



Dicehonesty: Cheating Equally for One's Own and Other's Benefit

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Introduction

Self-serving justifications are an important determinant of dishonest behavior. Recently, it has been shown that in tempting situations ambiguity can serve as a justification for dishonesty (Pittarello et al., 2015). Cheating for someone else's benefit can make justification of dishonesty even easier. Can we observe these effects even among those who do not cheat at the end but become more hesitant between honest and dishonest options?

Research goals

- Replication of the Pittarello et al. (2015) study.
- Investigation of dishonest behavior beneficial for others.
- Exploration of hesitation using mouse-tracking measures.



Methodology

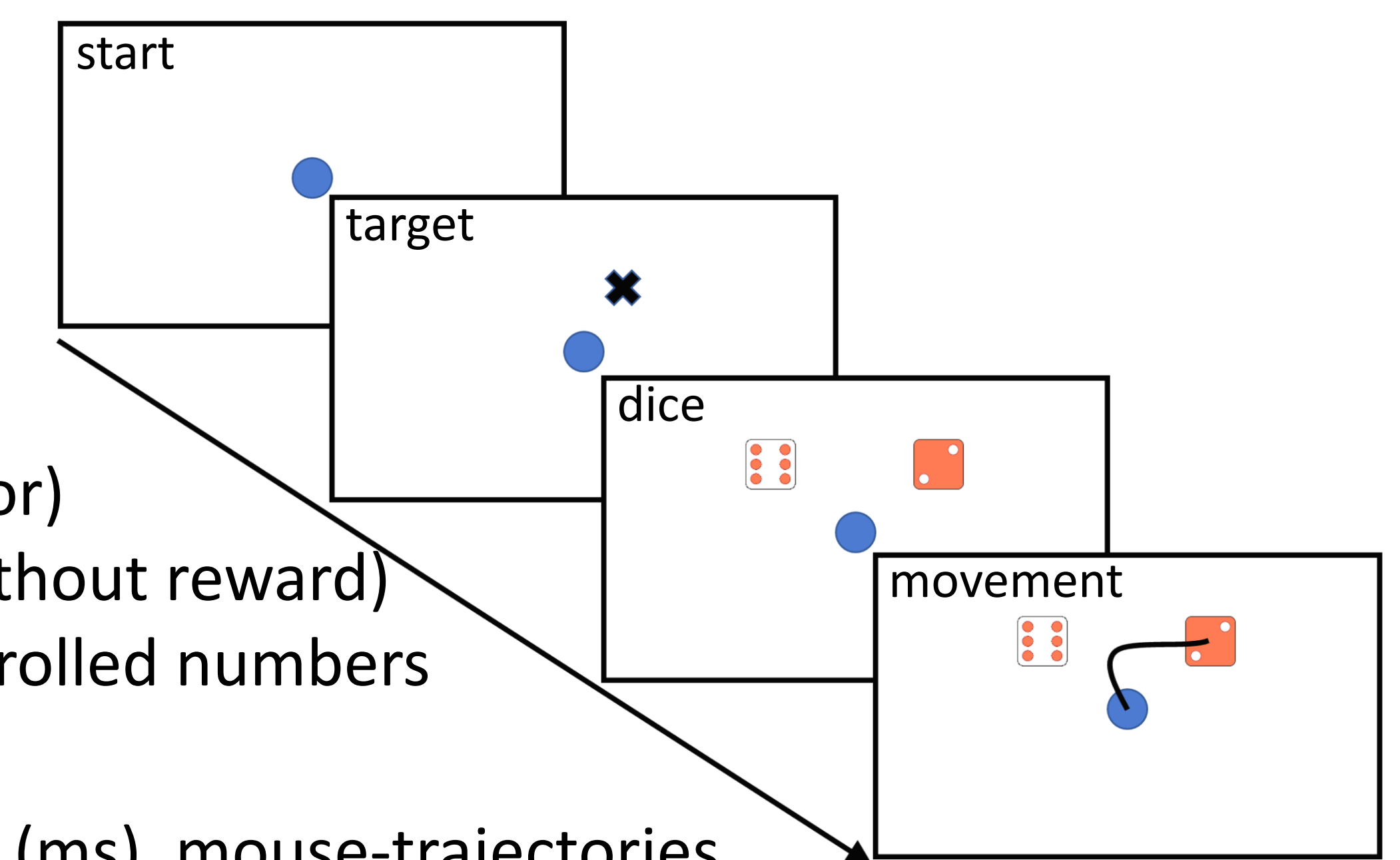
Task: „select the die closer to the target!“
randomized within-subject experiment
204 participants, 140 trials per each

Manipulations:

- 3 levels of target ambiguity: low, medium, high
- 2 recipients: charity vs. self (based on die's color)
- 2 conditions: exp. (with reward) vs. control (without reward)
- 6 levels of temptation: based on diff. between rolled numbers

