SOSA 2014-2016 Cover Sheet

Name of Applicant: Karen L. Becker-Olsen
Email address: kbecker@tcnj.edu
Department: Marketing and Management
School: Business
Rank: Associate Professor
Title of proposed SOSA program/project(s): Its Not Easy Being Green (or Healthy) and Why Bootstraps May not Fix our Policy Dilemmas
Year(s) of last two SOSA awards: 9/10 and 11/13

Whether approval by IRB (human subjects) or IACUC (certain animal studies) has been received or is still needed – IRB needed

Pretenure (please check): Yes: ___ No: ___ X ___

Re-engaging in Scholarly Activity: Yes: ___ No: ___ X ___

I have been informed of the applicant's intention to apply to have SOSA alternate assignment included within his/her workload. I have discussed with the applicant the use of facilities, support staff, and any other College resources essential to the execution of his/her proposed activities.

Chairperson or Dean Initials ___
Assessment of Proposal

PROJECT 1: Its Not Easy Being Green (or Healthy)

Description – A recent National Geographic study found the percent of U.S. consumers committed to being green has declined in the past two years. They note that U.S. consumers express a high interest in being green, but fail to make lifestyle changes that have real impact. Yet policy makers continue to roll out small step environmental programs. Small step environmental programs (programs in which consumers are encouraged to engage in small behaviors to eventually develop broader environmentally friendly habits) are thought to provide the basis for longer-term “green” habits that lead to significant “savings” in resources when multiplied across large populations. My previous work revealed that as long as consumers were reminded of the small steps, they continued to engage in the behaviors. Unfortunately, once the reminders stopped, so did most of the green behaviors, indicating that the habits were not fully realized and did not lead to longer-term commitments. Interestingly, the individuals continued to see themselves as “green” even though they were not engaging in the green behaviors and many of the individuals even began to engage in behaviors that were counter to environmental sustainability. Underlying this counter-behavior is the idea of licensing, which suggests that if one expends effort being green, they have built up a reserve of green behavior they can later draw on: by air drying your hair or turning off the lights, you are entitled to a long shower. Thus, this work is an extension of a previous SOSA, this time with goal of understanding why licensing presents itself in certain domains and how to reduce the occurrence of licensing.

Small step programs have been employed successfully with Diabetes and Heart Disease patients, but not with general weight loss. Of particular interest and relevance to this work is the idea that without an acute motivational Catalyst (e.g. heart attack or power outage) or an immediate significant impact (e.g., electric bill is significantly lower or weight is suddenly less), small step programs will fail and the net result may even be negative: the person who diets with small steps, actually gains weight in the end, or the person who turns off the lights in the house, wastes resources driving a big car. Thus, this work seeks to answer such questions as: does internal commitment to a goal reduce licensing, does educational information reduce licensing, does personal praise for behavior reduce licensing through a guilt mechanism, does making the licensing itself salient reduce licensed behaviors, and how do individuals estimate their “banked” goodness (energy saving or calories)?

Significance – The literature on environmental, and health behaviors is full of case studies and research which looks at various program appeals and provides plenty of descriptive studies outlining individual characteristics that are more to predispose a person to green behaviors or eating healthy. However moving larger portions of the population to sustained green behaviors or healthy eating without licensed counter-behaviors is our goal. Thus, this work looks at the cognitive processes that help to explain why some individuals might develop licensing behaviors, and how those behaviors might be curbed. The health literature offers some insight, such as rationalization and guilt, but is inconsistent in its conclusions and applications. In this research the focus will be on articulating some of the boundary conditions that may constrain true habit formation and lead to licensed counter-behaviors as well as potential solutions alleviating the counter-behaviors allowing for more effective policy campaigns and health communication.

Objectives, Goals and Method – In this work the goals are two fold: to examine the cognitive processes that lead to the licensing effect, and to evaluate how to better establish a habit without residual licensing effects. The first study will provide a replication for the licensing effect in
both the environmental and healthy eating domains as well as insight into the cognitive processes that allow licensing. This study will be an experimental study in which six groups of thirty subjects each will engage in either a single daily environmental or healthy eating behavior for the full 12 weeks, choose one behavior daily from a small set of environmental or healthy eating behaviors for the 12 weeks, or start with a single behavior and then 6 weeks later add another single behavior. Response measures will be related to behavior commitment, domain relevance and interest, motivation, self-perception, and automaticity. Measures will be recorded prior to the study, and then at the 4, 8 and 12 week marks. Single behaviors are more likely to lead to quick habit formation with minimal changes in self-perception, while a small sets of behaviors take longer to habituate, but is better at altering self-perception. In that my previous work suggests as green self-perception increased, so did licensing, this study will allow me to determine the role of behavior commitment as a moderator in that relationship as well as look at the impact of developing a single behavior at a time. These results will inform the second study design.

