

# Equity, Attribution, and Reactance in Giving and Receiving Gifts of Clothing

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## Abstract

*This study explores equity, attribution, and reactance theories as they relate to giving and receiving gifts of clothing. About 100 each of male and female subjects responded to a set of affective statements written to express the three theories and other aspects of giving and receiving clothing gifts. Factor analyses of responses resulted in four factors for each sex, three of which were similar in content. For each sex, the first factor concerned receiving gifts and incorporated the three theories. The following two factors were concerned with giving gifts, one factor emphasizing the recipient's well-being, the other factor the self-esteem of the giver. Content of the fourth factors differed for males and females. Attribution, equity, and reactance statements did not form separate factors, but were mixed with other statements. Results supported suggestions in the literature that theories overlap in explaining gift-giving behavior. Findings were consistent with others' reports of sex differences in gift-giving behavior and attitudes.*

**Key Words:** gifts, equity, attribution, reactance

Gift giving is a pervasive form of human behavior; nearly all members of a society engage in it frequently (Banks, 1979). According to Belk (1976), study of gift selection is useful in developing and testing concepts of consumer behavior because gifts are a high-involvement type of consumer purchase. Gift-giving research in consumer behavior has focused mainly on the social and economic importance of gifts (Wagner, Ettenson, & Verrier, 1990).

From a social perspective, gift giving functions as a form of symbolic communication between giver and receiver (Belk, 1979; Cheal, 1987). Additional functions of gift giving include establishing, defining, and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Gifts serve as social support in various rites of passage from one life stage to another and can indicate the status of a relationship, feelings of concern or love, or the promise of future interaction (Belk, 1979; Belk & Coon, 1991).

Gifts are indirect messages that may communicate the giver's impressions about the identities of both giver and receiver. Because clothing plays a role in self-expression

and communication, it has a more highly personal quality than many other gift objects. Clothing gifts may be one of the most effective means for a giver to communicate his or her perception of the receiver and the gift-giving relationship (Wagner et al., 1990).

From an economic perspective, clothing accounts for 25 to 35 percent of all gifts (Belk, 1979; Caplow, 1982; Jolibert & Fernandez-Moreno, 1983). However, greater risks may be involved in giving gifts of clothing than other kinds of gift objects; for example, the chosen gift may not match the recipient's self-image or identity (Horne & Winakor, 1991). Rucker et al. (1991) reported that, proportionally, recipients were more likely to return clothing gifts than any other type of gift object.

Lutz (1979) criticized research on gift giving for its lack of theoretical approach; he suggested that researchers address the issue of motivations for gift-giving behavior in order to build a basis for a comprehensive understanding of the behavior. Subsequently, some researchers (e.g. Goodwin, Smith, & Spiggle, 1990; Wolfenbarger, 1990) have examined giving in light of theory.

The dynamics of gift-giving behavior may involve multitheoretical perspectives, with no single vantage point providing a full explanation. Poe (1977) recommended that equity, attribution, and reactance theories be applied in research on gift giving. These theories were not formulated originally to account for gift-giving behavior; we found no studies that tested them directly in relation to gift giving. Following Poe's recommendation, we designed this research to examine these three theories as they may apply to giving and receiving clothing gifts. We concluded that

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clothing is particularly well suited for examination of these theories because of its expressive qualities and its frequent choice as a gift object.

### Equity Theory

Equity theory as formulated by Adams (1965) considers (a) the nature of inputs to and outcomes of social interactions, (b) the nature of the social comparison process, (c) the conditions leading to relational equity or inequity, and (d) the possible responses made to reduce a condition of inequity. Inputs include the factors that a person perceives as relevant for getting some return on investment; he or she may consider such factors as effort, education, or beauty as something of value brought to the relationship. Outcomes are any returns to the person that have value or utility. Inputs and outcomes form a ratio. Equity is said to occur when one person's outcome-input ratio is perceived to be equal to another person's ratio.

