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The Phenomenon and Sources of Gift Malaise in Adults

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Abstract

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The current study seeks to establish and understand "gift malaise", i.e., the feeling of discomfort experienced by the recipient of an unexpected windfall or gift. We probed four possible reasons for gift malaise: 1) inequity aversion, 2) merit, the feeling of un-deservingness, 3) the shortcut of typical reciprocation, and 4) an obligation or debt aversion. 270 adult participants (M=18.78, SD=1.543) completed an online survey comprised of a series of eight gift-giving centered vignettes (four experimental, four control), asked to evaluate the feelings and reactions that would be experienced by the gift recipient. Results demonstrate that gift malaise is experienced by a majority of adults. It is particularly prevalent in situations associated with inequity aversion, and it is significantly less prevalent in relation to merit (un-deservingness), the shortcut of typical reciprocation, and even less in relation to social obligation. We conclude that inequity aversion might be the main source of gift malaise.

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The Phenomenon and Sources of Gift Malaise in Adults

Have you ever felt embarrassed or uneasy when receiving a gift, especially an unexpected unsolicited gift? There are many different responses and reactions to adopt when receiving a gift, but one of the most common ones is to say, "Oh, no! You shouldn't have" or "I can't accept this." In this situation, the receiver of the gift feels a sudden discomfort, uneasiness, and embarrassment in being given a gift. This is the exact experience and phenomenon defined as "gift malaise," that we explored in the current study.

Foundations of The Gift and Gift Exchange

Gifts can be understood as a bribe, debt, obligation, retribution, ritual, reciprocation, well-wishing, commitment, or seduction. Gifts are material as well as social communication exchanges that are inherent across human societies and instrumental in maintaining social relationships and expressing feelings (Camerer, 1988; Joy, 2001)

Literature of the multi-disciplinary subject of the gift and gift exchange behavior now spans over 50 years. Today, researchers from the realms of psychology, anthropology, sociology, and even economics and marketing have established theories and concepts central to gifts and gift exchange. However, it was the French anthropologist-sociologist Marcel Mauss (1954) who in his essay, *The Gift*, established the foundation of social theories of reciprocity and system of gift exchange for the modern world. In his seminal work, *The Gift*, Mauss presents a theoretic analysis of the gift-giving process rooted in his observations of gift giving amongst various early secluded or ancient human societies. The essay focuses on the way that exchange of objects between groups builds relationships between people. He illustrates that early exchange systems center around the obligations which the self-perpetuating system of reciprocity or gift-giving: the obligation to give, to receive, and most importantly to repay or reciprocate. In Mauss' findings

these exchange systems occur between groups, not only individuals, and are a crucial part of "total phenomena" that work to build not just wealth and alliances marked by economic wants but social solidarity because "the gift" pervades all aspects of society (Mauss, 1954).

Gift giving is a universal behavior (Vanhamme, 2021) as well as a social, cultural, and economic experience (Camerer, 1988; Joy, 2001). The giving and receiving of gifts are culturally embedded in human societies across the globe and is therefore a crucial means of behavior and exchange to study in psychology.

Normative Gift Giving

Traditionally, we give gifts to celebrate key life events as a medium for nurturing personal relationships, to encourage economic exchange and to socialize children into appropriate behavior patterns (Belk, 1979). It has even been found that in early human societies, occasions of marriage, childbirth, circumcision, and funeral ceremonies have been established as gift-giving situations (Mauss, 1954). The majority of these types of gift exchanges that are intended to preserve social ties or bonds occur within this framework of ritualized occasions, such as birthdays or Christmas. In Sherry (1983), he discusses normative gift giving and explains the importance of gifts mirroring the occasion in which they are given. For instance, in western society givers are expected to present romantic gifts for Valentine's Day. Furthermore, the study asserts that gifts are also categorized as calendrical or non-calendrical. As such, gifts too may be categorized as culturally normative and determined by the calendar cycle. These ritualized and normative occasions of gift giving have been observed in early human societies (Mauss, 1954) and continue to persist in the present day (Belk, 1979) demonstrating how gifts are consistently and typically exchanged when most expected or rooted in a norm.

Often times, recipient evaluations of givers' presentations are frequently influenced by: the relationship, the context within which the gift was given, and the appropriateness of the gift. First, there must be a connection between the giver and the receiver for the exchange to take place. The nature of the relationship between the giver and receiver can influence the giver's inspirations and receiver's interpretation of the gift (Larson & Watson, 2001). Second, as previous cited (Sherry, 1983), gifts can be given under various circumstances or situations. Either as ritual gifts given at formal expected occasions or ceremonies such as Christmas, weddings, and birthdays or as spontaneous unexpected gifts given at other times. The timing and the environment within which the exchange takes place may also influence the context of the gift exchange process. Third, the appropriateness of the gift, or choosing a gift suitable for the receiver or that the receiver will appreciate. Appropriateness is perceived as being the key quality of a perfect gift and is based on factors such as symbol of the relationship, stage of life, occasion, and history.

Different types of gift giving seem to be subject to different unwritten rules. For instance, Caplow (1982, 1984) established that 10% of gifts were given in some form of money and in 94% of those instances' money was transferred from older to younger generations. Therefore, a significant norm in the case of a gift of money seems to be that the giver should be superior in age and/or status to the recipient. Similarly, a majority of gift exchanges occur amongst family members (e.g., parents give to children and grandchildren) (Belk, 1979). However, gift giving is not only limited to family members and approximately one-third of all giving involves unrelated persons, although the range may vary by culture. The norms, expectations, and factors that influence gift-giving may also differ on a gift-to-gift basis. The current study strives to better

understand the system and norms of gift exchange, and the psychology surrounding gifts and circumstances that defy these established norms in the form of gift malaise.

To Give, To Receive, and To Repay

Of the three forms of obligation—to give, to receive, and to repay—discussed in the work of Mauss (1954), it is reciprocity, or the sense of indebtedness, that guides the gift exchange system. More specifically, it is the desire to achieve 'balanced reciprocity,' the equilibrium between giver and receiver achieved through role reversal (Roberts, 1990; Sahlins, 1972). Balanced reciprocity describes the staggered nature of reciprocity and gift giving that occurs as it is not always possible or necessary to mutually exchange gifts at the same time (Sahlins, 1972; Sherry, 1983; Robberts, 1990).

A study by Lowes, et. al. (1971) classifies gifts according to their reciprocity commitments. The classification scheme can be expressed on a spectrum from "pure gift" to "total reciprocation." A pure gift would be an altruistic act where nothing is given or expected in return. Pure gifts were not often observed by researchers of primitive societies. Although not stressed by the early writers on gift-giving, altruism is a relevant motive. It would appear that this motive often arises when the receiver is capable of appreciating the gesture but is incapable of returning the gift or favor, in particular, the very old, the very young, the very sick and the very poor. Leeds (1963) defines this process as the "norm of giving" in contrast to what we've described as the obligation or norm of reciprocity (Mauss, 1954; Gouldner, 1960).

On the other end of the continuum is total reciprocity, which involves the social obligations to give, to accept, and especially to repay. Moral enforcement of these obligations is a concept addressed by most of the early authors on gift-giving, such as Mauss (1954) Simmel (1950), Levi-Strauss (1965), Homans (1965), Schwartz (1967), and Titmuss (1971). Gouldner

(1960) indicates that reciprocity is expected in the form of a return gift or in feelings of gratitude or deference (Lowes, et. al., 1971).

Reciprocation may be mediated by other variables, such as the ability of the individual to return a gift and the differential position of the individual in society. A good example of this is Muir and Weinstein's (1962) study on the giving of favors and the social debt incurred by different social classes by asking samples of low class and middle-class members questions about favors. Middle class statements indicated that social obligation required them to make certain repayments and to form expectations for others to repay their obligations or face growing hostility, i.e., the norm of reciprocity. On the other hand, lower class individuals tended to feel more "grateful" than "obligated," i.e., one gives when one is able, expecting others to do the same (Lowes, et. al., 1971).

Gift Malaise Theory

The primary research questions motivating the current study are as follows 1) Is gift malaise a real phenomenon experienced in all adults? 2) If so, what factors or circumstances trigger or drive this gift malaise? We hypothesized that a majority of adults will report experiencing gift malaise previously in their life. We also hypothesized that if gift malaise is real phenomenon, then it will be triggered by the following four factors—inequity aversion, merit, shortcut of reciprocation, and social obligation. Specifically, we predicted that circumstances associated with inequity aversion would drive the highest levels of gift malaise or the most prominent source of gift malaise, followed by merit, then shortcut of reciprocation, and lastly social obligation.

