

# Marketing Colloquia

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**Thursday, March 1, 2012**

**3:00 PM – 4:20 PM, JMHH 741**

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

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. We propose that externally imposing self-interest allows individuals to enjoy self-benefiting outcomes that are untainted by self-reproach for failing to help others. Experiment 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). Experiment 2 finds that this effect is not driven by choice in general; rather, it is the specific tradeoff between benefiting the self and others that inhibits happiness with self-interest. We theorize that the agency inherent in choice reduces the hedonic value of self-interest. Experiment 3 finds support for this mechanism.

Link to the paper:

[http://marketing.wharton.upenn.edu/documents/research/BermanSmall\\_SelfInterestWithoutSelfishness.pdf](http://marketing.wharton.upenn.edu/documents/research/BermanSmall_SelfInterestWithoutSelfishness.pdf)