It has been a genuine honor to serve as President of Division 46 this past year, and I appreciate the support of the Division Board and the many members who have contributed to the success of the Division. In particular, I appreciate the significant contributions of Ryan Niemiec, who organized a terrific program for us at the Toronto APA convention, and immediate Past President Frank Farley, who served as my mentor this past year. I know President Elect David Shapiro and President Elect-Elect Pauline Wallin very well, and the future of the Division is in good hands.

Previous presidential columns have been devoted to the ways in which media enhance and expand our lives; in this column I’d like to briefly discuss the risks inherent in living a life that is too media intense.

As I sit at my desk on a Sunday morning in my home, I write positioned between two large computer monitors; one no longer seems quite enough. I spend much of my time sitting at this desk, writing or responding to a seemingly endless stream of email messages, Tweets, Facebook updates, and incoming Skype calls. I live in a 20th floor apartment and look out over a beautiful landscape filled with trees that are just beginning to show their fall colors; much to my dismay, I no longer have the leisure necessary to spend time walking in those parks I love so much and can see so clearly from my apartment window.

I literally can’t remember the last time I went 24 hours without checking my email; in fact, because of my new iPhone, it is difficult to remember the last time I was awake and went more than a couple of hours without checking to see if new messages have arrived. I travel widely on my job, but no matter where in the world I go or whom I am with, there is always a cyber café a few blocks away, and I inevitably find myself checking my email.

Like many of you, I talk on my cell phone while I drive, despite clear evidence that this substantially increases the likelihood of having an accident. Even worse—but no doubt like many of you—I shamefully and surreptitiously check for new messages on long trips, holding my iPhone in my right hand while driving with my left. Most often, these new messages are trivial and mundane; however, I have a developed a compulsive need to know if anyone is trying to reach me, even if it is only a distraught widow from Nigeria with money to deposit in my account. Occasionally, a message will be genuinely significant, and this morsel will maintain the intermittent schedule of reinforcement that so clearly feeds my addiction.

I have a Charter Cable connection that brings several hundred channels into my living room—but lack the leisure necessary to watch TV. I subscribe to Netflix and always have a film waiting to be viewed—and I feel chronically guilty about not watching the films I order. My Bose stereo is wonderful—but it has been months (perhaps years?) since I’ve listened to a symphony in its entirety. I tape Keith Olbermann and Chris Matthews—but somehow never have time to watch the shows I tape.

Recently I experienced walking into a men’s room in a restaurant and I saw three men standing side-by-side at urinals, all of them checking their cell phones for messages. There are times when life provides a clear advantage for the ambidextrous. I have become one of these men, and I am ashamed.

When I recall the happiest moments in my life, they have all involved face-to-face communication, and frequently touch. They have rarely involved media.

I am single again and participating in online dating. Each day I receive my “Daily 5” from Match.com—but of course, I don’t want five women each day; I only want one woman who will love me for the rest of her life.

Wordsworth wrote “Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers/ And little we see in nature that is ours.” In the 21st century, we waste our powers interacting with vast social networks, but it is not at all clear to me that we benefit from the hundreds or thousands of daily interactions technology makes possible.

(continued on p. 14)
President-Elect’s Column

On the Limits of Media “Expertise”

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Many of us are often consulted by the media to render opinions about people about whom we do not have personal knowledge. A particular high profile issue, perhaps a widely reported criminal trial, occurs and the media call us to get our opinion on the case. Under such circumstances, we must make it very clear that we can only express opinions in general terms and not presume to address the personalities of the parties involved. Some of us can remember back to a time when a group of psychiatrists “diagnosed” presidential candidate Barry Goldwater and were met by condemnation professionally. There is a temptation to do such armchair diagnosis, a temptation which we must resist. On one occasion, I was called by a television talk show host who wanted my opinion on the dynamics of a defendant who was at that time standing trial. I informed him that it would be unethical to give a diagnosis of someone I had not examined. The host then exclaimed “What good are you!” and hung up on me. On the other hand, a psychologist proceeded to give a diagnosis of the Unabomber to the media without having examined him; such rendering of professional opinions need to be avoided. Of course, the APA Code of Ethics does not and in fact cannot totally prohibit such activity, but it states it in the form of a caveat: that when, despite our efforts to conduct a personal examination, such is not possible, we may render an opinion provided we qualify it with any relevant restrictions on validity and reliability.

Inside This Issue

For this issue, we invited some interesting thinkers, writers, and researchers in media psychology to contribute short pieces reflecting some of their current concerns, interests, or activities. We hope you will attend and enjoy the variety of offerings. And, of course, there are our regular columns and the reports of member activities and interests.

—Danny Wedding, President; V. Krishna Kumar, Editor; Victoria L. Hennessey and Kathryn Stamoulis, Associate Editors; Frank Farley, Consulting Editor; Elise S. Luber, Student Editorial Assistant

President’s Column .......................................................1, 14
President-Elect’s Column ....................................................2
Past President’s Column .................................................3–4
From the Editor ....................................................................4
From the Associate Editors .............................................5–6
Report From the Council of Representatives ..................6–7
“Knowing Is Not Enough; We Must Apply. Willing Is Not Enough; We Must Do.” .................................................7–8
“Moving to the Other Side of the Table”...............................8
Public Psychology: Demand, Supply—An Exploration ............................................................9–10
Welcome to Our New President-Elect...............................10
Welcome to Our New Members-at-Large..........................10
Sightings ............................................................................ 11
Member News ...................................................................12
New Media, Public Education, Public Policy
Committee Report ............................................................13
Membership Committee Report.........................................14
APA Div. 46 Board Meeting Highlights...............................14
2009 Board Directory.........................................................16

Join Our New Facebook Group

Media platforms like Facebook provide us with additional ways to build and maintain our network. Thus, Division 46 now is developing its own Facebook Group, “APA DIVISION 46.” You must be a member of Facebook to join this Group. Facebook membership is free, so there is no cost to network, ask questions, interact, and discuss issues that are relevant to Division interests such as Internet and media psychology. This differs from the Division listserv in that it can for some be a more appropriate place for discussions, since they stay between discussants, as opposed to involving everyone on the list. Please contact Joanne Broder Sumerson at joannebroder@aol.com if you would like more information.

