
THE PROSPECT OF EMBARRASSMENT MOTIVATES UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Sam Skowronek (with Maurice Schweitzer)

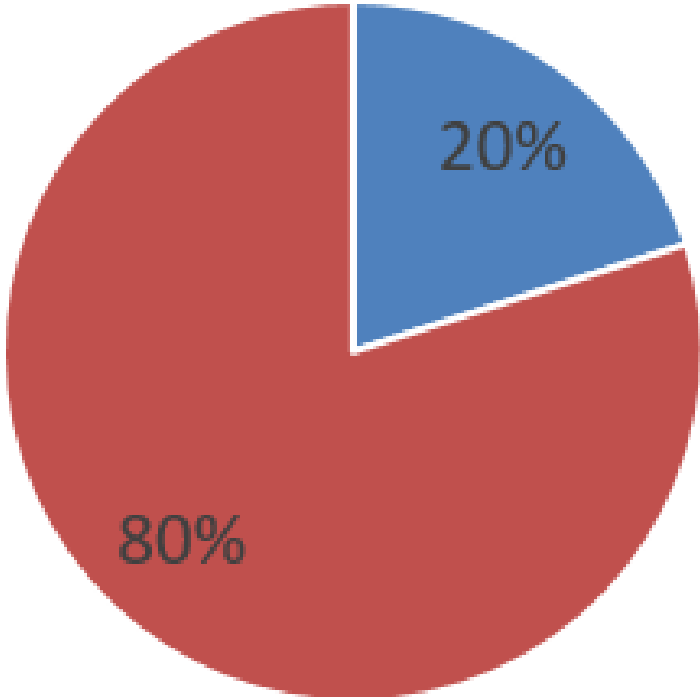
Society for Judgment & Decision Making

November 18, 2019

Embarrassment is Pervasive

500 Full-time Employees
Recruited via Prolific

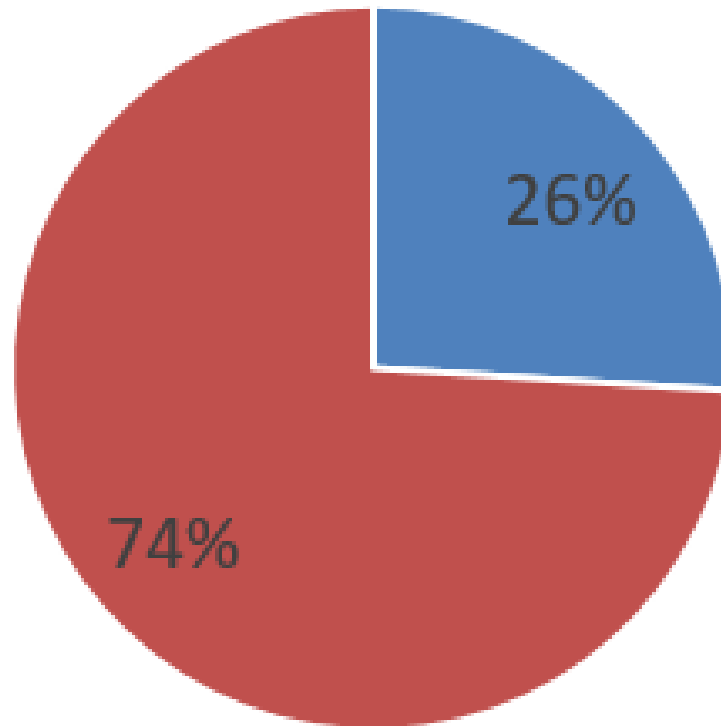
Felt Embarrassment



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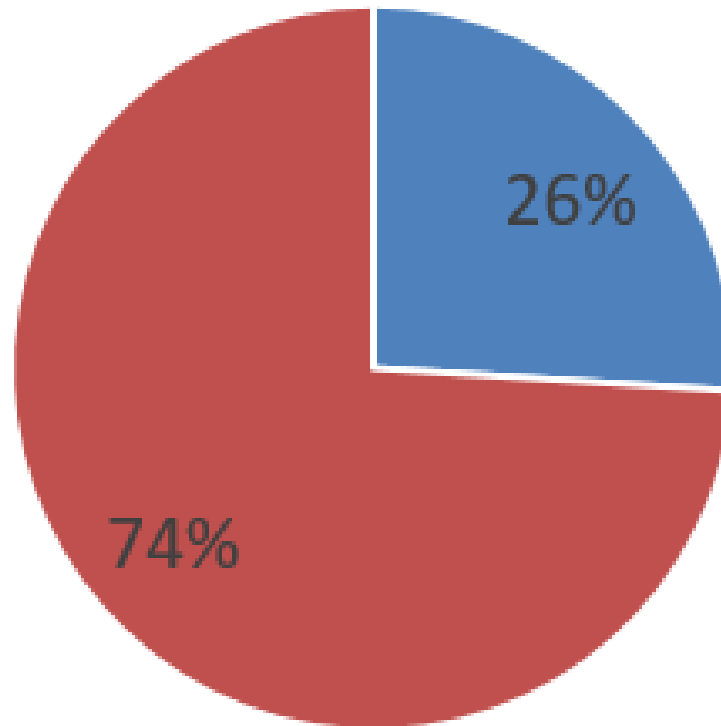
Taken Action



