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Is Gift a Token of Gratitude or an Imposition of Identity? Facilitating Positive Consequences of Gift-Giving with Receiver-Centred Design

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Gifts are more than things; they represent and tie together human relationships. While people often treat it as a token of social interactions, the presentation of a gift could impose an identity that reflects gift-givers' images of gift-receivers. Because gift-giving is a social behaviour situated in the cultural and economic context, the perceived value of gifts is greatly affected by the social norms and the consumer market, in which design plays an important role. This paper has two contributions. First, we uncover how commodities are transformed into gifts and how different kinds of design activities influence such transformations. We found that most relevant designs for commercial gifts are giver-centred with less regard to the concern of gift-receivers. To this regard, we then employed a design game to facilitate positive consequences of gift-giving with a receiver-centred perspective. We argue that, in a gift-giving scenario, people are designers themselves, so that each step of the gift-giving could be intentionally framed. The design game situates participants in a series of imaginary gift-giving scenarios to understand receivers' gift preferences and learn to select more appropriate gifts. By presenting our preliminary findings from the eight round playtests, we hope to inform future design activities, either at an individual-level or collective-level, to facilitate positive consequences of gift-giving.

Keywords: Gift; Gift-giving; Design Game; Design Research

1 Introduction

People exchange gifts every time to build, enhance, and maintain their relationships. As a token of social interactions that express people's gratitude and kindness, gifts not only embody aesthetic value via their appearance as physical things but also reflect the feelings and routine practices of the culture within which they are exchanged (Hendry, 1995; Marcel Mauss, 2000; Rupp, 2003). Although it is

desirable to consider gift-giving as a kindness act, the complex manifestations of its social meanings problematize such an altruistic behaviour.

Buunk and Schaufeli (1999) suggest that gifts are altruistic because the giver voluntarily transfers the ownership of the object to another person for free as an expression of gratitude and celebration. However, a gift could also be "an imposition of identity". Schwartz (1967) said parents would express their images of their children as "a little soldier" or "a little chemist or engineer" by giving different types of "masculine" gifts. More importantly, gift-giving is not simply an act of charity, because a reciprocal exchange is often expected (Gouldner, 1960). Such imposed reciprocity is rooted in the original concept of gift (Mauss, 2000).

We believe design is critical in shaping different identities (either individual or social) that the gift has represented, echoing the conference theme [Changing] Identity. First, because gift-giving is a social behaviour situated in the cultural and economic context, the perceived value of gifts is greatly affected by the social norms and consumer market (Yang, 1994), where design plays an important role. Second, gift-giving is a particular type of embodied social interactions, where both gift-givers and gift-receivers create and communicate meanings by selecting, giving, unfolding, exchanging, and remembering gift objects, similar to the framework of a design process (Dourish, 2001; Niedenthal et al., 2005; Reitsma & van den Hoven, 2017). Thus, in this paper, we aim to investigate: How does design facilitate the transformation of a certain identity into the form of gifts and people's experiences of gift-giving? Additionally, if we consider people are designers themselves, then each step of the gift-giving could be intentionally framed to influence the consequences of giving a gift, either expressing kindness or an imposition of identity. Thus, we also want to understand: What influences people's perceived differences between the above two outcomes? And does helping people recognize such differences mitigate the shadow of gift-giving?

To address the first question, we conducted literature searches with keywords "gift" and "design" from major design journals, such as *Design Issues*, *The Design Journal*, *Design Studies*, and *The International Journal of Design*. However, we found that only a few design studies focus on gift products, services, and the experience of gift-giving. We then expanded our search areas to include anthropology and consumer research[1], where a large body of gift relevant studies exists. We summarise the literature into two parts: 1) the transformation of commodity values to social and cultural meanings in gift-giving; and 2) the forms and experience of makings things as gifts by design. The first part lays a foundation for us to understand what kinds of identities are reflected by gifts and how they evolve. The second part describes how design influences the forms of gifts and the experience of gift-giving as a social embodiment of building human relationships.

From the literature, we found that most commercial gift designs are giver-centred with less regard to the concern of gift-receivers (Otnes et al., 1993). This might be because gift-givers are often the gift-buyers, and for marketing and consumption purposes, design efforts are spent on satisfying buyers' desires to expect gift-receivers to accept the gift, without regards to the shadow-side of acceptance.

