



# Honesty in the Face of Good and Bad Consequences

Jessica Saki, Evan Clarkson, Ann Karmol & Dr. John Jasper  
The University Toledo

## Background

Generally, studies examining moral decision making have used paradigms that pit two moral theories against one another by utilizing extreme dilemmas.

Previous research has argued that studies using these paradigms lack external validity and cannot appropriately predict one's moral decision making.

The current study examined if participants moral judgements aligned with their behavior when given the opportunity to lie for selfish or altruistic reasons.

## Method

338 Ps responded to the Trolley Problem, moral dilemmas, and the Moral Foundations Questionnaire.

Ps played a dice rolling game in which they rolled a dice and reported the what the dice roll was. The researchers never saw the dice roll.

Ps were assigned to receive a bonus for themselves or for a charity based off the dice roll. The bonus was framed either as a loss or a gain.

## Trolley Type

	Pull the Lever	Don't Pull the Lever
Push the Man	Utilitarian (U)	Weird
Don't Push the Man	Typical (T)	Deontologist (D)

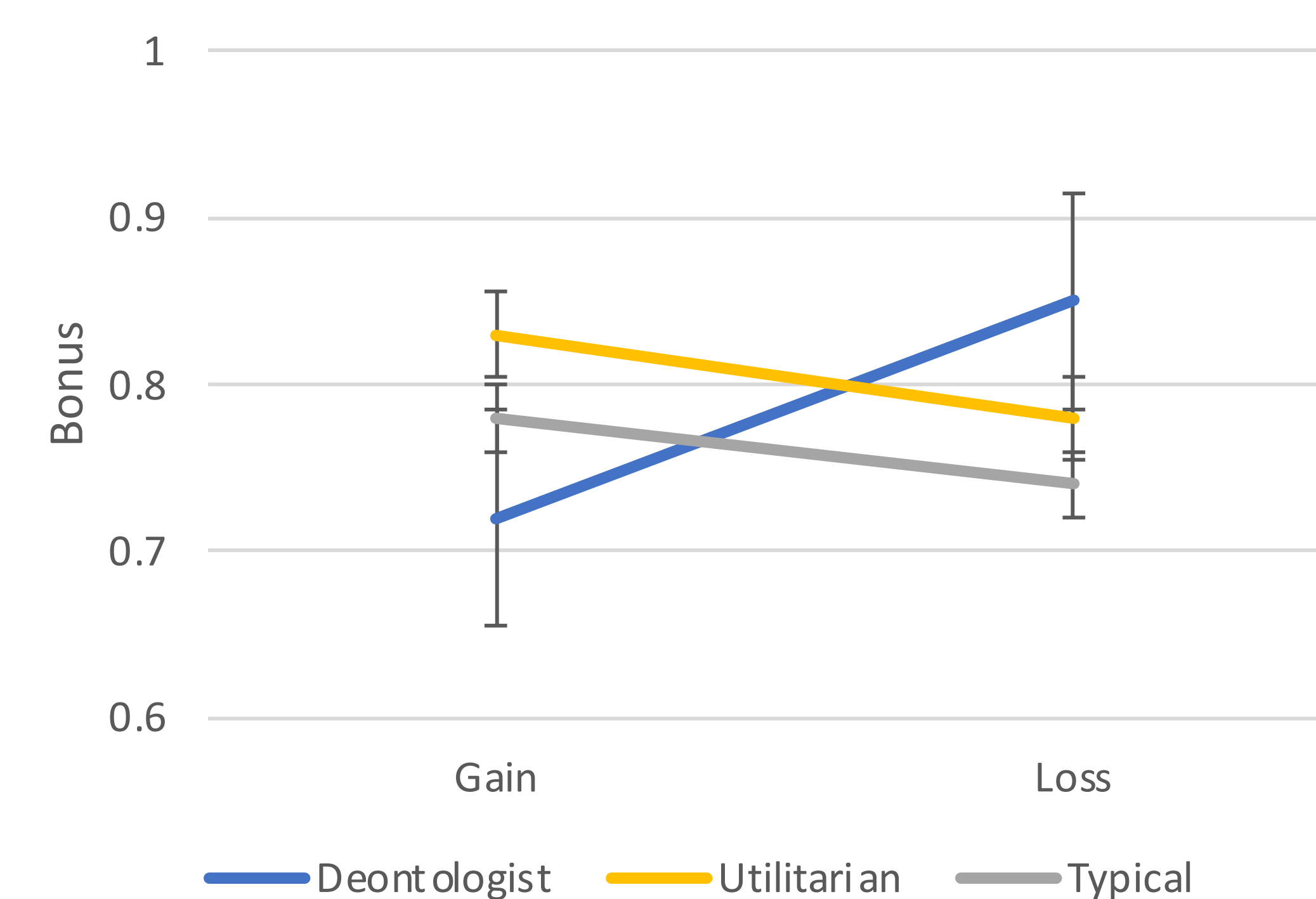
## Conditions

	Gain	Loss
Self	Ps gets dice rolls x .10	Ps gets \$1.40 – (dice rolls x .10)
Charity	Charity gets dice rolls x .10	Charity gets \$1.40 – (dice rolls x .10)