Inequity Aversion. The current study proposes that gift malaise originates from inequity aversion, and therefore we predict inequity aversion will the most prominent source of gift

malaise. Inequity aversion is the preference for fairness and the resistance to incidental inequalities (Fehr, 2008). Humans are averse to both having less (disadvantageous inequity aversion) and having more than others (advantageous inequity aversion). It is posited that humans are endowed a universal 'sense of fairness,' an adaptation designed to regulate cooperative interactions. This has been shown as humans are uniquely cooperative, and contrary to our close relatives the apes, obtain more of our resources through collaborative interactions. From distributing toys on the playground to receiving raises in the workplace, children and adults respond negatively to inequity (Fehr, 2008). A study by Fehr, Bernhard, and Rockenback (2008) found through using resource allocation paradigms with children, an aversion to both advantageous and disadvantageous inequity. Advantageous inequity aversion is when one receives more than another, whereas disadvantageous inequity aversion is when we receive less than another. Moreover, the researchers found that advantageous inequity aversion develops strongly between the ages of 3 and 8. However, at the ages of 7 to 8 years old, children were shown to prefer resource allocations that remove disadvantageous inequity further highlighting the early development and strength of inequity aversion from a young age.

Merit. Secondly, is merit, or the ability to attend to an agents' deservingness. (Kannglesser & Warneken, 2012). An unexpected and unsolicited gift (e.g. windfall) creates a situation of un-deservingness for the recipient that may trigger discomfort or unease; and is thus posited as the second source of gift malaise. Additionally, it is considered the quality of being entitled to a reward, a praise, or gratitude (Surian & Franklin, 2016). Merit is one of the fundamental aspects of human moral judgement and a key principle of fairness, similarly to inequity aversion, and for that reason is a predicted variable in triggering gift malaise. In a study by Kannglesser & Warneken (2012), they determine that rewards should be distributed according

to how much an individual contributes to a certain task. Research suggests that children have an early ability to take merit into account in third-party situations, but that merit based sharing in first-party contexts doesn't emerge until school-age in children. In their study, Kannglesser & Warneken provide evidence that 3 and 5-year-old children are already using merit and deservingness to share and allocate resources with others. And this occurs even when sharing is costly for the child. In the study's resource-allocation paradigm, children kept fewer stickers in trials in which they had contributed less than in trials which they had contributed more than their partner, demonstrating a clear account of merit. Moreover, the researchers also found in a subsequent study that children related their own work-contribution, the work they themselves contributed, to their partners, rather than simply focusing on their own contribution independently.

A *Shortcut of Typical Reciprocity.* A short cut of typical reciprocation and reciprocity in gift exchange, where the recipient is unable to reciprocate, may trigger feelings of discomfort or unease in the recipient; and is thus posited as the third source of gift malaise. In child developmental psychology, we know that children as young as three feel mutual obligations to reciprocate in cooperative settings (Tomasello & Vasih, 2013; Tomasello, 2016). Some studies also highlight that we as humans are naturally wired to reciprocate in a tit-for-tat social exchange and one of the fundamental aspects in gift giving and exchange is reciprocity (Cosmides & Tooby, 2004; Olson & Spelke, 2008). Tit-for-tat exchanges are defined by a repayment of equal value for a trade or exchange. Moreover, unexpected and unsolicited gifts defy this norm of reciprocity and established tit-for-tat exchange and are therefore predicted to elicit gift malaise in situations.

Human social organization depends on cooperation and exchange with others. Cooperation and social exchange yield greater benefits than can be achieved by individual effort alone. In humans, cooperation appears to be maintained in part by prosocial orientations and a concern for fairness or equity. Research on the developmental origins of social behavior suggests that, by the end of infancy, children show rudimentary pro-sociality, altruism, and sharing (Moore, 2009).

Questions remain as to what factors contribute to such development. It has also been found that strong reciprocity as the putative force behind human cooperation, as well as the human tendency to abide by and enforce social norms, might first emerge by 5 years of age and may depend on culture. From then on, children begin to situate themselves, their understandings, judgments, and actions toward others in a morally principled space (Taylor, 1989). Although the current study is focused on investigating gift malaise in adults, understanding the development of reciprocity, cooperation, and exchange will help to inform our and future developmental psychology research exploring gift malaise in children.

Social Obligation. Unexpected unsolicited gifts (e.g. windfalls) can introduce a social obligation, or a debt that the recipient owes to another. In these circumstances, these gifts may elicit feelings of discomfort or unease in the recipient due to this attached obligation; and thus, is posited as the fourth source of gift malaise. Goods are not only economic commodities but vehicles and instruments for realities of another order: influence, power, sympathy, status, emotions; and the skillful game of exchange consists of a complex totality of maneuvers, conscious or unconscious, in order to gain security and to fortify one's self against risks incurred through alliances and rivalry (Levi-Strauss, 1965). Regulation of one's bonds to others is very much a part of the matter of exchange of foods. Moreover, in 1954, McCorkle & Korn published

an interesting study that explored prison socialization and social obligation. The paper discusses that the researchers observed instances of gift exchange within the prison. And that when an inmate accepts any gifts, then it is understand within the community that the donor or giver of these gifts has thereby established personal rights over the receiver. These are the social obligations and debts that are now forced onto the recipient in these situations due to gifts and gift exchange. The extreme degrees to which these mutual aid usages have been made dependent to power struggles is illustrated by the custom of forcing other inmates to accept cigarettes…. aggressive inmates will go to extraordinary lengths to place gifts in the cells of inmates they have selected for personal domination. What is interesting in these findings is that these intended recipients, in order to escape the threatened obligation, responsibility, bond, debt that is attached to the gift, they will find the donor and insist that the gift be taken back or returned. These intended victims, in order to escape the threatened bondage, must find the owner and insist that the gift be taken back. In essence, the receiver refuses to accept the gift in acknowledgement of the social obligations that may be attached to it.

Literature Gaps

However, there is still an absence of literature and empirical studies investigating unexpected and unsolicited gifts (i.e. windfalls) or gift exchanges that defy the established norms giving and norms of reciprocity. Much of the literature up to now has focused on understanding the early form of social exchange (Mauss, 1954), the modes by which gift exchange occurs and the factors that influence each exchange. However, few studies have uncovered answers about gifts that do not bend to societal or cultural norms and expectations. Again, these are gifts typically given outside of the major holidays, birthdays, occasions. Such gifts can be termed "non-normative gifts" that are unexpected or surprising in nature. These types of gifts are the

primary focus of the current study and can be described as unexpected, unsolicited windfalls, or pieces of unexpected good fortune. Previous literature has also spent time investigating the obligation to repay (Mauss, 1954) and the balance of reciprocity needed to drive the system of gift exchange (Sherry, 1983), however the question of what happens when gifts defy and break these norms of reciprocity are still unclear. There are many studies investigating reciprocity and gift exchange, but less focused on when gifts defy this norm of reciprocity and effectively short cut it, leaving the recipient at a loss and unable to reciprocate.

Few studies have also centered around understanding the specific behavior or emotions of the gift recipient in the moment of exchange. When a recipient is presented with an unexpected gift (i.e., windfall) outside of the established norms of gift exchange or reciprocity, how does the recipient react or behave? It is in this question where the current study seeks to situate itself in the gaps of the current literature and offer a psychological theory regarding a novel phenomenon we like to call "gift malaise."

The Present Study

The present study was designed to establish and test what may be the causes in adults of a phenomenon in gift giving and social exchange we coin as "gift malaise," or discomfort that may be experienced by gift recipients. We ask specifically what may trigger the phenomenon of gift malaise and discomfort in adults. Specifically, the aim of the present study is to test four potential factors: inequity aversion, merit, shortcut of reciprocation, and social obligation on gift malaise. Ultimately, our research question aims to explore a new phenomenon and increase our understanding of gifts, reciprocity, social exchange, and social relationships through a psychological empirical lens.

Gift malaise is defined in the present study as the feeling of discomfort, embarrassment, or uneasiness by the recipient of an unexpected unsolicited gift (e.g., windfall). We assert that gift malaise may be triggered by four main variables. First, inequity aversion, or the preference for fairness and resistance to incidental inequities (Fehr, 2008). Secondly, merit, or the ability to attend to agents' deservingness. Merit is a fundamental aspect of human moral judgement and a key principle of fairness. Rewards should be distributed according to how much someone contributed to a task. Thirdly, the shortcut of reciprocation. Mauss' essay and previous developmental research has shown that humans may be naturally inclined to reciprocate in "tit-for-tat" exchanges (Cosmides & Tooby, 2004; Olson & Spelke, 2008) A shortcut of this reciprocation will defy this norm of reciprocity th.at Mauss outlines (Mauss, 1925). Fourthly, social obligation. In socialization and social obligation studies, it has been observed that when an individual accepts a gift then it is understood that the donor of these gifts has thereby established person rights over the receiver. These are social obligations and debts that are now forced on the recipient in these situations of gift giving and receiving.

