

TCR 2025: Pathways to Well-being: The Power of Policy Advocacy

A working mother struggles to care for her disabled son. She earns too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to afford health insurance. Who will care for him if she gets sick? School breakfast and lunch programs help to fill the gap for families that struggle with hunger but how will they feed everyone during summer without school meal support? A woman who is 18 weeks pregnant rushes to the hospital when she wakes up cramping and bleeding. The ER doctor cannot follow the recommended care for this woman who is suffering a miscarriage. The patient's blood pressure is rising, and the doctor is worried she may die but must wait for the legal department to authorize care.

These are not hypothetical stories. For millions of Americans, they reflect the reality faced when politics take precedence over people's well-being. Ten states have decided to opt out of Medicaid expansion leaving many families in medical limbo (McCarthy 2024). Many states have opted out of a new federal nutrition program intended to provide direct support for summer meals to feed children when school is out (Hiltzik 2024). In states where abortion bans put both women and doctors at risk of prosecution, women's healthcare is suffering, and doctors are being forced to put politics before patient safety (Westwood 2024).

When politicians make policy along a partisan divide, the well-being of their constituents is not their top priority. Who has the power to amplify the voices of the people harmed by these political fights? Nonprofit organizations often provide direct care and support for the people hurt by policies that undermine their well-being by offering free clinics that provide care to the uninsured, feeding families that struggle with hunger, and helping women get the care they need no matter where they live. But these organizations are also in a position of power to advocate for policy change by helping community members and leaders see and understand the direct harm that results from policy decisions. In our current environment, **advocacy for policy change is a moral imperative**. However, nonprofit leaders fear losing their nonprofit tax status if they advocate for policy change (Libby 2024).

One definition of advocacy is to "represent and advance [people's] interests within a particular system" (Libby 2024, p.23). Nonprofits offer essential services through programming and initiatives but "policy advocacy has the potential to bring about long-term positive societal impact" in ways that transform the system (Bublitz et al., 2024). If we only treat the symptoms of a disease, a person will continue to suffer chronic illness. Similarly, if we do not address the root cause issues that trap people in poverty and perpetuate systemic inequality, people will continue to suffer. Policy advocacy has the power to address the root causes of inequity and uplift people's well-being. **In this TRACK 2 TCR session, we explore the vital role of advocacy in creating social change.**

Organization and Plan of Work for TCR 2025:

Prior to TCR 2025 our team will use a relational engagement approach to investigate the role of nonprofits in advocating for policy and social change. [Midwest Academy](#) is an organization that provides training in advocacy, organizing, and movement-building. They offer customized training to help nonprofit organizations embrace their important role to advocate for racial, economic, and social justice. Our team will complete custom training with Midwest Academy to better understand the power of and methods for advocating for social change. Then, we plan to conduct qualitative research with nonprofit organizations and philanthropic leaders to better understand their hesitations and concerns about stepping into the role of advocate. Finally, our team will conduct a robust literature review to explore advocacy in a marketing context. We plan to arrive at the 2025 TCR Conference armed with literature, experiences, and data to collaboratively outline a conceptual framework for advocacy as a path to policy change to advance societal well-being.

Timeline and Activity Plan for TCR 2025:

November 2024	Team Kick-off and planning
January 2025	Advocacy Training with Midwest Academy
January 2025	Interview Planning/IRB
Feb-March 2025	Interviews
April 2025	Literature gathering, preliminary theme identification
May 2025	Conceptualizing, iterative team discussions
June 2025	TCR June 12-15, 2025, on site in Washington DC
July 2025	Writing in teams: literature review, conceptual model
August 2025	Writing in teams: conceptual model, discussion ideas
September 2025	<i>Journal Target, dates TBD</i>
October 2025	
November 2025	

Team: Track chairs **Melissa Bublitz & Laura Peracchio** will lead a team of researchers to collaboratively develop a conceptual framework for understanding the diverse pathways for advocacy to support well-being and create social change. Together the team will write a conceptual framework paper to be submitted to an academic journal.

Lauren Block (Professor)	Camryn Cobb (PhD Student)	Jennifer Escalas (Professor)
Elizabeth Miller (Professor)	Gia Nardini (Assistant)	Beth Vallen (Professor)
Dee Warmath (Associate)	Hillary Wiener (Assistant)	<i>Non-profit/Advocacy Partner</i>

References:

Bublitz, M.G., Peracchio, L.A., Davis, B., Du, K., Escalas, J. E., Gloukhovtsev, A., Hansen, J., Lindsey-Warren, T., Miller, E.G., Wiener, H. (2024) “We’ll Stand by You: Supporting Grassroots Nonprofits,” (working paper)

Hiltzik, M. (2024, Jan 2), [The GOP war on children's health - Los Angeles Times \(Business\)](#)

Libby, P. (2024) “Advocacy as a Moral Imperative” in Technology, Activism, and Social Justice, J. G. McNutt (ed), pp 22-35.

