



'Media' is the page of the Society's Press Committee. This section of *The Psychologist* aims to promote and discuss psychology in the media. If you would like to comment on a recent newspaper article, TV programme or radio broadcast involving psychology,

if you have tips for others based on recent experiences, or if you know of a forthcoming programme or broadcast, please contact the 'Media' page coordinating editor, Harriet Gross (Chair, Press Committee), on H.Gross@boro.ac.uk.

Entertaining headlines

MARCH is Annual Conference month for the Society, and there was significant coverage of papers and symposia in the national and local media this year. It might be of interest for future presenters to know by what route the stories come to the attention of the press.

The Press Committee, together with the Society's press office, selects possible papers for press release, and then works with the authors to produce a release reflecting the nature of their investigation and the conclusions drawn. A similar process takes place for Section and Division conferences. Authors must be prepared to talk to journalists – we usually have at least five or six national daily newspaper science correspondents in the press room, and there are also radio and sometimes television interviews. Journalists are also free to pick up on other talks by

referring to the book of abstracts and conference programme.

The stories this year that captured press attention across the board had largely been press-released and provided much entertainment for headline writers. These stories concerned work from the



A hand gesture can help understanding

psychology group at Northumbria University on the mental health of football referees – 'Whistle-blowers reveal secret of stress-free ref' (*Northern Echo*) and 'Soccer refs are blind to insults' (*The Sun*) – and on the relationship between prenatal sex hormones and finger length, which in turn relates to facial symmetry – 'Pointing to your appeal' (*Brentwood Weekly News*), 'You sexy fing' (*The Sun*).

Nina McLoughlin and Geoff Beattie's talk on how hand gestures can aid understanding was picked up by the *Daily Mail* and *Evening Standard*, and there was considerable interest in Patrick Leman's investigation of conspiracy theories.

Of course, newspaper coverage of psychology is not exclusively related to the Annual Conference, and one topic which generated recent interest was Ros Crawley's study of memory during pregnancy: 'Memory tests show that "nappy brain" is all in the mind' (*The Daily Telegraph*). It is also encouraging to note that *The Guardian's* new weekly science supplement is promoting psychology research: in 'The essential difference' (*The Guardian*, Life, 17 April), Simon Baron-Cohen described his ideas about male and female brains and the possible link with autism.

Harriet Gross

Film stars caught out behind the bike sheds

AN inevitable part of modern culture is CCTV cameras tracking our every move; it is thought that on average we are each caught on film around 500 times a week. With authorities hailing the success of CCTV in protecting our daily lives, it was only a matter of time before we saw it in our nurseries and schools. But what are the implications for both staff and pupils, with parents being able to log on to webcams to watch their every move? This was discussed on Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*.

Although the cameras may bring benefits in helping to reduce bullying and theft within schools, child psychologist Brain Young (Exeter University) pointed out that children have a right to privacy just as much as adults do. CCTV may even be undermining our children's

understanding that human relationships are based on trust. Let's hope they are not installed behind the bike sheds, intruding on that first furtive snog.

With technology also creeping into cognitive behaviour therapy – it is now available on CD-ROM, DVD or even via the internet – Radio 4's *All in the Mind* explored the applications of what seems to be the world's favourite therapy. The programme gave a good well-rounded introduction to CBT, highlighting its application not only in psychological disorders but also in treating patients suffering from chronic medical problems. Founding father Aaron Beck acknowledged that he has bad days just like the rest of us, but quickly challenges his thoughts to get on with things. Well he would, wouldn't he!

Jeremy Horwood

TIP OF THE MONTH

A journalistic story aims to answer the 'Five Ws' – What, Who, Why, When, Where. Structure your output to journalists in that way and you have a good chance of getting your story covered. *What* is the most important, because it answers the questions – What has been discovered? What's important about it? What's new? What are the implications for readers, viewers, listeners?

■ Next media training days are Monday 2 June and Monday 29 September (see p.285). Contact Dawn Schubert for details on dawsch@bps.org.uk or tel: 0116 252 9581.