

Negative traits encompassing gift giving

Inara Nanji

The Shared Secrets Lab

GiftAFeeling Inc.

Abstract

Positive gift giving behavior is widely discussed and researched. Notwithstanding, it is beneficial to contemplate what characteristics make people increasingly prone to participate in apathetic gift giving behaviors. Selfishness rather selflessness can sometimes take effect when engaging in gift giving as a manipulation tactic to yield into the desires of the giver. The agreeableness personality trait is positively associated with niceness, thus the opposite i.e., disagreeableness is associated with using gifts as an outstanding debt that one is anticipated to repay sometime later. Sociosexuality is another reason people use gifts in order to escalate a relationship to fulfill their end goal which is sexual access. Lacking in self-esteem also plays a significant part because it is used to make up for the fact that these people hold themselves in a low regard. From the dark triad perspective, gifts are used to placate their need to display a show to obtain recognition by any means necessary. Altogether, taking situations such as receiving gifts, at face value can be fatal in some instances hence it is helpful to dig deeper when in doubt.

Keywords: selfish gift giving, sociosexuality, low self-esteem, negative characteristics

Reasoning behind gifting

Since establishing social alliances and maintaining them is inherent among human beings, giving gifts is associated with being a good person. Following this thought, gift-giving is viewed as a prosocial behavior enacted to build relationships and maintain them to the best of abilities (Jonason et al., 2012). Such a characteristic is undoubtedly positively correlated with the agreeableness personality trait, an apparent measure of warmth. Agreeableness has a lot to do with a caring nature which is a fundamental aspect of gift giving.

From another point of view, agreeableness would be considered negatively correlated to gift giving with implicit immoral motives incorporating manipulating the receiver into surrendering to the giver's desires. People possessing antisocial traits are more inclined to execute selfish behaviors and are distinguished by disagreeableness (Jonason et al., 2012). Along the same lines, those who possess agreeableness characteristics exhibit positive gift giving behavior for instance, to show affection rather than selfish intent for example to incur debt so that the receiver can owe a favor to the giver that can be extracted at a later time (Jonason et al., 2012).

Another reason people may give gifts is due to sociosexuality which describes people's willingness to engage in casual sex without relationship commitment (Fernández Del Río et al., 2019). Hence, gifts are used as a means of rapidly fast forwarding the relationship to satisfy their end goal - sexual agenda. Sociosexual people are greater inclined to take advantage of others in order to gratify their personal needs, in this case, "buying" access to sex. Interestingly, the sociosexuality trait has a secondary intent of wanting to return a favor or with reference to an apology (Jonason et al., 2012). Yet, all the reasons tacitly advance sexual access in any way possible to win the receiver's heart.

In addition, people who have low self-esteem utilize gift giving as an attempt to amend for how they perceive themselves. Because they have such low self-confidence, gifts may be used so that the receiver can gauge their own value based on the quality of the gift. It is used to amplify their self-worth as they do not believe in themselves and are constantly doubtful. To insinuate feelings for them, those low in self-esteem use gifts to fill that emptiness as opposed to those who have a high self-esteem (Jonason et al., 2012). Thus, holding a low self-esteem is linked to making the receiver agree to go on a date with them, having an expectation of getting the favor returned, to express well-intentions on a special occasion, and to make the receiver fall for them. Sex also comes into play, in that, most males low in self-esteem exhibited gift giving in quest of sexual agenda.

The underlying selfishness in gifting

In many ways, gift exchange forges an alliance between individuals. Generally, the reasons behind gift-giving revolves around special occasions like birthdays, relationship maintenance, and to foster growth in a relationship (Jonason et al., 2012). Gift exchange is most pronounced during holiday season, mainly to enrich social ties and spread affection. In this manner, the mere act of giving can be seen as a selfless act wherein the benefits are reaped by the receiver at the cost of the giver. This cost can take many forms including one's time, resources, and bodily risk (Prewett et al., 2019). Yet however, giving can become a means of selfish gain as much as a selfless intent, if not more.

In other instances, people give to benefit the receiver as a way of supporting them emotionally to nullify the negative feelings or amplify positive feelings. Those who typically value these factors have at least one of the dark triad traits which will be discussed below.

The role of the Dark Triad

The three callous personality traits known as the term dark triad was devised by two researchers Paulhus and Williams (2002). These negative personality traits stirred together in a brewing pot can cause explosion of evil (Booth, 2021). They include:

- **Narcissism:** a feeling of superiority and entitlement that can override what in actuality lies underneath, that is the sense of inadequacy.
- **Machiavellianism:** manipulation flows through their blood which makes them willing to go to any extent in order to get what they want and ironically, they have a cynical view of the world.
- **Psychopathy:** empathy is a foreign feeling hence they are emotionally detached and at the same time they are known for taking big leaps of risk and are impulsive. If they were to participate in prosocial behavior, it would most likely be to charm others.

A common characteristic amongst all is indifference towards others and an unhealthy obsession with the self, pointing toward having little or no consciences (Booth, 2021). Even so depending on the circumstances, they may exhibit prosocial behavior.

Machiavellianism

People who are on the higher end of the Machiavellianism scale are less inclined to exhibit positive gift-giving behavior. Behaviors can shift from time to time, for example, in the presence of friends they will lay out altruistic behaviors but when alone, the behaviors will shift to becoming more egocentric. Nevertheless, if there are underlying potential advantages to participate in gift-giving such an increase in social status, it may serve as motivation to carry out normative behaviors. The recognition aspect is of great significance to them and they will go against their beliefs in order to gain that acknowledgment (Jonason et al., 2012).

Narcissism

Similar to Machiavellianism, people on the higher end of the narcissism scale show a disregard for others too. Since they have low empathy and have a need to boost their ego rather than engage in gift-giving. In romantic relationships, narcissists tended to give gifts not out of love, but in order to maintain the relationship by establishing a false sense of security, through which future rewards of power are obtained. In the context of donating, narcissists are highly motivated by status and power rather than an innate concern to help others. Overall, people who possess these traits engage in prosocial behavior only if there is personal gain i.e., high social status and accreditation (Jonason et al., 2012).

To sum it up, gift giving was explored by assessing individual differences as to why people give gifts and specific traits that had a huge role like agreeableness, sociosexuality, low self-esteem, and the dark triad personality traits. Linking all these together, one can gauge that on the surface, it may seem that giver's exhibit good intentions but that may not always be the case. Being mindful of the negative aspects is a good way to remain cautious.

References

- Booth, S. (2021, June 23). *What Is the Dark Triad, and Why Are People With These Personality Traits So Dangerous? Here's What Experts Say*. Health. Retrieved June 20, 2022, from <https://www.health.com/condition/antisocial-personality-disorder/dark-triad>
- Fernández Del Río, E., Ramos-Villagrasa, P. J., Castro, Á., & Barrada, J. R. (2019). Sociosexuality and bright and dark Personality: The prediction of behavior, attitude, and desire to engage in casual sex. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(15), 2731. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152731>
- Jonason, P. K., Tost, J., & Koenig, B. L. (2012). Sex differences and personality correlates of spontaneously generated reasons to give gifts. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 6(2), 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0099216>
- Prewett, A.N., Elliott, C.N., & Story, P.A. (2019). The short dark triad and giving to nonprofits. *The Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 6(1), <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/kjur/vol6/iss2/>.