

Overly Specific Gift Giving:

Givers Choose Personalized but Less-Versatile and Less-Preferred Gifts

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ABSTRACT

Gift givers often struggle to select gifts that recipients are likely to appreciate. This research shows that givers favor gifts that are specifically appropriate for the recipient but are less versatile than what the recipient would prefer to receive, largely because givers tend to focus on recipients' unique traits and personalities rather than on their multiple, varying wants and needs. Givers favor overly specific gifts even when they first consider what they themselves would prefer to receive, and they mistakenly believe that recipients will consider these gifts to be more thoughtful and likeable. This tendency is exacerbated when givers are especially motivated to show how well they know recipients, such as when givers select gifts for relationship partners instead of friends, and it is attenuated by encouraging givers to focus on recipients' current wants and needs. Finally, this tendency can contribute to gift nonuse: recipients take longer to redeem gift cards that are more specific, but givers fail to anticipate this and favor specific over general gift cards.

Keywords: gift giving, self-other differences, person perception, judgment, choice

Gift givers often struggle to anticipate recipients' desires, giving gifts that gather dust rather than garner delight. Traditional economic theories point to a solution, suggesting that cash is the best and most efficient gift (Waldfogel 1993, 2002), as cash guarantees that recipients can get exactly what they want. However, giving cash can feel impersonal, thoughtless, or crass (Camerer 1988; Webley and Wilson 1989), exactly the opposite message from what givers wish to convey. Monetary gifts are accordingly quite rare, accounting for less than 15% of gifts (Waldfogel 2002). Instead, givers tend to choose more personalized gifts that reflect a broader range of considerations (Belk 1996; Camerer 1988; Schwartz 1967; Waldfogel 2002). Although such personalized attempts may stem from the best of intentions, are they successful? After all, the more that a gift is personalized or tailored to a specific set of tastes, the less flexible and versatile it usually is. Given that recipients typically value the gifts they receive less than what givers paid for them (Waldfogel 2009), it seems possible that givers may in fact be missing the mark. How (and how well) do gift givers navigate the rocky ground between tailoring a gift to the recipient and making sure they choose a gift the recipient will value and appreciate?

In this paper, we explore this issue, examining whether givers and recipients favor different tradeoffs between personalization and flexibility in gifts. Specifically, we examine whether givers tend to choose gifts that are more specific than recipients prefer to receive, why this discrepancy might arise, when it is likely to be exacerbated or attenuated, and whether this discrepancy has implications for gift nonuse.

Giver-Recipient Discrepancies

Much research on gift giving suggests that givers often fail to anticipate that the gifts they prefer to give are not necessarily the ones recipients prefer to receive. Whereas givers believe that recipients would equally like a gift independently chosen by the giver and a gift requested by

the recipient, recipients prefer gifts that they specifically requested (Gino and Flynn 2011). Also, whereas givers prioritize the desirability over the feasibility of a gift, recipients prefer gifts that are more feasible to use (Baskin et al. 2014). Additionally, although givers think that putting extra thought or money into a gift will increase recipient appreciation, recipients tend not to be affected by how much thought or money was invested (Flynn and Adams 2009; Zhang and Epley 2012). A common theme across this research is that givers often fail to account for the fact that some information is likely to be more meaningful to them as givers than to recipients, and consequently overweight information that is meaningful to them and underweight that which is more relevant to recipients.

We propose that another way in which givers misgauge recipients' preferences is by favoring gifts that are specific and personalized to recipients even when other gifts might be better able to satisfy a wider range of recipients' wants or needs. Because of the expressive value of gifts, givers typically tailor gifts to recipients, as it is not just the act of giving a gift, but the meaning of that gift, that matters. Givers strive to choose gifts that are uniquely appropriate for the recipient because doing so signals that they understand the unique tastes, preferences, and identity of the recipient (Belk 1996; Schwartz 1967). Indeed, givers seek out gifts that relate to others' most individuating and distinctive characteristics (Nelson and Miller 1995), and they are willing to pay more to customize products for other people than for themselves, suggesting that they may especially value personalization in gift giving (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd 2011). Givers who are shopping for multiple recipients will even pass up gifts they think will be better liked in favor of gifts that are targeted to each recipient (Steffel and LeBoeuf 2014).

Personalization like this may sometimes be valued, but recipients may not appreciate it so much

if it diverts givers from gifts that would better meet recipients' current wants and needs, which may be situation-dependent, temporary, or even seemingly discordant with their personality.

Although this prior research is suggestive, past research has not directly examined whether givers and recipients differ in the degree to which they favor personalized over more versatile gifts. We suggest that they may. For example, a giver choosing a gift for a friend who enjoys making margaritas might favor a specially designed margarita machine over a multi-purpose blender because it more clearly signals his knowledge of the recipient's preferences – but the recipient might prefer the blender that could serve a wider range of functions. Likewise, a giver might personalize a gift card for a friend who loves movies by getting him a gift card for Netflix or a local movie theater. However, the movie lover might prefer a more general card, like a Visa- or Mastercard-backed gift card, as it would allow him to purchase a Netflix subscription, a night at the movies, or anything else that he might want or need. By favoring specific gifts that are representative of the recipient over more versatile gifts, givers may make it less likely that the gifts will be able to satisfy the recipient's current wants or needs, whatever they may be.

Thus, we predict that:

H1: Gift givers tend to choose gifts that are more specific than recipients prefer to receive: that is, givers prefer to give gifts that are tailored to the recipient but limited in how they may be used, whereas recipients prefer gifts that are more versatile.

Contributors to a Giver-Recipient Mismatch

Why do givers, who have presumably been recipients themselves in the past, not seem to recognize this giver-recipient discrepancy? Certain basic psychological processes may get in the way. In particular, when choosing gifts, givers may readily think about their recipients' stable traits and consider gift options through that lens, whereas recipients may be more aware that

what they currently want and need may depend on the situation and may frequently change. After all, much research suggests that people tend to explain their own behavior and preferences according to situational factors, but explain others' behavior and preferences according to dispositional ones (e.g., Jones and Nisbett 1971; Nisbett et al. 1973). People are also prone to making inferences about others' stable traits from their behavior, even in the presence of powerful situational constraints (Gilbert and Malone 1995; Jones 1976; Ross 1977).