A second 2 (environment/healthy eating) by 2 (personal praise/educational message/information about licensing) by 2 (journal/no journal) experimental study will be used to examine the impact of various communications on self-perceptions, interest in the topic, perceived motivation to engage in a behavior, willingness to engage in counter-behaviors (measure of licensing), ability to rationalize counter-behaviors, guilt, and actual behavior change. Over a 12-week time period, subjects will be exposed to weekly communications that will either provide personal praise (congratulations for eating healthy, you are doing a great job protecting the environment,...), educational message about the topic, or articles of people who have engaged in licensed behavior. Each week, subjects will check off behaviors they engaged in, while half of the subjects will also be asked to journal about their related behaviors and the communications weekly. Journaling is said to embed habits at a quicker rate and create more sustained habitual behavior. Response variables similar to study one will be measured. Actual behavior (single or set design) will be determined after analysis of the first study.

Although both studies will use a self-report format for behaviors, my previous work has used similar methods and the results have been reliable with strong internal validity. Subjects will be recruited using the subject pools at New York University and Villanova University; IRB approval will be obtained at all schools.

Depending on the results of the first two studies, a follow-up third study will be conducted. This follow-up might look at message framing, the role of guilt, or how “reflection” can be used in public policy campaigns. See Table 1 for Time line.

Dissemination – Individual studies will be presented at annual conferences, while the complete work will be submitted to journals. The results from the first study will likely be presented at the national Society for Consumer Psychologists or the Marketing and Public Policy conference. This work is ultimately likely to lead to two papers: one with a process perceptive and one that is more managerial. The first will be targeted for Psychology and Marketing, and the second will be targeted to Journal of Marketing and Public Policy (both have acceptance rates of 18-25%)

PROJECT 2: Why Bootstraps May not fix our Policy Dilemmas
Description – Approximately 1 in 2 students graduate from Trenton High School, significantly below the national average of 78%. One key factor could be the lack of cognitive capital exhibited by young people in low-socioeconomic environments. This project, motivated by work with Bonner Center, will examine the impact and use of Cognitive Capital (CC) for educational reform. Cognitive Capital is roughly defined as a collection of psychological tools that serve as resources in times of challenge or stress and become important tools for students and young
adults who are making life choices, such as staying in school, having unprotected sex, and even joining a gang. At this juncture, I will prepare a conceptual piece and several OpEd pieces that outline the CC debate and posit the idea that public policies which are made for individuals of limited CC by individuals with high CC are not only irrelevant, but a waste of financial resources, whether those policies are for education, food stamps, or welfare. The basic premise is that individuals low in CC tend to be clustered in low socio-economic neighborhoods, have limited goal setting abilities, low self-esteem, and a belief that they are relatively unable to affect the course of their life, and a negative short-term outlook which all impede their ability to simply “work-hard and pull themselves up by their boot straps.” As Dr. Martin Luther King said, “It’s all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, but it is cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps.”

**Significance** – This work has a broad impact on many policy areas and allows me to tie my research interests with Bonner Center initiatives at Youth Build. Additionally, this area of social psychology as applied to public policy is relatively new allowing me to be help shape the discussions on the impact of CC and how we might build CC in low CC individuals.

**Objectives, Goals and Methods** – As noted, this work is at the conceptual stage, but will be ready for field-work in another year. The primary goal is to flush out the ideas conceptually, then move to field-work to describe the CC abilities of various populations, and finally work to develop strategies to build CC. Youth Build, a small alternative high school and Bonner Partner, is working to build these types of skills with their students and tracking the student’s success both with GED completion and following them post graduation. They have agreed to support this work and provide data. IRB approval will need to be obtained in the next year. See Table I for timeline.

**Dissemination** – This piece will be presented at the national Society for Consumer Psychology in February 2015 as part of a panel discussion on social psychology and public policy and the OpEd pieces will be sent to various news outlets, including CNN and Washington Post. Based on the feedback from the panel, I will move to field-work on the topic which will eventually be prepared *Journal of Public Affairs*.