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Taken Action

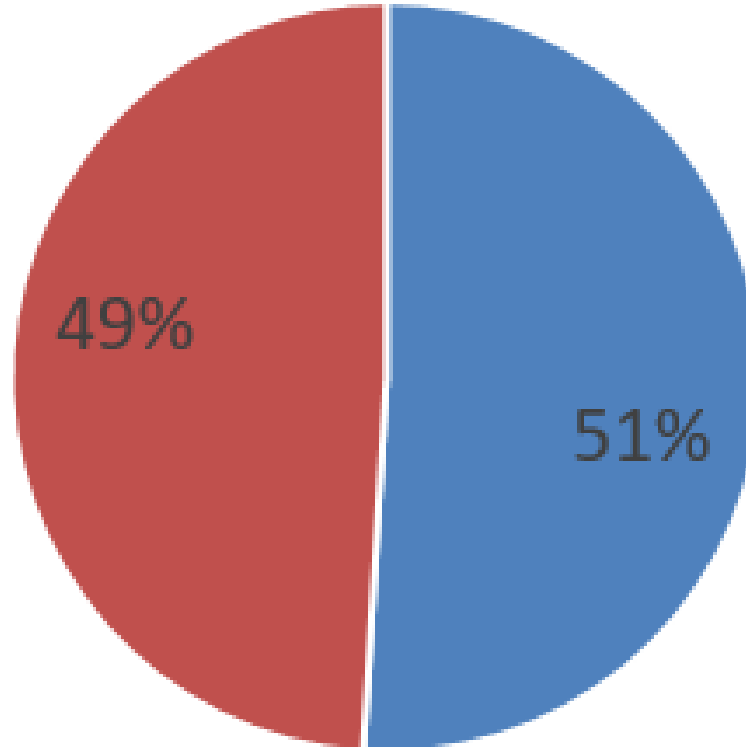


Avoidance + Conformity

Embarrassment is Pervasive

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Lied to Avoid Embarrassment



Lying to Avoid Embarrassment

“I messed up the count on the register so I blamed someone else for the error. It was my mistake. The manager accepted my story....”

Today

- Study 1: Reading *50 Shades of Grey* & Volunteering (N=304)
- Study 2: Reading *50 Shades of Grey* & Helping a Peer Win a Lottery (N=213)
- Study 3: Anagrams and Miming (n=241)
- Study 4: Dice, Condoms, & Bananas (N=251)
- Study 5: The Dictator Game & Miming (N=155)

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Study 1



Study 1

Will be randomly assigned to be an Actor or Observer

If you are assigned the role of Actor you will be escorted into the focus room one at a time. In the focus room, Actors will be handed three bananas [letters] and three condoms [envelopes]. Actors will place one condom [letter] on [in] each banana [envelope] in front of the observers. Actors will have 30 seconds to place all three condoms [letters].

Study 1

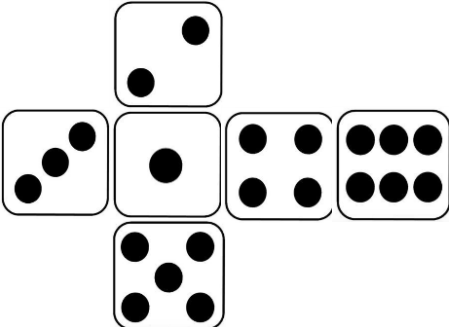
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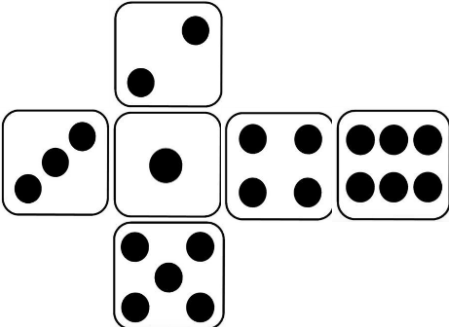
Study 1

Fair Die

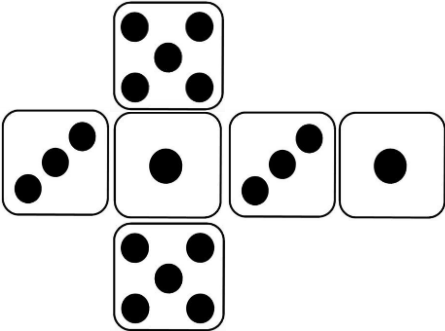


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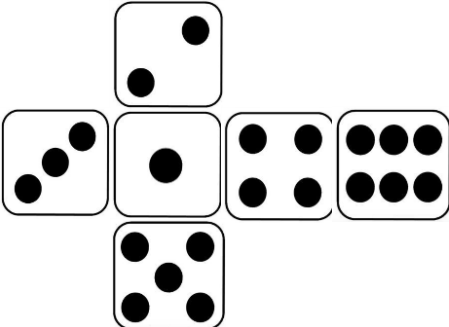


