

CAMmer in the Spotlight

Amy Jordan, PhD

Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies,
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
Contact: amy.jordan@asc.upenn.edu, www.asc.upenn.edu

Getting to know... Amy Jordan

What are you currently working on? One project I have been working on for the last year and a half is a skin cancer prevention project with fellow CAMmers Amy Bleakley and Morgan Ellithorpe (as well as health behavior change expert and epidemiologist Karen Glanz). The project, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, uses the Integrative Model (formerly known as the Theory of Reasoned Action/Planned Behavior) to understand beliefs about tanning in order to develop and test messages that would reduce UV exposure. One arm of the project is focused on young women (ages 18 to 25) who go indoor tanning. Research shows that indoor tanning drops off sharply by the mid-20s, and our research with these young women suggests that there may be something developmental going on as they become less peer oriented and more future oriented. It's a germ of an idea at this point, but something we will be pursuing in the data as we develop messaging around this behavior.



What has been your most memorable project so far, and why? My most memorable project was my first truly independent research project – my dissertation. It was an ethnographic study that I carried out when I was 26-27 years old going into the homes of families with school age children. I observed 21 families for 3 days each and took detailed notes on parents' and children's behavior around media. When I began the project, I was childless. When I ended it, I had a new baby. I look back at my field notes – which I was supposedly dispassionately writing – and I see the kind of “judgement” that, for me, went along with not really living the parenting reality from the inside. Also, becoming a parent made me realize how brave and open these families were to let me into their homes to observe them. I have since looked at all research participants with gratitude. They let us into their lives and help us see their worlds through their eyes -- and that is a very generous thing to do.

Which achievement are you most proud of, and why? It is probably obvious, but I have to say being president of the International Communication Association is the achievement I am most proud of. It is the second hardest thing I have done in my professional career (after writing my dissertation) because it demanded administrative skills I didn't know I had and took enormous amounts of time and energy that I had to siphon away from my research and teaching. But it was extremely rewarding. I am proud of the direction the association has taken

toward greater internationalization, increased awareness of the needs of students and early career professionals, and expanded opportunities to participate in the annual meeting through innovative research presentation formats. (And here, hats off to CAM for its research escalator sessions (partnering junior and senior scholars) and high density hybrid formats (which combine short presentations with posters for a dynamic exchange)!

Matt Lapierre, our previous CAMmer, is curious to hear what you think CAM can do to increase its visibility and influence in the discipline. What would be at the top of the list of things we could do? I would like to see CAM find ways to encourage cross-national and cross-disciplinary collaboration. If you look at the roster of CAM members, you see that they come from virtually all corners of the world. It would be wonderful to use the Division space to bring scholars with similar interests and from different geographic regions together to explore opportunities for joint research projects. Similarly, CAM members represent many different ways of thinking about children and childhood – so finding ways to “break down those silos” (as Michael Rich would say) would be a terrific way to shape the discipline.

What would be your work motto? Our school's second dean, George Gerbner, liked to say “Promise nothing, deliver everything.” It's something that stays in my head but not something I can always follow

(especially in the past year, when delivery was often, shall we say, “delayed”).

Which of your publications is your favorite, and why? I’m happy to have written about my experiences as an observer being proscribed different roles depending on the family and the project in a paper published in *Qualitative Research* entitled “Make yourself at home: The social construction of research roles in family studies ([Here](#)). I also feel privileged to have collaborated with Amy Bleakley, Michael Hennessy, Jessica Piotrowski, and Sarah Vaala in studies related to a media intervention we worked on designed to reduce children’s sugar sweetened beverage consumption, including “Do emotional appeals in public service advertisements influence adolescents’ intention to reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages? ([Here](#)) and “Sugar-sweetened beverage-related public service advertisements and their influence on parents” ([Here](#)).

If you had unlimited resources, what kind of project would you want to do and why? I have tended to imagine children almost always in the context of their homes. But this is not every child’s experience of childhood. We can’t ignore the fact that today, around the world, children and families are being forced to flee their homes in unprecedented numbers, creating the highest level of refugee children since World War 2. If I had unlimited resources, I would want to understand the

role that media can play in helping keep refugee families connected to those whom they have left behind and those whom have gone before them. Because for these families, media technologies like smartphones are a lifeline, not a toy.

If you had to give one piece of advice to young CAM scholars, what would it be? Be curious. Many of us are trained to look at a small corner of the field and slice it into thinner and thinner pieces. I think that some of my most interesting and opportunity-developing projects were those that took me into new territory. There was always a way to connect these back to my core interests, but they offered me the chance to meet new people and think new thoughts. And I took them on because I was curious.

Who would you like to put in the spotlight next, and why? I nominate Sister Agnes Lucy Lando from Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya. I would love to know what she would say about opportunities for cross-national collaboration between the Global North and the Global South, whether she feels this is important, and what she sees as the most important areas in which CAM collaborators would focus their efforts.