

## **The Charity Beauty Premium: Satisfying Donors' Want versus Should Desires**

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## **The Charity Beauty Premium: Satisfying Donors' Want versus Should Desires**

Despite widespread conviction that neediness is the most important criterion for charitable allocations, we observe a “charity beauty premium” in which donors often favor beautiful, but less needy charity recipients. We propose that donors hold simultaneous, yet incongruent preferences of *wanting* to support beautiful recipients (who tend to be judged as less needy) yet believing they *should* support needy recipients instead. We additionally posit that preferences for beautiful recipients are most likely to emerge when decisions are intuitive whereas preferences for needy recipients are most likely to emerge when decisions are deliberative. We test these propositions in several ways. First, when a beautiful recipient is introduced to basic choice sets, it becomes the most popular option and increases donor satisfaction. Second, heightening deliberation steers choices away from beautiful recipients and toward needier ones. Third, donors explicitly state that they “want” to give to beautiful recipients but “should” give to less beautiful, needier ones. Taken together, these findings reconcile and extend previous and sometimes conflicting results about beauty and generosity.

**Keywords:** Prosocial Behavior, Altruism, Decision Making, Beauty Premium, Want versus Should Preferences, Intuitive versus Deliberative Decision Making

“Pandas are among a number of endangered animals that are sometimes classified, not flatteringly, as ‘charismatic megafauna,’ which attract money and attention out of proportion to their numbers. The British naturalist Christopher Packham once offered to ‘eat the last panda’ if doing so would free up funding for less photogenic species with better chances of survival outside zoos.”

Owen 2013, 30

Attractive donation targets, such as giant pandas, often receive the lion’s share of charitable contributions in the animal world, whereas needier but less photogenic creatures, such as the pygmy sloth, remain neglected (IUCN Red List 2014). This is one example of donation patterns that tend to overlook the world’s neediest recipients; for example, of the more than \$350 billion donated in the United States in 2014, only 4% went directly to international affairs, a fundraising category that encompasses the developing world where the most pressing human needs exist (Giving USA 2015; UNICEF 2014).

In this research, we propose one reason why the neediest recipients may be overlooked: donors are swayed by recipient beauty. People naturally ascribe favorable qualities, and grant disproportionate benefits, to beautiful individuals in a phenomenon known as the “beauty premium” (Dion, Berscheid, and Walster 1972; Langlois et al. 2000). In the prosocial domain, however, a preference for beautiful recipients could lead to puzzling allocation choices. Perceptions of beauty and neediness are often negatively correlated (Fisher and Ma 2014; Langlois et al. 2000; Zaatari, Palestis, and Trivers 2009); therefore, a focus on beauty could result in neglect of the neediest individuals.

Previous research on recipient beauty and charitable giving shows seemingly contradictory patterns: some findings indicate that donors prefer beautiful recipients (Mims, Hartnett, and Nay 1975; West and Brown 1975), whereas other findings indicate that donors prefer less beautiful, needier recipients (Fisher and Ma 2014). In the current research, we attempt to understand the psychology behind both patterns. We posit that donors hold simultaneous, yet incongruent preferences including that they *want* to give to beautiful recipients but think they *should* give to needy recipients instead. In line with this notion, we find that when donors make decisions intuitively, their *want* preference for beautiful recipients emerges, whereas when they make decisions deliberatively, their *should* preference for needy recipients emerges. As we consider in a final discussion, the present findings allow insight into why the neediest recipients may often not receive priority in the real world.

### *RECIPIENT NEEDINESS AS A CRITERION FOR GIVING*

Proponents of the nascent “effective altruism” movement, including the renowned philosopher Peter Singer, endorse the notion that donors should allocate their funds to the causes that prevent the most suffering (MacAskill 2015; Singer 2009, 2013). This often means donating to recipients in the developing world, where people’s standards of living are the lowest and the incidence of preventable death is the highest (GiveWell 2013; UNICEF 2014).

Recipient neediness does not take precedence in the philosophical realm alone. A similar preference for the neediest recipients emerges from individuals’ explicitly stated donation criteria. We asked 228 Mechanical Turk participants (145 female, 83 male;  $M_{\text{Age}} = 30$ ) to generate an open-ended answer to the question “If multiple individuals needed help and you

were deciding which one to donate to, what would be the single most important thing you would consider when deciding which person to donate to?” Results, coded by research assistants blind to this paper’s hypotheses, showed that 56% of participants spontaneously answered that recipient neediness was the most important consideration. In comparison, the next most popular consideration was the potential impact of the donation, receiving 20% of responses; all other possible answers each received less than a 5% endorsement.

Despite the common conviction that recipient neediness is the most important consideration for allocations, this criterion does not seem to receive priority in practice. A small fraction of donated dollars go to individuals in life-or-death situations (Giving USA 2015), though many such individuals exist (UNICEF 2014).

Previous research sheds light on several important factors besides recipient neediness that influence donation decisions. These include donors’ sympathy for the recipient (Loewenstein and Small 2007; Wispé 1986), donors’ personal experiences (Ratner and Miller 2001; Small and Simonsohn 2008), donors’ need for emotional satisfaction (Andreoni 1990; Cialdini et al. 1987; Dunn, Aknin, and Norton 2008), and donors’ desire to maintain a positive image via both social and self-approval (Batson 1998; Cain, Dana, and Newman 2014).

Yet another factor that we hypothesize sways donor’s choices away from the neediest recipients is recipients’ aesthetic appeal. This hypothesis stems from research about the “beauty premium,” a phenomenon in which beautiful individuals receive more favorable judgments and benefits than their less beautiful counterparts.

### *THE BEAUTY PREMIUM*

In a seminal study, Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972) showed that people attribute more positive qualities to attractive than to unattractive others, and more negative qualities to unattractive than to attractive others. This “beauty premium” is confirmed by numerous findings demonstrating that facial attractiveness positively influences judgments by both familiar and unfamiliar perceivers in multiple domains and across cultures (Langlois et al. 2000; Miller 1970). More attractive children and adults are considered to be healthier and fitter, to have greater social appeal, to have higher academic competence, and to be more confident and better adjusted than their less attractive counterparts (Landy and Sigall 1974; Langlois et al. 2000; Mobius and Rosenblat 2006). More attractive individuals also are more successful in their attempts at persuasion (Landry et al. 2005) and receive sizable wage premiums compared to less attractive individuals (Hamermesh and Biddle 1994).

There are two dominant explanations regarding why the beauty premium occurs. One explanation is rooted in an evolutionary perspective that centers on reproductive selection and fitness. This evolutionary account proposes that a preference for beauty arises because beauty is a signal of traits such as health, athleticism, and intelligence, which are important for fertility and/or survival (Buss and Schmitt 1993; Langlois et al. 2000; Mobius and Rosenblatt 2006).

A second explanation proposes a more instinctive connection between beauty and favorable judgments. This account suggests that people simply have a taste, or predilection, for beauty even when fitness or beliefs about fitness are unrelated (Becker 1957; Hamermesh and Biddle 1994; Mulford et al. 1998; Newman and Bloom 2012). Such a taste-based preference for beauty has been posited to be automatic and affective at its core (Reimann et al. 2010) and to

arise as a by-product of information processing within the human brain (Rhodes 2006). Factors that are correlated with attractiveness, such as symmetry, are desirable not just for human faces but for many other stimuli, such as birds and wristwatches (Halberstadt and Rhodes 2000; Kubovy 2000). In the consumer domain, this innate draw toward beauty is manifested by favorable responses to aesthetic designs, including a desire to own an attractive product (Norman 2004) and to pay more for it (Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003), even in categories such as finance for which aesthetics are deemed to be irrelevant (Townsend and Shu 2010).

An appreciation for beauty not only increases the likelihood that people choose more attractive options but also results in higher satisfaction among people who do so. Visually beautiful stimuli activate reward centers in the brain (Aharon et al. 2001), elicit intense positive emotional responses (Leder et al. 2004; Reimann et al. 2010), and generate pleasurable subjective experiences (Reber, Schwarz, and Winkielman 2004; Townsend and Sood 2012).

### *WANT VERSUS SHOULD PREFERENCES IN CHARITABLE GIVING*

In the domain of charitable giving, an instinctive and gratifying preference for beauty could lead to puzzling allocation choices. Physically attractive people are perceived to be more competent, popular, and successful than their less attractive counterparts (Langlois et al. 2000) and, accordingly, should be perceived as less in need of help. Indeed, Zaatari, Palestis, and Trivers (2009) find that proposers in an ultimatum game rate the most attractive respondents as the least needy. Similarly, Fisher and Ma (2014) find that more attractive donation recipients are perceived to be less needy than less attractive recipients. Our own data reveal a similar pattern; in a correlational study, Mechanical Turk participants ( $N = 224$ ) rated 1 of 20 charity recipient

photos from a fundraising website on dimensions of attractiveness and neediness. The set of photos included pictures of 13 women and 7 men across a variety of adult ages and ethnicities. We observe a significant negative correlation,  $r = -.21$ ,  $p < .01$ , between ratings of attractiveness and neediness.

An instinctive draw to beautiful recipients might therefore be at odds with donors' explicitly held belief that individuals in the greatest need should receive altruistic priority. In this research, we propose that this incongruence exists because donors simultaneously hold two distinct preferences: a *want* preference for beautiful recipients and a *should* preference for needy recipients (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel, and Wade-Benzoni 1998; Bitterly, Dai, and Milkman 2014; Milkman, Rogers, and Bazerman 2008, 2009).

