

The Gift

Summary

Gifting practices are entangled with museum visits in several ways and can be used as a resource in designing hybrid museum experiences. In this scenario, every person takes on a character at a family gift exchange party, and all both give and receive gifts.

Background

This is a scenario dealing with 'what is a gift' and what is gift-giving. Anthropologists analyze gifting as a reciprocal pattern, through which donor and recipient become linked in a relationship. The ongoing pattern of exchange of gifts and other forms of gifting including hospitality and favors, defines and integrates social relationships.

In this scenario, we explore the meaning of gifts within different social relations, both close and distant. Every person takes on a character at a family gift exchange party, and all both give and receive gifts. While the scenario is generic, the de-brief focuses on ways in which gifting practices influence museum practices.

Roles in the scenario

- Ursula, mother of Anna and Patrick
- Anna, mother of Jax
- Fredrik, father of Jax and Emelie
- Patrick, son of Ursula
- Laura, his girlfriend
- Emelie, daughter of Fredrik and Anna
- Jax, child of Fredrik in a previous marriage

Preparations (before players come)

- Print the character descriptions. Cut them apart.
- Print all the gifts on separate pieces of paper. Cut off the 'Source/Background' part of each gift description and place it in a separate envelope. Staple the envelope on the back of the gift.
- Prepare three separate tables for wrapping the gifts. Provide wrapping paper, tape, scissors, ribbon, and sticky notes to write the 'to and from' on. Optional:
 - Paper and pen for writing rhymes.
 - Sturdy objects like boxes and books, to make the parcels look bigger and more interesting.
- Prepare a circle of chairs for the preparation workshop. This is also a good seating for the gift-giving phase.

*Players: 4 – 8
including facilitator*

Time: 1 hour

Supplies:

- Gift wrapping material
- 3 tables in one large room, or in separate rooms
- Chairs for all players

Keywords

Reciprocal gifting,
Gestation,
Prestation,
Realignment, Digital
Gifts

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Introduction: [15 minutes]

Present the scenario and its background

1. Talk a bit about gifts and giving, especially the three phases.
2. Explain that the whole scenario consists of two scenes: wrapping the gifts, and giving/receiving gifts.

Role-play: How do you do it

If your participants have previous experience of role-playing, steps 1-4 can be omitted.

1. They will play different roles
2. Their roles will have different agencies and wishes, express them as if they were your own.
3. You do not represent your own opinions, you express the opinions of your role.
4. The game master will indicate clearly when the role play starts and ends.
5. Instruct them in what to do when receiving a gift:
 - a. When you receive a gift, unwrap it. Look at it briefly (and read its short text). Tell the others what you got.
 - b. Stand up and perform an inner monologue: How did the character react to the gift?
 - c. Sit down. The players heard what your character thought, they should play as if their characters didn't.
3. Practice the gift receiving, with the facilitator as recipient. Explain that this phase will take some time, and that players should focus their play around what they as givers and recipients *feel* about the situation.

Distribute roles

1. Hand out the characters randomly to players. Let players swap characters if they wish.
 - a. If six players: Facilitator plays Ursula.
 - b. If five players: Remove Ursula and the gifts she gives.
 - c. If four players: Remove Fredric as well. Anna wraps also his gifts.
2. Let the players present themselves as their characters and briefly discuss their relationships to each other.
3. Hand out the gifts. Instruct players to NOT show the gifts to their recipients even if they are wrapping them together.
4. Ask them to stay in character from now, until all gifts have been given. Tell them that it is still OK to ask the facilitator questions out of character.

Role Play Phase [30-40 minutes]

Gift wrapping: 15-20 minutes

- Split the players over three tables, if possible in multiple rooms. If you only have one room, tell them that 'in reality', you cannot hear or see each other.
 - o Ursula, Fredric and Anna wrap their gifts together
 - o Patrick and Laura wrap their gifts together
 - o Emelie and Jax wrap their gifts together
- Instruct them to use the time to gossip about the other characters and develop their internal relationship.
- If they have gifts for each other, they *must* keep them secret. They may for example ask the other person to look away while they prepare the gift.

When all gifts have been wrapped, gather in the same place/room with all gifts.

Gift giving: 15-20 minutes

- Instruct the players to take turns in handing over the gifts.
- Remind them of the gift receiving rule.
- Play out the whole scene. When all gifts have been given, the facilitator cuts the scene by thanking the players for playing “The Gift”.