We tested gift malaise by studying a sample of university students in Atlanta, GA ($n=270$) using an online survey format. Participants read a series of eight vignettes (four experimental, four control). Each of the four vignettes, either experimental or control, corresponded with one potential factor of gift malaise (inequity aversion, merit, shortcut of reciprocity, or social obligation). Participants also responded to a questionnaire measuring gift malaise where they were asked to evaluate their level of embarrassment and discomfort after each vignette. The scale of gift malaise measures was designed for this study as well as the additional questions included (e.g., demographics, previous experience with gift malaise).

Ultimately, the current study seeks to understand the multidisciplinary age-old topic of gifts from a psychological perspective. Gifts are not trivial and can be deeply representative of society, relationships, and human psychology. Gift malaise is a novel phenomenon in psychological research, and this is among the first of empirical studies to research gift malaise in adults.

Our study proposes two main hypotheses of gift malaise and the sources of gift malaise in adults:

1. We hypothesized that gift malaise is a real phenomenon experienced in all adults. For instance, it was predicted that a majority of participants would have reported experiencing gift malaise at least once in their lives before.

2a. We hypothesized that if gift malaise is triggered in an individual, it will occur in certain situations due to the following four factors—inequity aversion, merit, a shortcut of reciprocity, and social obligation.

2b. We predicted that inequity aversion would be the primary source of gift malaise (i.e., elicit the strongest unease or discomfort), followed by merit, followed by short cut of reciprocity, followed by social obligation.

Methods

Participants

The study sample consisted of 270 participants (n=270) of varying gender identities (67% female, 30% male, 2.6% non-binary, and 0.4% other). Ages ranged from 18 to 23 (M=18.78, SD=1.543). Participants' self-identified ethnicities were 36.7% Asian or Pacific Islander, 13.7% Black or African American, 33.7% Caucasian, 9.3% Hispanic or Latin-X, and 6.3% other. Participants were recruited via the Emory SONA System, a database maintained by the Emory

University Psychology department of all undergraduate students enrolled in Introductory Psychology courses. Participants could freely enroll in the study via the Emory University SONA System online. 68 participants were excluded from the study sample due to incomplete survey data (e.g., not completing the entire survey, missing data points (n=68). Participants enrolled in Introductory Psychology at Emory University courses were compensated with course credit. Experimenters administered the survey online over the course of three months (December 2022-February 2023). All participants read a summary of the study and gave written consent to participating before beginning the survey. At any time during the online survey, participants were given the opportunity to opt out from completing the study. This study was reviewed and approved by the Emory Institutional Review Board (IRB) on October 28, 2022.

Materials and Measures

Materials and measures were composed of the Preliminary Questionnaire, Gift Vignettes, Vignette Questionnaire, Vignette Ranking, and Demographics Questionnaire. All data was recorded through Emory Qualtrics research services. Informed consent forms were employed to communicate vital information about this study including the title, purpose, procedure, risks, benefits, and researcher information to the participant.

Preliminary Questionnaire. The preliminary questionnaire was created for this study (See Appendix A). It included one binary yes or no question about whether participants had prior experience with gift malaise (*Have you ever felt uncomfortable or uneasy when receiving a gift?).* If participants answered "yes", there were prompted to respond to two open-ended follow up questions. (i.e., *please give an example of a time where you personally felt uncomfortable or uneasy when receiving a gift and please give a definition in your own words of this feeling of discomfort, what we may call gift malaise).*

Gift Vignettes. Eight vignettes were designed specifically for this study (See Appendix B). The eight vignettes were split into two conditions of four vignettes each (i.e. 4 experimental vignettes and 4 control vignettes). Each of the eight vignettes corresponded to one of the four distinct variables: 1) inequity aversion, 2) merit, 3) shortcut of reciprocation, 4) social obligation. Each of the eight vignettes followed the same structure: a preface, an example, and an instruction to the participant. For instance, the inequity aversion prompt appeared to the participants as such: an opening preface read: You receive a gift from someone who is at a clear economic disadvantage. Then, an example was provided: "Imagine that you are traveling to a less-developed, impoverished country for vacation. A local family takes you into their home for your entire visit. On your way to the airport, you discover, with much surprise, that in your bag there is an envelope containing a large sum of money (the equivalent of $500) with a note from the head of the poor family wishing you a safe travel." The closing instruction to the participant followed, telling them, "*In this scenario, you would NOT be able to either compensate for or return the money."* This structure (e.g., preface, example, closer) was used for all eight vignettes. The length of one vignette was approximately 4 to 6 sentences. (See Appendix B for a full list of all eight of the vignettes].

Vignette Questionnaire. Participants answered one question after each of the eight vignettes asking them to evaluate the amount of uneasiness or malaise they felt while reading each vignette and receiving the gift (rated on a 7-point Likert scale [1=least uneasiness or malaise, 7=most uneasiness or malaise]) (See Appendix C).

Vignette Ranking. Participants ranked all four experimental vignettes (listed from A to D) on a scale of 1 to 4 (1=most uneasy or malaise inducing, 4=least uneasy or malaise inducing) (See Appendix D for full list of vignettes).

Demographics Questionnaire. A demographics questionnaire was created for this study to assess the demographics and background of participants (See Appendix E). It included 6-items—age, gender, race and ethnicity, country of longest residence, country of parent's origin, and religion. All responses were recorded in multiple choice or free response format.

Procedure

All participants were informed of the study's general purpose, duration, participation requirements, and compensation, if applicable (i.e. course credit for introductory psychology students).

At the beginning of the online survey, participants signed the consent form and completed the Preliminary Questionnaire. Then, participants then read a series of eight gift vignettes, or scenarios, each followed by the Vignette Questionnaire to measure their evaluations of gift malaise. Experimenters randomized the order of the four experimental and control vignettes as well as the order of the four vignettes within each condition. Participants finished the survey by completing the Demographics Questionnaire and hitting submit on the form. The entire procedure took approximately 20-30 minutes.

Data Analysis Plan

Statistical analyses of repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were run to test the study's hypotheses. These results allowed us to determine the source of gift malaise across all participants and consider the effect of condition and vignette independently and as interaction terms. Post-hoc pairwise comparison tests were run to identify significant differences between each vignette and condition. Descriptive measures were used to analyze the frequency of gift malaise experienced by participants previously and the average ranking of the four

experimental vignettes. Statistical analyses were run to test hypotheses via IBM SPSS statistical software (version 29), with the significance set at an alpha of .05.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses

Initial analyses revealed that a small majority of all participants had experienced gift malaise previously in their lives. 55.2% of participants reported feeling uncomfortable or uneasy in receiving a gift before (i.e., gift malaise) while 44.2% did not. These initial analyses do confirm our first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) that gift malaise is a real phenomenon experienced by adults. See Table 1 for overall descriptive statistics of variables central to primary analyses (previous gift malaise experienced percentage, mean experimental and control vignette gift malaise evaluations, vignette rank order evaluations).

Additionally, descriptive statistics revealed that 68.9% of participants ranked vignette 1 (i.e., inequity aversion) as the number 1 (i.e., the vignette that elicited the most gift malaise). 35.2% of participants ranked vignette 2 (i.e., merit) as number 2 and 35.6% as number 3. 43.3% of participants ranked vignette 3 (i.e., shortcut of reciprocity) as number 4. 33.7% of participants ranked vignette 4 (i.e., social obligation) as either number 3 or number 4. See Figure 7 for the mean experimental vignette rankings.

A 2x2x4 repeated-measures ANOVA determined that mean gift malaise evaluation statistically significant between condition $F(1,268) = 329.204$, $p < .001$ and vignette $F(3,268) = 77.798$, $p < .001$, but not in relation to previous gift malaise experience $F(1,268) = 3.360$, $p > .05$ (See Table 2). The main effect of condition indicates that participants evaluated the experimental vignettes higher in gift malaise than the control vignettes, irrespective of vignette number (See Figure 1). In addition, the main effect of vignette indicates that which vignette the

participants read and evaluated impacted their gift malaise evaluations. There were multiple significant interactions. The condition by vignette interaction was significant $F(3,268)=130.825$, $p<.001$, indicating that the gift malaise evaluations for the experimental vignettes were higher depending on which vignette they read. The condition x previous gift malaise experienced interaction was also significant $F(1,268)=6.529$, $p<.05$, indicating that the gift malaise evaluations for the participants who reported experience with gift malaise was higher. The previous malaise reported by vignette and previous malaise reported by vignette by condition interactions were not significant ($p>.05$). The complete statistical results of the repeated measures ANOVA are presented in Table 2.