Previous research conceptualizes *want* preferences as those that are affect-rich and, sometimes, linked with desire (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel, and Wade-Benzoni 1998; Loewenstein 1996) and *should* preferences as those that are reason-based, logical, and more easily justified (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel, and Wade-Benzoni 1998).<sup>1</sup> For example, when choosing movies, consumers may hold a *want* preference to watch a comedy but a *should* preference to watch a documentary (Milkman, Rogers, and Bazerman 2009). In the charity domain, we hypothesize that if humans have an automatic and gratifying preference for beautiful stimuli, they may intuitively *want* to give to beautiful charity recipients, even if they deliberately believe that they *should* give to needy recipients. Beautiful recipients offer intuitive appeal and immediate satisfaction, whereas needy recipients fit with a reasoned priority to help the most desperate individuals.

We further propose that donors' *want* preferences for beautiful recipients are most likely to emerge when they choose intuitively, whereas donors' *should* preferences for needy recipients



are most likely to emerge when they choose deliberatively. Research from a breadth of psychology disciplines recognizes distinctions in cognitive functioning between “System 1” processing, or intuitive processing that depends on automatic associations, and “System 2” processing, or deliberative processing that depends on logical reasoning (Stanovich and West 2000). Processes under System 1 operate quickly, rely on seemingly effortless associations to inform judgments, and tend to favor affect-rich options. Processes under System 2, by contrast, operate slowly and rely on effortful cognition to reach reasoned conclusions (Chaiken and Trope 1999; Kahneman and Frederick 2002; Milkman, Chugh, and Bazerman 2009).

Because preferences for beautiful recipients may arise from automatic, instinctive preferences, we predict that they will be most likely to emerge when donors process information intuitively via System 1. In contrast, because we posit that preferences for needy recipients arise on the basis of reason, we predict that they are most likely to emerge when donors process information deliberatively via System 2. These predictions are consistent with previous research implicating a dual-system model of information processing in *want* versus *should* preferences (Bitterly et al. 2014; Milkman, Rogers, and Bazerman 2008). The intuitive System 1 is reward seeking and often oriented toward what feels good, whereas the deliberative System 2 is rule based and oriented toward what is appropriate and sensible (Epstein 1994; Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999).

Understanding a distinction between donors’ intuitively versus deliberately derived preferences could shed light on discrepancies that exist in the altruism literature. Some past research finds, for example, that attractive people are more likely to receive help than unattractive people (Mims, Hartnett, and Nay 1975; West and Brown 1975). In contrast, other research finds that unattractive people are more likely to receive help than attractive people

(Fisher and Ma 2014). To reconcile these inconsistent findings, we propose that donors hold simultaneous yet contradictory preferences that are cued by different information-processing modes: when donors decide intuitively, they are more likely to select beautiful recipients in line with their *want* preferences; when donors decide deliberatively, they are more likely to select needy recipients in line with their *should* preferences.

We test these propositions across eight studies. Studies 1A through 1C explore what happens to donors' choices and satisfaction when beautiful options are included in basic choice sets, and document a preference for beautiful options. Studies 2 through 4 test the proposition that increasing deliberation shifts preferences away from beautiful recipients and toward needy recipients. Study 5 examines how very high levels of perceived need, and associated high empathy, weaken the charity beauty premium. Finally, Study 6 demonstrates that donors' preferences for beautiful versus needy recipients specifically represent *want* versus *should* preferences. Throughout, we attempt to understand the psychology underlying donors' preferences for beautiful versus needy recipients and, in the process, shed new light on previous findings in this domain.

### STUDY 1A

Study 1A is a field study that solicited donations for an animal conservation center in the UK. The conservation center sells animal adoption packages that include receipt of a paper leaf inscribed with the donor's name that is placed on the center's adoption tree. While all species on the conservation center's website need funds, each species' conservation status differs because

some animals are more critically endangered than others. We test how judgments of beauty and endangerment predict donations to different animal species.

### *Pretest*

One hundred seven university graduate and undergraduate students rated images of eight animals from the conservation center's adoption webpage on beauty and perceived endangerment (1–10 scales; Please see Web Appendix A for photos); order of image and question were counterbalanced. Table 1 shows rating results as well as each animal's actual endangerment status as determined by a prominent conservation organization (IUCN 2015).

\*\*\*\*\* Insert Table 1 about here \*\*\*\*\*

### *Main Study*

Simulating the conservation center's adoption packages, a poster featuring a tree was placed in the foyer of a busy university building in the UK. The poster included the message "Support [conservation center] today. Join our Support Tree! [conservation center] contributes to animal conservation." Students, staff, and visitors passing by were asked if they would like to donate to support animal conservation. Those who were interested viewed a booklet with the animal images from the pretest and chose an animal to support. Donors could then write their name on a paper leaf and append the leaf to the poster. The suggested donation amount was 20 pence (approximately \$.30) per paper leaf, but donors were free to donate more both to the same animal and to different ones. Donations were collected for five consecutive days.

### *Results*

*Pretest.* The giraffe and the zebra were rated the most beautiful and least endangered animals, whereas the penguin and orangutan were rated the least beautiful and most severely

endangered; these endangerment ratings were in line with actual endangerment status as determined by the IUCN Red List (2015; see Table 1).

*Main study.* The giraffe and the zebra, rated the most beautiful animals in the pretest, received a significantly greater percentage of sponsorships than the two least beautiful animals, the penguin and orangutan (which also were correctly perceived as being more severely endangered), 32% versus 17% respectively,  $\chi^2 = 4.79, p < .03$ . A similar test comparing sponsorships for the four most beautiful versus least beautiful animals showed that the former were selected significantly more often than the latter (64% versus 36% respectively,  $\chi^2 = 7.04, p < .01$ ; see Figure 1). The same test conducted with the four most versus least endangered species, determined either by actual endangerment status or by participants' ratings of perceived endangerment, showed no such difference (actual endangerment: High = 47% vs. Low = 53%,  $\chi^2 = .38, p = .54$ , perceived endangerment: High = 48% vs. Low = 52%,  $\chi^2 = .17, p = .68$ ).

\*\*\*\*\* Insert Figure 1 about here \*\*\*\*\*

### *Discussion*

Study 1A provides initial field evidence that beautiful recipients can be preferred even when they do not have the highest need. Study 1B explores this pattern further, incorporating an experimental test.

### *STUDY 1B*

Study 1B experimentally tested how adding a beautiful recipient to a basic choice set changes donors' preferences and satisfaction. All participants viewed images of four children

who had received successful cleft palate surgery via the charity Smile Train, and chose which child they would sponsor.

### *Pretest*

Four hundred eighty-one Mechanical Turk participants (229 male, 252 female;  $M_{\text{Age}} = 36$ ) rated four children on attractiveness (“cuteness”) and neediness. One child (Angelica) was rated as significantly cuter than any of the other four children ( $M_{\text{Angelica}} = 4.08$ ,  $M_{\text{Vera}} = 3.03$ ,  $M_{\text{Maria}} = 3.00$ ,  $M_{\text{Silva}} = 2.86$ ,  $M_{\text{YaoLin}} = 2.83$ ;  $ps < .0005$ ). Angelica also was rated as significantly less needy than the other four ( $M_{\text{Angelica}} = 2.57$ ,  $M_{\text{Vera}} = 3.16$ ,  $M_{\text{Maria}} = 2.95$ ,  $M_{\text{Silva}} = 3.06$ ,  $M_{\text{YaoLin}} = 3.06$ ;  $ps < .0005$ ); one child, Vera, also consistently was rated as needier than the remaining three children (vs. Maria,  $p < .0005$ ; vs. Silva,  $p < .05$ ; vs. Yao Lin,  $p < .06$ ).<sup>2</sup>

### *Main Study*

*Method.* Three hundred sixty Mechanical Turk participants (173 female, 187 male,  $M_{\text{Age}} = 32$ ) participated in exchange for a small payment.<sup>3</sup> Participants were presented, in random order, with the pretested pictures of four children who had been helped by Smile Train and read that these children needed financial support to move on with their lives after cleft palate surgery. The children were described as approximately the same age (1–2 years) and from the same region of the world (Central and South America).

The experiment included Control and Beauty conditions. In the Control condition, participants viewed the four children who, according to the pretest, were similar in attractiveness (Vera, Maria, Silva, and Yao Lin). In the Beauty condition, the child rated as significantly more beautiful and less needy than the others, Angelica, was substituted for Yao Lin; to maintain experimental control, the name “Angelica” was used in both conditions.

Participants then selected a child as if they were actually sponsoring her. Next, they answered follow-up questions about how happy, pleased, and content they felt as a result of their choice; these items were combined into a single “satisfaction” score ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

*Results.* An omnibus chi-square test revealed a significant difference between conditions in sponsorship choices,  $\chi^2(4, N = 360) = 33.0, p < .001$  (see Figure 2). Participants in the Control condition, who did not consider a clearly beautiful option, showed a preference for Vera, the neediest child, over all others (Vera, 45%; Maria, 22%,  $p = .001$ ; Yao Lin, 20%;  $p < .001$ ; Silva, 14%,  $p < .001$ ; all  $p$ -values relative to Vera’s choice share).