**TABLE 1: Timeline for Sosa 2014-2016**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Spring 2015</th>
<th>Summer 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Spring 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project 1</td>
<td>Run study 1</td>
<td>Analyze study 1</td>
<td>Prepare follow up study</td>
<td>Run studies 2 and possibly 3</td>
<td>Analyze and Prepare papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 2</td>
<td>Write Conceptual Piece</td>
<td>Complete Conceptual Piece and Prepare OpEd work</td>
<td>Prepare for field work</td>
<td>Work with Youth Build collecting field data</td>
<td>Continue collecting data and prepare academic paper</td>
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**Qualifications of Applicant**

For the first project, I will again work with my coauthors from NYU and Villanova. As this builds on previous work, we are familiar with the literature and are published in the area. My past SOSA led to three conference presentations and one journal article (See CV for details). My coauthor’s provide much needed access to subjects. As for the second project, I have worked with the Bonner Center and Youth Build for one year on other projects, and see this as a natural extension of our relationship in which Youth Build benefits from research performed with their students. Additionally, I will be attending the OpEd Project workshop in December 2013 to develop my OpEd writing skills and build a network of publication outlets and mentors.

Becker-Olsen
Karen Becker-Olsen

Annotated CV

Educational Background and Academic Employment History

Educational Background

PhD in Economics and Business: Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA 12/98
MS in Marketing: Penn State University, University Park, PA 12/89
BS in Business: Cedar Crest College, Allentown, PA 5/87

Academic Employment History

The College of New Jersey, Ewing NJ
Assistant Professor of Marketing 8/06 - present

Lehigh University, Rauch College of Business, Bethlehem PA
Assistant Professor of Marketing, 3 year Visiting Appointment 9/03 – 5/06

New York University, Stern School of Business, New York, NY
Assistant Professor of Marketing, 3 year Visiting Appointment 7/00 – 5/03

Ramapo College of New Jersey, Mahwah, NJ
Assistant Professor of Marketing 8/99 – 5/00

Cedar Crest College, Allentown PA
Chair, Department of Business and Assistant Professor 8/94 – 12/97

SOSA Awards Received

1) Annual Award in 07/08 for work looking at the strategic brand building effects of Corporate Social Responsibility. This award led to two invited published pieces, one peer-reviewed book chapter, and three workshop presentations. See follow-up report for more details.

"Developing a CSR Program the Right Way," Harvard Business Review Latin America, lead article in April 2008; coauthored with Francisco Guzman and Ronald Hill.


Strategic CSR Workshop for Humana Corporation and Foundation, led a one day workshop on developing and communicating strategic CSR initiatives and continue to consult with management team.

Developed and led a CEO presentation on Globalizing Strategic CSR for Global Management Initiatives (a national CEO think tank) (2009).

2. Annual Award in 09/10 for work looking at the interaction of models, self-perceptions of body image and brand choice. This work demonstrates that although thin models have been labeled as a cause for maladaptive body-related behaviors, they are not necessarily to blame. Rather any idealized image is likely to cause to body dissatisfaction and temporarily lower self-esteem. Interestingly, these are the models that consumers want to see and express greater interest in products using these idealized images. This work resulted in two conference presentations, highlights in popular press magazines such as MacLeans and Vogue, an interview with CNN, and a final piece waiting publication in Journal of International Advertising, a B+ level publication with acceptance rates of 16% and SSCI of 1.75.

*Becker-Olsen, Karen and Jeremy Kees, “Go Ahead and Make me Feel Bad,” Marketing and Public Policy Conference (5/09).*


3. Semi-annual award 11/13 for work addressing the efficacy of small steps environmental programs which encourage consumers to partake in daily small activities that reduce their energy consumption. This work has shown that these programs are ineffective in building more sustainable large-scale behaviors that would have greater impacts. In fact they create a licensing effect which can lead to energy waste in other domains offsetting gains from the initial behavior. To date, this work has led to 3 conference presentations/proceedings (one with 2 students), an international symposium presentation, and a journal article being prepared. All work has been peer-reviewed.


*This follow up study was conducted with 2 TCNJ students.


Annotated list of publication and other scholarly works
1) Journal Publications

(refereed, double-blind review; premier journal in marketing communications; acceptance rate of 16%, SSCI impact score of 1.75) As primary author, I was responsible for approximately 70% of the work including developing the theoretical foundation, designing the studies and assisting with the final submission of the piece and reviewer adjustments. My coauthor ran the early studies using his behavioral lab and subjects as well as assisted with preparation of the piece. This is a four-study work.