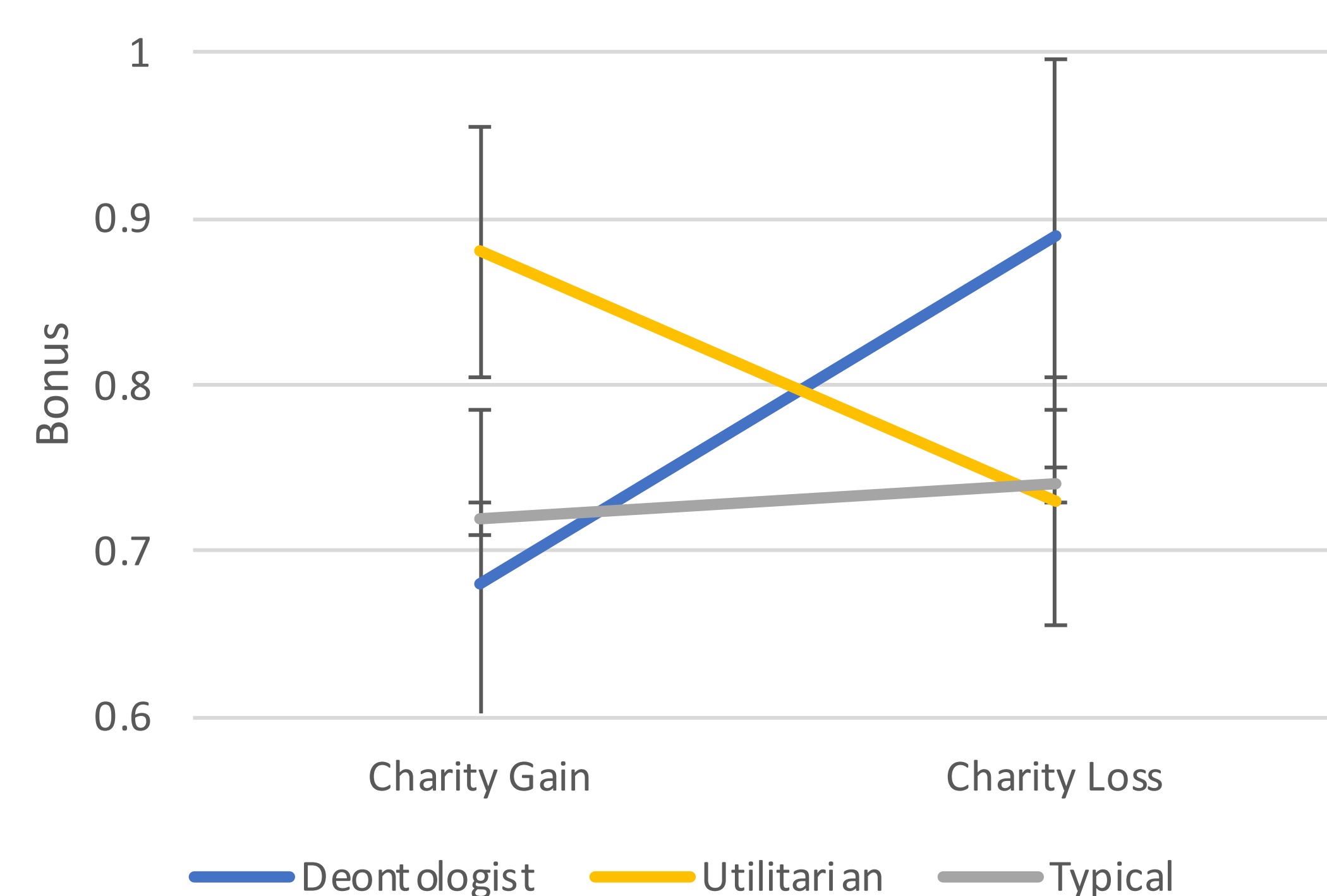
Bonus Received for Trolley Type per Condition

	Gain	Loss
Self	D: .76 (.29)	D: .82 (.31)
	U: .78 (.29)	U: .82 (.26)
	T: .86 (.23)	T: .74 (.28)
Charity	D: .68 (.28)	D: .89 (.25)
	U: .88 (.26)	U: .73 (.36)
	T: .72 (.29)	T: .74 (.26)