\*\*\*\*\* Insert Figure 2 about here \*\*\*\*\*

Results differed in the Beauty condition. Participants in the Beauty condition, who instead of Yao Lin considered Angelica, the most beautiful and least needy child according to the pre-test, chose Angelica more often than any other child (Angelica = 48%, Vera = 30%,  $p = .01$ ; Maria = 12%,  $p < .001$ ; Silva = 10%,  $p < .0001$ ; all  $p$ -values relative to Angelica’s choice share). In this Beauty condition, compared to Control, participants also were less likely to choose Vera, the child perceived as the neediest (30% vs. 45%,  $z(359) = 2.92, p < .01$ ).

In addition to selecting Angelica more often than any other option, participants in the Beauty condition reported greater satisfaction with their choice than did those in the Control condition,  $M_{\text{Beauty}} = 3.60, M_{\text{Control}} = 3.27, t(358) = 2.40, p < .02$ .

### *Discussion*

Results from Study 1B are consistent with several past findings about beauty and generosity (Mims, Hartnett, and Nay 1975; West and Brown 1975): when a beautiful recipient is present, donors are more generous toward that beautiful recipient. Further, we observe that not only do donors choose a beautiful recipient when one is present, but they also are more satisfied

with their choice, supporting the notion that beauty is gratifying. In contrast, when no beautiful option is present, donors gravitate toward the neediest recipient, in line with their explicit prioritization of neediness. Study 1C continues to explore this pattern with novel stimuli and decision types.<sup>4</sup>

### *STUDY 1C*

Study 1C tests donors' reactions to recipients who are more beautiful versus less beautiful using a different approach from Study 1B. Donors in Study 1C viewed a single recipient instead of several, considered donating to an adult instead of to a child, considered a photo of the same person that had been edited via photo software to be more versus less beautiful, and made real donations. The new study design also allowed follow-up questions measuring perceptions of facial expression so that we could control for this factor.

#### *Pretest*

Pretest participants recruited from Mechanical Turk ( $n = 285$ ; 172 female, 113 male, one gender unknown;  $M_{\text{Age}} = 33$ ) rated a photo of either a man ("Evan") or a woman ("Andrea") from a fundraising website. In the Beauty condition, participants saw the original, attractive, photo of one of these two individuals. In the Control condition, the photos were edited, introducing asymmetries to make them less attractive.

Participants were randomly assigned to view one of the four photos. Each participant rated the photo on the same dimensions (beauty/handsomeness and neediness) used in Study 1B, using 5-point scales. The two Beauty condition photos were rated more "beautiful or handsome" (Andrea:  $M_{\text{Beauty}} = 3.85$ ,  $M_{\text{Control}} = 2.77$ ,  $t(134) = 7.58$ ,  $p < .0005$ ; Evan:  $M_{\text{Beauty}} = 3.29$ ,  $M_{\text{Control}} =$

2.30,  $t(147) = 6.20$ ,  $p < .0005$ ) and less needy (Andrea:  $M_{\text{Beauty}} = 1.82$ ,  $M_{\text{Control}} = 2.35$ ,  $t(135) = 3.75$ ,  $p < .0005$ ; Evan:  $M_{\text{Beauty}} = 1.82$ ,  $M_{\text{Control}} = 2.15$ ,  $t(147) = 2.30$ ,  $p < .03$ ) than the two Control condition photos.

### *Main Study*

*Method.* Two hundred thirty-eight adults (134 female, 104 male;  $M_{\text{Age}} = 33$ ) participated online via Mechanical Turk. After reading initial instructions, participants learned that they would receive a 25-cent bonus that they could donate to charity as part of the study.

The study included two between-subjects experimental conditions (Control, Beauty) with recipient gender randomized within each condition. All participants read that they could donate to a recovered bone cancer patient who was seeking financial help. In the Beauty condition, participants saw the original photo of either an attractive man or an attractive woman from a fundraising website. In the Control condition, participants saw an edited, less attractive version of the same man or woman. Donors decided whether to donate their \$.25 bonus to the recipient or not.

Following procedures from Study 1B, participants then rated how happy, pleased, and content they felt as a result of considering the donation request (“satisfaction” score  $\alpha = .90$ ) as well as how happy, sad, needy, and beautiful the recipient looked.

*Results.* Participants were more likely to donate in the Beauty condition (59%) than in the Control condition (45%,  $\chi^2(1, N = 238) = 4.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This effect did not differ between female and male photos ( $p > .9$ ); moving forward we collapse results across recipient gender.

The beauty effect remained significant when controlling for the recipient’s judged happiness, sadness, neediness, or all three measures at once (in simultaneous logistic regressions,  $ps < .05$ ). When controlling for perceived beauty of the recipient, however, the effect of beauty



became non-significant ( $p > .2$ ); this result is consistent with the notion that perceived beauty, but not facial expression, drives donation differences between the Beauty and Control conditions.

A simultaneous mediation analysis confirmed that perceived beauty uniquely accounted for the influence of beauty on donations. We conducted a bootstrapping mediation analysis with 5,000 samples using Hayes's (2013) PROCESS Macro (Model 4), which included measures of perceived happiness, sadness, neediness, and beauty. Only perceived beauty significantly mediated the relationship between the Beauty condition and donation choice, 95% CI = .15–.63. In this model, the direct effect was no longer significant ( $p = .09$ ), and no other potential mediators were significant ( $ps > .2$ ). We note that this particular mediation analysis does not suggest a psychological mediator for the charity beauty premium (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010) but instead serves as a rigorous manipulation check.

Participants also reported marginally significantly greater satisfaction in the Beauty condition than in the Control condition ( $M_{\text{Beauty}} = 3.27$ ,  $M_{\text{Control}} = 2.98$ ,  $t(235) = 1.93$ ,  $p < .06$ ). A simultaneous mediation model analogous to the one described above confirmed that perceived beauty uniquely accounted for the influence of the Beauty condition on satisfaction, 95% CI = .12–.40. In this analysis, the direct effect was no longer significant ( $p = .91$ ), and no other potential mediators, including facial expression, were significant.

### *Discussion*

In Study 1A, donors were more likely to sponsor beautiful animals, even when beautiful animals were not the most endangered. In Study 1B, donors selected the neediest child as long as a beautiful (but less needy) recipient was not an option; once a beautiful recipient was an option, she became the most popular recipient and increased donor satisfaction (see also Web Appendix B). In Study 1C, this preference for a beautiful recipient, and the subsequent greater donation

satisfaction, persisted when participants made real donations to a single adult recipient, and it was not explained by recipients' facial expression.

Although a preference for beautiful recipients is consistent with some prior evidence about beauty and giving (Mims, Hartnett, and Nay 1975; West and Brown 1975), it is not consistent with donors' explicit statements (reported in our initial survey) that neediness is the most important criterion for charitable allocations. It is also not consistent with recent evidence that finds the opposite pattern, namely, that less attractive recipients receive more donations (Fisher and Ma 2014, Study 4).

A common feature of Studies 1A through 1C is that participants' decisions were relatively intuitive. Studies 1A and 1B involved a sponsorship selection from a small set of pictures; Study 1C included a simple yes/no choice of whether to donate a bonus payment. Previous research documenting a beauty premium in prosocial domains also relied on choices that are likely intuitive, such as whether agreeing or not to help an attractive, versus unattractive, experimenter with an additional task (Mims, Hartnett, and Nay 1975).

In this research, we propose that intuitive versus deliberative decision modes can lead to diverging recipient preferences. More specifically, we hypothesize that intuitive processing leads to preferences for beautiful recipients whereas deliberative, cognitively effortful processing leads to preferences for needy recipients. Studies 2 through 4 directly test this hypothesis.

## *STUDY 2*

Study 2 tests whether intuitive versus deliberative decision modes influence the charity beauty premium by directly asking participants to let either deliberation or intuition guide a

charity recipient choice. We predict that when deciding intuitively, participants will prefer the most beautiful recipient, but when deciding deliberatively, they will not.

*Method.* Two hundred forty Mechanical Turk participants (139 female, 101 male;  $M_{\text{Age}} = 33$ ) participated online in exchange for a small payment. Participants first read the scenario from Study 1B. In the Intuitive condition, participants also read, “Please make a quick choice, letting intuition guide which child you would sponsor. Be sure to rely on your instincts.” In the Deliberative condition, participants read, “Please think carefully about your choice, thoroughly considering which child you would sponsor. Be sure to rely on logical deliberation.” All participants then viewed the photos from the Beauty condition from Study 1B (excluding any additional text such as names). Participants first chose a child to sponsor and then rated to what extent their sponsorship choice was based on intuition versus deliberation (1–5 rating scale with 1 = “entirely on intuition” and 5 = “entirely on deliberation”). We also measured participants’ response time from when they loaded the survey screen with recipient photos until they made the final decision click on the same screen.

## *Results*

*Manipulation checks.* Participants in the Deliberative condition indicated that their choice was based more on deliberation than did participants in the Intuitive condition ( $M_{\text{Deliberative}} = 3.06$ ,  $M_{\text{Intuitive}} = 2.05$ ,  $t(238) = 7.62$ ,  $p < .0005$ ). Response time in seconds also was higher in the Deliberative condition than in the Intuitive condition ( $\text{Med}_{\text{Deliberative}} = 20.76$ ,  $\text{Med}_{\text{Intuitive}} = 11.59$ , Mann-Whitney  $U = 3,600$ ,  $p < .0005$ ).