As a designerly way of knowing (Cross, 1982), we took an exploratory approach to answer the second set of questions. We created a gift-giving social game as an intervention to understand what might

[1] We use Google Scholar to search relevant studies outside the design field.

influence people's perceived difference of gifts and gift-giving by engaging them in a simulated gift-giving environment. The game helped participants understand others' gift preferences and enabled us to observe their interpretations of gifts and gift-giving.

Our preliminary results show that: 1) people could potentially establish three levels of satisfaction on gift options, but their satisfactions are context-dependent based on the relationship between givers and receivers and the gift availability; 2) if gift-givers present gifts based on their own preferences or their preconceptions of gift-receivers' preferences, giving a gift is more likely to result in an imposition of identity; and 3) in the comparison between student and family players, family players are less willing to understand receiver's preference due to a certain degree of family rigidity. We hope the above findings help inform future design activities, either at an individual-level or collective-level, to facilitate the positive consequences of gift-giving.

2 From Commodities to Gifts: The Transformation of Commodity Values to Social and Cultural Meanings

Gift is a classic anthropological and sociological concept rooted in Mauss' ethnographic work (1954), referring to a particular type of social exchange rituals among the Maori people. Gregory (2015) states that the concept of gift is developed based on a social exchange system of commodities. Commodity exchange is the transaction of alienable things that stand alone beyond human beings, but gift exchange transfers inalienable parts of human beings with each other. To this regard, gift could inherit worth from its materiality but also develop new meanings and values based on givers' altruistic intentions and the reciprocal exchange behaviours in the social and cultural context.

Gifts embody aesthetic value via their appearance or material worth as physical objects, such as the long-lasting and human-beneficial materials as showy artefacts and durable metals (Chapman, 2015). People often select objects made of durable materials as gifts, as they weather time better and can be passed down from one generation to another. The physical attributes of a gift include the use value of the material as well as the form and functionality of the object. For example, the Miao people in China have favoured silver as gifts for over two thousand years. Affected by a history of continuous war, the Miao turned the silver coins that had previously been used for economic transactions into jewellery so that they could migrate with their wealth. Additionally, silver can also be used for practical purposes, like detecting poison. Even today, objects made of silver are popular gifts among the Miao community as a symbol of wealth and fortune (Chao & Juan, 2014).

Enriched with spiritual human activities, such as sacralization and donations, new social and cultural meanings of gifts emerge and transcend the commodity worth. Golden (1996) uses human milk as an example to describe how it evolved from a "profane" product to a "sacred" gift. Human milk was previously commercialised as a commodity offered by lower-class women in the early twentieth century. Lower-class women were employed by wealthy families to breastfeed their babies. Due to the development of artificial substitutions and the growing public nursing services, the need for human milk increasingly declined. Additionally, with the rise of social status of middle-class women in the post-war era, breast-feeding turned into a donation behaviour as a "womanly art".

Let us look at another example that happens in a religious practice - the bread and wine in the Christian Eucharist. Rubin (1991) found that Christian scholars progressively infused religious meanings to the

bread to construct a ritual practice of partaking in the eating of the bread. First, Christians used the symbolic meaning of wheaten bread from Christ's words in the Bible (Luke 22:20), interpreted the meaning of Christ's flesh to the material of wheaten bread, and bridged that in their rituals. Then, they claimed that the food is transformed into the flesh of Christ, and eating the food is an act of gratitude to remember the sacrifice Christ made. Therefore, by eating and drinking flesh and blood of Christ, Christian build the connection between God and themselves. Based on these religious activities and performances, bread and wine are no longer treated as gifts for their commodity value as food, but as symbolic acts in the service of Christ.

Based on the three examples described above, we conclude that during the transformation from commodities to gifts, exchanging gifts cannot be simplified as only an act of giving or presenting. It is enriched with other social activities, and it is difficult to neglect the design effort that was made in these activities, such as the craftsmanship in silver ornaments or a partaking ceremony of the bread and wine in the Christian Eucharist. In Buchannan's view (2001), design not only refers to the creation of physical artefacts or the communication of information (e.g., symbols and images) but also the plan of action and the construction of human experiences. This provides us a new perspective to examine gifts and gift-giving to understand how human relationships are mediated and how gift value and meaning are evolved by different gift design activities.

3 The Forms and Experiences of Gift-Giving: Making Things as Gifts

As we discuss the forms of gifts and the experiences of gift-giving, we are studying how things can reflect people's feelings and how those feelings are expressed through a social embodiment process of gift-giving. Correspondingly, this points to two subsets of the design field: design for products and design for experience.