When individuals find themselves in inequitable relationships, they become distressed and attempt to restore equity (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). As "an expression of a desire for fair division of rewards and costs," equity theory applies to gifts in that individuals try to maintain an equal ratio of receipts of gifts to their gift giving (Poe, 1977, p. 53). Equity may be measured by numbers of gifts, by the value of the gifts given, or by the effort required to obtain the gifts.

Mauss (1954) observed that three types of obligations are widely distributed in human societies: the obligation to give, the obligation to receive, and the obligation to repay. While reciprocal exchanges result in good feelings, gifts that cannot be reciprocated can lead to discomfort, distress, and dislike.

It is important that the amount of money, time, and effort put into a gift given is commensurate with the gift received. When someone perceives an imbalance between what he or she gives and receives, the person tries to restore balance. For example, a person who receives a birthday gift from a friend for the first time will try to remember the friend's next birthday with a gift.

Caplow (1982) and Cheal (1987) observed that in Western society asymmetric gift exchanges at Christmas are ritual enactments of the support-dependency relationships that exist between men and women—particularly dating couples and husbands and wives. Rucker et al. (1991) found that males placed greater emphasis on price while females were more concerned with how much both partners liked their gifts; when gift exchange was between males and females, partners were less likely to report that the exchange was equitable.

Although gift relationships between adults and children are expected to be asymmetric with regard to matching value and quantity of reciprocal gifts, a particular behavior or performance on the part of the child might be expected in return for a gift. For example, a child might receive a gift as a reward for good behavior.

It might be assumed that if someone gives an expensive gift, the recipient should reciprocate with an equally costly gift. However, people with larger incomes may be expected to give more costly gifts. For example, a young person may anticipate more expensive clothing gifts from a wealthy aunt than from other relatives.

Within families, inequities may result when siblings do not receive the same number of gifts or gifts of equal value. The oldest child of each sex might receive more expensive clothing gifts because givers assume that these can be handed down to younger children. Such inequities could cause family conflicts resulting from feelings of guilt or jealousy on the part of siblings.

### Attribution Theory

Social psychologists refer to the process of inferring the causes of someone's behavior as attribution. When a person engages in an act, neither the actor nor an observer may know the causes for that behavior. The observer then attributes the behavior to possible causes. According to Wegner and Vallacher (1977), people use systematic processes to make attributions that have consequences for future behavior and relations with others. They use information about the person, the behavior, and the context of the behavior in searching for explanations of the behavior. Four different versions of attribution theory are considered classics. Because Lennon and Davis (1989) reviewed these theories in detail, we discuss only those aspects of the theory that may apply to gift giving.

Heider (1958) developed the concept that individuals seem to operate as "naive psychologists" in their attempts to understand and validate their perceptions of others. People need to make some kind of inference about either a person or the environment to explain behavior. Heider proposed that behavior could have a personal internal cause or an impersonal external cause.

To identify causes of behavior, people assess their attribution on three dimensions: consensus over persons, consistency across time or situations, and distinctiveness among targets (Lennon & Davis, 1989; Mizerski, Golden, & Kernan, 1979; Wegner & Vallacher, 1977). High consensus is said to exist if other persons exhibit the same behavior toward someone, as, for example, if everyone attending a birthday party brings a gift. If the celebration of birthdays is always marked with giving gifts, there would be consistency across time. If people bring gifts to many kinds of festivities, this would represent consistency across situations. A behavior is high in distinctiveness if it occurs only toward one person, as when a mother gives gifts only to her daughter. People examine variations in these dimensions in deciding whether to attribute the behavior to the actor himself or herself, the person toward whom he or she is behaving, or the setting in which the behavior occurs.

Attribution theory depicts human beings as reacting to events by inferring intentions of others. It may help to explain how the receiver attempts to interpret the meaning of a gift and to arrive at intentions or dispositions of the gift giver. An individual tries to go beyond what another person has done and ask "why this gift?" or "what does this gift mean?" Miscommunication can occur in decoding the meaning of the gift because the message is nonverbal (Belk, 1979). The motive of the giver might be quite different from that inferred by the receiver. The giver and the receiver may have differing perspectives on the same behavior, leading to conflicting interpretations of the act. This might be particularly likely when a gift is sent through

the mail and the giver is not present to explain the reason for making the selection.