If givers tend to perceive others in terms of their traits, they may perceive a gift that is especially representative of its recipient's traits to be more appropriate and more likely to please the recipient than a more general gift, which could be used for multiple purposes. Once givers have it in mind that they should choose a gift that reflects the recipient's personality, it may be difficult for them to see the choice from the recipient's perspective and to take into account the fact that the recipient's wants and needs might be better served by a gift that could be used in multiple ways than a gift with a narrower range of uses. Perspective taking of that sort is difficult, and it can be hard for givers to put themselves in the recipient's shoes, even if they have been there themselves (e.g., Epley et al. 2004). Thus, we predict that:

H2: Givers tend to focus on recipients' stable traits and qualities, and fail to focus enough on recipients' variable wants and needs, leading givers to select overly specific gifts.

The hypothesized giver-recipient asymmetry may also be driven by the motives behind a giver's choice of gifts. Givers tend to believe that gifts that are individuated to their recipients are more thoughtful gifts, and the motive to be thoughtful can lead givers to select individuated gifts even when they believe that other gifts would be better liked (Steffel and LeBoeuf 2014). Thus, givers may prefer giving gifts with a specific purpose that reflect the recipient's traits or

interests, at least in part because such gifts better signal that givers put thought into choosing a gift that was tailored to the recipient. Consistent with this motive, we also predict that:

H3: Givers will be more likely to choose specific gifts over general ones when they are especially motivated to be thoughtful and demonstrate their knowledge of the recipient, such as when choosing gifts for close as opposed to distant others.

How, then, might givers be encouraged to choose gifts that are more likely to satisfy recipients? Past research has shown that encouraging givers to consider recipients' perspectives—either by imagining what recipients themselves would choose (Steffel and LeBoeuf 2014) or by imagining what they themselves would prefer (Baskin et al. 2014)—can help givers overcome perspective differences and choose better gifts. Another approach is to identify the criteria by which recipients are likely to evaluate gifts and prompt givers to evaluate the gift options using those same criteria (Baskin et al. 2014; Eyal and Epley 2010). Although both strategies have been shown to have some success, perspective taking alone may not be helpful if people's beliefs about others' perspectives and preferences are incorrect. Thus, prompting givers to consider recipients' perspectives may not be sufficient to improve gift decisions if givers are focusing on the wrong things when they think about what recipients would want. Rather, successful debiasing may depend on teaching givers to think about gift options in a manner more akin to the way that recipients perceive them, that is, to encourage them to think about recipients' current wants and needs rather than their personal traits. Thus, we predict that:

H4: Encouraging givers to focus on recipients' current wants and needs, rather than their traits and personality, makes givers less likely to select overly specific gifts.

Overview of Studies

Across nine studies, we show that givers tend to choose gifts that are more specific than recipients prefer to receive. Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c show that givers favor gifts that are tailored to the recipient but less flexible in how they can be used, but recipients prefer gifts that can be used more flexibly. Study 2 shows that givers choose overly specific gifts even when they first consider what they themselves would prefer to receive. Study 3 shows that this is because givers and recipients have different ideas about whether more specific gifts are more thoughtful and better liked. Study 4a shows that this discrepancy is rooted in the tendency for givers to focus on recipients' stable traits and qualities and for recipients to focus on their own variable wants and needs, and study 4b reveals that focusing givers on what recipients *would* like rather than what they *are* like makes givers less likely to choose overly specific gifts. Study 5 shows that givers are more likely to choose specific gifts for close than distant others, presumably because they are especially motivated to be thoughtful and personalize gifts for close others. Finally, studies 6a and 6b show in a real-world context that this giver-recipient discrepancy can contribute to gift non-use: recipients take longer to redeem gift cards that are more specific, but givers fail to anticipate this and favor specific over general gift cards.

STUDIES 1A, 1B, AND 1C: CHOICE OF SPECIFIC VERSUS GENERAL GIFTS

Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c examine whether givers tend to choose gifts that are more specific than recipients prefer to receive. Study 1a provides an initial test of this tendency by inviting givers and recipients to choose between a gift card that could be used at any store or one that could be used at a specific store that reflects the recipient's preferences. Study 1b explores whether this giver-recipient mismatch extends to choices between gift cards and tangible gifts

and also to choices between cash and tangible gifts, and study 1c tests whether this tendency generalizes to single-purpose versus multi-purpose gifts. We predict that, across a range of stimuli, givers will give more specific gifts than recipients want to receive.

Study 1a Method

Participants. Students ($N = 294$) at a large West Coast university participated in exchange for course credit.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to imagine that they were giving a birthday gift to a close friend (*giver* condition) or that a close friend was giving them a birthday gift (*recipient* condition). Participants were presented with two options: 1) “A Visa gift card, which functions like a debit card and can be used at any store,” or 2) “A gift card exclusive to your friend’s favorite store where they shop for clothing at least once a month” (*giver* condition) or “A gift card exclusive to your favorite store where you shop for clothing at least once a month” (*recipient* condition) Then, givers were asked to choose which gift card they would prefer to give, and recipients were asked to choose which card they would prefer to receive.

Study 1a Results and Discussion

As we predicted, givers expressed a preference for giving a more specific gift than recipients preferred to receive. Givers were more likely to choose a gift card to the recipient’s favorite store over a Visa gift card that could be used at any store than were recipients (65% vs. 26%; $\chi^2(1, N = 294) = 44.50, p < .001, \phi = .39$).

Study 1b examines the generality of the tendency for givers to choose more specific gifts than recipients want to receive by testing whether givers are also more likely than recipients to prefer a tangible gift over a gift card or a tangible gift over cash.

Study 1b Method

Participants. Students ($N = 120$) at a large West Coast university participated in exchange for course credit.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to answer a series of questions regarding either the types of gifts they preferred to give or the types of gifts they preferred to receive as part of a broader survey about gift giving. For each question, they indicated either “When you give a gift to someone else, which would you rather do?” (*giver* condition) or “When you get a gift from someone else, which would you rather they do?” (*recipient* condition). Participants indicated their preferences for cash versus a gift, a gift card versus a gift, and a gift card meant for one store versus a gift card meant for several stores on a series of 7-point scales ranging from one type of gift to the other.¹

Study 1b Results and Discussion

The tendency for givers to give more specific gifts than recipients prefer to receive generalizes to preferences for tangible gifts versus gift cards and tangible gifts versus cash. As in study 1a, on a scale from ranging from $1 = a\ gift\ card\ specifically\ for\ a\ store\ that\ you\ chose\ for\ the\ recipient$ (or, in the recipient condition, “...for a store that the giver chose for you”) and $7 = a\ gift\ card\ that\ works\ at\ several\ stores\ that\ the\ recipient\ could\ choose\ among$ (recipient condition: “...stores that you could choose among”), givers were more likely than recipients to prefer a gift card for a specific store ($M_{givers} = 4.20, SD = 2.44$, vs. $M_{recipients} = 5.17, SD = 2.05$; $t(115) = -2.36$, $p = .02$, $d = .43$). On a scale from ranging from $1 = a\ gift$ to $7 = a\ gift\ card$, again, givers were more likely to prefer a gift than were recipients ($M_{givers} = 2.53, SD = 1.81$, vs. $M_{recipients} = 3.48$, $SD = 2.01$; $t(117) = -2.73$, $p = .007$, $d = .50$). Finally, on a scale from ranging from $1 = a\ gift$ to $7 = cash$, givers were more likely to prefer to give a gift than recipients were to want one ($M_{givers} = 2.28, SD = 1.80$, vs. $M_{recipients} = 3.67, SD = 1.95$; $t(118) = -4.05$, $p < .001$, $d = .74$). Thus, across a

range of gift options varying in specificity, gift givers appear to want to give gifts that are more constrained than recipients want to receive.

