

Dissertation Proposal

Julian Givi

Monday, December 4, 2017

2:00 pm

388 Posner Hall

Errors in Gift Giving: When and Why Givers and Receivers Don't See Eye-To-Eye

Gift giving is a custom practiced worldwide and is one that carries major economic ramifications. Unfortunately, however, gift giving errors are prevalent and researchers are only beginning to understand the various factors at the heart of these errors. To that end, in the present work, I identify previously unexamined drivers of gift giving errors and, more broadly, help the field gain a better understanding of the entire gift giving endeavor.

In chapter 1, I review the gift giving literature and identify a commonality in the various types of gifts givers tend to give, as well as the ones recipients prefer to receive. Specifically, I argue that the types of gifts givers tend to give are those that make for a pleasant gift exchange, while the types of gifts recipients prefer to receive are those that maximize their utility during gift ownership.

In chapter 2, I demonstrate a novel error in gift giving, specifically that givers do not give enough sentimentally valuable gifts, and show that this is driven by the inherent asymmetry in information the two parties possess regarding the recipient's preferences.

In chapter 3, I demonstrate that gift giving errors are oftentimes the result of givers simply following the societal norms for gift giving. Specifically, I demonstrate that many of the earlier findings in the gift giving literature can be accounted for by this idea, that this idea can predict novel giver-receiver asymmetries in gift preference, and that givers err more in contexts with strong (vs. weak) gift giving norms

In sum, this work sheds light on novel psychological mechanisms driving gift giving errors and provides researchers with a more coherent understanding of gift giving in general.