(refereed, double-blind review; premier journal in marketing communications; acceptance rate of 12%, SSCI impact score not available) As primary author, I was responsible for approximately 40% of the work including developing the theoretical foundation, designing the initial studies and assisting with the final submission of the piece and reviewer adjustments. My coauthors analyzed data, ran two additional studies in international markets, and assisted with manuscript preparation. This is a four-study work using large data sets.


(refereed, double-blind review; premier journal in marketing communications; acceptance rate of 11-20%, SSCI impact score of 1.04) As primary author, I was responsible for approximately 65% of the work including developing the theoretical foundation, designing the studies and assisting with the final submission of the piece and reviewer adjustments.


2) National and International Refereed Conference Proceedings and Presentations (unless otherwise noted, all work done with coauthors is equally shared)


Becker-Olsen, Karen, “CSR and Athletes: Do Fans or Franchises Care?” American Marketing Association (9/12).


Becker-Olsen, Karen and Carolyn Simmons, “Not All Sponsors are Created Equal: Why Non-Profit Organizations Need to Be Careful When Choosing Partners.” Association for Consumer Research (10/04).


Becker-Olsen, Karen and Carolyn Simmons, “When Do Sponsorships Enhance or Dilute Equity? How Fit Affects Clarity and Builds Brand Equity.” Association for Consumer Research 2001 (10/01)


3) Invited and Edited Publications and Contributions


4) Work in Progress and Under Review
“The Emergence of the Global Consumer: A Cross Cultural Look at Corporate Social Responsibility Marketing Communications,” Revise and resubmit: Journal of International Marketing (top tier international publication with acceptance rates of 20%).

Academic Service to Field

Reviewer

American Marketing Association Conference, Marketing and Public Policy Conference Marketing Science Conference

Board Positions
Marketing and Public Policy Board for American Marketing Association
Councilor for Council for Undergraduate Research, Social Sciences division

Research Mentor and Advisor
NCUR – mentor for numerous undergraduate research projects, including five that were accepted for presentation at the 2009 National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), three at the 2010 NCUR, and two at 2012 NCUR.


Faculty Master’s thesis advisor for thesis on mobile marketing typology and adoption models for smartphone marketing technology; graduate student from University of Pforzheim in Germany (2010/2011).

Faculty advisor for Master’s thesis on organic food preferences in emerging markets for a student from Tbilisi State University (2009).

Advisor and reviewer for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Center in Toronto (2009- present); review several proposals per year and then serve as a special advisor for funded work; specializing in review and advising on proposals related to public policy initiatives on violence, teens and media, and food labeling as well as Corporate Social Responsibility.
Annual Report Format
Alternate Assignment and Sabbatical Leave
Academic Year 2009/2010

Name: Karen Becker-Olsen
Department: Marketing
Title of Scholarship Program: The Brand Body-Esteem Paradox
Year of support: 2009/2010
Report of: \( \Box \) Alternate Assignment
\( \Box \) Sabbatical Leave

Time and/or Funds received: \( \Box \) 4 semester hours \( \Box \) summer stipend

A. Describe the efforts made and the outcomes, to date, of your scholarly activity (one to two pages).

Since the time of this award, my coauthor and I have been able to conduct three studies that examine the brand-body paradox that exists with female consumers. In essence, the paradox suggests that viewing thin models makes young consumers feel bad about their own body yet they feel better about the brand than when an average size model is featured. The average size model does not cause an attenuation effect with young consumers personal beliefs about their bodies, but it does negatively influence both product interest and brand credibility.

In the first study we are able demonstrate that this paradox holds across both consumers that are high self-monitors and consumers that are low-self-monitors. It seems that body comparison is an automatic response for young women. Interestingly, the reduction in personal body image is short lived. Thus, the data suggest that for all young women, the automatic habitual response to viewing a model is a social comparison in which the subject falls short of the model in terms of body size and attractiveness. This is not a surprising finding in that it is consistent with the literature and popular press. What is interesting is that the attenuation effect is short-term and that the comparison is automatic without thought. Thus, the impact on long-term body esteem may be minimal at best. Further, the findings point to a boomerang effect if average models are used with young women.

