

Improving End-of-Life: Exploring the effects of default disclosure



SCAN ME

Introduction

- Literature on defaults focuses on assessing the probability that individuals will opt for the pre-selected choice.^{1,2,3}
- However, defaults may not only influence the immediate choice but also encourage information seeking behaviors.
- Prediction:** Individuals who know that a decision has been made on their behalf, will have greater interest in learning about how they could document their preferences.

Studies 1A-1C Methods

Methods: In three studies, we examine how disclosing defaults affects individuals' choice to learn about documenting their preferences in three domains: Advanced care planning (ACP), organ donations and retirement savings.

We, first, **elicited participants' preferences between two options.**

Domain	Options
ACP	1) Life-sustaining treatment (i.e., ventilation) 2) Avoid life-sustaining treatment
Organ Donation	1) Donate organs 2) Do not donate organs
Retirement Savings	1) Enroll into 401(k) 2) Do not enroll into 401(k)

IV - After eliciting their preferences, we manipulated default disclosures:

Control: No default

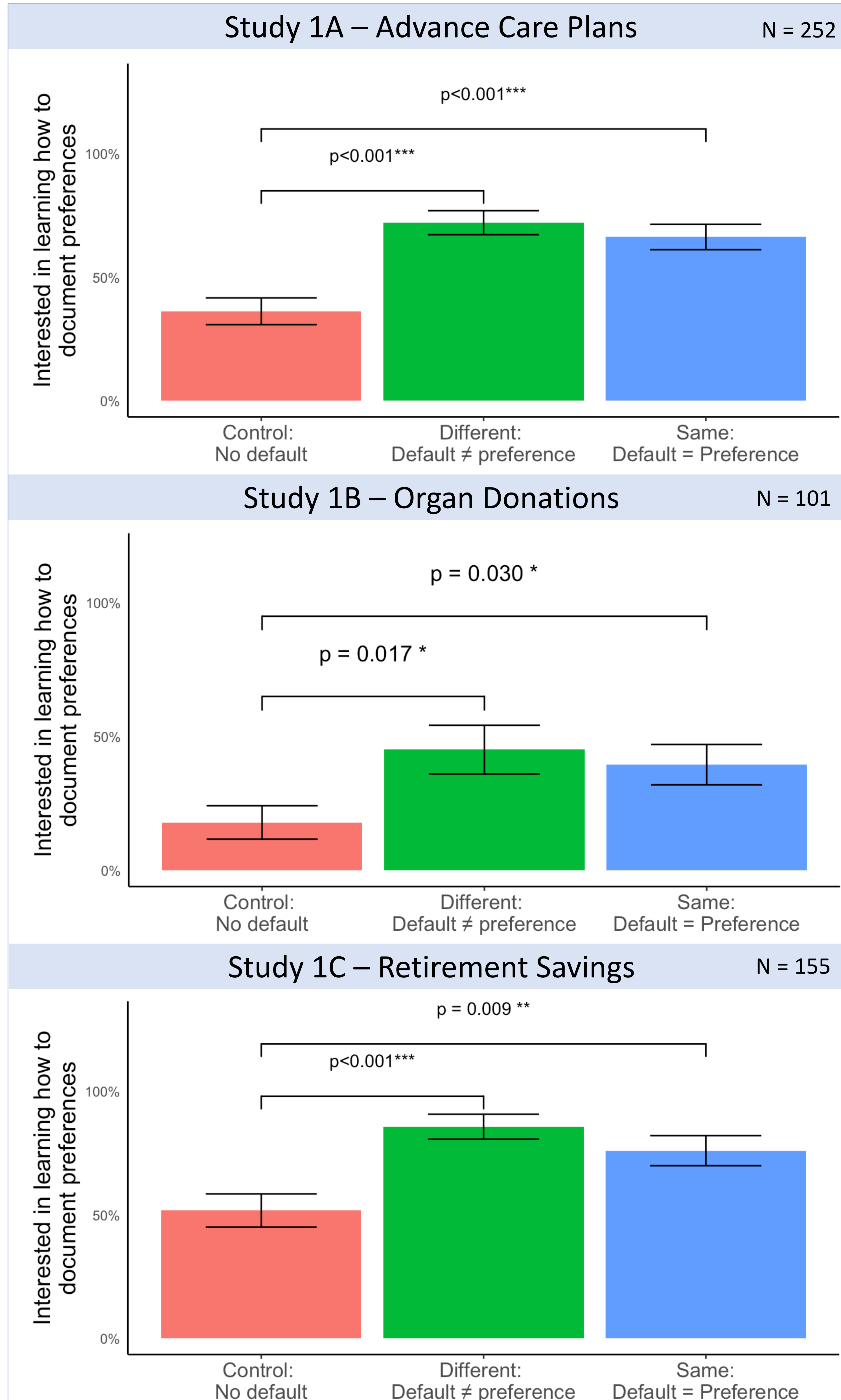
Different: Default different from preference

Same: Default consistent with preference

DV - Interest in learning how to document one's preferences (Yes/No)

Studies 1A-1C Results

Including default information increases interest in learning about ways to document preferences.