Effect of Condition

Post-hoc pairwise comparison tests were conducted to confirm the main effect of condition on gift malaise evaluations among all participants (Hypothesis 2a). The post-hoc analysis with a Bonferroni adjustment revealed that gift malaise evaluations between the experimental condition were significantly different from the control condition ($M=3.588$, $SE=0.70$, $p<.001$). The experimental vignettes elicited significantly higher malaise evaluations than the control vignettes, supporting our second hypothesis about the effect of all four factors, inequity aversion, merit, shortcut of reciprocation, and social obligation, on gift malaise (See Figure 1). Moreover, experimental vignette 1 (M=6.046, $SE=.079$) and 2 ($M=4.546$, $SE=.112$) different significantly in mean gift malaise evaluations to the control vignettes 1 ($M=3.531$, $SE=.108$) and 2 ($M=2.240$, $SE=.099$) ($p<.001$). For experimental vignettes 3 ($M=4.525$, $SE=.118$) and 4 ($M=4.049$, $SE=.095$), there were also significant differences in mean gift malaise evaluations compared to control vignettes 3 ($M=4.298$, $SE=.103$) and 4 ($M=4.326$, $SE=.108$)

(*p*<.05). Overall, all four experimental vignettes elicited significantly higher gift malaise in participants than the corresponding control vignettes (See Figure 2).

Effect of Vignette Number

Post-hoc pairwise comparison tests were conducted to explore the effect of vignette on gift malaise evaluation among all participants, specifically for the manipulated experimental vignettes. It was predicted that vignette 1 (inequity aversion) followed by vignette 2 (merit), then vignette 3 (shortcut of reciprocity), and vignette 4 (social obligation) would trigger the highest levels of gift malaise in participants (vignette 1>2>3>4*)* (Hypothesis 2b)*.* The post-hoc analysis with a Bonferroni adjustment revealed that gift malaise evaluations between vignette 1 was significantly different from vignette 2 (*M*=4.569, *SE*=.115, *p*<.001), vignette 3 (*M*=4.531, *SE*=.119, *p*<.001), and vignette 4 (*M*=4.073, *SE*=.097, *p*<.001). Experimental vignette 1 was evaluated significantly higher than the remaining three vignettes across participants. In other words, experimental vignette 1 elicited the highest amount of gift malaise in participants. The post-hoc analysis with a Bonferroni adjustment revealed that gift malaise evaluations between Vignette 2 was significantly different from vignette 4 (*M*=4.073, *SE*=.097, *p*<.001) but not vignette 3 (*M*=4.569, *SE*=.115, *p=*.782). Experimental vignette 2 was evaluated significantly lower than vignette 1, significantly higher than vignette 4, and not significantly different from vignette 3. The post-hoc analysis with a Bonferroni adjustment revealed that gift malaise evaluations between Vignette 3 was significantly different vignette 4 (*M*=4.073, *SE*=.097, *p*<.001). Experimental vignette 3 was evaluated significantly lower than vignette 1, significantly higher than vignette 4, and not significantly different compared to vignette 2. The results conclude that vignette 1 (inequity aversion) elicited significantly higher gift malaise than vignette 2 (merit) and 3 (shortcut of typical reciprocity), which were both significantly higher

than vignette 4 (obligation) (vignette 1>2=3>4) partially supporting Hypothesis 2b (See Figure 2).

Additional Analyses

Additional analyses considered participants who reported previous experience with gift malaise and those who did not as between-group variables. We were interested to explore if previous experience of gift malaise affects participants' gift malaise evaluations across conditions and vignettes. See Table 3 for overall descriptive statistics of central variables to exploratory analyses.

Effect of Reported Previous Experience with Gift Malaise. To further understand the effect of participant's self-report of previous experience with gift malaise, a mixed-model 2x2x4 ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of previous gift malaise experience (2 levels: Yes, No) on the participants' gift malaise evaluations (7-point Likert scale) while controlling for condition (2 levels: Experimental, Control) and Vignette Number (4 levels: Vignette 1, Vignette 2, Vignette 3, Vignette 4). There was no main effect of previous gift malaise experienced on gift malaise evaluations, $F(1,268) = 3.360$, $p=.068$. However, the interactions between previous gift malaise experienced and condition were significant, $F(1,268)=6.529$, $p<.05$ as well as the interaction between condition and vignette, $F(1,268)=130.825$, $p<.001$. The remaining interactions were not found to be significant ($p>.05$) (See Figure 4). The statistical results of the 2x2x4 repeated measures ANOVA are presented in Table 4.

Post-hoc tests were conducted to further examine the interactions of previous gift malaise experienced and condition as well as vignette number. Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons revealed that the mean difference in gift malaise evaluations between levels of previous gift malaise experienced was not significant between those who reported "yes" to experiencing gift

malaise (*M*=4.301, *SE*=.086, *p*=.068) and those who reported "no" to experiencing gift malaise (*M*=4.089, *SE*=.078, *p*=.068) (See Figure 5). In other words, although we only saw a small majority of participants who reported "yes" for the experience with gift malaise self-report question, we see the same significant difference in gift malaise evaluations for those who reported "no."

However, Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons revealed that the mean difference in gift malaise evaluations between levels of previous gift malaise experienced was significant between three of the experimental vignettes (See Figure 6). Furthermore, Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons revealed that the mean difference in gift malaise evaluations for vignette one was significantly different for those who with experience (*M*=6.315, *SE*=.106) and those without (*M*=5.777, *SE*=.117), *p*<.001. The same pattern was found in vignette two, for those with experience (*M*=4.819, *SE*=.150) and those without (*M*=4.273, *SE*=.167), and vignette four for those with experience (*M*=4.255, *SE*=.127) and those without (*M*=3.842, *SE*=.161), *p*<.05. None of the control vignettes different significantly as a function of previous gift malaise experienced(*p*>.05). The results of this mixed-model ANOVA suggest that the previous gift malaise experienced does not have significant main effect on the gift malaise evaluations. The results also support hypothesis 1 and our prediction that vignette 1(i.e., inequity aversion) would elicit the highest levels of gift malaise and vignette four (i.e., social obligation) the least.

Discussion

The current study sought to establish and understand "gift malaise," or the feeling of discomfort, embarrassment, or uneasiness when one receives a gift unexpectedly and unsolicited, in adults. Specifically, we wanted to determine what may trigger and underlie the gift malaise phenomenon in adults. We tested four potential sources or reasons for gift malaise 1) inequity aversion 2)

merit 3) shortcut of typical reciprocity 4) a social obligation or debt aversion. It was hypothesized that gift malaise is a real phenomenon experienced by adults. It was also hypothesized that if gift malaise was a real phenomenon, then its primary source would lie in inequity aversion, secondly merit, thirdly a short cut of typical reciprocity, and fourthly social obligation or debt aversion. The psychology of gifts and gift exchange is important to study as the behavior of gift exchange is culturally embedded in human society and transects multiple disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, economics, and psychology. Gift giving is a universal behavior (Vanhamme, 2021) exhibited around world and therefore this study has widely applicable implications regarding social, cultural, and even economic behavior and exchange systems. The current study contributes to the existing literature by examining specific types of gifts and gift giving exchanges that lie outside of the established norm of giving and reciprocity. Additionally, the current study introduces what we like to call "gift malaise" in adults, into the fabric of current psychological literature and research.

The results suggest that gift malaise is a prevalent psychological phenomenon experienced by a majority of adults, supporting our first initial hypothesis (Hypothesis 1). More than half of all participants reported feeling uncomfortable or uneasy when receiving a gift previously in their life. This finding aligns with our hypothesis and predictions that overall irrespective of the unique situation of gift exchange, there are certain circumstances or factors that trigger this phenomenon of gift malaise in adults.

To probe this finding further, we posited that gift malaise is driven by four potential factors 1) inequity aversion 2) merit 3) shortcut of typical reciprocity 4) obligation. The results suggested that gift malaise was found to be due to one or more of the following four factors, supporting the second hypothesis (Hypothesis 2a). Our prediction of a main effect of condition

on gift malaise was supported by participants' evaluations of experimental versus control vignettes. This means that adults gave significantly higher gift malaise evaluations in the experimental condition and to the experimental vignettes compared to the control condition and vignettes (this analysis does not consider individual vignettes). This finding does align with our hypothesis and predictions that the source of gift malaise lies in inequity aversion, merit, shortcut of reciprocity, and obligation. It should be noted that under vignette 3 (short cut of reciprocation) and vignette 4 (obligation), the control and experimental gift malaise evaluations did not significantly differ. This suggests participants are experiencing the same amount of gift malaise under the experimental condition and control condition for vignette 3 and 4. It is possible that there more be an unexpected alternative factor present in the control vignettes that impacted the participant's evaluation of the gift and thus increase the gift malaise evaluations. The shortcut of typical reciprocity and obligation are also the most abstract and more nuanced concepts among the four proposed sources of gift malaise and less established in the fields of developmental and social psychology and anthropology. Participants may not have been as perceptive to the subtle experimental manipulation of vignette 3 and 4 compared to vignettes 1 and 2.