In general, many products are designed without necessarily considering their use as gifts – it is people who choose and decide to turn them into gifts. Packaging or wrapping, as one of the primary gift design activities, has long been used to reveal the inalienability of gifts, strengthening the commodity worth or social and cultural meanings that the product has reflected. Howard (1992) found that wrapping reflects the product attributes and cues a happier mood from gift-receivers. For example, the packaging design of Apple products has been commented on a lot in consumer markets[2], as peeking at the consumer's sensory experiences of touch and vision. Its clean and minimalist white packaging denotes the iconic feeling of Apple's products and brands and makes people feel that they are valuable gifts. Kim et al. (2018) created three package stimuli to understand how unboxing, as an aesthetic interaction, influences product appraisal. They found that the process of unboxing provides an emotional flow of expectation and discovery, as well as strengthening the product attributes that the producer or designer aims to imbue with.

In addition to situations where people choose objects and use packaging to transform them into gifts, there are also cases in which products are intentionally designed or treated as gifts. For example, souvenirs are specifically designed to be given as gifts. Gordon (1986) said, people would give and receive souvenirs as records of an event or place, but typically after they travel. Although souvenirs

[2] Heisler, Yoni. 2012. "Inside Apple's Secret Packaging Room." January 24, 2012. https://www.networkworld.com/article/2221536/inside-apple-s-secret-packaging-room.html.

are not identical to gifts, the market and consumer industries do not distinguish these situations explicitly. Most museums and theme parks consciously or unconsciously name their souvenir stores "gift shops." From McGrath's ethnographic observations (1989), she found that owners and employees in the gift shop would rearrange their products in the course of a selling day. Although only a few new things were added, the reconstruction created an illusion of newness for gift-buyers. This phenomenon tells us that, in the consumption domain, the word "gift" serves as an embellished term for consumer products, although there are more individual values embodied within this concept (McLean, 1997).

As industrialised economies redefined consumer experience by combining products and services together, designers started to redefine the gift-giving experience instead of only focusing on the form and package of the gift. For example, Norman and Ortony (2003) discussed that a traditional gift-shopping experience could be reshaped by delivering gifts through seamless services that simplify consumers' giving process and bring surprise to fulfil gift-receivers' emotions. In their example, the gift service named *Telekatesse* has an SMS message function, which automatically helps givers inscribe their wish messages on a pastry and deliver it to the gift-receiver once they come to the shop. Designers for this gift idea no longer focus on making physical objects as gifts but the gift-giving experience empowered by interactive technology.

Another example is Giorgia Lupi's work "What Counts"[3], a census data visualisation project which aims to show the humanistic aspect of census data. It invites visitors to participate in a souvenir design process as part of the exhibition at the Museum of New York City in 2019. When visitors input their own sentimental feelings about New York City, different colours, shapes, and textures are generated and encoded into a souvenir badge that visitors can print out and take it home. People have fun participating in the exhibition when they find their own contributions for the exhibition.

In the cultural context, gift wrapping conforms to a special identity that represents symbolic cultural meanings more than the individual value of the gift based on its commodity worth (Hendry, 1995; Reitsma & van den Hoven, 2017). In Japanese culture, gift wrapping is a sophisticated social practice. For example, in Rupp's ethnographic accounts (2003), she describes a special wrapping envelope with dyed paper cords, known as *mizuhiki*, which is designed to wrap cash and present it as the token of fortune and auspiciousness in a wedding. The Japanese write a congratulatory message on the envelope with the amount of money enclosed written underneath. The money must be an odd-numbered amount, as it represents their traditional understanding that equates odd numbers with unity, as they cannot be equally separated. Practices in Japanese gift wrapping include decorating the package of the gift, arranging the proper sequence through which the gift is packaged and then given, and forming the ritual practice of how to give a gift based on the relationship between gift-givers and gift-receivers. Note that these rituals help people understand the gift values and, thus, determine the gift value that should be given in return (Hendry, 1995). Japanese gift wrapping is a good example that showcases how a simple package design activity has been extended to, as Buchanan (2001) describes, "sustaining human beings in the performance of their own actions and experiences."

[3]"Past Event: The Data We Don't See with Giorgia Lupi." n.d. Museum of the City of New York. Accessed April 5, 2023. https://www.mcny.org/event/past-event-data-we-dont-see-giorgia-lupi.

