Do you act like a Green Gaucho?
An Exploration of Social Identity and Pro-Environmental Behavior

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Introduction

   People want to be worthy of social approval. When they see a social identity as desirable, people tend to realign their behaviors with what is expected of that social identity in order to affirm their social acceptability. **In an example of this phenomenon, participants who took a questionnaire where voting was framed as a social identity ("to be a voter") were more likely to vote than other participants (Bryan, Walton, Rogers and Dweck, 2011). Research also suggests that this strategy can be applied to promoting pro-environmental behavior.** For instance, participants who were reminded of green behaviors that they had engaged in in the past experienced an increased sense of environmental self-identity, leading to an increase in green behavior (Van der Werff et al., 2014). Therefore: **Can social identity framing be used to promote pro-environmental behavior? How do social identities interact with other contributors to action, like environmental attitudes and environmental values?**

Methods

Procedure

Assessment of environmental attitudes using the NEP and green behaviors

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Receive "result" (false feedback determined by randomization to condition)

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Questionnaire regarding policy support, environmental identity, environmental values, demographic questions

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One week later: follow-up survey with behavior assessment regarding the past week, NEP again, enviro. identity questions

IV: Type of Feedback
- **Social Identity Framing condition (Green Gaucho condition)**: ie. "Your responses suggest that you are an environmentally responsible and considerate student … As a Green Gaucho, you are playing a key role in our campus' movement toward sustainability."
- **Behavioral feedback condition**: ie. "According to your score, you act and think in an environmentally conscious way."
- **Control condition**: Receives a meaningless code to give the experimenter.

Key Measures:
- **Green policy support**: Three questions regarding support for a $3.47 tuition increase to fund an on-campus sustainability committee.
- **Core-values**: "How close are your values concerning the natural environmental to your core values?"
- **Green behaviors:** Mixture of conservation behaviors, information-seeking behaviors and recycling behaviors measured on a frequency Likert scale.

Participants:
- 198 UCSB students enrolled in PSY 1
- Gender: 65.3% female, 34.7% male
- Age: $m=18.5$, range: 17-23
- Somewhat liberal on average ($m=3.05$ on a 7-point scale of "Very Liberal" to "Very Conservative")

Hypothesis

Participants in the social identity framing condition will participate in more pro-environmental behaviors in the week following the study than participants in the behavioral feedback or control conditions.

Results

Main Effects

No significant difference between the main effects of the conditions on follow-up green behavior composite, NEP scores, or the green policy behavior composite.

Across all conditions there was a general significant increase in pro-environmental behaviors ($p=.007$) and in NEP scores ($p=.008$) after the manipulation but not in environmental self-identity scores.

Interaction Effects:

