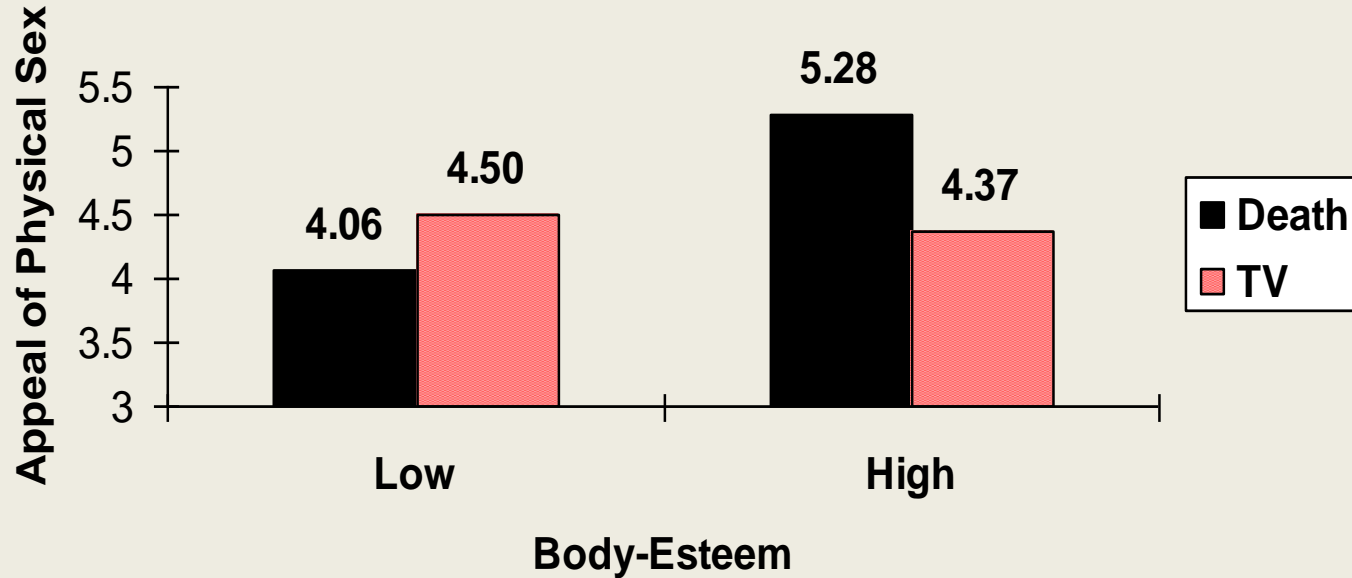
- Participants read essay about how human beings are either similar to or different from other animals
- Answer several short open-ended questions about either the physical or romantic aspects of sex
- Measure death thought accessibility (DTA) with word completion task
- D__ D; COFF__

Creatureliness and Sex



- Participants high or low in self-esteem
- Mortality salience or dental pain conditions
- Measure the appeal of the physical and romantic aspects of sex

Appeal of Physical Sex as a Function of Mortality Salience and Body Self-Esteem



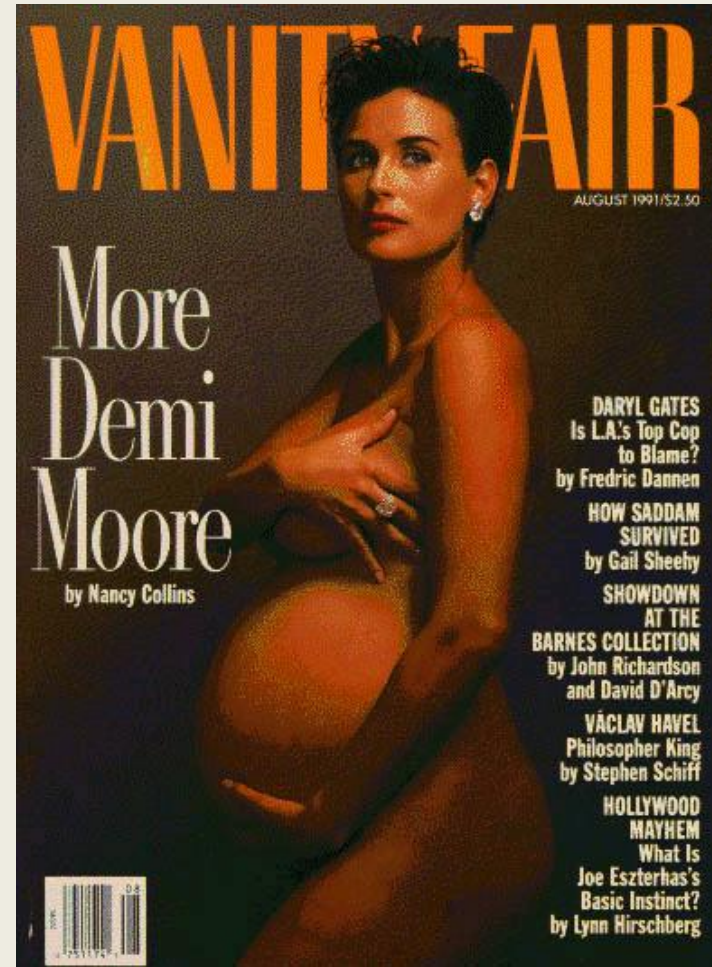
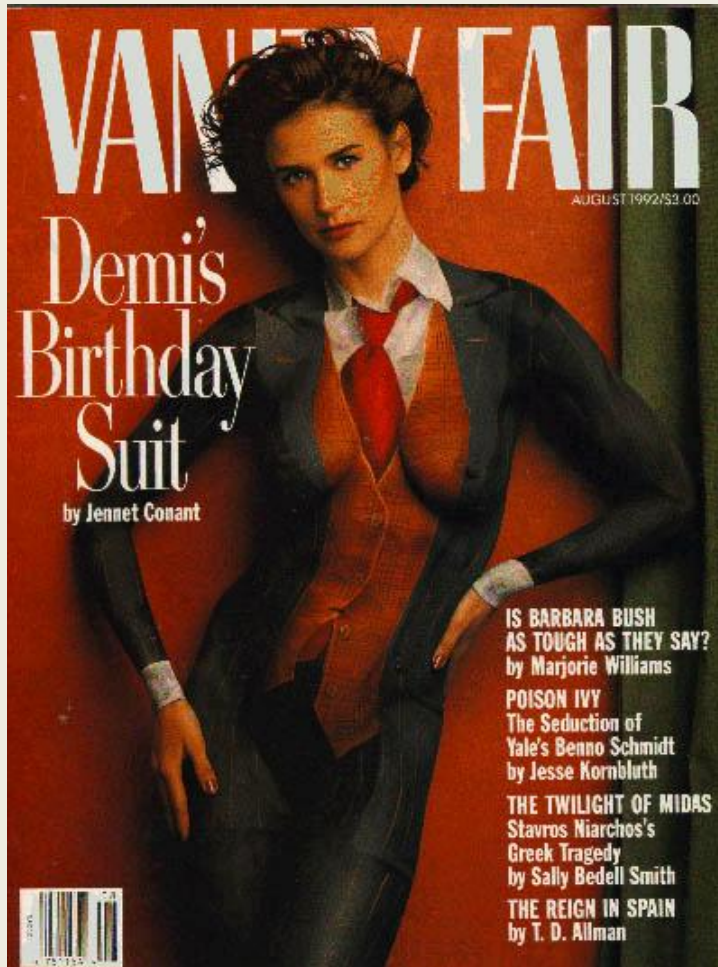
Women's Bodies