*Main results.* An omnibus chi-square test revealed a marginally significant difference between conditions in sponsorship choices,  $\chi^2(3, N = 240) = 7.36$ ,  $p = .06$  (see Figure 3). Participants in the Intuitive condition showed a preference for Angelica, the most attractive and

least needy of the four children according to the Study 1B pre-test (Angelica, 49%; Vera, 23%,  $p < .001$ ; Maria, 12%,  $p < .0001$ ; Silva, 16%,  $p < .0001$ ; all  $p$ -values relative to Angelica's choice share).

\*\*\*\*\* Insert Figure 3 about here \*\*\*\*\*

In the Deliberative condition, Angelica was no longer a favorite (Angelica, 33%; Vera, 28%,  $p = .55$ ; Maria, 18%,  $p < .05$ ; Silva, 22%,  $p = .13$ ; all  $p$ -values relative to Angelica's choice share). In the Deliberative condition, compared to the Intuitive condition, participants were less likely to choose Angelica, the most beautiful and least needy recipient, for their allocation decision (33% vs. 49%,  $z(239) = 2.63$ ,  $p < .01$ ); consequently, they were more likely to choose needier recipients.

### *Discussion*

In Study 2, when donors decided intuitively, they were most likely to choose a beautiful recipient; however, an explicit request to choose deliberately eliminated this preference. In the Deliberative condition, preferences shifted toward the less beautiful, but needier, recipients instead, providing initial evidence that the charity beauty premium emerges from intuitive, but not deliberative, decisions.

## *STUDY 3*

In Study 3, we use an alternative method to manipulate deliberation. We draw upon findings that decision makers rely more heavily on logic and deliberation when they make choices for others compared to when they make choices for themselves. For example, consumers

are less loss averse when choosing for others than when choosing for themselves (Polman 2012), and they seek greater variety when choosing for others because it is a more objectively compelling strategy (Choi et al. 2006; Ratner and Kahn 2002).

In Study 3, we manipulate whether donors make a sponsorship choice for themselves or on behalf of someone else while serving as an adviser. We predict that asking donors to serve as advisers, and thus choosing on behalf of someone else, will encourage them to override intuitive preferences for beauty in favor of deliberative preferences for neediness.

### *Method*

Two hundred sixty-four participants from Mechanical Turk (105 female, 159 male;  $M_{Age} = 32$ ) participated online in exchange for a small payment. Participants read the scenario from Study 1B. In the Intuitive condition, participants chose one child to support as a sponsor. In the Deliberative condition, participants served as an adviser, choosing “which child will be sponsored by an anonymous donor.” All participants viewed the same pictures and short recipient descriptions from the Beauty condition from Study 1B and chose a child, in the role either of sponsor (Intuitive condition) or adviser (Deliberative condition).

### *Results*

An omnibus chi-square test revealed a difference between conditions in sponsorship choices  $\chi^2(4, N = 264) = 8.99, p = .06$  (see Figure 4). Participants in the Intuitive condition sponsored Angelica, the most attractive and least needy of the four children, most often (Angelica, 42%; Vera, 25%,  $p < .03$ ; Mariana, 20%,  $p = .001$ ; Silva, 12%,  $p < .0001$ ; all  $p$ -values relative to Angelica’s choice share).

\*\*\*\*\* Insert Figure 4 about here \*\*\*\*\*

In the Deliberative condition, in which participants served as an adviser, Angelica was no longer the favorite (Angelica, 30%; Vera, 39%,  $p = .24$ ; Mariana, 18%,  $p < .05$ ; Silva, 13%,  $p < .01$ ; all  $p$ -values relative to Angelica's choice share). In the Deliberative condition, compared to the Intuitive condition, participants were less likely to choose Angelica for their allocation decision (30% vs. 42%,  $z(263) = 2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and they were also more likely to choose Vera, the neediest child (39% vs. 25%,  $z(263) = 2.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

In a posttest, we verified that making sponsorship choices on behalf of someone else prompts deliberation compared to making sponsorship choices for oneself. Previous research has shown that accountability to others can heighten expectations of justifying one's decision (Lerner and Tetlock 1999) and induce controlled information processing (Bazerman et al. 1998). Thus, we asked 113 Mechanical Turk participants to read either the Intuitive or the Deliberative scenario and to rate the extent to which they would expect to need to justify the decision to others. Participants who read the Deliberative condition scenario were more likely to anticipate justifying their choice than were participants who read the Intuitive condition scenario ( $M_{\text{Deliberative}} = 2.66$ ,  $M_{\text{Intuitive}} = 1.98$ ,  $t(111) = 2.97$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

### *Discussion*

In Study 3, donors who were placed in a more deliberative state by serving as advisers were less likely to choose Angelica, the most attractive but least needy recipient. These participants also were more likely to act in line with an explicit prioritization of neediness by choosing Vera, the child who was rated as needier than the others.

We note that the current result is incompatible with the notion that donors choose beautiful recipients because beautiful individuals are more worthy or more promising. If expectations of beautiful recipients' success drive the charity beauty premium, then we should

observe it both when participants make sponsorship choices for themselves and when they make sponsorship recommendations to others. However, we observe that when participants serve as advisers, the charity beauty premium weakens and, in fact, reverses; this pattern is consistent with an account that donors prefer beautiful recipients because of an intuitive preference for aesthetic appeal and not because these recipients are justified to be more likely to succeed.

Study 4 tests an additional way of increasing deliberation: asking participants to rate recipients on several dimensions before making sponsorship choices.

#### *STUDY 4*

Previous research documenting that donors allocate more funds to less attractive, needier recipients than to more attractive, less needy recipients finds this pattern after participants first explicitly rate charity recipients on several dimensions including neediness, attractiveness, and empathy (Fisher and Ma 2014, Study 4). It is possible that such a rating task encourages participants to thoroughly consider recipients, prompting deliberative decision making. In Study 4, we directly manipulate whether such a rating task steers donors toward a deliberative choice of needy recipients and away from an intuitive choice of beautiful recipients.

Study 4 includes an Intuitive condition identical to that in Study 3 and also includes a new Deliberative condition in which, before making sponsorship choices, participants explicitly rate each recipient on dimensions identical to those measured by Fisher and Ma (2014): attractiveness, emotional expression, social competence, perceived need, and empathy.

## Method

Three hundred six Mechanical Turk participants (189 female, 117 male;  $M_{\text{Age}} = 33$ ) completed the study in exchange for a small payment. The experiment included two conditions: the Intuitive condition from Study 3 and a new Deliberative condition in which participants rated each child on attractiveness (three items, 5-points scales), emotional expression (four items, 5-point scales), social competence (seven items, 5-point scales), perceived need (four items, 5-points scales), and empathy (five items, 7-point scales), all following procedures used by Fisher and Ma (2014), before making their sponsorship choice.

## Results

*Rating results.* Similar to the pretest described before Study 1B, participants in the Deliberative condition, who rated each child on multiple dimensions before making the allocation choice, rated Angelica as more attractive ( $M_{\text{Angelica}} = 4.20$ ,  $M_{\text{Vera}} = 3.42$ ,  $M_{\text{Maria}} = 3.43$ ,  $M_{\text{Silva}} = 3.39$ ,  $ps < .0005$ ) and less needy ( $M_{\text{Angelica}} = 2.39$ ,  $M_{\text{Vera}} = 3.28$ ,  $M_{\text{Maria}} = 2.80$ ,  $M_{\text{Silva}} = 3.10$ ,  $ps < .0005$ ) than any of the other three children; they also judged Vera to be needier than any of the other three children,  $ps < .0005$ ). In addition, participants reported either directionally or significantly less empathy for Angelica ( $M_{\text{Angelica}} = 5.23$ ,  $M_{\text{Vera}} = 5.52$ ,  $p < .0005$ ;  $M_{\text{Maria}} = 5.32$ ,  $p = .19$ ,  $M_{\text{Silva}} = 5.38$ ,  $p = .05$ ) and significantly more empathy for Vera compared to the other children ( $ps < .01$ ). These empathy ratings are consistent with the central finding from Fisher and Ma (2014, Studies 1–3) that participants express more empathy for a less beautiful than for a more beautiful charity recipient.<sup>5</sup>

*Main results.* An omnibus chi-square test showed a difference between conditions when choosing which child to support,  $\chi^2(3, N = 304) = 12.30$ ,  $p < .01$  (see Figure 5).

\*\*\*\*\* Insert Figure 5 about here \*\*\*\*\*



In between-subjects comparisons, participants in the Deliberative condition were less likely to choose Angelica, the most beautiful recipient, than were participants in the Intuitive condition (21% vs. 39%,  $z(302) = 3.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and more likely to choose Vera, the neediest recipient (42% vs. 30%,  $z(302) = 2.21$ ,  $p < .03$ ). Within the Deliberative condition, Vera was selected the most frequently (Vera, 42%; Angelica, 21%,  $p < .001$ ; Mariana, 20%,  $p < .0005$ ; Silva, 18%,  $p < .0005$ ; all  $p$ -values relative to Vera's choice share), whereas within the Intuitive condition, Angelica was selected the most frequently (Angelica, 39%; Vera, 30%,  $p = .23$ ; Maria, 18%,  $p < .0005$ ; Silva, 13%,  $p < .0005$ ; all  $p$ -values relative to Angelica's choice share).

### *Discussion*

The Deliberative condition from Study 4 demonstrates that a rating task, which prompts a thorough consideration of each recipient, pushes donors to choose needier, less beautiful, recipients. This study also sheds light on previous results by showing that such a rating task can trigger a reversal of the charity beauty premium (Fisher and Ma 2014; Study 4). Although donors gravitate toward beautiful recipients when choices are intuitive, increasing deliberation by asking participants to rate recipients on several attributes (including both beauty and neediness) steers them to allocate in accordance with their explicit priority of neediness. Across studies 2 through 4, donors were more likely to choose beautiful recipients when deciding intuitively and needy recipients when deciding deliberatively.

