

# THE MOTIVATING EFFECT OF EXPECTATION-INCONSISTENT SOCIAL INFORMATION

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## What is Expectation?

Expectations about others:

Beliefs derived from demographic and more individuating characteristics, like past actions

(Miller & Turnbull, 1986; Olson et al., 1996)

- Expectations about a person may either be *consistent* or *inconsistent* with their behavior

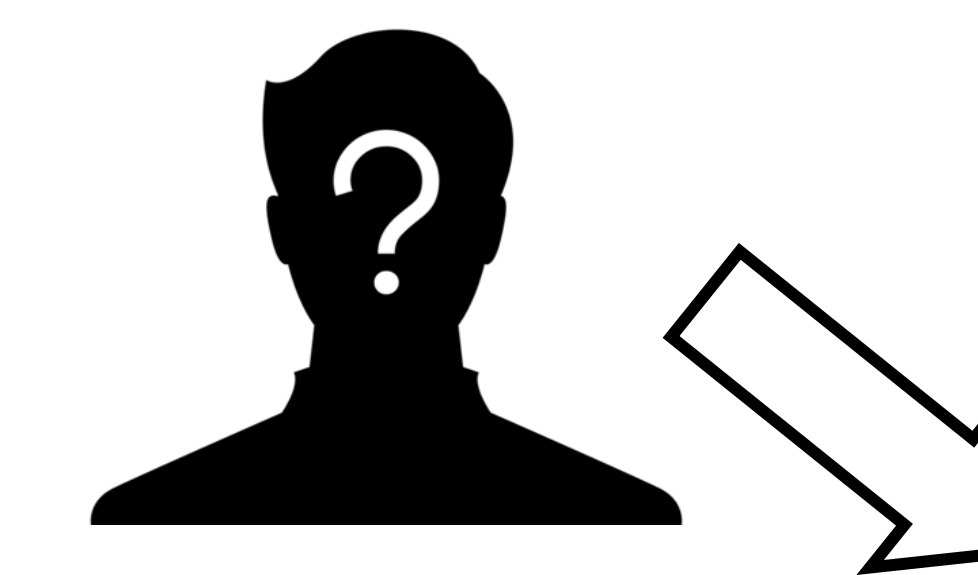
Goal-directed behavior:

- Can either be *goal-facilitative*, which facilitates achievement of a goal, or *goal-inhibitive*, which inhibits achievement of a goal (Aarts et al., 2004; Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Fishbach et al., 2006)

## Hypothesis

**RQ:** How does witnessing another person's expectation consistent vs. inconsistent, goal-directed behavior affect the observer's behavior?

People will experience a motivational boost from witnessing another person's expectation-inconsistent (vs. consistent) behavior, but only when this behavior is goal-facilitative (vs. inhibitive).

