Getting to know… the 2019 CAM Award Winners

The Children, Adolescents, and Media Division is very thrilled to congratulate the 2019 CAM Award Winners. The awards recognize some of the best scholarship, mentorship, and service contributions from its members. Learn more about the 2019 recipients of the top paper awards, the best published article, top dissertation, top reviewer, and senior scholar award.

Senior Scholar – L. Monique Ward

Professor, University of Michigan

Website

Congratulations on winning the Senior Scholar Award! What are you currently working on?

We are working on many exciting projects in our lab right now. One project is the STREAM project, which examines media use among a national sample of Black, Asian, and White adolescents, and its connections to their gender attitudes, ethnic identity, academic beliefs, and self-sexualization. We completed data collection in the fall and have several papers underway. Another project looks at the consequences of self-sexualization for emerging adult women and men. Here, we are looking at consequences for sexual relationships, gender beliefs, academic aspirations, and body image. We are also examining how both mainstream media use and engagement with princess culture and superhero culture contribute to self-sexualization. We were fortunate to be able to collaborate with Dr. Jennifer Stevens Aubrey for this project. Finally, we are conducting several content analyses of portrayals of Black women both in film and on scripted television.

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What has been your most memorable project so far, and why?

My most memorable project so far was probably one of my first projects at Michigan, while I was an assistant professor. We were working with a high school in Aurora, Illinois, to collect survey data from their student body. I was green and made many costly mistakes, including promising lunch to all participants without a full headcount, and really learned how NOT to conduct research. The graduate students working with me were amazing, but we all learned some hard and valuable lessons that have stuck with me to this day. I think I am a better researcher and scholar because of some of the early mis-steps and growing pains, which are part of any journey.

Which achievement are you most proud of, and why?

I always feel especially proud to see my students complete their doctoral studies and earn a PhD. Such a moment of pride. I have also been proud, recently, when I was sought out by policy and government programs to translate our research for a larger public. These efforts have included producing reports for the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls

and for Common Sense Media ("Watching Gender"), and also participating in an Obama White House summit entitled, "Breaking Down Gender Stereotypes in Children's Media and Toys." It was so exciting to see the work from my lab and from my colleagues be applied and extended in these ways.

What would be your work motto?

Just get it done. I am a bit of a worrier and can easily get stalled by thinking of all the things that could go wrong, or all of the flaws with a project or paper. But I have realized that I just need to bite the bullet and get it done.

Which of your publications is your favorite, and why?

This is tricky; it's like being asked to pick your favorite child. The papers are all special to me in their own way. ☺ With recency effects prevailing, I would select two of my recent publications: my 2016 media and sexualization review, and my recent paper on Black women's media use, gender beliefs, and sexual agency.

If you had unlimited resources, what kind of project would you want to do and why?

Aha, I am working on a grant that we hope will

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change the world, so I will keep that answer to myself at the moment.

If you had to give one piece of advice to young CAM scholars, what would it be?

Here are a few things I tell my students. There is no ONE right way to make your mark; you need to find your passion and figure out what approach works best for you. In terms of manuscripts, it takes multiple drafts (6-10) to make a tight, publishable paper. Take the time to hone your argument and your story. Parsimony is a beautiful thing.

Top Paper – Alex Bonus

Assistant Professor, Ohio State University
[Website](#)

Congratulations on winning the Top Paper Award! Your paper investigates the impact of pictorial realism in educational science television on children's learning and transfer of biological facts. What are the key findings?

I created two versions of an educational science television program that taught preschool children about insect communication. The original version of the show was animated and featured anthropomorphic images of insects at various points. I created a modified version of the show that replaced these anthropomorphic images with realistic footage

of those insects from documentaries (but that otherwise maintained the remaining animated sequences). Although children learned equally well from both versions of the show, they were more likely to transfer what they learned to real insects a week later if they saw the modified version with realistic images. I also found that children who saw the anthropomorphic version applied more humanlike characteristics to real insects. These findings suggest that educational science television might be improved by including realistic footage at various points in these programs.

What has been your most memorable experience while conducting the study, and why?

About a year ago, I had the pleasure of presenting these findings to parents and staff at the childcare center where the data were collected. It was great to be able to "give back" to the community who helped make the data collection possible. Hearing their questions, concerns, and insights about the project also spurred new ideas for future projects. It helped me realize how important the outreach component of research is.

Also, winning this award was pretty memorable!

I was shocked when I got the news. It's a really great feeling to have your work recognized by your peers, especially by a group like CAM that has such fabulous, prolific scholars and scholarship.