Rating results from Study 4 also show that participants report greater empathy for a less beautiful than for a more beautiful recipient. This result is consistent with the central finding from Fisher and Ma (2014, Studies 1–3). Despite greater empathy for less beautiful recipients, however, we find that donors choose these recipients only when the choice is deliberative, but

not when the choice is intuitive. In the next study, we further explore the complex role of empathy in the relationship between donors' preferences for beautiful versus needy recipients.

### STUDY 5

Study 5 explores the role of empathy in the charity beauty premium. In Study 4, we see that empathy only predicts giving when participants process information in a deliberative, System 2 mode. In many respects, this result is puzzling. Empathy and sympathy are often presumed to be affective responses and, therefore, associated with System 1 intuitive processing (Batson 1998; Loewenstein and Small 2007). Yet, empathy and sympathy are unique affective influences, because they also often correlate with deliberative judgments of neediness (Batson et al. 2005; Fisher and Ma 2014; Study 4 ratings from the current paper). Moreover, past research proposes a deliberative component of such sympathetic emotions (Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1994). According to this account, empathy entails taking another person's perspective, a process involving reflection and effort (Wispé 1986) that relies on deliberative cognition. This characterization of empathy is consistent with our findings thus far that donors are more likely to favor empathetic recipients when processing deliberatively.

Nevertheless, empathy and sympathy have potential to activate intense affective responses as well. Such intense affective responses may actually oppose, and even overwhelm, donors' intuitive *want* preference for beauty. We posit that very high levels of need may trigger strong emotional empathy toward recipients (Loewenstein and Small 2007; Small and Cryder 2016), which in turn can override beauty preferences due to a competing System 1 influence. We test this hypothesis in Study 5.

## *Method*

Seven hundred seventy Mechanical Turk participants (438 female, 332 male;  $M_{\text{Age}} = 34$ ) participated in exchange for a small payment. Similar to Study 1C, participants learned that they would receive a 20-cent bonus that they could donate to charity during the study.

The study included a 2 (Photo: Control, Beautiful)  $\times$  2 (Empathy: Control-Empathy, High-Empathy) between-subjects experimental design. The Beautiful versus Control photo manipulation was identical to that in Study 1C (randomizing female and male photos within condition). In the Control-Empathy condition, participants read the recipient description from Study 1C portraying a recipient who has recovered from bone cancer and is seeking financial help to move forward in life. In the High-Empathy condition, the recipient was described as even higher in need, struggling to recover from bone cancer and no longer able to work and support a family (please see Web Appendix C for full wording).

As in Study 1C, the main dependent variable was whether participants decided to donate their participation bonus to the recipient or not, after which they responded to five items from Fisher and Ma (2014; see also Study 4 of the current paper) designed to measure empathy: the extent to which participants felt sympathetic, compassionate, softhearted, warm, and moved (1–5 point scales, items combined for single empathy score,  $\alpha = .94$ ).

## *Results*

*Manipulation check.* Participants in the High-Empathy condition reported greater empathy than did participants in the Control-Empathy condition ( $M_{\text{HighEmpathy}} = 3.61$ ,  $M_{\text{ControlEmpathy}} = 3.35$ ,  $t(768) = 3.53$ ,  $p < .0005$ ).

*Main results.* A binary logistic regression simultaneously tested the influence of beauty, empathy, and their interaction on donation likelihood. We observed a marginally significant

positive main effect of beauty,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 1.46$ ,  $p = .06$ , and a significant positive main effect of empathy,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 1.88$ ,  $p < .01$ . Most importantly, we observed a significant interaction between beauty and empathy,  $\text{Exp}(B) = .53$ ,  $p < .03$ . Within the Control-Empathy condition, participants who saw a beautiful photo were marginally significantly more likely to donate (59%) than those who saw a control photo (50%,  $\chi^2(1, N = 396) = 3.4$ ,  $p = .06$ ), replicating Study 1C's findings. Within the High-Empathy condition, however, participants who saw a beautiful photo were not more likely to donate (59%) than were participants who saw a control photo (65%;  $\chi^2(1, N = 374) = 1.6$ ,  $p > .2$ ).

To more firmly understand the phenomenon from Study 5, we showed a new set of Mechanical Turk participants ( $N = 72$ ) the high empathy description from Study 5 and told them that it prompted many people to donate. Participants then indicated whether they thought people donated because of 1) logical thoughts that the person was needy, 2) emotional reactions to the person's situation, or 3) other reasons (with an option to type a response; the order of the first two response options was counterbalanced). A strong majority, 89%, of participants indicated that emotional reactions drove the response, providing evidence that the high-empathy manipulation was indeed an affective, System 1-based manipulation.

### *Discussion*

In Study 5 we observe that, when faced with recipients in severe need, donors experience high empathy and a tendency to help regardless of beauty. This result complements that from Fisher and Ma (2014) showing that when recipient need and donor empathy are high, donors feel compelled to help regardless of recipient beauty. In both sets of findings, empathy overwhelms beauty; however, we note that the natures of these two findings differ. In the case of Fisher and Ma (2014, p. 438), high empathy trumps a System 2 deliberative process that favors less

beautiful recipients; in the present study, high empathy trumps another System 1 process, an instinctive preference for beauty.

We therefore have found that multiple preference patterns can result from intuitive System 1 processing; first, we have observed an instinctive draw toward beauty that leads to feelings of happiness and satisfaction (Studies 1B and 1C); second, we have observed that very high levels of empathy can push donors to choose needy recipients, regardless of their beauty (Study 5). Because there are multiple types of preferences that can arise from intuitive (versus deliberative) decisions, in a final study we test whether beautiful versus needy recipients specifically represent donors' *want* versus *should* preferences.

## STUDY 6

In Studies 2 through 4 donors were more likely to choose beautiful recipients when deciding intuitively but more likely to choose needy recipients when deciding deliberately. However, there are multiple types of preference patterns that can result from intuitive (vs. deliberative) decision modes (Morewedge and Kahneman 2009; Stanovich 2009), including, for example, stronger sensitivity to affect-rich options (Rottenstreich and Hsee 2004) or greater sensitivity to emotional influences like empathy (Loewenstein and Small 2007). In Study 6, we test whether donors' preferences for beautiful versus needy recipients map onto their *want* versus *should* desires respectively.

### Method

Two hundred and forty-eight Mechanical Turk participants (146 female, 102 male;  $M_{\text{Age}} = 33$ ) participated in the study online in exchange for a small payment. Participants viewed the

sponsorship scenario and photos from the Beauty condition from Study 1B and then answered two questions on the same page: “Which one of these children do you think the donors would **want** to choose?” and “Which one of these children do you think the donors **should** choose?” (the words “want” and “should” were bolded in the actual questions; cf. Milkman, Rogers, and Bazerman 2009).

### *Results*

A within-subjects omnibus McNemar-Bowker test showed a difference between conditions in which child was selected,  $\chi^2(6, n = 247) = 79.8, p < .0005$ . When participants considered which child donors want to give to, they chose Angelica (54% of choice share), the most attractive and least needy child (Vera 24%, Maria 14%, Silva 7%, all  $ps < .0001$  relative to Angelica’s choice share; see Figure 6).

Results were different when participants considered which child donors should give to. With this question, Angelica was no longer the most frequent choice, now only receiving 13% of choice share, whereas Vera, who was previously rated as needier than the other children, was chosen the most frequently (Vera, 48%; Maria, 24%; Silva, 14%; all  $ps < .0001$  relative to Vera’s choice share).

In between-questions analysis, participants were more likely to choose Angelica when answering the “want” compared to “should” question (54% vs. 13%,  $z(247) = 9.67, p < .0001$ ); participants were more likely to choose Vera when answering the “should” compared to “want” question (48% vs. 24%,  $z(247) = 5.57, p < .0001$ ).

\*\*\*\*\* Insert Figure 6 about here \*\*\*\*\*

## *Discussion*

Study 6 lends direct support to the idea that donors choose beautiful charitable recipients to satisfy *want* preferences whereas they choose needy charitable recipients to satisfy *should* preferences. When asked which recipient donors *want* to choose, participants selected Angelica (the most beautiful, least needy recipient) most often, whereas when asked which recipient donors *should* choose, they selected Vera (the neediest recipient) most often. Participants were naturally able to express charity recipient preferences in *want* and *should* categories.

We also once again see evidence that the charity beauty premium cannot be attributed to beliefs that beautiful recipients have more potential than their less beautiful counterparts (Langlois et al. 2000). If beliefs about recipient success drive the charity beauty premium, then participants ought to indicate that they should give to beautiful recipients. Instead, participants indicate that they should give to needier, but less beautiful, recipients instead.