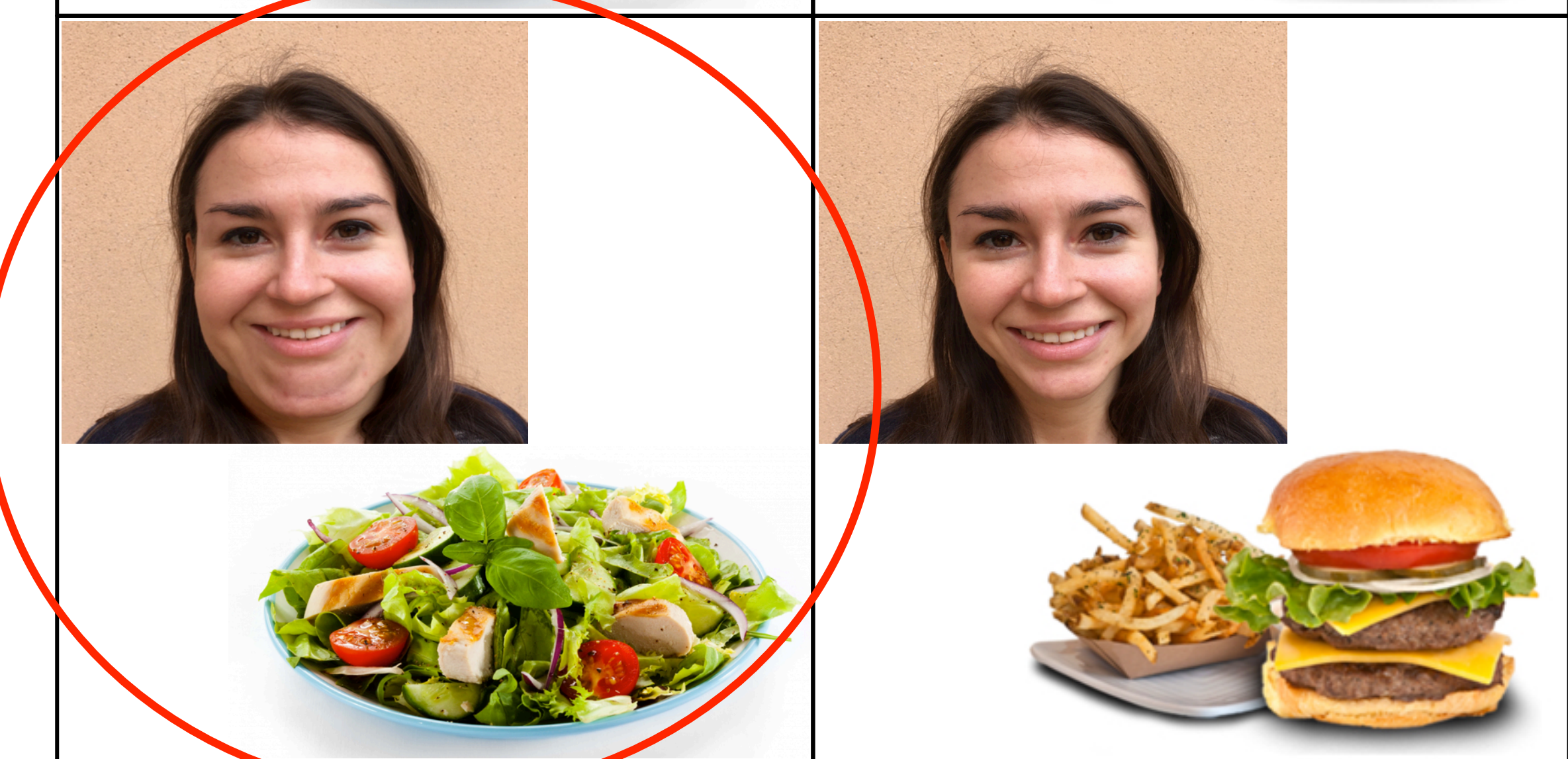


Goal-Facilitative      Goal-Inhibitive

Expectation-Consistent



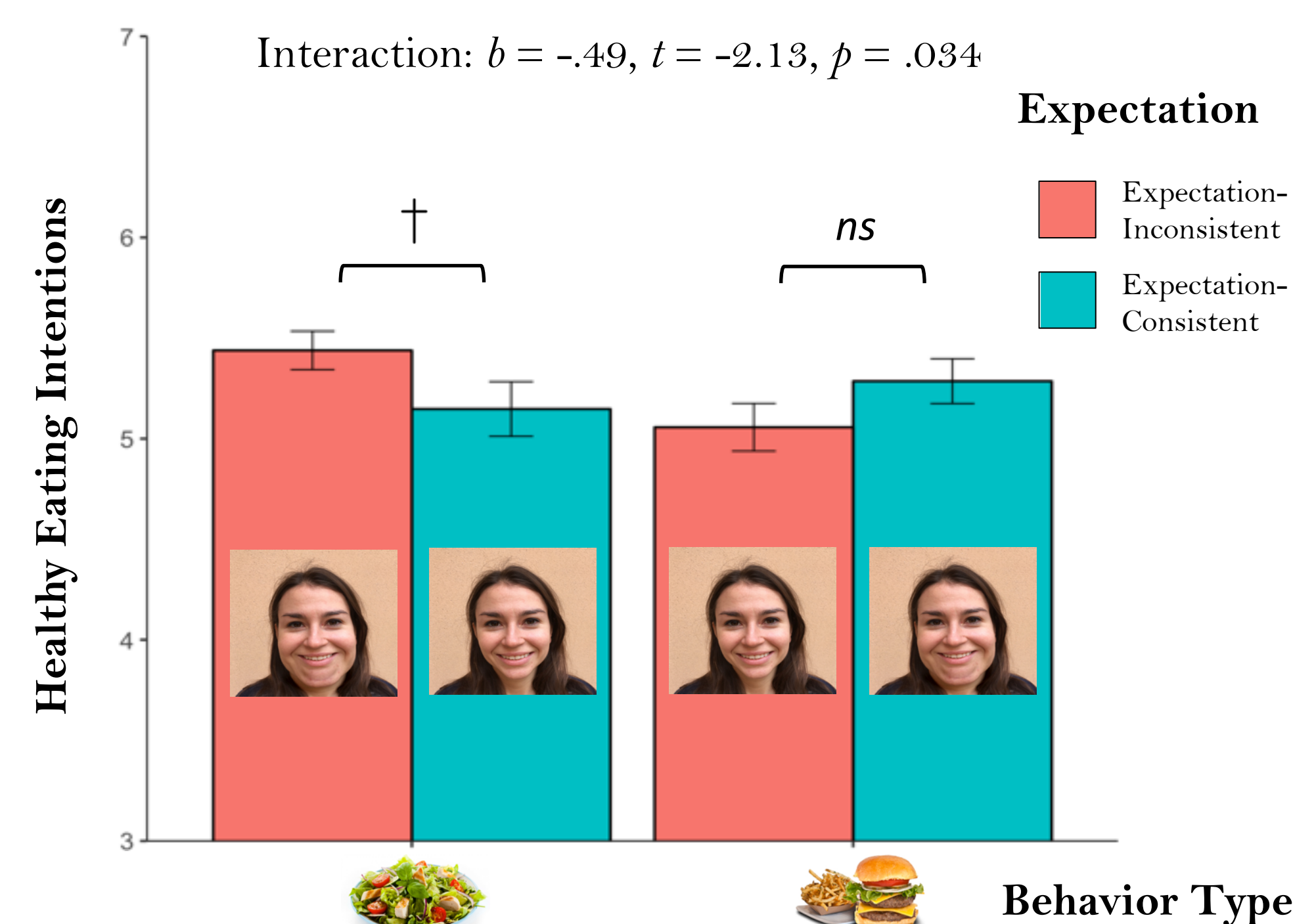
Expectation-Inconsistent



