

Ethical Consequences of Counter-Attitudinal Helping

Prejudiced helpers are more dishonest after helping a stigmatized person
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Background

- Recent years have witness two diverging trends
 - increasing acceptability to express **prejudice** against stigmatized groups (e.g., obese people, sexual minorities)
 - increasing policies/regulations on **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** that encourage or even require people to help stigmatized people
- Counter-attitudinal helping**, occurring at the intersection of these two trends, refers to the phenomenon wherein people help others, though such helping is opposed to their values and beliefs.

Research Question

- How does counter-attitudinal helping affect the helper's moral self-concept and subsequent moral behaviors?

Findings & Takeaways

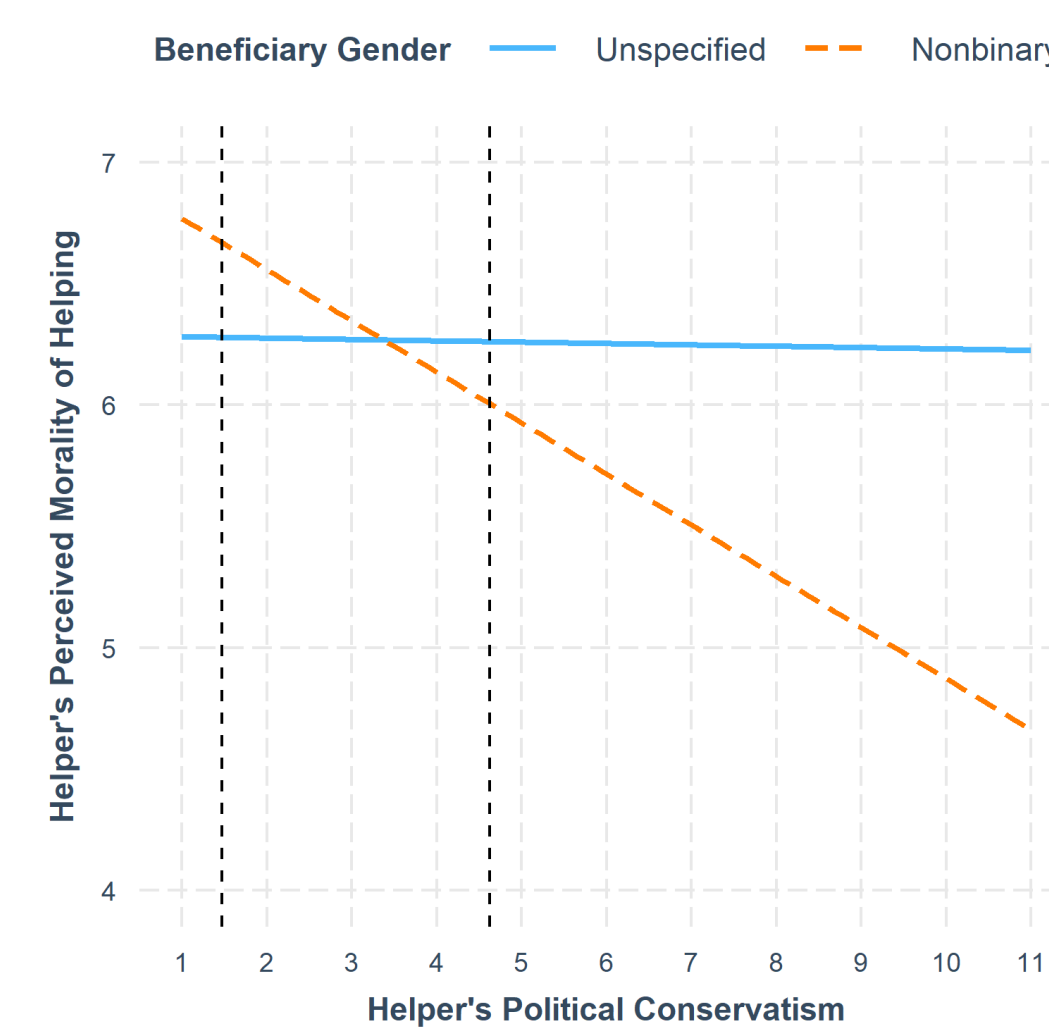
- Five preregistered studies (N = 2689) show that counter-attitudinal helping weakens helper's moral self-concept and increases subsequent immoral behaviors by heightening moral disengagement.