Reproduction:

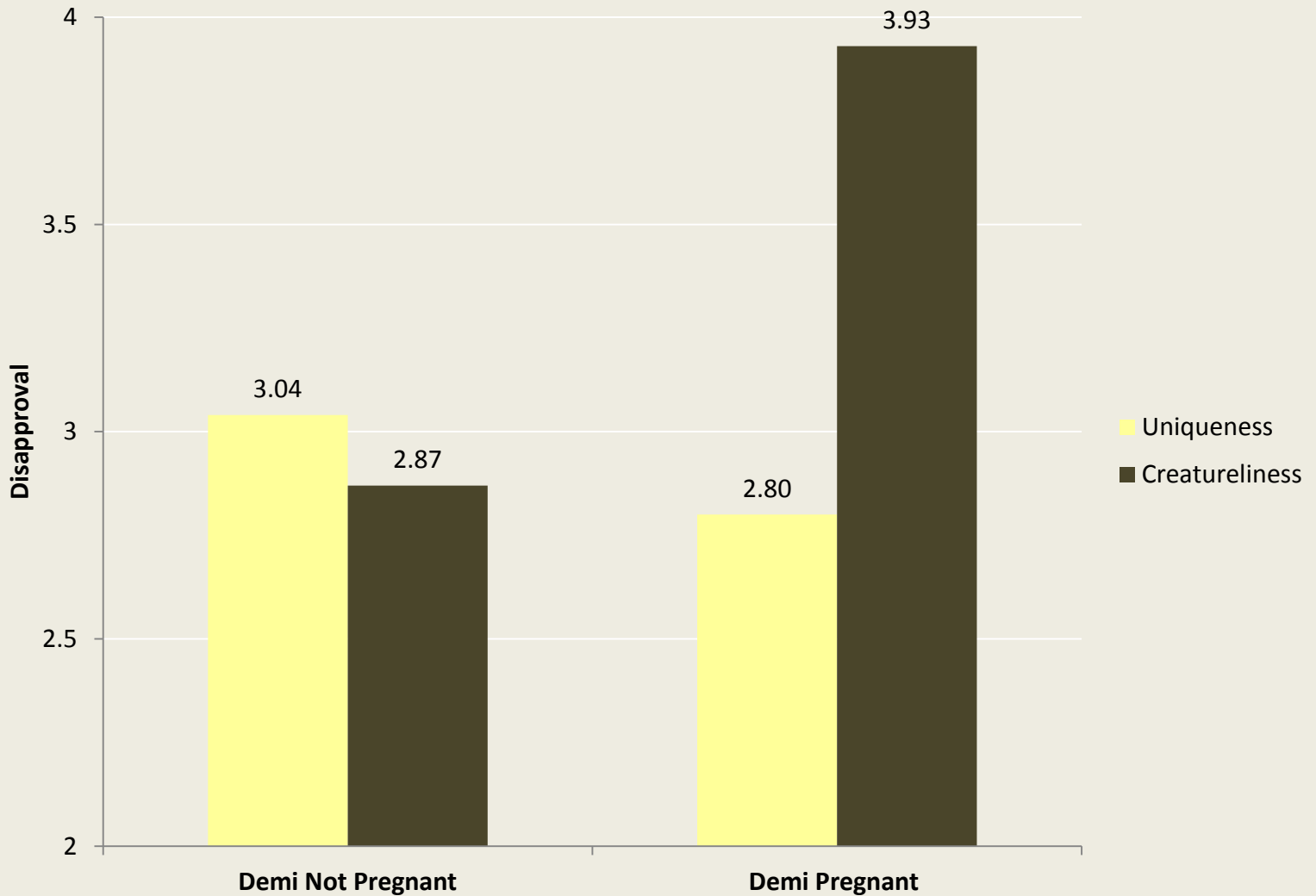
Females \neq Males

The female “is more enslaved to the species than the male, her animality is more manifest” (de Beauvoir, 1953)