Our results also provide evidence that partially supported our second hypothesis that gift malaise is primarily driven by inequity aversion, then merit, shortcut of typical reciprocation, and obligation (Hypothesis 2b). The results suggested that our prediction of a main effect of vignette (i.e., one of the four potential factors) on gift malaise was supported by participants' evaluations of the four individual vignettes. This means that certain vignettes, each associated with one of the experimental factors were, found to elicit significantly different levels of gift malaise in adults from others. However, our prediction of the "hierarchy" or "ordering" of factors was only partially supported. Merit and deservingness' were found to not be significantly different in

affecting gift malaise. Instead, gift malaise was particularly and significantly more prevalent in situations associated with inequity aversion and strong inequity compared to the remaining four factors. Our prediction that inequity aversion would elicit the highest gift malaise and social obligation the least, however, was still supported by the results. The results demonstrate that gift malaise is experienced by a majority of adults but is significantly more prevalent in situations of gift giving associated with inequity aversion, and significantly less prevalent and powerful in relation to merit (un-deservingness), short cut of typical reciprocation, and even less significantly associated with obligation. Contrary to our prediction, gift malaise in situations associated with merit were not significantly higher than situations associated with a shortcut of typical reciprocity but evaluated similarly by participants. These results could be explained by the strength of normative-giving and expected reciprocity attached to gifts and gift exchanges in society and among participants. Studies have found that humans are naturally inclined to reciprocate in tit-for-tat social exchange (Cosmides & Tooby, 2004; Olson & Spelke, 2008) and this tendency to abide by and enforce norms emerges as early as 5 years old. Thus, the defiance of typical reciprocity, this shortcut or inability for the recipient to reciprocate, illustrated in the vignette triggers a stronger response of gift malaise equal to what was expected for the vignettes centered around merit.

Additional analyses produced results that suggested there was no main effect of previous experience with gift malaise on vignette evaluations. However, we did find a significant interaction between previous self-reported experience with gift malaise in interaction with condition or vignette. Those who experienced gift malaise evaluated vignettes associated with inequity aversion, merit, and social obligation significantly higher than those with no self-reported previous experience. These findings are still consistent with the second hypothesis in

that situations associated with inequity aversion and inequity elicited the highest levels of gift malaise, regardless of previous experiences with the malaise. Therefore, gift malaise was not impacted by an individual's previous experience with the malaise and was overall consistent and supported Hypothesis 2b.

Implications

To our knowledge, this research is the first psychological studies to explore the specific phenomenon we refer to as "gift malaise" in adults. Moreover, is establishes gift malaise, the feeling of discomfort experienced by the recipient of an unexpected windfall or gift, to be experienced by a majority of adults. There is still a lack of literature and studies, especially current to today, that have investigated these types of unexpected and unsolicited gifts, or windfalls and no studies that discuss the topic of the current study "gift malaise" in much detail or consider what factors may be associated with it. Prior to this study, gift malaise was a fairly abstract and difficult to pin down phenomenon, supported mainly by anecdotal evidence. As a result of this study, we now have a better understanding of gift malaise and how we as humans consider gifts in association to factors such as inequity, merit, short cut of reciprocation, and social debt. The current study provides findings that opens a window into understanding human behavior, relationships, and culture in more detail. Ultimately, our research succeeded in exploring and testing a novel phenomenon and increased our understanding of gifts, reciprocity, social exchange, and social relationships through a psychological empirical lens.

Limitations and Future Directions

The results of the current study should be interpreted in light of a few limitations. The research design of the current study does not allow for complete control of all potential third variables that could impact gift malaise experienced by participants. Confounding variables such

as additional factors of gift malaise, personality, socio-economic status, culture, not primarily assessed in this study might also account for the associations found. In addition, the current study was conducted online through a survey. The study utilized only self-report measures, all of which were designed and piloted for the first time in this study, which may have introduced a slight bias. Thus, additional measures (behavioral, observational) of gift malaise may also be needed to improve the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the results and findings. Furthermore, the current sample was recruited from a small population of Emory undergraduate students, and as a result, the findings may not generalize to all college-aged students nor all adults in the population. Although the sample size was limited to undergraduate students from Emory university, there was a large and robust sample size totaling 270 participants. The study population was also limited to adults rather than children due to the more complex nature of the measurements and study design. However, to gain a better understanding of the development of gift malaise and its associations to factors such as inequity aversion, future research should work to include children and develop more rudimentary and simple measures of gift malaise. Finally, future research may work to replicate and validate the results of the current study to support the findings.

Conclusion

The present study sought to establish and understand "gift malaise" (i.e., the feeling of discomfort experienced by the recipient of an unexpected unsolicited windfall or gift). We probed four possible reasons or factors for gift malaise 1) inequity aversion 2) merit, or the feeling of un-deservingness 3) the shortcut of typical reciprocation and 4) an obligation or debt aversion. The study results demonstrate that gift malaise is real phenomenon experienced by a majority of adults. Gift malaise is particularly prevalent in situations associated with inequity

aversion, and significantly less prevalent and powerful in relation to merit and the shortcut of reciprocation, and even less in relation to obligation or debt aversion. Ultimately, we conclude that inequity aversion may be the main and most prevalent source of gift malaise in adults.

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Table 1

Overall means, standard deviations, ranges, and percentages for variables central to analyses

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	Percentage
Experimental Vignette 1 Evaluation	6.07	1.317	6	
Experimental Vignette 2 Evaluation	4.57	1.853	6	
Experimental Vignette 3 Evaluation	4.53	1.924	6	
Experimental Vignette 4 Evaluation	4.07	1.559	6	
Control Vignette 1 Evaluation	3.54	1.774	6	
Control Vignette 2 Evaluation	2.23	1.624	6	
Control Vignette 3 Evaluation	4.30	1.677	6	
Control Vignette 4 Evaluation	4.34	1.759	6	
Experimental Vignette 1 Ranking	1.47	.812	3	68.9% Rank 1 19.6% Rank 2 7.0% Rank 3 4.4% Rank 4
Experimental Vignette 2 Ranking	2.50	.947	3	15.6% Rank 1 35.2% Rank 2 35.6% Rank 3 16.7% Rank 4
Experimental Vignette 3 Ranking	3.04	1.001	3	8.5% Rank 1 22.6% Rank 2 25.6% Rank 3 43.3% Rank 4
Experimental Vignette 4 Ranking	2.91	.974	3	9.6% Rank 1 23.0% Rank 2 33.7% Rank 3 33.7% Rank 4
Previous Malaise Experienced				44.8% No 55.2% Yes

Note: Experimental and Control Vignette Evaluations were averaged across participants regardless of reporting previous gift malaise experienced (7-point Likert scale), Experimental Vignette Rankings were evaluated 1-4 (1=highest gift malaise inducing, 4=lowest gift malaise inducing).

Table 2

Results of 2x4 Repeated Measures ANOVA on Condition and Vignette Number

Tests of Within Subjects Effects

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Condition	790.856	1	790.856	335.675	<.001***
Vignette Number	633.769	3	109.014	79.417	<.001***
Condition*Vignette	834.094	3	278.984	133.971	<.001***
Residual	1944.947	269	7.230		

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

Table 3

Overall means, standard deviations, ranges, and percentages for variables central to analyses for participants who reported experience gift malaise ("yes") and those who did not ("no")

		Mean	**Standard Deviation**	**Range**
Experimental Vignette 1 Evaluation	Yes	6.32	1.047	6
	No	5.78	1.541	
Experimental Vignette 2 Evaluation	Yes	4.82	1.812	6
	No	4.57	1.866	
Experimental Vignette 3 Evaluation	Yes	4.54	1.905	6
	No	4.51	1.954	
Experimental Vignette 4 Evaluation	Yes	4.26	1.525	6
	No	3.84	1.576	
Control Vignette 1 Evaluation	Yes	3.66	1.754	6
	No	3.40	1.796	
Control Vignette 2 Evaluation	Yes	2.10	1.465	6
	No	2.38	1.795	
Control Vignette 3 Evaluation	Yes	4.28	1.763	6
	No	4.31	1.571	
Control Vignette 4 Evaluation	Yes	4.44	1.670	6
	No	4.21	1.863	

Note: Experimental and Control Vignette Evaluations were averaged by participant response to reporting previous gift malaise experienced (7-point Likert scale).