Study 1c further probes the generality of the tendency for givers to choose more specific gifts than recipients want to receive by examining whether givers prefer to give single-purpose gifts over multi-purpose gifts but recipients prefer to receive multi-purpose gifts.

Study 1c Method

Participants. Adults ($N = 278$) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk service and received \$.20 Amazon.com credit.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to imagine that they were giving a gift to a friend or that a friend was giving them a gift. Participants considered, "Imagine that you are choosing a housewarming gift for a friend who loves frozen margaritas. You would like to give your friend an appliance that he/she could use to make frozen margaritas. What appliance would you prefer to give?" (*giver condition*) or "Imagine that a friend is choosing a housewarming gift for you knowing that you love making frozen margaritas. Your friend would like to give you an appliance that you could use to make frozen margaritas. What appliance would you prefer to receive?" (*recipient condition*), and responded on a scale ranging from $1 = \textit{Definitely a frozen margarita slush machine specifically designed for making margaritas}$ to $7 = \textit{Definitely a top-of-the-line blender that could be used for making any frozen or blended drink}$.

Study 1c Results and Discussion

The tendency for givers to give more specific gifts than recipients prefer to receive also generalizes to single-purpose gifts versus multi-purpose gifts. Givers preferred to give the single-purpose margarita machine over the multi-purpose blender to a greater extent than recipients

preferred to receive it ($M_{givers} = 4.28, SD = 2.05$, vs. $M_{recipients} = 5.50, SD = 1.94$; $t(268.28) = -5.08, p < .001, d = .61$; equal variances not assumed).

Discussion: Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c

Together, these studies show that givers tend to favor gifts that are more specific than recipients would like to receive. Givers are more likely than recipients to favor a gift card meant for one store versus a gift card meant for several stores, a gift over a gift card, a gift over cash, and a single-purpose gift over a multi-purpose gift.

Are givers simply forgetting what it is like to be a gift recipient, or would givers still choose overly specific gifts even if they first considered what they themselves would prefer? In the next study, we examine the robustness of this giver-recipient discrepancy by inviting gift givers to consider both what they themselves would prefer to receive and what they would prefer to give, to see whether or not they realize that their recipient is likely to share their preference.

STUDY 2: CONSIDERING BOTH OWN AND OTHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Study 2 investigates whether givers persist in choosing overly specific gifts even when they first consider what they themselves would prefer to receive. Past research suggests that at times having gift givers imagine what they would prefer to receive can help them better match their recipient's preferences (e.g., Baskin et al. 2014). However, if, as we suggest, people focus on different considerations when they assume the role of being a giver versus being a recipient (i.e., givers may focus on what recipients *are* like, but recipients may focus on what they *would* like), then having people first imagine being recipients may not be enough to make them act differently when they later take on the role of givers. The giver role may so strongly prompt the

focus on recipients' personalities and the desire to personalize gifts that momentarily adopting the recipient role may not override this focus.

Method

Participants. Students ($N = 343$) at a large West Coast university participated in exchange for course credit.

Procedure. Participants imagined themselves as both the recipient of a gift card for their own birthday and as a giver of a gift card for a friend's birthday. Approximately half of the participants were randomly assigned to first imagine themselves as the giver of the gift card, then as the recipient on the next page. The other participants first considered receiving the gift card, then on the following page considered giving the gift card. Participants indicated which of two gift cards they would prefer in each situation, either "a Visa gift card, which functions like a debit card and can be used at any store," or "a gift card exclusive to your friend's favorite store, where they shop for clothing at least once a month" (*giver* condition) or "a gift card exclusive to your favorite store, where you shop for clothing at least once a month" (*recipient* condition). They indicated their preference on a scale in which $1 = I$ would definitely prefer to receive [give them] the gift card to my [their] favorite store to $7 = I$ would definitely prefer to receive [give them] the Visa gift card.

Results

The difference between the gifts givers prefer to give and recipients prefer to receive appears—at least initially—to be an intractable one. Participants were less likely to favor giving the Visa gift card than they were to favor receiving it ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 2.44$ vs. $M = 5.17$, $SD = 2.32$, respectively; $F_{\text{role}}(1, 341) = 160.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .32$). Neither the order in which participants took the role of giver or recipient nor the interaction between order and role reliably

influenced gift preferences ($F_{\text{order}}(1, 341) = .38, p = .54, \eta_p^2 = .001$; $F_{\text{order} \times \text{role}}(1, 341) = .09, p = .77, \eta_p^2 < .001$). Even when participants are well aware that they are choosing between the same gifts for self and other, they still indicate that they would have different preferences for the gifts they give and the gifts they get, opting to give a more specific gift than they would prefer to receive. See figure 1.

 Insert figure 1 about here

Discussion

Granting givers the chance to consider what they themselves would prefer to receive does little to reduce the tendency for givers to give more specific gifts than recipients prefer to receive. Participants preferred to give a gift card to the recipient's favorite store over a Visa gift card but preferred to receive a Visa gift card over a gift card to their favorite store, regardless of the order in which they made these choices. Thus, this discrepancy cannot be corrected simply by encouraging givers to consider what they themselves would prefer if they were in the recipient's shoes. Study 3 examines one reason why this discrepancy may persist.

STUDY 3: MISPERCEPTIONS OF LIKING AND THOUGHTFULNESS

Study 3 examines whether givers truly believe that recipients will like specific gifts better than more versatile gifts and consider them to be more thoughtful. Because of the various, occasionally competing goals of gift giving, there are times when gift givers recognize that they are giving a gift that will be less liked by the recipient than another option, but feel compelled to

do so anyway (e.g., to individuate gifts when giving to multiple people, Steffel and LeBoeuf 2014, or because there is a norm to give specific gifts). Here, we examine whether this is one of those times, or whether givers are indeed mistaken about what recipients would like best.