Reactions to Pregnancy



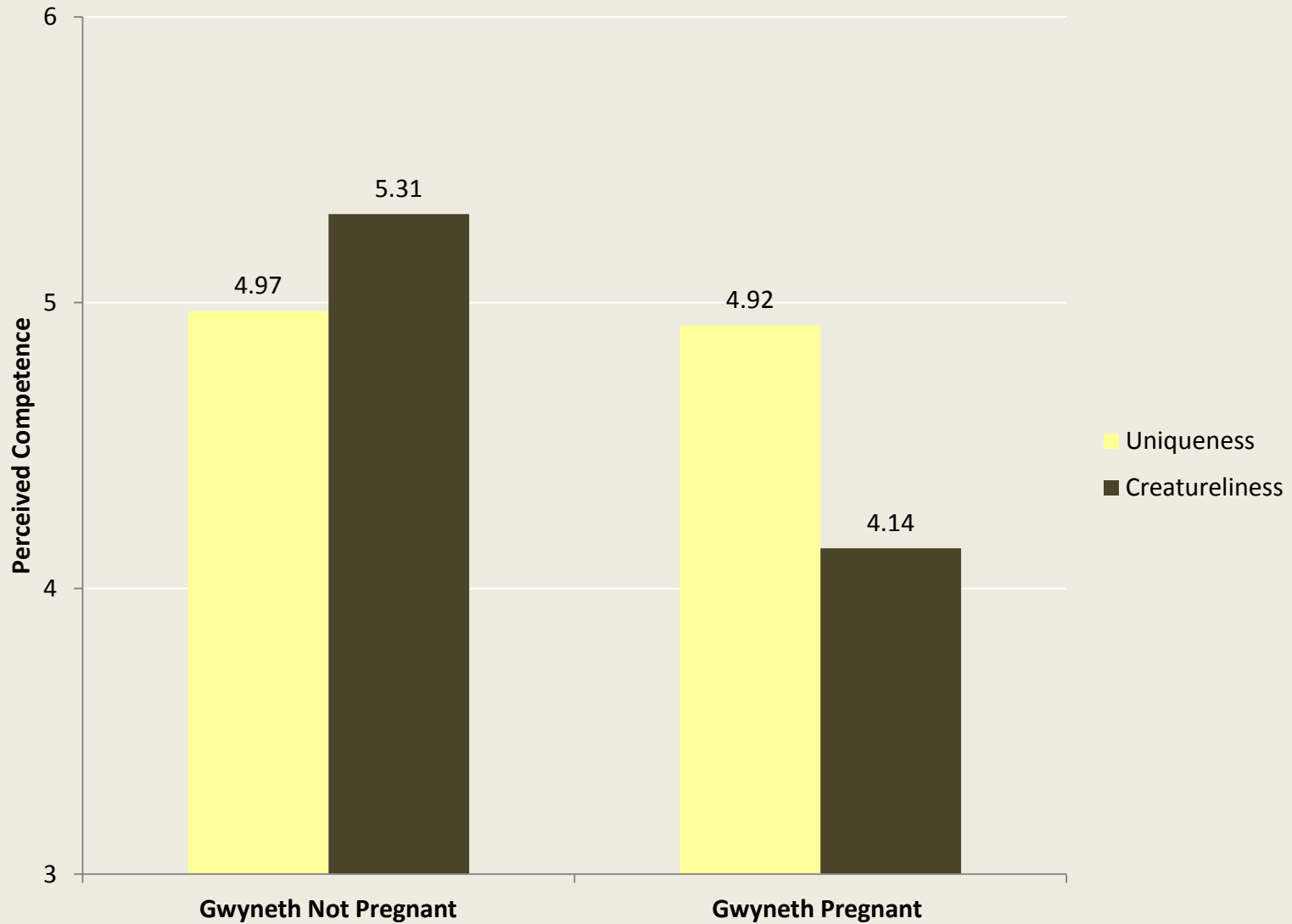
Reactions to Pregnancy



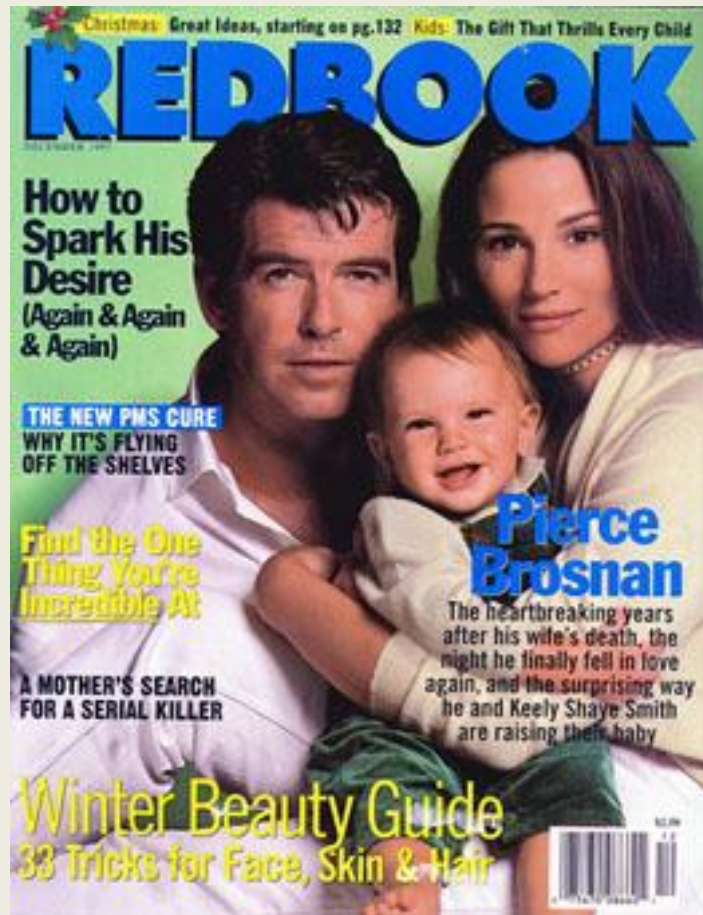