Research in clothing and human behavior has seen limited application of attribution theory. However, nonverbal cues provided by clothing are an important segment of the total attributional package (Kelley & Sweat, 1983-84). Sproles (1979) observed that clothing conveys information about age, status, sex, and personality. Although it is often said that clothing has its own language, the message is readily misinterpreted because it is not a language in the conventional sense (McCracken (1988, pp. 57-70). The message communicated through clothing is usually expressed in abstract form rather than in well-defined symbols such as letters or verbal sounds (Damhorst, 1990). As a result, in gift giving, the receiver may misinterpret the giver's motives for giving an expensive or highly personal gift of clothing. If the clothing gift is of a style or color not usually worn, the receiver may conclude that the giver disapproves of the way he or she dresses and wishes to change it. The ultimate success of a clothing gift may depend on the receiver's understanding of the intentions of the giver.

### **Psychological Reactance Theory**

Perceived threat to a person's freedom is the essence of psychological reactance theory. At a given time, a given person has a set of free behaviors that can be engaged in at the moment or at some time in the future. That person "will experience reactance whenever any of those behaviors is eliminated or threatened with elimination" (Brehm, 1966, p. 4). A person is motivationally aroused when threatened with reduction of behavioral freedom. The arousal is directed against any further loss and toward the re-establishment of that freedom (Brehm, 1966).

According to Brehm, the degree of reactance is a function of the importance of the threatened or eliminated freedom compared with other freedoms: the greater the importance, the greater the reactance. The reactance is also greater as the likelihood increases that the threat could be carried out. The power of the threat depends upon the relationship between the threatener and the person threatened: the greater the social power of the threatener, the greater the reactance (Brehm, 1966).

We found limited research on reactance theory related to gift giving. When the giver's motivation is social obligation, the obligation to purchase a gift may be perceived as a threat to freedom, resulting in psychological reactance. A negative rather than a positive purchase experience would result (Clee & Wicklund, 1980; Goodwin et al., 1990).

If a gift is perceived as a threat, the recipient may respond with resentment or overt aggression. The recipient may see a gift as a bribe or as a means of manipulating another person's behavior. A person may accept this as the norm in his or her family or may react negatively.

Choosing one's own style of dress is one type of free behavior. Clothing gifts can be perceived as threats to freedom to choose one's own style of dress or to express one's own taste. A little girl who receives a frilly dress as a gift when she prefers to wear jeans may feel that she is being coerced into being someone she is not. An adolescent who likes to wear the latest styles and colors may

receive more classically styled clothing as gifts from a parent who dislikes the current fads. A child may refuse to wear clothing gifts because of peer pressure and the parent, in turn, may be frustrated. The adolescent may also resent the parent's buying clothing that is not what he or she would choose to wear; the parent-child relationship may be adversely affected.

### **Multitheoretical Perspectives**

Theoretical perspectives seem to overlap as explanations of gift-giving behavior (Belk, 1976). In addition to demonstrating a balance theory interpretation of gift giving, Belk mentioned equity theory as a related theoretical perspective that had received little attention. Later, Belk (1979, p. 123) explored the communication and socialization functions of gift giving and suggested that "gift selections depend upon the giver's ideal self-concept, the nature of the occasion, and the giver's relationship to the recipient." The consideration of interpersonal communication and relationships makes gift selection a complex act of personal consumption (Belk, 1979). Belk suggested theories of social judgment, socialization, self-concept, and power to be among those that might be applied to understanding gift-giving behavior. Attribution and psychological reactance theories are examples of such perspectives. For example, Belk implied reactance in terms of changes in the recipient's attitude toward the giver, especially in cases of perceived inequity where the recipient is unable to reciprocate.

Understanding and explaining the dynamics of gift-giving behavior require ascertaining whether these theories apply and under what conditions. The theories are complex and there are subsets of theoretical hypotheses within a given theory.

