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Overcoming Resource Scarcity:

Consumers' Response to Gifts Intending to Save Time and Money

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### ABSTRACT

Consumers feel increasingly pressed for time and money. Gifts have the potential to reduce scarcity in recipients' lives, yet little is known about how recipients perceive gifts given with the intention of saving them time or money. Across 5 studies ( $N = 1,816$ ), we demonstrate that the recipients of gifts intending to save money experience more negative emotions and infer a lower status position than recipients of gifts intending to save time. Recipients experiencing greater financial scarcity (who may benefit most from gifts intending to save them money), experience negative emotions to a greater extent and perceive an even lower status position than recipients who experience relatively little financial scarcity. These findings are the first to directly evaluate the implications of receiving gifts seeking to address time and money scarcity and suggest that recipients may respond negatively to gifts given with the intention of saving money.

*Keywords:* scarcity, time and money, gift-giving, emotions

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Resource scarcity is an increasingly pressing problem. Many consumers report that they do not have enough time or money to meet the demands of daily life (e.g., DeVoe and Pfeffer 2011). Across the income spectrum, consumers feel financially constrained (Sharma and Alter 2012; Tully, Hershfield and Meyvis 2015). In a recent survey of over 7,000 Americans, 60% of consumers reported having less than \$1,000 in their savings account (Huddleston 2016). In another nationally representative survey, the average consumer reported spending less than 45 minutes of quality time with family on a typical day (Paul 2018).

Experiencing scarcity of financial and temporal resources generally does not make people feel good. Previous work has shown that time stress prevents consumers from engaging in behaviors essential for health such as exercising and preparing nutritious food (e.g., Jabs and Devine 2006), therefore increasing emotional irritation (Höge 2008), and predicting lower well-being and higher feelings of depression and anxiety (Giurge and Whillans 2019). This pattern is also true for financial scarcity, such that financial stress is linked to lower marital satisfaction, higher depression and poorer physical health (e.g., O'Neill et al. 2006).

Experiencing scarcity can also influence consumer thinking and decision-making. Recent theorizing suggests that restricted resources limit consumer behavior. As a result, consumers must shift their thinking and decision-making to mitigate the negative impact a resource constraint can have on their ability to carry out their goals (Hamilton et al. 2018). Indeed, to the extent that a constraint is mutable, consumers may seek to remove the constraint (e.g., Cannon, Goldsmith and Roux 2018). For example, consumers facing scarcity use resources more efficiently, allowing them to maximize the limited access they have to these resources (Fernbach, Kan and Lynch 2015). Scarcity not only influences how consumers manage their resources, but it can also influence consumption. For example, consumers experiencing financial scarcity are

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more inclined to purchase material goods for their long-lasting utility over experiences that are more ephemeral (Tully et al. 2015). Consumers experiencing time scarcity are more inclined to purchase services that save time such as housecleaning and meal delivery (Whillans et al. 2017). Ultimately, reminders of scarcity guide consumer decisions toward advancing their own welfare (Roux, Goldsmith and Bonezzi 2015).

While consumers regularly make decisions to alleviate and adapt to their own experiences of scarcity, scarcity can also be addressed through the help and assistance of others. In fact, consumers are regularly motivated to give their money and time to others when they perceive that their help will address relative disadvantage and make a difference in the recipient's life (Cryder, Loewenstein and Seltman 2013). Furthermore, consumers are relatively accurate in identifying when other people lack money (Kraus, Park and Tan 2017) and time (Bellezza, Paharia and Keinan 2017), demonstrating the fact that consumers may be able to accurately address the perceived scarcity of others.

One approach that consumers may take to address the perceived scarcity of others is through gift-giving. Gift-giving occasions are frequent: The average US household spends nearly 2% of its annual income on gifts (US Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2017), and gift-givers are motivated to give gifts that address the perceived need of the recipient (Williams and Rosenzweig 2017), including the desire to save others time and money (see Web Appendix A). Yet, little is known about how consumers respond to gifts intending to save them time or money, and whether consumers experience these gifts differently.

### **Status**

One consequence of receiving a gift intending to save money or time is that the recipient may make an inference of their relative status to the gift-giver or of their position in society more

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generally. Financial scarcity has been linked to inferences of low status and negative affect. Consumers make inferences about others' status based on their possessions. For example, ownership of expensive, luxury goods signals that one has the financial resources necessary to acquire such possessions, while the absence of such goods can communicate the opposite (Han, Nunes and Dreze 2010).

Furthermore, participants who were asked to recall a circumstance where they had fewer financial resources than a peer indicated that they felt more inferior and experienced more negative emotions than participants who recalled a circumstance where they had relatively more financial resources than a peer (Sharma and Alter 2012). Relatedly, financially constrained consumers avoid talking about their purchasing decisions with others because such discussions reinforce negative feelings about their disadvantaged position (Paley, Tully and Sharma 2019).

In contrast, status is conferred to consumers experiencing time scarcity. This is because "busyness"—devoting more time to work and less time to leisure—leads to a perception of the time scarce individual as having valuable human capital that is in demand (Bellezza et al. 2017). Resultingly, time strapped consumers regularly broadcast their time constraints to others in public such as on social media (Bellezza et al. 2017).

Given the different perceptions of status regarding scarcity of time and money, we predict that receiving a gift with the intention to alleviate money scarcity will result in the recipient perceiving a greater status differential between themselves and the gift-giver than a gift intending to address time scarcity. People who were asked to evaluate themselves compared to higher status peers have been found to report greater self-conscious emotions like guilt and shame, as well as negative emotions more broadly (Sandstrom et al. 2019). Thus, we will focus on how money versus time saving gifts influence negative emotions. We will also explore how gifts

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intending to address financial scarcity influence the recipient's perceptions of status, and how recipients believe gift-givers perceive their status. We predict the following:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Receiving a gift with the intention of saving money (vs. time) will result in the recipient experiencing greater negative emotions.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Receiving a gift with the intention of saving money (vs. time) will result in a greater perceived status differential between the gift recipient and the gift-giver. These status differences will partly explain why consumers feel more negative emotions after receiving a gift intending to save money (vs. time).

### Scarcity

We also explore whether the perceived status inferences and negative emotional experience of receiving a gift intending to save money is moderated by the extent to which the recipient is currently experiencing financial scarcity. One possibility is that consumers who are experiencing a greater degree of financial scarcity may have a more positive experience receiving a gift intending to save them money because the gift addresses a pressing need. However, past research has found that perceiving inferior status through financial disadvantage results in greater negative emotions (Sharma and Alter 2012). Thus, it is also possible that recipients who are experiencing greater financial scarcity may perceive an even greater status differential from a gift intending to save money, leading to more negative emotions. Thus, we explore the possibility that scarcity—both manipulated and measured as an individual difference—moderates the gift recipient's status inferences and emotional experiences.

To test these hypotheses, we conducted five studies evaluating actual and hypothetical gift exchanges. In Study 1, participants recalled a recent gift they received where the intention of the gift-giver was to save them money or time and reported how the motive of the gift-giver

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impacted their emotional experience (H1) and perceptions of status (H2). In Study 2, we recruited undergraduate participants to give a gift card to another person with the intention of saving them money or time and evaluated how gift-giving motive influenced recipient experience. In Studies 3 and 4, we evaluated whether scarcity moderated the extent to which gifts intending to save time or money impacted negative emotions and status. Finally, in Study 5, we evaluate whether gifts intending to save money influenced consumer purchasing.

### STUDY 1: RECALLED GIFTS & RECIPIENT EXPERIENCE

Study 1 asked consumers to recall a recent experience receiving a gift. We randomly assigned participants to think of a gift they received where they perceived the motivation of the gift-giver was to save them money or time.

#### *Method*

**Participants and Design.** Four hundred and five adults (58.3% female;  $M_{age} = 38.25$ ,  $SD = 11.95$ ; 77.8% Caucasian) were recruited through mTurk and paid a nominal fee.

**Procedure.** Participants reflected on a recent gift they received and wrote a few sentences about it. The instructions in the time-saving condition read as follows (word changes for the money-saving condition are in brackets): “*In this task, we would like you to think about a recent gift you received where you felt the intention of the gift giver was to save you time [money]. Please write a few sentences about this gift, why you think this gift was given to you and how you felt about it.*” After writing about this experience, participants completed measures assessing their impressions of this gift, the gift-giver, and additional characteristics about the gift.

**Emotions.** Participants rated the extent to which receiving the gift made them feel guilty, embarrassed, ashamed, bad, happy, proud and good on a scale from -5, *not at all* to +5, *a great*

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*deal*. Positive emotions were reverse scored and a negative emotion scale was calculated ( $\alpha=.85$ ; Donnelly et al. 2017).

**Perceived Status.** To measure perceived status inferences between the gift-giver and recipient, we used the MacArthur scale of subjective status (Adler et al. 2000). This measure consists of a drawing of a ladder with 10 rungs representing where people stand in society (10 represents people at the top of society; 1 represents people at the bottom). Participants were instructed to pick the rung where they felt the gift-giver would place them (the recipient) and where the gift-giver would place themselves. We created a difference score from these measures where a negative value meant that gift recipients believed that gift-givers saw them (the recipient) as lower status than they saw themselves.

**Social Consumption.** Previous research has demonstrated that consumption shared with others can enhance enjoyment (Caprariello and Reis 2013). We therefore asked participants to report the extent to which the gift was consumed with others on a scale ranging from 1, *Consumed Completely Alone* to 7, *Consumed Completely with Others*.

**Experiential Versus Material Gift.** Previous research has also demonstrated that experiential gifts can increase relationship closeness and engender more positive emotions than material gifts (Chan and Mogilner, 2017). Thus, we asked participants to classify the gift on a scale from 1, *Definitely a Material Item* to 7, *Definitely an Experience*.