Odd Die

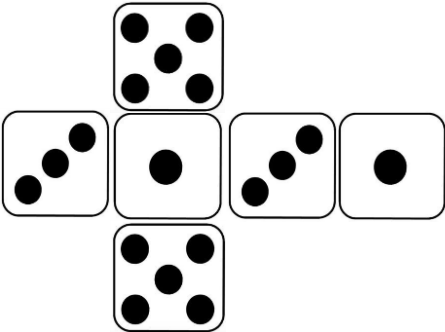


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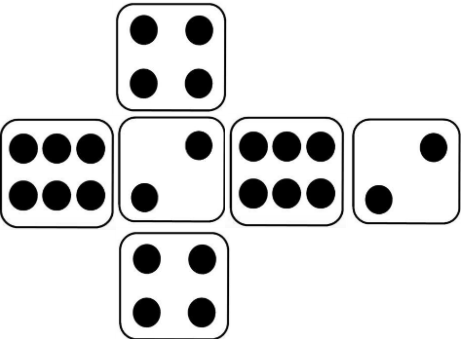
Fair Die



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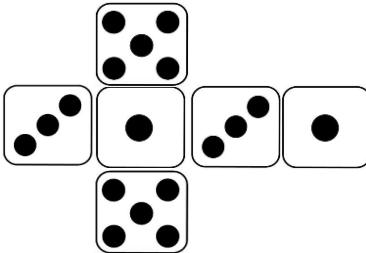


Even Die

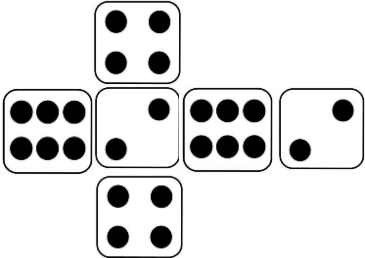


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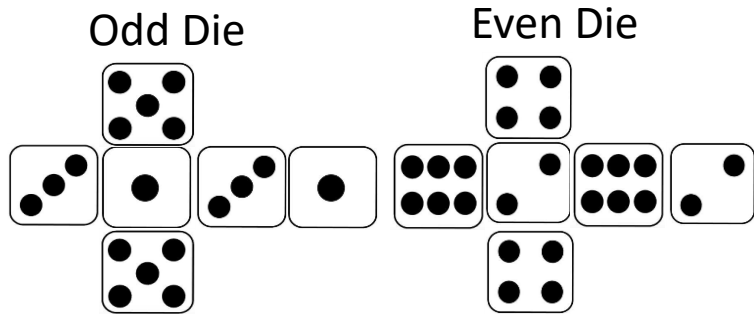
Odd Die



Even Die



Study 1

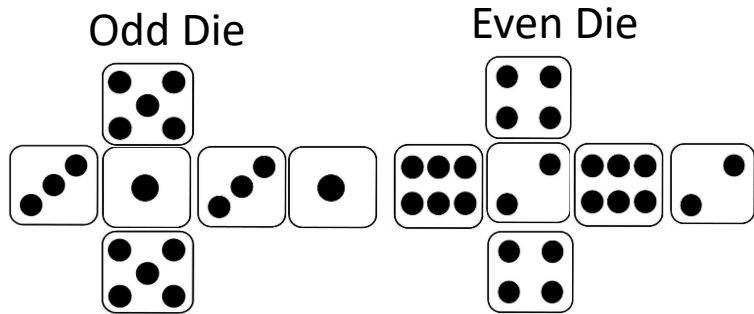


Dice Scoring Table

(The fewest number of points you can earn is 10, the largest number of points you can earn is 22)

Dice Roll Combination	Points	Dice Roll Combination	Points
	11		16
	10		17
	12		10
	10		18
	13		10
	10		19
	14		10
	10		20
	15		21
	10		10
			22

Study 1



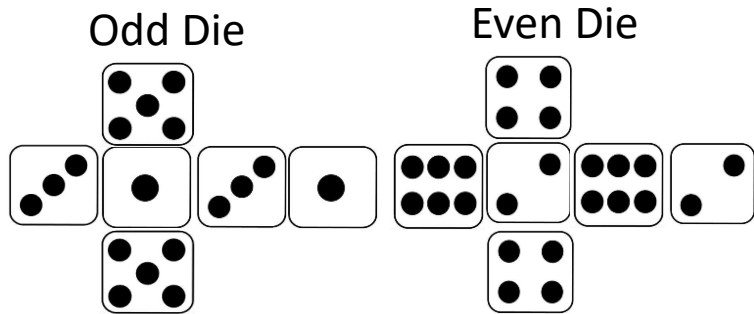
Each roll corresponds to a certain number of points.

