



'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.

Time to make love not war

A PREDICTABLE pattern seems to repeat in the winter press. December – psychology and shopping. January – post-Christmas downers and debt. February – why not some sexy romantic science?

The usual rash of romance research duly appeared in mid-February. After spying on 124 canoodling couples, psychologist Onur Güntürkün (published in *Nature* in time for Valentine's Day, and picked up extensively elsewhere) found that around 80 per cent of the kissing pairs turned their heads to the right. Apparently, right-kissing may be a reflection of behaviour in the womb – unborn babies tend to lean to the right.

JESS HURD (REPORTDIGITAL.COM)

There's no love lost elsewhere in the world. 'Psychological warfare against Saddam is already well in effect' reported the *Chicago Tribune* (and numerous other sources). The work of so-called 'psy-ops' employed by the Pentagon involves dropping leaflets with messages along the lines of 'Do not fire at coalition aircraft. If you choose to fire, you will be destroyed. Coalition forces will attack with overwhelming force. The choice is yours.' According to the article, 'another brochure urged Iraqis to tune into any of five "Information Radio" frequencies, on which they can hear Western music performed by Celine Dion and others, as well as news and US propaganda'.

Now, I know all's fair in love and war, but have the spooks been reading the latest research on 'earworms'? According to a report in *Reuters Health*, the vast majority of people have at some point been mentally tortured by a song that gets stuck in their heads. James Kellaris (a professor of marketing at the University of Cincinnati) says these songs are relatively simple, repetitive, and contain an element that surprises the listener. He suggests that you should try to avoid listening to music for a while if it 'becomes too sticky', and that 'chewing on cinnamon sticks' might help.

Adam Joinson

TIP OF THE MONTH

If you deal with the media regularly, keep an address book handy to record contacts. Journalists appreciate being remembered and you can appear helpful and knowledgeable if you are able to mention having spoken to them before.

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

IN these troubled times it is good to hear that there are still plenty of people trying to maintain balance. Radio 4's *All in the Mind* discussed research based on interviews with suicide bombers who had survived the attacks, or had been caught before they could achieve their aim. The research, led by psychologist Andrew Silke (Home Office), demonstrated that the bombers were no different from many people who have strongly held beliefs. They were not the mindless psychopaths often portrayed in the media. I was particularly relieved that not once was the word 'evil' used to explain their actions, as it so often seems to be when politicians seek to motivate their constituents to support the slaughter of their fellow human beings.

Another noble attempt to break taboos and misunderstanding has been BBC's 'Hitting Home' season. The collection of programmes went to great lengths to look at all aspects of domestic violence, and supported this with information to help people in this situation. Just what Lord Reith was looking for when he was encouraging public service broadcasting in the 1940s.

April sees the broadcast of the 2003 Reith Lectures on Radio 4. The theme this year is 'The emerging mind' – a series of lectures looking at how the studying brain phenomena such as Capgras syndrome or phantom limbs can help us to understand the workings of the mind, consciousness and human nature. The series should be of interest both to psychologists and the public alike.

Owen Hughes