Condition x UCSB Identity on Green Daily Behaviors
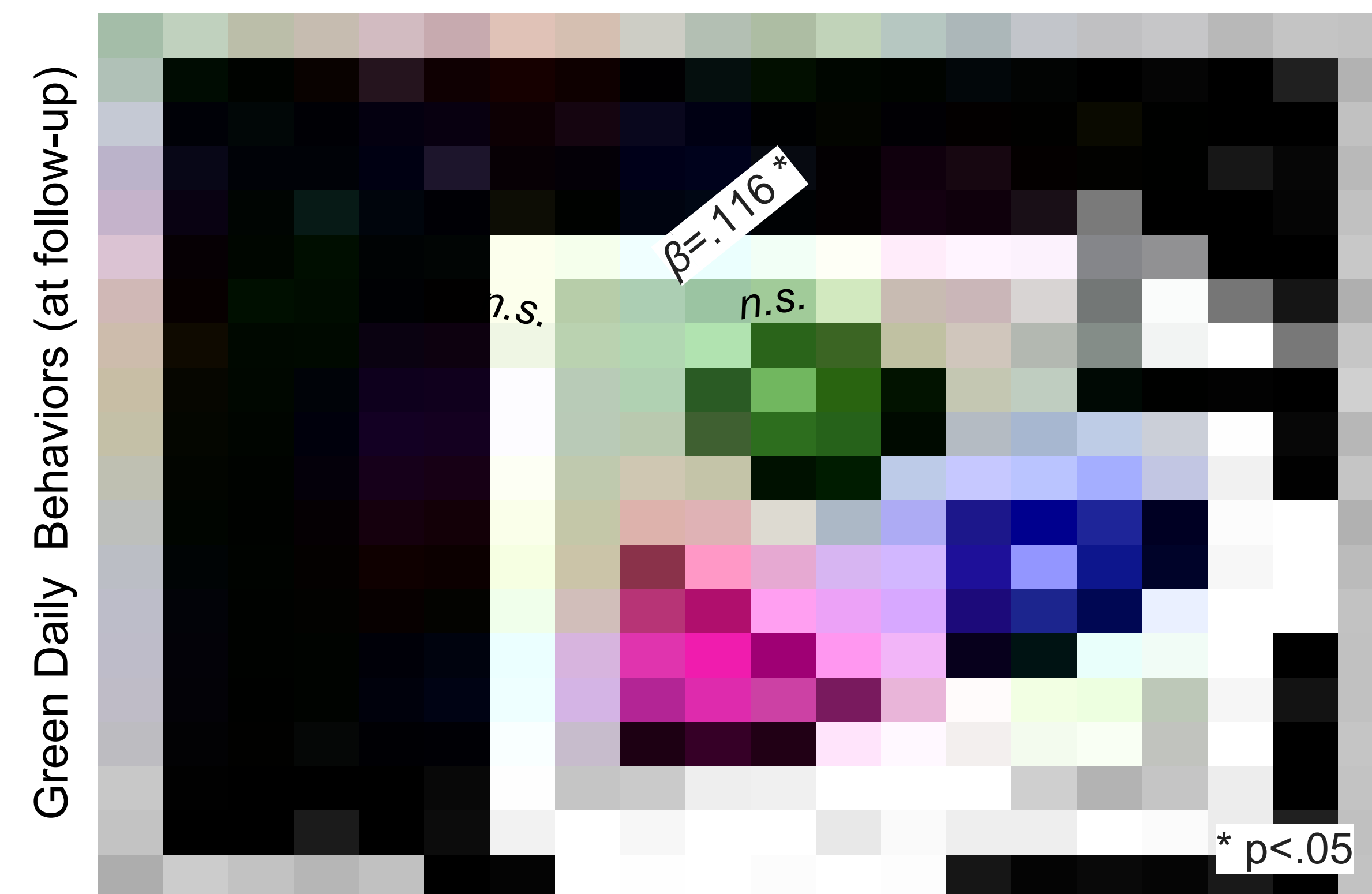
The Green Daily Behaviors composite ($m=4.49$, $s.d.=0.83$) operates on a scale of 1 (never engaging in the behavior) to 7 (always engaging in the behavior). UCSB identity ($m=6.18$, $s.d.=1.68$) was measured on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree with importance of UCSB self-identity) to 9 (strongly agree).