**Gift Characteristics.** Participants rated the extent to which the gift was unique, something they really wanted, and useful on a 1, *Not at All*, to 7, *A Great Deal* scale. Participants also estimated the cost of the gift, the relationship they had with the gift-giver and categorized the gift in a product category (see Web Appendix B).

## Results



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**Emotions.** Recipients experienced greater negative emotions when they perceived that the intention of the gift-giver was to save them money than to save them time ( $M_{money} = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ;  $M_{time} = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ,  $t(403) = 3.11$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $d = .31$ ).

**Perceived Status.** Recipients believed the gift-giver saw themselves as higher in status than the recipient when giving a gift intending to save money ( $M_{money} = -1.22$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ;  $M_{time} = -.52$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ,  $t(403) = 4.103$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .40$ ).

**Mediation.** We evaluated whether the effect of gift type on negative emotions was mediated by perceptions of status using the PROCESS macro (Hayes and Preacher 2014). Results are shown in Table 1 and demonstrate that perceptions of status partially mediate the relationship between receiving a gift with the intention of saving money and increased negative emotions (95% CI, .05 to .30).

**Gift Characteristics and Product Category.** Gift-giving motivation did not influence how social, experiential, unique, wanted, useful, and costly gifts were (see Web Appendix B for full results). Gifts given to save money or time were equally likely to be given from friends, acquaintances, and co-workers, and belonged to similar product categories. Money-saving gifts were more likely to be given from family members and time-saving gifts were more likely to be given from significant others. Importantly, our main effects hold controlling for these differences (see Web Appendix B).

### *Discussion*

Study 1 provides initial evidence that gifts given with the intention of saving the recipient money have negative implications for the recipient of the gift—recipients experience more negative emotions in part because they believe the gift-giver perceives a larger status differential between gift-giver and recipient.

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By evaluating recalled experiences of gifts, we gained insight into the characteristics of gifts that were more likely to be given with the intention of saving time versus money. Gift-giving intentions did not influence the price of the gift, perceptions of usefulness or desirability. While family members were more likely to give gifts with the intention of saving money, and significant others were more likely to give gifts with the intention of saving time, these factors did not explain why gifts given with the intention of saving money resulted in more negative emotions or a greater inferred status differential between the recipient and gift-giver (see Web Appendix C). In the studies that follow, we focus on a gift that was commonly represented across both gift-giving motivations in Study 1 (prepared food), and manipulate the motivation of the gift giver: to either save the recipient money or time. This approach allows us to isolate the unique effects of time versus money saving motivations, holding constant the features of the gift.

### STUDY 2: RECIPIENT EXPERIENCE IN REAL-LIFE GIFT GIVING

In Study 2, we continued to evaluate real gift-giving experiences by randomly assigning participants to give a \$5 Starbucks gift card to another person with the intention of saving them money or time. A pre-test ( $N = 66$ , 48.5% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 21.47$ ,  $SD = 9.49$ ; 81.8% Caucasian) revealed that participants perceived the time and money-saving value of a \$5 Starbucks gift card to be equivalent ( $M_{\text{money}} = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ;  $M_{\text{time}} = 3.64$ ,  $SD = 2.09$ ;  $t(66) = .97$ ,  $p = .34$ ,  $d = .24$ )<sup>1</sup>. While our primary interest was evaluating recipient experience of receiving a gift intending to save them money or time, we also evaluated the perspective of gift-givers to understand whether they anticipated the negative emotional experiences of recipients receiving a gift intending to save money (vs. time).

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<sup>1</sup> Participants rated the extent to which a \$5 Starbucks gift card would save them money and time (counterbalanced) on a 1 (*Not at All*) to 7 (*Very Much*) scale.

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### *Method*

**Participants and Design.** Two hundred students at a midwestern university (58.0% female;  $M_{\text{age}}=20.51$ ,  $SD=1.75$ ; 73.5% Caucasian) received course credit for participating in a study about gift-giving. We randomly assigned participants to a 2 condition (gift intention: save time versus save money) between-subjects design.

**Procedure.** Participants were informed that they were participating in a study on gift-giving and were instructed to give an envelope that contained a \$5 Starbucks gift card, a survey for the recipient of the gift card to complete, and a stamped and addressed envelope so the recipient could return the survey to the researchers. The Starbucks gift card was packaged in a sleeve (Figure 1) that contained a message that stated: “I know you’ve been stressed for time [money] lately. I hope you’ll enjoy this gift card in hopes that it will save you some time [money].” Gift-givers were instructed to give this gift card to another person within the week.

**Emotions.** Gift-givers evaluated the transcribed message on the sleeve of the gift-card and were asked to consider how the recipient of the gift would feel receiving a gift intending to save them time [money]. Gift-givers rated the extent to which recipients would feel the same emotions from Study 1 ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

**Gift Recipients.** The survey enclosed with the gift card assessed recipients' negative emotions ( $\alpha = .81$ ). Recipients also completed the MacArthur scale of subjective status as in Study 1. We received 92 responses from recipients (75.0% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.89$ ,  $SD = 7.52$ ; 77.2% Caucasian). This response rate (46%) was consistent with previous gift-giving studies (Chan and Mogilner 2017) and did not differ by gift-giving condition.

### *Results*

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**Emotions and Perceived Status.** Recipients receiving a gift intending to save money (vs. time) experienced more negative emotions ( $M_{\text{money}} = 2.64$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ,  $M_{\text{time}} = 2.13$ ,  $SD = .75$ ,  $t(90) = 2.49$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = .52$ ) and believed the gift-giver perceived a larger status differential between themselves and the recipient ( $M_{\text{money}} = -1.77$ ,  $SD = 2.10$ ,  $M_{\text{time}} = -.43$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ;  $t(90) = -3.51$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = .73$ ). Gift-givers did not predict the difference in negative emotions of recipients ( $M_{\text{money}} = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ,  $M_{\text{time}} = 2.97$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ;  $t(198) = .79$ ,  $p = .43$ ,  $d = .11$ ).

**Mediation.** As in Study 1, the perceived status differential between gift-giver and recipient mediated the relationship between gift type and negative emotions (95% CI, .05, .45; Table 2).

**Gift Card Redemption.** Three months following the administration of the experiment we assessed whether there were differences in redemption rates and gift card balance as a function of gift type. Participants were equally likely to redeem their gift card in the time-saving (68.0%) and money-saving (68.0%) conditions,  $\chi^2(1, N=200) = .00$ ,  $p = 1.00$ . Gift card balances were also similar ( $M_{\text{money}} = \$1.94$ ,  $SD = \$2.42$ ,  $M_{\text{time}} = \$1.82$ ,  $SD = \$2.29$ ;  $t(198) = .38$ ,  $p = .71$ ,  $d = .05$ ), as were the number of days that participants took to redeem their gift cards ( $M_{\text{money}} = 60.33$ ,  $SD = 47.23$ ,  $M_{\text{time}} = 66.61$ ,  $SD = 45.62$ ;  $t(90) = .65$ ,  $p = .52$ ,  $d = .13$ ) suggesting that the resource-saving intention of the gift did not impact redemption.

## *Discussion*

Study 2 provided further evidence that receiving a gift intending to save money increases negative emotions because of perceived differences in status between the gift-giver and the recipient. We also demonstrated that givers of gifts failed to predict the negative experience of recipients.

## STUDY 3: THE MODERATING ROLE OF PERSONAL RESOURCE SCARCITY

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Based on our theorizing that the negative emotional experience of receiving a money-saving gift results from differences in recipient's beliefs about the gift-giver's perceived status differential, our effect could be moderated by the degree to which people generally experience scarcity of the resource that the gift-giver is intending to save them. For instance, people who are experiencing greater resource scarcity may benefit more from receiving help to address their scarcity. Thus, the negative effect of gifts addressing money scarcity may be weakened for individuals experiencing greater money scarcity. A competing hypothesis is that people who experience greater money scarcity might feel more intense negative emotions, in part because the gift-giving motive may acknowledge a scarcity that the recipient hopes others do not realize. Indeed, consumers generally wish to hide their financial scarcity (Paley et al., 2019) but often broadcast time scarcity (Bellezza et al., 2017). We explore these possibilities in the current study.

### *Method*

**Participants and Design.** Four hundred and seven adults (52.2% female;  $M_{age} = 39.19$ ,  $SD = 11.33$ ; 77.6% Caucasian) were recruited through MTurk and were paid a nominal fee. We randomly assigned participants to a 2 condition (gift type: time-saving vs. money-saving) between-subjects design.

As in Study 2, we held constant the gift (Chipotle dinner) and vary the gift-giving motive. A post-test ( $N = 120$ , 51.7% female;  $M_{age} = 36.08$ ,  $SD = 12.71$ ; 70.0% Caucasian) revealed that participants perceived the time and money-saving value of a Chipotle dinner to be equivalent ( $M_{money} = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ;  $M_{time} = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.76$ ;  $t(119) = -.39$ ,  $p = .69$ ,  $d = .07$ )<sup>2</sup>.

**Procedure.** Participants imagined a scenario in which they received a gift by reading the following instructions: *"Imagine that you are coming home after a long day. Shortly after you*

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<sup>2</sup> Participants rated the extent to which a Chipotle dinner would save them money and time (counterbalanced) on a 1 (*Not at All*) to 7 (*Very Much*) scale.

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*arrive home, your friend stops by with a meal from Chipotle for you. Your friend says, I was at Chipotle tonight and thought I'd grab you some dinner..."*

In the time-saving intention condition participants read (word changes in the money-saving intention condition are shown in brackets): *"I know that you've been stressed for time [money] lately. I thought I'd grab you some dinner, in hopes that it would save you some time [money]."* Next, participants completed measures assessing how receiving the gift would make them feel.

**Emotions and Perceived Status.** Participants completed the same scale from Studies 1 and 2 measuring negative emotions ( $\alpha=.89$ ) and subjective status.