In the second study we test this same proposition across several products with the idea that young women are socialized to associate certain luxury and fashion goods with thin models, while utilitarian products are more often advertised with the product itself and a more average model. This study also has a choice component in which subjects were asked to make a product choice, not just express interest and brand preference. The results of this study show that the paradox holds even with utilitarian products. Counter to our thoughts that since the attenuation effect was short-term, the brand preference would be short-term, we find that preference was skewed toward the brand with the

Becker-Olsen
thinner model. This suggests that even though personal body esteem may recover and the attenuation may simply be a short-term memory effect, brand preference is being encoded into long-term memory.

Lastly, the third study replicated the second study, but used a subject pool of middle-aged women rather than young women. The finding interestingly show a similar pattern, but this time, the preference for the model, the attenuation effect, and brand preference is related to the more average size model rather than the thin model. This finding shows that relevant ideals have the same impact across generations, but the definition of a relevant ideal image changes, suggesting that brand managers need to be aware of the relevant ideal for their particular brand.

Theses studies have been presented at annual national conferences and have been combined to form an academic paper. See details below.

B. List any new evidence of scholarly activity since your most recent application for annual or sustained support.

This work resulted in two national conference presentations, highlights in popular press magazines such as Macleans and Vogue, an interview with CNN, and a final piece waiting publication in Journal of International Advertising, a B+ level publication with acceptance rates of 16% and SSCI of 1.75. All listed presentations have been peer-reviewed.


Annual Report Format
Alternate Assignment and Sabbatical Leave
Academic Year 2011/2013

Name: Karen Becker-Olsen
Department: Marketing
Title of Scholarship Program: Developing a Greener You: An Exploration of Environmental Licensing and Value Orientations
Year of support:
Report of:  
X Alternate Assignment

Sabbatical Leave

Time and/or Funds received:  
4 semester hours 

summer stipend

A. Describe the efforts made and the outcomes, to date, of your scholarly activity (one to two pages).

Over the past two years, my coauthors and I have conducted a series of studies in an attempt to determine the efficacy of small step environmental programs. To this end, we have conducted three studies that show small step programs are effective as long there are continued reminders and inducements for the participants. However, once the inducements for behavior are stopped, the behaviors tend to be stopped as well. This is consistent with the work on operant conditioning suggesting that external inducements for the development of a habituated behavior are relatively ineffective.

In our first study subjects were asked to engage in a series of small resource saving activities on a daily basis – turning out the lights, turning off the water, air drying hair, or unplugging the toaster. After 30 days, the subjects were given two weeks to without any reminders then they were then asked to participate in a larger more effortful behavior such as taking a reusable bag to the grocery store, walking on one trip rather than driving, or using reusable water bottle. At this time subjects were also asked about their willingness to continue the small behaviors and integrate some of the large behaviors into their daily life. Most subjects reported that they might continue the small behaviors, but would not likely perform the larger behaviors. Additional probing revealed that many of the subjects actually engaged in behaviors that were counter to environmental sustainability, or a licensed behavior.

The second and third studies were conducted on larger samples and this time used two groups of subjects – one that performed small environmental tasks and one that performed small “kindness” tasks. Again after 30 days, the subjects were asked to engage in a more effortful task related to their domain. Interestingly the subjects in the kindness group were more willing to perform the more effortful task than those in the environmental group. There was a change in self-perception that suggested both groups saw themselves as either greener or more kind. The licensing effect was only observed in
the environmental group. This led to a replication study (study3) which used a completely randomized design to ensure that the more effortful behaviors were not skewing the results. Subjects in the kindness group were more willing to perform both the more effortful behaviors, while subjects in the environmental group were only willing to perform the more effortful behavior that was kindness related. Again, a change in self-perception is consistent with the behavior domain and licensing is observed in the environmental group.

The results from all of these studies suggest that small step behaviors in the environmental domain are not effective and are leading to licensing effects. One possible explanation is that in the kindness domain, subjects are “thanked” or “praised” for each small step. This may have a greater impact in terms of building true commitment to activity, while there is no reward in the environmental group.

The results suggest an interesting outcome of small steps, and warrant additional research to further understand why licensing occurs and how it might be diminished as well as how a more defined habit can be engrained with consumers.

B. List any new evidence of scholarly activity since your most recent application for annual or sustained support.

To date, this work has led to 3 conference presentations/proceedings (one with 2 students), an international symposium presentation, and a journal article being prepared. All work has been peer-reviewed.


In addition to the aforementioned work which is directly related to the SOSA award, I have also been working on two invited book chapters which are to be included in books that will be released in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