## *GENERAL DISCUSSION*

Donors explicitly endorse neediness as a top donation priority; however, we observe that they often choose beautiful, less needy recipients instead. We test a hypothesis that donors simultaneously hold a *want* preference to give to beautiful recipients and a *should* preference to give to needy recipients. We further test whether preferences for beautiful recipients are most likely to emerge when decisions are intuitive whereas preferences for needy recipients are most likely to emerge when decisions are deliberative. In Studies 1A through 1C, when beautiful recipients are included in donation recipient choice sets, they are chosen most frequently and increase donor satisfaction. In Studies 2 through 4, prompting deliberative, compared to intuitive,

decision making eliminates the charity beauty premium and directs donors toward the neediest recipients. In Study 5, we observe that inducing high levels of empathy for all recipients can overwhelm the charity beauty premium. Finally, in Study 6, we find that the precise nature of donors' preferences for beautiful versus needy recipients corresponds with their *want* versus *should* desires: participants explicitly state that donors want to give to beautiful recipients but at the same time that they should give to less beautiful, needier ones. It seems that donors hold both sets of preferences, and that contextual factors favoring intuitive versus deliberative processing drive which preferences they will act upon.

The present research reconciles seemingly contradictory previous findings about beauty and giving. Although a charity beauty premium is consistent with some past research showing a positive effect of beauty on helping (Mims, Hartnett, and Nay 1975; West and Brown 1975), recent research uncovered a negative effect of beauty on empathy and helping (Fisher and Ma 2014). We bring this work together by identifying the circumstances under which each pattern occurs: when decisions are intuitive, attractive recipients receive more help; when decisions are deliberative, unattractive recipients receive more help.

Our findings suggest that when donors decide intuitively, charities may benefit by using beautiful photos, whereas when donors decide deliberatively, charities may benefit by emphasizing recipient neediness instead. Intuitive System 1 processing often is considered to be the default decision mode, routinely guiding thoughts and actions that are accepted by the deliberative system when processing under low effort (Evans and Stanovich 2013; Kahneman 2011). A frequent predominance of intuition over deliberation, in combination with the present findings, sheds light on why needy recipients may be neglected in the real world; if donors predominantly process information intuitively, beauty is likely to be favored. Further, these



patterns suggest that charities might be best off using beautiful photos as a default unless they believe their donors will be particularly deliberative when choosing (though we emphasize that all organizations should test patterns amongst their own donors and donation contexts).

Study 5 identifies a situation when System 1 processing does not result in a charity beauty premium: when emotional empathy is high, donors no longer prefer beautiful recipients. Although one reaction to this finding is that beauty might have minimal influence in the real world because of an overriding influence of strong empathy, we caution against such an interpretation. First, as we mention in our introduction, real world donations show that the highest-need causes, which have potential to trigger high levels of empathy, do not receive a substantial share of charitable contributions (Giving USA 2015). Second, empathy and sympathy are often characterized as negative emotional states (Cialdini et al. 1987; Small and Verrochi 2009) and recent neuroimaging research that predicts real world giving finds stronger effects of positive rather than negative donor emotional responses (Genevsky and Knutson 2015; Genevsky, et al. 2013). Finally, recent field evidence suggests that donors may be adept at avoiding situations where they expect to feel high empathy. A fascinating field study showed that when Salvation Army solicitors working outside stores made a direct plea to potential donors, looking them in the eye and asking “please give today,” donations increased. However, at the same time, traffic patterns into and out of the stores where solicitors operated also changed so that potential donors avoided encountering the solicitor altogether (Andreoni, Rao, and Trachtman 2011). These results and others suggest that, once potential donors’ attention is captured, high empathy appeals can be effective (Dickert and Slovic 2009); however, when given the opportunity, potential donors may actively attempt to avoid often uncomfortable empathetic appeals.

An additional preliminary study that we conducted sounds a cautionary note about increasing deliberation to encourage donors to choose the neediest recipients. In this study, designed similarly to Study 4, participants were randomly assigned to an Intuitive condition in which they simply chose a recipient to sponsor, or a Deliberative condition in which they rated each potential recipient on neediness before selecting one to sponsor. As in Study 4, the Deliberative condition effectively prompted donors to select a needier, less beautiful recipient compared to the Intuitive condition. However, later in the same session we asked participants to predict how much they would donate to the overall charity organization one year from now. Deliberative condition participants indicated that they would donate significantly less money one year from now compared to those in the Intuitive condition, who had been more likely to initially choose beauty. In other words, participants who were prompted to choose needy recipients over beautiful ones did so, but showed less willingness to donate in the future. Deliberation, therefore, appears to be a double-edged sword in that it increases priority for the neediest causes in the short term but may decrease kindness in response to future requests. Choosing in favor of neediness might satisfy a deliberative priority but might also diminish the immediate gratification that individuals derive from their *want* charity choices, suppressing future generosity. Taken together, this evidence again tentatively suggests that charities might benefit by relying on beautiful photos unless they have a specific reason to believe their donors decide deliberately when donating.

In conclusion, scholars have attempted for many years to understand the puzzle of why highly important campaigns remain underfunded while other, less desperate ones receive an outpouring of support. One of the most notable insights from this research is that focusing on the large scope of a problem, a natural way to present the world's neediest causes, can undermine

fundraising efforts by blocking donors' capacity for sympathy (Kogut and Ritov 2005; Small, Loewenstein, and Slovic 2007; Smith, Faro, and Burson 2013) and by obscuring a donor's sense of impact (Cryder, Loewenstein, and Scheines 2013; Grant 2007). In this research, we posit another reason why donors do not favor the world's neediest recipients: they are drawn to beautiful and pleasing ones instead. We examine donors' intuitive preference for beauty and find that it represents a *want* desire to give to instinctively pleasing targets. We posit that multiple other *want* charity preferences exist as well, including preferences to give to high-status causes such as prestigious universities or art museums, or personally relevant causes such as charities that have benefited friends or family (Small and Simonsohn 2008). We believe that understanding donors' desires to give to what feels good versus what feels optimal, as well as the contextual factors that favor one set of preferences over the other, present a fruitful research path for both scientists and practitioners.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Recent conceptualizations of *want* versus *should* preferences characterize them as tradeoffs that occur over time, with *want* options being those that are immediately gratifying and *should* options being those that are gratifying over the long term (e.g., Bitterly et al. 2014; Milkman, Rogers, and Bazerman 2008). In the current research, we rely on previous broader conceptualizations of *want* versus *should* tradeoffs in which *want* preferences are infused with a notion of desire even if that desire does not have a clear intertemporal component (e.g., Bazerman et al. 1998).

<sup>2</sup>All photo stimuli are available via e-mail from the first author.

<sup>3</sup>Sample sizes for all experiments were determined *ex ante*. At the end of all experiments, we included an “instructional manipulation check” (IMC; Oppenheimer, Meyvis, and Davidenko 2009) to identify inattentive participants. Participants who failed this attention check were removed before any analyses were conducted; thus, all reported results exclude them. Here we report the numbers of participants excluded from each experiment based on this criterion: Study 1B: 117; Study 1C: 70; Study 2: 55; Study 3: 75; Study 4: 112; Study 5: 281; Study 6: 165.

<sup>4</sup>We conducted a similar study, reported in Web Appendix B, using a choice set including four boys rather than four girls.

<sup>5</sup>We report social competence and emotional expression ratings from Study 4 here. Consistent with findings from Fisher and Ma (2014) and other research about the beauty premium (Langlois et al. 2000), participants in the Deliberative condition rated Angelica, the most attractive recipient, as also the most sociable ( $M_{\text{Angelica}} = 4.26$ ,  $M_{\text{Vera}} = 3.07$ ,  $M_{\text{Maria}} = 3.75$ ,  $M_{\text{Silva}} = 3.01$ ,  $ps < .0005$ ), most helpful ( $M_{\text{Angelica}} = 4.10$ ,  $M_{\text{Vera}} = 3.57$ ,  $M_{\text{Maria}} = 4.01$ ,  $M_{\text{Silva}} = 3.39$ ,  $ps < .05$ ), most intelligent ( $M_{\text{Angelica}} = 3.61$ ,  $M_{\text{Vera}} = 3.09$ ,  $M_{\text{Maria}} = 3.15$ ,  $M_{\text{Silva}} = 2.89$ ,  $ps < .0005$ ), and as having the least negative facial expression ( $M_{\text{Angelica}} = 1.33$ ,  $M_{\text{Vera}} = 3.11$ ,  $M_{\text{Maria}} = 1.49$ ,  $M_{\text{Silva}} = 3.24$ ,  $ps < .0005$ ).