From all the relevant gift design activities as described above, we conclude that decorating a gift and framing the gift-giving experience are important in both the individual-level (personal gifts, such as souvenir) and collective-level (cultural gifts, such as the wedding gift wrapped in *mizuhiki*). They facilitate the process of constructing performances and routines by integrating forms and appearances of physical products into experiences to communicate and establish interpersonal and social identities. As design practices shift from packaging and product design to participatory exhibition, digital interaction, and reciprocal actions, designers expand the scope of gift design from the forms and appearances of "gift" to the experiences and practices of "gift-giving".

Resonated with most consumer gift research (Baskin et al., 2014; S. Kim & Littrell, 2001; Otnes et al., 1993; Stauss, 2023), we found that most relevant designs for commercial gifts are primarily giver-centred, because gift-givers are most likely the gift-buyers. These design activities seldom consider the shadow side of gift-receivers - their concerns of receiving the gift, such as, what happens if they do not like the gift but must accept it for social courtesy and how this could lead to their misunderstanding of gift-givers.

We believe that in gift-giving, people are designers themselves, so each step of the gift-giving should be framed by carefully considering gift-receivers' reactions. As designers and researchers, we cannot directly tell gift-givers what they should buy and how they should present the gift to the gift-receiver, but we want to facilitate positive consequences of gift-giving with good intentions. To this regard, we position ourselves as mediators to help both gift-givers and gift-receivers understand what affects their perceptions of either thinking of a gift as a token of gratitude or an imposition of identity. Such a design standpoint inspires us to create a gift-giving social game to mitigate the potential challenge that exists in a gift-giving experience, which is mostly giver-centred influenced by the consumer market, such as the emotional burdens for both gift-seeking and gift-giving (Wooten, 2000).

4 The Gift-Giving Social Game

We created a gift-giving social game, which placed participants in an imaginary gift-giving context to bring up conversations for them to talk about their gift-giving experiences. The game served two specific aims for designers and participants. For designers, we wanted to observe people's natural reflections on their past gift-giving experiences, capturing their interpretations of gifts and understanding what might cause their perceptions of either thinking of a gift as a token of gratitude or an imposition of identity. For participants, we wanted to help them perceive such differences as self-reflections and think of gift-giving from a receiver-centred perspective.

The game idea is inspired by the concept of Design Game, which is one of the co-design methodologies to facilitate user exploration of their past experience and plan for the future ideas through play-like activities (Vaajakallio & Mattelmäki, 2014). Different from a real game, the mechanism and strategy of playing a design game is not to form a competition but to have conversations for participants to explain their understanding and feelings proactively. For example, a role-playing game in a patient-doctor visit scenario asks participants to play the roles of patient, doctor, nurse, and other stakeholders to fulfil the visit journey. Thus, we use Design Game to elicit participants to explore how to give an appropriate gift based on their self-reflections of the past gift-giving experiences.

4.1 Game mechanism and terminology

To develop the game for play, we reviewed a series of popular board games and card games. Because we were more interested in the gift-giving experiences that happen in closer human relationships, such as friends, couples, and families, we adopt the game strategy from *Card Against Humanity*[4], which is a party game and often played among friends in social gatherings. This game applies a simple mechanism that by comparing different answers to "evil" questions, the players who give the funniest answer win. Its simplicity and uncertainty appeal to players who can learn it easily and play it for fun.

Figure 1. Cards for playing the game and playtests

We name our gift-giving social game *The Best Gift*. It asks players to role-play gift-givers and gift-receivers in different imaginary gift-giving situations to exchange gifts and rate their satisfaction for different gift options. Players who role-play the gift-receiver choose the best gift that they agree on based on the relationship between gift-givers and gift-receivers. The player who has given gifts that are chosen the most times by others wins the game. We list the game mechanism as follows:

1. Players take turns playing the gift-receiver role. All the other players are gift-givers.
2. The first receiver randomly picks one gift-giving situation and reads the roles aloud. The situation describes a case of gift-giving and explains the relationship between the giver and the receiver, such as a birthday gift for parents given by their child. Thus, the receiver is either father or mother and all the givers are children who are going to present gifts.
3. Givers choose one gift card from their hands that they think is the most appropriate gift and give it to the receiver.
4. The receiver shuffles the gift cards and displays them one by one. The receiver articulates how he/she feels about the gifts and scores the gifts with points ranging from 1 to 4.
5. Once the receiver chooses their favourite gift, the giver of that gift receives rewards corresponding to how many points the gift earns.
6. Players refill their hands with 5 cards. Then, another player plays a new role of the receiver.
7. After *N* play rounds, the player who gets the most rewards wins the game.