If you had unlimited resources, what kind of project would you want to do and why?

I would love to do an in-depth longitudinal project that examines the impact of media use on various cognitive, academic, and social outcomes over the preschool and early elementary school years (ages 2-8). I would want fine-grained measures of children's media diets (perhaps down to the minute or even second), obtained by installing software of their TVs, computers, and mobile devices to track their usage and the types of content they view. There would be periodic assessment of their development two times each year, including observational, behavioral, and neuroimaging measures. The research team would include experts from many different subfields of communication, who would each be in charge of analyzing different aspects of the data.

Top Paper – Nilam Ram

Professor, Pennsylvania State University
[Website](#)

Co-authors: Xiao Yang, Mu-Jung Cho, Miriam Brinberg, Fiona Muirhead, Byron Reeves, & Thomas Robinson

Congratulations on winning the Top Paper Award! Your paper investigates adolescents' day-to-day digital experiences, using a new approach – screenomics. What are the key findings?

Many thanks! My co-authors and I are honored to be able to contribute this work to the community and to be selected for this award. We are forwarding *screenomics* as a new approach for studying individuals' media use –

how individuals actually use their phones and screens as they go through everyday life. Most aspects of life can now be digitized and represented on a screen. Once on a screen, the experiences can be paused, restarted, reordered, and atomized in any manner. Individuals build and curate personalized threads of digital experience that cut very quickly between many different applications and platforms. The heterogeneity we see in how individuals use their devices and move through content on those devices is enormous – both across persons and from day-to-day. We know that the technology provides individuals opportunity to play games, do school work, listen to music, have social relationships, watch videos, etc. – all within seconds of each other – but we did not know, until now, how quickly people actually move through and among all these different kinds of media. It is really amazing! Our key finding is that the new screenomics approach – collecting screenshots every five seconds that devices are on and sequencing those screenshots into a screenome – provides a new "microscope" for observing and understanding of individuals' media use. The world looks different through this new lens!

What has been your most memorable experience while conducting the study, and why?

The Screenomics Project is a collaboration among researchers from many different disciplines – media and communication, psychology, sociology, medicine, human development, information science, computer science, and more. The experience and opportunity to bring everyone's expertise together and develop the framework has been very rewarding. We all riff on each other's ideas to push our collective understanding of the possibilities forward. It is a great group. Watching my colleagues' eyes light up when they see something totally new and unexpected about their favorite phenomena or topic through examination of the screenome, and listening to them excitedly explain how these new data are changing their view of the world, is the best. Raw discovery of new knowledge!

If you had unlimited resources, what kind of project would you want to do and why?

Ah, this is interesting. Following the advancements and discoveries that emerged with the Human Genome Project – and with other -omics too, it would great to be able to gather thousands of screenomes from people of all ages and backgrounds – people who use media for different purposes and to achieve different goals at different times. Mapping the screenome, and very importantly discovering how the patterns embedded in the screenome change *within-person* over time will inform us about so many aspects of human behavior. A big repository of months-long or years-long screenomes would be really useful for lots of researchers – a rich repository of data from which to learn about all kinds of processes. Those data would be very exciting indeed!

Top Student Paper – Ines Spielvogel

Pre-Doctoral Researcher, University of Vienna

Website

Co-authors: Jörg Matthes & Brigitte Naderer

Congratulations on winning the Top Student Paper Award! Your paper investigates the influence of disclosure repetition on children's cognitive processing of brand placements. What are the key findings?

Thank you very much for your congratulations! We conducted an eye-tracking study with 105 children and investigated how disclosure repetition affects children's implicit cognitive processing of (i.e., their attention to) upcoming product placements compared to a one-time disclosure and no disclosure. Based on theoretical foundations and existing findings, we had reasons to expect both higher as well as lower levels of attention. Furthermore, we assumed that the extent of attention affects children's explicit cognitive processing of placements (i.e., their level of conceptual persuasion knowledge). Connected to the competing hypotheses, our results indicated that disclosure repetition led to lower levels of attention to the upcoming placements. However, we also found that higher attention to the placement resulted in higher persuasion knowledge. As levels of persuasion knowledge were still very limited, we would argue that implicit ways of forewarning children, for instance through repeated disclosures, are the more effective way. Disclosure repetition may thus be the key to shield children against persuasive influence.

What has been your most memorable experience while conducting the study, and why?