Condition x Core Values on Green Policy Behaviors
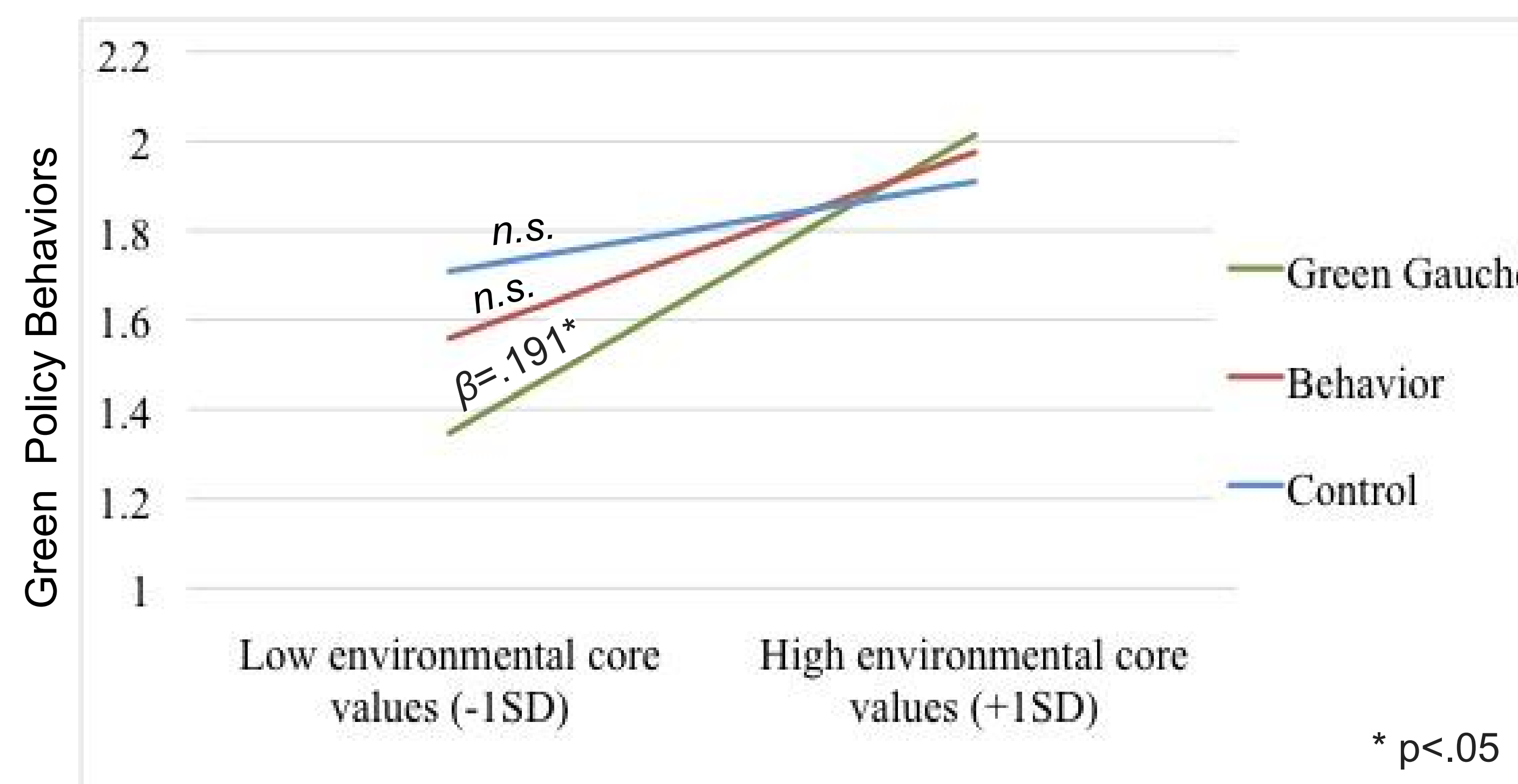
The Green Policy Behaviors composite ($m=1.76$, s.d.$=0.63$) operates on a scale of 0 to 3. Core values ($m=4.59$, $s.d.=1.22$) was measured on a scale of 1 (not a personal value) to 7 (very strong personal value).

Discussion

Main Findings
- Taking this test of environmental behaviors and attitudes increased pro-environmental behavior and attitudes across all participants, but the conditions alone did not make a difference.
- We were not able to recreate the boost in environmental self-identity seen in the research by Van der Werff et al. (2014).
- UCSB identity moderated the relationship between condition and general mixture of daily green behaviors but not the policy support behaviors.
- Core values moderated the relationship between condition and policy support behaviors but not daily green behaviors.
- Therefore, an interesting interplay between identity and behavior emerged in our results. Linking a green identity with a student identity significantly increased general green behaviors for those with a strong student identity and decreased student-specific green behaviors for students with less environmental core values.
- A strong reactance occurs with the Green Gaucho condition when identity and feedback are incongruent.

Future Research
- Our next study will have a larger sample size and will focus more on the relationship between social identity and different types of green behaviors.
- Our third study will apply these findings to a field experiment using a daily diary method and will measure quantifiable green behaviors as they occur in the real world.

Acknowledgements