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Study 1



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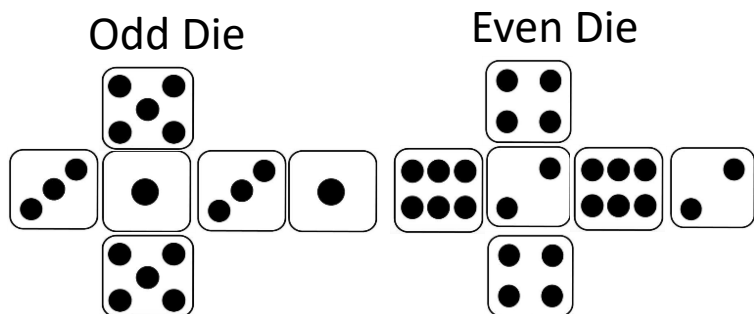
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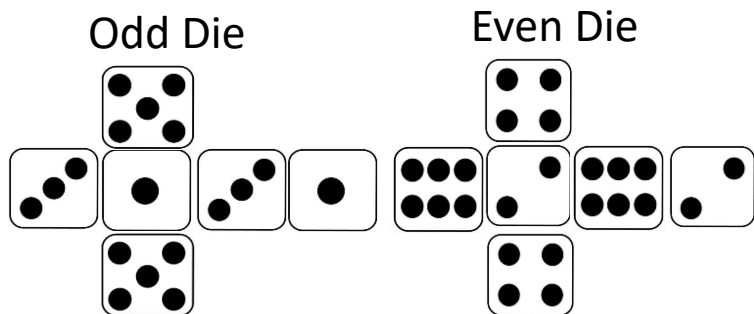
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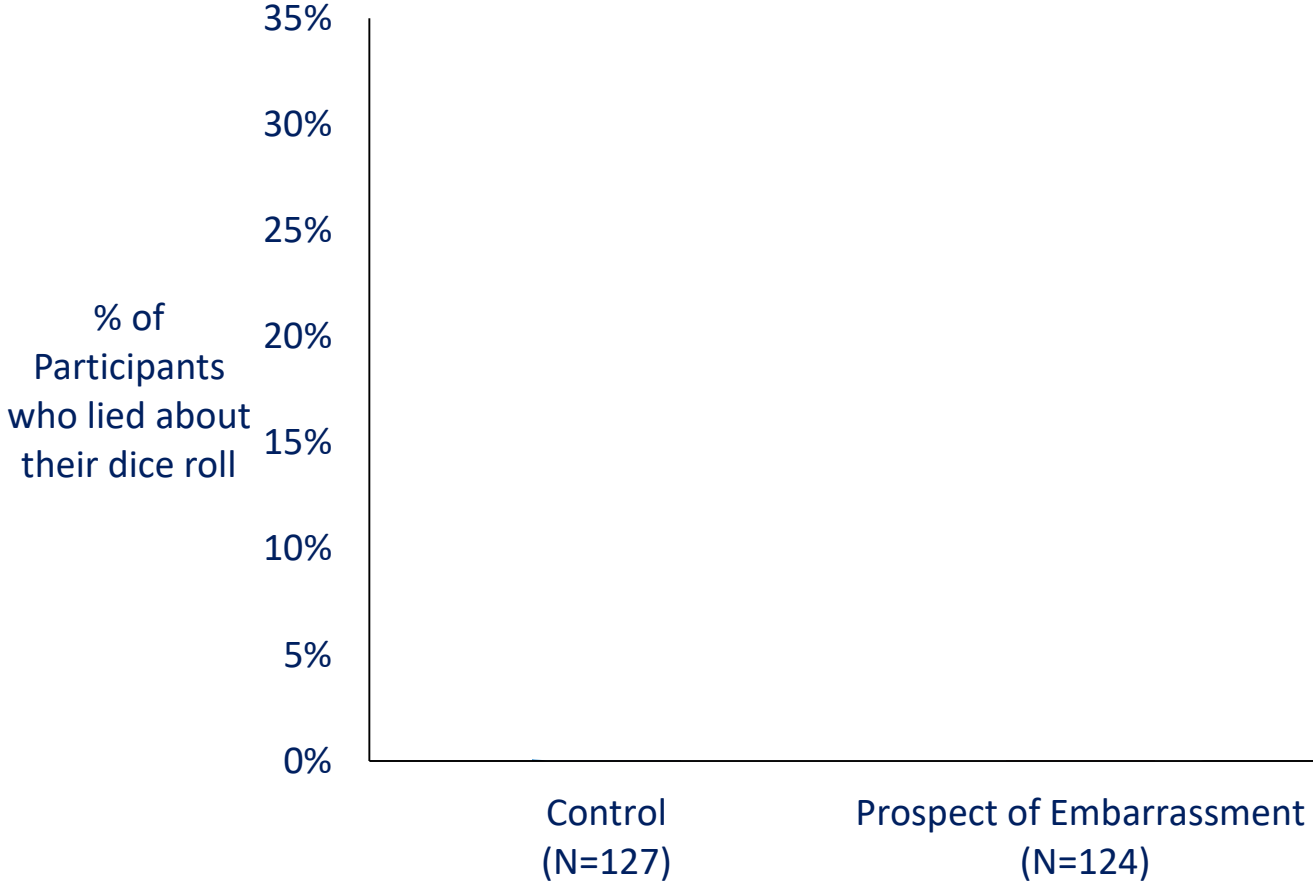
Zero participants reported that they were skeptical of this procedure