**Scarcity.** To measure participant's experience of resource scarcity, all participants completed a 4-item measure from Roux et al. (2015). In the time-saving intention condition participants read (word changes in the money-saving intention condition are shown in brackets): *"I don't have enough time [money]"*, *"my time [money] is scarce"*, *"I need to protect the time [money] I have"*, *"I need to acquire more time [money]"*;  $\alpha=.88$ ).

## Results

**Emotions.** Participants felt more negative emotions when receiving a gift intending to save them money than a gift intending to save them time ( $M_{\text{money}} = 5.48$ ,  $SD = 2.44$ ,  $M_{\text{time}} = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ,  $t(405) = 10.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $d = 1.00$ ).

**Perceived Status.** Participants believed that the gift-giver perceived a larger status differential between themselves and the recipient when giving a gift intending to save money ( $M_{\text{money}} = -1.76$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ,  $M_{\text{time}} = -.25$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ,  $t(405) = -10.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.06$ ).

**Moderated Mediation.** We then tested for moderated mediation following PROCESS (Hayes and Preacher 2014) model 8. In this model, we evaluated whether the mediation effect was

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moderated by gift-receivers experience of resource scarcity. The results of the analysis indicated that the mediation effects were stronger for participants with a higher experience of resource scarcity (Table 3). A floodlight analysis (Johnson-Neyman 1936) revealed a significant increase in perceived status differential for a gift intended to save money for any value of scarcity above 2.27 (at  $p < .05$ ; Figure 2) and a significant increase in negative emotions when receiving a gift intended to save money for any value of scarcity above 3.75 (at  $p < .05$ ; Figure 3).

### *Discussion*

Study 3 provided further evidence of the role of perceived status and negative emotions in response to receiving a gift intending to save money (vs. time). Our effect was moderated by the extent to which the recipient experienced scarcity of the resource the gift-giver intended to save. A gift intending to save money was particularly detrimental to status inferences and negative emotions when the recipient was experiencing a greater scarcity of money, while gifts intending to save the recipient time were relatively uninfluenced by the recipient's time scarcity.

## STUDY 4: MANIPULATING SCARCITY

In Study 4, we followed the same procedure as Study 3, but manipulated scarcity to understand if a scarcity manipulation would produce similar moderating effects as our individual difference measure. Further, we introduce a number of other changes in Study 4: we alter the language of the gift-giving motivation to more closely manipulate perceived scarcity (rather than perceived resource stress), we introduce a control condition to understand the direction of our effects and we assess the extent to which the gift is appreciated by the recipient and the extent to which the gift alleviates scarcity. We describe these changes in more detail below.

### *Method*

## GIFTS INTENDING TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY

**Participants and Design.** Five hundred and one adults (47.9% female;  $M_{\text{age}}=37.91$ ,  $SD=11.65$ ; 73.1% Caucasian) were recruited through MTurk and were paid a nominal fee. We randomly assigned participants to a 2 (gift type: time-saving vs. money-saving) x 2 (scarcity manipulation: yes vs. no) or a control condition (between-subjects).

**Procedure.** As in Study 3, participants imagined a scenario in which they received a Chipotle dinner from a friend. All participants read: *"Imagine that you are coming home after a long day. Shortly after you arrive home, your friend stops by with a meal from Chipotle for you. Your friend says..."*

In our control condition, participants read: *"I was at Chipotle tonight and thought I'd grab you some dinner."*

In the time-saving intention condition participants read (word changes in the money-saving intention condition are shown in brackets): *"I know that you felt like you've had an inadequate amount of time [money] lately. I was at Chipotle tonight and thought I'd grab you some dinner, in hopes that it would save you some time [money]."* Before reading this scenario, we administered a scarcity manipulation to half of the participants in the time and money saving conditions. Specifically, half of the participants assigned to consider a gift with a time [money]-saving motive were asked to briefly write about how they experience time [money] scarcity in their life and to list all the ways in which their experience of inadequate time [money] impacts their life overall.<sup>3</sup> Scarcity was not manipulated in the control condition.

**Negative Emotions and Perceived Status.** Following our manipulations, participants completed measures assessing their negative emotions ( $\alpha=.83$ ) and subjective status (Adler et al. 2000).

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<sup>3</sup> A manipulation check confirmed that participants in the money scarcity condition reported that their money was scarce more than all other conditions ( $ps < .04$ ), and participants in the time scarcity condition reported that their time was scarce more than all other conditions ( $ps < .005$ ).



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However, in this study, we asked participants where they would place themselves (the recipient) and where they would place the gift-giver (unlike our previous studies where participants were asked to take the gift-givers perspective) to examine the recipient's perception of one's own status. As before, we subtracted the self-rating from the rating of the giver to calculate a perceived status differential.

**Appreciation and Scarcity Alleviation.** Participants also reported how much they would appreciate the gift and the extent to which the gift would be helpful in alleviating their scarcity. Both questions were administered on an 11-point scale (from -5, *not at all*, to +5, *very much*).

### *Results*

**Emotions.** Participants felt more negative emotions when receiving a gift intending to save them money than a gift intending to save them time and a gift given with no communicated motive ( $M_{\text{money}} = 5.83$ ,  $SD = 2.12$ ;  $M_{\text{time}} = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ;  $M_{\text{control}} = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ),  $F(2, 496) = 67.93$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .21$ . Participants also felt significantly more negative emotions after a scarcity manipulation ( $M_{\text{scarcity\_manipulation}} = 5.11$ ,  $SD = 2.25$ ;  $M_{\text{no\_scarcity\_manipulation}} = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ),  $F(1, 496) = 9.44$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between gift-type and scarcity manipulation,  $F(1, 496) = 4.41$ ,  $p < .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Consistent with Study 3 when evaluating individual differences in scarcity, participants felt much more negative receiving a money-saving gift when scarcity was manipulated,  $F(1, 496) = 13.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ , while participants felt similarly receiving a time-saving gift whether scarcity was manipulated or not,  $F(1, 496) = .48$ ,  $p = .49$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ ; Figure 4.

**Perceived Status.** Participants perceived a greater status differential between themselves and the gift-giver when receiving a gift intending to save them money than a gift intending to save them time and a gift given with no motive ( $M_{\text{money}} = -2.08$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ;  $M_{\text{time}} = -.90$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ;  $M_{\text{control}}$

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= -.86,  $SD = 1.46$ ),  $F(2, 496) = 26.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ . Participants also perceived a greater status differential after a scarcity manipulation ( $M_{\text{scarcity\_manipulation}} = -1.73$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ;  $M_{\text{no\_scarcity\_manipulation}} = -1.13$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ),  $F(1, 496) = 6.67$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between gift-type and scarcity manipulation,  $F(1, 496) = 4.41$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Consistent when evaluating individual differences of scarcity in Study 3, participants perceived a greater status differential receiving a money-saving gift when scarcity was manipulated (vs. when it was not;  $F(1, 496) = 10.89$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ), while participants felt similarly receiving a time-saving gift when scarcity was manipulated (vs. when it was not;  $F(1, 496) = .12$ ,  $p = .73$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ ).

**Moderated Mediation.** As in Study 3, we then tested for moderated mediation which indicated that the mediation effects were stronger for participants under scarcity (95% CI: .11, .55) than those that were not (95% CI: .04, .39; Table 4).

**Appreciation.** Participants felt less appreciation for a gift intending to save them money than a gift intending to save them time and a gift given with no communicated motive ( $M_{\text{money}} = 9.58$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ;  $M_{\text{time}} = 10.09$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ;  $M_{\text{control}} = 9.93$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ),  $F(2, 496) = 5.36$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . However, there was no main effect of the scarcity manipulation on appreciation,  $ps < .58$ , and no significant interactions,  $ps < .75$ .

**Scarcity Alleviation.** Participants felt that a gift intending to save them money would be less successful at alleviating scarcity than a gift intending to save them time and a gift given with no communicated motive ( $M_{\text{money}} = 6.99$ ,  $SD = 2.48$ ;  $M_{\text{time}} = 8.96$ ,  $SD = 1.82$ ;  $M_{\text{control}} = 7.83$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ),  $F(2, 496) = 40.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ . There was no main effect of scarcity manipulation  $p < .35$ , and no significant interaction,  $ps < .32$ .

## Discussion

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Consistent with the findings in Study 3, a gift intending to save money resulted in lower status inferences and negative emotions when the recipient was under scarcity, while gifts intending to save the recipient time were relatively uninfluenced by scarcity. Study 4 also documented observations for appreciation and alleviation of scarcity—showing that gifts intending to save money (vs. time) were appreciated less and were perceived as less effective at alleviating scarcity.

## STUDY 5: PERCEIVED STATUS & PURCHASING DECISIONS

Our studies have provided consistent evidence that receiving a gift intending to save money results in a greater perceived status differential, leading to heightened negative emotions for gift recipients. In this next study, we evaluate the possibility that gifts intending to save money can influence purchasing decisions. Specifically, we posit that recipients who experience a greater status differential should look to restore status through compensatory consumption (Rucker and Galinsky 2008).

### *Method*

**Participants and Design.** Three hundred and three adults (58.0% female;  $M_{\text{age}}=36.21$ ,  $SD=12.65$ ; 73.5% Caucasian) were recruited through MTurk and were paid a nominal fee. We randomly assigned participants to a 3 condition (gift type: control vs. addressing money stress vs. addressing inadequate money) between-subjects design.

**Procedure.** Participants imagined a scenario in which they received a \$30 Amazon gift card from a friend. All participants read: *“Imagine that you are coming home after a long day. Shortly after you arrive home, your friend stops by with a \$30 Amazon gift card. Your friend says...”*

In our control condition, participants read: *“I thought I’d give you an Amazon gift card.”*

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In the addressing money stress condition (modeled after our procedure in Studies 2 and 3) participants read (word changes in the addressing inadequate money condition [modeled after Study 4] are shown in brackets): *"I know that you have been stressed for [felt like you've had an inadequate amount of] money lately. I thought I'd give you an Amazon gift card, in hopes that it would save you some money."*

**Purchase Intentions.** Participants were asked to imagine that they were considering using the gift card to purchase a grey sweater with a college logo and were asked to state their relative preference on a 1, *Definitely a sweater with a Boston University logo* to 7, *Definitely a sweater with a Harvard University logo*.<sup>4</sup>

**Emotions and Perceived Status.** Participants completed measures assessing their negative emotions ( $\alpha = .91$ ) and subjective status (as measured in Study 4). Participants also reported the extent to which they believed their friend gave them a gift card because they believed that they didn't have enough money.

