

# MARKETING COLLOQUIA

SPRING 2019

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**Date:** Thursday, January 24, 2019

**Where:** 741 JMHH

**When:** 12:00 PM to 1:20 PM

## **THE EFFECTS OF CONSIDERING MORTALITY ON CONSUMPTION: EMBRACING THE EXPERIENTIAL AND GIVING IT ALL AWAY**

**ABSTRACT:** This talk will discuss the findings of two different projects that both examine the consumer consequences of reminders of one's own mortality. While past research suggests that mortality salience tends to make consumers more materialistic and selfish, we find that mortality reminders can have two very different consequences—choosing experiential (vs. material) options and donating one's own possessions. The first project examines the effect of mortality salience on consumer preferences for experiential versus material options. Using field, online, and laboratory studies, we demonstrate that people express a greater desire to engage in experiential rather than material consumption when mortality is salient (vs. not salient). We propose that mortality reminders activate a desire for meaning, which, in turn, leads to preference for options that are relatively more experiential as opposed to material in nature. These effects are mediated by an activated desire for meaning. Furthermore, the observed effects are heightened among those high in an individual difference measure of the tendency to seek out meaning (i.e., intrinsic value orientation). Finally, we provide additional evidence for the role of meaning-seeking, by examining the moderating role of meaning-fulfillment. Taken together, the results suggest that individuals will seek out experiences rather than material goods in response to mortality threats in order to acquire a sense of meaning. The second project examines the conditions under which reminders of mortality might lead consumers to give away their own possessions. Across five studies, we propose and find that mortality salience can increase giving when the act of giving is linked to the self (i.e., name attached to donation, inscribing and signing a book, giving self-reflective possessions, and those consumers who are prone to self-extension). In addition, we find that the relationship between mortality salience

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and giving is driven by perceived transcendence; such that giving of a possession that is linked to the self allows consumers to transcend their physical death.