Dice Scoring Table

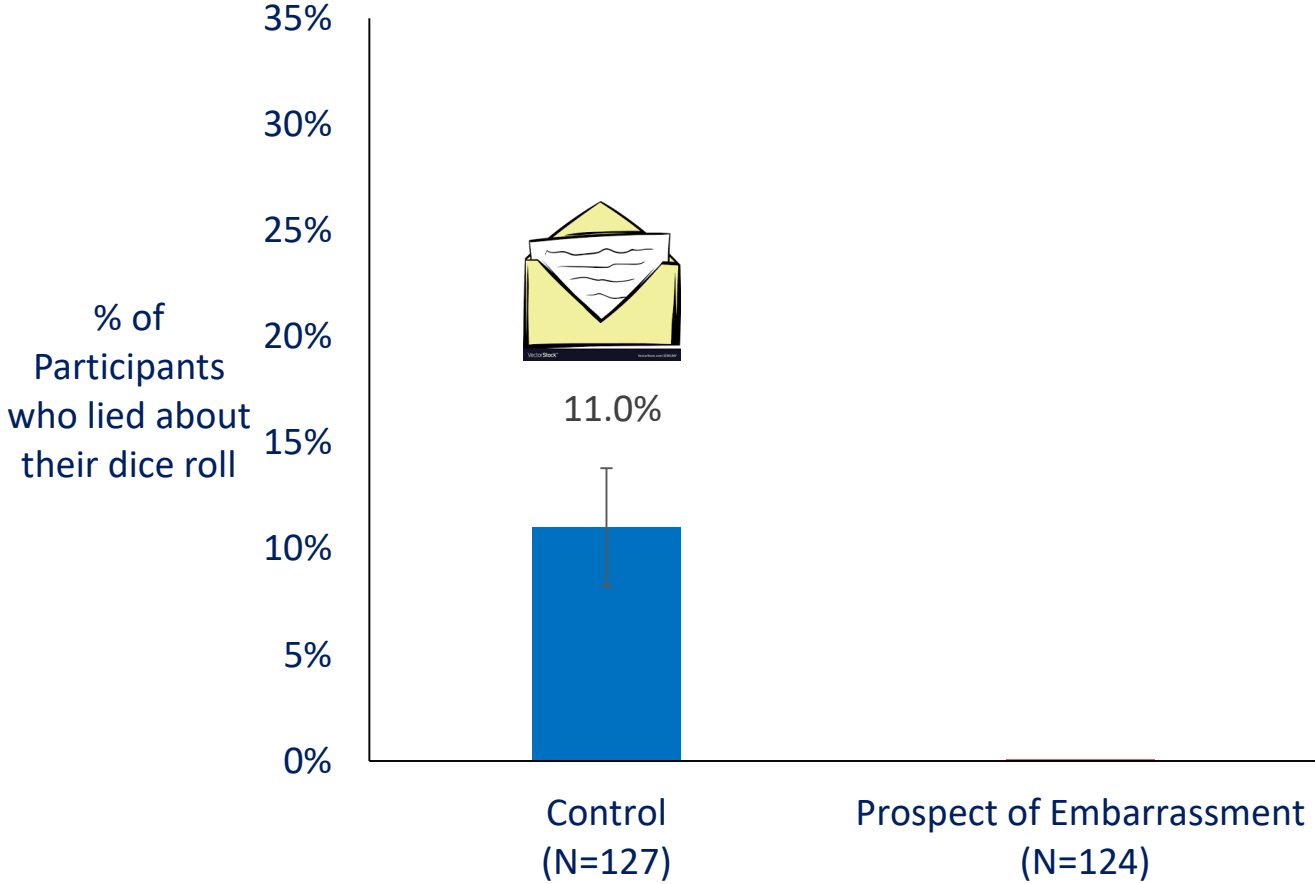
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