Table 4

Results of 2x2x4 Repeated Measures ANOVA on Previous Gift Malaise Reported, Condition, and Vignette Number

Tests of Within Subjects Effects

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Condition	759.991	1	759.991	329.204	<.001***
Condition*Previous Gift Malaise Experienced	15.072	1	15.072	6.529	.011*
Vignette Number	556.618	3	185.539	77.798	<.001***
Vignette Number* Previous Gift Malaise Experienced	13.392	3	4.464	1.872	.133
Condition*Vignette	811.957	3	270.652	130.825	<.001***
Condition*Vignette* Previous Gift Malaise Experienced	11.453	3	3.818	1.845	.137
Residual	1663.328	804	2.069		

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

Tests of Between Subjects Effects

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Previous Gift Malaise Experienced	24.084	1	24.084	3.360	.068
Residual	1920.863	268	7.167		

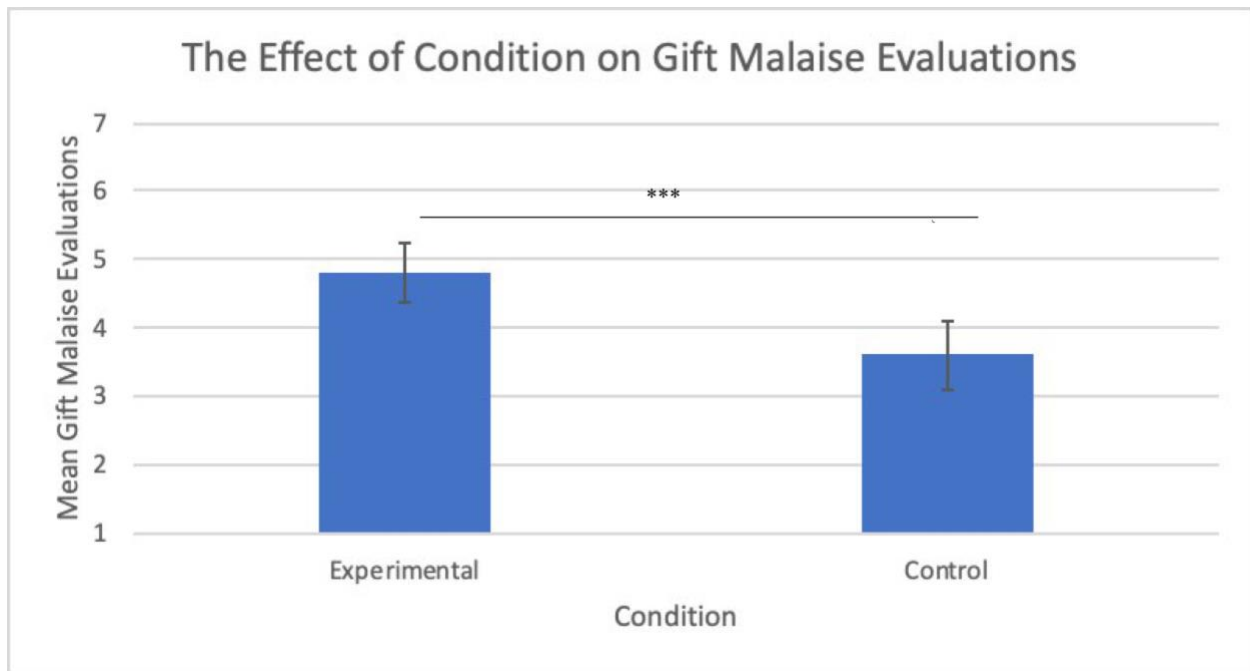Note. ***$p<.001$, **$p<.01$, *$p<.05$

Figure 1. The Effect of Condition on Gift Malaise Evaluation Across All Four Vignettes. *Note.* Gift malaise evaluations were averaged across all four vignettes per condition. SE Bars are plotted. ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.
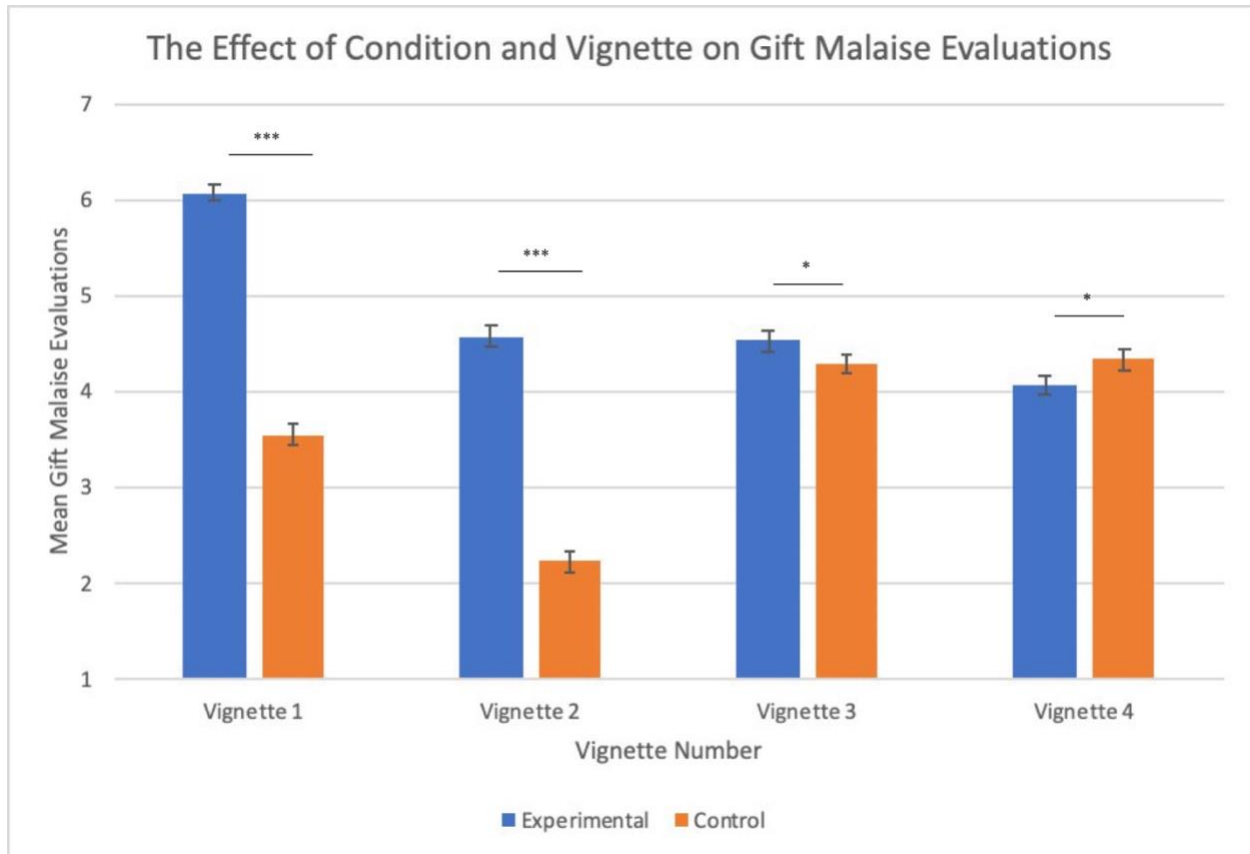
Figure 2. The Effect of Condition and Vignette on Gift Malaise Evaluations. *Note.* Vignettes are categorized accordingly: 1=inequity aversion, 2=merit, 3=shortcut of reciprocation, 4=social obligation. SE bars are plotted. ***$p<.001$, **$p<.01$, *$p<.05$.