TABLE 1

Study 1A: Beauty Ratings, Actual Endangerment, and Perceived Endangerment Ratings

Animals	Average beauty ratings (SE)	Actual endangerment status (numerical level from IUCN 2015)	Average perceived level of endangerment (SE)
Giraffe	5.81 (.15)	Least Concern (1)	3.66 (.15)
Zebra	5.12 (.15)	Least Concern (1)	3.49 (.16)
Flamingo	4.79 (.14)	Near Threatened (2)	4.02 (.20)
Elephant	4.66 (.16)	Endangered (4)	4.95 (.16)
Chimpanzee	4.42 (.15)	Endangered (4)	4.47 (.16)
Lemur	4.24 (.16)	Endangered (4)	3.93 (.17)
Orangutan	4.07 (.16)	Endangered (4)	4.77 (.16)
Penguin	4.06 (.16)	Vulnerable (3)	3.87 (.17)

FIGURE 1

STUDY 1A: PERCENTAGE OF SPONSORSHIPS FOR THE MOST AND LEAST  
BEAUTIFUL ANIMALS

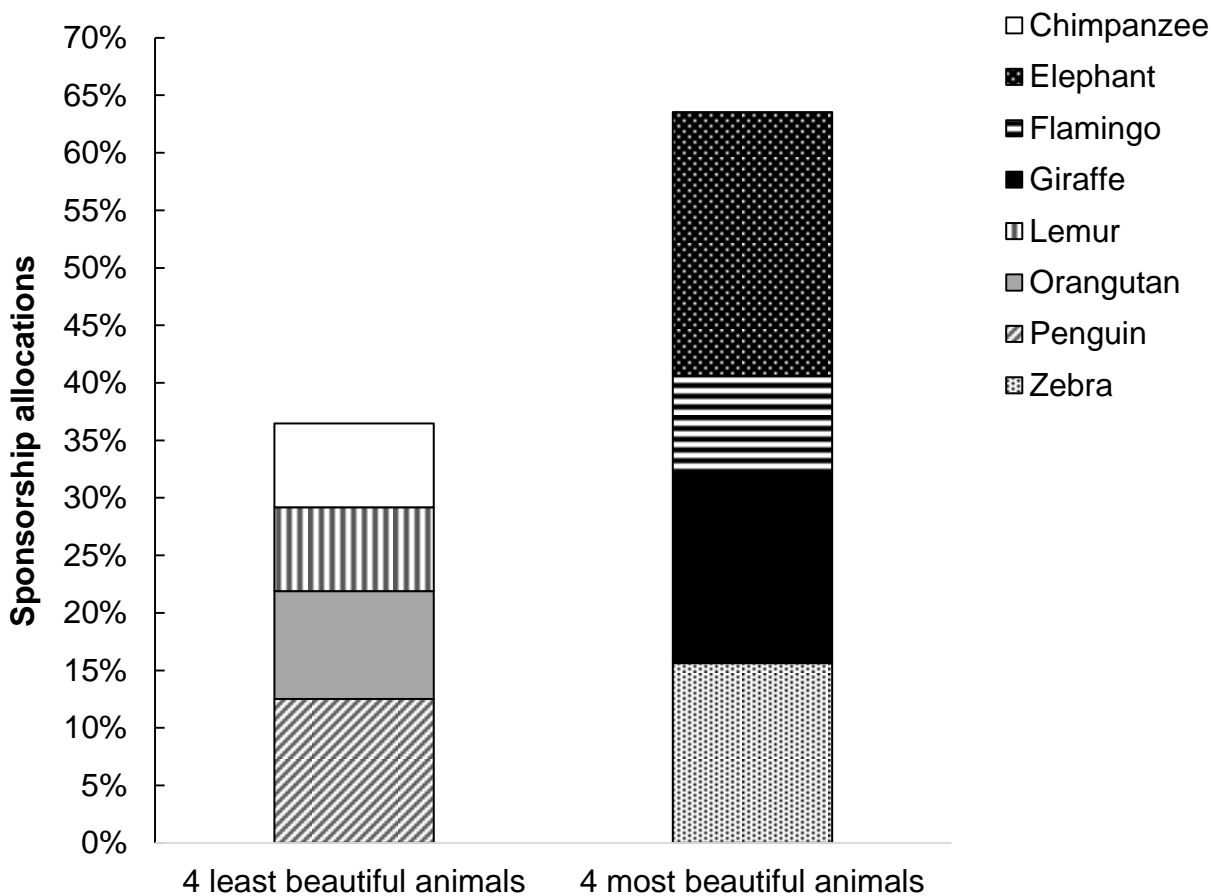
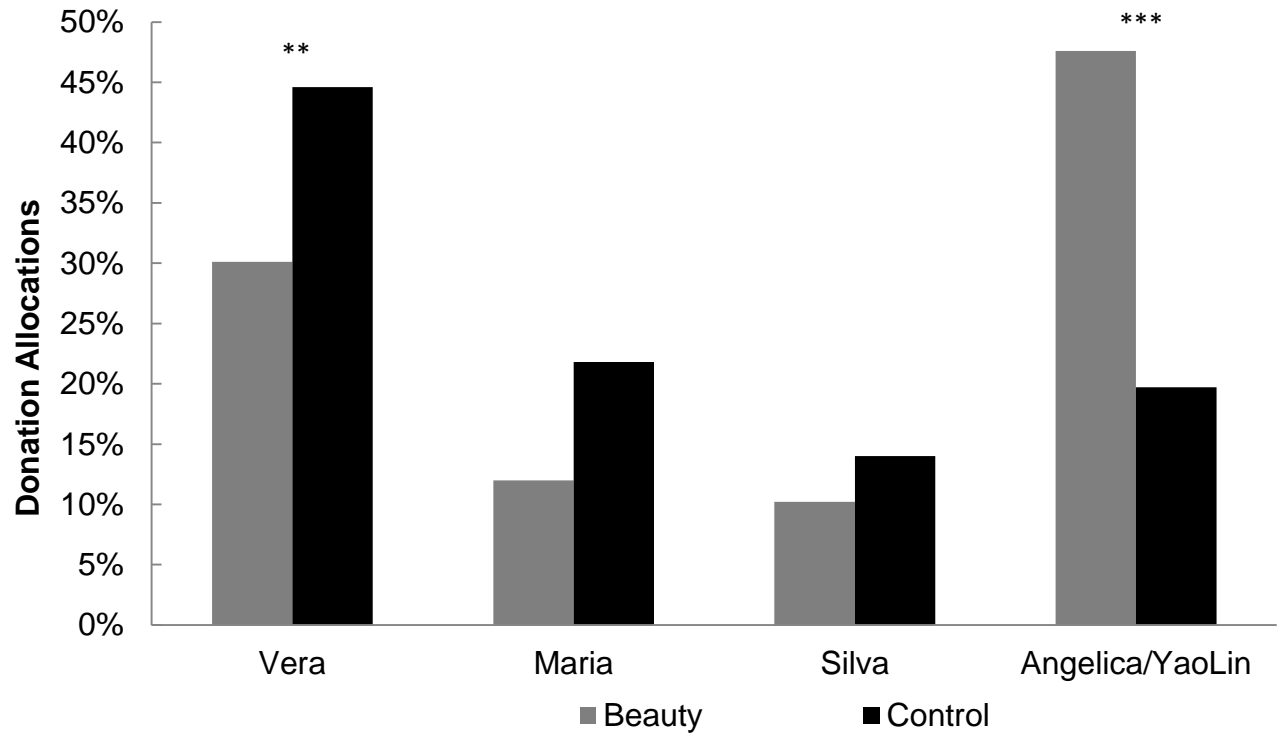