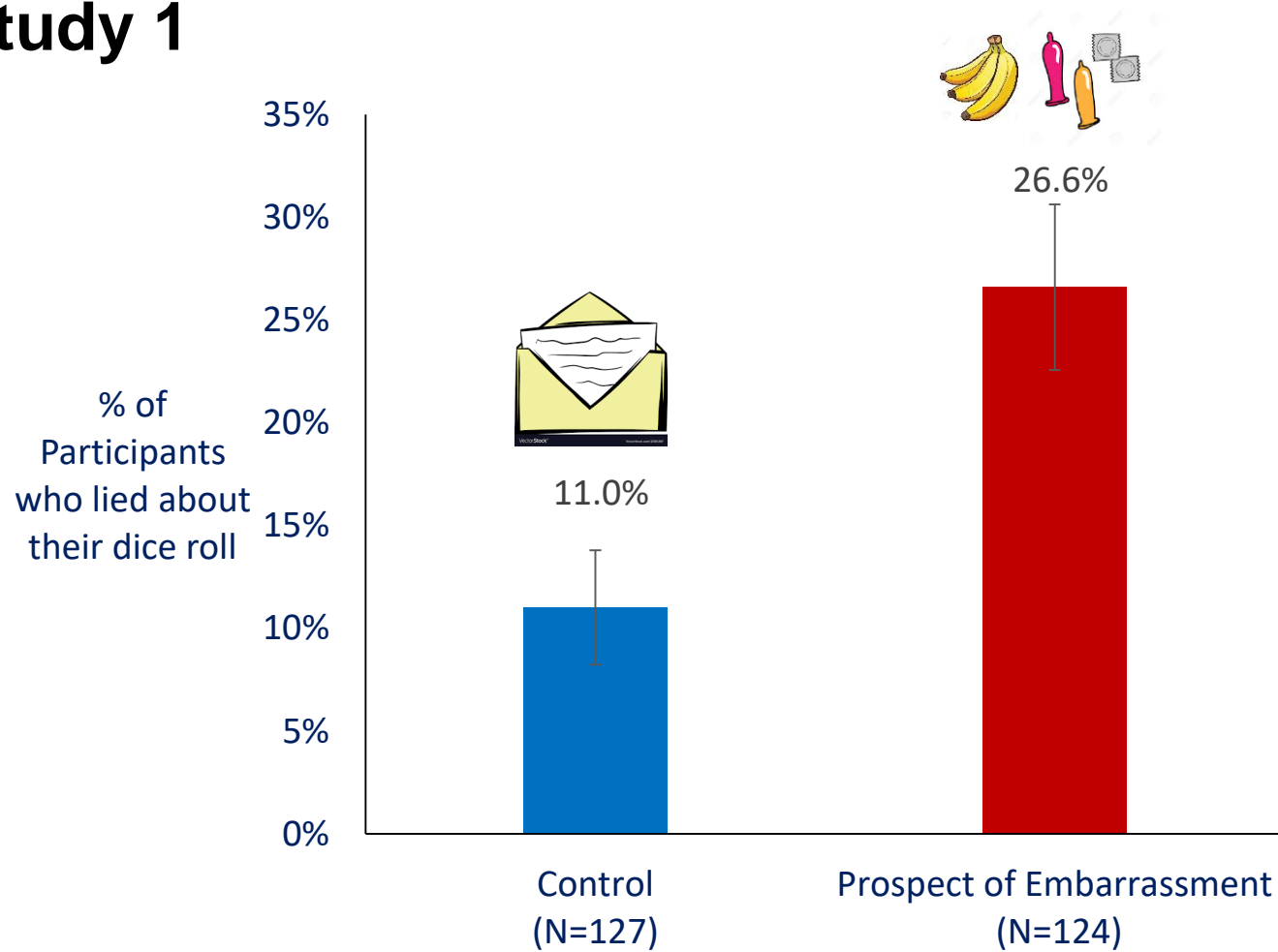
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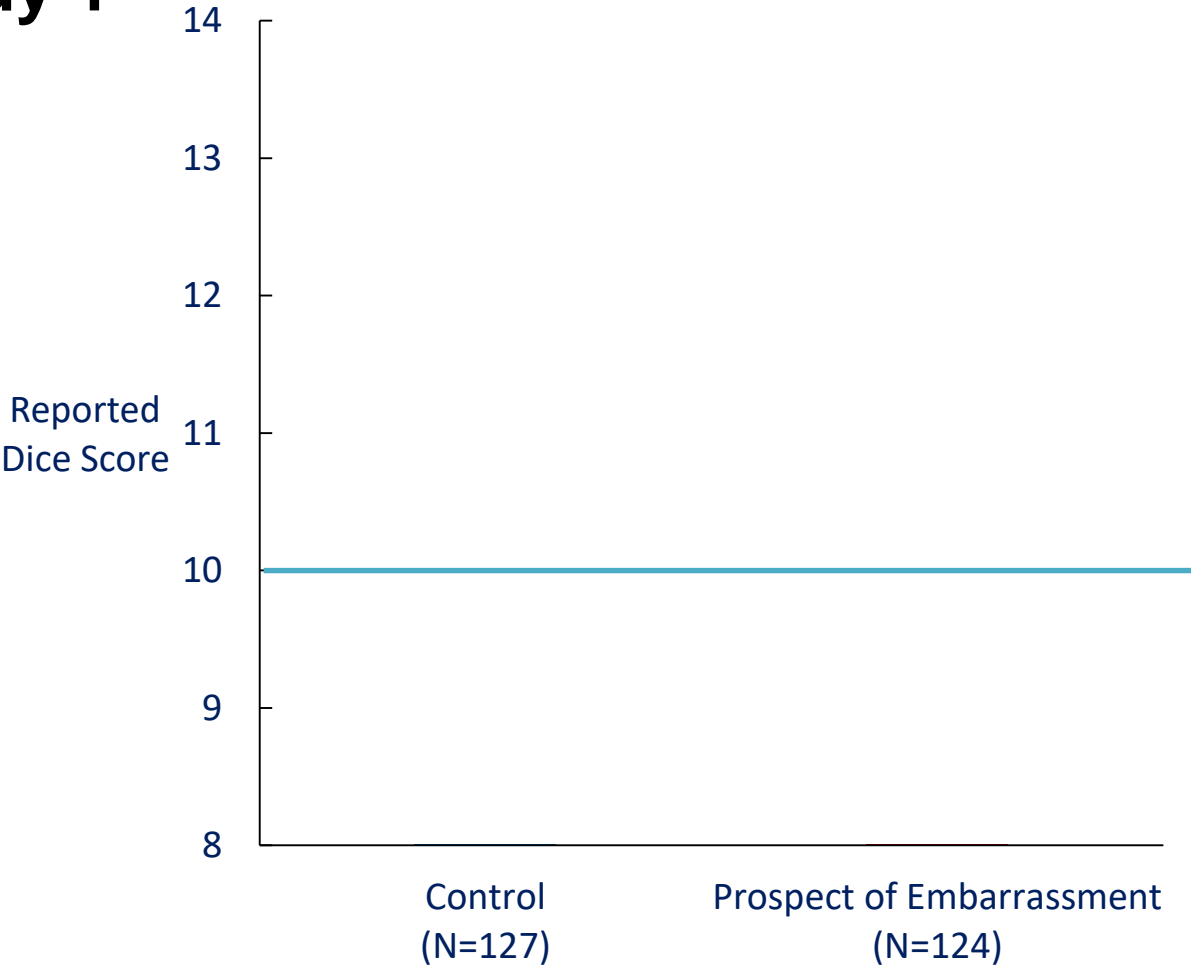