### Results

**Perceived Gift Intention.** There was a main effect of gift type,  $F(2, 302) = 188.65, p < .001$ . Planned contrasts indicated that participants in the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 2.72, SD = 2.00$ ) were less likely to believe the gift was given to them because they didn't have enough money compared to the money stress ( $M_{\text{money\_stress}} = 6.09, SD = 1.24, t(300) = 16.63, p < .001, d = 2.35$ ) and inadequate money ( $M_{\text{money\_inadequate}} = 6.40, SD = 1.24, t(300) = 17.52, p < .001, d = 2.57$ ) conditions. There were no differences between the money stress and money inadequate conditions,  $ps > .12$ .

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<sup>4</sup> A post-test revealed that participants considered Harvard University ( $M=6.33, SD=1.23$ ) to be higher status than Boston University ( $M=5.21, SD=1.24; t(3020)=15.42, p<.001$ ).

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**Purchase Intention.** There was a main effect of gift type,  $F(2, 302) = 5.36, p = .005$ . Planned contrasts indicated that participants in the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 4.11, SD = 1.48$ ) were less likely to purchase the Harvard sweater compared to the money stress ( $M_{\text{money\_stress}} = 4.70, SD = 1.42, t(300) = 2.89, p = .004, d = .41$ ) and inadequate money ( $M_{\text{money\_inadequate}} = 4.72, SD = 1.40, t(300) = 2.88, p = .004, d = .42$ ) conditions. There were no differences between the money stress and money inadequate conditions,  $ps < .92$ .

**Emotions.** There was a main effect of gift type,  $F(2, 300) = 26.13, p < .001$ . Planned contrasts indicated that participants felt fewer negative emotions in the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = 3.45, SD = 1.65$ ) than when receiving a gift intending to address money stress ( $M_{\text{money\_stress}} = 5.23, SD = 2.54, t(300) = 5.42, p < .001, d = .77$ ) or inadequate money ( $M_{\text{money\_inadequate}} = 5.82, SD = 2.54, t(300) = 6.97, p < .001, d = 1.02$ ). Participants felt marginally more negative emotions receiving a gift addressing inadequate money than money stress,  $t(300) = 1.87, p = .06, d = .26$ .

**Perceived Relative Status.** There was a main effect of gift type,  $F(2, 300) = 8.02, p < .001$  on perceived relative status. Planned contrasts indicated that participants perceived a smaller status differential in the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}} = -1.17, SD = 2.17$ ) than when receiving a gift intending to address money stress ( $M_{\text{money\_stress}} = -1.89, SD = 1.83, t(300) = 2.57, p = .01, d = .36$ ) or inadequate money ( $M_{\text{money\_inadequate}} = -2.32, SD = 1.97, t(300) = 3.98, p < .001, d = .58$ ). There were no differences between the money stress and money inadequate conditions,  $p < .11$ .

**Mediation.** We evaluated whether the effect of gift type on purchase intentions and negative emotions was mediated by perceived relative status. Given the consistent effects of gifts intending to address money stress and inadequate money we collapsed across this variable and compared money-saving gifts to our control condition. Perceived relative status mediated the

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effect on purchase intentions (95% CI: .00 to .19; Table 5), and negative emotions (95% CI: .02 to .34; Table 5).

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Five studies demonstrate the downstream consequences of giving gifts intending to save money or time. Across studies, gifts intending to save money resulted in higher negative emotions and increased perceptions of a status differential between recipients and gift-givers. Our effects were moderated by experienced financial scarcity (manipulated and measured). Experiencing financial scarcity resulted in a greater perceived status differential, and greater negative affect when receiving a gift intending to save money. Beyond negative affect, a heightened status differential resulted in greater purchase intentions of a high status good. Lastly, gift-givers did not accurately predict recipients' experiences with receiving gifts intending to save money.

### *Theoretical Implications*

This research contributes to the growing body of research evaluating how consumer decision-making is altered by resource scarcity. While previous research has primarily evaluated how consumers make decisions to address their own scarcity (Cannon et al. 2018; Hamilton et al. 2018; Sharma and Alter 2012), this research provides an important extension by understanding how consumers respond to efforts from others intending to address their perceived scarcity.

While consumers generally engage in behaviors to address their own money scarcity (e.g., Shah, Mullainathan and Shafir 2012), they have difficulty purchasing time-saving services to alleviate their own time scarcity (Whillans, Lee-Yoon and Dunn 2019). We document that consumers' emotional reactions are more positive toward gifts addressing time (vs. money) scarcity.

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Negative emotional reactions were predicted by a lower perceived status of the recipient, consistent with previous research documenting the status benefits of time scarcity (Bellezza et al. 2017) as well as the status costs of money scarcity (Sharma and Alter 2012). Recipients who experienced greater financial scarcity (and would most benefit from such gifts) perceived even lower status than those not experiencing financial scarcity, and resultingly, felt even more negative. While previous research suggests that time scarcity is associated with higher status inferences (Bellezza et al 2017), we observed that recipients of gifts generally perceived a lower status position to a gift-giver even when gift-giving intentions were explicitly addressing time scarcity or not explicitly addressing scarcity. We also note that there was no significant increase in the perceived status of the recipient in the time (vs. control) condition, and that more research is needed to explore the potential benefit of gifts that address time scarcity as compared to gifts that are given without an explicit scarcity-related motive. For example, time-saving gifts could potentially boost status and reduce negative emotions in work-related contexts, where busyness could be a point of pride for employees who receive time-saving gifts from managers.

This work also contributes to the literature on gift-giving. Research on gift-giving has primarily evaluated the positive benefits of giving-gifts (e.g., Chan and Mogilner 2017), evaluating how much recipients appreciate, value, and like the gifts that they receive (Gino and Flynn 2011). However, failures in gift-giving may reflect a problem in perspective-taking that afflicts many social exchanges. When predicting what gift-recipients will enjoy, gift-givers focus too heavily on their own perspective (Galak, Givi and Williams 2016) and overweigh recipient's immediate affective reactions over their general satisfaction with the gift (Yang and Urminsky 2018). We document another instance of a perspective-gap in gift-giving, as givers fail to predict the different emotional experiences of recipients who receive money (vs. time) saving-gifts. This

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perspective error could be interpersonally costly and work against a common gift-giving motivation for increasing recipient well-being.

By comparing gifts intending to save money and time, our work contributes to the literature that evaluates psychological differences between money and time (e.g., Zauberma and Lynch 2005). We demonstrate that consumers respond more negatively when receiving financial (vs. temporal) aid, in part because of the status inferences associated with these actions.

### *Limitations and Future Direction*

One limitation and a resulting question that arises from this work are that our effects were documented primarily in the context of friendships. While Studies 1 and 2 did capture instances of gift-giving among professional relationships, these instances were infrequent.

Previous research has found that devoting more detailed attention to money in friendships can make a friendship feel transactional, and undermine the cooperative nature of the relationship (Kim, Zhang, and Norton 2018). Thus, a gift intending to save money [time] may be particularly negative [positive] in the context of friendships and may have different effects in a professional context. For instance, receiving a gift addressing time scarcity at home might imply that the gift-giver is attempting to allow the recipient to further enjoy their leisure (e.g., ‘non-work’) time, whereas receiving a gift intending to address time scarcity at work might imply that the recipient is not competent in completing their work tasks in a timely manner. Future work could evaluate the emotional effects of receiving gifts in professional relationships.

While we evaluated gifts with similar money and time-saving abilities, future research could examine whether the size or cost of a gift influences perceptions of status and negative emotions. An overly expensive gift may heighten the perceived status differential between recipient and gift-giver (Sandstrom et al. 2019). However, more expensive gifts might be more



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successful at alleviating scarcity, and our findings from Study 4 suggest that consumers may have a more positive experience receiving gifts that are successful at alleviating scarcity. In addition, the immediate versus chronic nature of experienced scarcity might have a distinct impact on emotions. If a person is experiencing daily stress that isn't representative of their overall chronic state, they may not feel as negative when receiving a money-saving gift. Future research should examine the varying effects of different types of experienced scarcity.

Future research should also explore the differential effects of gifts that vary in the extent to which they objectively (vs. subjectively) are money-saving or time-saving in nature, such as comparing gift cards for gas versus housecleaning services. Receiving a gift that saves an objective amount of time or money might bring different emotional outcomes for the recipient (vs. gifts intended to save one of these resources more generally).

Lastly, it is possible that recipients' negative emotional reactions to gifts intending to save money might be an immediate reaction that is mitigated over time. Through extended consideration, recipients might realize the inherent benefit of a money-saving gift and feel more positive in the long-run. More research is needed to explore when and why people react negatively to such gifts and whether reflecting on the gift after consumption garners different emotional responses than when receiving it (see Dunn and Weidman 2015). Relatedly, future research could explore how gifts shape consumption patterns and the likelihood to interact again with someone who gives money (vs. time)-saving gifts.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Consumers report feeling increasingly concerned with having enough time (Perlow 1999) and money (Rheault 2011), yet feel uncomfortable communicating limited resources to others (Paley et al. 2019). This work demonstrates that consumers are regularly motivated to give gifts to

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address perceived scarcity of money and time, but suggests that gift-givers should be careful when communicating this saving motive. A gift intending to save money results in more negative emotions for the recipient and leads to inferences of lower status and is particularly detrimental for consumers experiencing financial scarcity. Overall these results suggest that alleviating scarcity through gift-giving may be costly to recipients.