McCarthy, R. (2024, Mar 22), [Florida advocates want the state to be the next to expand Medicaid: NPR](#)

Westwood, R. (2024, Mar 19), [Pregnancy care has changed in alarming ways since Louisiana banned abortion: Shots - Health News : NPR](#)

TCR 2025 Track 2: Pathways to Well-being: The Power of Policy Advocacy Team Bios

Melissa G. Bublitz, Ph.D. (track co-chair), is the Liz Kramer Professor of Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research focuses on understanding and influencing consumer behavior to promote well-being and positive societal impact by focusing on topics such as Transformative Consumer Research, food and nutrition access programs, social entrepreneurship, and public policy to increase consumer well-being. Her work has been published in journals, such as the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, and the *Journal of the Association of Consumer Research*. Dr Bublitz's research is characterized by a strong commitment to creating real-world impact and is often conducted in partnership with social impact organizations.

Laura A. Peracchio, Ph.D. (track co-chair) is Emeritus Professor of Marketing at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the American Marketing Association's 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award honoree for her significant contribution to research that has a positive impact on society and social good. Laura has an extensive research portfolio, a depth of experience serving as an editor of academic journals, and a history of publishing high impact work in top academic journals. Her current research focuses on food well-being, storytelling, social change and societal impact initiatives. Laura has served in several editorial positions including Editor of the *Journal of Consumer Research* and Associate Editor at both the *Journal of Consumer Research* and the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. Laura has served as the President of the Society for Consumer Psychology.

Lauren Block, Ph.D. is the Lippert Professor of Marketing at the Zicklin School of Business, Baruch College. Her current research primarily focuses on areas of consumer and societal well-being, including food-related decision making, food waste, climate issues and inclusive design. She also studies consumer judgments of product efficacy, magical thinking and extraordinary beliefs, and specific topics in sensory marketing. She has served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, and Associate Editor for the *Journal of Consumer Research*, the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* and the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*. She has served on the editorial boards of *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, and the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*. Dr. Block was the recipient of the Richard W. Pollay Prize for Intellectual Excellence of Research on Marketing in the Public Interest.

Camryn Cobb is a PhD Candidate in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Georgia. Her research examines community well-being, with a focus on how people in communities learn to coexist in ways that promote the well-being of all. More specifically, she studies marginalized populations and social justice. Her work has been presented at conferences such as the AMA Marketing and Public Policy and the Society of Personality and Social Psychology. She currently serves on the American Council of Consumer Interests Marketing Committee.

Jennifer Edson Escalas, Ph.D. is Dean Samuel B. and Evelyn R. Richmond Chaired Professor of Marketing and Associate Dean of Academic Programs at the Owen Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt University. Her research 1) applies the concept of narrative processing to consumer behavior, 2) studies how consumers form self-brand connections, and 3) seeks to positively impact consumer and societal well-being. Jennifer has published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Journal of Advertising*, and *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, among others. She currently serves on the Transformative Consumer Research Advisory Committee.

Lama Lteif is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at the Anderson School of Management, University of New Mexico. Her research broadly addresses consumer well-being, with a focus on food and health well-being, social entrepreneurship, climate change and inclusive design. Her work has been published in top marketing journals, including the *Journal of Marketing Research* and the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. She also serves on the editorial review boards of the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* and the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*.

Elizabeth G. Miller, Ph.D. is Department Chair and Professor of Marketing at the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her research focuses on consumer behavior, particularly in the areas of health, consumer well-being, affect and information-processing, and promoting positive societal impact. Her research has been published in leading marketing journals including the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, and *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, among others.

Gia Nardini, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at Florida Atlantic University. Gia's research focuses on consumer behavior in the domains of wellbeing-focused consumption, decision making, and consumer advocacy. She explores the theoretical underpinnings of how and why consumers engage in experiences and make decisions related to wellbeing. Her work has been presented at leading conferences and published in academic journals, such as the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* and the *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, among others. She has participated in past TCR conferences and continues to work on transformative consumer research projects.

Dee Warmath, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Consumer Economics, Director of The Human Condition Lab, and Leadership Fellow for Innovation & Entrepreneurship in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Georgia where she teaches courses in consumer well-being, social entrepreneurship, and consumer analytics. Her research examines the individual's capacity to make decisions and the impact of involving others in those decisions on well-being in the areas of finance and health. She has served as a primary investigator or co-investigator for projects funded by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Australian Securities and Investment Commission, NCAA, Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services, and Investor Protection Trust. She is currently a member of the core team for an NSF Innovation Engine grant to promote health equity through diagnostic health technology.

Hillary J.D. Wiener, is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at University at Albany. Her research focuses on the role of conversation as it relates to advertising, sales, and word of mouth. She studies how marketers can improve conversations, both those in which the brand or a salesperson is a participant and those in which a product is the topic of conversation. Recent work looks at product-facilitated conversations, word of mouth about surprise products, gift giving as an alternative to conversation, and small talk between salespeople and customers. Her work has been published in journals, such as the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, and *Journal of Business Research*, among others.