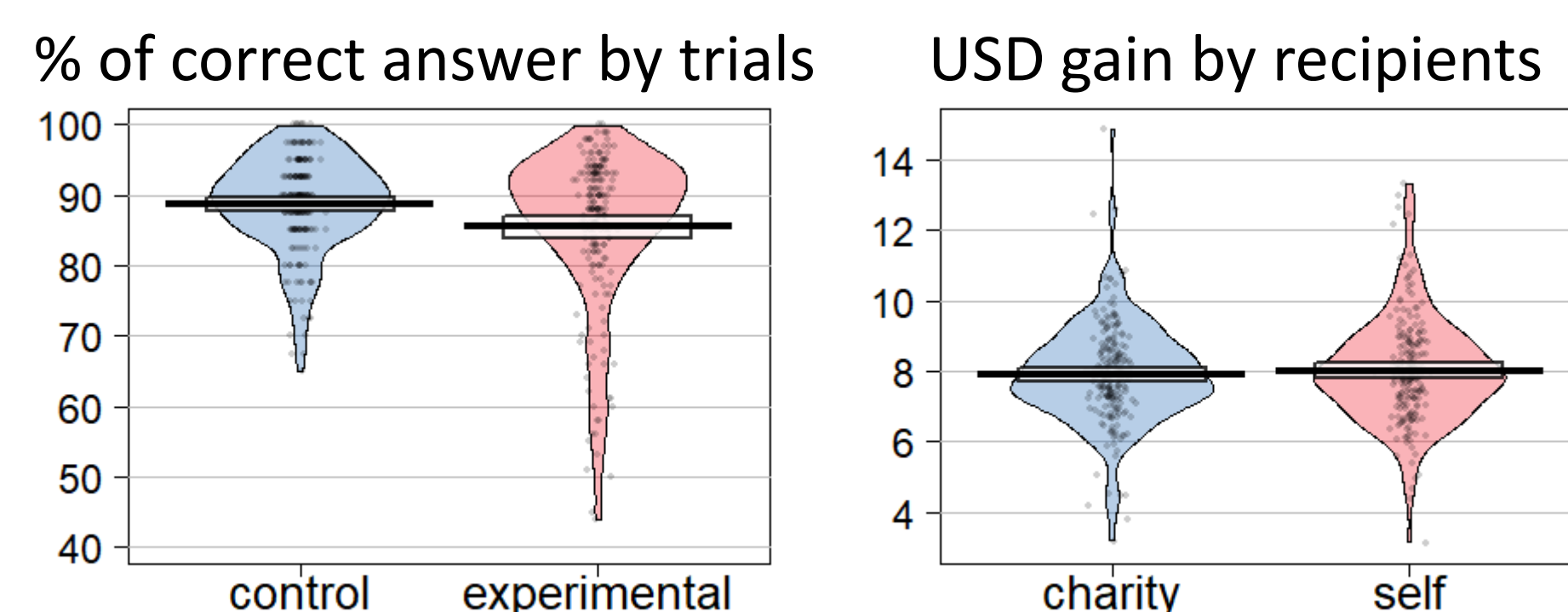
Outcomes:

die selected (correct/incorrect), reaction times (ms), mouse-trajectories



Results

- Lower accuracy in rewarded trials
 $t(203) = 4.43, p < .001$
- Same overall gains across the recipients
 $t(203) = 0.51, p = .60$



Trial level analyses

- ambiguity (difficulty)**
P(selecting correct die): $Z = -20.25, OR = 0.15, p < .001$
log(response times): $t(378.5) = 19, b = 0.16, p < .001$
- temptation × condition (incentives matter)**
P(selecting correct die): $Z = -3.82, OR = 0.54, p < .001$
log(response times): $t(195.4) = 3.98, b = 0.05, p < .001$
- no temptation × ambiguity × condition**
P(selecting correct die): $Z = -0.51, OR = 0.92, p = .61$
log(response times): $t(24960) = 1.17, b = 0.02, p = .24$

Length of the mouse trajectories

Longer trajectories indicate that the participants wavered between the choices and thus were more hesitant.

- ambiguity**
 $b = 0.21, 95\% \text{ HDPI } [0.18, 0.23]$
- temptation × condition**
 $b = 0.09, 95\% \text{ HDPI } [0.05, 0.14]$

SDs of movement directions

Decisive choices are characterized by straightforward movement towards the choice, the higher the SD of the pointwise directions, the more the participants hesitated.

- ambiguity**
 $b = 0.15, 95\% \text{ HDPI } [0.13, 0.16]$
- temptation × condition**
 $b = 0.06, 95\% \text{ HDPI } [0.03, 0.09]$

Count of directional changes along X-axis

Directional changes along X-axis show distinct changes in the movement direction, therefore they signal hesitation

- ambiguity**
 $b = 0.25, 95\% \text{ HDPI } [0.21, 0.28]$
- temptation × condition**
 $b = 0.05, 95\% \text{ HDPI } [-0.01, 0.11]$

Summary

- We successfully replicated the effect of temptation × condition: the higher the temptation was, the more likely participants engaged in dishonest behavior. However, the attempt to replicate the temptation × ambiguity × condition effect was unsuccessful. Our participants did not use the difficulty to justify cheating in more tempting trials.
- Rates of dishonest behavior between the trials where a charity could benefit and the trials where oneself could benefit were not significantly different from each other.
- Not only did higher temptation lead to a higher prevalence of dishonest behavior, but it also increased the hesitation between the choices.

References

- Pittarello, A., Leib, M., Gordon-Hecker, T., & Shalvi, S. (2015). Justifications shape ethical blind spots. *Psychological Science*, 26(6), 794-804.
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