Debrief [15 minutes]

1. Open the envelopes attached to the gifts.
2. Discuss the gifts, start with those representing “Gifting as part of exchange ritual”. After that, you can take them in any order.
 - Was the gift perceived in any way that was related to its theoretical description?
 - Have you experience with gifts that have that particular function?
 - What makes such a gift appreciated? Uncomfortable?
3. Discuss what kinds of gifting rituals that museums are involved in and affected by, e.g.
 - Gifts of experience
 - The Museum shop
 - Museum donations
 - The Gifting app developed within the GIFT project
 - ...

Curious?

Gift giving can be analyzed as consisting of three phases¹, that are explored in this scenario.

- The ‘gestation’ stage, when the giver figures out what to give and why.
- The ‘prestation stage’, is the actual performative stage when the gift is packaged, given and the receiver responds to it.
- The ‘realignment’ stage is when the recipient makes use of the gift, and the involved parties interpret the gift and its impact on their relationship. Traditional reciprocal models indicate that this normally, but not always, involves a role reversal – that next time, it is the other person who needs to give something back.

The pattern of reciprocity is used to explain the purpose of gifting from an anthropological perspective. Donor and recipient become linked in a relationship supported in part by token gift exchange, but also by other forms of gifting including hospitality and e.g. favors. The ongoing pattern of exchange integrates social relationships.

Belk, Russell W., and Gregory S. Coon. "Gift giving as agapic love: An alternative to the exchange paradigm based on dating experiences." *Journal of Consumer Research* 20.3 (1993): 393-417.

¹ Source: Sherry Jr, John F. "Gift giving in anthropological perspective." *Journal of consumer research* 10.2 (1983): 157-168.

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#1: Appendix 1: Characters

Ursula: *Mother of Anna and Patrick, 67*

Everyone has been invited to Ursula's large apartment. The place is spotless after a paid cleaning and the food is catered. Ursula is a healthy woman in her upper sixties, long divorced and quite well off since she sold the house. She likes travelling, museums and cultural events.

What she thinks of the family members.

Fredric (son in law): A dull man. Anna seems to love him dearly, but Ursula has never understood why. She is a bit surprised the relationship is still ongoing.

Emelie (his daughter): She does not quite belong to the family, but she is a very nice and well-behaved girl.

Anna (daughter): As mother and daughter there remains a bond between them, forged in equal amounts by love and conflict.

Patric (son): Brilliant but lazy. She is getting very tired of how he expects her to cook food every time they meet.

Laura (his girlfriend): Patric has brought home girlfriends before. But this seems a bit more serious.

Jax (grandchild): She has always loved children, but Jax is quite a handful. Maybe it is just her getting a bit too old to keep up?

Fredric: *Father of Emelie and Jax, 42*

Fredric is very middle-aged and dependable. He raised his daughter alone for years, before Anna came into his life. He has a job that everyone else perceives as boring. He likes family excursions to outdoor museums and science centres.

What he thinks of the family members.

Ursula (mother in law): A selfish woman. One would think she'd care more about her grandchildren. (She recently agreed babysit Jax as part of your gift to Anna. Keep this secret as it will be revealed through play.)

Emelie (daughter): You remain very close-knit even now, when Emelie is going through her most difficult teenage years. You fear that she may not make it through.

Anna (wife): That Anna fell in love with you, and continues to love you, is the biggest miracle ever.

Patric (wife's brother): He is hard to grasp. You value such different things in life.

Laura (his girlfriend): You actually know Laura, professionally. She used to represent a business partner in a difficult negotiation. You admire her formal yet casual style and frankly, find her quite attractive.

Jax (child): Anna worries too easily. Jax won't be going to school for two years yet.

Anna: *Daughter of Ursula, married to Fredrick, Mother of Jax, 38*

Anna has devoted the better part of her adult life to her studies, first artistic and then academic. She feels uncomfortable and uncertain both as a mother and a professional. And it's become so hard to paint – she never has any good ideas anymore. Anna loves art museums and can wander around in them forever – preferably alone. Anna may be needing a change in her life – but at what price?

What she thinks of the family members.

Ursula (mother): Why do all things seem so simple for your mother? Even her advice is always on the mark.