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### **Objective**

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The goal of this research is an exploratory examination of the association of equity, attribution, and reactance theories with giving and receiving gifts of clothing. Factor analysis is used to examine the clustering of affective statements representing each of these theories as applied to gifts of clothing.

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### **Procedure**

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#### **Instrument**

We composed sentences to express attribution, equity, and reactance theories as well as other concepts suggested by the literature on gifts and to represent a balance between statements dealing with giving and receiving. Ideas for some statements came from responses of students in a clothing consumption class, who were asked to write about their feelings about giving and receiving gifts of clothing.

Forty-two students in clothing selection classes at a large land-grant university completed a preliminary version of the instrument. Subjects responded on an 11-point scale

**Table 1. Factors for females and males: Means, variances, correlations.**

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
<b>Factors for females</b>				
Variance explained	4.673	4.051	3.355	2.831
Factor mean <sup>a</sup>	-31.486	25.193	17.321	13.193
Factor std. dev. <sup>a</sup>	17.694	15.423	13.346	15.282
Cronbach's <i>alpha</i> and correlations <sup>b</sup>				
Factor 1	<b>0.7359</b>			
Factor 2	-0.0908	<b>0.6846</b>		
Factor 3	-0.0719	0.1244	<b>0.6240</b>	
Factor 4	0.0797	0.1324	0.0354	<b>0.6319</b>
<b>Factors for males</b>				
Variance explained	5.325	4.185	4.100	3.761
Factor mean <sup>a</sup>	-22.515	4.646	24.212	5.253
Factor std. dev. <sup>a</sup>	20.888	18.213	14.317	12.159
Cronbach's <i>alpha</i> and correlations <sup>b</sup>				
Factor 1	<b>0.7892</b>			
Factor 2	0.1521	<b>0.6949</b>		
Factor 3	-0.0849	0.1731	<b>0.6646</b>	
Factor 4	0.0537	0.0955	0.0715	<b>0.5805</b>

<sup>a</sup>Factor means and standard deviations are simple algebraic sums, not weighted.

<sup>b</sup>*Alpha* values in boldface

ranging from -5 (very certain I disagree) through 0 (uncertain) to +5 (very certain I agree). Subjects could select any number in between to indicate different levels of certainty about a statement. From analysis of their responses, we prepared a revised instrument consisting of 73 statements, 15 to a page. The five pages of statements in the final instrument were arranged in six different orders to reduce the effect of fatigue on responses.

**Sample**

Subjects were students in selected university classes including marketing, education, and consumer behavior; students responded during class time. Usable instruments were obtained from 109 females and 99 males; two instruments were rejected because of spoilage or missing data. Sixty-four percent of females and 36 percent of males were 18 to 21 years old; the others were 22 years of age or older. Of female students, 49 percent were juniors, 41 percent seniors, and 10 percent graduate students; males included 37 percent juniors, 48 percent seniors, and 14 percent graduate students. Half of female and two-thirds of male respondents were business administration majors; about one-fourth of female respondents were enrolled in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences. Other students were scattered among the Graduate College and the Colleges of Agriculture, Education, and Sciences and Humanities.

**Analysis of Data**

Responses were transformed to approximately normal deviates as shown:

response: -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5  
transformed  
response: -8 -5 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +5 +8

This transformation is based on the psychological theory of equal-appearing intervals. Warren, Klonglan, and Sabri (1969) discussed the theory underlying this scale and its transformation.

Scatter plots of mean responses showed women's responses to be more extreme than men's responses for about two-thirds of the 73 statements. Also, standard deviations of responses were generally larger for females than for males. This result parallels findings of Winakor, Canton, and Wolins (1980). Factor analyses were computed separately for each sex, not only because the response patterns differed for males and females, but also because there is substantial evidence that males and females differ in their affective responses to giving gifts (see for example Fischer & Arnold, 1990). We found fewer studies comparing responses of males and females as recipients of gifts; recent contributions are Belk and Coon (1991) and Rucker et al. (1991).

