



'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.

## Twin studies with a difference

**T**HE quest to find the 'most identical' of one hundred pairs of identical twins occupied much of the evening of 19 March on BBC1. Though seemingly a rather pointless exercise, this latest opportunity to get 15 minutes of fame made unexpectedly compelling viewing.

The programme tested twins on such diverse aspects as facial symmetry, fingerprints and ability to do a karaoke rendition of the theme from *Titanic*. Based on such tests, four pairs of twins were identified as showing remarkable similarities and were submitted to more elaborate 'experiments'. A panel of experts including Robert Plomin (Institute of Psychiatry), Tim Spector (St Thomas' Twin

Research Unit) and Nancy Segal (California State University) provided a commentary on the results.

While the scientific value of some of the tasks was dubious, the results were entertaining and often surprising – even to the panel of experts. The twins showed remarkable similarities in reactions, for example when filmed on rides in Alton

Towers or watching a film (separated by a screen from their twin). Plomin claimed to be amazed by the extent of some of the similarities. The experts also claimed to be surprised that the twins tended to have similar preferences in a test of sexual attraction, though it is not the case that identical twins pick similar spouses.

However, despite strong similarities, impersonating a twin seemed only to be possible where the family and friends were not paying much attention. Hence, two middle-aged twins managed to swap places in the middle of a shopping trip without their mother noticing the difference. A girlfriend was much less easily fooled when her partner's identical twin brother turned up to meet her at the station.

*Fiona Jones*

**W**AR is something of a topical issue just now. And our press office has understandably been taking a flood of media requests for psychological comment. But I was surprised to learn that until the first shots were fired, the psychological angle had not been a priority – a mere trickle of enquiries. I scoured the papers too, and found nothing. There were articles on many other aspects of the crisis – even the usefulness of protest songs got a mention! Now I'm not suggesting we have the answers, but a number of areas come to mind that might have added some psychological insight to the many questions being asked. Negotiation and listening skills, political decision making, and conformity immediately spring to mind. Narcissistic personality would definitely appear to be relevant.

However, I did wonder at a possible connection between certain politicians and a study of football referees by this page's very own Nick Neave (University of Northumbria) reported in *The Daily Telegraph*. Referees were described as 'an unflappable breed, confident in their own ability and judgement whatever abuse is hurled at them by infuriated spectators'. Apparently, they deal with 'constant negative feedback from external sources' by concentrating on 'supporters' ignorance of the laws of the game'. Now who does that remind me of, and why does it worry me?

*Geod Bailes*

## Overexposed research

**A**S a member of the Society's press database, I regularly handle media enquiries. My research interests cover attraction, so my views have been regularly aired in print, and to lesser extent over the airwaves. More recently, due to the print exposure I guess, I have been increasingly approached by TV companies.

After several filming sessions with various production companies I feel in a position to offer some advice to others in the same boat. In short, have fun but **BE CAREFUL!** – there are many potential pitfalls on the path to a telly ego-massage.

First, time seems to mean something completely different. If you are invited for an interview at 2pm to finish at 4pm you can be pretty damn sure that it will overrun considerably. This causes problems if you have booked a specific train home (and as I am as tight as two coats of paint I always do this – even though you get reimbursed).

Second, and most important, if they are wanting to recreate your research they will want to make it 'visual', which always

seems to involve exposing as much bare flesh as possible. My research on female perceptions of male faces in relation to certain male bodily characteristics (chest size, etc.) is a good example. At no point in my study did females look at naked male bodies, but the crew wanted me to have 10 guys on parade in their underpants while a trio of 'game-for-it lasses' (their words not mine) rated them out of 10! Needless to say I made my excuses and left.

*Nick Neave*

### TIP OF THE MONTH

E-mailing material to the media? Unless specifically asked to send it as a file attachment, send as body text in the e-mail. You will save yourself a lot of time re-mailing to disgruntled journalists who can't open the attachment because of their office firewalls.

■ Next media training day – Monday 2 June. Contact Dawn Schubert for details on dawsch@bps.org.uk or tel: 0116 252 9581.