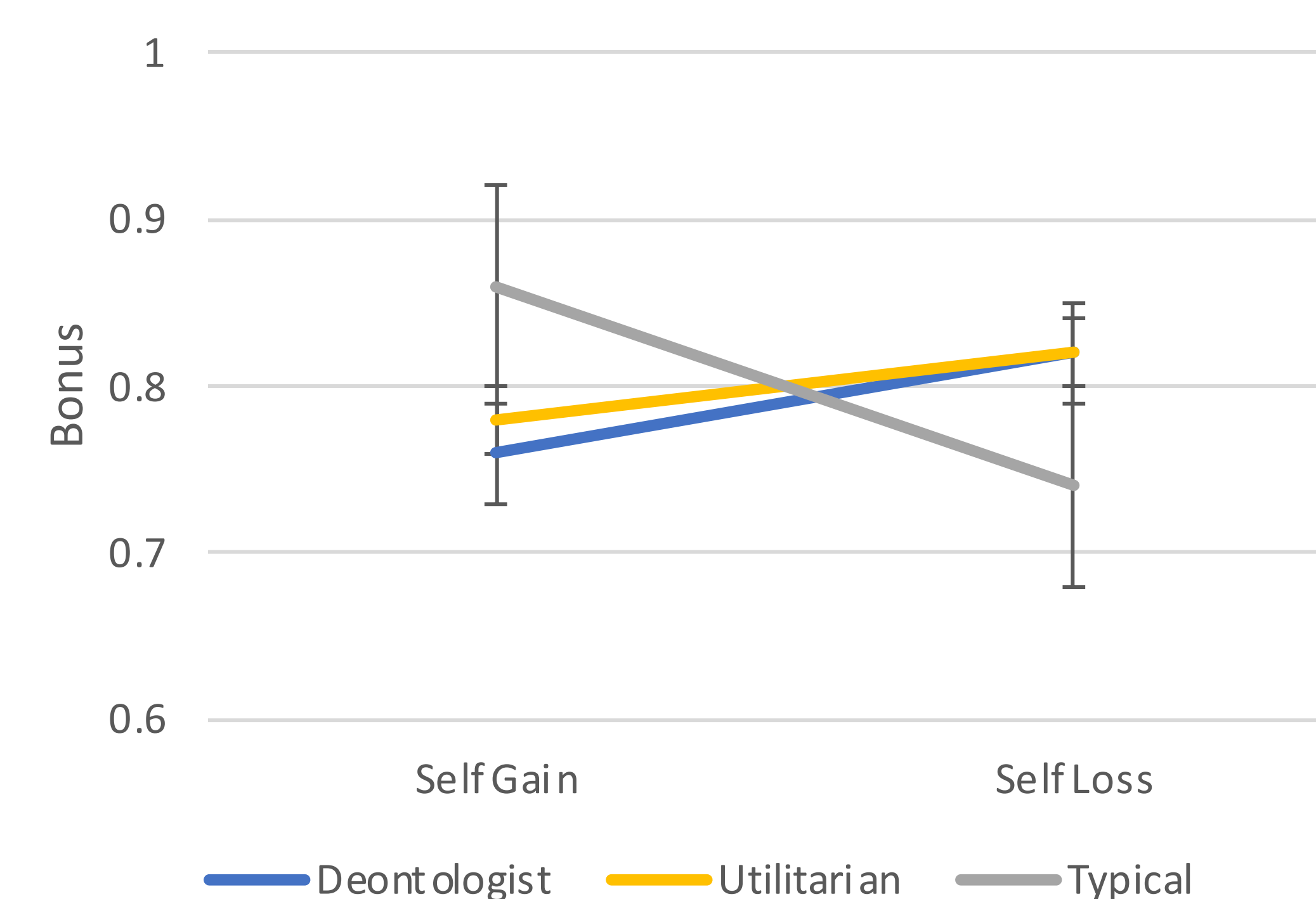
Bonus in Gain Loss Frames



Bonus in Charity Condition



Bonus in Self Condition



## Results

- The way the bonus was framed changed participants decisions to lie or tell the truth  $F(2, 298) = 4.41 p < .013$ .
- When the money was going to a charity and was framed as a gain, utilitarians lied more.
- When the money was going to the Ps and was framed as a loss, deontologists lied more  $F(2, 298) = 3.88 p < .022$ .

## Conclusions & Future Studies

The way a bonus was framed significant impacted Ps decision to lie or be honest.

The effect of framing on moral decisions could be due to the preferences of moral decision makers regarding action vs inaction.

- When utilitarians are in the charity loss condition, it is possible they had a preference to keep the bonus without lying (preference for inaction)

Future research should investigate action preferences of moral decision makers when decisions are framed as losses vs gains.

### References:

Bauman, C. W., McGraw, A. P., Bartels, D. M., & Warren, C. (2014). Revisiting external validity: Concerns about trolley problems and other sacrificial dilemmas in moral psychology. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 8(9), 536–554.