

# CAMmer in the Spotlight

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### Getting to know... Matt Lapierre

**What are you currently working on?** I feel like I have quite a few irons in the fire right now (maybe too many?). Here is a quick rundown of a few of my current research projects:

Esther Rozendaal and I just conducted a large survey with parents in the Netherlands and the United States where we asked parents to report on their child's cognitive/affective development, consumer behavior, and family consumer socialization practices. What we want to examine is the following: 1) how does the development of children's executive function and emotion regulation affect their consumer behavior (continuing earlier work [here](#)), 2) what role does family socialization play in this same realm, and 3) what differences are there between Dutch and American families regarding consumer development/behavior?

David Bickham and I currently engaged in a project that I think all of the people reading this will find extremely interesting and (I hope) many of you participated in. While I do not want to divulge too much, I will note that David and I are examining

how academic parents use media with their children and how they differ from non-academic parents.

Marina Krcmar and I have been working on a set of studies investigating parent-child communication in consumer settings (e.g., grocery stores). In the first part of our research we conducted observations of children and parents in stores to see how they talked with one another about products. In our most recent study we created a new scale examining family consumer communication and its link to parent typology and parent stress.

Kirstie Farrar and I have recently been taking a different approach towards the study of videogames to see how they affect player attitudes towards various policy issues. For example, we surveyed college students to see how playing videogames featuring firearms predicted attitudes towards gun control and whether students believed that guns were useful in protecting public safety. As predicted, we found a significant link between game play and gun attitudes.

Finally, there are a number of other projects I am working on by myself that focus on things like parent responses to marketing cues found on children's food packaging, executive function and persuasion processing, and smartphone dependency. I have also had a long term pet-project trying to map non-linear dynamics onto traditional perspectives of media effects and it would be great to find some collaborators for this (...ahem...).

**What has been your most memorable project so far, and why?** I have not been able to get this published, but I wrote a paper based on the birth of my first daughter. It was a qualitative examination of how training within medical models (biopsychosocial, biomedical) affected the way various medical professionals interacted with me and my wife. For one, it was fun to work outside of my methodological comfort zone and, more importantly, it was fun to really think that deeply about one of the best moments of my life.



**Moniek Buijzen, our previous CAMmer, is curious to hear about your experiences as a man in this female-dominated domain?** What is interesting is that over the course of my adult life and even before entering this field, I have worked in female-dominated domains, as child-focused workplaces seem to be (side note: I actually ended up marrying my first post-college job boss and we have two wonderful daughters together- so “female-dominated domains” seem to come with the territory for me). As such, my experiences in this field, as it relates to gender, are what I have always experienced as an adult. That said, one thing I definitely appreciate about working in these fields that upend traditional gender norms regarding institutional power (while also acknowledging that our field sits within more male dominated hierarchies- academic departments, university administration, etc.) is that I think it has made me more aware of how gender discrimination and sexism work within these larger institutions. Consequently, I hope it helps me and other men in our field to be strong allies in the fight to make these over-arching institutions much more aggressive in pursuing gender equity.

On a more personal note, it is interesting that Moniek mentioned my sense of humor when asking me this question. I say this because I use humor to alleviate my considerable social anxiety when meeting new people or engaging in traditional social rituals that we often find at conferences (i.e.,

cocktail partyesque small talk) in this 'female-dominated domain' and I have always found it easier to connect to men than women with my humor. I don't mean this in a 'women just aren't funny' sort of way because that is obviously sexist B.S. but that for a variety of social and cultural reasons, using humor to break through my own social anxiety is just more difficult.

**What would be your work motto?** "I'll figure it out". This is actually the motto my wife and I have for the family (we'll figure it out), but it applies equally well here. Its origin dates back to when my wife and I first started dating and we took a cross-country trip in a Volkswagen Jetta from Montana to Georgia (approximately 4,000 miles round-trip). In the course of that trip the car broke down three times, with the first time being in West Memphis, Arkansas. At that first breakdown we were marooned at a very sketchy gas station all night trying to get the car to start and instead of panicking we kept telling each other that we'd figure it out. We now use it to remind ourselves not to get overwhelmed and to think clearly when things get stressful.

**Which of your publications is your favorite, and why?** I think my favorite is the one that I recently had published in the Journal of Communication on children's theory of mind development and persuasion understanding

([here](#)). I had spent years on this project as I first conceived of the study when I was beginning my PhD and seeing it start off from that to a published study was just awesome.

**If you had unlimited resources, what kind of project would you want to do and why?** This is an easy one. With unlimited resources I would like to conduct a longitudinal study of children and parents exploring how parent socialization and cognitive development affects children's ability to understand and respond to persuasive messages. I have had the whole damn thing mapped out in my head for as long as I have been interested in the subject, I just need to find a wealthy benefactor but because I am married with two children it really limits my ability to find a sugar daddy/momma to fund my extravagant ideas.

Why this project? For one, I think this is the crucial step in understanding not only how children's development/socialization affects their response to persuasive messages but I also believe that the findings from this research project would help us understand adult's responses to persuasion. Second, the policy debates surrounding the appropriateness of advertising to children primarily hinges on what children are developmentally capable of when encountering persuasive messages. This project would go a long way towards answering those questions.

**If you had to give one piece of advice to young CAM scholars, what would it be?** Since I am only three years in to having my Ph.D. and would likely be considered a young scholar; I am going to flip this question and offer a polite suggestion to more established CAM scholars. While we have made some tremendous gains over the past few years (particularly within ICA), I think more can be done to help foster the next generation of CAM researchers. To be clear, I could list a few suggestions for how this could be done, but I would like to highlight something that has been a particularly bothersome issue in my short career- the dismissal of studies with small samples because they use small samples.

I am quite sure many of the young CAM scholars reading this right now have a drawer full of journal rejections for studies where the conceptual/theoretical reasoning was sound and there were significant findings in line with this reasoning but were told that the sample was too small. Now, if a study is obviously underpowered, all reviewers/editors should rightly reject such a submission. However, I am suggesting that we get away from knee-jerk “the sample is too small” reactions that seem to pervade many reviews and you are not likely to encounter in other child-focused disciplines (e.g., read articles in Cognitive Development or similar journals, the sample size is almost always half of what passes for a usable sample in CAM based research).

Young scholars can only build their research agendas by getting their work published and it is impossible to build up to large research projects without this. Moreover, working with children is incredibly resource intensive and finding child samples has only gotten more difficult over time. As such, there are few incentives in pursuing these research possibilities for young scholars especially when there is an unspecified/unexplained magic number for sample size. Consequently, we end up pushing out new scholars or putting them in a position where their research agendas move into non-CAM directions. For example, look above at my own current research projects, I am working on a lot of projects but you will notice that none of them include working with children directly. There is a reason for that.

**Who would you like to put in the spotlight next, and why?** I would like to nominate the incomparable Amy Jordan to be in the spotlight next. It think it is fitting to have Amy in the spotlight as she has just finished her ICA presidency and likely has some interesting thoughts on just how CAM can continue to grow. With that in mind, I want to know: what does Amy think can CAM do to increase its visibility and influence in the discipline? What would be at the top of the list of things we could do?