How Well Do People Recognize, Learn, and Apply Default Nudges in Social Influence[1]

Chengyao Sun, *The University of Chicago*

Minah H. Jung, *Stern School of Business, New York University*

Leif D. Nelson, *Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley*

Abstract

Zlatev, Daniels, Kim, & Neale (2017) argue that people are unaware of those effects and unlikely to learn them. We argue that it reflects more about the particular stimuli chosen for consideration and the particular way in which they were presented. People are both aware of some default effects and capable of learning about new ones.

Introduction

In a series of experiments, Zlatev et al. (2017) show that participants (Choice Architects) failed to set defaults in an optimal way. Zlatev et al. interpret this as a general failure "to understand/or use defaults to influence others." Such a claim depends on the particular default nudge. When we asked people to choose defaults for other most considered examples from the literature, Choice Architects were generally good at finding the best nudge.

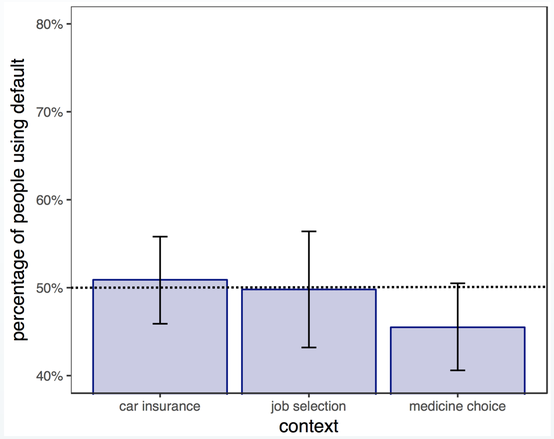
Zlatev et al. further claim that Choice Architect naïveté reflects a more general shortcoming: People are unable learn a default effect even seeing its consequences. Our reanalysis shows that people learned from what they saw, but not everyone saw a default effect.

Note

1. This is a published research. Please find more more information in the reference section
2. The pre-registration of the study can be found at http://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=u2vb3z

Do people recognize and apply default nudges?

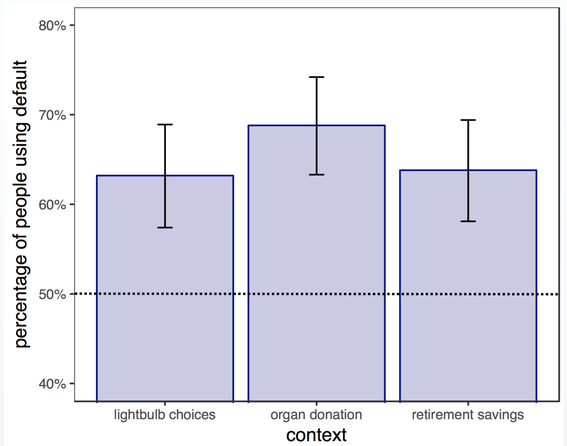
Zlatev et al. asked participants to choose a default in three contexts. In general, participants failed to choose the optimal default.



We mimicked their default games in three other default contexts from literature that are most considered.[2] Our results show that people are good at choosing the optimal default nudges.

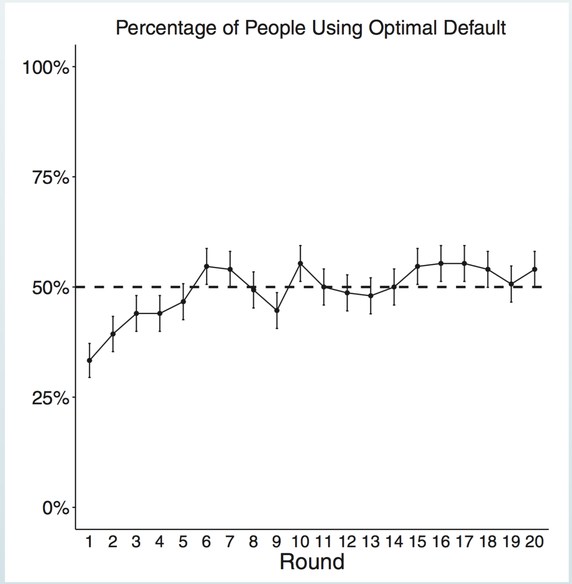
Percentage of people using default

- Retirement: 63.8% (p < 4e-6)
- Lightbulb: 63.2% (p < 1e-5)
- Donation: 68.8% (p < 2e-10)

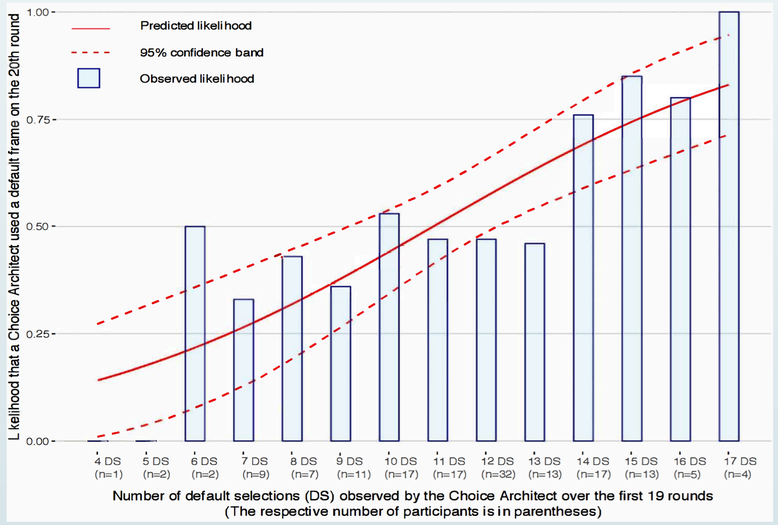


Do people learn default nudges?

Zlatev et al. conducted a 20-round default games and calculate each round's overall optimal-default using likelihood. Over the 20 rounds, the likelihood to use default is not significantly greater than chance.



We reanalyze their data. Instead of looking into each round's overall default using rate, we examine Choice Architects' last round strategies. In particular, Choice Architects' use of default frames in the last round is a function of the total number of defaults they observed in their past 19 rounds.



Model specification. Logit $p(x) = \alpha + \beta x$, where x is number of default observed in the first 19 rounds.

Discussion

Awareness of default effects. People's ability to recognize and use defaults depends on the particular default nudge and cannot be generalized to other contexts.

Ability to learn the default effects. Our reanalysis shows that Choice Architects tendency to use the default was overall highly sensitive to strength of the default effect they were shown. Choice Architects showed the type of naïveté that allows for learning; when they saw that defaults increased the desired outcome, they selected it, but when they saw that defaults decreased the desired outcome they avoided it. When the outcome was very close to showing neither tendency, the Choice Architects showed neither tendency themselves.

References

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