FIGURE 2

STUDY 1B: PERCENTAGE OF ALLOCATIONS RECEIVED BY EACH CHILD BASED ON  
CONTROL VERSUS BEAUTY CONDITION

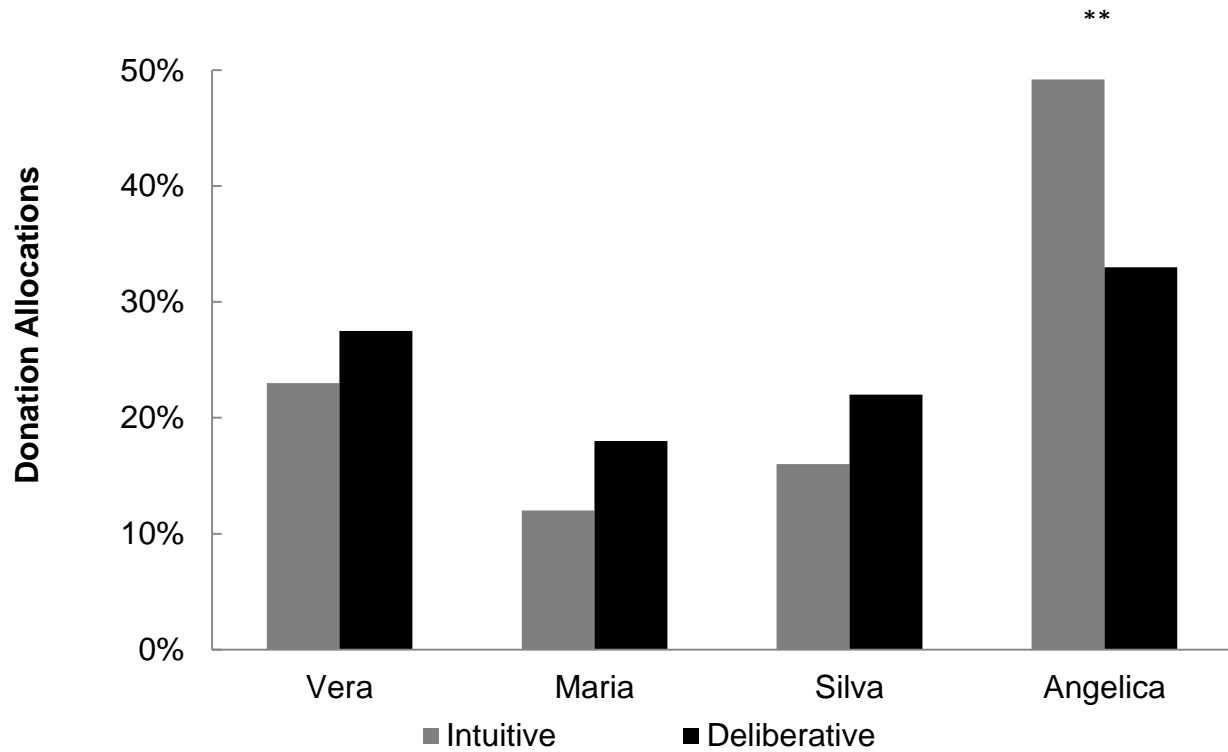


\*\* $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

FIGURE 3

STUDY 2: PERCENTAGE OF ALLOCATIONS RECEIVED BY EACH CHILD BASED ON  
INTUITIVE VERSUS DELIBERATIVE CONDITION

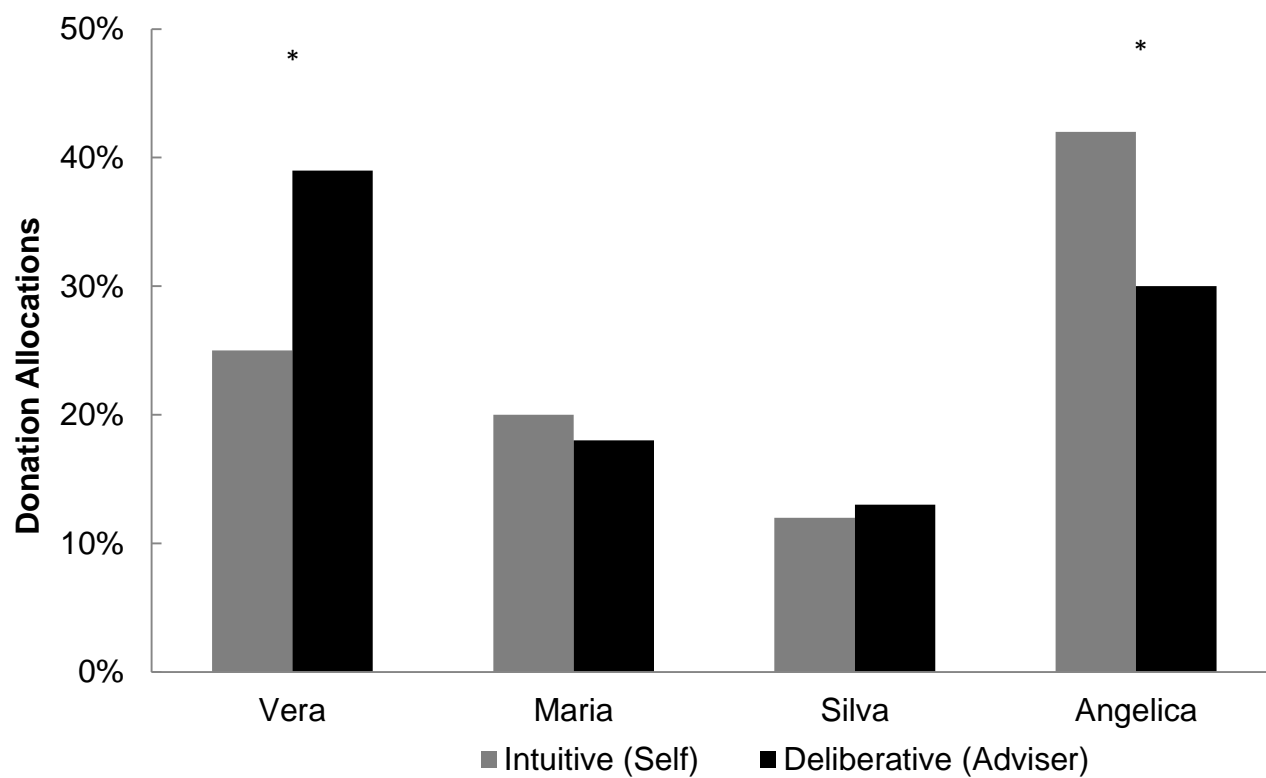


\*\* $p < .01$



FIGURE 4

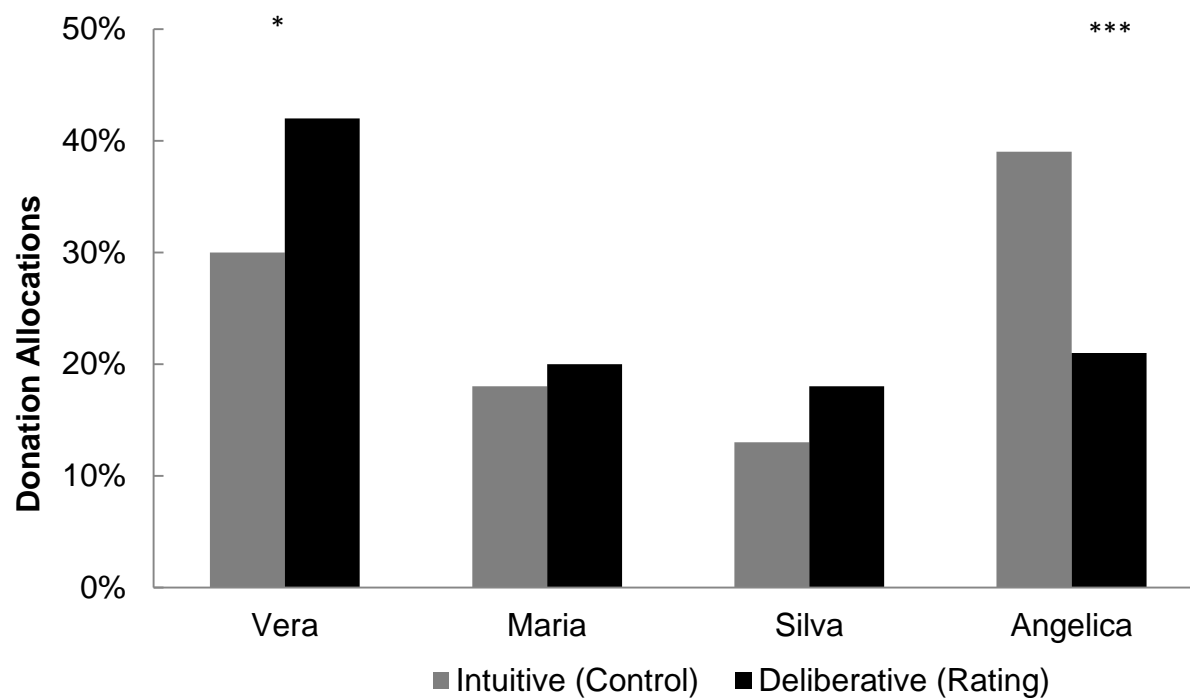
STUDY 3: PERCENTAGE OF ALLOCATIONS RECEIVED BY EACH CHILD BASED ON  
INTUITIVE VERSUS DELIBERATIVE CONDITION



\* $p < .05$

FIGURE 5

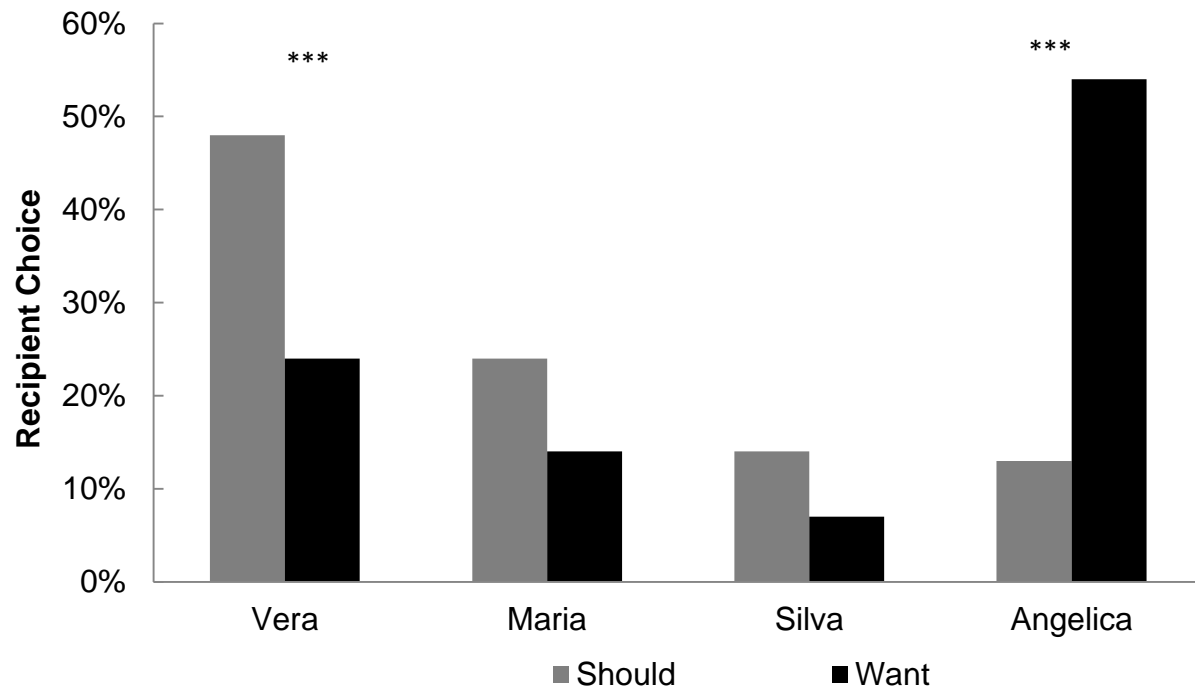
STUDY 4: PERCENTAGE OF ALLOCATIONS RECEIVED BY EACH CHILD BASED ON  
INTUITIVE VERSUS DELIBERATIVE CONDITION



\* $p < .05$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

FIGURE 6

STUDY 6: CHOICES BASED ON *WANT* VERSUS *SHOULD* PREFERENCES

\*\*\* $p < .001$