

THE KNOBE EFFECT (KE)



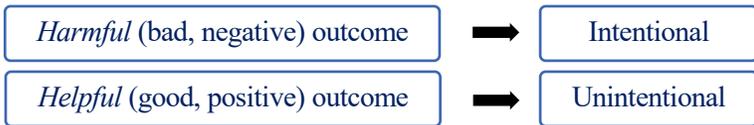
THE SEVERITY EFFECT (SE)



KE ACCOUNTS AND GRADABILITY

Standard research on the KE has focused on merely two data points out of many: intentionality ascriptions for *harmful* vs *helpful* outcomes.

Explanations drawn thereof have conceived of the KE as a *binary*, absolute effect:



However, rather than being of *binary* nature, the relation between outcomes and intentionality ascriptions appears to be a matter of *degrees*.

Some KE accounts, which we will call *gradable* accounts, can be amended to explain a relation between outcomes and intentionality ascriptions of graded nature: e.g., blame-based (cf. Alicke, 2008; Alicke & Rose, 2010; Nadelhoffer, 2004b, 2006), normality (Knobe, 2010; in press), and belief-attribution heuristics accounts (Alfano, Beebe & Robinson, 2012).

THE STUDY

Past research on the SE suffers from a shortcoming: focus placed only on *graded harmful* outcomes (i.e., somewhat bad vs very bad). What about *graded helpful* outcomes?

Objective of the study: Addressing the former lacuna and providing a clearer understanding of **the relation between outcomes and intentionality ascriptions**.

THE EXPERIMENT

We conducted two experiments exploring attributions of intentionality across a range of different outcomes: *very bad*, *somewhat bad*, *neutral*, *somewhat good*, and *very good* side effects. In what follows, we will only present Experiment 2.

We were interested in the correlation between *perceived* goodness and badness of outcome on intentionality. The positive and the negative parts of the spectrum were explored separately:

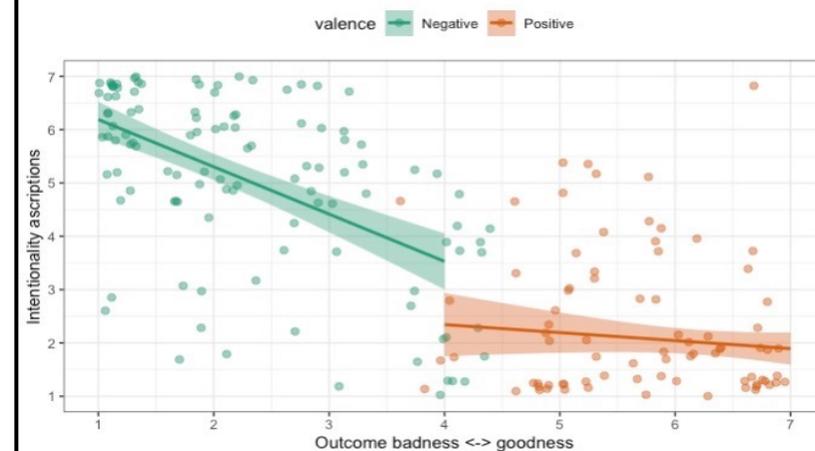
Positive	Negative
Very good, somewhat good, and neutral outcome conditions, <i>and</i> perceived the outcome as good or neutral.	Very bad, somewhat bad, and neutral outcome conditions, <i>and</i> perceived the outcome as bad or neutral.

Experiment (N=400): Participants were randomly assigned to one out of three scenarios —DAM, MALL, AND PUBLIC IMAGE—, either in the very bad, somewhat bad, neutral, somewhat good, or very good outcome condition.

Dam scenario: The mayor of a riverside town wants to build a new dam. He is aware of the *very bad*, *somewhat bad*, *neutral*, *somewhat good*, or *very good* side effects of building the dam, but is indifferent to them. The mayor decides to build the dam. Sure enough, there are *very bad*, *somewhat bad*, *neutral*, *somewhat good*, or *very good* side effects.

Questions: intentionality, knowledge, blame/praise, badness/goodness.

THE RESULTS



CONCLUSIONS

The *negative* part of the spectrum: strong linear relation between intentionality ascriptions and outcome severity.

The *positive* part of the spectrum: linear, yet weak relation between intentionality ascriptions and outcome desirability.

Valence plays a central role in defining the strength of the relation between intentionality ascriptions and outcomes.

The relation between intentionality ascriptions and outcomes is of *graded* nature. In particular, the relation is best represented by a tilted-graded view.

Empirical support to *gradable* accounts.