Publication and Submission Guidelines

The Amplifier is the official newsletter of APA Division 46, Media Psychology, and is published twice a year (Spring/Summer, Fall/Winter). Unsolicited contributions from members are welcomed and encouraged. Articles must be relevant to media psychology and should not have been published elsewhere. All submissions should be sent to the Editor, V. Krishna Kumar, PhD (kkumar@wcupa.edu). Submissions must be received by April 1 for Spring/Summer issue and October 1 for the Fall/Winter issue. Authors should ensure that their manuscripts comply with all APA publication and ethical guidelines.
Past President’s Column

Pass the Salt

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Sometimes you have to take what you see in the media concerning psychology with a grain of salt (remember that old phrase?), sometimes a whole bag of it. I had one of those salt-bag moments a few weeks ago when I opened my issue of that media powerhouse Newsweek magazine. There was an article by the eminent science writer Sharon Begley titled “Ignoring the Evidence: Why do psychologists reject science?” A highlighted quote blares out “It’s very threatening to think our profession is a charade.” The gist of her piece was that, according to an article that she notes was to be published in a upcoming issue of the journal, Perspectives in Psychological Science, psychological science has made substantial progress “in identifying the most effective treatments” and that cognitive and cognitive–behavior therapy “are effective against depression, panic disorder, bulimia nervosa, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and posttraumatic-stress disorder.” But, “You wouldn’t know this if you sought help from a typical psychologist. Millions of patients are instead receiving chaotic meditation therapy, facilitated communication, dolphin-assisted therapy, eye-movement desensitization…. In her article decrying the lack of evidence supporting what “typical psychologists” do, she cites no evidence for the sweeping “millions of patients” statistic! Continuing “A 2008 survey of 591 psychologists in private practice found they rely more on their own and colleagues’ experiences than on science when deciding how to treat a patient. (This is less true of psychiatrists, since these MD’s receive extensive scientific training.)”

I am writing about all this because of the provocative and misleading title of the Newsweek piece “Ignoring the Evidence: Why do psychologists reject science?” and because of the prestigious and believable source (Newsweek and an eminent science writer), and because it’s a lesson for all of us concerned with media effects and media psychology.

I do not reject science and my guess is most of you don’t either, although I have some problems with some features of what often seems to be a dominant paradigm of insular lab-centric, self-report-centric, simulation-centric and psychology101-student-as-subject-centric, mostly convenience-small-sample-centric, one-shot-unreplicated-study-centric and often over-generalized science (the new/old monastic order of psychological science?) in much of contemporary psychology. (And I have done such science!!) Using such a sweeping title for the Newsweek article, possibly read by millions, is unfair to many psychologists. Truth in labeling should apply both to our work in psychology and to those in the media who present psychology to the public.

Writing about a yet unpublished scholarly article, which was the basis for the Newsweek piece, seems an unfair practice as the reader does not have timely access to that unpublished article to judge for oneself its merits. Also Begley misidentifies the journal in which it was scheduled to appear, making it even less readily accessible. The article appears not in Perspectives in Psychological Science, as she reports, but in Psychological Science in the Public Interest.

A key study Begley cites (see above) “A 2008 survey of 591 psychologists” turns out to have actually been published in 2007. A minor point, perhaps, given that the error came from the scholarly article she bases her whole piece on, but might underscore the importance of fact-checking in media’s so-important representation of psychology to the public. The Newsweek piece did not note that the survey had a very poor return rate of 23%, and there were several problems of research method. For example, a close look at this 2007 key study shows that two groups of the total 591 sampled were randomly constructed with one receiving information on empirically supported treatments (ESTs), and the other not. Unsurprisingly, the results showed that the former group reported more impact of ESTs on their treatment decision in a (simulated) case study than did the latter group. Note: It involved one simulated case study only—no replication on one or more other cases with different diagnoses. It seems to me that sweeping conclusions about how practitioners make treatment decisions in the REAL WORLD based on a survey/simulation study need to be tempered by the nitty-gritty of the research design, something we should always be concerned about, on our side and on the media’s side. Begley adds that placing less weight on science in treatment decisions “is less true of psychiatrists” as they “receive extensive scientific training”!! Hello? Do most psychiatrists typically receive training in research design and methods, statistics, etc., more than we do? Begley presents questionable evidence (the aforementioned low-return survey of 591) that psychologists down play science in treatment decisions but presents no evidence at all backing-up her statement that this is less true of psychiatrists. Take a grain of salt and call me in the morning. Its disappointing when leading media may tilt perhaps inadvertently their reportage one way or another (e.g., psychologist vs. psychiatrist). To me this is not trivial as the public good, and professional livelihoods, are at stake here.

Empirically supported treatments are excellent if they have been well validated in the REAL WORLD where people’s lives and problems reside, but the current status of ESTs is that they don’t work for everyone and every problem.

I am a fan of cognitive and cognitive–behavioral approaches, and was surprised to see Aaron T. Beck, our leading living thinker and practitioner of those approaches nowhere referenced in the list of 339 references in the article Sharon Begley based her piece on. This is, of course, not her doing. OK, OK, he’s a psychiatrist, not
Past President’s Column
(continued from p. 3)

a psychologist, but he’s a fellow of our APA, one of our award recipients, and should appear in any full discussion of cognitive approaches to treatment!

I strongly support ridding ourselves of “schlock science” and invalid treatments and tests, and we have much reform to do (cf. Farley, 2009; Farley & Kumar, 2005). Continued clarification of what works, how, when and where is needed and we need the media as our ally in carrying the best we have to the many publics. Begley’s piece, despite the problems noted above may, I hope, stimulate substantial discussion on both the psychology and the media sides that may help to clarify and ultimately strengthen our contributions to the public good.

