

# Marketing Colloquia

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**Thursday, August 29, 2013**

**Where:** 741 JMHH

**When:** 3:00 PM to 4:20 PM

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## **Self-interest without Selfishness: The Hedonic Benefit of Imposed Self-interest**

*ABSTRACT:* Despite common sense appeal, the link between self-interest and happiness remains elusive. One reason why individuals may not feel satisfied with self-interest is that they feel uneasy about sacrificing the needs of others for their own gain. I propose that externally imposing self-interest allows individuals to enjoy self-benefiting outcomes that are untainted by self-reproach for failing to help others. Study 1 finds that an imposed self-interested option (a reward) leads to greater happiness than choosing between a self-interested and a prosocial option (a charity donation). Study 2 finds that this effect is not driven by choice in general; rather, it is the specific trade-off between benefiting the self and others that inhibits happiness with self-interest. I theorize that the agency inherent in choice reduces the hedonic value of self-interest. Study 3 finds support for this mechanism. Finally, Study 4 shows that people feel better with choosing self-interest when they feel like they have deserved their money.