Method

Participants. Students ($N = 238$) at a large West Coast university participated in exchange for course credit.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to imagine that they were giving a gift to a close friend for the friend's birthday or that a close friend was giving them a gift for their birthday. All participants indicated which would be a more thoughtful gift in their eyes: 1) "a Visa gift card, which functions like a debit card and can be used at any store," or 2) "a gift card exclusive to your friend's favorite store, where they shop for clothing at least once a month" (*giver* condition), or "a gift card exclusive to your favorite store, where you shop for clothing at least once a month" (*recipient* condition). Then, givers rated how much their friend would like each of the gift cards and recipients rated how much they themselves would like each of the gift cards on scales ranging from $1 = \textit{not at all}$ to $7 = \textit{extremely well}$.

Results

Givers are miscalibrated about recipients' feelings regarding specific and general gift cards. Recipients were more likely to consider the Visa gift card to be the more thoughtful of the two gift cards than were givers (45% vs. 18%; $\chi^2(1, N = 238) = 21.20, p < .001, \phi = .30$). Recipients also liked the Visa gift card more than givers thought they would ($M_{\text{recipients_Visa}} = 6.03, SD = 1.42$ vs. $M_{\text{givers_Visa}} = 5.29, SD = 1.40; t(236) = 4.04, p < .001, d = .52$), and recipients liked the gift card to their favorite store less than givers thought they would ($M = 5.58_{\text{recipients_favorite}}, SD = 1.62$ vs. $M_{\text{givers_favorite}} = 6.08, SD = 1.15; t(213.36) = -2.77, p = .006, d = .36$, equal variances

not assumed). Examined another way, recipients liked the Visa gift card more than the gift card to their favorite store ($M_{\text{Visa}} = 6.03$, $SD = 1.42$ vs. $M_{\text{favorite}} = 5.58$, $SD = 1.62$; paired $t(118) = 2.68$, $p = .008$, $d = .66$). However, givers thought that recipients would like the gift card to the recipient's favorite store better than the Visa gift card ($M_{\text{favorite}} = 6.08$, $SD = 1.15$ vs. $M_{\text{Visa}} = 5.29$, $SD = 1.40$; paired $t(118) = 5.08$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.39$).

Discussion

It appears that gift givers are not overriding their accurate intuitions about what recipients would prefer to receive in the service of some other goal, but instead that those intuitions are mistaken. Givers seem to genuinely believe more specific gifts to be more thoughtful and more liked by those who receive them despite the fact that, in actuality, recipients prefer to receive more versatile gifts, believing them to be the more thoughtful and likeable gifts.

Why might givers be so miscalibrated about their recipients' preferences? Gift giving is often intended to send a message from giver to recipient. That message is encoded not only in the fact that the giver is giving a gift, but also in what specifically the gift is and what it says about the giver and recipient's relationship. In particular, the giver may be trying to communicate how well he or she knows the recipient. Thus, one reason why givers may tend to choose personalized but overly restrictive gifts is that they may be focusing on the extent to which gifts are representative of recipients' unique traits and personality, rather than on whether the gifts are likely to satisfy the recipient's varying wants and needs.

STUDIES 4A AND 4B: FOCUS ON TRAITS VERSUS CURRENT WANTS AND NEEDS

Studies 4a and 4b test the causal link between givers' tendency to focus on recipients' unique traits rather than varying wants and needs and givers' miscalibration about recipients' preferences. First, study 4a examines whether givers and recipients differ in the weight they place on recipients' personalities rather than their wants and needs when contemplating gifts. Then, in study 4b, we encourage givers to either think about what the recipient *is like* as a person or what the recipient *would like* to receive, and we ask givers whether they would give a general or specific gift. We predict that givers focus to a greater extent on recipients' traits (rather than wants and needs) than do recipients, and that givers will therefore be more likely to choose a more personalized—but more restrictive—gift when they first think about what their recipient is like than when they think about what the recipient would like.

Study 4a Method

Participants. Adults ($N = 207$) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk service and received \$.20 Amazon.com credit.

Procedure. Participants were asked to imagine that they were creating a list of possible gifts, either to give to a close friend or to receive from a close friend (i.e., recipients created a “wish list” of gifts they might like to receive). Givers were told the following; the wording for recipients is in brackets:

People give gifts to others for many reasons: to acknowledge their relationships, to express gratitude or an obligation, to meet cost considerations, and so on.

We are interested in two particular reasons why you might choose certain gifts to give [suggest] to your friend:

--Sometimes you might choose a gift to give [suggest] because it really reflects their [your] notable traits and qualities and what you [they] know about their [your]

personality.

--Sometimes you might choose a gift to give [suggest] because it really is something they [you] currently want or need.

How likely are you to consider these reasons when deciding what gifts you would like to give [suggest] to your close friend?

Givers indicated, “How likely would you be to give a gift to your friend primarily because it reflects their notable traits and qualities and what you know about their personality?” and “How likely would you be to give a gift to your friend primarily because it is something they currently want or need?” on a scale from 1 = *not at all likely* to 7 = *extremely likely*. Recipients answered similar questions: “How likely would you be to suggest a gift to your friend primarily because it reflects your notable traits and qualities and what they know about your personality?” and “How likely would you be to suggest a gift to your friend primarily because it is something you currently want or need?”

This study was slightly different in its setup from previous studies, and so as a comprehension check, participants also indicated on the following page whether they were considering “A list of which gifts you might give to a friend” or “A list of which gifts a friend might give to you.”

Study 4a Results and Discussion

Among participants who passed the comprehension check ($N = 171$), givers rated themselves significantly more likely to consider what their friend was like as a person when choosing a gift to give to them ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.31$) than recipients were to consider what they were like as a person when suggesting gifts for their friend give to them ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.54$; $t(169) = 5.58$, $p < .001$, $d = .84$). However, givers ($M = 5.58$, $SD = 1.25$) were less likely than

recipients ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.11$) to consider what the recipient currently wants and needs when choosing a gift ($t(169) = -2.30$, $p = .02$, $d = .35$).² These findings indicate that givers and recipients do focus on different aspects of the recipient when thinking about gifts. In study 4b, we demonstrate that shifting givers' focus from the recipients' traits and personality to their wants and needs makes them better calibrated regarding the recipients' true preferences.

Study 4b Method

Participants. Adults ($N = 208$) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk service and received \$.15 Amazon.com credit.