Fredric (husband): Everything happened so fast - you got pregnant almost immediately after starting to date Fredric. You consider yourself lucky; he makes you feel competent, trusted and safe.

Emelie (stepdaughter): There is a truce; you live side by side. You tried acting as a mother and confidant before, but it never worked.

Patrick (brother): You used to change his diapers, then you washed his clothes and now he's bought presents for your money. You love him as if he was your own child – but now that you have a child of your own there's less space for him in your life.

Laura: You envy her job, her grace, and her pleasant manners. You would like to become friends with her, but do you measure up?

Jax (child): Your greatest love and worry. Jax is too different, too wild, too vulnerable. There are phone calls from day-care almost every week.

Emelie: *Daughter of Fredrik and Sarah (not present), 14*

Emelie is fourteen. Since the divorce, she has lived with her father. She does reasonably well in school, tried smoking a couple of times and does not attract boyfriends. Recently, she has started to try out black makeup and clothes, and practice writing very dark poetry.

What she thinks of the family members.

Ursula (grandmother): So strong and independent – your main role model.

Fredric (father): You can probably still talk with your dad about anything, just as when you were younger. Only, you are not sure you want to.

Anna (stepmother): She's okay, and dad's a lot happier now. You just wish that you had got a bit of time to be the three of you, before Anna got pregnant.

Patrick (uncle): His eyes go a bit too easily to your breasts. You are not comfortable around him.

Laura (his girlfriend): You have never met Laura before, and you feel embarrassed by her presence. You worry about what Patrick might do in front of her, and you want to know what Ursula thinks of her.

Jax (half-sibling): Jax's weird, but in a good way. Despite the age difference, you never had to step into the mini-mother role. Now that Jax's getting a bit older you can spend hours playing games, or just fantasising, together.

Patrick: *Son of Ursula, 29*

Patrick is a winner. School was easy, university easy. He dropped out of his studies for a high-paying job, and then changed jobs in rapid succession trusting his large network of friends for new opportunities. He is not sure what happened, but both party invitations and job offers stopped coming about six months ago.

Patrick retains his love for technical gadgets and science centres since childhood, but is a bit ashamed to admit it.

What he thinks of the family members.

Ursula (mother): You have recently contacted your biological father, of whom Ursula never spoke much. He seems quite likable.

Fredric (sister's husband): You like his dry humour, but until recently you had the more successful career and the higher income. Your relationship has shifted, and you don't know how to handle him.

Emelie (Fredrick's daughter): Nice body now, a bit too much makeup. You could probably seduce her, but the relationship with Laura is too important to bother.

Anna (sister): By now, you owe her quite a bit of money. You could pay them back, but it would make it more difficult to date Laura.

Laura (girlfriend): A beautiful woman with an important job and all the right contacts. You love her deeply, or at least, love having her as your girlfriend.

Jax (child of Fredric and Anna): A difficult and moody child, but you have a bit of a special connection. Sometimes, you feel that you understand Jax better than the parents.

Jax: *Son/Daughter of Fredric and Anna, 5*

Jax doesn't play well with the other children at daycare; it often ends with somebody screaming and hitting the others. Jax is uncomfortable at family gatherings too, when the adults just want to speak with each other and Emelie stays silent and sullen. It is all a bit scary. Jax is not a boy, because boys can't wear skirts.

What he thinks of the family members.

Ursula (grandmother): The scariest of scary! You used to cry every time you saw her, but now that you are older you just try to keep out of her way.

Fredric (father): Dad is good at reading story books, but he is sometimes too tired to do it. Once he got really angry with Jax in a museum, when Jax moved something that one wasn't supposed to touch.

Emelie (sister): Emelie plays a lot of games, and tells new stories. Jax likes Emelie a lot, but when they are at grandma's place Emelie only cares about grandma.

Anna (mother): Anna always asks questions about what happened at daycare. Jax doesn't want to talk about daycare at home.

Patrick (uncle): You can talk to him about important things and he actually listens. And he knows a LOT about engines!

Laura (uncle's girlfriend): You have never met her before. She keeps sitting where you want to sit.

Laura: *Girlfriend of Patrick, 31*

Laura has the perfect job, the perfect looks and the perfect manners. It takes time and energy to be Laura and she is getting a bit worn out. She has a keen aesthetic sense and is deeply affected by all things of beauty.