The most memorable experience is very difficult to identify, because when working with children, especially when it comes to interviewing them, you never quite know what to expect. So, the process is full of potential surprises. However, a quite particular experience was to observe

children during the eye-tracking study. More specifically, with our eye-tracking device it is possible to monitor what children are dwelling on in real time, so I could follow the process while it was happening.

If you had unlimited resources, what kind of project would you want to do and why?

If I would have unlimited resources, I would like to build on the results of the present study by investigating disclosure repetition over time. A long-term study with an adequate sample of children would give us insights into whether disclosure repetition can indeed work as an implicit strategy to help children to cope with embedded persuasive messages such as product placements.

Best Published Article – Edmund WJ Lee

Research Fellow, Harvard University & Nanyang Technological University

Website – Article

Co-authors: Shirley S. Ho & May O. Lwin

Congratulations on winning the Best Published Article Award! Your article provides a review of problematic social network sites use. What are the key findings?

It is an honor and privilege for my co-authors and I to receive this award! We are grateful to have the opportunity to share our research with the larger CAM community and hope that our work would be useful to scholars working in the area of problematic media use.

There were two key findings that stood out for me. First, we found that the term *problematic social network sites* (SNSs) use is nebulous and often conflated with *addiction*. We argue that it is important to conceptually make a distinction between *addiction* and *problematic use*. The former implies that uncontrollable SNSs use is an official behavioral disorder. While we believe that we have not reached the stage where we could classify problematic SNSs use – or any problematic media use in general – as a behavioral disorder, we acknowledge that the way adolescents use SNSs may be *problematic* at some level, especially if it interferes with their lives (e.g., lack of sleep, not turning in work on time).

Second, it is important to understand adolescents' problematic SNSs use in the broader context of their lives. That means that we as communication scholars should go beyond examining "individual-level" factors such as psychosocial issues (e.g., depression and loneliness), interpersonal skills deficits, or media affordances, and consider how external factors such as family climate, relationship with parents, and social norms (e.g., everyone is using SNSs) may directly or indirectly explain why adolescents use SNSs excessively.

What has been your most memorable experience while conducting the study, and why?

My most memorable experience while working on this project was going to different high schools in Singapore and speaking with students to understand what they thought were the most problematic aspects of their SNSs use. Some shared with me the emotion volatility they had experienced while using SNSs, especially if their posts received negative feedback, or if they saw their crushes hanging out happily with others (and not them). It was a reminder for me to go beyond the reductionistic view of categorizing adolescents into artificial boxes of "problematic users" or "non-problematic users", and to look at the broader contextual reasons why they spend a lot of time on SNSs. After all, excessive use is only a symptom, and not the root of the problem.

If you had unlimited resources, what kind of project would you want to do and why?

I started my PhD journey examining a very specific area of problematic SNSs use – why adolescents use SNSs excessively. However, in the course of my work, I found that there are other forms of *problematic SNSs use* as well.

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For example, e-cigarettes companies are using SNSs to target and market their products to young people, and young people are active in sharing these e-cigarettes advertisements with their friends on SNSs. Now, e-cigarettes consumption is higher than regular cigarettes use among high school students in the U.S., and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has acknowledged that e-cigarettes use among young people has become a pressing public health problem.

If I had unlimited resources, one of the projects that I would like to pursue is to work with social media companies and CAM scholars to examine why and how e-cigarettes messages diffuse through adolescents' social networks, and to design effective public health messages that could inoculate young people against the proliferation of e-cigarettes misinformation on SNSs.

Top Dissertation – Lisa B. Hurwitz

Lead Researcher at Lexia Learning Systems LLC, A Rosetta Stone Company – Website

Congratulations on winning the Top Dissertation Award! Your dissertation investigates the short- and long-term effects of Ready To Learn media on young children's literacy. What are the key findings?

For my dissertation, I conducted an independent evaluation of Ready To Learn (RTL), an initiative sponsored by the US Congress, Department of Education, and Corporation for Public Broadcasting that provides about USD $25 million annually in funding for mass media intended to promote school readiness. I first conducted a meta-

analysis exploring the short-term effects of RTL-funded media on young children's literacy skills, and I then followed up with 5th/6th grade children who had participated in an evaluation of RTL-funded computer games when they were in preschool and kindergarten.

I found that in the short-term, this body of media effectively promoted early literacy skills, with especially pronounced impacts for preschoolers (as compared to school-age children). Surprisingly, interactive media (e.g., computer games, apps) and television shows were equally effective. Altogether, the average effect of RTL-funded media was roughly on par with comprehensive early childhood education programs (e.g., Head Start).