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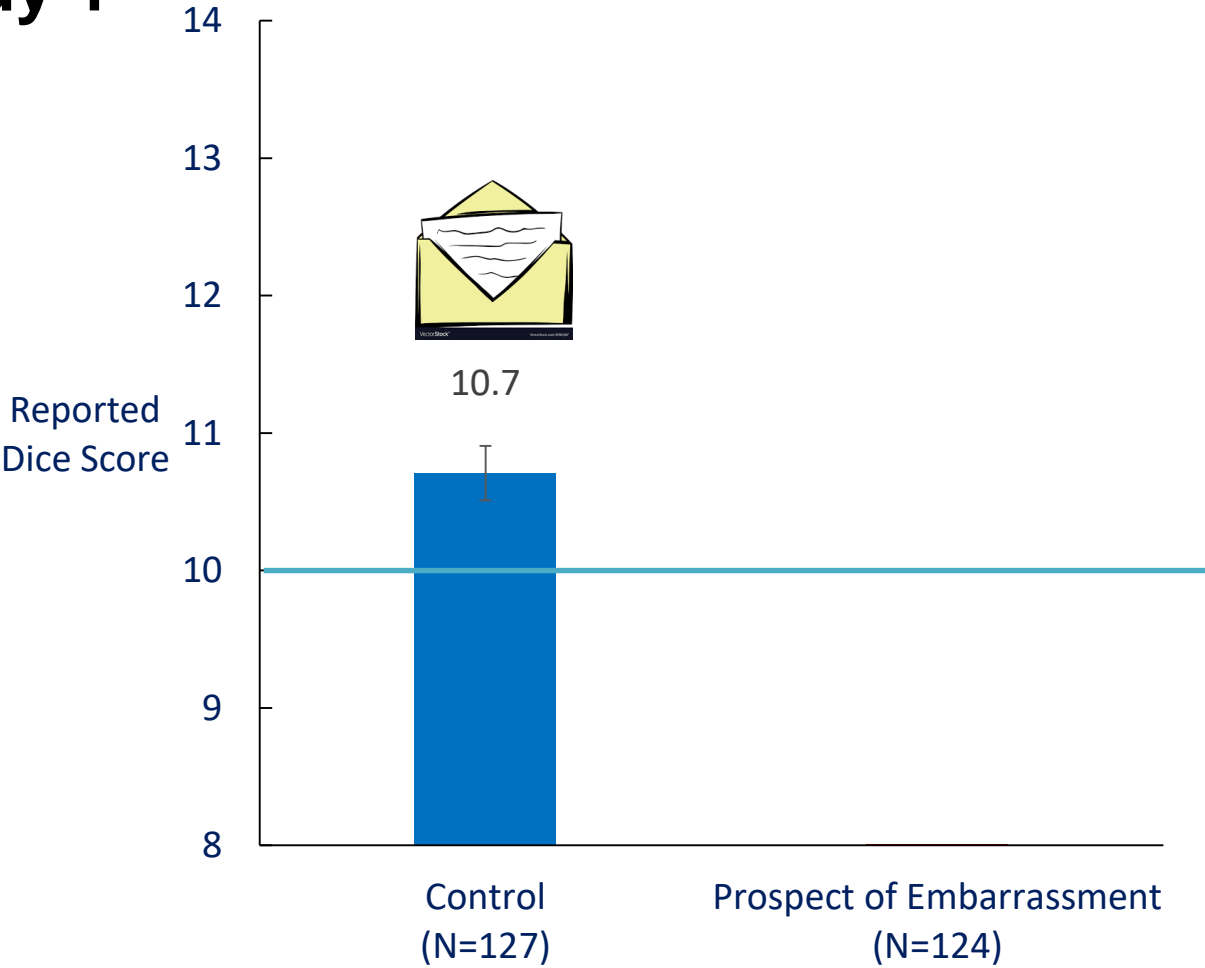