References

From the Editor

The Dummies/Idiots Media

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Imagine you are at a cocktail party and someone asks “Have you read any interesting books lately,” and you start to answer Orchids for Dummies by Steven A. Frownie (2005). Would you skip the word “dummies” and just say “I’m reading a book on orchids?” What type of response do you think you would receive? I was intrigued when I discovered that our illustrious Division 46 member Judy Kuriansky has written several such books, The Complete Idiot’s Guide to a Healthy Relationship, being one of them.

I wondered if I would be more likely to buy a book titled Orchid Growing Simplified or Orchid Growing for Dummies. The use of the pejorative expressions “dummies or idiots” certainly makes the title more dramatic and likely attracts attention. However, with my utmost unconditional regard for Judy Kuriansky as a psychologist and an author, the unfortunate ambiguity in the title The Complete Idiot’s Guide ... is hard not to notice—is the book written by an idiot or for an idiot, or both? The dummies titles are clearer; the books are for “dummies.” Seeing a book as written by an “idiot” has some advantages—if an idiot could write this, one might think, well I should be able to understand it. If it was written for me—an idiot—it does not sound flattering, even if I were one.


These are the days of euphemisms—we do not say “spelling mistakes,” rather we say “typographical errors.” Gone are the days when a person can be classified as “retarded” or “moron.” Thus, one might think that the writing and publishing books for dummies and idiots will be a public relations disaster. To the contrary, these books are immensely popular. Just visit their websites: www.dummies.com and www.idiotsguides.com. The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Psychology, by Joni Johnston is now in its 4th edition and is 435 pages long. I wondered how a course entitled “Advanced Statistics in Behavioral Sciences for Dummies” or “A Complete Idiot’s Course in Advances Statistics in Behavioral Sciences” would look on a student’s transcript applying for a doctoral program. And if I did offer such a course, assuming that the university’s curriculum committee would approve it, I would not wish to imagine students’ comments who might find the course difficult anyway!

Writing for idiots and dummies is a noble goal, particularly in view of the concern some educators have expressed about “the dumbing-down of America” (e.g., see Stern, 2009). No doubt, all of us should be “above average,” as Garrison Keillor would like to have it. Much like GEICO’s popular Caveman commercials, these books for dummies and idiots are a clever, perhaps brilliant, albeit paradoxical marketing strategy—they are designed with an obviously simple message: “We make it easy for you.”

Books for “dummies” and “idiots” counter the pessimistic intellectual hubris on the part of some who think not everyone can understand complex subject matter such as Einstein’s Relativity Theory. For those who have a low intellectual view of themselves in physics, such a book could instill hope and inspiration that reading it will make them capable of discussing matters on the subject of relativity, well perhaps, with at least at a cocktail party level of intelligence.

Nonetheless, it should be clear that one would need to work through even such simplified books to get something out of them. When I saw the title Probability for Dummies by Deborah Rumsey (2006), a 358-page book, I thought someone should write a book titled Probability for the Lazy, Unmotivated, and Impatient, since I would like to learn things quickly and without expending much energy.

Reference
From the Associate Editors

Celebrity Scandals: A Chance for Psychologists to Educate?

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There has been some concern amongst our profession and division 46 members regarding psychologists speaking in the media about celebrity news, particularly as it relates to the mental health of celebrities making headlines. Opponents argue it is unethical to render a diagnosis to someone they are not treating. They are also concerned that even offering speculation as to why certain celebrities behave the way they do may be misconstrued or twisted by media outlets. While these opponents may have a valid argument, the recent public response to one such celebrity news story illustrates how many people are ill-informed about mental health concerns and presents an opportunity for our profession to educate the public.

Many public figures of late have made headlines with bizarre behaviors, scandals or shocking revelations: Jon Gosselin, Britney Spears, Michael Jackson and most recently Mackenzie Phillips. One Day at a Time star Mackenzie Phillips appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show to publicly reveal her story of reported incest at the hands of her father, John Phillips, of the Mamas and Pappas fame. Immediately frenzy ensued. Oprah Winfrey questioned her about whether her story was believable because of her drug abuse history, which Phillips reported began at the age of 10 with her father. Message boards quickly lit up with many calling Phillips a liar, which Phillips said began at the age of 10 with her father. Message boards quickly lit up with many calling Phillips a liar, commenting that she could never be trusted due to her drug usage. Phillips’ own stepmother echoed this sentiment in a public statement. The popular television show Entertainment Tonight aired results from a poll “Do you believe Mackenzie’s story?” Others, such as blogger Perez Hilton read by millions each day questioned “Why did Mackenzie’s incestuous relationship with her dad continue? After the first time, wouldn't she have stopped it right away?”

While incredulity regarding Phillips accusations blanketed the media, response from our profession seemed lacking in comparison. Where were the strong messages of mental health experts educating the public that sexual perpetrators often chose vulnerable victims? That many victims carry guilt or shame because they did not stop the abuse? That, in many instances, these victims can develop unhealthy coping strategies such as substance use to cope with such trauma? This case presented an opportunity for experts to relay factual information and address misconceptions about the nature of sexual abuse, victimization and drug addiction to millions of Americans. And the desire to be informed does exist. The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) reported a 26% increase in calls to their hotline and an 83% increase in traffic to their website following Phillips announcement. This statistic lends support to the notion that celebrity revelations and gossip can present an opportunity to better inform and educate the public.

Division 46 members are at the forefront of “giving psychology away.” Many of our members speak often to the media, disseminating psychological information to the masses. With so much misinformation being presented by media sources that are viewed and heard by millions, it should be our profession’s responsibility to educate and inform. Even though psychologists must choose their words carefully when dealing with the media, the benefits of using celebrity examples as a means of getting accurate psychological information to the public may be well worth it.