In the long-term, I was still able to detect significant effects favoring children who played RTL-funded literacy games – but only for youth who scored below and above average on measures of early literacy prior to RTL-funded media exposure. Effects faded out for kids scoring in the average range on their pretests. This same long-term pattern bore out for multiple direct measures of children's literacy, as well as parent report of children's performance in other school subjects like science and social studies. In my dissertation, I interpret these findings in light of numerous CAM theories.

What has been your most memorable experience while conducting your dissertation, and why?

No matter how the results of my studies panned out, I knew during my longitudinal data collection efforts that I was gaining important life skills: I re-taught myself to drive! I hadn't really gotten behind the wheel in about a decade prior to commencing that study. To be able to locate the kids from the original evaluation, I found myself maneuvering through packed, urban streets in the Loop and Southside Chicago, Illinois one day and then racing over highways between cornfields in rural Illinois the next. Luckily, no one was hurt as a result of this non-IRB-sanctioned activity.

On a more serious note, I enjoyed collecting and sharing these data, making it challenging to point to one highlight. Kids being kids throughout data collection kept me on my toes (e.g., when I'd unexpectedly need to pause during administering a standardized test because a child was daydreaming, coloring, or playing with the test stimuli). On the back end of this project, I've had fun opportunities to

share these findings with both academic and professional audiences.

What are you currently working on?

I currently hold an industry research position with Lexia Learning. They're a company under the Rosetta Stone umbrella that makes software designed to teach school-age children English reading and literacy skills. I lead both summative/efficacy evaluation, and formative/user testing studies. I'm wrapping up two large-scale evaluations of one of Lexia's newer products targeting non-proficient and struggling readers in grades 6 and above, Lexia® PowerUp Literacy™. I'm also managing a large-scale evaluation exploring the impact of Lexia® Core5® Reading on elementary school students with special needs. Some of my formative/user research work focuses on very specific questions about new content for both of those programs, but I've also continuously explored factors that might enhance children's motivation to use each. Outside of work, I'm also continuing to publish from research I conducted in graduate school at Northwestern University with Ellen Wartella, Alexis Lauricella, and Kelly Schmitt, and at my postdoc at the Center on Media and Child Health at Boston Children's Hospital with David Bickham and

Michael Rich.

If you had to give one piece of advice to CAM members who are working on their dissertation, what would it be?

Take some - but not too many - risks. I made quite the gamble with my dissertation – that I'd find long-term effects from a pretty low-dosage of media exposure. That gamble largely paid off. But I also had conducted the meta-analysis and included a really robust parent survey as part of my full dissertation package. If my main gamble hadn't have worked out, I still would have had lots of backup data.

To the extent you're able to, I'd also strongly consider using your dissertation as an opportunity to prepare yourself or position yourself competitively for the kind of work you're hoping to do post-PhD. In my program, I was able to select a dissertation topic in my third year of studies. I considered continuing research that I had assisted faculty in conducting. Instead, I decided to essentially start a project more aligned with my own interests. Although I didn't choose the easiest path, I found the work very fulfilling and think it ultimately made me well prepared for my current job.

Top Reviewer – Brigitte Naderer

Post-Doctoral Researcher, University of Vienna

[Website](#)

Congratulations on winning the Top Reviewer Award! If you had to give one piece of advice to CAM members on how to provide top reviews, what would it be?

First, I would like to thank the division for the award! I am very grateful that CAM honors their reviewers in such a way, because we all know that providing helpful reviews is important to attain the review system we have in place at conferences as well as for journals. At the same time, you do not usually get any visible reward for reviewing that is why I really appreciate the way of communication and voiced gratitude that is practiced in CAM.

A helpful review, in my opinion, stays true to objective measures of sound science but stays away as far as possible from one's more personal perceptions of what is interesting and what is not. Furthermore, a good review should give constructive and structured feedback and provide concrete tips on how to improve a paper. However, a good review in my view should also not shy away from voicing concerns that regard limitations of a study the authors cannot address, as including these limitations in the paper is important to sort the study in the existing body of literature. However, I would also regard it as essential to outline the advantages of a manuscript in a review. Because I believe that being aware of what is good about a study, an idea, or one's writing is also vital to ensure a successful scientific and/or publishing process for the future.

What would be your reviewer motto?

I have to cite a recent review I received myself: "The authors did what they could." I interpret this sentence in the most positive way possible: Do not forget that somebody put a lot of effort into what you are reading and reviewing. And yes, the paper might not be perfect, but which

manuscript is? Always keep in mind that there is a person at the other end who tried hard and you should therefore be as respectful and fair as possible in your critique.