Overview of Methods

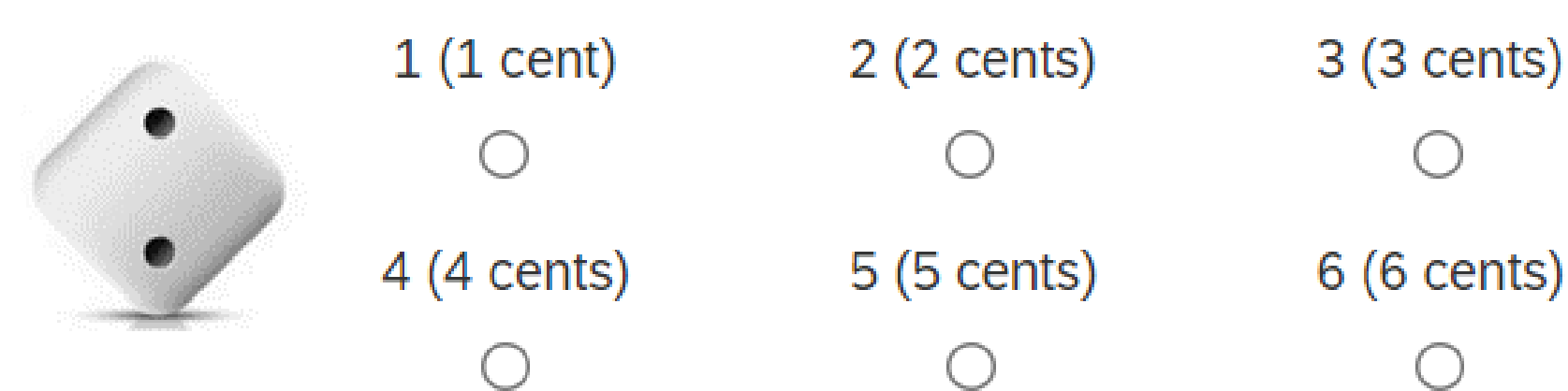
- We operationalized counter-attitudinal helping through stigma experienced by the beneficiary (manipulated) and helper's prejudice (measured).
- All experiments started with a transcription task requiring participants to type out a handwritten note. The task was framed as helping someone experiencing **LGBTQ (Study 1)** or **obesity (Studies 2-5) stigma (vs. no stigma)**. The manipulation was embedded in the handwritten note.
- Then, we measured **perceived morality of helping (Studies 1 and 3)**, **moral self-concept (Study 1)**, and **cheating** in incentivized dice roll games (Studies 2, 4, and 5) or on one's romantic partner (Study 3).
- We measured **prejudice** through political conservatism (for anti-LGBTQ prejudice, Study 1) or acceptability of prejudice (for anti-obesity prejudice, "It is okay to have negative feelings about obese people;" Studies 2-5) before or after the main study.
- We tested the **moral disengagement** process through mediation (Study 3) and moderation (Studies 4 and 5).