Texting and Driving

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I sat in the hair salon the other day listening to a customer complain about all the texting she sees going on in public places. At the time, I recalled a recent conversation I had with a friend who was telling me about a high school friend of hers that passed away a few months ago in a car accident. Her friend was texting and crashed her car into a tree. Her spine was severed and she died instantly. I shared this story with the other customers and their comments were fast and furious about people who drive and text. I decided to look into it for my own edification primarily because I am one of those people who texts while driving.

Paul Green, research professor at University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute who has done a decade’s worth of research on driver distraction, said “from the science so far, it’s very clearly a problem. We don’t have exact statistics yet; we have enough information to say that texting shouldn’t be permitted while driving.”

In December of 2007, Clemson University did a study measuring the danger of driving while texting. They found that text messaging and using iPods caused drivers to leave their lanes 10 percent more often in a simulated driving study conducted by researchers in the Clemson University psychology department. Obviously with new enhancements, features, and improved technology, texting and messaging will continue to increase jeopardizing our safety on the road. Currently, 14 states and Washington, DC, have banned text messaging for drivers of all ages (www.drivinglaws.org). New York’s ban on texting while driving went into effect on November 1, 2009.

(continued on p. 6)
From the Associate Editors
(continued from p. 5)

Donald Lewis, MD, chief of Eastern Virginia Medical School’s Department of pediatrics told WebMD that a growing body of research suggests that texting while driving is a rapidly increasing problem. He stated that in Virginia, young drivers are not allowed by law to use cell phones, but he says the statute is difficult to enforce because it’s tough for police to gauge driver age. Lewis stated “what’s clear is that the more finger involvement you have, the more dangerous you are. Talking on a cell phone affects driving, but when you start to do things like dialing, texting, or messing with your MP3 player, you’re more likely to have speed variability and lane variation.”

According to a recent study by the American Automobile Association (AAA) the risk of car accident increases by 50% for people who text message while driving. A few states have banned texting while driving, “and they all should,” Lewis says (www.webmd.com).

I am unsure if my own state has laws against texting and driving or even laws against talking on a cell phone while driving. What that tells me is either the fines are not great enough to force me to change, or that the law was not publicized in a way that impacts those it should have the most bearing on—someone like me.

Report From the Council of Representatives

APA Becomes Strategic!

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The August 2009 Council of Representatives (COR) meeting got off to a rousing start with the approval of the first ever strategic plan for the APA. Led by CEO, Dr. Norman Anderson, with the assistance of Jay Young from the firm assisting us with mission statement (that was done last year) and formulating our goals, objectives and values. At the most recent meetings, COR members voted to form a committee to work out the appropriate values and to accept the following three goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Maximize Organizational Effectiveness
Objectives:
• Enhance APA programs, services and communications to increase member engagement and value.
• Ensure the ongoing financial health of the organization.
• Optimize APA’s governance structure and function.

Goal 2: Expand Psychology’s Role in Advancing Health
Objectives:
• Advocate for the inclusion of access to psychological services in health-care reform policies.
• Create innovative tools to allow psychologists to enhance their knowledge of health promotion, disease prevention, and management of chronic disease.
• Educate other health professionals and the public about psychology’s role in health.
• Promote the application of psychological knowledge in diverse health care settings.
• Promote psychology’s role in decreasing health disparities.
• Promote the application of psychological knowledge for improving overall health and wellness at the individual, organizational and community levels.

Goal 3: Increase Recognition of Psychology as a Science
Objectives:
• Enhance psychology’s prominence as a core STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) discipline.
• Improve public understanding of the scientific basis for psychology.
• Expand the translation of psychological science to evidence-based practice.
• Promote the applications of psychological science to daily living.
• Expand educational resources and opportunities in psychological science.

Other important issues taken up by this summer’s COR meeting included
• Voted to adopt as APA policy Guidelines Regarding Psychologists’ Involvement in Pharmacological Issues. The guidelines, developed by an APA Division 55 Task Force, are intended to provide a resource on optimal psychological practice in pharmacotherapy. They also provide information for psychologists with any level of involvement with psychotropic and other medication issues.
• Voted to adopt as APA policy a resolution that endorses the concept of recovery for people with serious mental illness.
• Approved a suspension of the annual dues increase. Dues levels for all members and affiliates will remain at 2009 rates next year.
• Voted to amend the bylaws to drop unpaid members if they haven’t paid their dues after one year instead of the current two-year grace period. To become effective, this proposed change requires the approval of the full membership.
• Voted to establish an APA “designation program” for education and training programs in psychopharmacology (as opposed to program accreditation). A designation program is seen as the right developmental step for psychopharmacology programs at this time and would be intended to provide quality assurance guidance for these programs.
• In response to ongoing concerns regarding Ethical Standards 1.02 and 1.03, which address conflicts between ethics and law
and ethics and organizational demands, the Council directed the APA Ethics Committee to propose language that would clarify the psychologist’s obligations when such conflicts arise. After a public comment period this fall, the Ethics Committee will come forward with proposals in preparation for Council’s February 2010 meeting.

- Approved the creation of two new division journals: Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology (Div. 47, Exercise and Sport Psychology) and International Perspective in Psychology: Research, Practice and Consultation (Div. 52, International).
- Approved a change in the timeline for APA presidential elections. The president-elect ballot will now be distributed to all voting members on Sept. 15 rather than Oct. 15.

Further, two important reports were accepted by COR that were then released to the press resulting in good press coverage on timely topics: global climate change and the debate on whether sexual orientation can be changed through therapy.

One report, the product of an APA Task Force on the Interface Between Psychology and Global Climate Change examined how psychological science can be applied to encourage people to engage in environmentally sensitive behaviors. The report summarizes the psychological literature on climate change issues and recommends ways that psychology can help create public policies designed to protect the environment (see article, p xx).