Reactions to Pregnancy



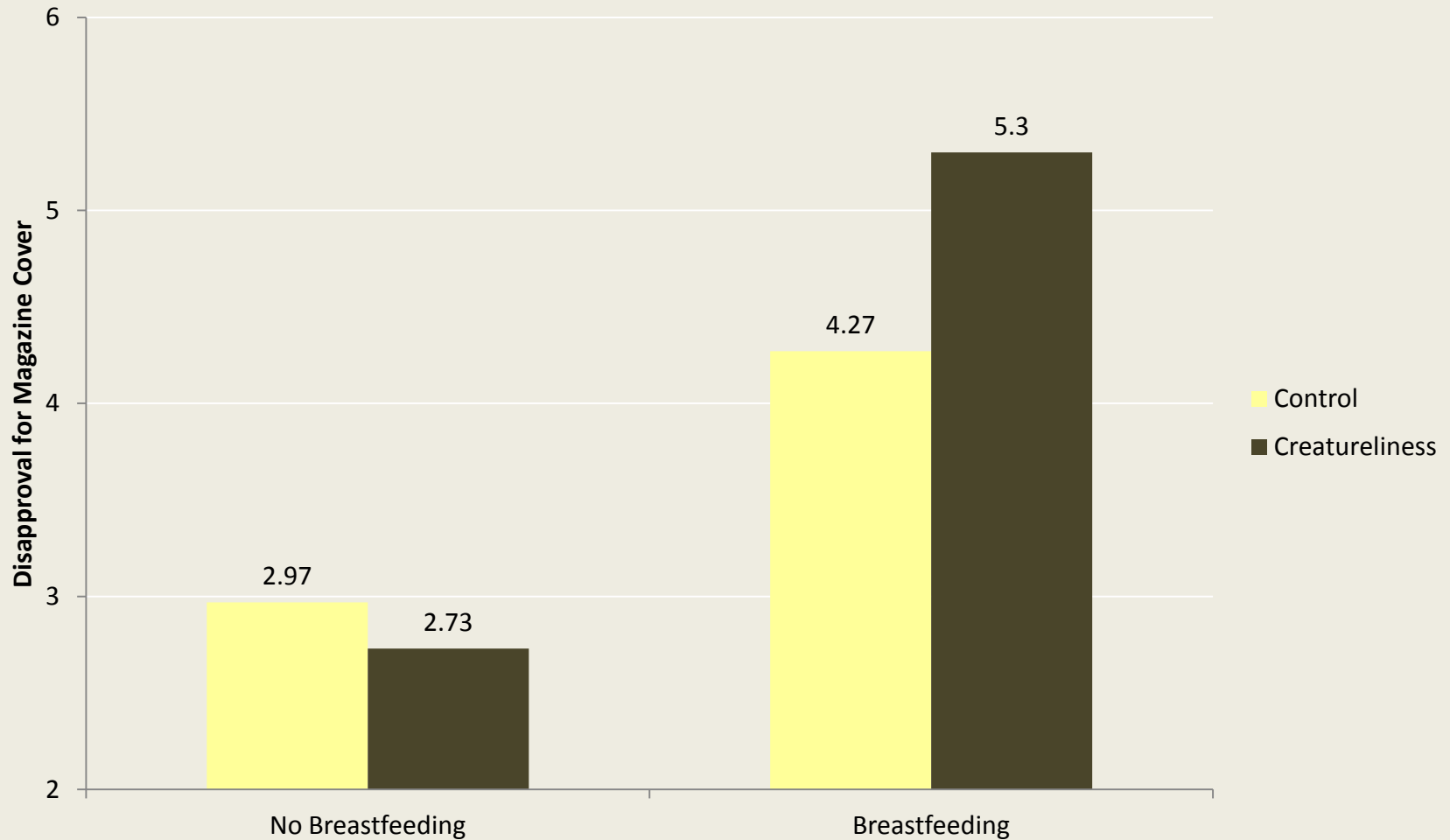
Reactions to Pregnancy



Reactions to Breastfeeding



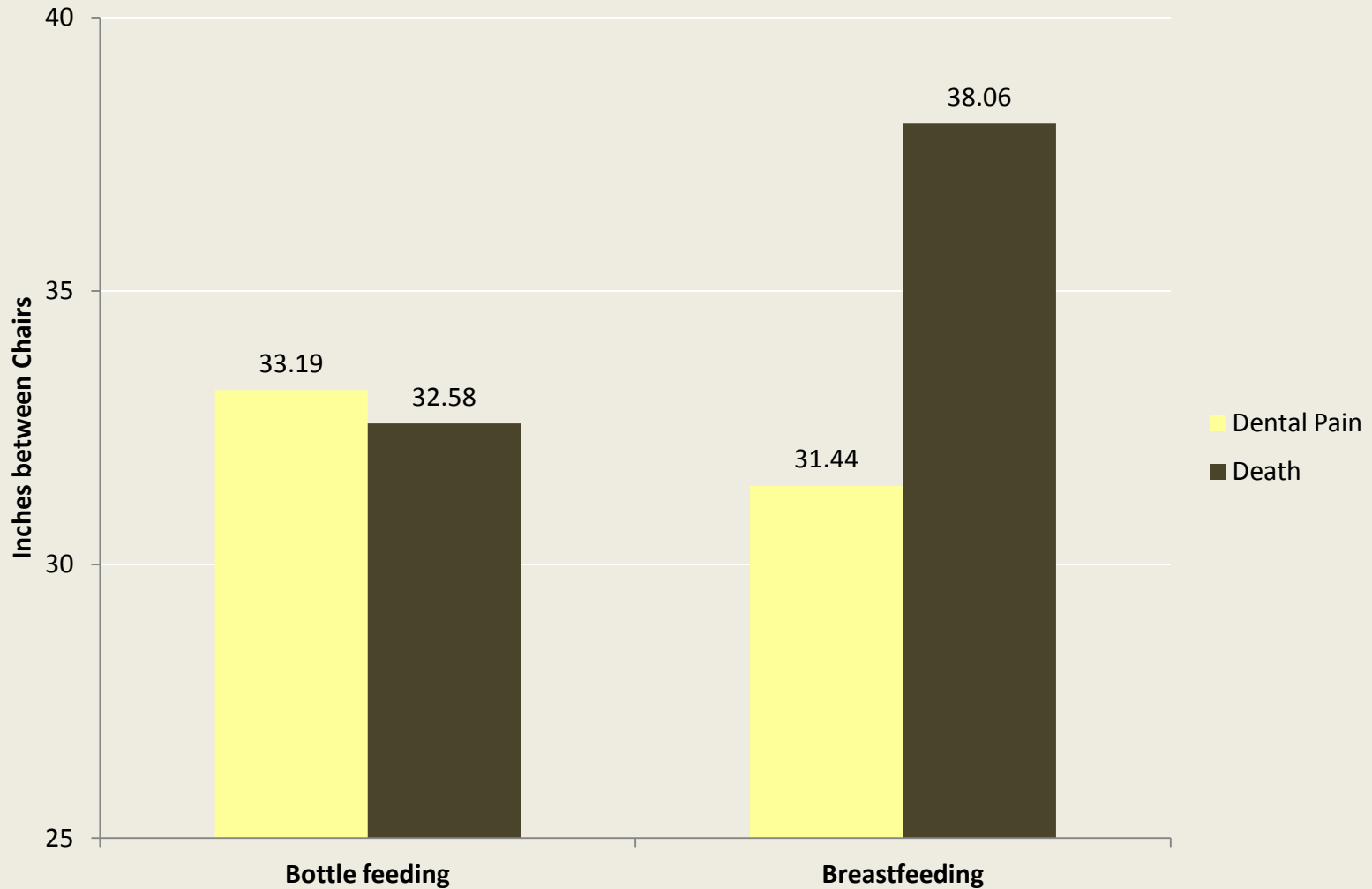