Study 1: Moral Self-Concept

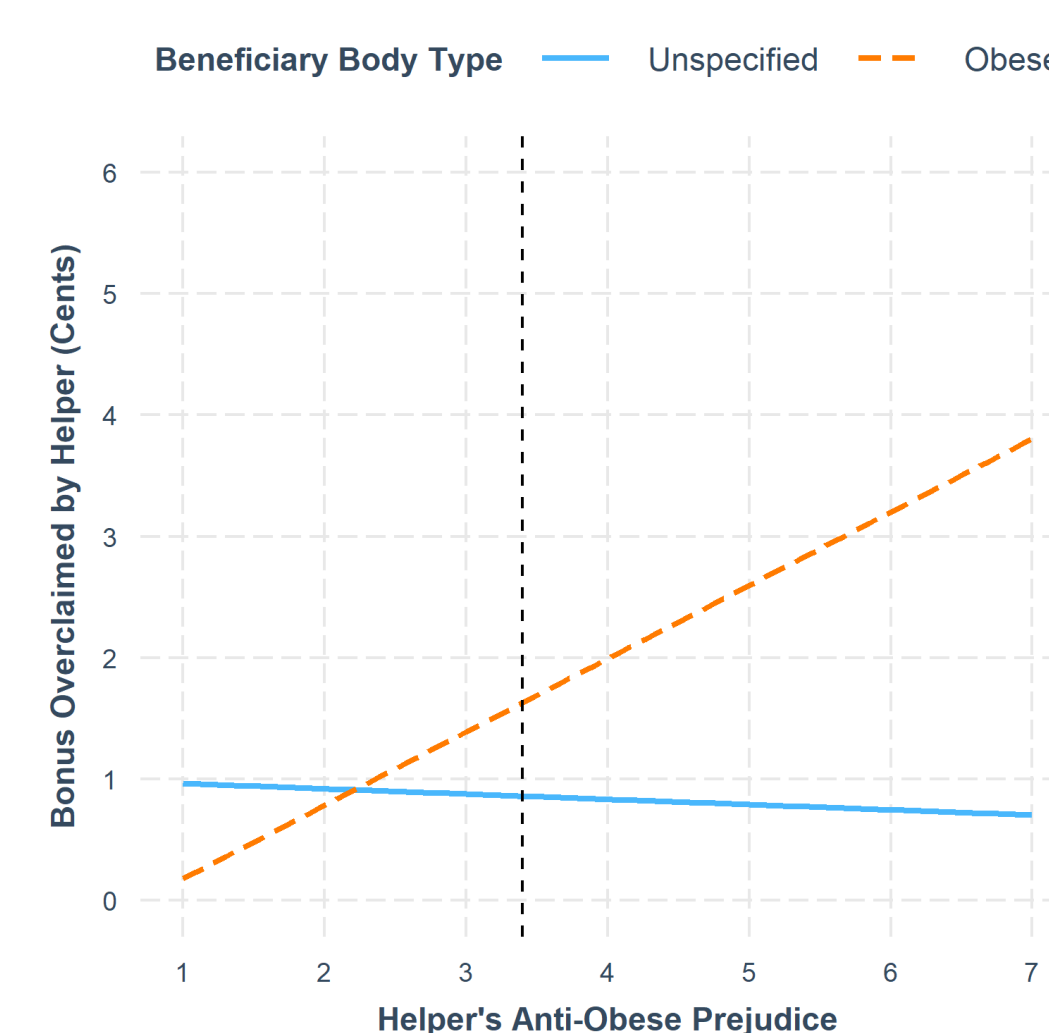
- Counter-attitudinal helping**
- was perceived to be less moral
 - led to lower moral self-concept (c.f. moral licensing, wherein helping increases moral self-concept)
 - increased state guilt and shame (c.f. warm glow)
 - had no effect on depletion or reactance



Study 2: Cheating

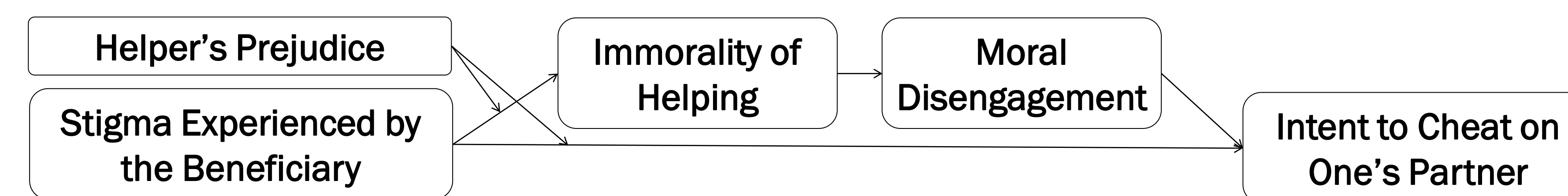


Counter-attitudinal helping increased overclaimed bonus in an incentivized dice roll game.