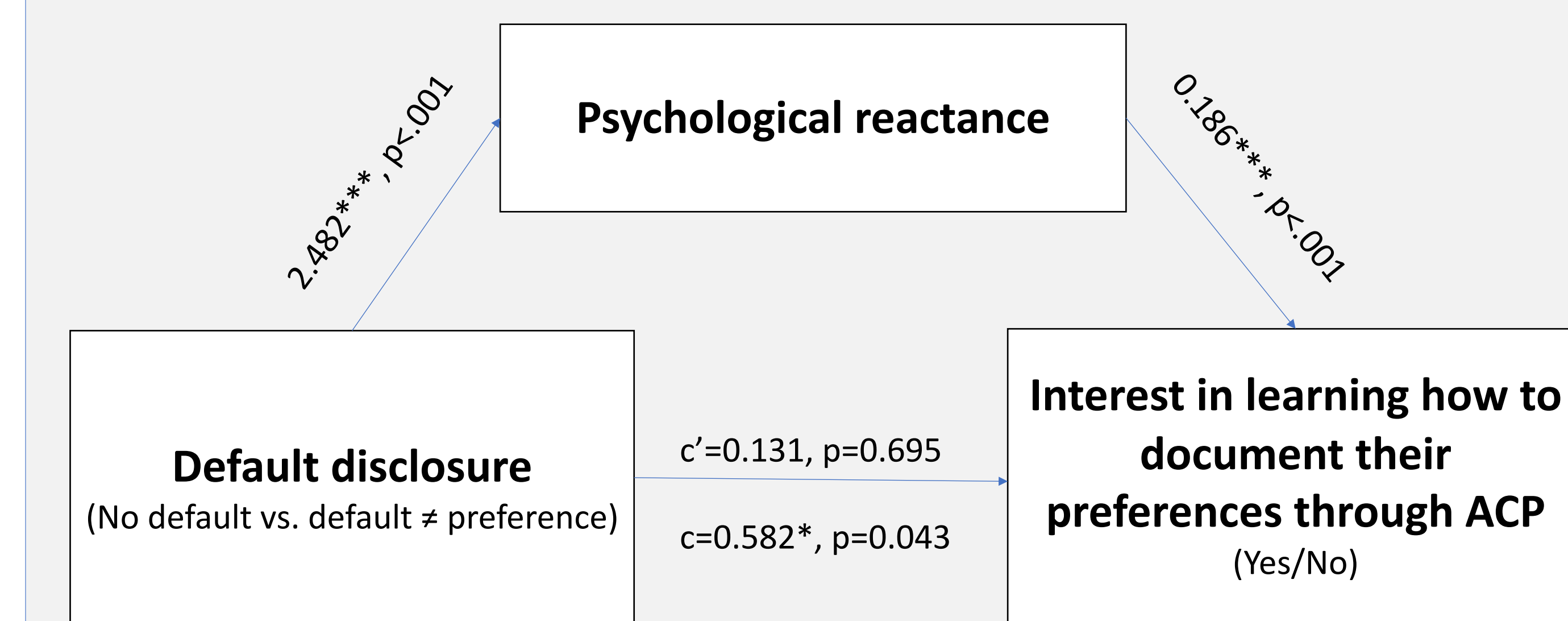


Study 2 - Mediation

N = 343

In Study 2, we use the same design from Study 1A (ACP) and added measures for psychological reactance. We replicate only the main effect between the “Control” and “Different” conditions.

The mediation analysis for the main effect we replicated revealed that the effect of default disclosure on choice to learn how to document preferences through ACP was mediated by psychological reactance (indirect effect, $B = 2.48$, $SE = 0.23$; 95% CI = 0.03 to 0.18).



Key Takeaways

- Within the context of end-of-life planning, individuals' interest in learning about ways to document their preferences increase after they are made aware that a default exists.
- This effect is driven, at least in part, by psychological reactance.
- This insight can be harnessed to encourage individuals to complete important documentation (e.g., ACP).

¹ Johnson, E. J., & Goldstein, D. (2003). Do defaults save lives?. *Science*, 302(5649), 1338-1339.

² Halpern, S. D., Loewenstein, G., Volpp, K. G., Cooney, E., Vranas, K., Quill, C. M., ... & Bryce, C. (2013). Default options in advance directives influence how patients set goals for end-of-life care. *Health Affairs*, 32(2), 408-417.

³ Madrian, B. C., & Shea, D. F. (2001). The power of suggestion: Inertia in 401 (k) participation and savings behavior. *The Quarterly journal of economics*, 116(4), 1149-1187.

Feedback is appreciated! bchew@ucsd.edu