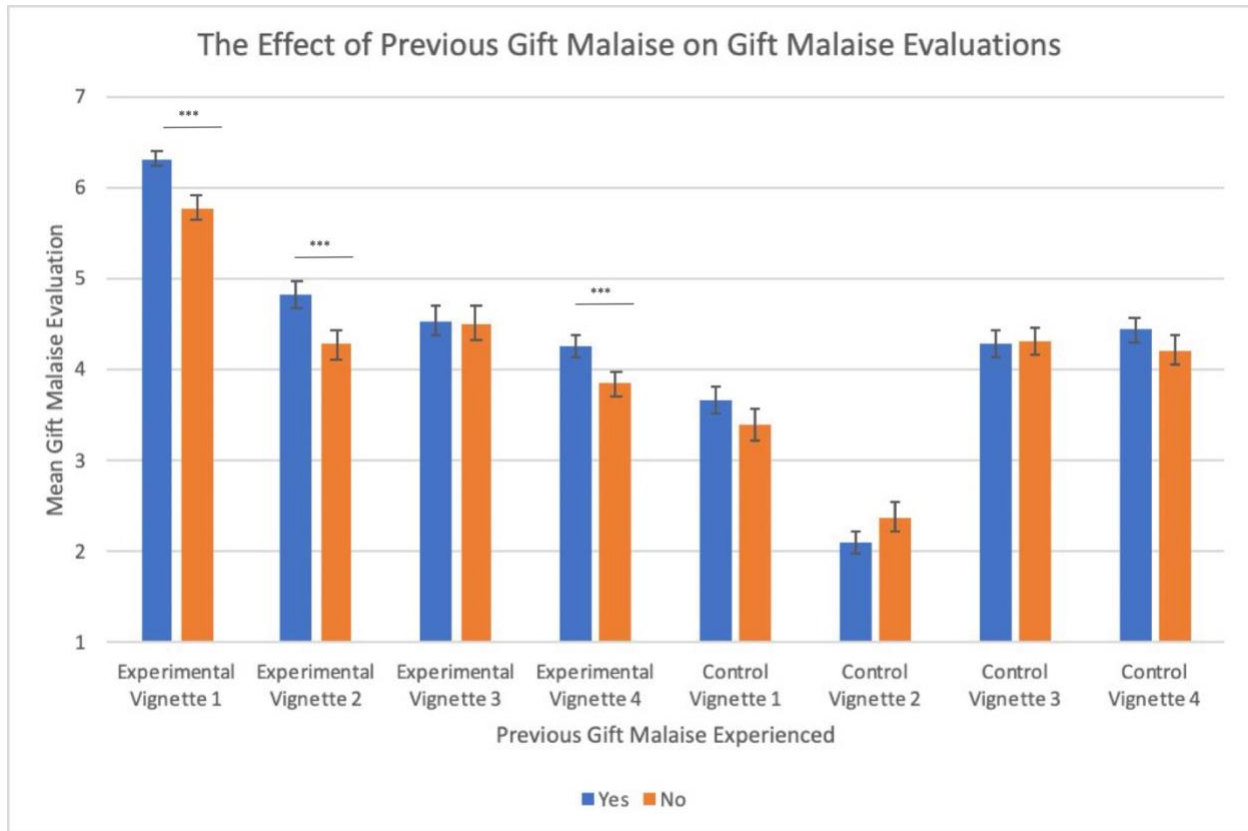**Figure 4.** The Effect of Previous Gift Malaise on Gift Malaise Evaluations. *Note.* SE bars are plotted. ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.

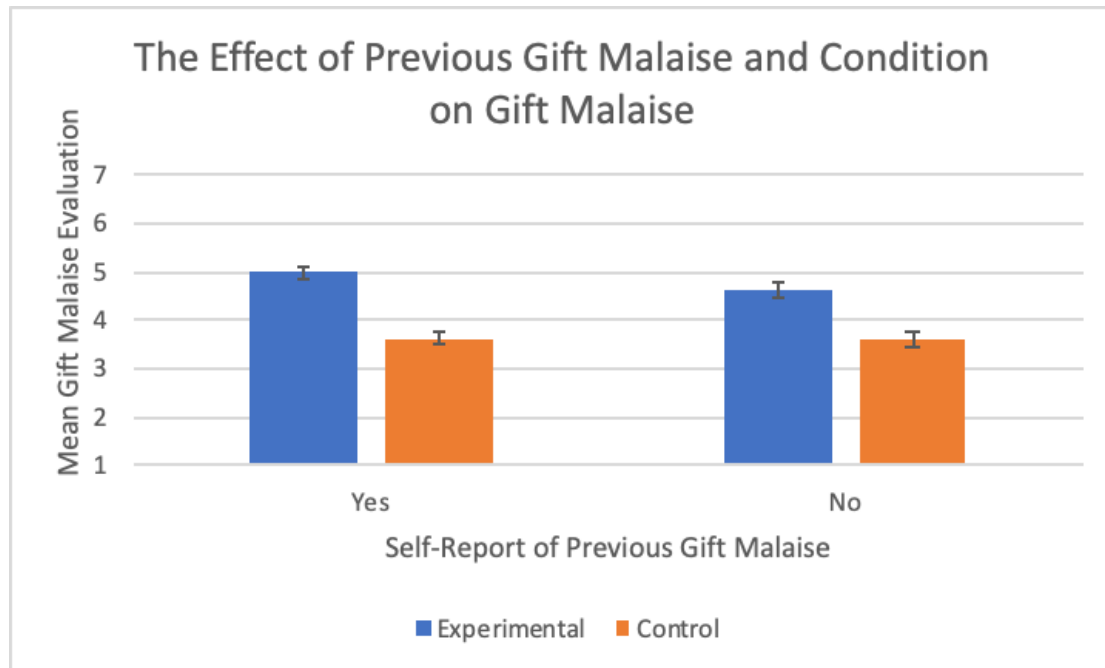**Figure 5.** The Effect of Previous Gift Malaise and Condition on Gift Malaise. *Note.* SE bars are plotted. ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05.
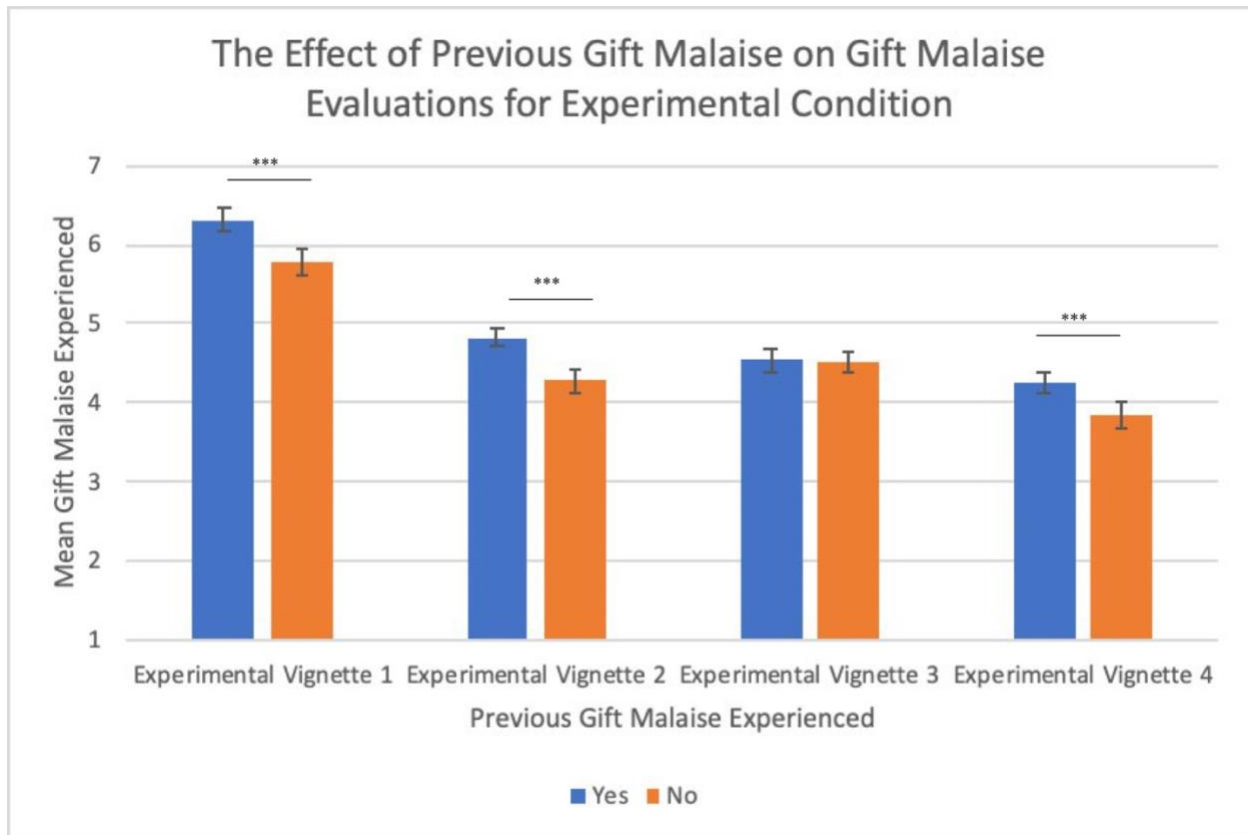
Figure 6. The Effect of Previous Gift Malaise on Gift Malaise Evaluations for Experimental Condition. *Note.* .***$p<.001$, **$p<.01$, *$p<.05$.
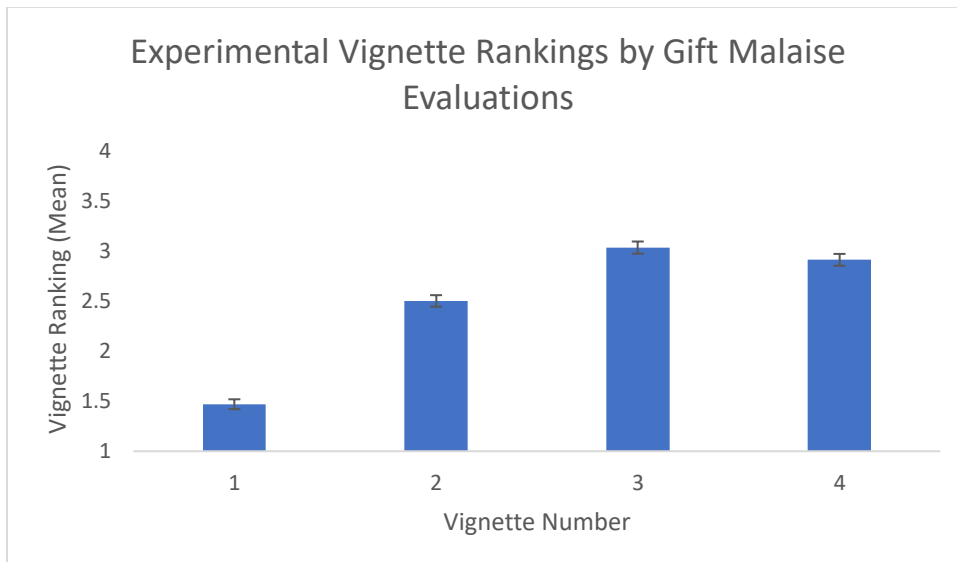

