Knobe effects:
HARM/HELP: The VP of a company went to the chairman of the board and said, “We are thinking of starting a new program. It will help us increase profits, but it will also [harm/help] the environment.”

The chairman of the board answered, “I don’t care at all about [harming/helping] the environment. I just want to make as much profit as I can. Let’s start the new program.” They started the new program. Sure enough, the environment was [harmed/helped].

1. How much [blame/praise] did the chairman deserve? (0 to 6) \(M=4.8/1.4\) (Knobe 2003 e.g.)
2. Did the chairman intentionally [harm/help] the environment? [87%/23%] (Knobe 2003)

Asymmetries also displayed by: “Did the chairman desire to [harm/help] the environment?” (1 to 7) \(M=3.4/1.6\) (Tannenbaum et al 2007); “Was it the chairman’s intention to [harm/help]?” \(27%/0%\) (Knobe 2004); “The chairman decided to [harm/help]” (1 to 7) \(M=4.6/2.7\); “Did the chairman [harm/help] the environment in order to increase profit?” (-3 to +3) \(M=+.6/-1\); [advocated / was in favor of] (1 to 7) Harm/Help: Advocated: 4.1 vs. 2.8, In favor of: 3.8 vs. 4.6 (Pettit and Knobe forthcoming)

Things to note:
- Varying scores on graded answers; significant minorities on binary.
- Individual variation (Nichols & Ulatowski 2007)

Suggests: no univocal concept that requires these differences, but sensitivity strongly suggested.

Some earlier suggestions:

But by what mechanism? (a) Gricean accounts of interaction: Attributions of intentionality pragmatically imply blame. (Adams and Steadman 2004) Did not pan out (Nichols and Ulatowski 2007 e.g.)
(b) Intentionality explains blameworthiness: (Wright & Bengson 2009)

Blame not necessary: (Phelan and Sarkissian 2008):
INCREASE PROMINENCE: Susan is the president of a major computer corporation. One day, her assistant comes to her and says, “We are thinking of implementing a new program. If we actually do implement it, we will be increasing sales in our Atlantic division, but this will also increase the prominence of the Atlantic division compared to the Pacific division.”

Susan thinks, “According to my calculations, increasing the prominence of the Atlantic division compared to the Pacific division should not affect our other programs, and we will be making gains in the Atlantic division. I guess the best course of action would be to approve the program.”

“All right,” she says. “Let’s implement the program. So we’ll be increasing sales in our Atlantic division, but this will also increase the prominence of the Atlantic division compared to the Pacific division.”

(67% said Susan increased the prominence of the Atlantic division intentionally)

- Agent took side-effect in consideration as putative reason not to perform action (preserved Knobe-effect).

Blame not sufficient (Phelan and Sarkissian 2008):
CITY PLANNER: The city planner’s assistant came to him and said, “We finally developed a plan to address our pollution problem. We have a new reclamation project that will clean up the toxic waste polluting the former industrial area. However, if we actually do implement the project, it will also increase the levels of joblessness.” The city planner answered, “I feel terrible about increasing joblessness. But we have to do something about our pollution problem. Let’s start the project.” They
started the project. Sure enough, the toxic waste polluting the former industrial area was cleaned up, and joblessness levels increased. (Only 29% attributed intentionality, only 1 of 8 also attributing blame.)

- Agent felt terrible about bringing about side effect (undermined Knobe-effect).

Effects in absence of judgments of blameworthiness (Knobe 2007): NAZI LAWS: In Nazi Germany, there was a law called the “racial identification law.” The purpose of the law was to help identify people of certain races so that they could be rounded up and sent to concentration camps. Shortly after this law was passed, the CEO of a small corporation decided to make certain organizational changes.

The vice-president of the corporation said: “By making those changes, you’ll definitely be increasing our profits. But you’ll also be [fulfilling/violating] the requirements of the racial identification law.”

The CEO said: “Look, I know that I’ll be [fulfilling/violating] the requirements of the law, but I don’t care one bit about that. All I care about is making as much profit as I can. Let’s make those organizational changes!”

As soon as the CEO gave this order, the corporation began making the organizational changes. (Praise rather than blame in both vignettes, most for violate, 81% “intentionally” for violate, 30% for fulfill.)

**Summing up:**

(i) Blame/praise strong predictors of “intentionally” scores. But are undermined in cases where:

(ii) Agents taking the side effect to be highly regrettable (effect lost). On the other hand, side effect effects can also be had with:

(iii) Agents taking the side effect to be a putative reason against action.

(iv) Agents violating salient norms that we reject.

**New suggestion: “Intentionally is an explanatory notion”**

First suggestion: To say that an agent did something intentionally is to say that the action so described relates in the relevant way to the intention that produced it. (Meant to be trivial.)

Second suggestion: The paradigmatic relation is that the description of the action captures the agent’s foreseen (ultimate or intermediate) goal of the action. (Meant to be trivial.)

Third suggestion: Many also see less straightforward relations as relevant if they are relevant to understanding how the action came about. (Substantial suggestion.)

Fourth suggestion: All three ways of producing side effect effects involve features that make the side effect relevant in that way, while regret undermines it.

(i) **Blame/praise/responsibility implies explanatory relation**

EXPLANATION HYPOTHESIS (EH) (Björnsson and Persson forthc., ms):

(Very roughly): We take an agent to be responsible for some event, E, in the way required for blame and praise based on the badness or goodness of that event to the extent that we take E to be straightforwardly explained in normal ways by the agent’s motivational structure.

Apply this to HARM/HELP: Why was the environment harmed/helped?

- Explanatory asymmetry. Salient alternative motivational structure in harm, but not in help condition, increases sense of difference-making. (cf Alicke 1992, Hitchcock & Knobe 2009)

(ii) **Agent strongly regrets side effect -> low “intentionally” scores**

Shows that agent already cares. Makes it less likely that agent violates normative expectations.

(iii) **Side effect putative reason against action -> high scores**

Makes salient alternative motivational state where that reason prevails.

(iv) **Agents violating “bad norms” -> high scores**

Even violated salient norms that we reject provide salient alternative states.

**Extending analysis?**

Yes! Folk psychological locutions are explanatory in general.