Reactions to Breastfeeding



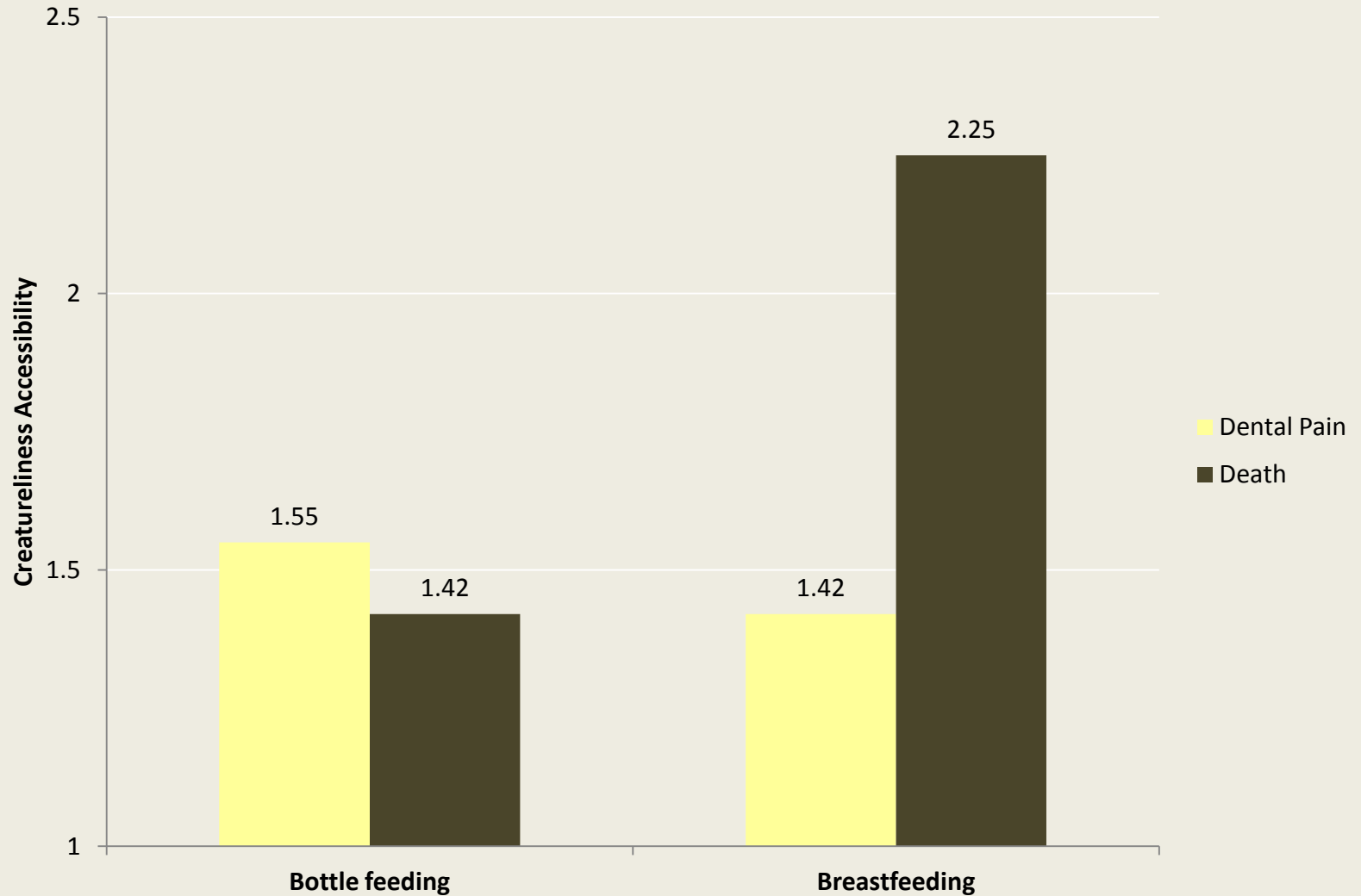
Reactions to a Woman Breast-feeding in Room Next Door

