

Knobe (2003) Replication

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Original Study: Knobe (2003)

We report a preregistered replication of Experiment 1 in the paper

Knobe, J. (2003). “Intentional Action and Side Effects in Ordinary Language.” *Analysis*, 63, 190-193.

Knobe (2003) reported that people spending time in a Manhattan public park were recruited for a pencil and paper survey. Each subject was randomly assigned to either the ‘harm condition’ or the ‘help condition’ of the following vignette:

The vice-president 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].

In the harm condition, participants were asked to determine whether the chairman deserved blame and whether the chairman harmed the environment *intentionally*; In the help condition, participants were asked to determine whether the chairman deserved praise and whether the chairman helped the environment *intentionally*.

The original study analyzed the data from 78 participants, and found that they more judged that the chairman intentionally *harmed* the environment (82%) than they judged that the chairman intentionally *helped* the environment (21%), $\chi^2(1) = 27.15$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.59$. The original study did not report or compare participants’ judgments of blame/praise.

Replication Demographic Information

100 participants were recruited from Amazon’s mechanical turk (45 females; $M_{age} = 31.09$; $SD_{age} = 7.87$). No participants were excluded from our analyses.

Replication Methods

As in Knobe (2003), participants were randomly assigned to the either the *help* or *harm* condition. In the harm condition, participants read the following vignette:

The vice-president 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 the environment.’

The chairman of the board answered, ‘I don’t care at all about harming 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.

After reading the vignette, participants were asked to indicate how much blame they thought that the chairman deserved and responded on a scale from 0 ('no blame') to 6 ('a lot of blame'). They then indicated whether they thought that the chairman intentionally harmed the environment on a 'yes'-'no' scale.

In the help condition, participants read a vignette in which the word 'harm' was replaced by the word 'help':

The vice-president 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, and it will also help the environment'.

The chairman of the board answered, 'I don't care at all about 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 helped.

After reading the vignette, participants were asked to indicate how much praise they thought that the chairman deserved and responded on a scale from 0 ('no praise') to 6 ('a lot of praise'). They then indicated whether they thought that the chairman intentionally helped the environment on a 'yes'-'no' scale.

Participants then completed a demographic questionnaire.

Differences from Original Study

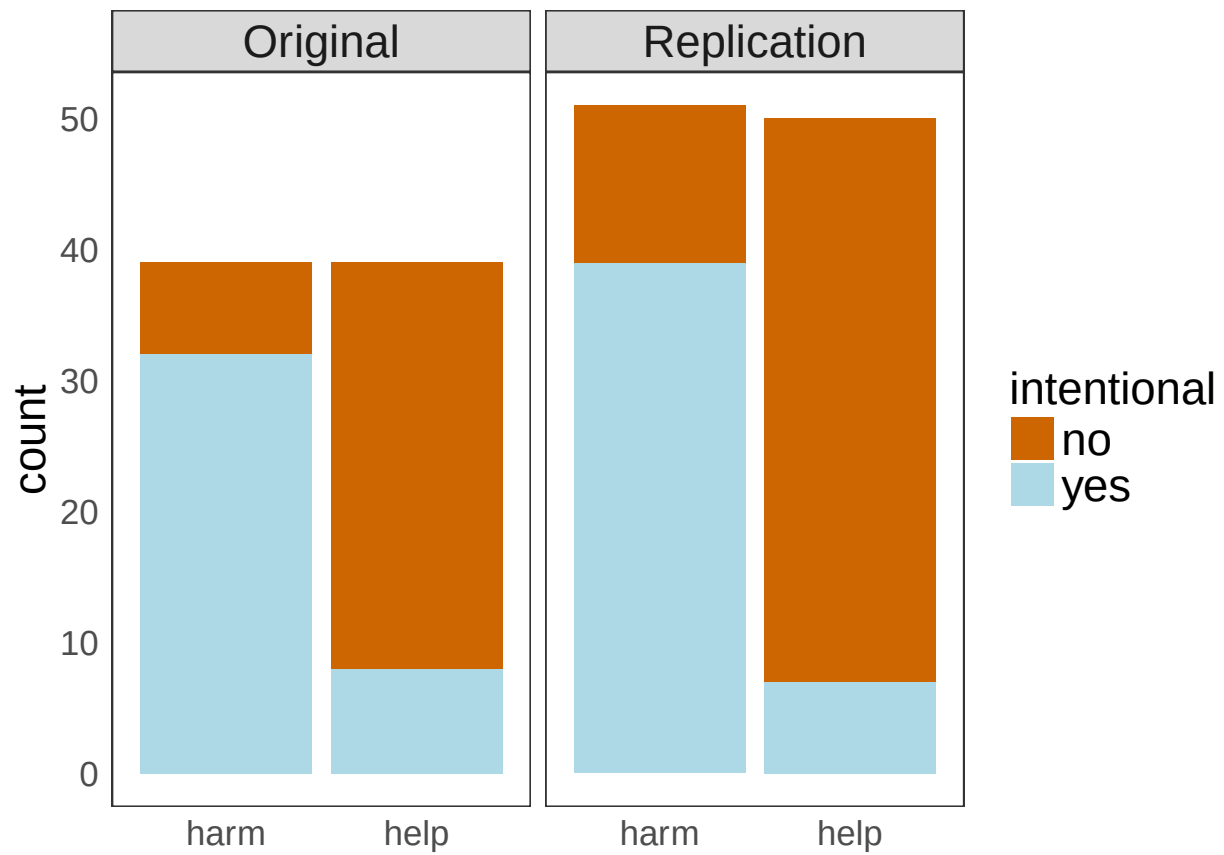
The two notable differences between the original study and this replication were (1) that the survey was administered on a computer rather than with pencil and paper, and (2) that participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (<http://www.mturk.com>) rather than from a public park in Manhattan, NY.

Replication Results

We found that participants more judged that the chairman deserved blame when his action harmed the environment ($M_{blame} = 5.27$; $SD_{blame} = 1.13$) than they judged that chairman deserved praise when his actions helped the environment ($M_{praise} = 2.2$; $SD_{praise} = 1.41$), $t(99) = 12.07$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 2.4$.

More importantly, we also found that participants more judged that the chairman to have intentionally harmed the environment (78%) than that the chairman intentionally helped the environment (15%), $\chi^2(1) = 37.25$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.61$.

Replication Graph



Related Resources

- The experiment can be viewed at: <http://mprlab327.webfactional.com/games/jphil/XphiRep/Knobe2003/index.html>
- The pre- and post-registration materials, data, and script for this write-up can be found at: <https://osf.io/hdz5x/>
- The original paper can be found here: <https://campuspress.yale.edu/joshuaknobe/files/2016/02/Side-Effect-2jd52ts.pdf>