A second report, also based on a review of the relevant published literature, found insufficient evidence for claims that sexual orientation can be changed through therapy and concluded that therapists should avoid telling their clients that they can change from gay to straight (see article, page x). After receiving the report, the council adopted a resolution on appropriate affirmative responses to sexual orientation distress and change efforts which grew out of the report findings.

Finally, as many of you know, the COR listerv raises important topics in between meetings. Two topics that were not resolved at the COR meeting but have had continued discussions in the three months following are concerning the APA vs. APAIT lawsuit and the Hyatt Manchester Hotel in San Diego for APA in 2010.

The Hyatt Manchester Hotel is owned by a businessman who donated several million dollars to help defeat the California Gay Marriage laws last year’s state elections. Many APA members who are sensitive to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual civil rights objected to the Hyatt Manchester Hotel being one of the major convention hotels and called for APA to cancel its contract with the hotel. The APA Board of Directors estimated that such a cancellation could cost the organization several million dollars which was not feasible in our present economy. Therefore, they voted to go forward with the contract but permit divisions to make decisions of whether or not to meet there and if so, whether or not to spend any additional money in that hotel. Division 46 Board met via telephone in October and voted unanimously to follow the APA Board of Directors suggestions of highlighting LGBT issues at convention. We are considering giving awards with other divisions to high profile people in California who support full LGBT civil rights.

The information presented to COR in closed session of the meeting about the APA vs. APAIT lawsuit cannot be discussed as there is ongoing litigation. However, we were told both positions—APA’s in closed session by the attorney, Nathalie Gilfoyle and by email from APAIT’s officers. Sadly, we are they—in other words the two organization’s boards have overlapping members and APAIT insures APA members as a benefit of our membership. For those of us who are clinicians and have elected APAIT insurance, we are paying double for this lawsuit no matter who wins. The issues as I see it involve who has power and control, fiduciary responsibility for APAIT. Although negotiations between the two groups have not previously been successful, it was strongly suggested that both sides come back to negotiations this fall and see how much closer they can get before we have to spend more money on litigation when we are so limited in the budget for all activities. We have not yet gotten a formal report from the task force that met this fall but informally heard that it went well.

“Knowing Is Not Enough; We Must Apply. Willing Is Not Enough; We Must Do.”

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Goethe appears in every publication issued by the Institute of Medicine (IOM). Having a wonderful idea or the clinical skills to make a significant difference in the lives of one’s patients is undoubtedly personally rewarding. During the three and a half decades that I have been involved within the APA governance and at the national public policy level, I have been exposed to a number of very creative and highly dedicated colleagues. Many, however, genuinely wonder if they will ever be able to make a substantial impact upon the field or society. They are seemingly caught up in the demands of the moment. Few seem to appreciate that to have a lasting impact—vision, patience, persistence, and, I would suggest, like-minded colleagues are required.

The field of Psychology has tremendous potential. Former APA and Division President Frank Farley has often stressed that psychology is the key to almost all of our nation’s most pressing
problems—whether education, healthcare, preventing violence, or ensuring a decent standard of living for all Americans. In the aftermath of 9/11, a number of the Division’s members effectively addressed the nation, providing a calming voice. The media, of course, was their vehicle. I will never forget how impressive then-APA President Norine Johnson was at the national level, talking with concerned parents and their children. Her service to the nation was simply outstanding. Former APA President Phil Zimbardo later forcefully pointed out that the lessons of his Stanford Prison Experiment were highly relevant to the challenges facing our nation. My sincerest congratulations to APA’s Rhea Farberman for having “psychology’s voice heard.”

It has been my observation over the years, however, that as one of the nation’s learned professions, psychology could have a substantially greater impact if we would collectively stop “talking to ourselves” and instead pay attention to how on a daily basis the media effectively shapes society’s expectations and understanding of admittedly highly complex issues, such as prevention and wellness. How many of us, for example, actually know members of the media as friends and colleagues? How many State Associations affirmatively arrange “listening sessions” in which their members can hear on a first hand basis what their local media is interested in and how psychology might contribute to a more sophisticated understanding by their audience? It is perhaps appropriate for psychology to wait for a media inquiry and then smile when one is accurately quoted. A more responsible approach, however, would be to proactively develop mutually engaging policy agendas. For example, if one listens carefully to the national debate surrounding the President’s Health Care Reform agenda, it is clear that many “interests” have been actively ensuring that their concerns are openly debated by the American public. In so doing, the political and substantive dynamics of Health Care Reform have been substantially altered.

The challenge for those colleagues interested in working with the media is not only to represent psychology (or one’s personal scientific and clinical expertise) well, but at the same time, to develop an appreciation for the extent to which the media represents a bona fide and vibrant profession—with its own culture, history, and future generations. Throughout various IOM publications, national experts call for each of the health professions to move away from their traditional (and admittedly comfortable) isolated silos and instead interact affirmatively with other learned professions. I would suggest that the same visionary “call for action” would be most appropriate for psychology and the media. Aloha.

“Knowing Is Not Enough...”
(continued from p. 7)

“Moving to the Other Side of the Table”

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It was quite literally an offer I could not refuse. After more than 30 years as a media psychologist, entrepreneur, journalist, academic researcher and teacher, I was given an opportunity to put my values into action in ways that I could never do alone or in any of my previous positions.

On September 1, 2009, I left Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School to become the executive director of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation in Lansdowne, VA, a suburb of Washington, DC. Although it is only 9 years old, JKCF is one of the 100 largest foundations in America. Our mission is to identify highly intelligent and very talented adolescents and young adults from low-income families, and to give them the support they need to realize their potential through education.

We do this through a combination of scholarships and specialized internal programs. You can read some of the students’ profiles on our website http://www.jkcf.org.

