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 & Bergh, 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).

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

Study 1: Healthy Eating
- \(2 \times 2\) (expectation 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) 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: 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:
• Rules out alternative explanation that seeing an overweight person perform a 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, \(b = -.10, t = -2.00, p = .049\)
  • Exercised harder, \(b = -.52, t = -1.97, p = .047\)