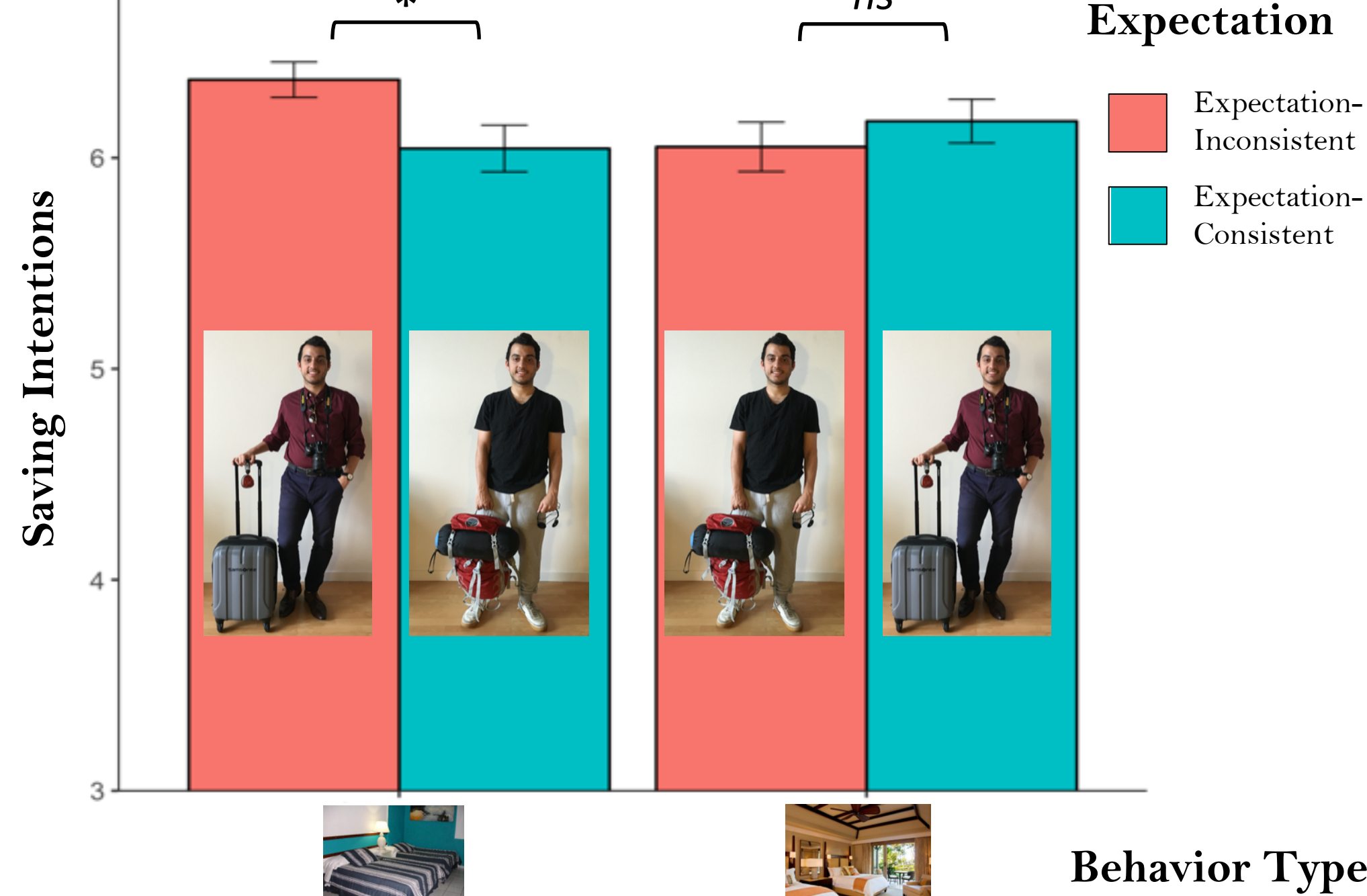
## Studies 1 & 2: Motivational Boost of Healthy Eating and Saving

### Study 1: Healthy Eating

- 2 (expectation) × 2 (behavior type) between-subjects design
- Participants (N = 420) viewed a profile about a social other, including this person's choice of dinner last night
- Measure: Healthy eating intentions