Jack Kent Cooke was a dynamic billionaire entrepreneur and sportsman. He had little formal schooling, but was an accomplished autodidact. He went from selling encyclopedias door-to-door during the Great Depression to owning radio and television stations, the Chrysler Building in Manhattan, and a variety of professional sports teams including the Washington Redskins and the Los Angeles Lakers.

When he died in 1997, he left the bulk of his fortune to establish the foundation. His advice to young people remains the driving force behind the foundation's mission: “Destiny demands you do better than your supposed best.”

The reason I was drawn to the executive directorship was simple: As a child, I fit the profile of the type of person the foundation supports. I was raised in the Bronx by an immigrant single mom who was a high school dropout and who died when I was a teenager. I was also lucky enough to have teachers and other adults in my life who took the time to encourage and support me in critical ways throughout my high school and college years. I understand at a visceral level, as well as at an intellectual level, the importance of this type of support.

I'm working with a highly talented, dedicated and diverse team of educators, attorneys, financial managers, academic administrators and others. Each of us revels in the stories of the extraordinary Jack Kent Cooke Scholars: a formerly homeless single mother who's now getting a master’s degree in public administration and an MBA from Harvard; an immigrant from Cameroon who's becoming a doctor; a 15-year-old cellist who's touring the country giving concerts. The list goes on.

Does this mean that I'm giving up media psychology? No. I'll be applying my skills and experience to this new role and new environment. There are wonderful stories to tell.
Public Psychology: Demand, Supply—An Exploration

Frank Farley (frank.farley@comcast.net), Annette McMenamin Bakley, Ting Dai, Kristin Funk, Brad Litchfield, Tamarah Smith-Dyer, and Julia Walsh

“Science’s sole aim must be to lighten the burden of... human existence.”
—Galileo Galilei

Has psychology become a 130-year-old discipline that has promised more than it has delivered, has insufficiently contributed to the improvement of the human condition, and is misleading and under serving an unwary public? Is the American public being well served by psychology? Are we seeing crime and violence diminish, health improve, education improve, marriage and family life get better and happiness in an upward trajectory, all objectively attributable at least in part to our field? We are not a young discipline in the family of sciences if we date our beginning to Wundt in 1879. We are not a small discipline if one examines the membership numbers in our professional societies, which dwarf those of other fields such as sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science.

Despite this massive discipline, with our continuing huge college enrollments promising yet more future psychologists, it’s not very clear what the correct answers should be to the questions posed above. The American public is facing a number of large scale social issues: a problematic healthcare system; an educational system that is the envy of no one, it seems; divorce and marital problems; and it remains a violent society by any international standards, with one of the highest incarceration rates in the world. Intergroup tensions, racism, sexism, and ageism remain high, despite some progress in these areas. Given all this, and our large mature discipline that talks about all these issues, and grinds out thousands of studies each year many of which are allegedly directed at these issues, why is psychology’s impact on improving American life not more clear? This question is too big for the present brief report but a related question we provisionally tackle here is: how is all that work of our discipline and psychologists being represented to the public? We are “giving away” (Miller, 1969) is good, or whether some of it should be “taken back!”

In the present brief report, we looked at two aspects of “public psychology”: (1) the quantity of public media reference to our discipline and (2) the estimated quality of the media’s psychological sources.

We examined print, television, and radio via 10 consecutive samples, which in some cases included 10 weeks (e.g., weekly magazine; July 13 to September 14, 2009) or 10 days (e.g. TV, radio, daily newspaper; August 26 to September 4, 2009) of material as constrained by each medium’s publication schedule. The online search was restricted to two terms “psychology” and “psychologist.” The media websites examined included the weekly newsmagazine Time Magazine, Oprah.com and daily publications of episodes of The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, and the daily content of The New York Times, CNN.com, FOXNews.com and National Public Radio. All original material identified by these search terms was reviewed to determine relevance to the field of psychology as defined by the use of identified psychologists as experts or references to published research. Consensus was reached by the present authors regarding the following criteria: if the media piece referred to psychological research and then, when possible, we examined the quality of the research cited including research design features of the original source document such as control group, reliable and valid measures, and the like (Agnew & Pyke, 2007), peer-review status of the journal, and the qualifications of the researchers.

A total of 107 media pieces or articles were retrieved referring to “psychology” or “psychologist” of which 62 met relevant criteria as defined above. Of these 62 psychologically relevant stories, 66% referred to a psychologist as an expert and approximately 44% referenced a published study. However, a substantial number of the studies cited by the various media utilized convenience samples which were very frequently college students in introduction to psychology courses, made unsupported generalizations, had weak methodology especially regarding external or ecological validity, were one-shot unreplicated studies, or failed to consider alternative interpretations.

Conclusions and Recommendations
This is a very provisional/exploratory snapshot of one slice of psychology’s public exposure with a limited methodology. It is an initial report which could be replicated and expanded over a longer time sampling of media coverage, examining more media sources, and made to include some more sophisticated design features. However, based on this limited examination, we would like to offer the following set of recommendations for discussion:

For Psychologists:
Psychological science should be producing research that has the PUBLIC GOOD as a priority, can be easily and clearly communicated to the public, and provides them with solutions

(continued on p. 10)
Public Psychology
(continued from p. 9)

(“SOLUTION SCIENCE”) or preventative strategies. We urge the conducting of research with real-world applications or, even better, the conducting of research in real-world settings, using well-designed, proven methodologies, especially with both internal and external validity, and with a publication requirement that the study be replicated.

For the Media:
Support journalism school curricula that provide better training in critical thinking and understanding of the basics of behavioral research methodology and appropriate representation of findings and expert quotes. Bring the best research forward; reduce reliance on “infotainment” and “pop psych” as opposed to psychological science. Provide resources for the public to seek more information on psychological topics covered in the media including one or more references or links to peer-reviewed citations when possible.

Popular media now have the ability more than ever to provide information and misinformation on topics related to psychology, however, consumers must understand that the content they are viewing and reading represents a small and possibly biased sample of the psychological information or knowledge available.