We used the Varimax procedure for factor analysis.<sup>1</sup> After examining the initial scree plots, we ran factor analyses by using the Prinfit procedure. We examined two-, four-, and five-factor solutions for males and three-, four-, and seven-factor solutions for females. We then computed the correlations among factor scores formed by summing salient items and also computed Cronbach's *alpha* coefficients for each solution. *Alpha* is appropriate for estimating reliability of statements that have several possible weighted answers (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 261; Cronbach, 1951). The goal was to minimize correlations

<sup>1</sup>Cary, NC: SAS Institute, Inc., 1988.

among factors, maximize *alpha* coefficients (representing reliability of factors), and obtain factors that were internally logical. The two- and three-factor solutions had lower correlations and higher *alpha* values, but each factor contained many statements, including seemingly unrelated statements. Solutions with more than four factors had higher correlations among factors and lower *alphas*. We selected the four-factor solutions for both males and females as providing the most satisfactory compromise (Table 1).

For the analyses reported here, we retained all statements that loaded on one factor at 0.400 or higher and no higher than 0.299 on one other factor, plus statements that loaded between 0.300 and 0.399 on one factor and no higher than 0.199 on one other factor. Statements that load-

ed 0.200 or above on two or more other factors were omitted.

Correlations and *alpha* values in Table 1 indicate that the factors are independent and that their reliability is reasonably good. None of the correlations achieves statistical significance at the 5 percent level; seven of eight *alpha* values exceed 0.6 and the remaining one is close to 0.6.

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## Findings

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Tables 2 and 3 list all statements in the four-factor solutions for females and males respectively.

**Table 2. Factors for females.**

Item	Loading	
<b>Female factor 1. (9 items)</b>		
<b>Receiving gifts; attribution, equity, reactance.</b>		
11 A <sup>a</sup>	+0.698	When people give me clothing, they are trying to influence the way I dress.
60	+0.599	Clothing that people give me just doesn't suit my lifestyle. <sup>b</sup>
6 R	+0.579	When someone gives me a clothing gift, I feel they are limiting my freedom to make my own choices.
2	+0.505	You should not let anybody know if something you wear was a gift. <sup>b</sup>
58	-0.492	I select clothing gifts that are fashionable. <sup>b</sup>
33 E	+0.480	My sister or brother gets better clothing gifts than I do.
57	+0.415	People give me clothing that is hard to care for.
56 E	+0.404	My brother or sister gets more clothing gifts than I do.
51	+0.330	I buy clothing gifts at stores where they will gift wrap the item for me.
<b>Female factor 2. (8 items)</b>		
<b>Giving gifts; concern for recipient; satisfaction, success of gifts.</b>		
28	+0.585	When I buy clothing as a gift, I try to purchase it at a store where it can be returned.
49	+0.573	I try to choose clothing gifts that reflect the recipient's taste in clothing, not my own taste.
61	+0.529	I try to select clothing gifts that are easy to care for.
54	+0.467	I appreciate being able to return a clothing gift without offending the giver. <sup>b</sup>
41	+0.410	I try to buy clothing gifts made of fabrics I am sure will perform satisfactorily. <sup>b</sup>
45	+0.399	I like to receive gifts that are a complete surprise.
30	+0.398	I avoid clothing fads as gifts because they go out of style too quickly.
23	+0.344	I am an easy person to buy clothing gifts for.
<b>Female factor 3. (7 items)</b>		
<b>Giving gifts; impressing the recipient; attribution, equity.</b>		
9	+0.618	When I give a gift of clothing to someone, I try to find something in my favorite brands.
13 A	+0.524	It is important for the receiver of the gift to know I was trying to please him or her.
65	+0.442	I like to buy gift clothing from stores with good images. <sup>b</sup>
4 A	+0.357	People give children the kind of clothing they want the child to wear, not necessarily what the child wants to wear.
8 E	+0.355	When I receive a gift, I feel the obligation to give a gift in return.
20 A	+0.309	People give me the kinds of clothing that they think I ought to wear.
14 E	+0.302	Sometimes a gift can be repaid by doing someone a favor of some kind.
<b>Female factor 4. (7 items)</b>		
<b>Giving and receiving; closeness of relationship; recipient helps choose gift; equity.</b>		
66	+0.545	People should give clothing gifts only to close friends and relatives.
68	+0.499	People should give clothing gifts only to people they see often.
44	+0.484	Most of the people who give me clothing are my relatives.
27	+0.423	I like to let people know what gifts I want to receive.
32	+0.416	I give clothing gifts only to people I know very well.
69	+0.361	I prefer that people give me hints of what gifts they want to get.
35 E	+0.342	How much you pay for a gift for someone should be in line with what he or she could afford to spend on a gift for you.