We developed a set of gift cards and gift situation cards as game materials (Table 1). There are 120 gift samples in total for the gift cards, which are collected from Amazon Gift Finder (i.e., material commodities), Instructables[5] (e.g., self-made objects), and authors' ideation of different celebratory

[4] https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/50381/cards-against-humanity
[5] https://www.instructables.com/

events (Table 2). There are 27 gift-giving situations, spanning different interpersonal relationships throughout a life cycle (Table 3). We invited 26 participants through eight rounds of playtests to finalise the game mechanism.

Table 1. Card terminology

	Description
Gift Cards	There are two types of gift cards, including a normal gift card and a blank gift card. A normal gift card describes a particular gift. A blank gift card has no description. Which means, the gift-giver can write down gifts they come up with when playing the game.
Situation Cards	The situation card describes a gift-giving scenario and the relationship between gift-givers and the gift-receiver, determining players' roles.
Rewards Cards	The reward card represents the gift-receiver's preference. One card represents one point you would like to give to the gift-giver who you finally accept that player's gift.

Table 2. Samples of gift cards

	Material Commodities	**Self-made Objects**	**Celebratory Events**
Gift descriptions	A heat changing mug, a pen, a glowing lamp, family pyjamas, winter gloves, throw pillows, scented candles…	A tin of wishing stars, homemade cookies, a printed T-shirt, handwritten calligraphy gift card, a printed photo album…	A big dinner, a movie, an art exhibition, a bike tour, a series of baking classes, yoga class, a concert, a luxury massage…
Total number of cards	64	36	22

Table 3. Samples of situation cards

	Gift situation	**Total number of cards**
Couple relationship	A gift for someone you have a crush on. You have a friend whom you have had a crush on for a long time, but he or she does not know how you feel. On Valentine's Day this year, you plan to give him or her a gift to show your feelings.	5
Marriage relationship	A gift to apologise. You two have a big quarrel over something. So, you would like to give a gift as an apology.	3
Family relationship	A Christmas gift. On Christmas eve, what you would like to give to your parents.	14
Friendship	A farewell gift. Your friend is going to study abroad, what gifts would you prepare to say goodbye to him or her?	4
Others	A gift to your teacher. On Teacher's Day, what gifts would you prepare to show your gratitude to him or her?	1

In the beginning, guessing was the primary strategy for personal gift-giving. When gift-givers selected their gifts, players often based their decisions on what they perceived as unchanging factors about the receivers. Often, their guesses were incorrect. However, whether players properly understood each other's elicited interests via conversations. As the other person explained the reasons that informed their choices, gift-givers and gift-receivers understood more about each other's preferences. To win the game, a player had to develop a better understanding about the receiver than other players. Thus, the game motivated people to ask questions about each other and learn about changes that had unfolded in receivers' lives.

4.2 Participants

We recruited 17 students from our university department and another 9 people from two different families for the playtest. They have different cultural backgrounds, including the US, China, India, and Peru. We kept audio records from each playtest for further analysis. All participants received study compensation as a token after the research. Note that during a series of playtests, participants also came up with other gift-giving situations, which they thought were more interesting, as well as additional game mechanisms, such as gift-givers explaining why they choose a specific gift from the gift-giver. Together with recruited participants, we finalised the last game version.

4.3 Preliminary findings

During eight rounds of playtests, we iterated the game mechanism and updated our game materials. For example, we added blank gift cards (i.e., players could write down gifts whatever they come up with) and allowed gift-givers to explain their intentions of giving the specific gift they selected. Because each playtest had changed slightly by adjusting its mechanism and materials, results across these playtests might not be consistently reliable. We plan to have more participants play the game in the future to have more reliable evidence. In this paper, we present our preliminary findings from the existing eight rounds of playtests.

4.3.1 How does the scoring mechanism influence receivers' satisfaction of gift options?

When telling gift-givers how much they prefer one gift over the others, gift-receivers need to use a four-point scale to rate their favours for different gift options. This scoring mechanism helps us identify players' satisfaction with each gift. We found that their satisfaction is context-dependent, not only based on personal preferences, but also gift availability. This results in three levels of receiver satisfaction on gift options based on how they score. These levels represent how participants map the perceived value of the gift to the importance of the gift-giving situation given the relationship between gift-givers and gift-receivers.