Procedure. Participants were asked to imagine that they were giving a gift to a close friend for their birthday. They thought of a specific friend for whom that could be true and wrote down the recipient's initials. Participants were randomly assigned to think about either what the recipient was like (*traits* condition) or what they would like (*wants and needs* condition). Specifically, participants were instructed: "Now that you have this friend in mind, we would like you to think a little bit about what your friend is [would] like, to help inform your choice of gifts. What are your friend's notable traits and qualities [current needs and wants]? What are a few specific things you know about your friend's personality [your friend might want or need]?" After spending a few minutes answering these questions, participants next rated how likely they would be to choose a general or specific gift card on a scale ranging from $1 = I$ would definitely give them a gift card exclusive to my friend's favorite store where they shop at least once a month to $7 = I$ would definitely give them a Visa gift card, which functions like a debit card and can be used at any store.

Study 4b Results and Discussion

Considering a recipient's wants and needs instead of their personality can help guide givers toward a less-restrictive gift. Givers rated themselves more likely to choose a more personalized but more restrictive gift card when they first thought about what their recipient was like ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 2.48$) than when they thought about what their recipients would like ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 2.37$; $t(206) = -2.33$, $p = .02$, $d = .32$). This technique even appears to help debias givers, so that they are more likely than not to choose to give the Visa gift card: Participants who thought about what their friend is like were torn between the Visa card and the favorite store card, as their responses were not significantly different from the scale midpoint of 4 ($t(100) = .04$, $p = .97$, $d = .004$). However, participants who thought about what their friend would want were more likely than not to prefer the Visa gift card ($t(106) = 3.47$, $p = .001$, $d = .34$).

Discussion

Study 4a established that gift givers are inclined to consider their recipient's personality when choosing a gift, whereas recipients are more inclined to consider what they want and need when thinking about the gifts they could get. Study 4b established that the inclination to consider traits instead of wants in turn predicts givers' likelihood of giving a specific versus general gift. Using an experimental causal chain design (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005), we have demonstrated a causal link between whether givers and recipients focus on the recipient's wants and needs and the types of gifts they prefer.

Of course, the degree to which a giver might focus on, be aware of, or feel obligated to attend to a recipient's personality might vary, for a number of reasons. In particular, it might depend on the nature of the relationship the two have with each other. If givers believe that specific, personalized gifts are better and more thoughtful gifts, then they may be especially

likely to choose specific gifts for recipients they are closest to and most motivated to please. We examine relationship closeness as a potential moderator in study 5.

STUDY 5: THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIP CLOSENESS

Givers are likely to care most about selecting gifts that recipients like and find thoughtful when they are choosing gifts for recipients with whom they are especially close. Study 5 examines the role of relationship closeness in giver-recipient discrepancies. In this study, givers and recipients indicated how likely they would be to prefer to give or receive a general versus a specific gift card. In this case, however, some of the participants considered a gift exchange with a friend, while others considered a gift exchange with their significant other. We expected to find the typical divergence in preferences between giver and recipient for both relationships. However, we also expected that this discrepancy would be particularly large when givers consider significant others, whom they are especially motivated to make happy.

Method

Participants. Adults ($N = 404$) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk service and received \$.15 Amazon.com credit.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to imagine that they were giving a gift to someone for their birthday (*giver* condition) or that someone was giving them a gift for their birthday (*recipient* condition). They were also randomly assigned to imagine that the "someone" was either a friend (*friend* condition) or their significant other (*partner* condition). Givers rated the extent to which they would prefer to give a specific or general gift card on a scale ranging from $1 = I$ would definitely prefer to give my friend [partner] the gift card to his/her favorite

store, to 7 = *I would definitely prefer to give my friend [partner] the Visa gift card*, and recipients rated the extent to which they would prefer to receive a specific or general gift card on a scale ranging from 1 = *I would definitely prefer to receive the gift card to my favorite store from my friend [partner]*, to 7 = *I would definitely prefer to receive the Visa gift card from my friend [partner]*. As a comprehension check, participants also indicated on the following page whether they were asked to imagine that they were a giver or recipient in the scenario.

Results

It does appear that significant others are particularly likely to give their partners a specific gift card, more so than mere friends. However, recipients' preferences do not change depending on who the giver is, and they prefer a more general gift card regardless of who would give it to them. Among participants who passed the comprehension check ($N = 382$), givers preferred the specific gift card relative to the general gift card to a greater extent than did recipients ($M_{\text{givers}} = 3.88$, $SD = 2.44$, vs. $M_{\text{recipients}} = 5.13$, $SD = 2.17$; $F(1, 378) = 27.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$) and the specific gift card was preferred more among romantic partners than friends ($M_{\text{partners}} = 4.08$, $SD = 2.45$, vs. $M_{\text{friends}} = 4.90$, $SD = 2.27$; $F(1, 378) = 11.50$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$). Of more importance, there was also a significant interaction ($F(1, 378) = 5.63$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$), such that givers preferred the specific gift card to a greater extent for a romantic partner than a friend ($M_{\text{givers_partners}} = 3.23$, $SD = 2.29$, vs. $M_{\text{givers_friends}} = 4.57$, $SD = 2.43$; $t(197) = -4.01$, $p < .001$, $d = .57$), but recipients' preferences between the gift cards did not vary based on whether they were from a romantic partner or friend ($M_{\text{recipients_partners}} = 5.01$, $SD = 2.29$, vs. $M_{\text{recipients_friends}} = 5.25$, $SD = 2.04$; $t(180.31) = -.74$, $p = .46$, $d = .11$; equal variances not assumed).³ See figure 2.

 Insert figure 2 about here

Discussion

The closer the relationship between the giver and the recipient, the stronger the motivation the giver has to give a gift card that reflects the recipient's individuality—in other words, the more givers feel like they need to give what seems to them, as a giver, to be a good gift. This finding suggests that, although this giver-recipient discrepancy may emerge in part due to how givers think about recipients (in that givers are more likely to focus on what recipients *are* like than what they *would* like), givers' motives can also exacerbate and contribute to the discrepancy. Significant others seem to feel especially compelled to give gift cards that are matched to what their partner is like.

