



'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@lboro.ac.uk.

MY background listening is usually Radio 4; it's on in the car so inevitably I only ever hear snatches of programmes. This month, despite the potential, I didn't catch any psychological input to understanding industrial disputes, or on the effect of uncertainty over war with Iraq. Nevertheless, psychology continues to make its presence felt on radio, and a couple of items caught my attention.

Meeting Your Match (Radio 4) investigated whether psychology can help us to choose our life partner. Glenn Wilson's Compatibility Quotient test allowed Helen to see whether the eligible bachelor she would choose from a series of blind dates was 'Mr Right'. She went out with three men selected for her using the CQ, and we were treated to some pretty yukky chat-up lines! But, guess what – she would have liked most to meet again the least compatible CQ-scorer of the three. Disappointingly, there was little discussion of reliability and validity of tests or of the contrariness of human nature; many listeners probably wondered what the point was – but that's entertainment!

A quite different and fascinating topic found psychologists and neuroscientists talking about fundamentals of psychology (brain functions, perception, language) in a two-part series looking at synaesthesia (Radio 4), bits of which were rather difficult to visualise!

Finally, I am glad to report that Freud is still alive and well and appearing on Radio 4, with a new translation and a book (by Adam Phillips) prompting discussion of the father of psychoanalysis on *Start the Week*.

Harriet Gross

I am the new Chair of the Press Committee, which is an offshoot of the Publications and Communications Board. In this role I will continue to work to make psychology and the work of psychologists accessible to the public, in a professional and engaging way. For most readers, contact with the Press Committee may be limited to this page or dealings over the BPS Annual Conference. Changes are afoot for the future. As a committee we are hoping to have more involvement with Section and Division conferences. 'Media watch' becomes 'Media', reflecting an expansion of this page's remit to facilitate members' involvement with the media, rather than just commenting on it after the event. If you have comments or contributions, do get in touch.
– Harriet Gross, Department of Human Science, Loughborough University. E-mail: H.Gross@lboro.ac.uk

TIP OF THE MONTH

If you are taking part in an interview, remember brevity is crucial in the media, and you can make life easier by jotting down a simple central message in advance. Trying to sum up your thoughts on the hoof for a short news story can be a challenge, but a note of your soundbite should help to focus the mind and encourage you to think about the core issue.

Credit where it's due

WHY do we do the things we do?

A simple question, but one that is decidedly tricky to answer; and fortunately so, as trying to solve this conundrum has saved many of us from the harsh realities of earning a proper living in the real world. Several recent programmes have been probing round the edges, but the undoubted winner was



BBC1's *Human Instinct* presented by the ever-cheerful and game-for-anything fertility expert Robert Winston. With editing and presentation slicker than a weasel dipped in baby oil, this four-part series explored the very instincts that make us what we are.

To the sound of John Locke being beaten senseless by a large blank slate and then spinning in his grave afterwards, the series covered fear, jealousy, sex, competitiveness, attachment, and so on, amply illustrated by state-of-the-art graphics, real-life examples, and re-creations of some classic experiments. This was obviously not aimed at the discerning scientific viewer, and I don't want to appear negative but it really bugged me that people were not given credit for their work. Unless you were one of the select named few to appear alongside the great man, then all you merited was 'some

research conducted at some university or other'. No names, no credits – why not? Would the BBC have had to pay them? What is the harm in giving credit where credit is due? Anyway, highlight of the series was the Prof. crouching next to a gorilla, who he informed us had smaller testicles than humans. Next shot he was sidling up to a rather chirpy-looking chimpanzee and telling him that he had huge testicles! Good telly, but to make great telly the Prof. really needed to have whipped his own out for comparison.

Channel 5 had a slightly different viewpoint – not so much 'why are we doing this' but more 'lets avoid getting caught for doing it' in their *Mapping Murder* series. This focused on the technique of geographical profiling as pioneered by forensic psychologist David Canter (University of Liverpool) in order to catch serial offenders. While serving as a great advert for his Dagnet computer programme, it still remained highly absorbing, perhaps especially so for all of the serial killers watching.

Finally, providing no answer whatsoever, *Correspondent* on BBC2 looked at the bizarre behaviour of Japanese teenagers who, in large numbers, are apparently locking themselves in their rooms and refusing to come out for years on end. The programme hinted that this was a big problem, but for many parents it probably came as a blessing.

Nick Neave