Laura meets Patrick's family for the first time. It is very different from her own; Laura's parents were friendly but distant and by now the family has drifted apart entirely.

What she thinks of the family members.

Ursula (Patric's mother): Intimidating in a rather irritating way. It is the duty of a good host to make the guests comfortable.

Fredric (Anna's husband): You consulted for his employer once, so you have met before. He is trying very hard to make you feel welcome; it makes you a bit uncomfortable.

Emelie (Fredric's daughter): She seems almost hostile. You juggle being friendly and giving her space. Of all the new contacts today, you don't prioritise building a relation with Emelie.

Anna (Patric's sister): You can see that she is busy and tired, but you envy every aspect of her rich family life.

Patrick (boyfriend): It is only with Patrick that you allow yourself to relax and show your flaws.

Jax (child of Fredric and Anna): Patrick quite likes this strange child, so you try hard to make friends.


Appendix 2: The Gifts

From Emelie	To Ursula
<div data-bbox="204 309 363 342" data-label="Section-Header">Description</div> <div data-bbox="204 409 1402 1624" data-label="Image"></div> <div data-bbox="204 1697 1225 1731" data-label="Text"><p>A beautifully crafted scrapbook, that must have taken quite some time to make.</p></div>	

Source/Background

This gift is inspired by the idea of gifts of ‘agapic love’. This concept is central in theology and represents love without an erotic component, and with little emphasis on reciprocity – a love that expects little in return.

Source: López, Antonio. *Gift and the Unity of Being*. Vol. 11. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013.

From Laura	To Patrick
Description	
	
<p>A beautiful and rather expensive wool blanket. (Patrick's apartment is a bit cold)</p>	



Source/Background

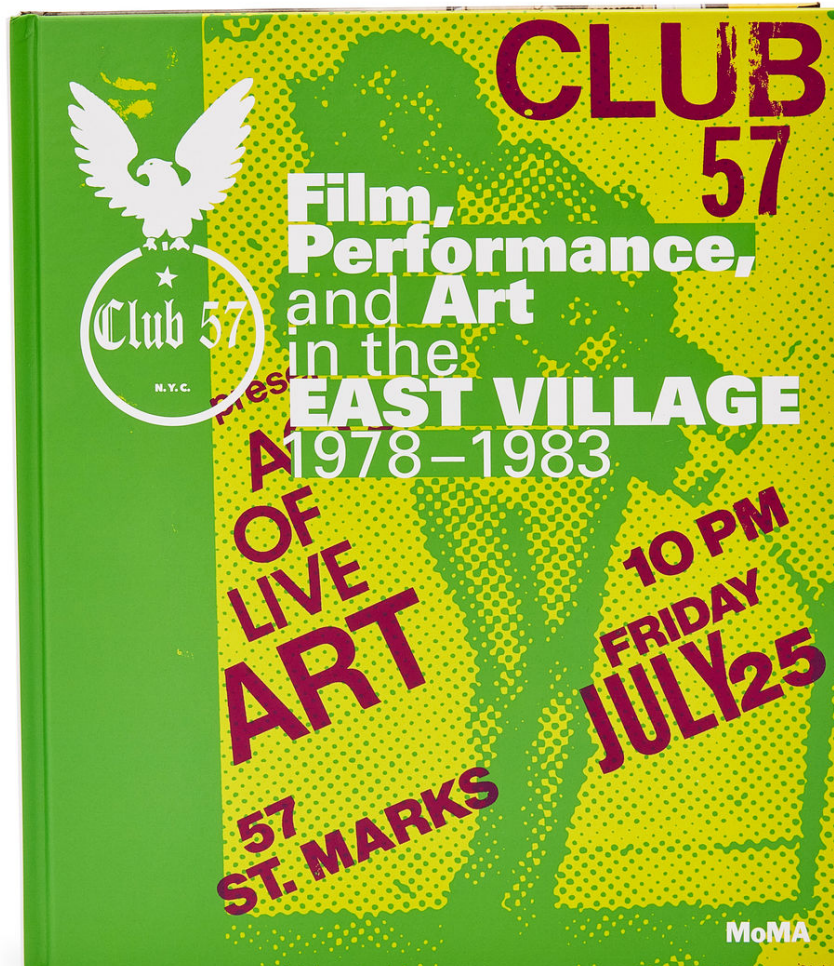
This gift is meant to illustrate a gift of 'erotic love'. It is part of a dating ritual, and expects a certain level of reciprocity (not necessarily gifts but can be other types of commitment). There are many ways to do mistakes with these types of gifts: They can be too much, or too little, or show a mismatch between giver and receiver.