STUDIES 6A AND 6B: IMPLICATIONS FOR GIFT NONUSE

If it is the case that givers tend to give more specific gifts than recipients would like, then recipients may be less likely to use gifts the more specific they are. Some indirect insight into this question may be gleaned from the gift card resale market: many web sites allow people the opportunity to sell gift cards they do not intend to use at a discount to others who do intend to use them, with the size of the discount reflecting the demand for the gift card. Indeed, measured in a number of ways, the more constrained a set of products a gift card can purchase, the less valued the gift card is on the resale market. Gift cards resold on eBay garnered lower bids the fewer products for which they could be redeemed (as approximated by less floor space; Offenberg 2007). Data that we received from a number of gift card resellers also supports this

conclusion. We coded the gift cards to the 100 most popular stores resold on GiftCards.com for the number of product categories for which they could be redeemed out of nine possible categories—food and beverage, beauty and cosmetics, clothing and accessories, home and home improvement, arts and crafts, media and entertainment, electronics and computing, sport and fitness, and travel—and found a negative relationship between the number of product categories and the discount at which it sold ($r = -.27, p = .007$). We observed a similar but nonsignificant relationship among the gift cards to the 100 most popular stores resold on CardCash.com ($r = -.15, p = .14$). We also examined the gift cards to the 25 most popular stores resold on GiftCardGranny.com and found a sizeable correlation between the number of product categories and the number of people who requested to receive email notifications when the gift card became available ($r = .65, p < .001$).

We predict that, likewise, recipients may take longer to redeem gift cards designated for a restricted range of product categories or for a particular store, if they redeem them at all. Thus, studies 6a and 6b sought evidence for a relationship between gift card specificity and redemption time in the context of real-world gift exchanges. In study 6a, participants were randomly assigned to recall a gift card they gave and to indicate how long they think it took the recipient to redeem it (if at all), or to recall a gift card they received and indicate how long it took them to redeem it (if at all). We coded the gift cards for specificity based on the number of product categories for which they could be redeemed, and we examined the relationship between specificity and predicted and actual redemption times. We predicted that increased specificity would increase redemption times, but that givers would not appreciate this. To further explore the generality of this relationship, in study 6b, we analyzed all gift cards that were given and redeemed in 2013 via Giftly—a service that allows people to give personalized gift cards with a

suggestion of what to get and where to get it—and examined the relationship between redemption times and whether the gift card came with specific suggestions. We predicted that givers would be more likely to give gifts with a specific suggestion than more general gifts, but that recipients would take longer to redeem gift cards that came with suggestions.

Study 6a Method

Participants. Adults ($N = 302$) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk service and received \$.15 Amazon.com credit.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to recall a gift card that they gave to a friend or family member for the holidays the previous year or that they received from a friend or family member for the holidays the previous year. Participants identified the gift card that they gave [received], indicated how much it was worth, then indicated how long they thought it took the recipient [them] to redeem the gift card on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 = *less than 1 week*, 1 = *1 week*, 2 = *2 weeks*, 3 = *3 weeks*, 4 = *4 weeks*, 5 = *More than 5 weeks*, and 6 = *The recipient has [I have] not redeemed the gift card yet*. The survey was conducted 20 weeks after Christmas, but this five-week range was chosen to span from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean redemption time found in a pre-test.

Altogether, participants identified gift cards to 82 different stores. The median value of the gift cards was \$25 ($M = \43, $SD = \$48$, range = \$5-500). Gift card value was positively skewed, so we log transformed this variable in the analyses that follow. Ninety-four percent of gift cards were for a specific store (e.g., Amazon, Best Buy, Starbucks), and 6% could be used anywhere (e.g., Visa, American Express). Even within specific gift cards, there can be more or fewer constraints on what recipients can purchase; for example, a recipient can purchase far more categories of products with a Target gift card than with a Starbucks gift card. Two coders

who were blind to condition coded the gift cards for specificity based on the number of product categories for which they could be redeemed. There were eight product categories: food and beverage, beauty and cosmetics, clothing and accessories, home and home improvement, arts and crafts, media and entertainment, electronics and computing, and sport and fitness. (Travel, which was used in study 5, was not included as a category because it was not represented in the sample.) Inter-rater agreement was high ($r(82) = .98, p < .001$). The majority of gift cards (55%) could only be used for a subset of the possible product categories.

Study 6a Results and Discussion

Overall, givers predicted that those recipients who had redeemed their gift cards took $M = 2.43$ weeks to do so; only 3% of givers predicted that recipients had not yet redeemed their gift cards. Recipients reported actually taking $M = 2.60$ weeks to redeem their gift cards, if they had redeemed them, and another 18% of recipients reported that they had not yet redeemed the gift cards they received. Controlling for the log-transformed value of the gift cards, we regressed givers' predictions and recipients' reports of how long it took recipients to redeem the gift cards (using the full 7-point scale) onto role (giver or recipient), the number of product categories for which the gift cards could be redeemed (centered), and their interaction. Givers thought recipients would redeem gift cards faster than they actually did, $\beta = .17, t = 3.04, p = .003$. Furthermore, predicted and actual redemption times were longer the fewer product categories for which the gift cards could be redeemed, $\beta = -.25, t = -4.41, p < .001$. Most important, there was a significant interaction between role and the number of product categories for which the gift cards could be redeemed, $\beta = -.12, t = -2.18, p = .03$. The fewer product categories for which the gifts could be redeemed, the longer recipients took to redeem them, $\beta = -.35, t = -4.44, p < .001$, but givers did not significantly consider the number of product categories for which the gifts could

be redeemed when predicting redemption time, $\beta = -.14$, $t = -1.62$, $p = .11$. The pattern of results was identical without transforming gift card value and without controlling for gift card value.

Thus, recipients took longer to redeem gift cards (if at all) the more specific they were, but givers underestimated the extent to which that was the case.

Study 6b Method

In this study, we analyzed all gift cards that were given in 2013 and redeemed via Giftly, a service that allows givers to give recipients personalized gift cards with a suggestion of what to get and where to get it. Recipients receive their gift card by entering a code on the Giftly website, where they can opt to receive their gift as a credit to their credit card or to their PayPal account. Giftly also enables recipients to thank the giver and to share information about the purchase they made with the gift card via Giftly's website. The dataset included information 9,359 gifts, including when the gifts were delivered, when the gift cards' codes were entered and thus the gifts were received (only gifts that had been claimed in this way were included in the dataset), if and when recipients reported spending their gifts and thanked givers (this was optional for recipients), the item that was specified by the giver (e.g., specific = "dinner," "mani-pedi," "manpurse;" general = "anything"), the place that was specified by the giver (e.g., specific = "Cottage Restaurant," "Beauty Nails," "Rivers Casino;" general = "any restaurant," "any store," "any place"), the value of the gifts, how the gift was received (via credit to a credit card or PayPal account), and the place that recipients reported redeeming the gift (this was optional)

Study 6b Results and Discussion

Again, specificity was predictive of delays in how long recipients took to use their gifts. Overall, it took recipients a median of 16 days ($M = 40$, $SD = 59$, range = 0-548) to claim their gifts. Of the 35% of recipients ($N = 3,235$) who opted to report spending their gifts and thank

givers, the median number of days it took recipients to report spending their gifts and thank givers were 20 days ($M = 50$, $SD = 73$, range = 0-548). Ninety percent of gifts ($N = 8,447$) came with a suggestion of an item or place where the gift should be used. The median value of the gifts was \$50 ($M = \66, $SD = \$69$, range = \$5-999). Seventy-nine percent of gifts were received via credit to a credit card, and 21% were received via a credit to a PayPal account. The number of days it took recipients to claim their gift cards, the number of days it took them to report spending their gifts and thank givers, and the value of the gifts were all positively skewed, so we log-transformed each of these variables. For all of the analyses that follow, we report the means for the non-transformed values for ease of interpretation.