<sup>a</sup>A = statement composed to represent attribution; E = statement composed to represent equity; R = statement composed to represent reactance.

<sup>b</sup> Item also loads between 0.200 and 0.299 on another factor.

**Table 3. Factors for males.**

Item	Loading	
<b>Male factor 1. (11 items)</b>		
<b>Giving and receiving gifts; closeness of relationship; equity, attribution, reactance.</b>		
71 E <sup>a</sup>	+0.556	I feel unhappy if my close friends get more gifts than I do. <sup>b</sup>
2	+0.555	You should not let anybody know if something you wear was a gift.
56 E	+0.530	My brother or sister gets more clothing gifts than I do.
42 E	+0.514	People give me more expensive clothing gifts than I give them. <sup>b</sup>
11 A	+0.485	When people give me clothing, they are trying to influence the way I dress.
34 R	+0.462	I write thank you notes only for gifts that I like. <sup>b</sup>
6 R	+0.461	When someone gives me a clothing gift, I feel they are limiting my freedom to make my own choices. <sup>b</sup>
68	+0.431	People should give clothing gifts only to people they see often.
57	+0.428	People give me clothing that is hard to care for.
33 E	+0.415	My sister or brother gets better clothing gifts than I do.
66	-0.403	People should give clothing gifts only to close friends and relatives. <sup>b</sup>
<b>Male factor 2. (10 items)</b>		
<b>Giving gifts; impressing the recipient; equity, attribution, reactance.</b>		
17 A	+0.614	I want the receiver to know I spent time trying to select the right gift. <sup>b</sup>
65	+0.504	I like to buy gift clothing from stores with good images. <sup>b</sup>
63	+0.480	It's tacky to buy gifts of clothing at discount and off-price stores.
9	+0.449	When I give a gift of clothing to someone, I try to find something in my favorite brands.
15 E	+0.438	If someone gives me an expensive gift, I feel that I should give him or her an equally expensive gift. <sup>b</sup>
22 R	+0.437	It bothers me if someone gives me an inexpensive gift after I have spent a lot of money on a gift for him or her.
26 E	+0.410	I expect people who have larger incomes to give me more expensive gifts.
10	+0.400	When I give gifts of clothing, I choose things that I like.
31 R	-0.392	I am not insulted when someone returns a gift of clothing that I have given them.
40	+0.307	When I give a gift of clothing to someone, I want it to be something more unusual or more special in some way than what they would buy for themselves.
<b>Male factor 3. (9 items)</b>		
<b>Giving; concern for recipient; closeness of relationship; attribution, reactance.</b>		
49	+0.466	I try to choose clothing gifts that reflect the recipient's taste in clothing, not my own taste.
38 R	+0.463	It is important to me for the receiver to like my gift.
47 R	+0.461	It is important to me that the recipient wear my clothing gift. <sup>b</sup>
32	+0.438	I give clothing gifts only to people I know very well.
1	+0.433	I try to select styles and colors that I think will look good on the recipient.
28	+0.415	When I buy clothing as a gift, I try to purchase it at a store where it can be returned.
4 A	+0.405	People give children the kind of clothing they want the child to wear, not necessarily what the child wants to wear.
69	+0.347	I prefer that people give me hints of what gifts they want to get.
41	+0.304	I try to buy clothing gifts made of fabrics I am sure will perform satisfactorily.
<b>Male factor 4. (6 items)</b>		
<b>Pleasing the recipient; likes clothing gifts; role of recipient in choice; equity, attribution.</b>		
19	+0.536	When people give gifts of clothing, they choose things that the receiver will like.
25	+0.516	Clothing that people give me as gifts fits me well.
67	+0.509	I would rather receive gifts of clothing than other types of gifts.
48 A	+0.490	When someone gives me a gift of clothing, it means that they like me.
36	+0.418	When someone in my family gives me clothing, he or she takes me shopping to be sure I will like the gift. <sup>b</sup>
14 E	+0.351	Sometimes a gift can be repaid by doing someone a favor of some kind.