Source: Belk, Russell W., and Gregory S. Coon. "Gift giving as agapic love: An alternative to the exchange paradigm based on dating experiences." *Journal of Consumer Research* 20.3 (1993): 393-417.

From Ursula

To Fredrick

Description



This book must have been bought in a museum gift shop.

Source/Background

The main role of this gift is to be part of the family's gift exchange ritual. It represents the social aspect of the classical view on gifts as mechanisms of exchange. "For it is groups, and not individuals, which carry on exchange, make contracts, and are bound by obligations..."

Source: Marcel Mauss, The Gift. Cohen West Ltd. 1966. (Translated from French.)

<https://archive.org/stream/giftformsfunctio00maus#page/n9/mode/2up>

From Fredrick	To Emelie
<p data-bbox="199 248 363 282">Description</p>  <p data-bbox="199 1552 1334 1626">Emelie likes the band 'Pumarosa'. This is their latest record, together with a renewal of Spotify premium for one year.</p>	
<p data-bbox="199 1697 478 1731">Source/Background</p> <p data-bbox="199 1749 1353 1823">This gift is part of an extended reciprocal system of gift-giving and services between two individuals. Its purpose is to re-establish their bond and reinforce their unity.</p> <p data-bbox="199 1839 1273 1872">Source: Marcel Mauss. <i>The Gift</i>. Cohen West Ltd. 1966. (Translated from French.)</p> <p data-bbox="199 1890 1109 1924">https://archive.org/stream/giftformsfunctio00maus#page/n9/mode/2up</p>	

From Laura	To Fredrick
<div data-bbox="199 241 365 280" data-label="Section-Header"> <p>Description</p> </div> <div data-bbox="212 353 863 1270" data-label="Image"> <p>The image shows a green holiday card. At the top, there are white snowflakes and stars. In the center, the text "Season's Greenings" is written in a white cursive font. Below the text is a stylized tree with a brown trunk and blue leaves. The tree is set against a dark green background with a white snow-covered ground at the bottom.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1016 461 1241 611" data-label="Text"> <p><i>This holiday season a grove of five trees has been dedicated to honor</i></p> </div> <div data-bbox="995 654 1260 696" data-label="Text"> <p><i>Recipient's Name</i></p> </div> <div data-bbox="965 748 1287 810" data-label="Text"> <p><i>A contribution to TreePeople has been made by</i></p> </div> <div data-bbox="1037 842 1219 880" data-label="Text"> <p><i>Your Name</i></p> </div> <div data-bbox="928 907 1345 960" data-label="Text"> <p><small>This meaningful gift and the restoration work it makes possible, is at the heart of TreePeople's effort to encourage personal involvement in restoring and caring for our natural environment.</small></p> </div> <div data-bbox="911 1097 1345 1254" data-label="Image"> <p>The image shows the TreePeople logo, which consists of a green tree icon and the text "TREEPEOPLE". Below the logo, the following text is printed: "12601 Mulholland Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210", "Tree Dedications (818) 753-8733", and "www.treepeople.org". At the bottom, it says "Printed with soy ink on 100% recycled paper" and "Design by Jeff Baughman".</p> </div>	
<p>A gift certificate of trees in SubSaharan Africa.</p>	
<div data-bbox="199 1411 480 1449" data-label="Section-Header"> <p>Source/Background</p> </div> <div data-bbox="199 1462 1370 1612" data-label="Text"> <p>Recent research has emphasised gifts that have no clear receiver, what has been called 'transactional' gifts. Donations to charities and museums belong to this category. This gift is a hybrid, when the donation is done <i>for</i> another person – a form of gift that is becoming increasingly common.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="199 1680 1313 1753" data-label="Text"> <p>Source: Davies, Gary, et al. "Gifts and gifting." <i>International Journal of Management Reviews</i> 12.4 (2010): 413-434.</p> </div>	

From Fredric

To Anna

Description



This is a virtual gift, a tour of Paris' Museum of Modern art that Fredric has recorded himself. The recordings can only be listened to on-site.