Controlling for gift value and method of receipt, recipients took longer to claim gifts that came with a specific suggestion of an item or place where the gift should be used (adjusted $M = 40.53$ days, $SE = .64$) than ones that did not (adjusted $M = 32.90$ days, $SE = 1.95$; $F(1, 9,355) = 75.89$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$). Those who opted to report spending their gifts and to thank givers took longer to do so when the gift came with a specific suggestion (adjusted $M = 50.58$ days, $SE = 1.34$) than when it did not (adjusted $M = 42.04$ days, $SE = 3.83$; $F(1, 3,232) = 21.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .007$). The pattern of results was identical without transforming the key variables and without controlling for gift value and method of receipt.

Our results show that recipients take longer to use specific gift cards than general ones, suggesting that the tendency for givers to favor specific over general gift cards could contribute to gift card nonredemption. Specifically, study 6a showed that recipients took longer to redeem gift cards (if they redeemed them at all) the more specific they were. Yet givers tended to give gift cards that could only be redeemed for a limited number of product categories, and they failed to anticipate that recipients would take longer to redeem more specific gift cards. A similar

pattern emerged in study 6b with monetary gifts with suggestions for how and where they should be used, even though the restrictions on these gifts were merely suggestions rather than actual barriers to use. Although Giftly givers overwhelmingly chose to give gifts with a specific suggestion for an item and place where the gift should be used, recipients took longer to redeem gifts with specific suggestions than those without.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

People prefer different gifts depending on whether they are the giver or the recipient. Givers prefer to give gifts that are specifically tailored to what the recipient is like, whereas recipients prefer to receive more general gifts with which they can do whatever they like. Givers choose to give overly specific gifts even when they first consider what they themselves would like to receive, and they mistakenly think that recipients will like specific gifts better and consider them to be more thoughtful. This discrepancy appears to be due to differences in what people consider when they think of which gifts they would prefer to give and to get: givers think more about the recipients' stable traits and choose gifts that reflect those characteristics, whereas recipients think about their varying wants and needs and prefer gifts with greater versatility. Shifting givers' focus from what recipients are like to what recipients would like makes givers more likely to choose the more versatile gifts that their recipients prefer. Ironically, givers were more prone to selecting more specific and less-liked gifts for close others than for more distant others, likely because the motive to get a thoughtful gift—that is, a gift that reflects the giver's knowledge of the recipient—is stronger the more intimate the relationship between the giver and the recipient. Finally, the tendency for givers to choose overly-specific gifts may contribute to

gift nonuse: recipients are slower and less likely to redeem gift cards that are more specific, but givers do not anticipate this.

Open Questions and Future Directions

Although we provide evidence that the difference in focus on what recipients are like versus would like is a root cause of the mismatch between the gifts people want and receive, this general finding that givers overpersonalize gifts is potentially compatible with other explanations of giver-recipient discrepancies in gift giving. One possibility is that, as with over-individuation in gift giving (Steffel and LeBoeuf 2014), givers may realize that the gifts they are choosing will be less well-liked but nonetheless choose them because they seem more thoughtful. Our study 3 rules out this explanation by showing that givers actually believe that specific gifts will be better liked. Another possibility is that givers may grant too much weight to the desirability of a gift relative to the feasibility of its use compared to recipients, because the social distance between them and the recipient leads them to prioritize abstract versus concrete features of gifts (Baskin et al. 2014). However, choosing between general and specific gifts does not necessarily involve a tradeoff between desirability and feasibility. For example, the gift card that givers prefer to give—a gift card to the recipient’s favorite store—is logically equally or less desirable than a gift card that could be used anywhere (which necessarily includes the recipient’s favorite store). And, whereas specific gift cards may, at first blush, seem less feasible to redeem than general gift cards because they are redeemable at fewer locations, most of these gift cards can easily be redeemed online with the products delivered directly to the recipient. In our sample in study 6a, for example, only 11% of gift cards did not fit this description, and the pattern of results is the same if these gift cards are excluded from the sample. Additionally, whereas Baskin et al. (2014) found that givers who first considered their own preference for an item before evaluating it as a

gift were more likely to prioritize feasibility relative to desirability, we found that givers who first considered their own preferences (as recipients) were still just as likely to choose specific gifts as those who did not.

The size of this giver-recipient mismatch may depend on a variety of factors. Study 4b suggests that this discrepancy may be reduced by prompting givers to think about what recipients *would* like rather than what they *are* like, and study 5 shows that it may be exacerbated when givers are selecting gifts for close than distant others. The discrepancy may also be greater when givers shop for multiple recipients at once rather than for a single recipient, as doing so makes givers want to individuate the recipients (Steffel and LeBoeuf 2014). Additionally, the size of the discrepancy may vary based on the norms and expectations associated with the occasion or holiday. Although we found overpersonalization across a variety of holidays and occasions in our studies (i.e., Christmas, birthdays, and housewarmings), the gap may be smaller for need-based occasions like housewarmings, baby showers, or weddings, when givers may be more apt to consider recipients' wants and needs. Finally, the gap between what givers think will be most appreciated and what recipients actually appreciate may shrink over time. As time passes, recipients may better recall more specific and distinctive gifts than more generic ones and may consequently remember such gifts more fondly.

Theoretical Implications

By showing that givers tend to choose gifts that are more specific than recipients want to receive, this research contributes to a growing body of research showing that givers often fail to accurately anticipate what recipients would most like. Good intentions, like the desire to be thoughtful or to show knowledge of recipients, can have the ironic consequence of leading givers to choose gifts that are less likely to please recipients and can predispose givers to err the most

when choosing for the people they know the best and most want to satisfy. This research also shows that the giver-recipient mismatch can contribute to gift nonuse, and specifically, gift card nonredemption. The present findings further contribute to an understanding of the barriers to accurately gauging others' preferences. We extend classic work on social perception by showing that the tendency for people to perceive others in more dispositional terms than they see themselves affects beliefs about not only a target's traits or reasons for behavior, but also beliefs about what the target would like. Further, the finding that givers fail to recognize that what they would prefer to give differs from what recipients would prefer to get contributes to a growing body of research showing that people often fail to anticipate that their own perspective may differ from that of those for whom they are choosing, and that overcoming this failure is difficult (Epley et al. 2004). Givers in our studies still over-personalized gifts even when they themselves had just adopted the recipient's role.