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**Table 1.** Perceived Status Differential Mediates the Link between Receiving a Gift Intended to Save Money and Increased Negative Emotions (Study 1)

	Gift Intended to Save Money to Perceived Status Differential	Perceived Status Differential to Negative Emotions	Indirect Effects of a Gift Intended to Save Money on Negative Emotions	Total Effect of a Gift Intended to Save Money on Negative Emotions	Direct Effect of a Gift Intended to Save Money on Negative Emotions	95% CI
Perceived Status Differential	69***	-.23**	.16(.06)	.53**	.37*	[.05, .30]

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

## GIFTS INTENDING TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY

**Table 2.** Perceived Status Differential Mediates the Link between Receiving a Gift Intended to Save Money and Increased Negative Emotions (Study 2)

	Gift Intended to Save Money to Perceived Status Differential	Perceived Status Differential to Negative Emotions	Indirect Effects of a Gift Intended to Save Money on Negative Emotions	Total Effect of a Gift Intended to Save Money on Negative Emotions	Direct effect of a Gift Intended to Save Money on Negative Emotions	95% CI
Perceived Status Differential	1.34***	-.16**	.21(.10)	.51**	.30	[.05, .45]

Note. \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

## GIFTS INTENDING TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY

**Table 3.** Moderated-Mediation by Resource Scarcity: Perceived Status Differential Mediates the Link between Receiving a Gift Intended to Save Money and Increased Negative Emotions, Where This Effect is Even Greater When Scarcity is High (Study 3)

	Gift Intended to Save Money to Perceived Status Differential	Gift Intended to Save Money x Scarcity to Perceived Status Differential	Perceived Status Differential to Negative Emotions	Gift Intended to Save Money x Scarcity to Negative Emotions	Conditional Direct Effect	Indirect Effect, 95% CI Low Scarcity [5.75]	Indirect Effect, 95% CI High Scarcity [10.25]	Index of Moderated Mediation, 95% CI
Perceived Status Differential	.48	.12*	-.18*	.22*	1.35 (.31)***	.21 (.10) [.02, .43]	.31 (.16) [.02, .64]	.02 (.01) [.00, .06]

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$



## GIFTS INTENDING TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY

**Table 4.** Moderated-Mediation by Resource Scarcity: Perceived Status Differential Mediates the Link between Receiving a Gift Intended to Save Money and Increased Negative Emotions, Where This Effect is Even Greater When Scarcity is High (Study 4)

	Gift Intended to Save Money to Perceived Status Differential	Gift Intended to Save Money x Scarcity to Perceived Status Differential	Perceived Status Differential to Negative Emotions	Gift Intended to Save Money x Scarcity to Negative Emotions	Conditional Direct Effect No Scarcity	Conditional Direct Effect Scarcity	Indirect Effect, 95% CI No Scarcity	Indirect Effect, 95% CI Scarcity	Index of Moderated Mediation, 95% CI
Perceived Status Differential	.84***	.73*	-.20***	.65 <sup>†</sup>	1.51 (.26***)	2.16 (.29)***	.16 (.07) [.04, .34]	.31 (.11) [.11, .55]	.14 (.08) [.02, .34]

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

## GIFTS INTENDING TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY

**Table 5.** Perceived Status Differential Mediates the Link between Receiving a Gift Intended to Save Money and Purchasing and Negative Emotions (Study 5)

	Gift Intended to Save Money to Perceived Status Differential	Perceived Status Differential to Dependent Measure	Indirect Effects of a Gift Intended to Save Money on Dependent Measure	Total Effect of a Gift Intended to Save Money on Dependent Measure	Direct Effect of a Gift Intended to Save Money on Dependent Measure	95% CI
Purchasing	.92***	-.08*	.07(.05)	.59***	.52**	[.00, .19]
Negative Emotions		-.15**	.13(.08)	2.05***	1.91***	[.02, .34]

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

## GIFTS INTENDING TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY

### FIGURE LEGENDS:

**Figure 1.** Time-saving gift card: The Starbucks gift card was packaged in a sleeve that contained the message of interest (Overall  $N = 200$ ; Study 2).

**Figure 2.** There was a significant interaction between gift type and experienced scarcity on perceived status differential, such that recipients of gifts intending to save money (vs. time) felt lower status than the giver, to the extent that they were experiencing greater scarcity ( $N = 407$ ; Study 3)

**Figure 3.** There was a significant interaction between gift type and experienced scarcity on negative emotions, such that recipients of gifts intending to save money (vs. time) experienced greater negative emotions, to the extent that they were experiencing greater scarcity ( $N = 407$ ; Study 3).

**Figure 4.** Negative emotion by conditions ( $N = 501$ ; Study 4). Participants in the money condition felt greater negative emotions when they were asked to think about their money scarcity; however, participants' negative emotion in the time condition was unaffected by thinking about time scarcity.

**I know that you've been stressed for time lately.**

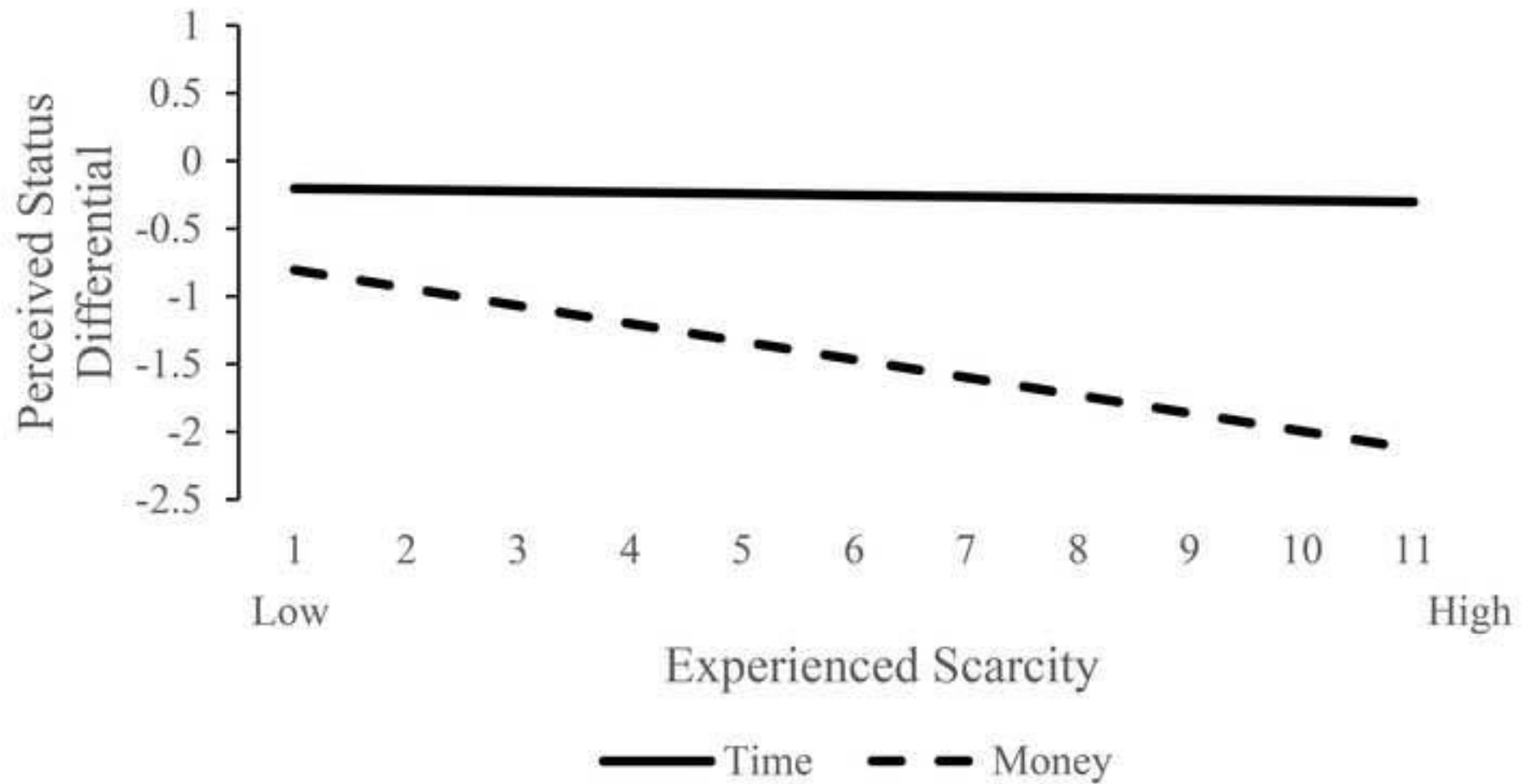
**I hope you will enjoy this gift card in hopes that it will save you  
some time.**