<sup>a</sup>A = statement composed to represent attribution; E = statement composed to represent equity; R = statement composed to represent reactance.

<sup>b</sup> Item also loads between 0.200 and 0.299 on another factor.

### Mainly Receiving Gifts; Equity, Attribution, and Reactance

Female Factor 1 and Male Factor 1 (factors accounting for the largest shares of variance for females and males) are similar in that all but two statements in each factor refer to receiving gifts; both factors contain statements written to represent equity, attribution, and reactance. Some statements that were not specifically written to represent one of

these theories could also be so interpreted: for example, in Female Factor 1 statement 60 might express reactance. Female Factor 1 and Male Factor 1 have six statements in common: 2, 6, 11, 33, 56, and 57. All but 2 and 6 are among the highest-loading statements in both factors. Present in the male factor but not in the female factor is the idea that clothing gifts should be given only to close friends, relatives, and people the giver sees often.

### **Giving Gifts: Concern for the Recipient**

Female Factor 2 and Male Factor 3 are similar in expressing concern for the recipient when giving gifts of clothing, although the two factors have only three statements in common. All but one statement in Male Factor 3 and five of eight statements in Female Factor 2 express consideration by the subject, as giver, for the convenience or satisfaction of the recipient. Statements expressing reactance and attribution appear in the male factor, but no statements written to express any of the three theories appears in the female factor. Female Factor 2 includes the idea of surprise in receiving a gift, and Male Factor 3 includes preference for hints about what people want to receive. Two statements (38 and 47) in the male factor stress the importance to the giver that the recipient likes and wears the gift.

### **Giving Gifts: Impressing the Recipient**

The third factor for females and the second factor for males are also predominantly about giving gifts of clothing. Only two statements are common to these two factors but, in both factors, the giver is interested in impressing the recipient and emphasizes his or her own tastes and preferences rather than those of the recipient. Statements representing attribution, equity, and reactance appear in both Female Factor 3 and in Male Factor 2. Statement 22, in the male factor, was composed to represent reactance but could also be interpreted as representing equity.

### **Miscellaneous Ideas**

The fourth factors for males and females contain no common statements, although each includes some themes that appear in other factors for the other sex. Female Factor 4 contains one equity statement and is divided between receiving and giving gifts. It emphasizes exchange of gifts with close friends and relatives, people the female sees often. This theme was observed in Male Factor 1. It also includes giving and receiving hints about desired gift objects. One side of this theme appears in Male Factor 3.

Male Factor 4 is mainly about receiving gifts of clothing; it includes statements representing equity and attribution. The subject expresses favorable attitudes toward receiving clothing as a gift object and infers that the giver likes him. Appearing only in this factor is the idea of going along when someone in the family shops for a gift for him.

### **Factor Means and Standard Deviations**

Factor means (Table 1) are negative for both Female Factor 1 and Male Factor 1, indicating that subjects of both sexes disagreed with statements about manipulation of recipients by givers, jealousy of siblings, and negative reactions to gifts of clothing. However, the magnitude of the standard deviation, relative to the mean, implies that the females were much more certain about this; individual statement scores showed that males were, on the average, uncertain about their agreement or disagreement with some of the statements. Means for all other factors are positive but, for men, the means for factors 2 and 4 are much smaller than the standard deviations, indicating much variation of opinion.