- “Other participant” brings baby to study
- Goes into next room to feed baby, with breast or bottle
- Afterward she comes out for study
- Participants told to get a chair and sit next to her to talk
- Measure physical distancing from mother, in inches

Reactions to Breastfeeding



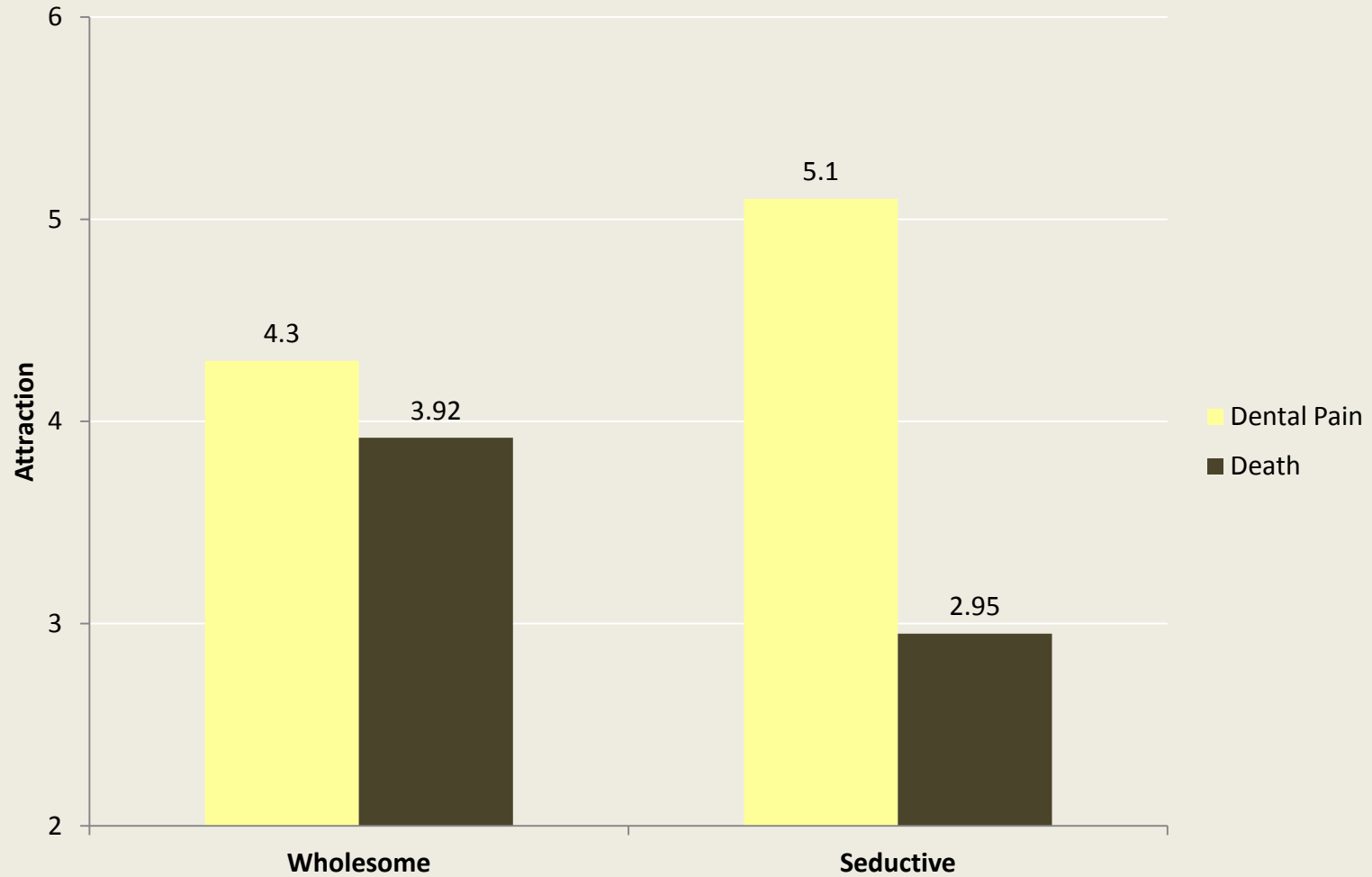
Reactions to Breastfeeding



Men's Attraction to Women



Men's Attraction to Women



Beauty as a Solution

“In woman dressed and adorned,
nature is present but under restraint”
(de Beauvoir, 1952)

Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)

Women Compared to Men:

- Value appearance over competence (e.g., Fredrickson et al., 1998)
- Have memories from observer's perspective (Huebner & Fredrickson, 1999)
- Are less aware of physiological states (Roberts & Pennebaker, 1995)