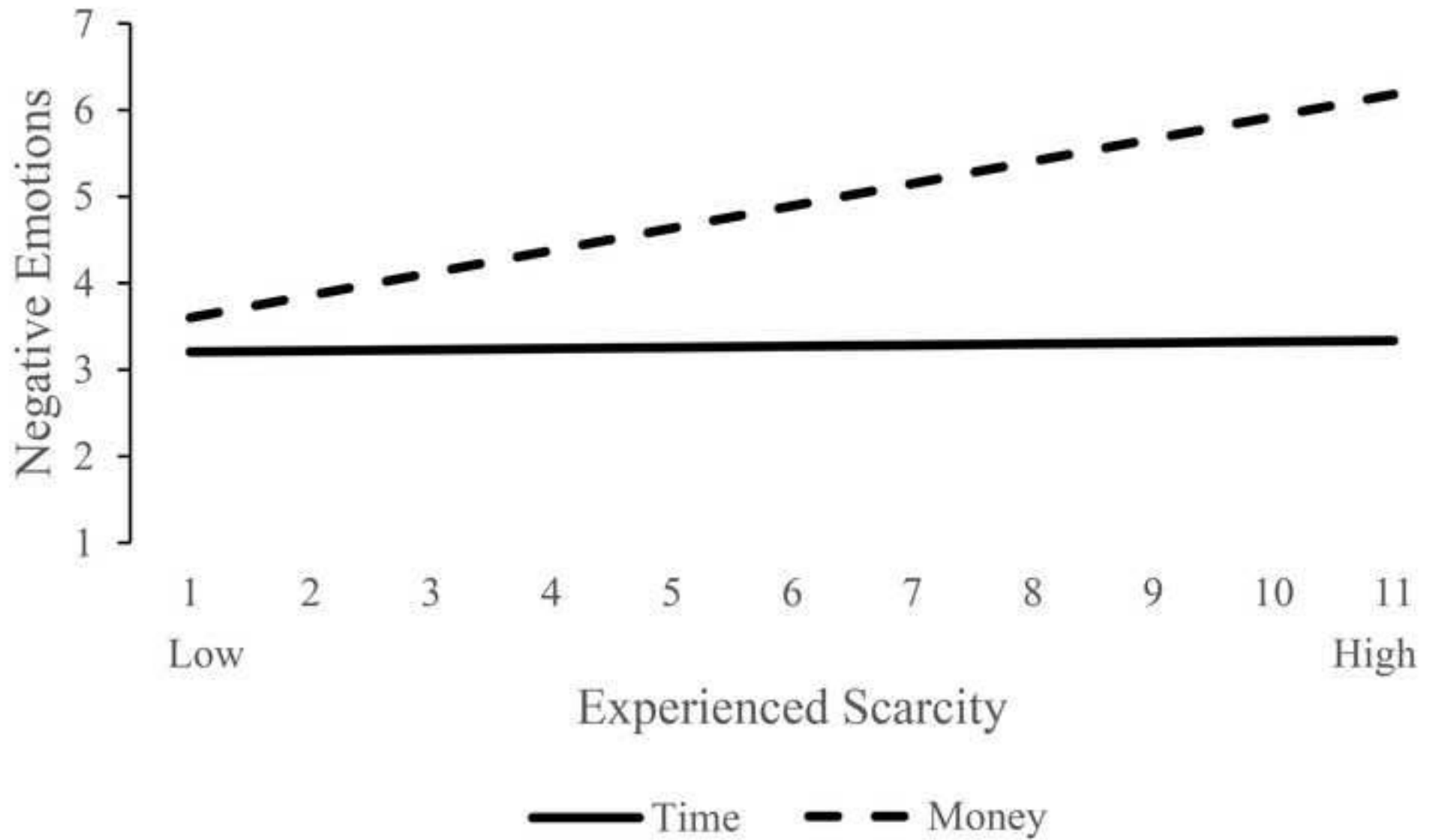


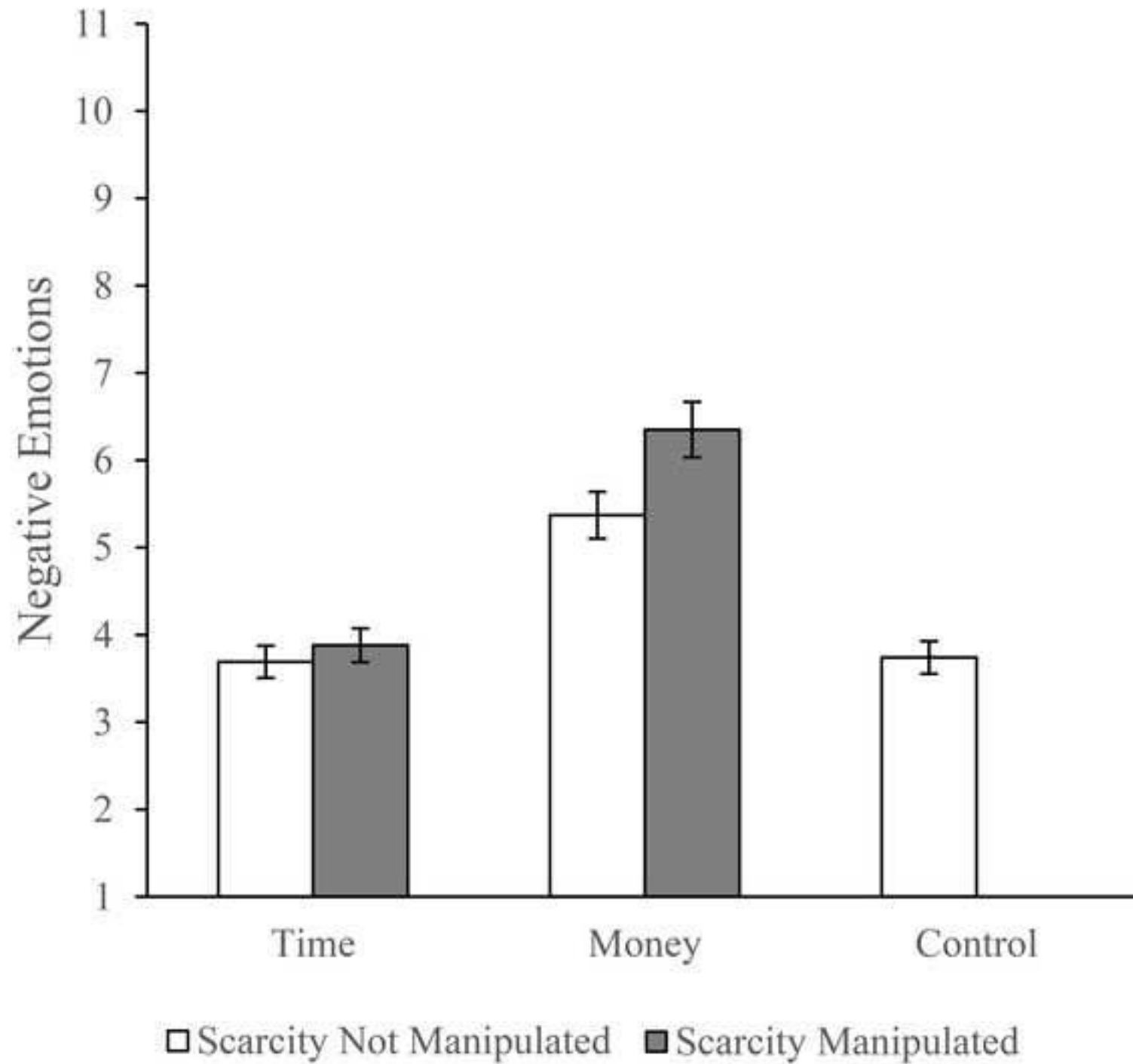
**Earn free drinks, food and refills.**  
Just register this Card at [starbucks.com/rewards](https://starbucks.com/rewards)  
to start earning great benefits.

Some restrictions apply.









## WEB APPENDIX A

### MOTIVATION FOR GIVING MONEY AND TIME SAVING GIFTS

As an initial investigation of money and time saving gifts, we sought to understand consumer motivation to save others money and time through gift-giving, and if consumer motivations were moderated by recipient identity. Therefore, we evaluate gift-giving motivation with a variety of personal and professional relationships and evaluate if consumer motivation to give money and time saving gifts are influenced by perceived recipient need.

#### Method

##### *Participants and Design*

We recruited six hundred fifteen adults (47.1% female;  $M_{age} = 38.58$ ,  $SD = 12.04$ ; 72.8% Caucasian) through MTurk and paid a nominal fee for participating. We randomly assigned participants to a 2 (relationship type: personal vs. professional) x 3 (relative social position: low vs. similar vs. high) between-subjects design.

##### *Procedure*

Participants were asked to think about giving a gift to someone they knew for his/her birthday. Participants were randomly assigned to consider a child, friend, parent, supervisee, co-worker or supervisor. Participants then completed measures assessing their motivation for giving a gift to their relationship partner and estimated how concerned this person was with having enough time and money (among other goals, such as improving friendships, appearance, or receiving unique or surprising gifts). We included these additional comparisons based on previous research suggesting that consumers are motivated to give unique and surprising gifts (Gino and Flynn 2011, Horne and Winakor 1995), as well as gifts that enhance relationships (Belk 1979) or physical appearance (Much Needed 2018). Therefore, we examined these gift-giving motivations in this study to provide a useful benchmark for gift-giving motivations of consumers to give gifts that save time or money.



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### *Motivation*

To measure gift-giving motivation, participants responded to the prompt, “*I want to give my [relationship type] a gift that would...*” The following gift-giving motives were presented in a randomized order: *save them time, save them money, surprise them, be unique, bring them closer to me, bring them closer to other people, improve their appearance*. Each of these motives were measured on scale ranging from 1, *not at all* to 7, *a great deal*.

### *Perceived concern*

To understand if consumers expressed greater motivation to give gifts that addressed a perceived need of their relationship partner, we asked participants the extent to which they thought their relationship partner was concerned with the gift-giving motive in question. Specifically, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they thought their relationship partner was currently concerned about: *having enough time, having enough money, being surprised, receiving unique gifts, becoming closer to the gift-giver, becoming closer to other people, improving their appearance*. All questions were presented in a randomized order and measured on a scale ranging from 1, *not at all* to 7, *a great deal*.

## Results

### *Motivation*

We ran a repeated measures analysis predicting gift-giving motivation. This analysis revealed that consumer motivation significantly differed across goal type,  $F(1, 602) = 181.99, p < .001$ . While consumer motivation to save recipients money ( $M = 4.33, SD = 1.87$ ) and time ( $M = 4.35, SD = 1.77$ ) was significantly lower than the motivation to give surprising ( $M = 5.59, SD = 1.43$ ) and unique gifts ( $M = 5.22, SD = 1.52$ ) and gifts that would bring them closer with the recipient ( $M = 4.74, SD = 1.66; ps < .001$ ), the motivation to save the recipient money and time was significantly higher than the motivation to give a gift that would bring them closer to others ( $M = 3.86, SD = 1.70$ ) and improve their appearance ( $M = 3.14, SD = 1.81; ps < .001$ ).