(Hint for Fredrick: You have also talked Ursula into babysitting Jax for a couple of days, so that you and Anna can go to Paris together.)

Source/Background

This gift represents the gifting of experiences. Clarke has studied this form of gifting in particular, and suggests that successful gifting of experiences rely on four factors: An element of surprise and suspense, some sacrifice from the donor's side, and that the experience becomes shared.

Source: Clarke, J. "The Four 'S's' of experience gift giving behaviour." *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 26.1 (2007): 98-116.

From Patrick

To Anna

Description



A very expensive bottle of Sherry.

(Hint for Fredrik: Since you can't afford to buy something this expensive, you must have gotten it as a gift yourself.)

Source/Background

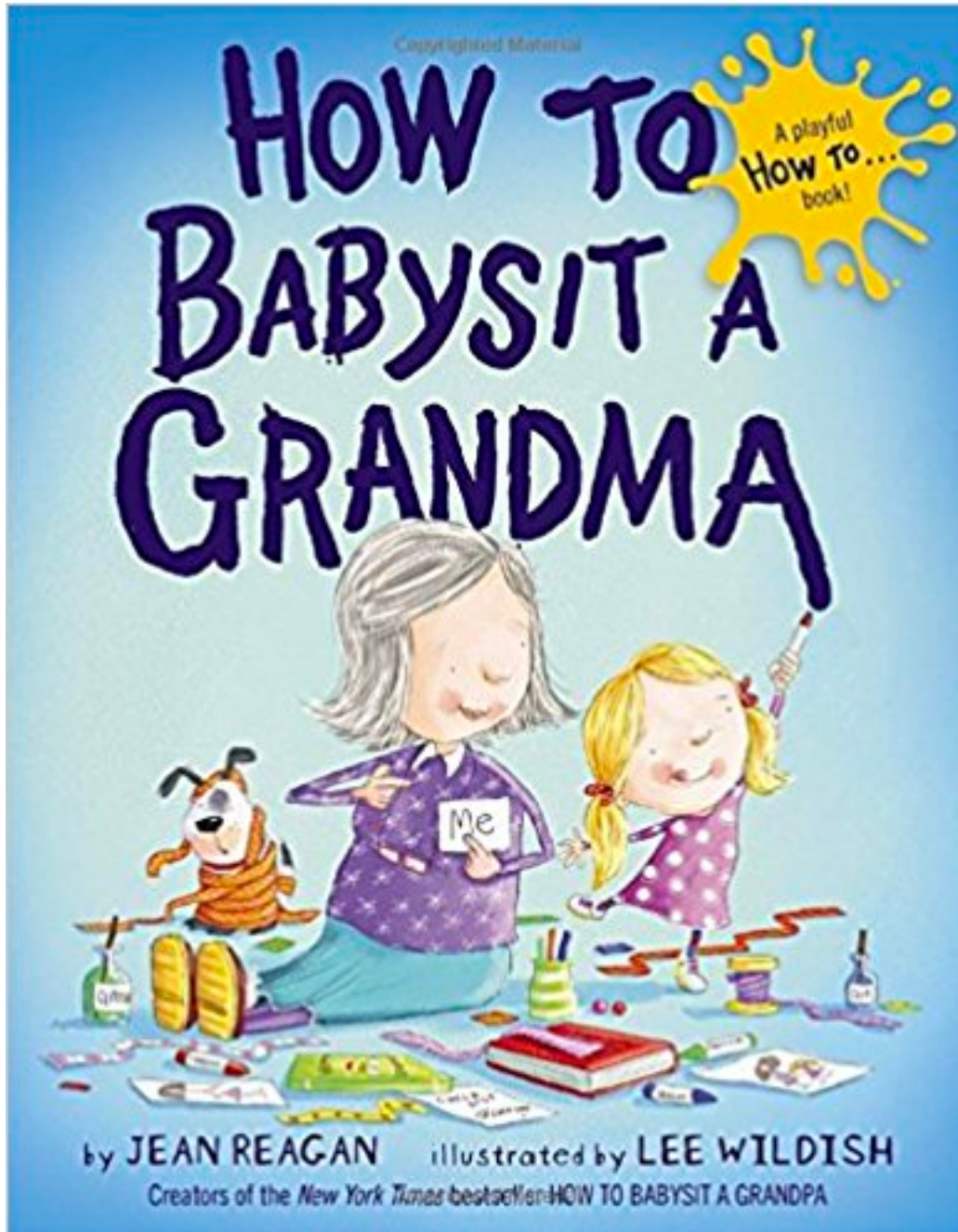
It is very difficult to achieve balanced reciprocity in gift giving, and to some extent the very gift-giving process is driven by perpetual imbalance.