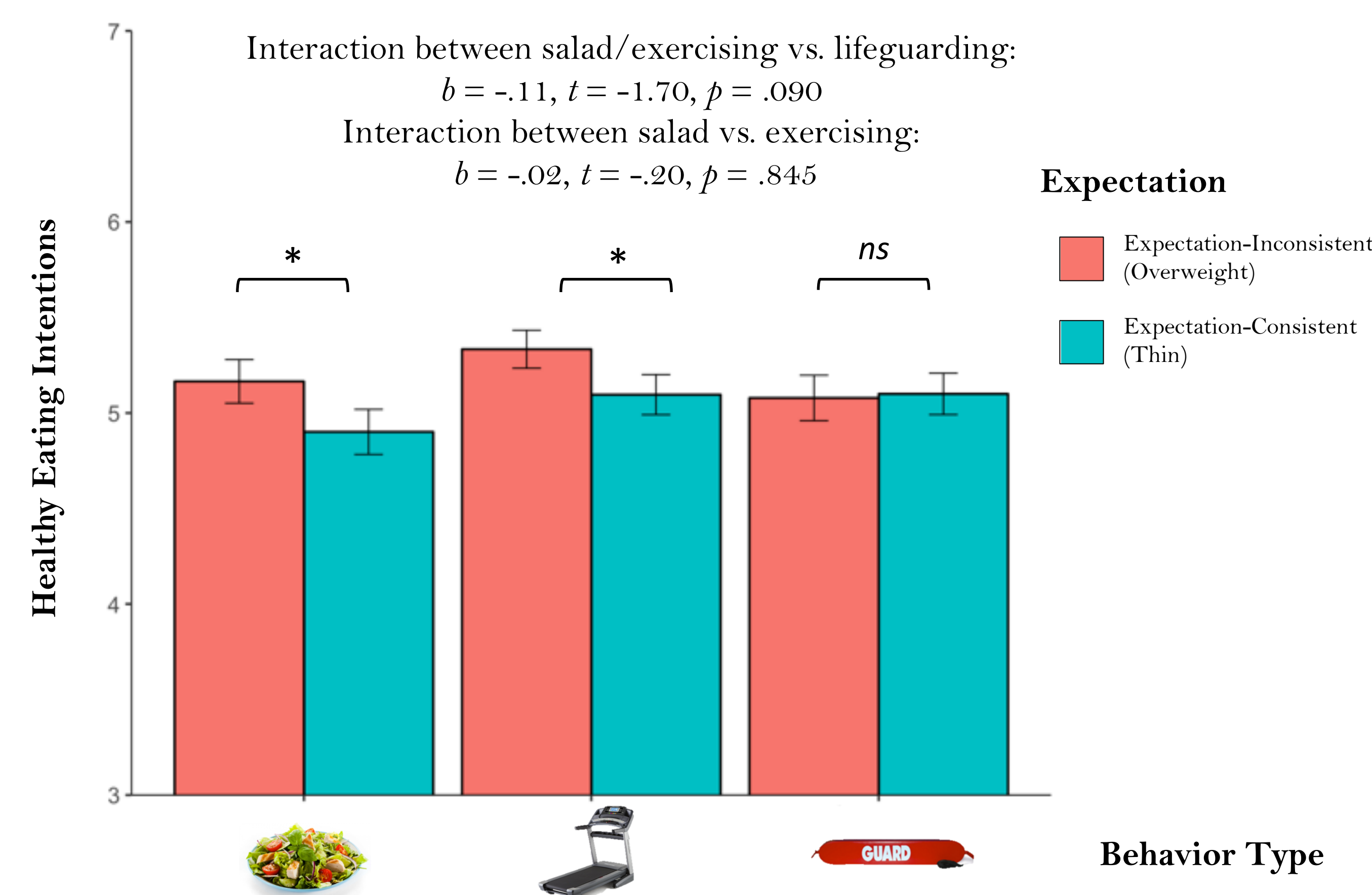
### Study 2: Saving Money



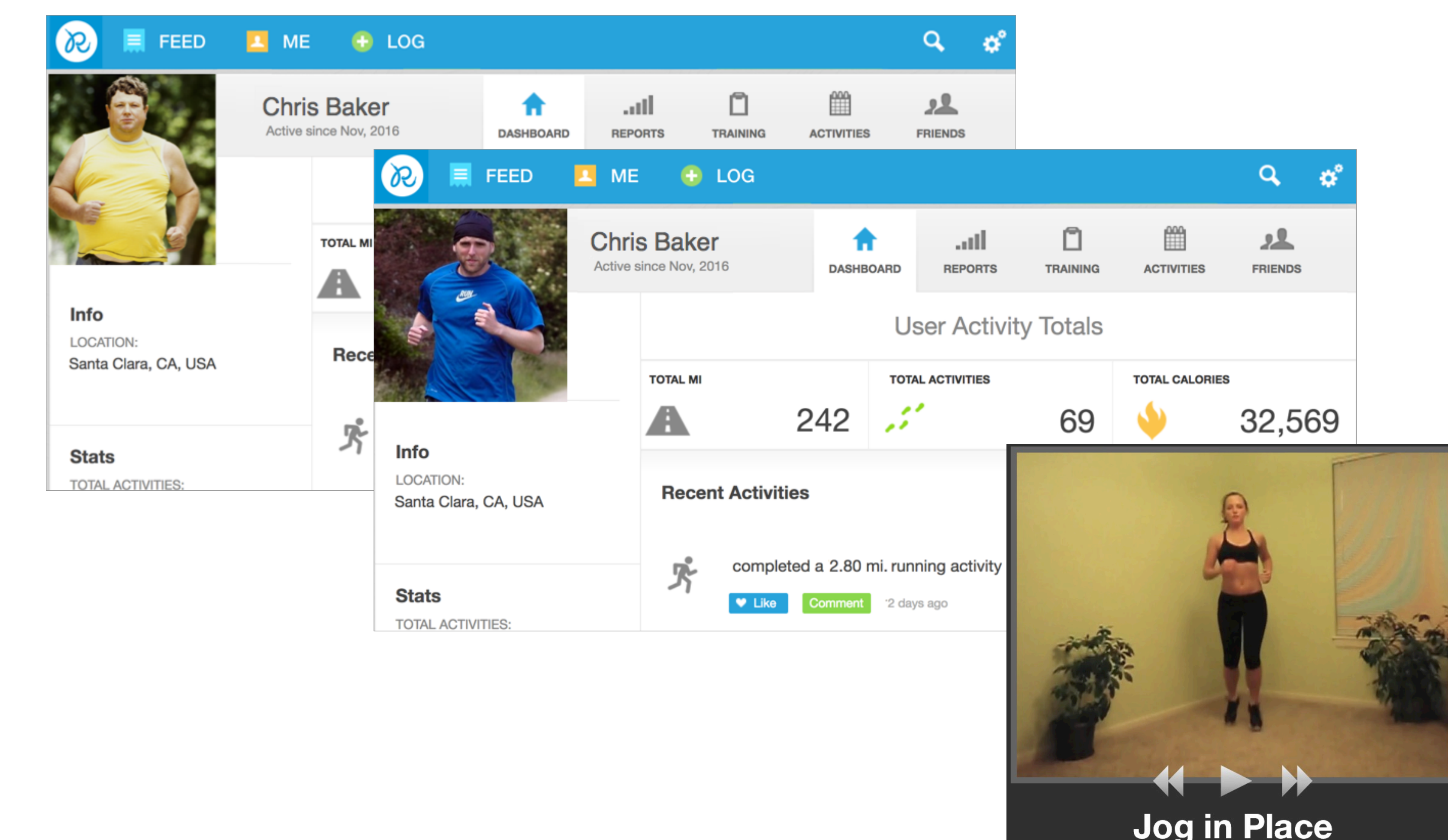
- Replicated Study 1's findings utilizing a different goal
- Participants (N = 451) witnessed either a 1) good-at-saving person or 2) bad-at-saving person book either an a) cheap hotel or b) expensive hotel
- Measure: Saving intentions

## Study 3: Scope of Effect on Observer Motivation

- Participants (N = 590) read about an overweight (expectation-inconsistent) or thin person (expectation-consistent) performing a behavior that was either similar to eating healthy (eating a salad), different but still goal-facilitative (exercising), or goal-irrelevant (lifeguarding)
- Measure: Healthy eating intentions
- Conclusions:
  - Observing expectation-inconsistent, goal-facilitative behavior can motivate behaviors consistent with that goal, beyond the specific action observed
  - Rules out alternative explanation that seeing an overweight person perform any surprising action would be motivating



## Study 4: Motivational Boost of Real Behavior



- Participants (N = 195) in the lab viewed the fitness activity of either an overweight (expectation-inconsistent) or thin person (expectation-consistent) on the website Runkeeper
- Later, those who had seen the overweight (vs. thin) person's fitness profile:
  - Exercised longer to a workout app,  $b = -.10, t = -2.00, p = .047$
  - Exercised harder,  $b = -.52, t = -1.97, p = .049$