For the least satisfaction level, participants won't give any score to the gift, which they thought is the least appropriate. Although players were not allowed to score zero for a gift while playing the game, it might happen in the real world, such as one player mentioned he received "old clothes given by others as Christmas gifts". In this situation, participants said "they would rather not be given any gifts." The second level refers to minimum satisfaction - satisficing. Participants said this type of gifts are "better than nothing". As we observed in most cases, participants found it difficult to score these gifts because there wasn't a more attractive one. Thus, the final selected gift only earned two points and other unselected gifts were given one point. The third level is the most appealing case where gift-receivers appreciate the gift as expected by the gift-givers. For example, some participants preferred a particular type of gift more than the others, so it was easy for them to give a much higher score (i.e.,

three or four). Their high satisfaction with those gifts derives from the idea that they would like to get something they desire, saying “these gifts might not be what I actually need for daily use, but they are what you desire. If other people buy them for you, they are gifts.”

During the game, it is difficult for participants to score a gift if its commodity value does not match the perceived value based on the satisfaction levels, which the gift-receiver holds personally. For example, one participant mentioned that her boyfriend bought her an iPad pro for her birthday in the same gift-giving situation while playing the game. Although the gift is expensive, she didn’t think it was worth buying given the limited usage (low perceived value). As a result, she felt a burden receiving it, worrying about whether she should give a gift of an equal amount of money in return for his boyfriend’s birthday. This situation points to a difference of people’s satisfaction with gifts between gift-givers and gift-receivers. From a receiver-centred perspective, it is important for gift-givers to understand gift-receivers’ satisfaction levels of gifts instead of relying on their own or the preconceptions of gift-receivers’ preferences. Although the scoring mechanism simplifies gifts’ value as cut-off measures, the number of points sends a direct message of favours to the gift-giver, helping them quickly grasp others’ preferences.

4.3.2 How do players’ relationships influence givers’ intentions to understand receivers’ preferences?

Inviting participants with different relationships allows us to explore how human relationships affect both gift-givers and gift-receivers’ understanding of each other’s satisfaction with gifts, as well as how willingly gift-givers would consider gift-receiver’s satisfaction for winning the game. As we observed, players who are students and friends were more willingly to understand gift-giver’s satisfaction and adjust their gift-giving strategies, but family members were less likely to do so.

Student players were mostly in their twenties, and they were not from the same study programs. Since they were unfamiliar with each other, the game helped them quickly get to know others’ characteristics, preferences, and hobbies. For players who already knew each other, the game also revealed some unknown facts that surprised them. We found that student players were more actively involved in the role-play than family players. For example, in the imaginary scenario of “grandparents giving a birthday gift to their grandchildren”, student players loved choosing digital play devices and interesting celebratory events as gifts by thinking those gifts were what current youngsters might prefer. In a Christmas gift for other family members, student players also happily played their roles as the mother or father of the family and chose gifts such as family pyjamas, a family camping canvas, or other gifts. They explained their thoughts with a magisterial authority of the head of the family.

However, family players were less willing to listen to other’s thoughts, and they did not actively participate in the role-play by situating themselves in the gift-giving situations. Oftentimes, they selected gifts for others based on their own preferences. For example, during the playtest among a Chinese family, the father gave his daughter a Chinese chess in the scenario of “a parting gift for friends who are going to study abroad.” He said, “I wanted the chess set to remind her [daughter] to be patriotic while studying abroad.” However, he totally ignored the fact that her daughter seldom played chess. Note that this example does not infer that all family players in the playtest share similar intentions, but it might imply that family players are too familiar with each other to understand each other’s gift preferences, or they are less interested in winning the game.

4.3.3 How do givers' explanations of their gift options influence receivers' decisions?

When gift-givers explain why they give these gifts, their explanations serve as a double-sword, either disclosing the richness of the gift's meaning or imposing a certain identity of gift that represents gift-givers' image of gift-receivers. During the playtests, we found that such explanatory behaviours became a competing strategy among gift-givers to persuade the gift-receiver to choose their gifts.