### **Factor Analysis of Total Sample**

We also computed solutions for the entire sample, pooling male and female responses. Because the number of statements was so large (73), the larger number of observations (208) might provide more reliable factors (Comrey, 1988). However, the factors were less clearly defined in content than in the separate analyses by gender. This may be because, while the first three factors for males and females contain similar ideas, only the first factors contain more than three statements in common.

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## **Discussion**

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The factors that accounted for the largest shares of total variance for both males and females contain statements representing equity, attribution, and reactance. This seems to support Poe's (1977) implied hypothesis that these concepts are related to giving and receiving gifts. However, statements representing the three theories do not form distinct clusters. Presence of all three theories in some factors and two theories in others suggests that these theories are interrelated in subjects' minds, as Belk (1976, 1979) proposed. Only one factor (Female Factor 2) contained no statements written to express equity, attribution, or reactance.

In an examination of risks perceived by 103 married couples when giving gifts of clothing, Horne and Winakor (in press) found that husbands placed greater importance on recipients' recognition of their efforts to locate a gift and on recipients' knowing where the gift clothing was purchased; wives placed greater importance on the recipients' feeling good about themselves. In our research, both males and females expressed concern both about the well-being of the recipient and about making a good impression on him or her. The male factor that expressed concern for pleasing the recipient incorporated an element of importance for the giver ("It is important to me") while the corresponding female factor included statements about receiving gifts herself.

Caplow (1982) identified women as givers of the vast majority of gifts, alone or jointly with men; a higher proportion of gifts given by males were of "substantial" value (p. 387). The role of the female as the giver (or selector) of most gifts, while the male is the giver of the big, impressive gifts, may account in part for the difference in the way they see their relationship to the recipients. Fischer and Arnold (1990) also found major gender role differences in shopping for Christmas gifts.

Statements that people should give hints about clothing gifts they would like to receive appear in one male and one female factor, whereas helping to select gifts that one is to receive appears in one male factor. Horne and Winakor (1988) observed that family members often participated in selection of gifts for themselves. In these cases, recipients would forego the surprise element in gifts. Schwartz (1967) raised the issue of surprise in gift giving. Surprise may be more important for female recipients of clothing gifts than for males. The idea of "complete surprise" in receiving

gifts of clothing appears in Female Factor 2, but in no male factor. Horne and Winakor (in press) found that both husbands and wives considered surprise to be more important when giving clothing to females (wife or daughter).

Exchange of gifts with relatives and close friends appears in several statements in Female Factor 4. Statements on this topic appear in Male Factors 1 and 3. Caplow (1982) is one of several researchers who have observed that most gift exchange occurs with close relatives. That females give more gifts may be a partial explanation for the greater prominence of this idea in a female factor. The prominence of closeness of relationship between giver and recipient recalls Belk's observation that "Gift giving instances involving close relatives and a prior history of gift exchange were most likely to result in balanced cognitive configurations" (1976, p. 160).

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## Conclusion

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Separate analyses of data for males and females seemed to provide more interpretable results than the pooled analysis. This result reflects the differences in response patterns of males and females, although the differences found here are subtle as compared to results of Winakor *et al.* (1980), who obtained very different factor structures for males and females. Our results agree with findings of several researchers that males and females differ in their roles as givers of gifts, and also support recent reports of differences in affective responses of males and females to receipt of gifts. Neither males nor females seemed to feel that they were being manipulated or treated unfairly by givers of clothing gifts, although males were less certain about this.

Equity, attribution, and reactance, and perhaps other theories, seem to be worthy of further attention in gift research. Clearly, the theories are interconnected. In further research, expert judges could be used to classify statements as to which theory they best represent, strengthening validity of the conclusions. Future researchers could also explore the roles of these theories in exchange of gift objects other than clothing.

Although factor correlations and *alpha* values indicate that these factors are reasonably reliable, factor analysis is an exploratory technique. Therefore it is unlikely that identical factors would emerge in further administrations of this instrument. However, findings seem logical in terms of other research and contribute to understanding the motivations and responses involved in gifts of clothing.

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