Source: Sherry Jr, John F. "Gift giving in anthropological perspective." *Journal of consumer research* 10.2 (1983): 157-168.

From Ursula

To Jax

Description



The gift consists of an invitation to stay with grandma a couple of days, and this book.
(Hint for Ursula: Fredrik has talked you into babysitting Jax for a couple of days, so that Fredrik and Anna can go to Paris together.)

Source/Background

Part of the value attributed to a gift relates to its monetary value, and how much time and effort the giver has put into the gift.

Source: Sherry Jr, John F. "Gift giving in anthropological perspective." *Journal of consumer research* 10.2 (1983): 157-168.

From Jax	To Emelie
<p>Description</p> <div data-bbox="413 533 963 1079" data-label="Image"> <p>A 3D rendered image of a wooden crate, commonly known as a 'loot box' in video games. The crate is made of light brown wooden planks and is secured with a thick, grey metal chain. The chain is wrapped around the crate in an 'X' pattern on top and around the sides, with a large, grey metal padlock attached to it, preventing it from being opened.</p> </div> <p>Jax and Emelie play Team Fortress 2 together. Jax is fascinated by finding and opening loot boxes. Now, he has transferred 10 loot boxes to Emelie's account in Team Fortress 2.</p> <p>(In video games, a loot box can be opened to receive a random in-game resource. In Team Fortress 2, they can be sold but are worth very little.)</p>	
<p>Source/Background</p> <p>Virtual goods are resources that have no value outside the virtual context in which they exist. It can still be considered valuable based on 1) the perceived monetary profit on the goods, 2) the effort required to acquire them, 2) the status / sense of belonging that they allow in the online community, and 4) uniqueness. In game contexts, usefulness can also be valued.</p> <p>Source: Martin, Jennifer. "Consuming code: use-value, exchange-value, and the role of virtual goods in Second Life." <i>Journal For Virtual Worlds Research</i> 1.2 (2008).</p>	

From Emelie	To Patrick
<p data-bbox="199 248 363 282">Description</p> <div data-bbox="359 443 1024 1146">  </div> <p data-bbox="199 1339 1385 1413">A pussy hat. It is a common symbol at women's marches, raising awareness about women's issues and advancing human rights.</p>	
<p data-bbox="199 1485 478 1518">Source/Background</p> <p data-bbox="199 1536 1390 1682">What is the motivation behind a gift? Sherry (1983) places the motivation behind a gift on a scale depending on who the gift is intended to please. "Gift giving may range from altruistic, where the donor attempts to maximize the pleasure of the recipient, to agonistic, where the donor attempts to maximize personal satisfaction."</p> <p data-bbox="199 1697 1268 1771">Source: Sherry Jr, John F. "Gift giving in anthropological perspective." <i>Journal of consumer research</i> 10.2 (1983): 157-168.</p>	

From Anna

To Laura

Description




These are two elegant aluminium vases for single flowers. They were rather expensive.

Source/Background

Part of the value attributed to a gift relates to its monetary value, and how much time and effort the giver has put into the gift.

