

# CAMmer in the Spotlight

## Erica Scharrer, PhD

Professor and Chair, Department of Communication, University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Contact: [scharrer@comm.umass.edu](mailto:scharrer@comm.umass.edu) / [personal website](#)

### Getting to know... Erica Scharrer, CAM chair



**What are you currently working on?** I'm about to field a study with a wonderful graduate student co-author using a nationally representative survey

population to investigate associations among TV viewing (overall and particular genres), video game playing (particular genres), and perceived norms about masculinities. I'm also preparing--with another couple of outstanding graduate students in my department--to go into the local public school classrooms with our annual media literacy program for the 15th year in a row! This year, we're planning a medium by medium media literacy program, in which we'll have a lesson plan for each major medium (TV, video games, movies, and the Internet) highlighting such issues as commercialism, stereotypes, and aggression within and across

media forms. We're planning to ask our 6th grade participants to create a video public service announcement or an Adbusters type commercial to be shared with 4th graders as a way to culminate the experience.

**What has been your most memorable project so far, and why?** Definitely it would be offering a media literacy program in local 6th grade classrooms for so many years. It's great to spend time with early adolescents and learn from them about the many ways they make sense of and negotiate media in their lives, and to carve some time for my students (grad and undergrad) to share with them what they have learned about media studies.

I can also say that serving as an officer in CAM has been very high on my "most memorable" list! Having the opportunity to hear outstanding research, learn wonderful teaching tips, and make friendships and gain new colleagues from



around the globe has been very rewarding.

**Which achievement are you most proud of, and why?** I'm really proud of the chance I get as an increasingly senior scholar to mentor junior people in the field and in my home department. From writing tenure cases as Chair to networking at ICA, it makes me proud to have a hand in supporting emerging teachers and scholars.

**What would be your work motto?** If it gets rejected three times, it's probably time to give up on it!

**Which of your publications is your favorite, and why?** It's not a CAM-specific publication, but I'm really proud of my 2002 *Communication Research* article on the third person effect in which I pose the question of whether out-group stereotyping might contribute to the gap in people's perceptions of their own susceptibility to media influence compared to that of others. I'm also a pretty big fan of *Media and the American Child*, the book I co-authored with one of my mentors, George Comstock, and it was a huge labor of love to edit the recent *Media Effects/Media Psychology* volume (all 800+ pages of it) of the Wiley-Blackwell International Encyclopedia of Media Studies.

**If you had unlimited resources, what kind of project would you want to do and why?** I'd love to do a mixed methods study of the impact of media literacy education on a whole host of outcomes. I'd love to be able to have data to show how to tailor media literacy education to the characteristics (age, race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) of the young people with whom you are interacting.

**If you had to give one piece of advice to young CAM scholars, what would it be?** Our field is full of hugely socially significant and critically important questions to ask. Follow your passions in pursuing the questions that compel you the most and that have the biggest impact on and respect for the health and well being of children and adolescents.

**Who would you like to put in the spotlight next, and why?** I would like to nominate Dan Anderson, who is semi-retired and who has so many pearls of wisdom to share before he hangs up his laptop, his eye-tracking device, and the other tools of his trade!