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Because our primary interest was to understand gift-giving motivation as it relates to saving the recipient money and time, we ran a repeated-measures analysis predicting only these two motives by relationship type (personal vs. professional) and relative social position (low vs. similar vs. high). This analysis revealed a non-significant difference in motivation to give a gift to save the recipient money or time,  $F(1, 604) = .34, p = .56$ , and there was no significant interaction between motive and relationship type,  $F(1, 604) = .00, p = .96$ . Participants reported a similar desire to save personal and professional relationship partners time ( $M_{\text{personal}} = 4.39, SD = 1.77; M_{\text{professional}} = 4.28, SD = 1.77, t(610) = .78, p = .44, d = .06$ ) and money ( $M_{\text{personal}} = 4.43, SD = 1.87; M_{\text{professional}} = 4.16, SD = 1.87, t(610) = 1.74, p = .08, d = .14$ ).

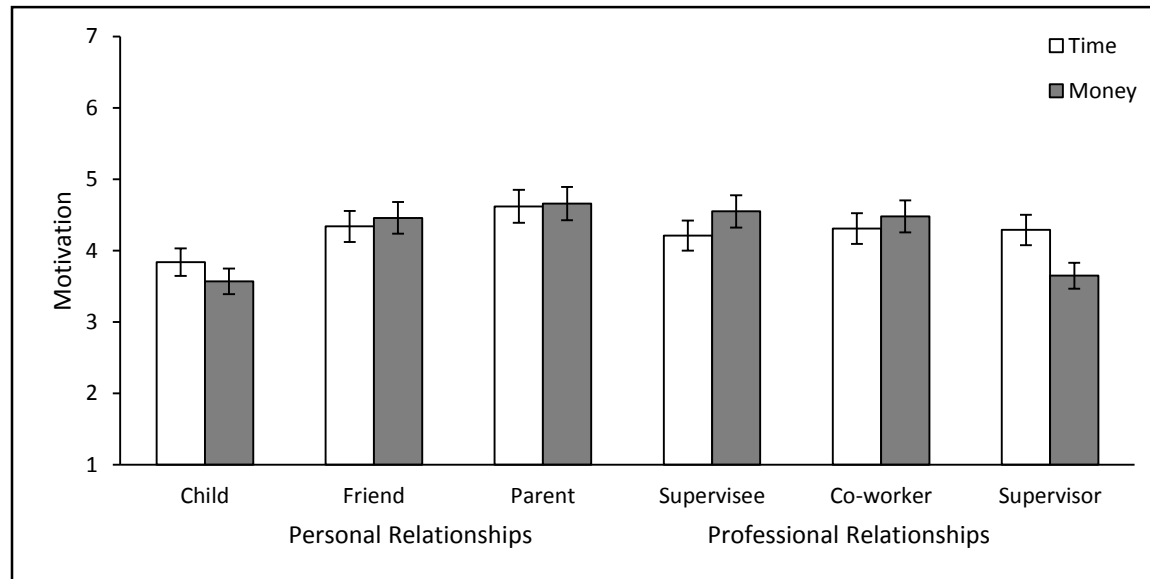
However, there was a significant interaction between motive and relative social position,  $F(2, 604) = 5.12, p = .006$ . Participants expressed lower motivation to give a time-saving gift to someone of lower relative social position than someone of higher relative social position ( $M_{\text{lower}} = 4.02, SD = 1.92; M_{\text{higher}} = 4.50, SD = 1.72, t(353) = 2.29, p = .02, d = .27$ ). Participants also expressed lower motivation to give a money-saving gift to someone of lower relative social position than someone of similar relative social position ( $M_{\text{lower}} = 4.04, SD = 1.99; M_{\text{similar}} = 4.47, SD = 1.75, t(352) = 1.98, p = .05, d = .23$ ), no other comparisons were significantly different from each other.

Further, there was a three-way interaction between motive, relationship type and relative social position,  $F(2, 604) = 6.81, p = .001$ . Regarding the motivation to save others time, in personal relationships, participants expressed marginally lower motivation to save time for relationships with lower relative social position ( $M_{\text{lower}} = 3.84, SD = 1.86$ ) than relationships with similar ( $M_{\text{similar}} = 4.33, SD = 1.72, t(352) = 1.73, p = .08, d = .28$ ) and higher ( $M_{\text{higher}} = 4.62, SD = 1.77, t(216) = 2.74, p = .007, d = .44$ ) relative social position relationships. However, amongst professional relationships there was no significant differences in the desire to save time across relative social position  $F(2, 226) = .05, p = .95$ . In regards to the motivation to save others money, in personal relationships, participants expressed significantly less motivation to save money for lower relative social position relationships ( $M_{\text{lower}} = 3.57, SD = 1.96$ ) than similar ( $M_{\text{similar}} = 4.46, SD = 1.74, t(215) = 3.12, p = .002, d = .50$ ) and higher ( $M_{\text{higher}} = 4.66, SD = 1.90, t(217) = 3.57, p < .001, d = .57$ ) relative social position relationships. The

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opposite pattern was observed in professional relationships: participants expressed greater motivation to save a lower relative social position relationship money than a higher status relationship ( $M_{lower} = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 1.92$ ;  $M_{higher} = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ,  $t(135) = 2.73$ ,  $p = .007$ ,  $d = .49$  see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Gift-giving motivation by relationship type and relative status ( $N = 615$ ; Experiment 1; error bars indicate  $\pm 1 SE$  of mean )



### Perceived concern

We evaluated the relationship between perceived concern and gift-giving motivation, in order to examine whether people are motivated to give gifts that address the recipient's perceived need. Indeed, consumers' motivation to give a time-saving gift was positively correlated with the perception that their relationship partner was concerned with having enough time,  $r = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was also a positive correlation between motivation to give a money-saving gift and perceived concern with having enough money,  $r = .42$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### Discussion

These results demonstrate that consumers are equally motivated to give time and money saving gifts. However, we do find that relative social position moderates gift-giving motivation, and that gift givers attempt to address recipients perceived need through

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gift-giving. In future experiments we evaluate recipient's experience of receiving a money or time saving gift and will evaluate how relative social position impacts consumer experience.

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# WEB APPENDIX B

## Study 1: Recalled Gifts and Recipient Experience

### Recalled Gifts by Product Category (Study 1)

Subcategory	Gifts Intending to Save the Recipient Time	Gifts Intending to Save the Recipient Money	Statistic
<b>Gifts for the Home (N = 96; 23.7% of all gifts recalled)</b>			
Overall	(N = 54; 28.7% of sample)	(N = 42; 19.4% of sample)	$\chi^2[1] = 4.89, p = .04$
Appliances	(N = 47; 87.0% of category)	(N = 33; 78.6% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 1.22, p = .27$
Remodeling	(N = 5; 9.3% of category)	(N = 6; 14.3% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .59, p = .44$
Home décor	(N = 2; 3.7% of category)	(N = 2; 4.8% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .07, p = .80$
Furniture	(N = 0; 0.0% of category)	(N = 1; 2.4% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 1.30, p = .25$
<b>Food and Dining (N = 90; 22.2% of all gifts recalled)</b>			
Overall	(N = 35; 18.6% of sample)	(N = 55; 25.3% of sample)	$\chi^2[1] = 2.64, p = .12$
Groceries	(N = 0; 0.0% of category)	(N = 18; 32.7% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 14.32, p < .001$
Prepared Food	(N = 8; 22.9% of category)	(N = 6; 10.9% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 2.32, p = .15$
Restaurant Meal	(N = 6; 17.1% of category)	(N = 16; 29.1% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 1.65, p = .20$
Drinks	(N = 2; 5.7% of category)	(N = 7; 12.7% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 1.17, p = .47$
Cooking Tools	(N = 13; 37.1% of category)	(N = 5; 9.1% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 10.52, p = .002$
Cooking Storage	(N = 6; 17.1% of category)	(N = 3; 5.5% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 3.25, p = .09$
<b>Apparel (N = 64; 15.8% of all gifts recalled)</b>			
Overall	(N = 27; 14.4% of sample)	(N = 37; 17.1% of sample)	$\chi^2[1] = .55, p = .46$
Clothing	(N = 4; 14.8% of category)	(N = 15; 40.5% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 4.95, p = .03$
Accessories	(N = 7; 25.9% of category)	(N = 17; 45.9% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 2.67, p = .12$
Jewelry & Watches	(N = 16; 59.3% of category)	(N = 5; 13.5% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 14.82, p < .001$
<b>Entertainment (N = 52; 12.8% of all gifts recalled)</b>			
Overall	(N = 23; 12.2% of sample)	(N = 29; 13.4% of sample)	$\chi^2[1] = .12, p = .77$
Tickets to Live Events	(N = 1; 4.3% of category)	(N = 9; 31.0% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 5.88, p = .03$
Books, Toys & Tools	(N = 22; 95.7% of category)	(N = 20; 47.6% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 5.88, p = .03$
<b>Electronics (N = 41; 10.1% of all gifts recalled)</b>			
Overall	(N = 25; 13.3% of sample)	(N = 16; 7.4% of sample)	$\chi^2[1] = 3.89, p = .07$
Computers & Laptops	(N = 12; 48.0% of category)	(N = 3; 18.8% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 3.60, p = .10$