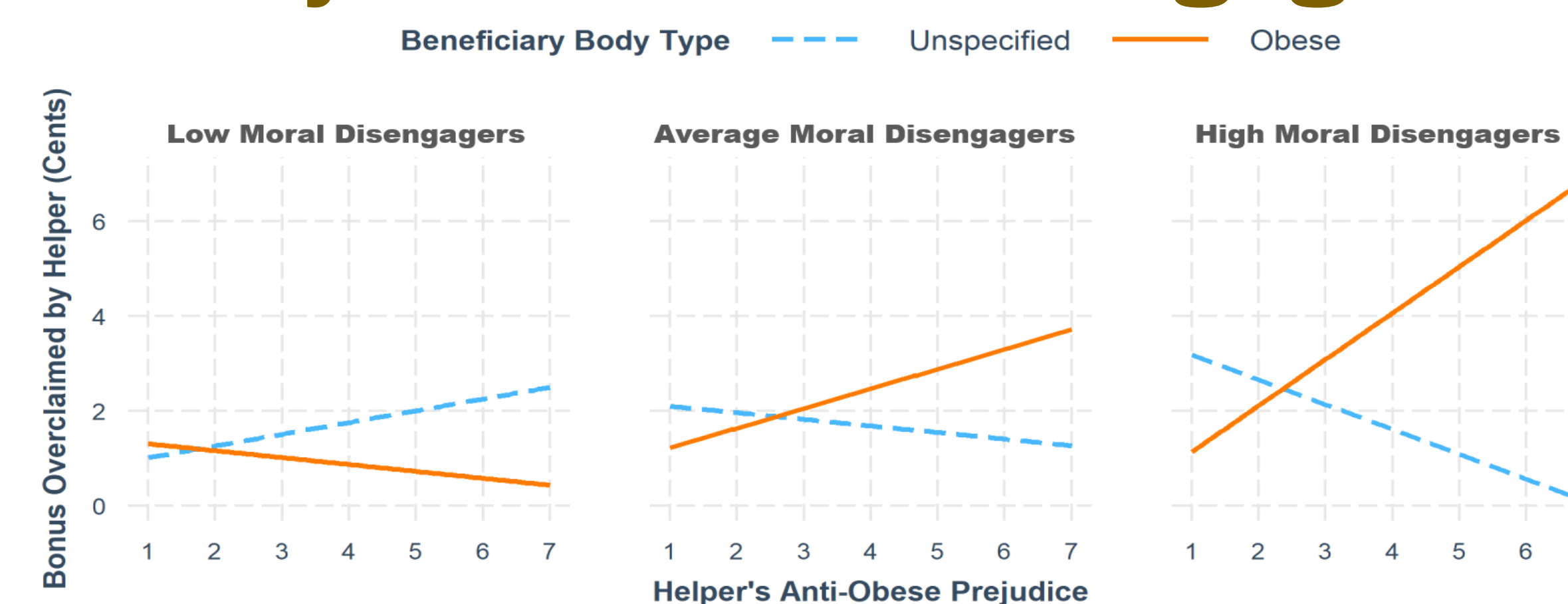
Study 3: Mediation by State Moral Disengagement

- Counter-attitudinal helping increased intent to have unprotected sex outside of a committed relationship.
- This effect was mediated by lowered perceived morality of helping and heightened moral disengagement (e.g., "Cheating is appropriate behavior because no one gets hurt;" Shu et al., 2011; PROCESS Macro Model 85).