References

This brief report was a project of a “Public Psychology” course at Temple University.

Welcome to Our New President-Elect

Pauline Wallin, PhD, comes well prepared for assuming the role of President-elect of Division 46. For the past 5 years she has served as Secretary of the Division, and coordinated the revision of the bylaws.

She has extensive experience with using (and teaching others how to use) the Internet for marketing and public education. Last August she presented three workshops (including an invited address) on this topic.

She has also done presentations on working with the media. For her media training workshops at the Pennsylvania Psychological Association she brought in local TV news reporters who coached workshop participants in effective media communications (e.g., sound bites, plain language).

Pauline is in private practice in Camp Hill, PA. She is author of Taming Your Inner Brat: A Guide for Transforming Self-Defeating Behavior and is frequently interviewed by mainstream media on related topics.

She was a content expert for two online courses (not yet published) by the APA Practice Organization: Using Technology in Psychological Practice; and Marketing Your Practice. She also teaches her own course: Market With Authority: Build Credibility and Professional Name Recognition on the Web.

Pauline invites all members to become more involved in Division 46 activities. Do you have a specific interest in some aspect of the media? There may be an opportunity for you to develop and/or work on a project within the Division. Contact Pauline: drwallin@drwallin.com.

Welcome to Our New Members-at-Large

Frank Farley, PhD
Lilli R. Friedland, PhD

Subscribe to Division 46 Listserv
Looking for a forum to join with others interested in a dialogue about Media Psychology issues? To subscribe to the Division’s listserv, go to the following URL: http://lists.apa.org/cgi-bin/wa.exe?HOME Scroll down to DIV46-MEDIAPSYCH, click on it, and follow the instructions for joining the listserv. (Please note: You must be either an APA member or a Div. 46 member to be eligible to join.)
“The Fourth Kind”

Elise S. Luber
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A recent release in the theaters is the psychological thriller The Fourth Kind. The central question the movie seeks to answer is: “Do alien abductions really take place?” This film about Dr. Abigail Emily Tyler, a psychologist in Nome, Alaska, is reportedly based on actual events starting in 2000. Dr. Tyler uses hypnosis to help three of her patients, participants in her sleep study, who report experiencing similar night terrors.

One patient after only one session of hypnosis returns home to kill his family and then himself. The second patient experiences contortion of his body, becoming paralyzed from the neck down during the session itself. There are other intriguing psychological events depicted in this movie. Dr. Tyler’s daughter develops blindness after seeing her father’s dead body. She is called a “faker” by other children at school. Dr. Tyler herself seems to have created a false memory as a coping mechanism for the shocking death of her husband. When questioned by police, she maintains that he was murdered next to her, despite contrary evidence from an autopsy that shows that her husband had indeed committed suicide.

There is plenty of interesting psychology in this film: hypnosis, conversion disorder, and false memories. What might possibly be its impact? Would it attract more students to major in Psychology? Would it reinforce the existing myths surrounding hypnosis? Would it deter people from seeking hypnosis for the treatment of their ailments? Would it increase the number of diagnoses of conversion disorders in the coming years? Can hypnosis answer the ultimate question “Do alien abductions really take place?”

New York State Psychological Association Media Ambassador Report

Sharon Brennan, Chair
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Online Counseling & Psychotherapy Media Attention Is Resurfacing With Vigor

Marlene Maheu
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There is an increase in media attention to telehealth, now more frequently termed "online counseling" or "online therapy." Some examples are as follows:

Labardee, L. (2009, Summer). Online therapy Crosses the chasm. EAP Digest, 12–20

For more information and an extensive research bibliography, see the Center for Online Counseling http://centerforonlinecounseling.com, particularly this page: http://centerforonlinecounseling.com/bibliography.

Join Our New Facebook Group

Media platforms like Facebook provide us with additional ways to build and maintain our network. Thus, Division 46 now is developing its own Facebook Group, “APA DIVISION 46.” You must be a member of Facebook to join this Group. Facebook membership is free, so there is no cost to network, ask questions, interact, and discuss issues that are relevant to Division interests such as Internet and media psychology. This differs from the Division listserv in that it can for some be a more appropriate place for discussions, since they stay between discussants, as opposed to involving everyone on the list. Please contact Joanne Broder Sumerson at joannebroder@aol.com, if you would like more information.
Peggy (Margaret) Backman, PhD, has recently published a book titled: Did That Really Happen? Stories in Prose and Verse. The short stories are a mixture of perception and misperception, salted with a dash of suspiciousness with some rationalization stirred in. (Available on Amazon.com.)

Elizabeth Carll, PhD, has been elected the chair of the United Nations NGO Committee on Mental Health, a consortium of non governmental organizations, in Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. She is the first psychologist to be elected chair of the UN NGO Committee on Mental Health. Prior to serving as chair, she was the founder and chair of the Media/ICT Working Group of the NGO Committee on Mental Health and chaired the working group for the past 6 years. Dr. Carll is also a United Nations representative for the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. At the APA convention in Toronto, she presented about media depiction of women and violence and the use of media for human rights advocacy.

Irene Deitch, PhD, was the recipient of the Milton Fisher Second Harvest Award, by the Alumni Board of Brooklyn College, City University of New York (her Alma Mater) The inscription reads “This award is given to honor her exceptional achievement in the field of Psychology and to Public Service, subsequent to her post 50th year of graduation.” With this award was a $2000.00 endowment which she donated to Brooklyn College Psychology, Department’s Mental Health Counseling MA program and to the Creative Writing Program. Dr. Phil Zimbardo was given a Lifetime Achievement Award at this event, which Dr. Deitch received in 2005.

Michael Fenichel, PhD, has written several articles, including ones about Division 46 events: http://www.fenichel.com/APAlive2009.shtml

James Kaufman’s, PhD, recent book Creativity 101 came out from Springer Publishing as part of a series (the Psych 101 Series) that presents an introductory look at a variety of psychological topics.

