



'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](mailto:H.Gross@lboro.ac.uk).

## Rising to the challenge

A RECENT BBC3 series called *Risky Business* couldn't have been better named, as it highlighted some of the ethical considerations one has to face when dealing with the media. The series looked at the physiological and psychological factors involved in risk taking, using three high-profile media cases by way of illustration. I was asked to contribute to the second programme, which dealt with risky sex in the form of Hugh Grant's notorious automotive escapade with a prostitute.

Now I don't know Mr Grant, and all I know of this seedy episode is what I read in the papers at the time. But I do know about the various hormonal and physiological factors involved in the sexual response, fear, the fight or flight system, etc., so this is what I tried to stick to. I was very uncomfortable with being asked to

comment about a specific individual and a particular episode in their life, so I desperately tried to avoid naming him in person. In the end I stuck with generalities

– 'a person in this situation might show the following physical response...' – and was pleased with the outcome. My fellow 'experts' were not quite so prudent and often spoke of Hugh doing this, or Hugh would feel that', though of course the editing process may have been a little kinder on me than them.

Am I being too sensitive here? If people place themselves squarely in the public eye, can they expect anything other than the psychological Spanish Inquisition? This is a tricky issue, and I think that it is probably best to try to stick to the general rather than the specific, otherwise we may be regarded not as human behaviour experts but rather as shallow gossip peddlers (then again is there really a difference?).

While I was lucky with the narrative, I was not so fortunate with the graphics. While I spoke about the physiology behind an erection on the left side of the screen, on the right, a highly detailed graphic demonstrated a rapidly rising phallus which ended up pointing straight at my head. Needless to say I was mortified, and in the unlikely event that I become famous, this little clip will no doubt rise again to haunt me. So be warned – you can be as careful as you like with what you say, but they can still make the 'expert' look like a *Catchphrase* solution any time they like.

*Nick Neave*

## 'THAT'S LOVELY, DEAR... BUT WHAT IS IT?!

With two young children who go through enough paper in one drawing session to destroy a large patch of the Amazonian rain forest, I was interested by a recent article in the *Guardian's* 'Education' section

entitled 'Smart squiggles'. Apparently, drawing in schools can often be seen as a soft option to keep young children quiet and occupied when they've finished other work. The Campaign for Drawing ([www.drawingpower.org.uk](http://www.drawingpower.org.uk)) sees drawing as an important form of perception and way of understanding the world that helps children to develop cognitive abilities. Ken Baynes (Loughborough University) suggests that drawing is a more complex activity than it may appear. In his study of how children draw, random squiggles often had a pattern to them, and by attributing meaning to marks children were able to model ideas, perhaps aiding their cognitive development.

In studying long-term attainments in children, drawing is not usually considered as an outcome factor, and there is

apparently little evidence available in this area. However, for evidence of short-term benefits, the article cites the Reggio Emilia pre-schools and nurseries in Italy, where art is specifically used as a way of focusing on thinking and learning. Children there are said to be very emotionally and intellectually fulfilled.

Angela Anning (Leeds University) believes that our attitudes to drawing can have a negative impact on children when they begin school. So look again at that hallucinogenic collage adorning the fridge door. Yes, I know cows don't look like that, the cat isn't purple (unless it's been painted again!) and your portrait bears no resemblance to a carbon-based life form... but who knows what hidden meaning lies therein!

*Ged Bailes*

CHRIS CHAFFERON

### TIP OF THE MONTH

If you are doing a radio interview try not to rely on lots of papers – microphones pick up the rustling sounds. If you really must write something down (facts and figures can be a useful comfort blanket), use a single side of A4 or a couple of small cue cards. But the fewer the better – have confidence in your knowledge of the subject.

■ Next media training day – Monday 29 September. Contact Dawn Schubert for details on [dawsch@bps.org.uk](mailto:dawsch@bps.org.uk) or tel: 0116 252 9581.