When women's appearance is primed:

- Restrain eating (e.g., Fredrickson et al., 1998)
- Perform poorly on a cognitive tasks (e.g., Gervais et al., 2011)
- Talk less (Saguy et al., 2010)

Women high in "self-objectification":

- Have ineffective motor performance (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005)
- Hold negative views about body functions (e.g., Roberts, 2004)
- Are less assertive and interested in sex (e.g., Impett et al., 2004)
- Feel less competent (i.e., self-efficacy) and purposeful (i.e., intrinsic motivation) (Gapinski et al., 2003)

New Approach in Psychology: Objectification of Others

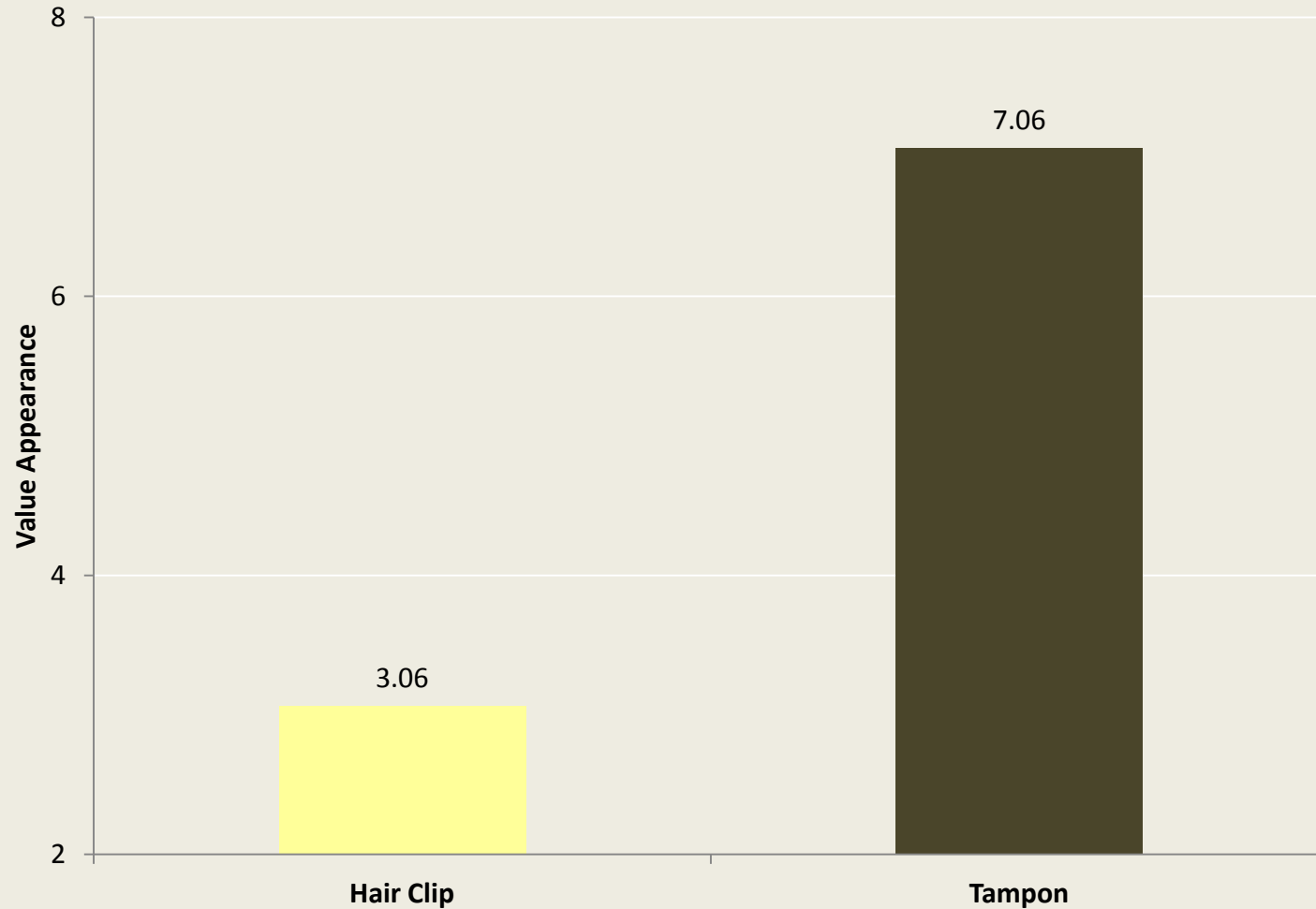
Objectified Women are:

- Perceived as less competent and warm (Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011)
- Denied mind and moral status (Loughnan et al., 2010)
- Attributed less agency (Cikara, Eberhardt, & Fiske, 2011)
- Perceived as interchangeable, or fungible (Gervais, Vesco, & Allen, in press)
- Recognized with cognitive processes similar to perceiving objects (Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi, & Klein, in press)
- Attributed less human nature (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009)