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Cell phones	( <i>N</i> = 5; 20.0% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 2; 12.5% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .39, p = .68$
Tablets	( <i>N</i> = 1; 4.0% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 2; 12.5% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 1.04, p = .55$
Activity Trackers	( <i>N</i> = 7; 28.0% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 9; 56.3% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 3.27, p = .10$
<b>Money &amp; Gift Cards (<i>N</i> = 28; 6.9% of all gifts recalled)</b>			
Overall	( <i>N</i> = 7; 3.7% of sample)	( <i>N</i> = 21; 9.7% of sample)	$\chi^2[1] = 5.55, p = .02$
Money	( <i>N</i> = 1; 14.3% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 3; 14.3% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .00, p = 1.00$
Memberships	( <i>N</i> = 0; 0.0% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 2; 9.5% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .72, p = 1.00$
Coupons	( <i>N</i> = 0; 0.0% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 3; 14.3% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 1.12, p = .55$
Gift Cards	( <i>N</i> = 6; 85.7% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 13; 61.9% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = 1.37, p = .37$
<b>Transportation &amp; Travel (<i>N</i> = 22; 5.4% of all gifts recalled)</b>			
Overall	( <i>N</i> = 13; 6.9% of sample)	( <i>N</i> = 9; 4.1% of sample)	$\chi^2[1] = 1.50, p = .27$
Vehicle	( <i>N</i> = 4; 30.8% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 3; 33.3% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .02, p = 1.00$
Vehicle Maintenance	( <i>N</i> = 5; 38.5% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 4; 44.4% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .08, p = 1.00$
Ride Share Services	( <i>N</i> = 1; 7.7% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 1; 11.1% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .08, p = 1.00$
Vacations	( <i>N</i> = 3; 23.1% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 1; 11.1% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .51, p = .63$
<b>Health &amp; Wellness (<i>N</i> = 12; 3.0% of all gifts recalled)</b>			
Overall	( <i>N</i> = 4; 2.1% of sample)	( <i>N</i> = 8; 3.7% of sample)	$\chi^2[1] = .85, p = .40$
Bath & Body	( <i>N</i> = 3; 75.0% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 7; 87.5% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .30, p = 1.00$
Vitamins	( <i>N</i> = 1; 25.0% of category)	( <i>N</i> = 1; 12.5% of category)	$\chi^2[1] = .30, p = 1.00$

## Social Consumption

Participants reported that gifts given with the intention of saving them money was marginally more social than a gift given with the intention of saving time ( $M_{money}=3.51$ ,  $SD=2.07$ ;  $M_{time}=3.14$ ,  $SD=2.11$ ,  $t(401)=1.75$ ,  $p=.08$ ,  $d=.17$ ).

## Experiential vs. Material Gifts

Gifts given with the intention of saving money and time were seen as equally experiential ( $M_{money}=3.00$ ,  $SD=1.97$ ;  $M_{time}=2.92$ ,  $SD=1.91$ ,  $t(402)=.41$ ,  $p=.68$ ,  $d=.04$ ).

## Gift Characteristics

Gifts given with the intention of saving money and time were seen as equally unique ( $M_{money}=2.81$ ,  $SD=1.88$ ;  $M_{time}=2.87$ ,  $SD=1.91$ ,  $t(401)=.31$ ,  $p=.76$ ,  $d=.03$ ), wanted ( $M_{money}=5.12$ ,  $SD=1.69$ ;  $M_{time}=5.35$ ,  $SD=1.87$ ,  $t(402)=1.30$ ,  $p=.20$ ,  $d=.13$ ), and useful

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( $M_{money}=6.22$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ;  $M_{time}=6.29$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ,  $t(403)=.64$ ,  $p=.52$ ,  $d=.06$ ) and cost did not significantly differ by condition ( $M_{money}=\$312.90$ ,  $SD=\$2,178.28$ ;  $M_{time}=\$505.83$ ,  $SD=\$3,125.38$ ,  $t(402)=.73$ ,  $p=.47$ ,  $d=.07$ )<sup>1</sup>.

### Gift Giver Identity

Gifts given with the intention of saving money and time were equally likely to be given from friends ( $M_{money}=34.6\%$ ;  $M_{time}=27.7\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=2.23$ ,  $p=.16$ ), co-workers ( $M_{money}=1.4\%$ ;  $M_{time}=1.6\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=.03$ ,  $p=1.00$ ), and acquaintances ( $M_{money}=1.4\%$ ;  $M_{time}=2.1\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=.33$ ,  $p=.57$ ). However, family members were significantly more likely to give a gift with the intention of saving money ( $M_{money}=50.7\%$ ;  $M_{time}=37.8\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=6.81$ ,  $p=.009$ ), while significant others were significantly more likely to give a gift with the intention of saving time ( $M_{money}=12.0\%$ ;  $M_{time}=30.9\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=21.82$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

### Product Category

Gifts intending to save time and money were equally likely to be food and dining ( $M_{money}=25.3\%$ ;  $M_{time}=18.6\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=2.64$ ,  $p=.12$ ), clothing and apparel ( $M_{money}=17.1\%$ ;  $M_{time}=14.4\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=.55$ ,  $p=.46$ ), entertainment ( $M_{money}=13.4\%$ ;  $M_{time}=12.2\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=.12$ ,  $p=.74$ ), electronics ( $M_{money}=7.4\%$ ;  $M_{time}=13.3\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=3.89$ ,  $p=.07$ ), transportation and travel ( $M_{money}=4.1\%$ ;  $M_{time}=6.9\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=1.50$ ,  $p=.27$ ), health and wellness ( $M_{money}=3.7\%$ ;  $M_{time}=2.1\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=.85$ ,  $p=.36$ ). However, gifts for the home were more likely to be recalled as gifts intending to save time ( $M_{money}=19.4\%$ ;  $M_{time}=28.7\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=4.89$ ,  $p=.04$ ), whereas gift cards ( $M_{money}=9.7\%$ ;  $M_{time}=3.7\%$ ;  $\chi^2[1]=5.55$ ,  $p=.02$ ) were more likely to be recalled as gifts given with the intention of saving money.

Descriptive Statistics of Gift Features by Gift-Giving Motivation (Study 1)

Variable	Gifts Intending to Save Time		Gifts Intending to Save Money		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Social Consumption	3.14	2.11	3.51	2.07	1.75	.08
Experiential vs. Material Gifts	2.92	1.91	3.00	1.97	0.41	.68
Gift Characteristics						
Unique	2.87	1.91	2.81	1.88	0.31	.76
Wanted	5.35	1.87	5.12	1.69	1.30	.20
Useful	6.29	1.23	6.22	1.15	0.64	.52
Cost	505.83	3,125.38	312.90	2,178.28	0.73	.47



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Gift Giver Identity and Product Category of Gifts by Gift-Giving Motive (Study 1)

Variable	Gifts Intending to Save Time	Gifts Intending to Save Money	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
	%	%		
Gift Giver Identity				
Acquaintance	2.1%	1.4%	0.33	.57
Co-worker	1.6%	1.3%	0.03	.99
Family	37.8%	50.7%	6.81	.009
Friend	27.7%	34.6%	2.23	.16
Significant Other	30.8%	12.0%	21.82	.001
Product Category				
Clothing and Apparel	14.4%	17.1%	0.55	.46
Electronics	13.3%	7.4%	3.89	.07
Entertainment	12.2%	13.4%	0.12	.74
Food and Dining	18.6%	25.3%	2.64	.12
Gift Cards	3.7%	9.7%	5.55	.02
Health and Wellness	2.2%	3.6%	0.85	.36
Home	28.7%	19.4%	4.89	.04
Transportation and Travel	6.9%	4.1%	1.50	.27

## WEB APPENDIX C

### Study 1: Evaluating Main Effect of Gift Type and Negative Self-Conscious Emotions Controlling for Other Variables

We assessed whether our main effect of gift type on negative self-conscious emotions held when controlling for other characteristics of the gift that significantly differed between gift type conditions. Specifically, we evaluate whether receiving the gift from a significant other or a family member and whether the gift was a gift card or for the home moderated our effects. We conducted a step-wise linear regression predicting negative self-conscious emotions from our condition dummy variable and ran additional step-wise analyses adding in gift-giver characteristics and gift-category characteristics (See Table 2).

**Table 2.** Step-wise regression predicting negative self-conscious emotions from gift-type (Study 1).

Predictor Variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Condition (1 = Money-Saving)	.15**	.14**	.14**
Gift Giver Significant Other (1 = yes)		-.06	-.06
Gift Giver Family (1 = yes)		.02	.01
Gift Card (1 = yes)			-.05
Gift for the Home (1 = yes)			-.01
$\Delta R^2$	.02	.00	.00
$\Delta F$	9.69	.90	.46
Total $R^2$	.02	.00	.00
F	9.69**	3.83**	2.47*
d.f.	1, 403	3, 401	5, 399

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Evaluating Main Effect of Gift Type Status Controlling for Other Variables

Next, we conducted the same analysis predicting for status to assess whether our main effect of gift type on status held when controlling for other characteristics of the gift that significantly differed between gift type conditions (See Table 3).

**Table 3.** Step-wise regression predicting status from gift-type (Study 1).

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Predictor Variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Condition (1 = Money-Saving)	.20***	.16***	.16***
Gift Giver Significant Other (1 = yes)		-.08	-.09
Gift Giver Family (1 = yes)		.11	.10
Gift Card (1 = yes)			-.07
Gift for the Home (1 = yes)			-.09
$\Delta R^2$	.04	.02	.01
$\Delta F$	16.28	5.33	2.18
Total $R^2$	.04	.06	.07
F	16.28***	9.10***	6.36***
d.f.	1, 403	3, 401	5, 399

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 4.** Correlation matrix (Study 3).

	1.	2.	3.
1. Gift-Type (1 = Money-Saving)			
2. Scarcity	.20***		
3. Status Differential	-.47***	-.18***	
4. Negative Self-Conscious Emotions	.45***	.20***	-.32***

Note: Status Differential is a difference measure. We used the MacArthur scale of subjective status (Adler et al. 200). This measure consists of a drawing of a ladder with 10 rungs representing where people stand in society in terms of status (10 representing people at the top of society; 1 representing people at the bottom of society). Participants were instructed to pick the rung where they thought the gift-giver would place them (the recipient) and where the gift-giver would place themselves. We subtracted participant's rating of where they thought the gift-giver would place the recipient (them) from the rating of where they thought the gift-giver would place themselves (the gift-giver). A negative value reflects a rating that the gift-recipient is perceived to have lower status than the gift-giver.