Our work also builds on research on perspective taking by showing that explicitly prompting people to think about others in the same way that those others think about themselves—for example, by encouraging them to carefully think of others in more situational than dispositional terms—may be more effective than simply encouraging people to put themselves in others' shoes by imagining what they themselves would prefer to receive. This research points to why perspective taking so frequently fails to improve accuracy at understanding the minds of others (Epley 2014): the key is not in learning *that* one needs to think about others' perspectives, but rather, in learning *how* to think about others' perspectives.

Practical Implications

Our research could help reduce the amount of “deadweight loss” associated with gifts and gift cards (Waldfogel 2009). Recipients typically value the gifts they receive 10% to 33% less

than the prices givers paid for them (Waldfogel 2009) and return 10% of their gifts (National Retail Federation). Likewise, an estimated \$44 billion in unredeemed gift cards has accumulated since 2008 (Arnold 2013). Unwanted gift cards can be sold online, but sellers typically only get a portion of the face value of the card in return (Offenberg 2007), a very literal deadweight loss for recipients of overly specific cards. Better-calibrated gifts would mean that retailers would still get the income associated with gift card sales, while reducing the delay between purchase and redemption. This delay can be quite costly to merchants: it postpones additional sales exceeding the value of the card, as customers typically buy more than a gift card is worth (White 2008), and retailers are not allowed to keep unused gift cards as revenue in many states, so any cards that do not get used are lost income (Horne 2007).

Our findings point to several paths by which marketers can encourage consumers to select more versatile and appealing gifts. One option is to prompt shoppers to focus on what recipients would like rather than what they are like, as shown in study 4b. Another possibility is to provide shoppers with customization options that can fulfill their need to personalize gifts without rendering those gifts less versatile. For example, rather than offering different products for different functions, marketers can offer customizable add-ons or accessories to serve more specific functions or simply to represent something about the recipient. Similarly, marketers can allow consumers to customize gift cards by specifying the color, design, or message rather than by designating those gift cards to a specific store. Retailers might also consider training their salespeople or recommendation engines to suggest other, more general items when people inquire about specific ones—for example, to suggest that a customer also consider blenders when they shop for a margarita machine—and this might lead shoppers to make more versatile purchases that are more likely to be appreciated and less likely to be returned.

In sum, in givers' quest to show that they know who the recipient of a gift card is, they often end up demonstrating that they do not know recipients as well as they thought. But when gift givers work to consider what recipients might want and need, they can give a gift as good as the one they hope to give.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ Although the following questions were outside of the purview of the present research, participants also indicated their preferences for homemade versus store-bought gifts, riskless versus risky gifts, fun versus practical gifts, material versus experiential gifts, individual versus shared gifts, one-time versus repeated-use gifts, requested versus unrequested gifts, novel versus familiar gifts, gifts that relate to new or long-standing interests, gifts that recipients would or would not buy for themselves, gifts that only the recipient or that most people would like, gifts that only the giver or that most people would give, and gifts from local or national brands.

² If we include all participants, givers were more likely than recipients to consider what the recipient was like as a person ($M = 5.36, SD = 1.28$, vs. $M = 4.24, SD = 1.54$; $t(198.05) = 5.65, p < .001, d = .79$), and givers and recipients were equally likely to consider what the recipient currently wants and needs ($M = 5.54, SD = 1.25$, vs. $M = 5.46, SD = 1.56$; $t(195.93) = .42, p = .68, d = .06$).

³ If we include all participants, the pattern is identical: givers preferred the specific gift card relative to the general gift card to a greater extent than did recipients ($M = 3.92, SD = 2.44$, vs. $M = 5.18, SD = 2.15$; $F(1, 400) = 30.44, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$); the specific gift card was preferred more among romantic partners than friends ($M = 4.18, SD = 2.45$, vs. $M = 4.94, SD = 2.25$; $F(1, 400) = 10.97, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$); and there was a significant interaction between the two factors ($F(1, 400) = 5.99, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .02$).

Figure 1

Preferences For Gift Cards, Study 2

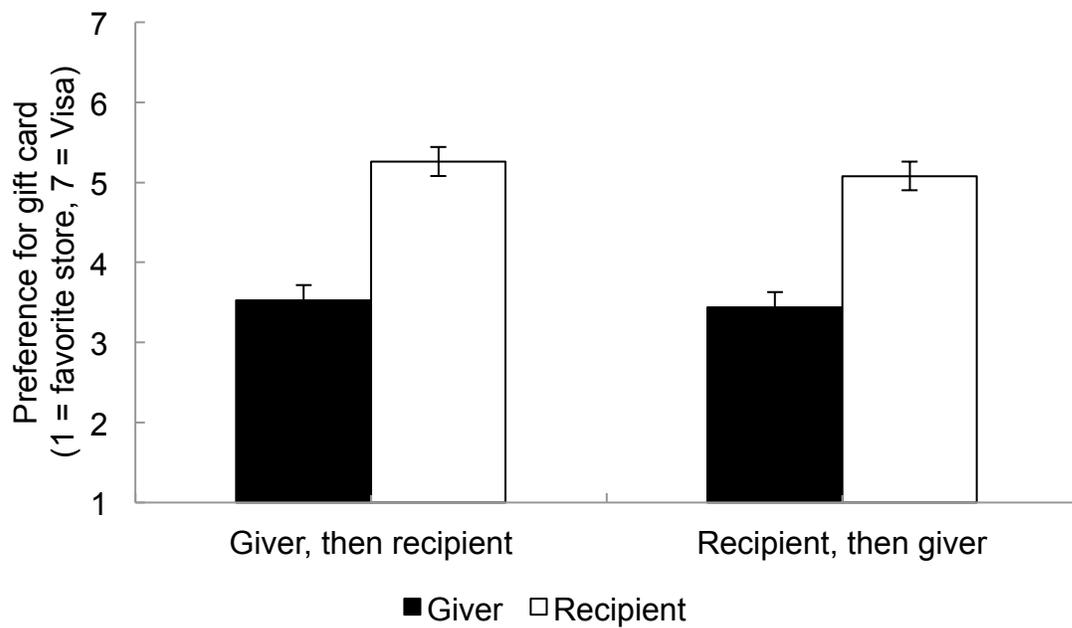


Figure 2

Preferences For Gift Cards, Study 5