Figure 7. Experimental Vignette Rankings. *Note.* SE bars are plotted. ***$p<.001$, **$p<.01$, *$p<.05$.

Appendix A
Preliminary Questionnaire
Q1. Have you ever felt uncomfortable or uneasy when receiving a gift? Please answer yes or no.
    Yes
    No
Q2. If you answered yes, please give an example of a time where you personally felt uncomfortable or uneasy when receiving a gift.
Q3. If you answered yes, please give a definition in your own words of this feeling of discomfort, what we may call gift malaise.

Appendix B
Gift Vignettes
Please read the following vignettes in which you receive a gift. We would like you to evaluate how much malaise each gift makes you feel.

Please take your time and read each vignette carefully. Pay extra attention to the **bolded** and underlined words and phrases.

Experimental Vignettes
Inequity Aversion.
> You receive a gift from someone who is at a clear economic disadvantage.

> For example:
> Imagine that you are traveling to a **less-developed, impoverished** country for vacation. A local family takes you into their home for your entire visit. On your way to the airport, you discover, with much surprise, that in your bag there is an envelope containing a large sum of money (the equivalent of $500) with a note from the head of the poor family wishing you a safe travel.

> ***In this scenario, you would <u>NOT be able</u> to either compensate for or return the money.***

Merit.
> You receive a gift that you do not deserve.

> For example:
> Imagine that you are working as an employee for a construction company. You are paired up with team to build a wall. After the build, everybody is paid at the same hourly rate for their work for a total of $500 each. However, when you return home you discover that you were actually given an additional sum of money (two times the amount you should have received in compensation for your work). With the money is a note explaining that **you were the only one receiving the extra money because you were the boss's favorite.**

> **In this scenario, you would <u>NOT be able</u> to return or refuse the money.**

Shortcut of Reciprocation.
You receive a gift from a stranger you will never see again.

For example:
Imagine you are sitting at a coffee shop. Out of nowhere, a total stranger drops in your bag an envelope. You discover that it contains a large sum of money in cash (equivalent of $500). The stranger walks out of the coffee shop and disappears into the crowd before you can react.

In this scenario, you would <u>NOT be able</u> to return the money or identify the stranger.

Social Obligation.
You receive a gift that may create a future obligation or debt.

For example:
Imagine that you are speaking to a family member on the phone. You confess that you have financial problems and cannot afford to pay your rent this month. **Another family member** happens to overhear the conversation. The next day, you receive an envelope with a large sum of cash (the equivalent of $500) with a note signed by this **latter family member.**

Control Vignettes
Inequity Aversion.
You receive a gift from someone who is from the same economic background (i.e., comparable revenues and wealth).

For example:
Imagine that you are traveling to a **well-developed** country for vacation. A local wealthy family takes you into their home for your entire visit. On your way to the airport, you discover with much surprise that in your bag there is an envelope containing a large sum of money (the equivalent of $500) with a note from the head of the wealthy family wishing you a safe travel.

In this scenario, you would <u>NOT be able</u> to either compensate for or return the money.

Merit.
You receive from someone a gift that you do deserve.

For example:
Imagine that you are working as an employee for a construction company. You are paired up with team to build a wall. After the build, everybody is paid the same hourly rate for their work for a total of $500 each. However, when you return home you discover you were actually given an additional sum of money (two times the amount you should have received in compensation for your work). With the money is a note from the boss

explaining **that everybody did a great job and deserve the extra money.**

In this scenario, you would <u>NOT be able</u> to return the money.

Shortcut of Reciprocation.
    You receive a gift from a stranger you will see again

    For example:
    Imagine you are sitting at a coffee shop. Out of nowhere, a stranger drops in your bag an envelope. You discover that it contains a large sum of money in cash (equivalent of $500). The stranger walks out of the coffee shop and disappears into the crowd before you can react.

In this scenario, you would <u>BE able</u> to return the money and identify the stranger.

Social Obligation.
    You receive a gift that may NOT create a future obligation or debt.

    For example:
    Imagine that you are speaking to a family member on the phone. You confess that you are having financial problems and cannot afford to pay your rent this month. **A complete stranger** happens to overhear the conversation. The next day, you receive an envelope with a large sum of cash (the equivalent of $500) with a note signed from this **complete stranger.**

Appendix C
Vignette Questionnaire.
Q1. On a scale of **1(least uneasiness or malaise) to 7(most uneasiness or malaise)**, please rate how such a gift would make you feel. Select the number that corresponds to your choice.
    1=least uneasiness or malaise
    7=most uneasiness or malaise

Appendix D
Vignette Ranking.
Q1. On a scale of **1=MOST** <u>uneasy or malaise inducing to</u> **4=LEAST** <u>uneasy or malaise inducing</u>, please rank Vignette A, B, C, and D based on how each gift made you feel.

Fill in your desired ranking 1-4 below.
    ___Vignette A
    ___Vignette B
    ___Vignette C
    ___Vignette D

Vignette A:
You receive a gift from someone who is at a clear economic disadvantage.

For example:
Imagine that you are traveling to a **less-developed, impoverished** country for vacation. A local family takes you into their home for your entire visit. On your way to the airport, you discover, with much surprise, that in your bag there is an envelope containing a large sum of money (the equivalent of $500) with a note from the head of the poor family wishing you a safe travel.

In this scenario, you would <u>NOT be able</u> to either compensate for or return the money.

Vignette B:
You receive a gift that you do not deserve.

For example:
Imagine that you are working as an employee for a construction company. You are paired up with team to build a wall. After the build, everybody is paid at the same hourly rate for their work for a total of $500 each. However, when you return home you discover that you were actually given an additional sum of money (two times the amount you should have received in compensation for your work). With the money is a note explaining that **you were the only one receiving the extra money because you were the boss's favorite.**

In this scenario, you would <u>NOT be able</u> to return or refuse the money.

Vignette C:
You receive a gift from a stranger you will never see again.

For example:
Imagine you are sitting at a coffee shop. Out of nowhere, a total stranger drops in your bag an envelope. You discover that it contains a large sum of money in cash (equivalent of $500). The stranger walks out of the coffee shop and disappears into the crowd before you can react.

In this scenario, you would <u>NOT be able</u> to return the money or identify the stranger.

Vignette D:
You receive a gift that may create a future obligation or debt.

For example:
Imagine that you are speaking to a family member on the phone. You confess that you have financial problems and cannot afford to pay your rent this month. **Another family**

member happens to overhear the conversation. The next day, you receive an envelope with a large sum of cash (the equivalent of $500) with a note signed by this **latter family member.**

Appendix E

Demographics Questionnaire.

Q1. What is your age?

Q2. What is your gender?

    A. Female, male, non-binary, prefer not to say

Q3. What is your race/ethnicity?

    A. Caucasian, Black or African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latin X, Other

Q4. In which country have you spent most of your life?

Q5. What country are your parents from?

Q6. What is your religion?

    A. Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Atheist, Agnostic, Other