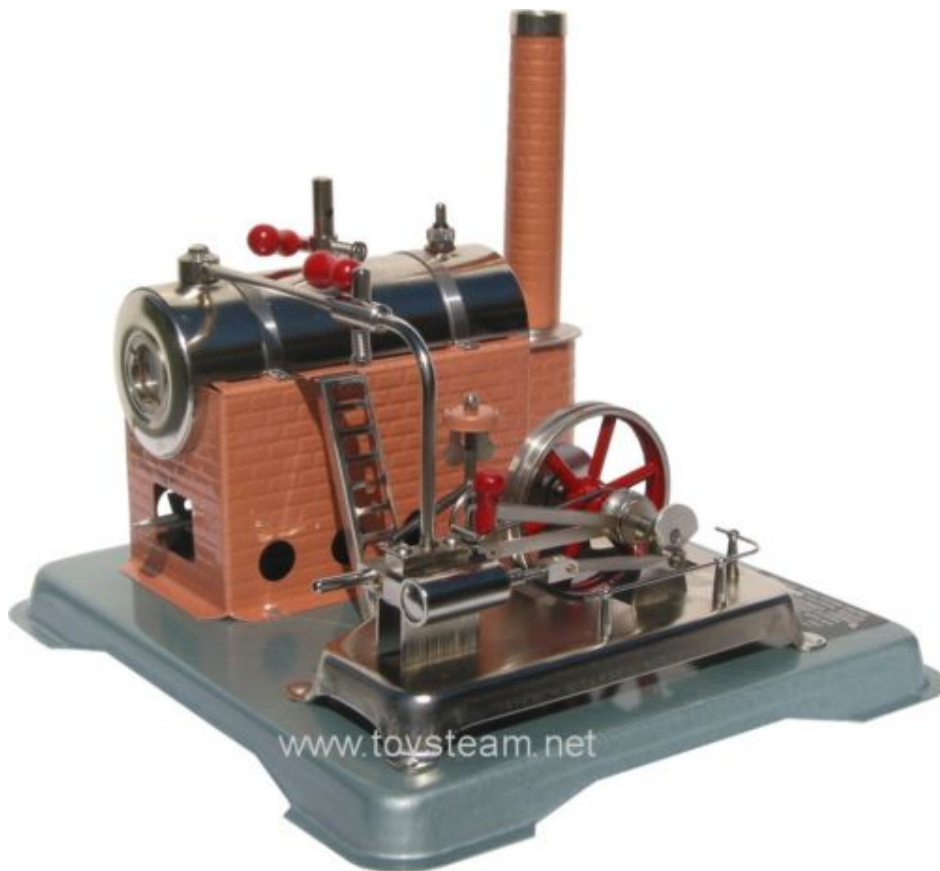
Source: Sherry Jr, John F. "Gift giving in anthropological perspective." *Journal of consumer research* 10.2 (1983): 157-168.

From Jax	To Laura
<p data-bbox="204 293 363 331">Description</p> <div data-bbox="204 347 1295 1142">  </div> <p data-bbox="204 1220 1316 1294">A pair of tech-compatible mittens. You can have them on and still tap on your mobile. Anna must have helped Jax in picking out this gift.</p>	
<p data-bbox="204 1366 478 1404">Source/Background</p> <p data-bbox="204 1420 1364 1568">The main role of this gift is to be part of the family’s gift exchange ritual. It represents the social aspect of the classical view on gifts as mechanisms of exchange. “For it is groups, and not individuals, which carry on exchange, make contracts, and are bound by obligations...”</p> <p data-bbox="204 1583 1276 1621">Source: Marcel Mauss, The Gift. Cohen West Ltd. 1966. (Translated from French.)</p> <p data-bbox="204 1637 1109 1675">https://archive.org/stream/giftformsfunctio00maus#page/n9/mode/2up</p>	

From Patrick

To Jax

Description



A working steam engine model, some assembly required.

Source/Background

What is the motivation behind a gift? Sherry places the motivation behind a gift on a scale depending on who the gift is intended to please. "Gift giving may range from altruistic, where the donor attempts to maximize the pleasure of the recipient, to agonistic, where the donor attempts to maximize personal satisfaction."

Source: Sherry Jr, John F. "Gift giving in anthropological perspective." *Journal of consumer research* 10.2 (1983): 157-168.

From Anna	To Ursula
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Description



How to Use Your Card:

1. Visit www.SpaWish.com to find a location near you
2. Call and book an appointment
3. Bring your gift card & enjoy

Amount: \$50

Present gift card before service. Single use only. Cards never expire. Additional terms and conditions can be found at spawish.com/legal/

eGift Card Number: 0000-000-0000

A spa visit gift card, which can be redeemed at several different spas.

Source/Background

This gift represents the gifting of experiences. Clarke has studied this form of gifting in particular, and suggests that successful gifting of experiences rely on four factors: An element of surprise and suspense, some sacrifice from the donor's side, and that the experience becomes shared.

Source: Clarke, J. "The Four 'S's' of experience gift giving behaviour." *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 26.1 (2007): 98-116.