John LaMuth, MSc, has recently published a new book: Challenges to World Peace: A Global Solution (Distributor: INGRAM). This newly devised master hierarchy of traditional virtues and values is formally based upon behavioral principles, wherein the moral commonalities across all religious traditions are emphasized encouraging a new era in religious cooperation. This new ethical system eminently qualifies as the long anticipated foundation for a global system of planetary ethics serving a secular constituency, where such moral issues have typically been downplayed due to well-meaning attempts to avoid religious favoritism. This same system further serves as a crucial adjunct to the major religions of the world without favoring any one of them, promoting a new era in peaceful religious coexistence in that it does not preclude the existence of a top-down pattern of influence of a supernatural nature as well. Consequently, this new ethical innovation potentially amounts to the best of all possible worlds: promoting an ethical revival in the secular world, as well as the potential for an even greater degree of spiritual cooperation and religious tolerance across all of the established religions of the world. More at http://www.global-solutions.org

Marlene Maheu, PhD, has been quoted in multiple recent publications, including the CNN, the EAP Digest, and US News & World Report articles:

Linda Sapadin, PhD, has published a “Now I Get It!” series of books, articles and programs. Her latest e-program is entitled “Kick the Procrastination Habit.” It teaches college and graduate students about the “Six Styles of Procrastination.” This approach to procrastination helps students know and embrace their strengths by offering a tailor-made change program for each style. For more information on her work, visit her new website: www.BeatProcrastinationCoach.com.

Marcella Bakur Weiner, EdD, PhD, has published her 23rd book, The Problem is the Solution: A Jungian Approach to a Meaningful Life with co-author, Mark Simmons, LCSW. While it is geared to the general public (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers) it will be of particular value to clinicians since it includes multiple cases showing how a Jungian approach can be most instrumental to healing. She has also just completed a spring teaching in Marymount Manhattan College, where she is an adjunct professor, the course titled: “Women and Spirituality.” It was geared to women 50 and over. Her most recent interviews in the media have been with US Weekly, OK Magazine, Cosmo, Gentleman’s Quarterly, and Bride. Her children’s book, I Want You Moo, with co-author Jill Neimark, an APA publication, is being enlarged and re-issued for the fall of 2009.

Join the Membership Committee!

Are you creative? Do you enjoy reaching out to touch someone? Do you like networking with both old and new friends? If so, we want you. The membership committee needs creative “people” persons. The time commitment will be minimal, but the pleasures will be great. Get involved. Our Division needs you. Contact me at joannebroder@aol.com.

Joanne Broder Sumerson, Membership Chair
New Media, Public Education, Public Policy Committee Report

Elizabeth Carll, Committee Chair
ecarll@optonline.net

The news media has great influence in shaping public opinion and ultimately public policy. How information is reported is the key to its accuracy and usefulness and highlights the important role of journalists.

Carolyn Abraham, medical reporter at The Globe and Mail, Canada’s largest daily newspaper, and Nancy Shute, contributing editor at US News & World Report, were the recipients of the 2009 News Media Recognition Award. The two journalists were honored during the 2009 APA Annual Convention for their outstanding work reporting on psychological information and research.

Carolyn Abraham has held the position of medical reporter for The Globe and Mail for 11 years. In that time, she has focused her efforts on covering the way science and research impacts society, particularly in the areas of mental health, genetics, and stem cells research. Her work has earned several awards from the Canadian Science Writers Association, the Canadian Daily Newspapers Association, and this year, her story on the controversy surrounding the diagnosis of childhood bipolar disorder won a prestigious National Newspaper Award.

Nancy Shute has been a contributing writer for US News & World Report, for the past 13 years where she writes the OnParenting blog, which covers issues mental health, behavior, and current research. As a senior writer and assistant managing editor at US News, she directed the magazine’s science and technology coverage. Nancy serves as vice president of the National Association of Science Writers, and teaches science writing at Johns Hopkins University’s Advanced Academic Programs. Her recent articles on psychological science have included a diversity of topics, such as preventing depression in teens, bullying, teaching teens with autism how to make friends, and protecting your child’s mental health.

The many years of outstanding stories by Carolyn Abraham and Nancy Shute have helped to keep the public informed about important psychological information to benefit their well-being.

The News Media Recognition Awards were created by the News Media, Public Education, Public Policy Committee of APA’s Division of Media Psychology to recognize excellence in the reporting of psychological information and research.

I would like to thank the members of the News Media, Public Education, Public Policy Committee for their work in the selection process.

Committee members: Elizabeth Carll, founder and chair; Mary Alvord, Jon Cabiria, Jina Carvalho, Helen Friedman, Pamela Rutledge, and students Scott Kaplan and Lynn Temenski.

If you would like to nominate a journalist for the 2010 News Media Recognition Award, contact Elizabeth Carll, chair, at ecarll@optonline.net.
Perhaps psychologists can help society deal with the problem of information glut. I have access to better music on my iPod than Louis XIV had with his court musicians; I have more access to information than Aristotle or Thomas Jefferson. However, I continue to be plagued by a simple question—what does it all mean?

For the time being, I plan to deal with the anxiety associated with media overload by returning to the basics. I'll look for a lover, and hope to tremble at her touch. I'll watch the sun go down and marvel at the colors I see before me. I'll turn off my iPhone and simply sit in the dark listening to Bach’s cello concertos. And this afternoon, I’ll ignore the 150 messages in my Outlook inbox and go for a walk in the park.

To All Division 46 Student Members

Kathryn Stamoulis and Diane Hernandez, co-chairs of the student committee, have both graduated and are passing on the torch. Over the past year, the co-chairs have been involved in board meetings and held an open meeting at the APA convention in Toronto. Students interested in getting involved this upcoming year can contact Kathryn at kestamoulis@hotmail.com.
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