Difference of Proportions: 15.6%
 $z(249)=-3.16$, $SE=0.05$, $p=0.002$

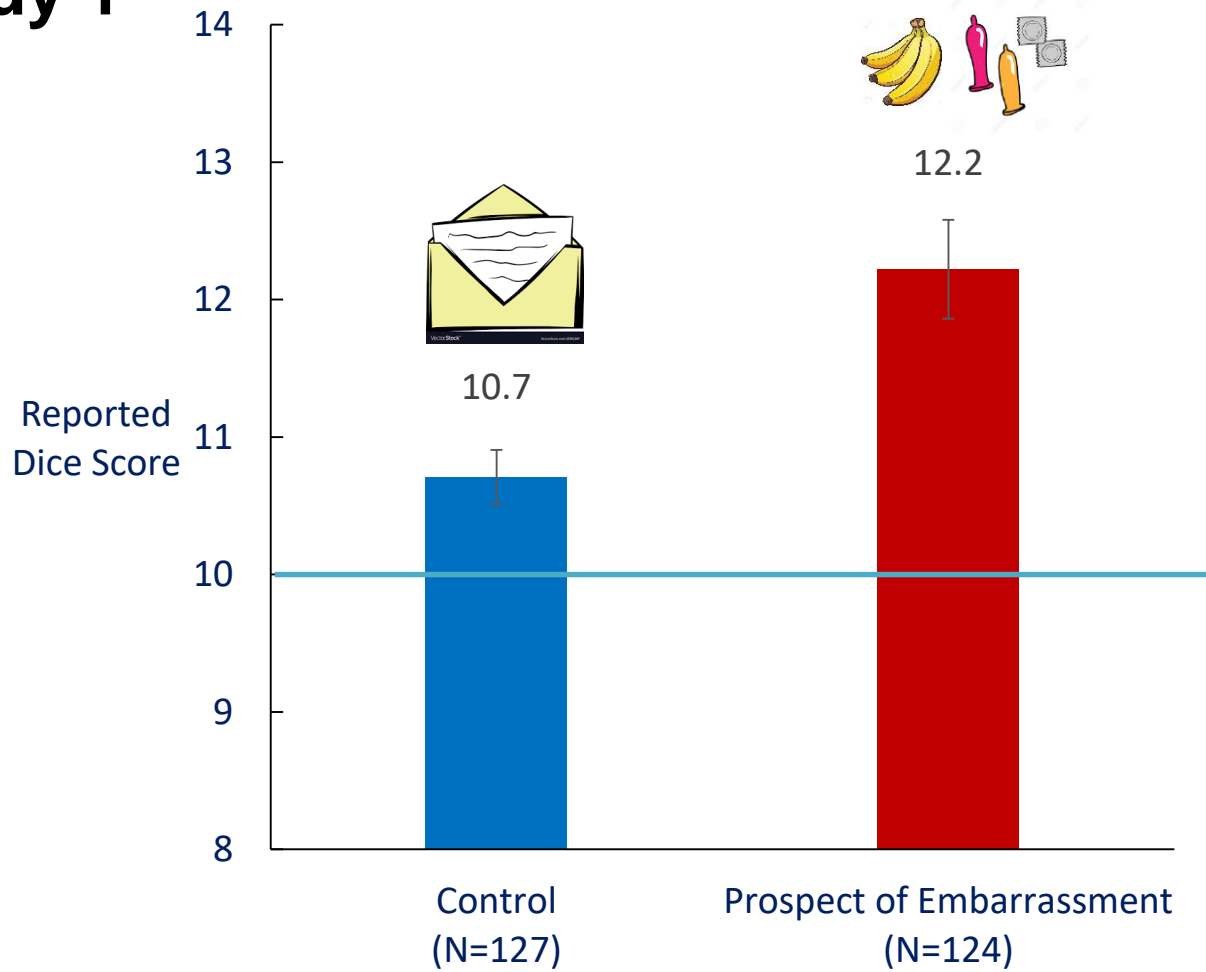
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Difference of Means: 1.5
 $t(249)=-3.67, SE=0.2, p<0.001$

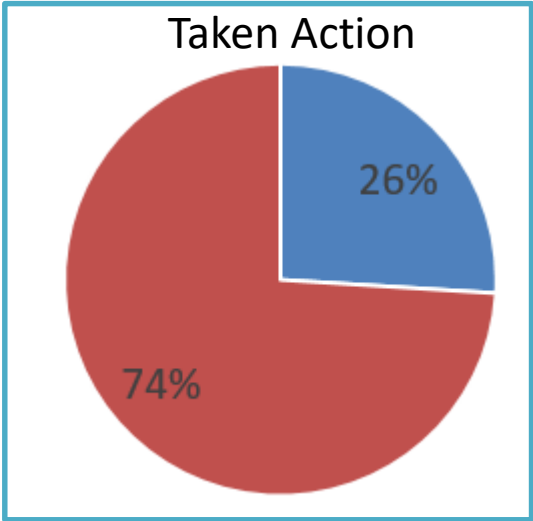
Summary and Implications

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**The prospect and experience of embarrassment are common
in the workplace**

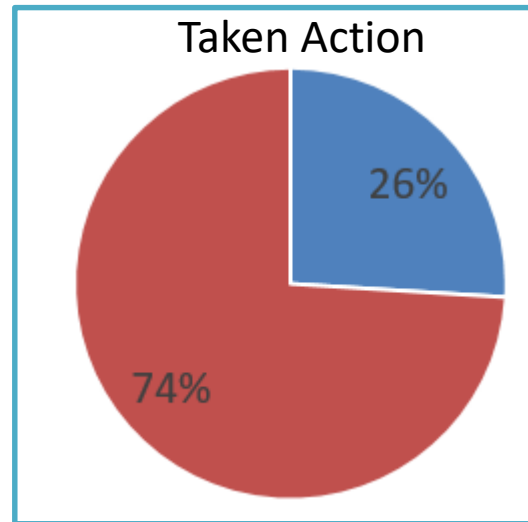
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Individuals are readily willing to engage in other-harming unethical behavior to avoid embarrassing events

Thank you!

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