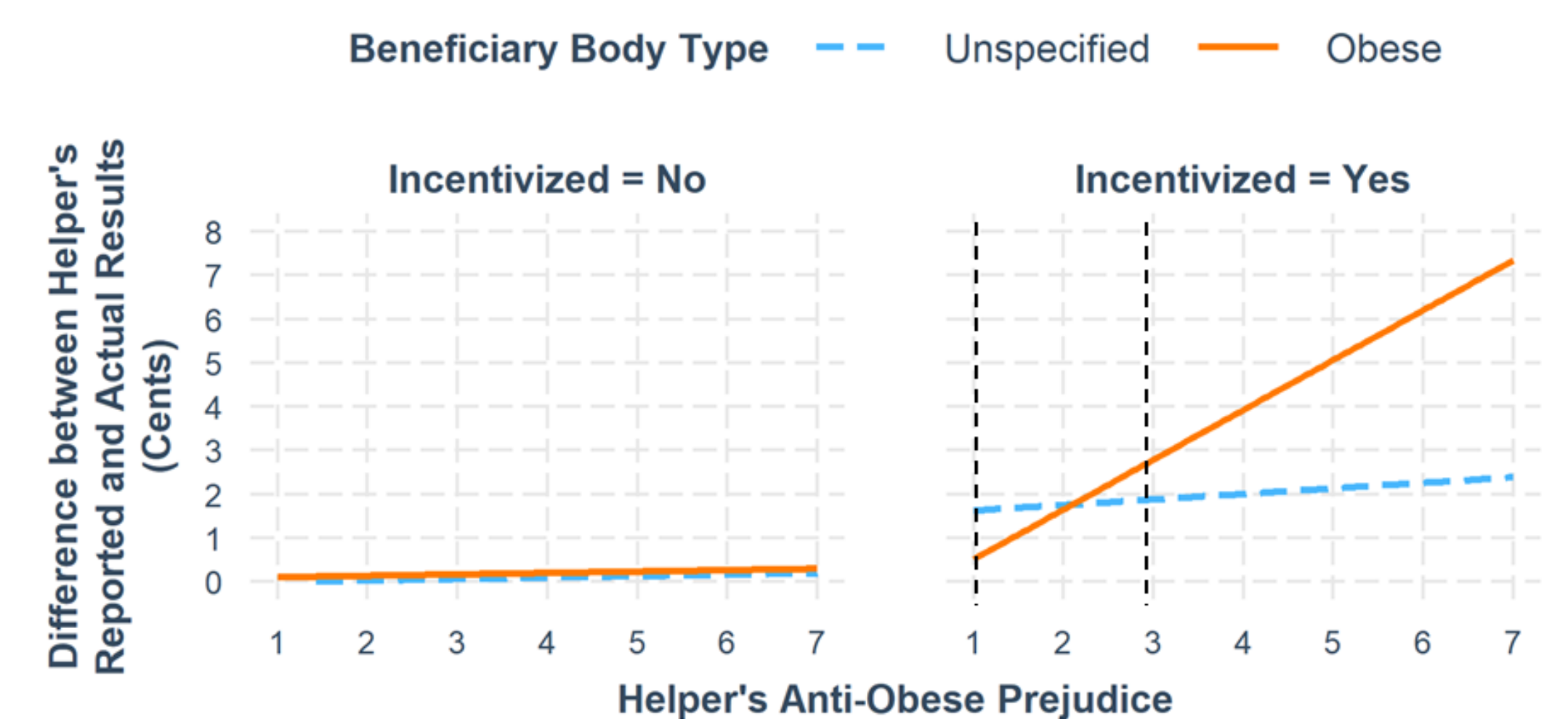
Study 4: Moderation by Trait Moral Disengagement

Counter-attitudinal helping increased overclaimed bonus among high moral disengagers.



Study 5: Moderation by Incentive Presence

Counter-attitudinal helping increased dishonest reporting of dice roll results only when misreporting was tied to incentives and thus constituted a moral dilemma.



Statistical Analysis

Linear regression analysis was conducted for all studies. For all focal results, $ps < .001$.