Generally, the disclosure of the gift preparation processes and gifts' meanings let gift-givers ask for a higher number of points from the gift-receiver. For example, we observed several cases where the selected gifts, which were previously scored with two or three points, earned one more point after the gift-giver explaining their intentions of giving the gift. Also, players who were good at storytelling took advantage of this explanatory behaviour to persuade the gift-receiver to change their previously selected gift or increase the assigned score, especially when the gift-receiver had difficulty making their final decisions. However, it is less often for gift-receivers to completely change their previously selected gift to another one for the case that the gift was only worth one point, considering it poor or barely satisfactory.

In conclusion, we found this game proved to be effective for helping student players, who are still learning about each other, imagine how to give an appropriate gift for different relationship-specific circumstances. Since the game offers pre-set rules and ritualistic settings, givers found it convenient to have a structure within which to prepare gifts, and receivers also found it to be a great opportunity to express their true feelings by using gifts as examples. However, we did not find that family players are very engaged in playing this game. Sometimes, the game provoked conversation about family shared memories, but it ended very quickly as players knew each other too well. Also, they were less willing to learn about other's gift preferences. Hence, there is a need to improve the game mechanism to personalise the content for each group and enable it to be updated.

5 Discussion

In this paper, we first answer question of How design activities facilitate a gift transformation process from commodity value to social and cultural meanings. During the literature, we found that decorating a gift and framing the gift-giving experience facilitate the process of constructing performances and routines of gift-giving by integrating forms and appearances of physical products into experiences. This process helps communicate and establish interpersonal and social identities. We believe the gift itself can be seen as a model of an experience (Dewey, 1980), with a dramatic structure that unfolds over time as the relationships between individuals evolve. This encourages us to understand the plurality of design impacts for human interactions across multiple levels, spanning from the use of products to their surrounding human behaviours, experiences, social dynamics, and cultural practices.

Additionally, we argue that people are designers themselves, so each step of the gift-giving should be framed by carefully considering gift-receivers' reactions. This points out an interesting design relationship between designers and consumers in the context of gift-giving. Such as, designers create products for buyers who might not use but present them as gifts to others. Since recent consumer research has been fostering the empowerment of receiver-centred marketing strategies (Baskin et al., 2014; Gao et al., 2017; Otnes et al., 1993; Stauss, 2023), how can designers take on this idea? In this paper, we present our design game as the first attempt for receiver-centred gift-giving by asking people to reflect their past gift-giving experiences and select more appropriate gift based on receivers'

preferences. From the playtests, we found that student players are more likely to learn other's preferences, but family players are less willing.

As a reflection, our work primarily refers to the gift model of reciprocity with a positive humanistic perspective, which is discussed in the context of interpersonal relationships. That says, we consider gift-giving as a humanistic social behaviour and the potential problems in this type of gift-giving is because giver's good intention is expressed inappropriately without considering the receiver's emotional burden and preferences. However, we believe our work does not apply to the unilateral gift-giving context: givers present gifts without expecting any returns, while receivers do not hold the debt of giving another gift. For example, as reported by Yan (2002), in a centralized and strict control society, because subordinates have to rely on superiors to satisfy their material needs and other living resources, superiors are free from the obligation of returning the gift to subordinates. In such cases, receiver-centeredness should not be promoted because it rules out the possibilities of equal exchange and further lead to collective corruptions.

Additionally, receiver-centeredness is not obvious in the virtual communities where members are both givers and receivers. People contribute gifts to the community (rather than specific individuals) and benefit from the gifts contributed by others. For example, in the open-sourced communities, engineers share high-quality codes and learn better coding practices from others, demonstrating the success of such an open-sourced software. Noted by Bergquist and Ljungberg (2001), the circulation of engineer's codes within the community indicates the power of giving-away. Because the benefits of a sharing network outweigh one-on-one transactions, people with the shared interests and goals are grouped together and their contributions are continuedly developed into professional activities. We can observe a similar phenomenon in the digital fan environment (Jenkins et al., 2013).

6 Conclusion

This paper contributes to the conference theme [Changing] Identity by 1) reviewing gift-giving as a social behaviour and highlighting the importance of design in shaping the forms, experiences, and people's perceptions of gift-giving; and 2) presenting a design game as an intervention to facilitate the positive consequences of gift-giving. Additionally, we discuss the limitation of this study that our research findings are rooted in the gift model of reciprocity within the context of interpersonal relationships. Thus, future research could explore unilateral gift-giving, which could further enrich our understanding of design impacts on social hierarchy and power dynamics within and beyond broader human relationships.

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