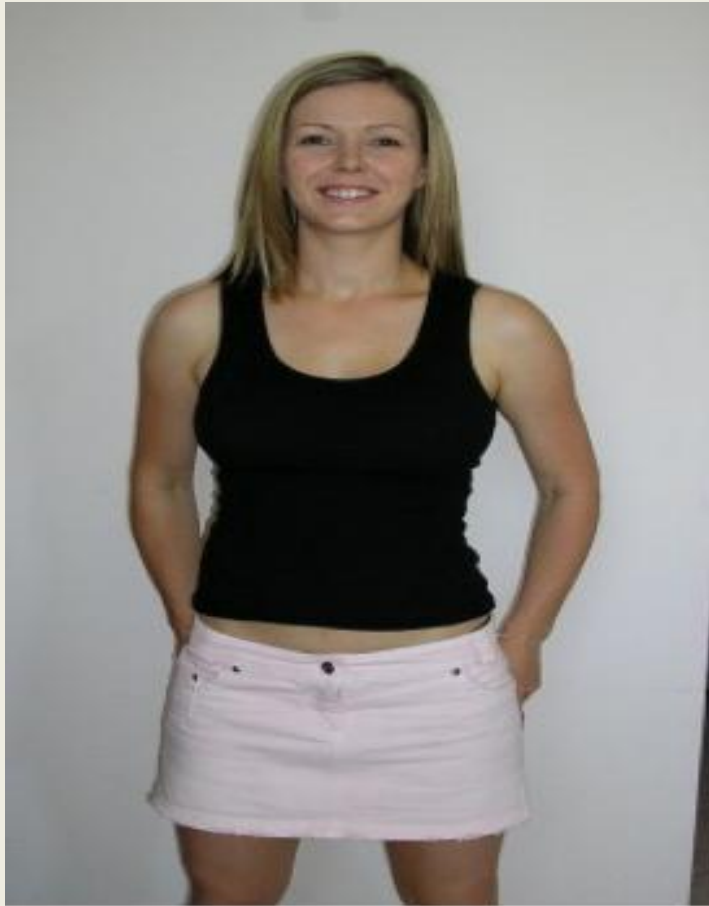
Focus on Appearance



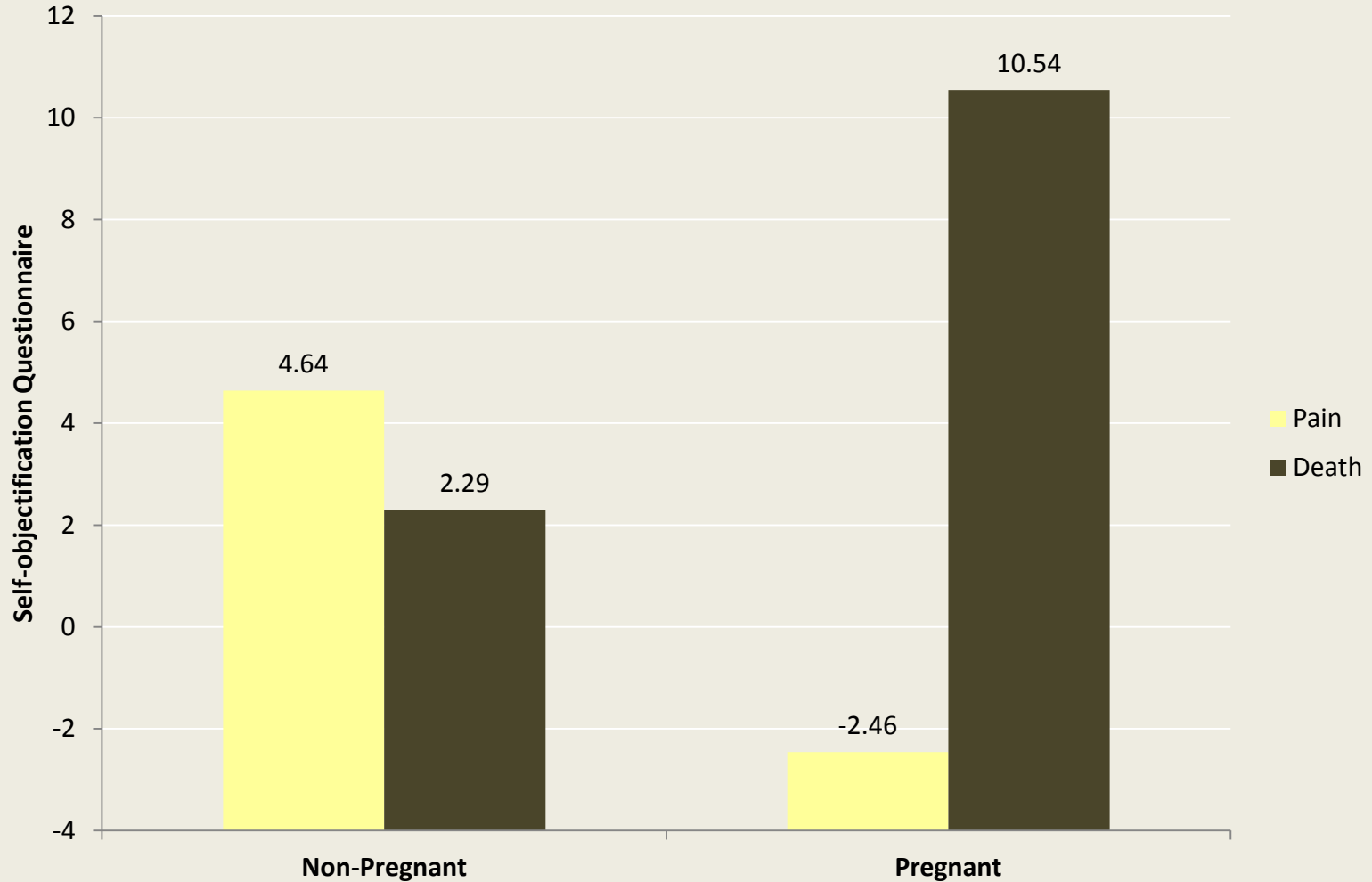
Beauty as a Solution



Pregnant Images



Pregnancy and Women's Appearance Striving



Conclusion

“Objectification entails making into a thing, treating as a thing, something that is really not a thing” (Nussbaum, 1995)

But Why?

accounting for: (1) women’s self-objectification
and (2) men’s attraction to women

OBJECTS DON’T DIE!